

Backyards & Beyond

Spring 2011

RURAL LIVING IN ARIZONA

Volume 5, Number 1



Featured Plant

Common Name: Desert hackberry
Scientific Name: *Celtis pallida* Torr.



Mitchel McClaran, Professor, School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona

Desert hackberry, also known as spiny hackberry and granjeno, is common, but not particularly abundant at elevations from 2200-4000 ft. in southwestern Arizona. Adults are often wider (6-10 ft) than tall (4-8 ft), and each plant has a dense group of stems growing out of the soil (< 3 per ft²). These dense stems and spiny branches create "impenetrable thickets" where small mammals and reptiles establish homes. It is often found on sandy to loamy soil, and is conspicuous in and near ephemeral washes. The fruit is eaten by many bird, reptile and mammals species; livestock rarely consume the leaves

or young stems; and the species is well-suited as a hedge to screen visibility in residential settings.

The small (1/16 inch) flowers appear in spring, are small greenish-white in color, and do not have true petals. Typically, male and female flowers appear separately on the same plant (monoecious), but flowers with both sexual organs will occur. Fruits are yellow-orange (1/4 inch), are fleshy but with a large seed, and I think they taste like cantaloupe (see upper insert).

Leaves (1-2 inches long, 0.5-1 inch wide) have three prominent veins small teeth along the margins, and are arranged alternately along branches (see upper insert). The plant is nearly leafless (deciduous) in winter and new leaves appear in spring. Spines appear at branches nodes where leaves emerge (see lower insert). Branches express a gentle zigzag pattern, because the growth changes direction ever so slightly at each node, straying left and then right to the end of the branch (see upper insert).

The name *Celtis* is Greek for tree bearing sweet fruit and was applied by the famous Dutch botanist Carl Linnaeus to the European hackberry in the 18th Century. The name *pallida* was applied to this particular species by the Harvard botanist John Torrey in 1859 probably because the young stems are pale green. Torrey based his determination on specimens collected by the eccentric Charles Wright in 1851 somewhere in west Texas (probably the Trans Pecos country) when he served under Major William Emory during the survey of the new international boundary with Mexico.

Be aware that some have proposed taxonomic changes from the *pallida* to *ehrenbergiana* species name, and from the Ulmaceae to Cannabaceae family. Given this flux, it is best to report the authority along with the genus and species, *Celtis pallida* Torr.; where the use of Torr. tells the world that you are following the designation made by Torrey (the authority for that nomenclature).

Based on repeat photography from the Santa Rita Experimental Range (<http://ag.arizona.edu/SRER/photos.html>); particularly photo stations 332, 333, and 334) suggest that desert hackberry plants can live much longer than 100 years. Those old plants that we see today were the rare shrubs in open grassland, but now they are surrounded by mesquite, acacia, and cactus neighbors. Oh, the stories they could tell about how the neighborhood has changed.

Featured Bird

Common Name: Black-throated Sparrow
Scientific Name: *Amphispiza bilineata*



Dan L. Fischer – Author of *Early Southwest Ornithologists, 1528-1900*, University of Arizona Press

The striking Black-throated Sparrow can be described as mostly achromatic with colors ranging from black through shades of gray to white. The distinctive field marks of this attractive bird are the white facial strips and jet-black throat, and although seldom seen, the white tips of the outer tail feathers. In 1850, at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, John Cassin (1813-1869) noted while officially describing the specimen, that the sparrow was one of the "most remarkable finches yet discovered in America."

Black-throated Sparrows are distributed through most of the Southwest desert regions. In Arizona they are the most widespread nesting sparrow. They represent the extreme in their adaptation to arid desert conditions. Feeding mostly on seeds,

they do not require drinking water, yet are exposed to intense heat with little cover in the often sparse bushy areas they reside. In summer they supplement their diet with insects. Although their moisture intake is limited, they will drink water when it is available.

In winter Black-throated Sparrows assemble in small loose flocks along with other ground dwelling and winter visitant species. By late February they begin their lovely soft tinkling song as they pair for the nesting season. Depending on food availability, they may have as many as three or four broods with the first beginning in March and lasting through mid-August. The nest is usually located in a dense bush very close to the ground. Three or four light bluish-white eggs are laid in a cup composed of small twigs and coarse grasses lined with much softer materials such as finer grass, plant down and fur. Incubation lasts for about twelve days and the young leave the nest in another ten days.

The trials and tribulations leading to the discovery of the handsome Black-throated Sparrow were indeed harrowing. It was accomplished by John Woodhouse Audubon (1812-1862), the youngest son of the celebrated John James Audubon (1785-1851), while on his almost disastrous adventure westward. The younger Audubon, like his father, was an artist interested in natural history and the spirit of adventure. In 1849, he joined with a privately financed New York company seeking speedy wealth and fortune in the mountains of central California. In March they disembarked from a ship near the mouth of the Rio Grande and then sailed on a steamer upstream to a point near Camp Ringgold, opposite Rio Grande City. Almost immediately after their arrival, while preparing for their long land trip into Mexico, most of the men including Audubon came down with the dreaded cholera. Their troubles continued in rapid succession when ten men died, twenty turned back, their leader deserted and the remaining were robbed. After recovering two months later, Audubon was appointed their leader as they began the journey west through northern Mexico, southwestern Arizona and into California. Of the nearly 100 men starting their long journey, only thirty-eight reached the gold fields. Audubon's misfortune continued upon returning to New York when he learned that most of his precious paintings and sketches went down with a following ship after leaving San Francisco.

John Cassin was alluding to the well-defined head stripes when applying the specific Latin name of *bilineata*, "two-lined," to the Black-throated Sparrow.

