Meet the Natives
Arizona Groundcovers & Vines

One overlooked area of the use of Arizona native plants in urban landscapes is groundcovers and vines. We use numerous groundcovers and vines such as lantana and bougainvillea in our landscapes. Arizona native groundcovers and vines are virtually unknown outside of regional botanical gardens and native plant growers. They may not have the landscape impact of common landscape groundcovers and vines. However, these Arizona natives deserve recognition and use in Arizona landscapes.

A couple of things to be aware of in regards to groundcovers and vines are the following: don’t over-plant groundcovers; plant as to mature size. If the groundcover grows to 3-ft. in diameter, plant on a 3-ft. center. Plant a diversity of groundcovers. Most groundcovers in this climate last a maximum of five years in the landscape. Vines like to be cut back periodically in the landscape to rejuvenate their stems for increase flowering and growth. The following is a selection of native Arizona groundcovers and vines for the Phoenix area.

Groundcovers
Calyplophus hartwegii — Yellow Evening Primrose is a spreading herbaceous groundcover with medium green foliage and masses of brilliant yellow flowers borne spring through summer. Yellow Evening Primrose is commonly found from 4,500-9,000-ft. in the grasslands and mountains of southern Arizona and ranging into Texas and central Mexico. This evening primrose grows to 3-ft. in diameter and likes to be cut back periodically in late fall for new spring growth.

Dicliptera resupinata — is ground-covering perennial with rose purple flowers, it grows to 2-ft. high and 3-ft. wide. This perennial occurs across southern Arizona from 3,000-6,000-ft. and ranges across southwestern New Mexico and Mexico.

Dyssodia pentachaeata — Golden Dyssodia is a small growing short-lived groundcover with masses of golden yellow flowers in late spring and late summer. D. pentachaeta is seen throughout Arizona from 2,500-4,500-ft. and ranges into Texas and northern Mexico. Golden Dyssodia is commonly seeded with other wildflowers in the fall.

Hymenoxyss acaulis — Angelita Daisy is one of most promising desert groundcovers to be introduced in some time. H. acaulis are especially common at the Grand Canyon and ranges across northern Arizona from 4,000-7,000-ft. and are widespread throughout Colorado, Nevada New Mexico and southern California. Angelita Daisy provides masses of brilliant yellow flowers and flowers nearly all year.

Macrosiphonia brachysiphon — Rock Trumpet is a ground-covering perennial of the oleander family with bright green foliage and contrastaling fragrant white flowers during the summer. M. brachysiphon is commonly encountered in southern Arizona from 4,000-5,500-ft. and ranges into southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. Rock Trumpet dies down in the winter and likes to be cut back for new growth in the spring.

Melampodium leucanthum — Blackfoot Daisy is commonly seen flowering in the spring with masses of pristine white flowers. M. leucanthum is widespread across Arizona from 2,000-5,000-ft. and ranges into Kansas, Texas and Chihuahua. Blackfoot Daisy typically grows to 2-ft. across and 1-ft. in height.

Oenothera berlandieri — Mexican Evening Primrose is commonly seen throughout central Texas, Kansas, Missouri, Louisiana, and northern Mexico. However, wild plants of O. berlandieri have been collected and documented from near Fort Verde in Yavapai County. Mexican Evening Primrose bears masses of lustrous pink to white flowers throughout the spring into early summer. O. berlandieri can become somewhat invasive in gardens and likes to be cut back periodically.

Oenothera caespitosa — Prostrate Evening Primrose has masses of stunning white flowers throughout the summer. O. caespitosa is widespread across the interior mountain west ranging from Colorado, Utah, California and Washington. Prostrate Evening Primrose forms impressive 2-ft. clusters in gardens and their exquisite flowers perfume the evening air. O. caespitosa flowers prolifically for a couple of years and then suddenly dies but reseed readily in the garden.

