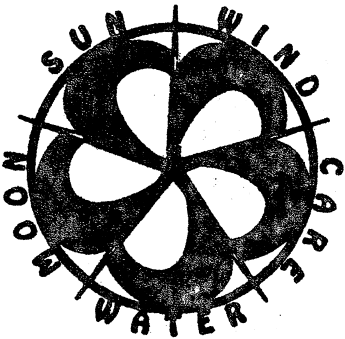


# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

University of Arizona and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.



## the Cochise County Master Gardener

# NEWSLETTER

VOL. 4, NO. 5

MAY 1993

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### ALOE

**Barbara Kishbaugh**  
Staff Writer

An entire section of the Desert Botanical Gardens is devoted to the Aloe family. There are many varieties and all seem to do well in Phoenix although Aloes are not native to Arizona.

In our area you may want to try the medicinal *A. barbadensis* or *Aloe vera* in a protected area. However, it is sensitive to frost and may be more successfully grown indoors. This is the plant that soothes minor burns, sun burns, and some insect bites so it is useful to keep on hand. Just pinch a piece of the leaf off and apply the mucilage to the affected area.

Carolyn and Gary Gruenhagen have successfully grown *A. saponaria* around "rock islands" in their back garden forming attractive meandering paths through the yard. The orangish-red blossoms are on a stock that can reach more than three feet tall and are very striking. The blossoms are similar in color, texture, and shape to ocotillo blossoms. In the Gruenhagen's garden the aloe usually blooms twice a year—spring and fall and at sunset the hundreds of blossoms give the garden a beautiful reddish glow.

Hummingbirds, bees, and even orioles feast on the nectar of these plants. Aloe clumpings create a useful and pleasant habitat for wildlife. The cold winter temperatures can play havoc with the fleshy leaves of *A. saponaria*, but the plant rebounds with new growth if it does receive frostbite. The plants form broad clumps which spread rapidly and occasionally they need to be separated.

(Continued on next page)

Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent,  
Horticulture

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2500 Fry Blvd • Sierra Vista, AZ • 458-1104

A very noticeable planting of *A. saponaria* can be seen against a fence just north of the Coronado and Golf Links intersection in Sierra Vista.



*A. saponaria*

The form and texture of aloe lends itself well to our Southwestern location. They are members of the lily family and actually are succulents. Please bear that fact in mind when contemplating a place for them as they will require a protective micro-climate to do their best. The leaves of the different aloes are varied, each with a distinctive pattern which shouts at you for notice. Couple this with blossoms that also demand attention, extreme drought tolerance, and you have a plant which can satisfy high expectations.

Happy Mother's Day!



MAY

REMINDERS

- BEGIN DEEP WATERING
- PLANT WARM SEASON CROPS
- CONTROL WEEDS
  - Controlling Weeds*
- CHECK TREE TIES
- CONTROL PESTS

The pamphlet listed above is available in the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office as well as many others that may be helpful to you.

Thank you  
Dorothy Britton  
for sharing your  
beautiful garden with us!



Staff: Carolyn Gruenhagen  
Barbara Kishbaugh  
T.J. Martin  
Elizabeth Riordon  
Virginia Westphal

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office by May 26.

## SCOTT'S ORIOLE

Elizabeth Riordon  
Staff Writer

There are many birds in our gardens. Most are a variation of brown or grey. The few that are more brightly colored are exciting to have as regular visitors to our homes. The strong sunlight of Arizona shines through leaves making bright yellow and greenish-yellow patterns which alternate with the dark shapes of shadows in the trees and bushes. This natural pattern is perfect cover for our local oriole, the Scott's Oriole, *Icterus parisorum*.

Scott's Oriole is a medium-sized bird of about seven or eight inches. The male is the most brightly colored with its body a very brilliant lemon yellow. The head, back, and chest are a deep rich shiny black. Most of the rest of its body is a very brilliant lemon yellow. Each time I see it I am surprised again at how brilliant it is. The female has a similar pattern of color but is not so dark black and has a green tinge to her yellow feathers. Her chin and neck are yellow. The immature male is also of a muted color scheme but the beginnings of his black bib can be noticed. Males have one white wing bar and females have two.