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Steven Love

Steven Rabin



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Spring 2011

Living According to Our Values: Striking a Balance

Goals

Dreams

Purpose

Erik Glenn, Area Extension Agent, Community Resource Development,
University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

We all possess a set of values that define who we are and how we'd like to live our lives. However, for many of us, there is a real disconnect between our values and our actions. Here are a few pieces of information to think about:

- Over the past thirty years, there has been a 33% decrease in families who regularly have dinner together.¹
- The average American over the age of 15 devotes 2.8 hours a day to watching television.²
- About 40 percent of American families spend more than they earn each year.³ However, a 2006 *American Values, Issues and Media*TM survey found that--by a considerable margin--Americans value leisure time more than wealth or a luxurious lifestyle.⁴

Why do we as a society have such a difficult time living according to our values? There are many reasons, but our actions can often be explained by three issues:

1. **Not Enough Time:** Most of us feel that we don't have enough time to accomplish all of the things we want to do. In reality, this just means that we try to do too much in our daily lives.
2. **Too Much "Stuff":** The accumulation of too many physical possessions is another phenomenon that prevents us from living according to our values.
3. **Feeling Disconnected:** More and more of us are losing touch with other people, as well as with the natural and spiritual world.

Not Enough Time

At one time or another, who hasn't experienced anxiousness, stress, or even depression because it seems impossible to get everything done? There's just not enough time in the day, or so it appears. In reality, we know that every one of us living today, as well as each one of our ancestors, has had the same amount of time to work with: 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year. The reasons we're stressed and unsatisfied are that we try to stuff too many activities into the time we have, and that we often spend our time on things that are unnecessary, unproductive or unhealthy. Even our leisure

time can very easily be taken up by mindless activities rather than those activities we really love. Although there are a few things in life that we have to do to support ourselves and our families, in more areas than not we truly do have a choice about how we spend our time.

By the same token, we can choose how we spend and save money, as well as how our time and our money relate. For example, although we may not always have control over the number of hours each week we spend earning an income (although even here there is usually some flexibility), we can decide how much money we spend on our leisure-time activities. Here are a few other examples of choices we all can make:

- Which is more valuable to me: the free time I have now or the free time I'll have in the future (for example, in retirement)?
- How much do I spend on work-related expenses, like transportation costs, lunches, work clothes, child care, etc.?
- Knowing how many hours of work (after taxes and work-related expenses) it takes me to pay for an item, should I make that purchase?

Too Much "Stuff"

Our lives can also feel out of balance when we accumulate more and more possessions. We often purchase things that we don't truly need, and we may purchase them on credit. We do this for a variety of reasons: pervasive advertising; a desire to keep up with the neighbors by buying the latest and greatest products; or as a way to make ourselves feel better. We may even buy gifts for others because we feel we have no other way to connect with them.

Many of us also don't get rid of possessions that are no longer useful or valuable. As a result, we accumulate more and more items in our home and on our property. Although we should strive whenever possible to reuse and repair items that we already have rather than buying new things, we should also make sure that we don't just keep things for the wrong reasons.

Buying and saving things that don't provide us value or utility can put a strain on our wallets and cause us unneeded stress. Sometimes even small reductions in the amount of "stuff" we have can help us to focus on the things that are really important to us.

¹ Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2009).

³ U.S. Federal Reserve System. (2009).

⁴ Decision Analyst. (2006). *American Values, Issues and Media*TM survey.

Feeling Disconnected

With the time crunch we face and the growing number of possessions we accumulate, more and more of us are losing touch with the people around us. Whether it's our family, friends, church, clubs or other social networks, personal connections are another vital piece of a balanced life.

Some of us have limited contact with the outdoors, as well. We may work inside, commute long distances or spend a great deal of time watching television, using a computer or talking on the phone. As rural residents, we have a better opportunity than many other Americans to be outside and be connected to food, water, fresh air and other natural resources.

Making Meaningful Changes

Many things may be keeping you from living the way you want to live. So, what can you do about it? First, as all of us have different things that drive us, it's very important that you understand your own personal values and beliefs and the reasons you've developed them. Think about what truly matters to you in your life, and write those things down. Focus on the activities, things, places and people that bring you joy, but also think about activities you used to love to do but don't anymore, or things you've never done but would like to try.

Next, focus on the reasons why those things aren't as big a part of your life as you'd like them to be. Track the way you spend your time and money; how would you manage both of these resources differently? Think about all of your possessions; which ones are truly important to you and why do you have so many things that aren't important? Throughout your life, you've made a variety of connections; have you maintained those relationships?

Finally, make a written plan that details the changes you'd like to make in your life. Set priorities. Write down specific things that you want to do differently, and think both about the short-term (this week) and the long-term (over the next year). Remember, even small changes can bring about a huge improvement in your health, financial position and overall well-being.

Those of us in the modern world face a challenge. We want to take advantage of all of the new choices that are out there (activities, technology, media, other products) without giving up the things that we know, deep down, are most important: our friends, family and community; the outdoors; our spirituality; and our favorite activities. We can find balance in our lives if we remember our values and try to apply them every day.

Acknowledgments

Many of the ideas in this article were originally presented in *Living Sustainably: It's Your Choice*, a 2008 publication by the National Network of Sustainable Living Education and Oregon State University Extension.

Additional Resources

- *Are You Unconsciously Wasting Hours of Your Life?* <http://www.dumblittleman.com/2010/04/are-you-unconsciously-wasting-hours-of.html>
- *Controlling Spending.* http://www.extension.org/pages/Controlling_Spending
- De Graaf, J., et. al. (2005). *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. ISBN 1-5767-199-6.