Verbena gooddingii — Goodding Verbena is found throughout Arizona below 5,000-ft. and ranges into southern Texas, Utah, California and northwestern Mexico. Goodding Verbena has masses of light purple

Continued on page 9.
Meet the Natives (Continued from page 8)

flowers in the fall and spring and grows to 1-ft. in height and 3-ft. in diameter. *V. gooddingii* sometimes behaves like an annual if the summer is hot but can come through a mild summer and provides fall color. An excellent plant combination is the green foliage and purple flowers of *V. gooddingii* in contrast to the gray foliage and yellow flowers of *Psilothrophe cooperi*, Paper Flower.

*Zinnia acerosa* (pumila) — Desert Zinnia is woody perennial commonly seen throughout Arizona from 2,500-5,000-ft. and ranges into Texas and northern Mexico. *Z. acerosa* has masses of white small flowers in the spring and works well on caliche soil.

*Zinnia grandiflora* — Prairie Zinnia is a small growing perennial with masses of brilliant yellow summer flowers. *Z. grandiflora* is commonly seen across Arizona and ranges across Kansas, Nevada, Texas and northern Mexico. Prairie Zinnia dies down in the summer and would contrast well with the red flowers of *Stachys coccinea*, Red Mint.

Vines

*Cardiosperum halicacabum* — Balloon Vine or Farolitos is widely distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions and occurs in the Coyote Mountains of Pima County. Balloon Vine bears unique ‘lantern like’ fruits that appear in late fall. The common name of Farolitos is in reference to the ‘little lantern’ fruits of this vine.

*Cissus trifoliata* — Arizona Grape Ivy is a deep green vine with thick semi-succulent leaves. Arizona Grape Ivy is uncommonly seen in central and southern Arizona from 3,000-5,000-ft. and ranges into Mexico and is widespread throughout tropical America. *C. trifoliata* is fairly evergreen in mild winter areas and grows from tubers and the foliage is reported to produce contact dermatitis.

*Clematis drummondii* — Old Man’s Beard is commonly seen throughout Arizona below 4,000-ft. and ranges into Texas, northern Mexico. This clematis does not have the showy flowers like many garden clematis but have small cream flowers followed by distinctive plumose fruits. This massive 25-ft. vine would work well in a wildlife habitat garden.

*Cucurbita foetidissima* — Buffalo-gourd is found throughout Arizona from 1,000-7,000-ft. and ranges into the Midwest, Texas, southern California and Mexico. This ground-covering vine grows to 20-ft. in diameter and bears a yellow gourd-like fruit in late summer. We have two other species of a wild gourd in Arizona: *Cucurbita digitata*, Finger-leaved Gourd and *Cucurbita palmata*, Coyote Melon.

*Ipomoea longifolia* — Long-leaved Morning Glory is a spectacular ground covering vine with magnificent white with purple-pink throat flowers. *I. longifolia* is commonly seen in the grasslands of southern Arizona from 4,000-6,000-ft. and ranges into Oklahoma and Mexico. Long-leaved Morning Glory grows to 25-ft. in diameter and provides spectacular evening flower displays from late spring through early fall.

*Janusia gracilis* — Slender Janusia is a small, twining vine with delicate yellow orchid-like flowers. *J. gracilis* is widespread throughout Arizona from the Grand Canyon to southwestern Arizona from 1,000-5,000-ft. and ranges into west Texas and Baja California. Slender Janusia can be trailed up a Palo Verde, creosote bush or works well on a wrought iron fence.

*Marah gilensis* — Wild-cucumber is a deep green vine seen throughout Arizona below 5,000-ft. along streams and thickets and ranges into southwestern New Mexico. Wild-cucumber grows from a tuber and bears small cream flowers in the spring followed by unique inedible spiny fruits. *M. gilensis* is drought deciduous in the wild in late spring. However, with supplemental summer watering wild cucumber will stay fairly green through the summer and works well in the shade.

*Maranta antirrhiniflora* — Snapdragon Vine is a small delicate vine with variable white, blue to red flowers. Snapdragon Vine is found throughout the state from 1,500-6,000-ft. and ranges into west Texas, southeastern California and Mexico. *M. antirrhiniflora* would work well in the shade and around a garden water feature.

Kent Newland
Former President, Arizona Native Plant Society, Phoenix Chapter

Gardener Profile (Continued from page 14)

Biggest Claim to Fame: Jim once sold 12 pairs of shoes to Imelda Marcos.