In my back yard the male was the first to discover the hummingbird feeders. He seemed to get only a taste of nectar as he unsuccessfully tried to hover like a hummingbird. In the process he set the feeder swinging violently, emptied it, and drew bees and wasps. I found a bush in the yard that had several horizontal strong branches and hung a feeder there so that the oriole could perch and drink. The bird understood and was soon trying for the nectar. Unfortunately I had used a feeder that had small, round holes with flower shaped bee guards. The holes were the wrong shape for the oriole's beak. Worried that the bird might

give up on my yard, I quickly replaced that feeder with one that has slits as feeding ports. The oriole was gone for the day and the hummingbirds had their evening drinks. The next day I was rewarded with a flash of bright yellow. The male oriole sat and drank for quite a while. He pushed the feeder to the side to get a better drink but didn't spill any of the sugar water. Later that day he brought the female. He sat and made a chucking noise until she came. Her response was a softer whistling chirp. They took turns at the feeder. One drank while the other kept watch in the tree above.

The diet of Scott's Oriole includes insects, nectar, and all types of fruit including cacti fruits. It breeds in yucca, palms, sycamores, and cottonwoods as well as in the dry scrub and desert mountains. Some of my neighbors find this bird to be a nuisance and cover their fruit trees and change style of hummingbird feeders. It seems, though, that it is smart enough to use only one easily managed feeder in my yard, and I will soon need to buy some netting to save a few strawberries for dessert.



Scott's Oriole

NOTE: Tucson Botanical Gardens has recently opened their new *Backyard Bird Garden*.

## USING BEARDED IRIS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

Carole Cox\*  
Guest Writer

While there are more than 150 species of iris, only the bearded iris will be discussed here as this is the most commonly grown and recognized species.

Those who visited the iris garden of Dorothy Britton on the garden tour this spring were delighted by the spectacular display of over 750 iris varieties. Ms. Britton graciously invited the Master Gardeners to tour her home garden, and guests had the opportunity to select their choices and place orders for delivery at the proper planting time.

The bearded iris is a good choice for Cochise County yards and gardens. It is one of the easiest perennials to grow, it adapts well to most soil conditions, it is not a heavy feeder, and does not require a large amount of water. Although the iris grows well in full sun, it thrives in light shade in hot climates. Being native to cold winter areas of Europe, the iris rhizome is not harmed by Cochise County's winter temperatures.

The many iris varieties are useful for foundation plantings, are good in borders or beds around yards and patios, and along pathways. With the huge selection of sizes, colors, and combinations iris are beautiful when viewed from up close—many have the added attraction of fragrance. When grown in large clumps of a single variety, iris put on a magnificent display even when seen from a distance.

Now that summer is here, the time for planting iris is approaching—usually from July through September. It is during these months that iris growers ship plants, and they become available locally in garden shops. Friends and neighbors who have iris plantings are also good sources of rhizomes (the thick, tuberous-like stem that lies just under the ground and from which the leaves and roots grow) since many iris are quite prolific and the older, dense clumps should be dug, divided, and replanted soon after

they finish blooming.

Prepare the soil prior to planting by digging at least one foot deep. The inclusion of some organic matter at this time is helpful to improve the drainage as iris will rot if left standing in puddles of water. A small amount of balanced fertilizer (i.e. 6-6-6 or 10-10-10) dug into the planting hole at this time will be helpful. Do NOT use heavy additions of nitrogen which causes lush growth but few flowers.

Plant iris rhizomes horizontally—the tops of the rhizomes should be just under the level of the soil surface. If planting them in a row, space the rhizomes 8-12 inches apart; the rhizomes should all face the same direction resulting in a uniformly expanding row of plants. If clumps are desired, plant the rhizomes in a circle (3 or 4 per circle) with the root ends toward the center and the growth ends facing outward. This allows growth for several years before division of the clumps is necessary.

Plants require water during active growth and blooming periods—water deeply about once a week. Unless the weather is very hot, watering is not necessary at other times of the year for established plants. A light feeding of a balanced plant food is desirable each year in early spring.

Iris bloom lightly the first year after planting, then more heavily each year until by the fourth year the amount of bloom has decreased. Dig the iris clumps every 3 to 4 years and wash off the dirt with a heavy spray from the hose. Separate the plump, healthy rhizomes with a sharp knife discarding any that are old, shrivelled or mushy (rotted). Cut off the leaves to about 6 inches to reduce wilting. Leave the iris outside for 2 or 3 days to allow the air to "heal" the cuts, and then replant.

With a minimal amount of care, bearded iris will return a maximum amount of springtime pleasure.

\*Carole Cox is a student in the current Master Gardener class—a "soon-to-be" Master Gardener!