- *Doing Things Together as a Family for Less.* http://www.extension.org/pages/Doing_Things_Together_as_a_Family_for_Less
- Domingues, J. and V. Robin. (1999). *Your Money or Your Life.* New York: Penguin. ISBN 0-670-84331-8.
- *eXtension Budget Calculator.* http://www.extension.org/share/FSA/budget_calculator.swf
- *Finding Frugality.* <http://www.findingfrugality.com>
- *How Much is Your Time Worth?* http://moneycentral.msn.com/personal-finance/calculators/Know_The_Value_Of_Your_Time_Calculator/home.aspx
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- *The Simple Living Network.* <http://www.simpleliving.net>
- *Small Steps to Health and Wealth.* <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw>
- *The Sustainable Living Project.* <http://www.cof.orst.edu/cof/extended/sustain>
- *What Is More Important, Time or Money?* <http://www.thebestmoneyblog.com/what-is-more-important-time-or-money>
- *When Prices Rise: Living on Your Income.* http://www.extension.org/pages/When_Prices_Rise:_Living_on_Your_Income





Jasmina

The Value in Local Foods

Gregory J. Butler, Master's Candidate in Ecology and Management of Rangelands, School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona

Eating locally grown foods is beneficial in many ways. It supports local businesses, keeping money in the community, and minimizes fossil fuels used in transportation and packaging. Eating locally can be a way to connect with food growers and consumers within your community. In Tucson, there are several organizations that provide services to market and distribute such commodities including: Native Seeds/SEARCH, Tucson Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Desert Harvesters and Iskashitaa Refugee Harvesting Network. These established organizations illustrate the value of local food in the Tucson community.

Native Seeds/SEARCH

Producing food within a community begins with the right seeds. For thousands of years, agriculturists have selected and saved seeds, adapting them to particular environments, seasons, and climates. In the Sonoran Desert, Native Americans like the Tohono O'odham have contributed to this tradition. However environmental destruction, cultural change and land transfers have led to the loss of many of these traditional seeds. Native Seeds/SEARCH conserves, distributes, and documents over 350 varieties of agricultural crop seeds and their wild relatives, preserving their cultural heritage of the American Southwest and northwest Mexico. The inspiration for Native Seeds/SEARCH began in 1976 after Gary Paul Nabhan published an article in *Organic Gardening*. The article received a large positive response from readers and interested Native Americans. The Tohono O'odham wished to grow traditional crops, but the necessary seed stocks were missing. In fact, they were missing the seed supply for 30 to 40% of the crops they wanted and they were experiencing health problems such as diabetes without these disease-preventing crop foods in their diets. In order to preserve these essential crops and provide a valuable link with the cultural exchange among Native Americans, Native Seeds/SEARCH became a key regional seed bank in 1983 and a leader in the heirloom seed movement.

Tucson Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Tucson Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) was started in 2004 as a direct connection between regional producers and local consumers. Tucson CSA was founded by Philippe Waterinckx while he was a graduate student at the University of Arizona. Driven by the desire for a steady source of locally grown, organic produce, Philippe began contacting farmers in southern Arizona. He searched for a farm that practiced good land management without the use of pesticide practices as well as the capacity to deliver produce to its members every week. After speaking with Farmer Frank Martin, owner of Crooked Sky Farms in Phoenix, he knew he found the right farm. Frank is a skilled farmer, devoted to practicing sustainable land stewardship, fair wages and treatment of his workers, and to protect the preservation of heirloom varieties. In addition to this, he had already been supplying produce to two CSA's in Phoenix and Flagstaff. Frank requested that Philippe begin his CSA with a minimum of 15 members. The next week Philippe gathered 15 eager friends and Frank delivered his produce as promised. Over the next year membership grew to 50 members. In 2006, the publications of Michael Pollan's book *Omnivore's Dilemma* and Barbara Kingsolver's book *Animal, Vegetable,*

Miracle, motivated many people to seek out local food sources. Membership continued to increase significantly and today the Tucson CSA links over 500 members to area food producers.

Desert Harvesters

In another local food marketing effort, Brad Lancaster began Desert Harvesters in 2002 after being inspired by an instructor at an eco-village design workshop. He realized that there is a surplus of food available in Tucson growing on public right-of-ways (i.e. street curbs, medians, property lines) that the general public is not taking advantage of. He decided to put his plan into action by changing one neighborhood at a time, beginning first with his own. Desert Harvesters supports local food security and production by encouraging the planting of native, food-bearing shade trees in water-harvesting earthworks, and then educating the public on how to harvest and process the bounty. Brad encountered resistance at first because he was doing something new. He was able to dissolve this resistance by communicating the benefits of new ideas such as curb cuts to direct water runoff from the streets into peoples' yards to irrigate trees and show that his ideas really did work.

Iskashitaa Refugee Harvesting Network

Local food can be a means of integrating displaced refugees from other countries into a new culture. Iskashitaa Refugee Harvesting Network empowers refugees by creating opportunities to use their knowledge and skills in helping their families and the Tucson community. Barbara Eiswerth began the Refugees Harvest organization in 2003 when she became aware of the widespread food waste in and around Tucson and the global inequalities of hunger, food, and poverty. She wanted to create an awareness of the local food system by bridging communities through local exchange. She started her project by harvesting unused food from fruit-bearing trees in her neighborhood and sharing the food and knowledge with elders. Her effort has grown to a yearly harvest of 75,000 lbs. of fruit and vegetable crops from backyards and local farms. Each year the quantity of produce, the sites, the diversity of the crops harvested, and the increasing number of refugees requires more financial support and dedicated volunteers.

Empowering a Community

These organizations were started by motivated individuals who recognized opportunities in the form of the overlooked or underutilized components in their communities. Barbara Eiswerth explains that people must "broaden their mindset to value." People must think of what is important to themselves, their children, and the community they live in. Brad Lancaster adds that people with a desire for change "need to start in their own life for themselves and see if the idea works on a small level. The ultimate power of change is made in one's own life." It is within every individual's ability to change the way they live, which can extend to ones neighborhood or even further "It is important that we share values," suggests Gary Nabhan, "and build strong links to our community." Choosing to support local food producers can empower a community. With growing concerns of higher fuel costs and food shortages in the future, producing food locally might not be too bad of an idea.

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If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a scrapbook filled with photographs, mementos and trinkets is priceless. Scrapbooking is a creative outlet for young and old alike. It links us to our past, connects to our present and creates memories that last far into the future.