Sue Hakala
Master Gardener
Letters to the Editor

Buffalo grass or Buffelgrass?

Hello Val! Just read your Nov./Dec. Communicator and it looks great! I do have a correction for you on the good article from Carol Zimmerman on the Ironwood Tree. In paragraph #4 she mentions the “planting of buffalo grass” in Mexico’s Ironwood country and has a little bit of erroneous detail. Actually, this is not our native Buffalo grass, but a non-related pastureland range grass called Buffelgrass. We deal in Mexico quite a bit and I have both bought & sold these grasses over the years with Mexican growers.

Buffalo grass (Buchloe dactyloides) is a short, creeping grass native to the central short grass prairie & plains of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. It is not being planted into those disturbed desert areas in Mexico that agreeing converted to grazing land. This is the native grass that is being used extensively around the country as a low-input turf grass alternate.

The unrelated grass being planted for grazing use in those desert areas is Buffelgrass (Pennisetum ciliare), which is originally from Africa. The grass is an excellent, high quality forage for any grazing animals (cattle, horses, goats, sheep, etc.). It can be a very invasive and weedy grass, and is actually encroaching on our own Arizona deserts as an escape from desert rangeland plants. It is related to many other invasive warm climate African grasses that have become pests and weeds wherever introduced around the world — this includes our popular pest Fountain grass which has escaped cultivation and is invading the numerous Phoenix Mountain preserves. It is also related to an African grain crop called Cattail Millet that is used in Africa for a human consumption grain & bread, and in this country as a grazing & hay crop in the South.

Many Arizona residents will know this Buffelgrass by sight as the sprawling grass about 1-2 ft. tall growing along roadsides and washes with fuzzy 3-4 in. grey flowers & seed heads. It looks very similar to its relative Fountain grass, except that Fountain grass is much more clumping in growth habit.

In Mexico, the pressures of starvation and the weak economy have caused farmers & ranchers to convert many acres of native desert to this highly productive and drought tolerant range grass. It spreads readily by runners and by windborne seed, so it doesn’t take long before this species can dominate an area, almost as a monoculture. In our desert, it only succeeds where addition water supplies or run off exist to supplement our low rainfall, areas such as roadsides, washes, irrigated fields, etc. Due to the invasive nature of this Buffelgrass and its relative Fountain grass, the AZ Dept. of Agriculture has been considering placing these plants on the State Noxious Weed list as controlled plants.

Mike Hills
Master Gardener & Seed Research of Oregon

Val,
Mike Hills is absolutely correct. I checked my source at the Arizona Game & Fish Department, and they definitely have spelled-out buffelgrass. I believe the spell checker in my PC didn’t recognize buffelgrass, and quite possibly changed it. I appreciate Mike’s sharp eye and his lucid clarification on this topic. I regret any misconception I may have caused.

Carol Zimmerman
Master Gardener

Growing Corn (Continued from page 13)

insects that feed on earworm larvae. Application of mineral oil (use a medicine dropper) just inside the tip of each ear will suffocate the worm and the mineral oil will not affect the flavor of the corn. Do not apply the oil until the silk has wilted and started to turn brown at the tip to avoid interfering with pollination. Too much oil may also spoil the ears in hot dry weather. It is also often possible to avoid ear worm infestation by planting a short season variety in February (frost protection may be required) or a mid-season variety in September.

Corn is ready to harvest after the silks have turned brown and dry and the kernels are plump and moist. To test, peel back a little of the green husk. If the kernel are plump and hard to the point where testing with your thumbnail does not make an impression, it’s too late. If the kernels are not plump, close up the husk and hold it tight to its original position with a rubber band. The older standard hybrid ‘su’ varieties, and open pollinated varieties should be eaten at the peak ripe condition because the sugars will turn to starch immediately and lose sweetness and flavor. The newer, sugar-enhanced (se) and super-sweet (sh) hybrids can be left on the stalk or in the refrigerator up to 10 days after they reach the peak ripe condition without losing sugar or flavor.

