



High on the Desert Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter

Vol. 13, No. 3 MARCH 2002

The University of Arizona and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

Gardening in water Get your hands wet with Angel

Waterlilies

It is possible to have a beautiful water garden without water lilies, but you should have at least one. The plants are grown not only for the beautiful and sometimes fragrant blossoms, but also for the big shiny leaves frogs and dragonflies love. They shade the water and keep your fish cool, provide hiding places for them, and keep the algae growth down.

All water lilies belong to the genus NYMPHAEA. There are hardy water lilies, tropical day bloomers, tropical night bloomers, and there are miniatures in all three categories. Tropicals are considered the largest and showiest of all water lilies. Flowers of day bloomers open in mid-morning and close in late afternoon. Flowers of night bloomers open in late afternoon and close the following mid-morning. Blooms

open for three to four days, while next blooms continue in succession. Tropicals hold their flowers above water. They should not be placed in the pond before the water temperature is steady above 70 degrees. Temperatures below 70 degrees may cause plants to go dormant and/or die. Tropical water lilies also come in wide variety of colors and in blues and purples. Shades you will not find in hardy water lilies. Water lilies like full sun, at least six hours a day, and calm water. They are planted in big shallow containers. They are heavy feeders and need to be fertilized once a month with aquatic fertilizer tabs.

Most people just let their tropical lilies die and buy new ones the following spring. You can, of course, try to store them for the winter. Lift the container and pull the rhizome out, rinse the plant well and let it

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

March Reminders	2
Book Review	2
Conference Feedback	3
Wildfires	4
Cuttings 'N' Clippings	4
Planting Spring Bulbs	5

Cochise County Cooperative Extension

www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/

1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

(520) 458-8278, Ext. 2141

450 Haskell, Willcox, AZ 85643

(520) 384-3594

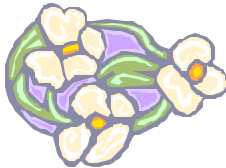
(Continued from page 1)

air-dry for a couple of days, not in full sun. Store the rhizome in a container of distilled water in a cool but frost-free place. In early spring, pot up the rhizome and place it in a sunny window. If you are the proud owner of a green house it can stay there in a tub all winter.

Hardy water lilies come in white, pink, yellow, and red as well as so-called changeable, which present an array of colors. Hardies open around 9 a.m. and close around 3 to 5 p.m. They stay in the pond over winter. Your lily needs to be repotted when the leaves are piling upon each other, the number of blooms decrease, and the leaves yellow early. Not all water lilies are equal and it is good to know your variety and its performance. Some like greater depth than others, some need more sun, some bloom more heavily and some require more surface area.

Plant of the month:

Nymphae "James Brydon", hardy, twenty-seven petals, not subject to crown rot and do well in only 2-3 hours of sunlight. Blooms tend to come in spurts. Adapts well to small pool culture. Fragrant. New leaves are purplish and mottled. Round leaves measure 7 inches with a spread of 3 to 4 feet. Double rosy red flowers are peony-like with yellow centers and yellow stamens, open several at the time. Available in spring from my nursery.



Angel Rutherford
Master Gardener

March Reminders

- ⇒ Prune roses
- ⇒ Start seeds indoors
- ⇒ Check cactus for fungus
- ⇒ Plant cool-season veggies
- ⇒ Reconsider your water usage (call *Water Wise* for a free audit)
- ⇒ Remove and replace winter mulches

Book Review—Books for the Birds

This month the garden will start to see an increase of birds. Birds are my best ally in the garden and do a lot of garden pest control for me. In fact since I started habitat gardening five years ago I have not had to spray anything due to my friendly feathered helpers. Here are some good books on birds and bird gardening.

Attracting and Feeding Hummingbirds, by Sheri Williamson, ISBN 0-7938-3580-1. There is a misconception that hummingbirds live on sugar water and nectar alone. Small insects such as gnats, aphids, and fruit flies are a vital part of their protein diet. Plant an abundance of nectar producing flowers that are attractive to insects and lure hummingbirds and others to the garden. Sheri and her husband Tom Woods founded the *Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory*. They have an excellent web site at www.sabo.org and offer many educational opportunities to learn more about Arizona birds.

A Field Guide to Birds of the Desert Southwest, by Barbara L. Davis, ISBN 088415-278-2. This was my very first field guide and I still use it today. I like it because it showcases the popular birds found in Southwest gardens and includes informative descriptions on identification, 123 color photographs as well as bird habitat and diet, nesting and mating behaviors, and as necessary supplemental information.

