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the Cochise County Master Gardener

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1, No. 19

SEPTEMBER 1990

WHAT TO DO ----- WHAT TO DO ----- WHAT TO DO ----- SEPTEMBER

Jackie Dillon-Fast
Staff Writer

DON'T STOP NOW: There is a high mortality rate among spring-planted plants in September. It isn't that spring is a bad season in which to plant in the desert or that our fall weather is hard on plants. The problem actually relates to our wonderful rainy season. The rains of July and August meant we could relax our water vigilance a little. Now that the drier months of September and October are here and the desert is experiencing its final temperature surge before winter arrives, plants that have been in the ground less than a year are prone to drought-stress. All plants, EVEN DESERT OR LOW-WATER USE PLANTS, need extra water during the first year. Not watching for drought stress during the first months of fall is a mistake that gardeners new to the desert often make, and the reason that spring plantings sometimes fail during those months. This includes trees and shrubs that are less than a year in the ground. By the end of their first year, most plants will have established healthy root systems and need a lot less water, especially if they are drought-tolerant varieties. Neglecting young plants during the early fall can result in the loss of the plants you so carefully protected through the hot summer.

YOU CAN ALWAYS PLANT SOMETHING: You can still plant lettuce, radishes, and spinach for harvesting before the first frost.

START SHOPPING FOR BULBS: Bulb planting will be at its peak in early October and you want to be ready. Order bulbs from catalogs and watch for their arrival in area nurseries. If you're planting a bulb bed for the first time, turn over the soil, removing any rocks and breaking up all chunks, and check the soil drainage, adding sand or mulch as needed. Pull up any weeds that sprout in your new planting bed. Bulbs planted in fall will bloom early spring and include crocus, hyacinth, iris, and daffodil. By the way, gophers are reported to detest daffodil bulbs. Keep bulbs cool and dry until you're ready to plant. (The bulletin *Bulbs For Southern Arizona* is available at the Cooperative Extension Office in Sierra Vista.)

2500 Fry Blvd * Sierra Vista, AZ 85635 * 458-1104

**GARDENING FOR GLORY:
THE 1990 COCHISE COUNTY FAIR**

Jackie Dillon-Fast
Staff Writer

Gardeners are by nature a modest lot - we usually don't grow for fame and fortune. Still, we have worked hard this year, balancing between drought and flood, and we've earned that all too rare pat-on-the-back. Our handiwork deserves to stand with the best of its kind, a tribute to the powers of soil, water, and sunlight, and to the skill and persistence of gardeners in Cochise County.

The fair takes place at the Cochise County Fairgrounds in Douglas. This year's fair begins with judging on Thursday, September 20, and exhibits and events are scheduled through Sunday, September 23. The only requirement for entries is that they were produced or raised during the current year in Cochise County. The exception are entries in the minerals, hobbies, and fine arts departments.

There are literally thousands of categories under the nineteen major departments: field crops, apiary, fruits, foods, domestic arts, livestock, poultry, fine arts, photography, hobbies, minerals and archaeology, home-makers, and 4H clubs. There is even a miscellaneous unclassified department for those entries that don't fit a predefined category.

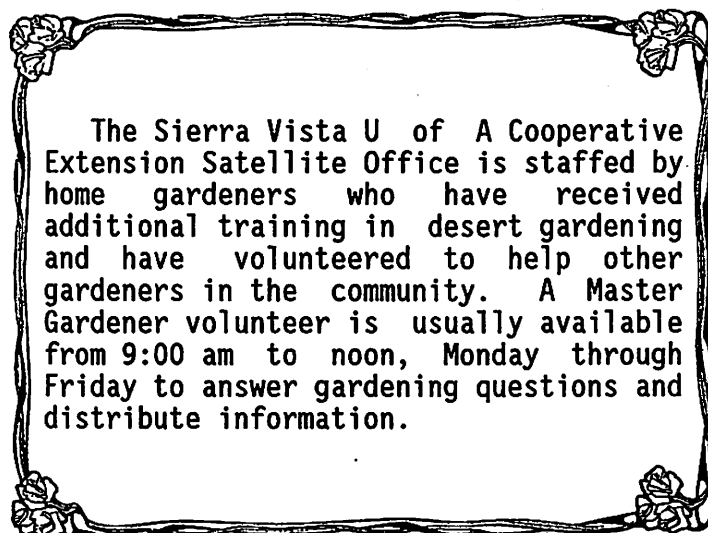
Except for entries in the poultry department, there are no entry fees and ribbons or small cash awards are presented to the winners in each category. In many of the departments, entries are accepted up until the morning of judging, September 20.

Fair books listing all of the categories, deadlines, and other information are available at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office as well as other locations around the county.