Growing sweet corn requires paying fairly close attention to soil preparation, water and nutrient needs, planting time, and plant spacing. But if you have the space and are not concerned about the relatively high water use, it can be one of our most rewarding two-season vegetable crops.

Olin Miller
Master Gardener
PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

2ND ANNUAL SOUTHWESTERN REGION
COMMUNITY & SCHOOL/YOUTH GARDENING CONFERENCE
“GROWING AWARENESS”

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
FEBRUARY 26-28, 1999 - PHOENIX, AZ

This dynamic conference will offer educational sessions and “hands-on” interactive workshops. The only conference of this kind in the Southwest, you will be sure to have an opportunity to discuss issues, network and learn about the latest projects and techniques in community and school/youth gardening. There’s no place like Phoenix in the winter to soak up the sun and experience the hospitality southwestern style!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?:
Professionals and Volunteers from School Gardens, Community Gardens, Master Gardeners, Youth Agencies, K-12 Educators, Community & Youth Leaders, Child Development Specialists, Public & Botanic Gardens, Horticultural Therapists, Cooperative Extensions or anyone interested in learning more about community, school or youth gardens.

CONFERENCE PROFILE:
A beginner or experienced educator/professional involved in a gardening project will find “all they need to know to grow” at this conference. You’ll learn from leading national and regional experts on the basics of “how to” and the latest techniques, curriculums and resources. This conference was designed to:
1. Provide the beginner or experienced educator/professional with information on how to start, maintain and grow a community or school garden
2. “Grow Awareness” of the resources, information and strategies available to nurture and sustain school or community gardens.
3. Provide a catalyst for the exchange of ideas and information through networking with other community and school gardens.

Please see the Conference Agenda on the reverse side for complete details.

CONFERENCE FEES AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

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<th>Before 2/1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Basic Conference Plan:</td>
<td>$125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Hotel: Holiday Inn Express- 5750 E. Main - Mesa, AZ 85205</td>
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<td>Transportation:</td>
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<td>$119 plus tax (single, double, triple, quad)</td>
<td>Call 800-888-3561 (mention CSG Conference) by Feb 15, 1999 to secure rate.</td>
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Transportation provided between Mendoza Elementary, Desert Botanical Garden, The Farm at South Mountain & Tours. Transportation between airport and hotel must be paid by individual.

SPONSORED BY:
American Community Gardening Association
Arizona Community Action Association
Arizona Dept. of Education
Chefs Collaborative 2000
Desert Botanical Garden
Maricopa County Master Gardeners
Mendoza Elementary School
University of Arizona Cooperative Ext.
SW Center for Education & the Natural Environment (SCENE)

VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR MORE INFORMATION...
http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/html/calendar/aware.htm

FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION CONTACT CHERYL CZAPLICKI...
call or fax (602) 942-3289 or email to j-c-czaplicki@worldnet.att.net
2nd Annual SW Region Community and School/Youth Gardening Conference Program

FRIDAY - FEBRUARY 26 - The Farm at South Mountain
9:00 – 3:00 a.m. “Hands-on” workshops for additional fee
THE FARM INSTITUTE AT SOUTH MOUNTAIN
Institute I Get Growing!
Institute II Being an Advocate is Easier than You Think sponsored by the Arizona Community Action Association
Institute III Art in the Garden

4:00 - 7:00 p.m.
DESSERT BOTANICAL GARDEN
Early Registration, Tour, Welcome Reception, Garden Project Slide Show

SATURDAY - FEBRUARY 27 - Mendoza Elementary School
7:15 – 8:00 a.m.
Registration, Continental Breakfast, Exhibitors, Tours of Mendoza
8:00 - 8:30 a.m.
Welcome Keynote by JIM FLINT, National Gardening Association “Creative Kids’ Gardens from Coast to Coast”

8:30 – 9:30 a.m.
SESSION ONE
A. Fun Games with Bugs for the Classroom
B. Community Gardens and Food Security
C. Design Basics for Schoolyard Wildlife Habitats
D. Get the Word Out!... How to Make a Newsworthy Story
E. Creating Harmony with Permaculture