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## **International Master Gardener Conference and Trade Show**

**August 13 - 15  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Tours, classes, clinics, trade show exhibit. Contact: Debbie Reid, Bexar Co. Extension Office, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, 1143 Coliseum Road, San Antonio, Texas (210) 228-0417**

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### **CUTTINGS 'N' CLIPPINGS**

- The word Cactus is derived from the Greek word kaktos, meaning thistle.
- Arizona has a great number of plants that cannot be found in other states.
- In Arizona, cacti are the most sought after of popular succulent plants.
- Many desert plants are in danger of extinction/reduction of populations because of illegal collecting, change of habitat, urban development, and vandalism.
- Many native plants are still essential to ensure an adequate food supply and nutritionally balanced diet for Arizona's native people.  
(Arizona Department of Agriculture)

- To minimize damage, tie tomato plants to stakes with old panty hose. By cutting the nylons into lengthwise strips, you can make several ties from a single pair.
- Use an old broomstick (minus the broom) or a dowel rod to make a straight furrow for planting seeds. Lay it down on top of prepared soil, push it in about 1/2 inch deep, then remove and plant your seeds.
- Lay strips of old jute-backed carpet or newspaper between rows of vegetables to discourage weed growth.
- Not up to keeping your birdbath clean and filled with fresh water? Fill it with soil and plant flowers in it instead.

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## THE AGENT'S CORNER

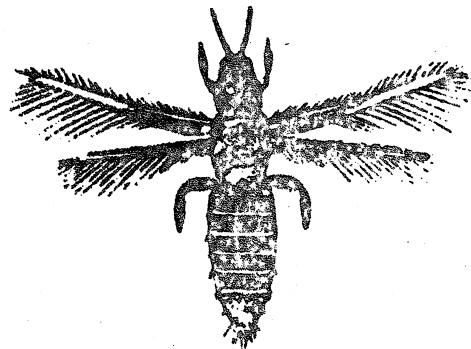
Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

**QUESTION:** When my roses bloom they have brown and black petal edges and are deformed. Also the leaves are sticky. Some of the leaves are covered with yellow spots mixed with the green color of the leaves. What is causing these problems and what can I do?

**ANSWER:** Your roses have two insect problems and a virus. The flower petals are brown or black because of a very small insect called the western flower thrip, *Frankliniella occidentalis* (Pergande). Adult thrips are about 1/8" (2 mm) in length, usually tan-to-dark brown-bodied, with four feather like wings. The young or nymphs are creamy white and wingless and develop into adults in about two weeks. The adults enter a rose bud and lay eggs inside the immature flower. The eggs hatch and the resulting nymphs and adults injure the plant by rasping the bud, flower and leaf tissue of host plants and then suck the exuding sap. This causes petal tissue to die and results in brown or black petal edges. Thrips also affect other flower, fruit and vegetable plants. These include apples and peaches which result in surface damage to the fruit. Onions, snap beans, chrysanthemums, gladiolus and iris are also damaged by other thrips species. There has been many more thrips the last couple of years because of the above normal rainfall which has provided abundant wildflower and weed crops for the thrips to live on and thus increased populations. The other insect problem is aphids. These small insects are yellow to green in color and suck sap from plants that they infect. The "sugars" which they do not metabolize are excreted and fall onto the leaves of the plant. This is the sticky, shiny substance that you see. Sometimes ants and

flies will "milk" aphids for this exudate and feed on it. So if ants are spotted on plants there is a good chance that aphids are present. The yellow marks mixed with the green color of the leaves is a virus or a complex of several viruses. The spotted yellow-green leaf color is known as mottling and is very symptomatic of viruses. These viruses generally do not kill the plant but can weaken it.

**Control:** Several insects are predators of thrips and aphids. These include ladybird beetles and their larva, minute pirate bug and lacewings. Thrips have alternate hosts of weeds and wildflowers. By controlling host plants thrip populations will be lowered. Because thrips do damage inside the rose buds a systemic insecticide should be used. There are several products on the market which control thrips and aphids systemically. Sometimes disystox, a systemic insecticide, is included in rose fertilizer. Always follow label directions when applying pesticides. To reduce the problems of viruses in plants purchase virus-indexed or certified virus free plants. Virus infected plants can be a source of infection that can be transmit to healthy plants by aphids or other insects. Therefore, control the aphids and other insects vectors to control the spread of virus diseases.



Thrip

Source: *Insect Pests of Farm, Garden and Orchard*. 7th Ed. R. H. Davidson and W. F. Lyon. pp. 305-6, 311-12.