Scrapbooks can be created on limitless themes. Family history is always a wonderful topic for scrapbooking. A recent family vacation, school sports teams, arts and culture, community events, clubs, school years, friends or a recent birthday party are all themes that may be of interest to children. Most of all, young people need to find a topic in which they have a keen interest or have some sentimental value to put together this type of craft. Youth have a chance, through scrapbooking, to unfold a crinkled photograph, trace a lucky coin, paste a newspaper article or insert a small envelope to hold sports tickets or a concert performance program. A scrapbook, after all, provides an opportunity to bring labels, sketches, cards—all the little items that bring back memories of the past—out of the shoe box and into an album of precious memories.

In preparation to creating a scrapbook, gather the basic necessary equipment and supplies, such as: acid-free double-sided tape, scrapbooking glue, photo corners, decorative scissors, hole punches, a bone folder, pencil, a ruler, acid-free background paper, ribbon, glue dots, and labels. Building a basic tool kit for scrapbooking will save hours of frustration. Consider gathering the following items:

- **Rub-on letters and numbers:** they come in a wide variety of fonts, colors and sizes
- **Store bought scraps:** including items like old postcards, seed packets, maps, paper bags, etc.
- **Tags:** creating or adding tags helps to present a place for hand writing memories
- **Vintage to Colorful Papers:** these are background papers used as either full sheets or as oddly shaped pieces for different effects

Scrapbooking a Lifetime of Memories with Children

- **Rubber Stamps:** these are purchased in craft stores and handy to add decorative appeal
- **Grommets, Setter and Hammer:** these add flair to securing tags, picture frames and pockets
- **Brads and Jump Rings:** these fun fasteners are usually bright and colorful and come in different shapes and sizes mostly used to secure or dangle items on a page for some fun effects
- **Acid-free Double-sided Tape and Photo Corners:** used to frame in favorite pictures

Each photo album for scrapbooking projects is different. It should reflect the project and its theme. Albums can be purchased in craft stores. They can be 3-ring binders' ranging from 12" x 12" page inserts to 4" x 6" mini-scrapbooks. Select the album, and the page size, before beginning the project.

Building a theme page starts with a photo and an idea. What happens next is usually imagination at work. Begin by finding the subject and planning a theme. Think about what the lay-out might look like. The page usually comes together by deciding on the dominant item (photograph or memento), and experimenting with the placement of the surrounding materials and items until a pleasing design has been achieved. When you have all the supplies and have read the latest scrapbooking magazines it is time to put together your first page. You can follow these easy step-by-step instructions:

- **Select photographs:** best to have 3-4 photos for one page—cropping the photograph to a desired size and shape can add character to your page

- **Select color scheme:** look for common colors in the photographs that will compliment your page
- **Select page decorations:** embellishments such as stickers, die-cuts, brads, stamps, letters, numbers, tags add flair and fun to any page
- **Include journaling:** this is often the most important part of a scrapbook as journaling gives details about the events, people and places—quotes, lyrics and slogans are great additions
- **Arrange the layout:** place all items before permanently attaching the items and overlapping is great as it adds personal line and design
- **Gluing and taping:** utilizing glue, tape, spray adhesive, photo corners and glue dots

Allow children to let their creative ideas flow. Sometimes it's hard for parents to hand over control but scrapbooking is a perfect activity for this. Allow young people to create without watching over their shoulder too much. Be available to make sure that all safety issues have been satisfied. Depending upon the age of the child, you may need to be present to assist in the use of scissors, hole punches, grommets, brads and jump rings. A team effort is the best way to go to create scrapbook memories while creating more memories that will last a lifetime.

Digital scrapbooking is a wonderful option for young people to explore their creativity and unique style while utilizing their knowledge of computers. By using image editing or photo software, people are able to import their precious memories, create graphic designs and print their completed pages on stock paper or decorative scrapbook paper from their home printer. Digital software not only allows importation of photos, embellishments and graphics, but also presents ideas and additional page layout ideas for young hobbyists.

Adobe Photoshop or FotoFusion are two examples of easy to use digital software. Utilizing a digital camera with high resolution will add quality and color for beautiful pictures. Digital scrapbooking allows opportunities to create scrapbooking pages which can be created, saved and shared electronically with family and friends. Another advantage of digital scrapbooking is cost. Utilizing software is less expensive than purchasing all of the equipment and supplies mentioned above. There are definitely advantages of each style of scrapbooking and personal taste and design will dictate which style is best for each person.

As the child is scrapbooking he/she might need additional ideas. Suggest writing in the dates of the events and milestones, weather and news headlines, thoughts and feelings about the day, comments from friends and family members, facial expressions, poetry captions or quotes that summarize the event, meals or special foods eaten, sights seen, funny

situations that happened on a vacation or perhaps details of being together as a family or group of friends.

Creating a scrapbook is truly a work of art. Many crafters take their scrapbooking very seriously and spend hours upon hours making sure they include everything that made that moment in time so special. When scrapbooking with children, remember that they are interested because they have their own story to tell. Allow them to have access to colorful papers and accessories to embellish their projects. It is important to have fun, be creative, and reminisce about the wonderful times they have experienced. Happy scrapbooking!

Resources:

Bradley, H. (2007) *Scrapbooking: A Book and CD with Templates and Clip Art to Make your own Memories*. Sellers Publishing, Inc.

www.KodakGallery.com/SmartFit-Books/

www.Smilebox.com

www.SpottedCanary.com

<http://www.creativescrapbookmemories.com/images/baby-scrapbook-clipart-41.gif>





Dave William

Stocking Small Pastures Using AUM's – Part 2

George Ruyle, Ph.D., Rangeland Management Extension Specialist, School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona

In the Summer 2010 issue of *Backyards and Beyond* we defined an animal unit month (AUM) as the amount of forage required by an animal unit (AU) for one month. The forage demand by the grazing animals is half of what you need to know in order to determine the grazing capacity and proper stocking rate for your land. Grazing capacity or stocking capacity are terms synonymous with carrying capacity, which is defined by the average number of livestock and/or wildlife that may be sustained on a management unit compatible with management objectives for the unit. The proper stocking rate will depend on forage demand by the grazing animals compared to forage productivity of the pasture. Stocking rate is the number of animal units, multiplied by the number of months divided by the area being grazed. Stocking rates can be expressed several ways. On Arizona rangelands it is not uncommon to describe stocking rates as animal units per section per year. On smaller units of land or pastures in complex grazing management scenarios, units such as animal days per acre (ADA) may be used.