9:40 – 10:45 a.m.
SESSION TWO
A. The Edible Schoolyard
B. Staying Alive! How to Sustain a Community Garden
C. Water Wise Garden Activities... Active Lesson Plans to Study Water Conservation as it Relates to Gardening sponsored by Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
D. Recruiting and Managing Volunteers
E. Organically Speaking! How to Become Stewards of the Earth

10:45 - 11:00 a.m.
BREAK

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
SESSION THREE
A. Growing Minds: A Research Program Evaluating the Benefits of Gardening on Children
B. Feed the Body and Mind: Nutrition in the Garden
C. National Wildlife Federation’s Backyard/Schoolyard Habitat Programs
D. Creative Financing Ideas: How to Keep your Garden in the Green
E. Cultivating the Past Exploring Native American Gardens & Culture

12:00 – 12:30 p.m. LUNCH (grab & go)

12:30 - 4:00 p.m.
TOURS - SCHOOL/COMMUNITY/MARKET GARDENS

6:00 - 10:00 p.m.
“SEEDS FOR CHANGE” - AN EVENING IN THE GARDEN
Sponsored by the Chep’s Collaborative 2000 and The Farm at South Mountain
Welcome and Keynote Address by Award Winning Chef RobSand Scoops
Three Course “Garden Fresh” Gourmet Dinner
Awards Ceremony -Outstanding Community & School Gardens in the SW Silent Auction

SUNDAY - FEBRUARY 28 - Mendoza Elementary School
8:00 – 8:30 a.m.
Registration, Continental Breakfast, Exhibitors, Tours of Mendoza

8:30 – 9:45 a.m.
ART IN THE GARDEN
Artists featured throughout the Mendoza Elementary School campus to provide hands-on creating and demonstrations on how to use the garden for art or how to create art to enhance the garden.

9:45 - 10:45 a.m.
SESSION FOUR
A. Using the Garden to Teach Arts and Humanities
B. Digging Deeper
C. Walking Tour of Mendoza’s Habitat Projects: Lessons Learned
D. Getting Started: The Basics of Project Management
E. Growing for the Market - A Family’s Project

10:45 - 11:00 a.m.
BREAK

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
SESSION FIVE
A. A Garden in Every School: National Campaign
B. Resources I - What’s Available for Training
C. Schoolyard Habitats as Outdoor Laboratories
D. How to Get Backing from your Administration - Panel
E. Gardening for People with Disabilities

12:05 - 1:05 p.m
SESSION SIX
A. Gardening and Nutrition in the Classroom
B. Resources II - Funding and Building Community Support
C. Native Plants: Choosing Plants for Success
D. Collaboration: Linking School and Community Gardens
E. Key to Sustaining your Youth Garden Programs: Nationwide Examples of What Works!

1:05 p.m.
CLOSE OF CONFERENCE

Track Legend:
A= School Garden
B= Community Garden
C= Habitat/Native
D= Management
E= Special Topics

Please Note: Agenda is subject to change

Questions? Contact Cheryl Czaplicki via telephone or fax at (602) 942-3289 or email at j-c-czaplicki@worldnet.att.net

Check out our Web Site for more details:
http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/html/calendar/aware.htm
Children’s Book Review

After a hectic holiday there is nothing better that a solitary workout in the garden followed by a quiet time with the children. And what better quiet activity is there than sharing a good book about gardens. Children’s literature is filled with delightful stories about gardens. Even last year’s Caldecott Honor Book, The Gardener by Sarah Stewart, is about a garden. This beautifully illustrated book is about a young girl who is sent to live in the city with a dour uncle after her father loses his job. The main character, Lydia, brings her love of plants with her to the city. We learn through a series of letters home that Lydia finally coaxes a smile out of her uncle after surprising him with a rooftop garden.

Another favorite book of children is Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens. This book opens lengthwise to colorful, humorous pictures. The story is about a lazy bear who wears wingtip shoes and a family of ambitious rabbits. The two decide to become partners in a vegetable garden venture. The produce from the garden is divided by the tops and bottoms. The bear, of course, always ends up with the inedible part of the plant. When the bear finally wises up and chooses the tops and bottoms, the rabbits plant corn and take the middle. The original artwork for this book was created on paper made by hand from carrots, corn, potatoes, beans, radishes, tomatoes and even a pair of gardening pants. This may give some of you creative gardeners an idea of how to use that extra produce.