## **WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?®** by T.J. Martin

### **PREPARATION FOR SPRING**

Just like the children at Christmas time, now is the time of year that area gardeners like to lay snug in their beds, with visions of goodies dancing in their heads. But unlike the kids, our visions are not of sugarplums, but of mail order gardening catalogs, seed packets, bare root trees, veggie transplants, etc...

In gardening, as in many of life's endeavors, one of the secrets of success is **PREVENTION**. Never underestimate the powers of hard work, timing, fertile soil, viable seeds, luck, etc., but a little forethought and a few preventive measures early in the season can make a **BIG** difference in how much work and hassle is involved during the main growing season. Here is a reminder of some of the preventive measures that you can take now to help keep **YOUR** garden's supply of undesirable creepy crawlies to a minimum.

**TILL THE SOIL** - Try to dig down at least 6-12 inches and turn the soil over well. This will expose many overwintering insects to the cold weather and drying winds as well as make them accessible to birds, spiders, lizards, and other natural predators. You can also hand pick any pupae, egg cases, etc. that you find while digging.

**USE ROW COVERS** - Try covering your early seedlings with agricultural fleece to keep pests away. If the cabbageworm butterfly cannot get to your plants to lay the eggs, then there should not be any of the caterpillars munching on your leaves later on. Be sure to anchor the edges well and cover them with a thick layer of soil to keep the crawling pests out also. One note of caution: some brands of fleece hold in heat as well as they keep out the bugs. In this area, that could mean cooked veggies right there in your garden patch. Keep an eye on the temperature and vent the covers on warm days. Make extra sure that your crop is well watered to help prevent moisture stress. On the plus side; this very heat retention capability will help protect your plants in the event of a borderline cold snap.

**WASH YOUR TREES** - Using an insecticidal soap (or just plain Ivory soap and water) scrub down the bark of your trees using a stiff brush. This will dislodge many overwintering pests that are hiding in the bark crevices. You can spread a light colored cloth on the ground around the tree and the insects should be readily visible when they drop on it. Some folks just let the critters lay where they fall and hope that they will die of exposure or be preyed upon. Personally, I would rather get rid of them myself once and for all. Using a hard spray of plain water will often work to dislodge pests, too.

**USE A DORMANT OIL** - This extra fine oil is sprayed on the bark and limbs of trees to smother any overwintering pests that may be in residence. Make sure that you don't get any on developing buds or emerging leaves as this may cause them to drop off. There are a couple of agricultural oils that claim not to harm emerging growth, but since I have never tried them, I cannot recommend any of them. If **YOU** try one, please let me know how it worked so I can pass on the information.

**WRAP YOUR TREES** - To keep certain larvae from crawling up your trees to feed, wrap a layer of corrugated cardboard, burlap, or some other batting-type material around the trunk of the tree and secure. Either make it very tight at the top edge or add a line of sticky stuff (petroleum jelly, Tanglefoot, etc.) to catch "escapees". The crawlers will be caught in the batting and you can destroy them when you check the batting. This method can also work in the



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fall when critters are crawling up to overwintering spots.

**SET YOUR TRAPS** - It's time to purchase your pheromone or baited traps in anticipation of pests' arrival (Codling Moth, etc.). At the proper time, hang these traps in your trees to attract and catch the first arrivals. You can use these to decrease the critter population by catching as many as possible, or they may be used as early warning systems to alert you as to the proper times for spraying properly selected insecticides.

**PLAN FOR COMPANIONSHIP** - Many garden plant varieties reportedly work together by either enhancing each other's growth or by repelling pests that commonly affect the other. Onions, garlic, and peppers are favorites in this game. Other combinations include tomatoes and basil, corn and beans, and mint and cabbage. Many of the strong herbs and spices can be used in this manner.

**ENCOURAGE NATURAL PREDATORS** - Include in your plans the ordering of ladybugs, lacewings, and others if you plan on supplementing local populations. Plant flowering plants to provide food and shelter for natural helpers and the presence of a birdbath will generally encourage our feathered friends to "stop by and have dinner" on your garden pests.

Other items to consider during your planning stage include rotation of crops, mulching, planting of resistant, tolerant and adapted varieties, proper timing, and required watering and feeding schedules. There is too much to cover in this one article, but the Cooperative Extension Service has a wealth of information available at either the Willcox or Sierra Vista offices. I suggest a copy of the paper *Ecologically Sane Pest Control*, one of my previously published *What's Bugging You* columns on your particular problem pest or one of the other available handouts. Just call (458-1104 or 458-UASV in Sierra Vista or 384-3594 in Willcox) or stop by the office and we should be able to provide you with just the information you require.

**HAPPY GARDENING!**