So how do you determine the grazing capacity and appropriate stocking rate for an area of land? There are two basic approaches to estimating grazing capacity, the forage inventory approach and the stock and monitor approach. Most rangelands should be managed by the "stock and monitor" approach. Under this scenario, range managers measure the impact of actual stocking levels over time on utilization and utilization patterns, vegetation composition, plant vigor, soil cover, animal condition and other factors to see if changes in stocking and/or management are needed.

On smaller parcels of land, especially homogeneous pastures associated with irrigated production systems, a forage inventory approach may provide land owners an initial estimate of grazing capacity or a method to compare the relative capacity among small pastures. This concept requires a determination of the amount of forage production on a defined area. Normally these estimates are done during the peak in forage production, known as peak standing crop. On

native rangeland in southern Arizona this is usually sometime in mid-September and mid to late summer on most irrigated pastures.

There are many methods to estimate peak standing crop, but most require plant harvest through clipping, drying and weighing vegetation. This can be done various ways by placing a quadrat frame at various locations throughout the pasture and then clipping all plant material that occurs within the sample frame. The clipped forage is then bagged, dried and weighed. Drying is usually done in special drying ovens but for general purposes, air dried samples, especially those dried in the hot Arizona sun will suffice. Don't forget to tare the bag (determine bag weight) when calculating forage sample weights. A standard quadrat frame (used to delineate the area) size is 0.96 or 9.6 ft² because sample weights are easily converted to pounds per acre by multiplying grams times 100 or 10 converts to pounds per acre. Typically 10 or more randomly placed quadrat frames should be clipped, bagged, dried and weighed. The average value of these samples can then be used to compare to forage demand by your grazing animals. The number of quadrats that should be clipped to provide an adequate sample depends upon how homogeneous and dense the forage conditions are in the pasture. However there will be variability associated with any estimate of forage production so use caution when applying results to stocking levels and closely monitor forage disappearance over time.

Because of the variability associated with estimating forage production and the seasonal shifts in diet and habitat selection, this approach is not generally useful as a ranch management approach to setting stocking. Grazing capacity estimates based upon one-point-in-time rangeland inventories do not produce results of sufficient accuracy to be the sole basis for adjusting time of grazing or stocking rates on specific grazing units. Grazing capacity should instead be based on impacts of historical and current stocking rates, grazing management, and weather. Adjustments in stocking levels should be made through monitoring over time and in response to yearly and seasonal weather.

Invasive Plants on Small Acreage Properties in Arizona

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Figure 1. A single plant of yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) can produce up to 150,000 seeds under favorable conditions.

If you live on several acres in rural Arizona, you no doubt have some native vegetation. The local climate and your use of the land may dictate how much vegetation you have. And, when it finally rains in Arizona, you may have a burst of new plant life. Some plants may be treasured and others put in the weed category. People tend to define weeds as plants that are growing where they are not wanted. Invasive weeds, however, are of concern for many reasons.

Invasive plants are plants that have been accidentally or intentionally introduced to an area outside their original range and become problematic in their new environment by interfering with native or desirable species. The Executive Summary of the National Invasive Species Management Plan defines invasive species as “a species that is non-native to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.”

Invasive plants generally reproduce at high rates, easily dispersing a large amount of seed through wind or water (Figure 1). They are highly competitive for resources such as soil nutrients and water. Some invasive plants can even exude compounds that inhibit growth of other plants. Invasive plants are generalists, meaning that they do not have special requirements for growth and can flourish in diverse habitats. In addition, many invasive plants spread more easily than in their native environment due to the absence of natural enemies (such as insects and disease), which do not occur in their new environment.



Figure 2. Russian knapweed has taken over this area and out-competes native vegetation.

The term “noxious weed” is not the same as “invasive plant”. An important distinction is that **noxious weed** is a regulatory term and is any plant designated by a federal, state or county government to be injurious to public health, agriculture, recreation, wildlife, or property. Noxious weeds are regulated with respect to their transport, sale, and eradication efforts. Not all invasive plants that occur in Arizona are noxious weeds. That does not mean, however, that unlisted invasive plants are any less of a nuisance than listed ones.

In Arizona, invasive and noxious plants have a huge impact on native vegetation and ecosystem health. Because invasive plants are competitive against native plants, once an invasive plant becomes established, they can completely replace the existing native vegetation (Figure 2). In so doing, they:

- reduce the amount of forage available to grazing livestock,
- eliminate wildlife habitat,
- decrease soil stability and increase soil erosion,
- affect water quality and water quantity,
- increase fire hazards, and
- detract from scenic, recreational and wilderness values.

As a landowner, you can help in the fight to control invasive plants. First, learn how to identify invasive species that occur in Arizona. Many species were brought in as ornamentals and most people would not recognize them as invasive species (Figure 3). Second, be mindful of the ways that invasive plants spread and avoid those behaviors and



Figure 3. Onionweed (*Asphodelus fistulosus*) was introduced as an ornamental and is now a federally listed noxious weed due to its invasive properties. Note the flower is like our native onions, but the plants have fibrous roots instead of bulbs, and they don't smell like onions.

activities. For example, some weed species can grow from underground buds on the root stalk. Plowing or tilling these plants will chop the root stalk into many pieces, multiplying the number of plants that will emerge the next growing season.