The Birder's Handbook—A Field Guide to the Natural History of North American Birds, by Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye, ISBN 0-671-65989-8. If you're really into birds

then check out this book. Valuable information on where birds nest, how many eggs are laid, how the young is cared for, food preferences and foraging habits and so much more. It also contains 250 short essays covering all aspects of bird history.

A good starter kit to learn how to create a bird garden is to purchase a Backyard Wildlife Habitat packet by the National Wildlife Federation. The packet contains *The Backyard Naturalist* book, a backyard wildlife habitat planning guide, information on attracting butterflies to the garden, the Beyond your Backyard guide and an Application for Certification to register your garden as a National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat. Packets are available at Wild Birds Unlimited Stores or you can order it on-line from the National Wildlife Federation at www.nwf.org/habitats/

Another neat website is the Wild Birds Unlimited at www.wbu.com They have gardening information as well as a bird cam so you can watch the birds at the WBU feeders. We are fortunate to have a Wild Birds Unlimited now in Sierra Vista located at 4341 South Highway 92. Phil & Marcia Tucker have a wonderful store and the suet, the birds tell me, is to die for!

Starting next month through October I will take you step by step on the process on how I created my habitat garden, my monthly "to-do" garden calendar, and what birds, butterflies and other wildlife one can expect to see (or hope to lure) into the garden.

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener

High on the Desert

Our 9th Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference has come and gone. From all reports everyone had a great time and learned so much. It is with great pleasure that I say, "Thanks! Job well done!" to all the dedicated volunteers of the Cochise County Master Gardeners Association!

Special thanks to our sponsors:

Bella Vista Water Company, Sierra Vista and Desert Trees Nursery, Tucson.

Thanks also to the following:

Program Advertisers:

ACE Garden Place, Pueblo del Sol Water Company, Arizona Gardens, Arizona Folklore Preserve, The Bindery, Butterfly Gardens, Inc., Dreeszen Landscape Materials, Engineering and Environmental Consultants, Inc., Johnny's Selected Seeds, Kanmar Gutters, Kazzam Nature Center, Safeway, Southwest Gardener, Southwest Gas Corporation, and Whetstone Southwest Pottery & Fountains.

Exhibitors:

Birdland Ranch, Brec Tree Care, Diamond JK Nursery, Kazzam Nature Center, Southwest Desert Growers, and U of A South Bookstore.

Non-Profit Exhibitors

Door Prize Donors

Speakers:

A great big THANK YOU! We couldn't have done it without you!

Committee chairpersons and CCMGA Members who gave so much of their time, energy, and talents to make it all work:

Rob Call, Extension Agent and Program Chair, Carole Beauchamp, Emily Boyd, Linda Cleveland, Cado Daily, Shelley Davis, Gwin Garcia, Sponsorship Chair, Jan Groth, Carolyn Gruenhagen, Conference Coordinator, Gary Gruenhagen, Registration Chair, Anne Hughes, Janet Jones, Treasurer, Liz Kraz, Diane Levine, De Lewis, Facilities Chair, Ginger Maxey, Artist, Cheri Melton, Charlie Narburgh, Angel Rutherford, Centerpiece Creator and the Cooperative Extension Staffs in Sierra Vista and Willcox.

**Thanks to all of you!
YOU made it happen!**

*Carolyn Gruenhagen
2002 Conference Coordinator*

Robert E. Call

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor



Conference Feedback

Another High Desert Gardening and Landscaping conference has been written into history, and it's time for me as the Chairman of the Registration Committee to share some of the feedback we received from people who attended the conference. I have just finished typing into our database all of the comments received. Once again, nearly 60 percent of our attendees submitted evaluations.

We ask all participants at the conference to rate the meals, facilities, hotel staff, and speakers on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the best rating. We also solicit narrative comments. As I mentioned last year we take the feedback received from our attendees very seriously. Although some of the suggestions we receive are beyond our ability to implement, we try to accommodate as many as possible. We also share the comments received about the facility with the hotel management at the Windemere.

Most narrative comments tend to focus on four subjects—food, facilities, speakers, and presentation topics. In addition to these subjects, I would like to address a few general comments that were made about the door prizes.

Meals: To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, you can please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time but you can't please all of the people all of the time. The food at our conferences illustrates this principle very well. Ordering food for a conference is like buying cable TV services. Everything comes in packages and you're sort of stuck with what comes in the package. Some of the attendees thought the meals were outstanding and others thought they were terrible.

Facilities: There were two big issues with the facilities. Several people complained about the "cross-talk" between the breakout session rooms. We are aware of that problem but

(Continued on back page)

Wildfires

The threat of wildfires is a real concern for homeowners. Many gardeners are familiar with the concepts and principles behind hydrozoning, also known as 'Xeriscape Zones,' but did you know that there is also a set of zones for firescaping, also known as 'Defensible Zones?'