FARM FRESH PRODUCE

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Staff Writer

More than two dozen farms in the Sulphur Springs Valley are selling fresh produce directly to the public. Some even allow you in the fields to pick it yourself. A brochure listing these farms has been prepared by the Southeastern Arizona Food and Fiber Council. Stop by the U of A's Cooperative Extension office in Sierra Vista Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to noon and pick up a free copy. A copy may also be obtained by sending a SAS envelope to the Willcox Chamber of Commerce, 1500 North Circle I Road, Willcox, AZ 85643.



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Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista Extension Office no later than September 21.

CUTTINGS 'N' CLIPPINGS

* The U.S. is the world's largest producer of flowers and plants. (It is also one of the world's largest importers.) The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that the sale of flowers and plants in the U.S. has increased by 10% annually since 1982, making horticulture one of the fastest growing sectors of U.S. agriculture.

* Something to think about: "I don't think individuals see their [environmental] responsibilities clearly....we still fertilize our lawns, pour paint down the drain - those kinds of things. We don't assume enough responsibility as buyers to favor the marketers who are socially responsible. We have a lot of power. We haven't used it. Yet. I mean, how many of us go into a fast-food chain and say, 'Just put my burger on a paper napkin, please?'" (Victoria Tschinkel, former Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation)

* There is some concern over the accumulation of nitrate in greenhouse grown leafy vegetables. The New Alchemy Institute, based in Massachusetts, recently determined that winter greenhouse growing conditions - low-light, low-temperature, and excessive nitrogen fertilizings - lead to a higher than normal concentration of nitrates in lettuce, spinach, and Chinese cabbage. Health risks from excessive nitrates are still being determined, though it is known that the body converts nitrate into highly carcinogenic nitrosamines. The Institute is focusing its research efforts on developing new ways of growing winter greenhouse leafy vegetables without the worry over high nitrate levels.

* Here's one small businessman who is making his own contribution to the nationwide Global ReLeaf effort. A senior citizen from Oregon, Fred Ibister gives away a tree seedling with every bird feeder and planter he makes.



Oenothera rydbergii House

"100 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS"

Melissa Buckley
Guest Writer

Master Gardeners filed 238 *Plant Problem Report* forms during the first six months of 1990. Our clients were predominantly women - 43% of those identified on the forms (and probably about 57% of all clients). A majority are from Sierra Vista - 57% of those who gave addresses or telephone numbers (and probably about 65% of all clients). Four calls came from outside Cochise County.

The busiest month was March, when Master Gardeners filed 56 *Plant Problem Report* forms, followed by June with 49. Mondays (former Extension Agent Deborah Young's day in the office) were the busiest days, averaging 12 *Plant Problem Reports* each week.

By far the most questions we answered were about trees - 107 in all, including 39 about fruit trees. Other questions were 31 about vegetables, 30 about shrubs/landscape, 14 about lawns/ground covers, 10 about flowers, 22 about insects, 15 about soil including fertilizing, composting, and mulching, and a few miscellaneous questions.

**JUDGES - IN - TRAINING:
THE 1990 COCHISE COUNTY FAIR**

Jackie Dillon-Fast
Staff Writer

Ever wonder why one squash is better than the next? Why one jar of peach preserves gets a blue ribbon and it's neighbor a red one? Ever wonder where all these fair judges come from? Well, this year you may have the chance to find out.

The Cochise County Fair Association is instituting a judges-in-training program at this year's county fair. Interested gardeners will be paired with fair judges in floriculture, vegetables, fruits, and field crops at the Thursday, September 20 judging. Each trainee will be given a scoring sheet similar to the judges, and asked to rate entries on various points, selecting first, second, and third places.

Although trainees' scoring will not affect the awarding of fair premiums, at the end of the judging you can compare your scoring with that of the official judge. This is a marvelous opportunity to learn how judging is done at county fairs across the country, and to learn if you would enjoy volunteering as a fair judge next year. Trainees will be expected to be present at the fairgrounds in Douglas at 9:00 am and to remain for the 1 to 3 hours of judging.

Interested? Call the Cochise County Cooperative Extension Office in Sierra Vista (458-1104) to reserve a spot along side an official fair judge.

FUTURE WATER LIFESTYLE

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Staff Writer

Since September 1985, Arizona's first water conservation home, Casa del Agua ("House of Water") has showcased water-conservation ideas. The five major features are indoor conservation, outdoor conservation, solar greenhouse, rainwater harvesting, and graywater recycling. Guided tours of the house are given every Sunday from noon to 4:00 pm by the residents of the home. The Casa del Agua is located at 4366 N. Stanley Place (corner of Wetmore and Stanley near Tucson Mall) in Tucson, Arizona. Stop by for a tour (it's free), and perhaps you will come away with some ideas to help you in your gardening/conservation.



"50 SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SAVE THE EARTH"

Earthworks Press has published a 96 page book titled *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*. It tells you everything you need to know about what to buy and what not to buy; what to save, how to save it; and why it is important to know all of the above. Abigail Van Buren says, "This book should be required reading for everyone entering the 21st century." This book, as well as similar ones, should be available in your favorite book store.

WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?

by T.J. Martin

Big Green Beetles In Your Home Garden And Orchard

COMMON NAME: Green June Beetle, Fig Beetle, Green Fruit Beetle, Peach Beetle.

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Continis texana*

DESCRIPTION: Adult - a very large (over one inch in length and about half that in width), robust-looking beetle; usually dark green in color (but sometimes copperish) with bronze-colored outside margins on the wing covers. They fly during the day and make a very loud "whirring" noise when doing so.

Pupae - The pupae are about one inch in length and will be found in the spring burrowed deep into the soil that the larvae lived in.

Larvae - These large white grubs can grow up to two inches in length and be the diameter of an adult's little finger. They live deep in soil that is rich in organic materials.

Eggs - the eggs are gray, oval or round, and are laid in piles of organic matter such as manure, compost, or mulch.

LIFE CYCLE: The larvae pupate in the spring and the new adults emerge and come to the surface in early or mid-summer. The adults fly around, feeding, and laying eggs throughout the summer and then die. The eggs hatch and the larvae feed on available organic matter and grow until the cold weather hits. The beetles overwinter as larvae and there is only one generation per year.

PLANTS USUALLY AFFECTED: Peaches, grapes, figs, apricots, apples, nectarines, pears, berries, muskmelons, corn, tomatoes, cactus fruit, and even roses.

TIME OF YEAR: The adults usually show up about June, often seeming to come with the summer rains. Damage from the adults will show up throughout the summer, becoming more noticeable as fruit and vegetables start to ripen. The larvae will of course be feeding underground throughout the summer and fall.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Look (and listen!) for the adults. They will be very visible if they are flying in the area. Look at the contents of your compost pile as you turn it or put it into your planting beds. The large white larvae and smaller pupae will be easy to spot and remove. Both adults and larvae will often come to the surface of the soil after a heavy rain or in a flooded area. You can sometimes spot the adults as they start to tunnel into the soil or compost to lay their eggs and they can leave behind a hole about one inch in diameter in clay soils.

PROBLEMS AND DAMAGE: The adults will often gather in masses on ripe fruit or veggies, eating chunks of it and spoiling what is left. They also feed on stems and leaves. The larvae are generally not a problem; but, if they are in your planting beds, they can disturb roots by their tunneling and feeding.

CULTURAL CONTROLS: Clear away any piles of manure, compost, or mulch near the garden or orchard; destroy any larvae or feed them to the chickens. Consider putting your compost or mulch down in the late fall or winter when the larvae

will still be present, rather than waiting until the spring when they might pupate before you get to them. And, be sure to screen your compost carefully before using it. Plant varieties that ripen before the emergence of the adults in June. Clean up any fallen or damaged fruit; the odor can draw the beetles from far away and they can attack undamaged fruit as well while they are there.

COMPANION PLANTING, REPELLENTS, AND TRAP PLANTS: Unknown.

MECHANICAL CONTROLS, BARRIERS, AND TRAPS: Practice your backhand or slam and use a tennis or racquetball racquet to swat flying adults right out of the air and then step on them! Put a sheet under the tree or vegetable foliage and shake to dislodge the pest; then quickly step on them, making sure that they are indeed dead and not just stunned. These critters are exceedingly tough to kill. You can try covering your fruit, trees, and veggies with paper bags, agricultural fleece or a fine netting; but, given enough time, these beetles will simply chew right through it. Use a portable wet/dry vacuum on low power to suck the beetles off, then quickly (before they eat their way out of the bag) kill them. Be careful of fragile foliage and stay away from water. You can make a trap by using a funnel over a jar containing overripe fruit. Place this well away from your other crops and check daily. The beetles should be able to get into the jar using the large part of the funnel, but not be able to find their way out of the small hole from the other end.

NATURAL CONTROLS: If they can find them, chickens, ducks, geese, and all sorts of other birds would love to help you get rid of the larvae. But most of the time you will have to bring them to the surface for them as the larvae tend to bury themselves much too deeply for the birds to find for themselves. Skunks, coyotes, snakes, toads, ground squirrels, mice, etc...may have better luck but will still appreciate you tilling up the ground to bring everything closer to the surface.

BIOLOGICAL INSECTICIDES: Rotenone and possibly Ryania.

CHEMICAL CONTROLS: Call your County Extension Agent or her staff for current recommendations. Check at your favorite garden supply store or nursery to see what they have available. Remember to check the label to make sure that the Green Fruit Beetle is a listed target pest and FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS EXACTLY! When it comes to pesticides, more is NOT better!! Wear protective clothing, watch out for non-target insects, plants, pets, children, and other living things. Wash your skin and clothing after application and take care not to get the substance into your eyes, mouth, or breathing passages.