Prevention

The most important action in invasive plant control is prevention. Good land management will help keep desirable vegetation healthy and weeds under control. Buy only weed-free hay, plant only certified seed, wash your vehicle after being in weed-infested areas, and monitor your property. Weeds spread fast, so regularly look for new weed patches on your property. Act immediately to treat them by using one or more of the weed control practices below. Team up with neighbors to improve effectiveness. Remember, weed control by itself is not enough. It is also necessary to modify the practices that caused weeds to become established in the first place. For example, mowing weeds after seed has matured can spread seed to new areas if the mower is not cleaned prior to moving to an un-infested location.

Control Methods

Mechanical control includes activities such as mowing, hoeing, and hand pulling. Mow weeds before they go to seed. Repeated mowing in the same year may be necessary. Pull small weed patches and weeds near streams by hand.

Livestock grazing can be used to control some invasive plants (Figure 4). Graze weeds before they go to seed using sheep, goats, or cattle. Because livestock and wildlife can easily carry and spread weed seed on their coats or in their feces, avoid moving livestock from a weedy area to a weed-free area. Some weed species, if eaten, are poisonous. Be sure you properly identify weed species and check for poisonous properties before letting animals graze.

Herbicides can also be used to combat invasive plants. Selective herbicides can be effective against specific targeted weeds when applied in the proper amounts and at the proper time of year. **Read the label instructions carefully and follow directions.** Use herbicides away from water or desirable vegetation to prevent pollution of streams and groundwater. Only licensed applicators can apply restricted use herbicides. Call a local farm supply store to find out about hiring custom



Figure 4. Goat grazing, in combination with other control methods, can be effective in reducing some invasive weed infestations.

chemical applicators to spray your weeds if restricted herbicides are to be used. Be sure herbicides do not come in contact with desirable trees and shrubs. **Properly** dispose of leftover chemicals.

Biological control is the use of natural enemies, such as insects, fungi or pathogens, to control weeds. Natural enemies can weaken or eventually kill a weed plant. Many successful biological control agents cause stress in weeds by attacking seed heads, stems, roots and other plant parts. Permits to release biological control agents must be obtained from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Some combination of these control methods may be used, depending on the situation.

For help, contact the Arizona Department of Agriculture weed specialist or your local county Cooperative Extension office to obtain a list of noxious and invasive weeds in your area and recommendations on how best to control them.

For More Information

Noxious Weeds: A Disaster Looking for a Place to Happen in Arizona, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension ag.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az9610.pdf

Help Protect Arizona from Nonnative Invasive Plants, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension <http://ag.arizona.edu/backyards/articles/spring07/page5-6.pdf>

Prohibited, Regulated and Restricted Noxious Weeds (Arizona), Arizona Department of Agriculture <http://www.azda.gov/PSD/quarantine5.htm>

Federal Noxious Weeds, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/weeds/index.shtml

Executive Order 13112, Presidential Documents, Invasive Species <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/eos/eo13112.html>

Invasive Species Definition Clarification and Guidance White Paper, National Invasive Species Council <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/docs/council/isacdef.pdf>



Understanding Family Finance in These Trying Economic Times

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Let's face it, living in today's world costs money. Chances are, in the last year or so your family may have had to tighten their "economic belt" along with millions of other families throughout the country. No one ever intentionally plans to not have enough money at the end of the month; however, many families struggle to understand how they can trim the fat out of their monthly budget. The good news is that even when money is tight there are a number of ways to save for important purchases, entertain guests, and have special family nights together.

Where Does My Money Go?

How do you begin? Well, first you need to understand what cash flow is. You don't need to be a math whiz to figure out your cash flow. It is simply figuring out how much income you are expecting minus your expenses, such as, housing, food, utilities, insurance, and transportation costs. By doing this, now you know when you have left over cash for saving, spending or donating. How much do you spend? Do this simple exercise: utilize a notebook and pen or electronic device that you can carry with you throughout the day. Whenever you spend money, record how much you spent and what you purchased. Try to use cash, debit card and only one credit card, if possible, for easier tracking. Do this for one to four weeks if possible. This will track your spending habits.

Get everyone in your household to do the same thing and utilize a spreadsheet for visual impacts. Compare notes at the end of the month and you will have established a monthly glimpse of your family's cash flow patterns. This is a great time to set up categories for how you spend money. Some of these categories will probably include housing, utilities and groceries, eating out, clothing, entertainment, haircuts, medical bills, transportation, income taxes and insurance. Now that you know how your family spends money, you can set up a budget or average monthly living expense form which includes your necessary expenses and also set up a savings plan.

How Can I Save My Money?

You may wonder how to save money when you can barely make ends meet. Saving makes cents—in more ways than one. Experts say that you should always pay yourself first. The National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) teaches to "Pay Yourself First." In other words, when you receive your paycheck, set aside approximately 10% of your paycheck in a savings account before you pay anything else to build an "Emergency Fund" that will help pay for unexpected car expenses, home repairs, health care costs, or any other unexpected expense that might put you in debt. You may choose to utilize a payroll deduction plan to help you with this savings plan.

The key to saving money comes down to prioritizing what is most important in your life and determining what is a need versus a want. For example, buying a vending machine soda each day isn't something you really need, but will cost you roughly \$2.00/day or about \$730 a year. If you give up that soda for one year you can put \$730 in savings for college, a car, medical bills or any other major goal your family has chosen.

Think about it this way, most bankruptcies come from unexpected events such as the loss of a job, divorce, or medical expenses that are not covered by insurance (Livshits, Magee, and Tertilt, 2007). The money that a family has saved in an Emergency Fund might have been the needed funds that could have saved them from a difficult situation. No one knows when they will need their savings. The simple act of carrying your own reusable water bottle or packing lunch instead of eating out might make a big difference for your family should an emergency happen.

How Can I Get Out Of Debt?

Analyzing your debt is an important step in this process. Debt is an amount of money you owe that is linked to a written obligation to pay back a lender. Typically you will pay back the original amount (principal) plus interest. Getting out of debt requires hard work and dedication. NEFE designates four ways to get on track and get out of debt:

1. Make a serious pledge/commitment to get out of debt,
2. Immediately stop going into more debt by cutting up credit cards and using your new budget,
3. Determine your total amount of debt, and
4. Develop a repayment plan.