The first is **The Home Zone, edges of the structure to 6 feet**. The goal is to prevent the spread of fire from vegetation to the structure. It is recommended that all fuel sources from this zone be removed. The objective is to landscape this zone with gravel, concrete, or left bare. **The Yard Zone, 6 to 30 feet**. The goal is to prevent a fire from moving from ground fuels to brush or tree crowns and to slow the rate of fire spread. The objective is to eliminate fuel ladders, limit litter layers to three inches or less, removing dead materials off the ground and from plants, and pruning branches of trees to at least 10-15 feet above the ground. **The Brush and Screen Zone, 30-75 feet**. The goal is to keep a wildland fire on the ground to minimize intense burning and damage to overstory vegetation. It is the primary zone for fire suppression. And finally there is **The Woodland/Forest Zone, 75 to 100 feet**. The goal is to provide a space which a fire will "cool down, slow down, and stay on the ground" to maintain fire safety. Objectives are the same as the yard zone to include creating patchy landscaping, thinning trees to 20 feet trunk spacing, and remember that the fuel reduction zones increase for properties on ridges and slopes.

As for plants any succulent plant

such as agaves, sedums, sempervivums, prickly pear, barrel and hedgehog cactus are highly recommended for use in the home zone, being the most fire resistant plants for firescaping. Other *Waterwise/Firescapewise* plants include Penstemons, Daleas, Salvias, Netleaf Hackberry, Desert willow, and the *Atriplex* species, particularly Four-wing saltbush, which is very fire resistant.

The following plants are very volatile and should be avoided, if possible, in the home and yard zone for firescaping: Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, ornamental grasses, Pines, Carolina Jessamine, Bougainvillea, and berry vines.

The bulletin *Low Water Use Xeriscape Plants for Cochise County* available at the Cooperative Extension offices indicates flammable and flame resistant plants. For more information visit the Home Fire Protection website at www.firewise.org and homeowners in Cochise or Santa Cruz Counties who live within two miles of national forest land are eligible for a free home-hazard assessment by calling (520) 378-0311.

Defensive Space and Fire Wise Annual Checklist

Trees and shrubs properly thinned and pruned.

Roof and gutters are clear of debris.

Branches overhanging the roof and chimney are removed.

Grass and weeds 30 feet around the home are mowed to a low height.

Trash and debris is removed from the defensive space.

An outdoor water supply is available, complete with a hose and nozzle that can reach all parts of the house.

Fire extinguishers are checked and in working order.

The driveway is wide enough to accommodate fire and emergency trucks.

Road signs and house number is posted and easily visible from the road.

Practice family fire drills and have a fire evacuation plan.

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener

Cuttings 'N' Clippings

* The next regular meeting of Cochise County Master Gardeners is March 13, 2002 at the Sierra Vista Library, 5:00—7:00 pm.

* **April is "Water Awareness Month!"** The April 6 *Water Wise* workshop is *Hands-On Irrigation* with Jim Shaffer, Irrigation Systems Specialist and Plant Sciences Center Horticultural Technician. The free workshop takes place at the University of Arizona South, 1140 N Colombo, Sierra Vista at 9:00 a.m..

* Spring Homeowner Tree Workshop on the University Campus, Tucson, on Saturday, March 9th from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 in the afternoon. For more information call (520) 626-5161

Planting Spring Bulbs

If you have been out shopping your local nurseries lately, you have probably noticed that supplies of spring bulbs are starting to appear onto the shelves (I use the term bulb loosely for brevity to cover bulbs, tubers, corms etc). It is a tad early yet to be planting them. But if you think that you might want to add some late Spring/Summer/Fall color to your garden by using bulbs, now is definitely the time to prepare the planting beds.

Since most bulbs are not Southwest desert natives and will require growing conditions not naturally available here, you need to carefully plan your garden spaces and amend the soil appropriately. Most of the summer bulbs, in my experience, can take full sun here but few will tolerate full sun combined with reflected sun—so carefully avoid western exposures up against a house or wall. Remember that the summer sun here hangs high in the West turning that side of your home into a blast furnace unless you have done something to mitigate its effect. Conversely, northern exposures up against a house or wall or under an overhang are not the best location either due to the paucity of sunshine.