When analyzing debt load, repayment of debts is one way to feel good about yourself and celebrate your personal debt being reduced. One payment plan on-line maybe helpful and visual and can be found at <http://PowerPlay.org>. This program offers strategies to pay off debts using four options:

1. Highest interest rate
2. Shortest Term
3. Smallest Balance, and
4. Order of Priority.

The program illustrates the savings that would result from implementing the various strategies and provide a payment calendar so monthly progress can be observed.

Serious debt management issues may require counseling from the Consumer Credit Counseling Service. This service helps to reduce debt by offering lenders a smaller amount of money for the existing debt in exchange for the whole amount being eliminated. This agency is a non-profit credit counseling agency dedicated to helping people regain control

of their finances and plan for a debt free future. Filing bankruptcy is only to be used as a last resort. Many debt issues can be lessened with a monthly budget.

How Can a Monthly Budget Help?

Who needs a monthly budget? All of us need to create and live by a monthly budget. However, if something unexpected happens, a budget can be altered. The whole idea behind budgeting is to make sure we save some money, pay bills, and ensure that we are in control of our money instead of our money controlling us. There are a number of budget items to consider. Housing expenses measure approximately 30% of our overall household income. If a family chooses to own a home, the mortgage is probably not flexible compared to a family who might choose a less expensive apartment. However, owning a home builds equity for the owner while renting is cash gone. Utilities such as electricity, gas, and telephone give the family more opportunities to decrease their bills by altering their usage. Groceries are another simple way to decrease monthly costs by checking local store flyers for sales, planning weekly meals, switching from brand name items to store brands, using coupons for items usually purchased for the household and waiting to shop on days when the stores redeem double coupon values.

Entertainment on a budget can be a huge savings for families. Dinner out for a family of four can easily range from \$40-80 depending upon the restaurant. Yet, the same food can be purchased on sale from the grocery store and prepared at home for \$20 or less depending upon the menu. Going to the movies with the same family will cost \$25+ in tickets and at least \$20 in popcorn and sodas when a movie rental and home popped

popcorn is a fraction of the price. When inviting friends over, pass on the \$5.00/lb steaks and pick up the \$.99 chicken leg quarters. Focus on spending time with friends and not on impressing them with fancy dinners.

What Can I Do on a Small Budget?

No one should ever feel guilty that they can't buy their children/grandchildren toys or clothes because money is tight. Look at options for those items, such as garage sales or second-hand stores. Often high dollar items can be purchased for a fraction of the cost. But, even toys get broken and clothes become outgrown. Spending quality time with them is important. Try creating a game night where you pull out a board game or a deck of cards and play with them for 30 minutes. The memories you will create will last much longer than any toy you could ever buy.

Getting back to the basics of life is fundamental. We all need to pay for our lifestyle choices. As we look at our options, knowing that we have so many basic needs/purchases that are somewhat flexible, we will eventually feel more in control of our finances and our future lives.

For more information on managing in tough times go to:

http://www.extension.org/personal_finance for additional ideas on saving money and stretching resources.

National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE), <http://www.nefe.org>
Utah State University <http://PowerPlay.org>

Consumer Credit Counseling Service, <http://www.consumercredit.com>

Livshits, I., Magee, J., and Tertilt, M., (2007). Consumer Bankruptcy: A Fresh Start. *The American Economic Review*, 97, 1, pp. 402-418.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY YOUR "RANCHETTE" — LOT-SPLITS VERSUS SUBDIVISIONS IN RURAL ARIZONA

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Arizona's total land mass is comprised of 72.9 million acres. Of this acreage, 42% is federal land, 28% is Tribal or Reservation land, 13% is State Trust Land, and 18% is private land¹. Private land in this percentage includes all local government lands like rights of way and special district-owned land, in addition to land owned by private entities. The conversion of large tracts of private lands, like ranches and farms, to smaller residential lots is the focus of this publication. While many may be familiar with the concept of subdivision, few people other than planners or real estate interests understand the difference between subdividing property and the process of lot-splitting, whereby a parcel of land is split off and sold in the absence of a subdivision plan. Lot-splitting is a very common land use practice in Arizona's rural areas, especially outside the incorporated limits of cities and towns.

Lot Splits

In Arizona's counties, Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS §32-2101)² allow large properties like ranches or farms to be surveyed into many parcels no smaller than 36 acres and sold with only minimal state public report requirements, namely disclosure of legal access, floodplains, etc. Furthermore, the statutes permit any individual buying one or more of those parcels to further split that acreage up to five additional times and sell each one without going through

any formal subdivision review process. Subsequent owners of parcels can also continue to split their property up to five times, as long as the resulting new parcels meet the minimum zoning requirements of the county. This process of lot-splitting results in what are commonly called "wildcat subdivisions," although the term "subdivision" is a misnomer since no formal subdivision plans are required, reviewed or recorded. The informal term "wildcat" is also confusingly applied to illegal lot-splitting, i.e. splitting more than five times, or acting in concert with other individuals to profit from multiple lot splits.

Local zoning plays an important role in the number lot splits that may actually happen on any given property. Zoning in Arizona's counties stipulates a minimum lot size needed in order to obtain a building permit for a home or other structures. Minimum lot sizes in rural areas vary county by county but generally range from one acre to ten acres. Logic dictates that the greater the minimum lot size, the fewer times a property can be split, and the fewer homes will occupy the landscape.