Almost all of the available bulb plants appreciate or need soil amendment. Most prefer slightly acidic soil. Our soils are almost always very alkaline. This necessitates the addition of lots of organic matter (peat moss works best but

other materials will do) to the soil along with gypsum will aid in prepping the soil. I prefer gypsum rather than just sulfur because it works to not only lower pH but also aids in loosening up our compacted soils (especially important in areas of new construction where the building process has further compacted soil) thus promoting much needed drainage.

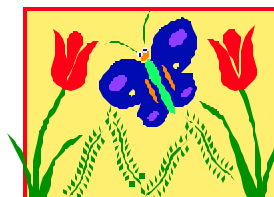
I strongly recommend avoiding the addition of manure to bulb planting beds. Manure can severely damage fragile new root systems. Well composted manure mixed with copious amounts of organic material is acceptable if used judiciously (try to apply a month or more before planting your bulbs). I also like to save egg shells, dry them thoroughly, crush to a fine powder and add to my planting bed. If you do not have dogs who like to dig like my terriers, the addition of bone meal to the bottom of each planting hole is beneficial. Otherwise, add a small amount of triple phosphate granules in the planting hole.

When selecting bulbs, try to make your purchases early. That gives you the best selection and best quality of product. Check to ensure that the bulbs you select are full and firm. Badly desiccated or moldy bulbs should be avoided. Unless you are a collector or specialist with a particular plant, there is really no point to mortgag-

avoided. Unless you are a collector or specialist with a particular plant, there is really no point to mortgaging the farm to afford specialty bulbs. It is quite possible to spend over \$100 per tuber for rare dahlia specimens for example. My “generic” tubers produce gorgeous flowers that, IMHO, are just as spectacular.

Avoid the temptation to plant too early in the season. Store newly purchased bulbs in a cool, dry location until ground temperatures have warmed considerably and all chance of late frost is past. In most locations here that would be late April/early May. Follow the instructions included with your purchase particularly in regards to planting depth. Planting too deep can mean no plants and too shallow can result in plants falling over or root scorching by the hot Arizona summer sun. It is a good idea to stake very tall plants such as dinner plate dahlias. No matter how strong the stalks may be, a good blast of SW wind can break them off. Always use stretch ties or something similar to avoid binding the tender stalks.

John Phillips
Master Gardener



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, James A. Christenson, Director, Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona and Arizona Counties cooperating. The University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences is an equal opportunity employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to sex, race, religion, color, national origin, age, Vietnam Era Veteran's status, or disability.

The information given herein is supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Cooperative Extension is implied. Any products, services, or organizations that are mentioned, shown, or indirectly implied in this publication do not imply endorsement by the University of

ARIZONA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Cochise County
450 S. Haskell Avenue
Willcox, AZ 85643-2790
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

PRSRT STD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
USDA
PERMIT NO. G268

Return Service Requested

(Continued from page 3)

unfortunately there is nothing we can do about it. The moveable partitions that divide the large conference room into thirds do not deaden sound particularly well. As long as we use the Windemere, we are stuck with the problem. Heating and cooling was the other big issue. Again, we are aware of the problem and suffer along with you, but there is nothing we can do about it.

Speakers: I would remind you again that our speakers work only for food. They receive no other remuneration. As I said last year, some are professional speakers from the University who do public speaking all the time while others are Master Gardeners who have never spoken to an audience before. Its okay to grade them down on the number scores but don't be too critical in the narratives. They have conquered their fears about speaking in public because they are passionate about their subjects want to

share the information with you. Give them a little encouragement. Those of you who would like to become Master Gardeners should remember that you may be the one standing up there sometime in the near future.

Topics: Pleasing everyone with topics is nearly as difficult as pleasing everyone with food. For every comment we receive that a topic was totally useless, we receive another that the topic was super useful. I would invite everyone who attended the conference to read the welcoming statement on the title page of the program booklet. Our conference supports the mission of the Master Gardeners by focussing on food production, landscaping with native plants, and environmental stewardship. All of the conference presentations support one or another of these areas.

Door Prizes: A couple of people suggested that we sell raffle tickets for our door prizes. To these folks I would like to say that the conference

is not primarily an event to raise money. Our intent is to provide an educational experience to our attendees in a pleasant venue. Nearly 80 percent of your registration fee goes to overhead (remember all those hungry speakers who work for food?). What little profit that is gained from the conference goes to support Master Gardener projects throughout the year, including school projects and books for Cochise County Public Libraries. Our most important resource is not the amount of money we have to spend but the time and talents so selflessly donated by our Master Gardeners throughout the year.

Overall, everyone attending the 2002 conference seemed to have a wonderful experience. For those of you who weren't able to attend this year, watch for our 10th annual conference in February 2003.

*Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
Registration Committee Chairman
gruenha@sinosa.com*