Counties in Arizona, under Arizona Revised Statutes³, if they choose, can adopt a minor land division ordinance to review lot-splits of five or fewer parcels. These review criteria are considerably less onerous than the review processes for formal subdivisions and not all counties have adopted this kind of ordinance. However, if a county adopts such an ordinance, it is limited to a review of the following:

1. The lots, parcels or fractional interests each meet the minimum applicable county zoning requirements of the applicable zoning designation.
2. The applicant provides a standard preliminary title report or other acceptable document that demonstrates legal access to the lots, parcels or fractional interests.
3. The applicant provides a statement from a licensed surveyor or engineer, or other evidence acceptable to the county, stating whether each lot, parcel or fractional interest has physical access that is traversable by a two-wheel drive passenger motor vehicle.
4. The applicant reserves the necessary and appropriate utility easements to serve each lot, parcel or fractional interest created by the land division.

Subdivisions

By contrast, formal subdivisions are a regulated process of surveying, engineering and designing a residential community containing six or more lots, and for the eventual sale of those lots. A subdivision plat, reviewed and approved by a county's Board of Supervisors or Planning Commission, becomes the legal document governing the engineered development of that residential community, including the legal boundaries of each lot, floodplains, placement of roads, easements and utilities. In addition, the plat also may stipulate conditions of construction and uses within that community. Subdivisions often have stringent rules that supersede a county's own zoning regulations and these deed restrictions are governed by homeowners associations. Innovative subdivision developments incorporate rainwater harvesting and water conservation requirements, building envelopes, community open space, parks, and other amenities either voluntarily or due to requirements or incentives from the municipality or county in which the project lies and was approved. Issues such as setbacks from washes, flood control and drainage, street maintenance, utility corridors, water adequacy and wastewater treatment are all addressed between a developer and the county before one lot is ever sold. See Figure 1 for an example of a subdivision plat. In addition, the seller of a new platted lot within a recorded subdivision is obligated to provide the first buyer with a state-approved public report which outlines important information about the subdivision as a whole – such as proximity to medical services, the location of nearby schools, liens and taxes on the property, and any other restricted uses within the subdivision.

From a bird's eye view, it is easy to discern between a lot-split community and one that has been through a regulated subdivision process (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Subdivision Plat

So What's the Big Deal?

It is not difficult to understand why lot-splitting is a more popular way for a land owner to sell a portion of his or her property, rather than go through a formal subdivision platting process. In the case of a rancher or farmer, surveying their property into a multitude of 36-acre (or larger) parcels is the most expedient process for them to cash in on their most valuable commodity – land. This process involves little to no engineering and only requires the services of a surveyor and a realtor. Owners of smaller acreages may see the need to split off and sell a piece of their acreage in order to make their mortgage payment. Families of large and small properties alike will often carve out a separate parcel so that their relatives can build a home and live nearby. Because of the expediency and relatively low costs to a land owner in lot-splitting a property, raw land is more affordable.

Subdivisions can be costly and time-consuming for developers. Before a developer can sell one lot in a subdivision, they will likely have expended many thousands of dollars on engineers, county platting fees and improvements like grading, road construction, and utilities. These costs are often passed on to the buyers of lots in the subdivision. The advantage to a developer, of course, is that they have the ability to sell many lots to recoup their costs and make a profit on the development.

New rural residents may know ahead of time the issues they will face living in remote, rural settings. However, Christensen et al. in a 2006 article about Arizona lot splitting, published in *Perspectives in Public Affairs*⁴ cited a particular issue related to lot-splitting referred to as 'information asymmetry.' This refers to the amount of information that a seller has about a piece of property compared to the potential buyer of that same property. Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS §33-422)⁵ now require disclosure between sellers and buyers about certain aspects of a property—such as whether or not a property is in a floodplain, status of legal access, proximity to a military airport, among others. All in all, there are currently twenty property disclosure questions that sellers are required to provide buyers upon sale of property. A buyer may rescind the sale within five days of receiving the affidavit of disclosure.

Although the intent of this statute is to protect buyers and provide some balance to the information asymmetry issue, the reality is that many Arizona counties do not have the capacity to enforce this requirement. The statute requires the affidavit to be recorded with the deed, but there is no legal link between this requirement and the ordinance that counties are permitted to adopt to review lot splits. Moreover, though the affidavit of disclosure is



Figure 2.

required to be signed before a notary, there is no set process for verifying the information provided by the seller.

As a result, unsuspecting buyers of rural property that has been lot split may find themselves confronting a host of issues. For example, they may find it to be much more costly than they expected to drill a well due to the depth of the water table; or may even find the need to haul water to their home from another location. When they apply for a septic permit to handle their home's wastewater, their percolation tests may not pass muster with a county's health department, due to poorly draining soils or bedrock. They are then forced to consider more costly wastewater treatment systems. They may be surprised to find out the cost of running a power line to their property, if it is located some distance from the nearest existing utilities. Access to their property is likely a private, unimproved dirt road without regular maintenance. New rural property owners often assume that their county will automatically maintain their road, but if it is private, then that becomes the property owner's responsibility. These are but a few of the impacts that new property owners may face in lot split areas.

The term 'subdivision' may conjure up images typical of suburbia like uniform-looking homes, paved streets, and manicured lawns, but in Arizona the term more aptly characterizes a regulatory process to ensure responsible development. Lot splits are a loosely regulated alternative to subdivision, but both processes result in new homes on Arizona's rural landscapes – areas that were once farmland, ranchland, wildlife habitat or all three. In his book *New Geographies of the American West*⁶ William Travis describes the effects of landscape fragmentation, the introduction of exotic species of plants and animals and the exacerbation of wildland fire hazards as the result of exurban, residential development in the rural West.

Before purchasing that slice of paradise, it is important to be informed of all the issues that may arise. Arizona Cooperative Extension has a host

of resources that may prove useful to small acreage land owners as they grapple with issues like wells, wildlife, home-siting, easements and open range cattle. These resources, as well as others, can be found on Arizona Cooperative Extension's website *Arizona's Changing Rural Landscapes* under Small Acreage Landowner Resources: <http://ag.arizona.edu/rurallandscape>. New residents choosing to live in these rural landscapes have an opportunity to be good stewards of their land while having the least amount of impact on the landscape as a whole.

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