For those of you who work with children on community gardens a good book to share is City Green by DyAnne DeSalvo-Ryan. This is a story about a community that leases a junk fill lot in the inner city and turns it into a garden. One resident, Old Man Hammer, sees nothing but gloom until he plants seeds one night and is surprised when they grow into beautiful flowers. Information on organizing a community garden is in the back of the book.

An old classic, The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss is still popular with children. This book written in 1945 is about a little boy who has faith in the carrot seed he plants despite everyone’s dire predictions. The illustrations are black and white.

If you are sharing a book with a young child, Alison’s Zinnia by Anita Lobel is a must. This is an alphabet book in which each large page contains a full size illustration of a flower. Instead of a one word format, the letter of the alphabet is used repeedly making an interesting but an unusual story. It begins with “Alison acquired an amaryllis for Beryl who bought a begonia for Crystal”and so on through the alphabet. The illustrations alone are worth investigating in this book.

These five reviews are just the beginning of the path through children’s literature on gardening. All of these books can be found in your local library.

Sharon Leezer
Master Gardener

Growing Corn (Continued from page 15)
tall, thin to one plant each. You can leave both plants if both came up. Both will bear ears but they may be smaller. This is a also good time to place drip-tape along each row. Soaker hose may also be used; water distribution is more uniform if the pressure is kept constant at about 30 psi. The hose should then be covered with mulch to prevent salt accumulation on the hose from water evaporation.

Corn should be grown at a uniform rate to prevent stress by providing proper irrigation and nutrients. Irrigation can be controlled with an automatic timer if the water requirements are known, but because of variable evaporation rates due to large swings in relative humidity and unpredictable desert winds it is best to turn the valve on and off manually. Test daily for moisture to the second joint on the index finger. Water deeply (for 2 hours or more on drip) in the early morning. Evaporation is higher in the afternoon. Before tasseling, when the corn is about 2- to 3-ft. tall, side dress with ammonium sulfate fertilizer or an equivalent organic fertilizer.

The corn ear worm, Heliothis zea, is a serious pest in late spring, is less common in the fall, but will still occur because there are several generations each year. The larva enters the corn ear on the silks and eats the kernels from the tip of the cob. Dusting with Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) will control small larvae before they enter the ears and has the advantage that it does not also kill beneficial predator Continued on page 10.
The Arizona Herb Association

The Arizona Herb Association (AHA) was started in 1988 by just 10 people who were interested in herbs; 5 of them are still members today. The group now has more than 200 members and is growing. The AHA meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m., either at the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office or at the Pueblo Grande Museum. The exception is in December, when a special date is set for the group’s Annual Cook-Off, a herbal potluck dinner.

The mission of the AHA is to educate the public about herbs and their uses, and meetings feature informative, educational programs by nationally renowned speakers. Past speakers include Chef Jeffrey Beeson, author Jim Wilson and herbalist Kathi Keville. Members and guests mix and visit after the program while sampling a variety of herbal snacks provided by AHA members. Field trips and special weekend workshops are also being scheduled for the upcoming year. (Note: non-members will be charged a fee to attend some of the special meetings; call the AHA’s number for details prior to the meeting.)

The AHA has three mini groups which meet at various times during the year; the Cosmetic Test Lab, the Culinary Group, and the Craft Group. AHA members also participate in planting, growing and maintaining a public Demonstration Garden, located behind the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office. There is at least one “Weed & Feed” scheduled every month, usually a Saturday morning, at which members tend to the garden. This is exactly what it sounds like: first you work in the demonstration garden and then you gather to eat! The AHA usually has seed exchanges at meetings in the fall and again in the spring. Members can buy plants (when available) and books at a discount at the meetings as well as at the Spring and Fall Garden Fairs at the Extension Office. The AHA also participates in the Maricopa County Home & Garden Show in January, the Spring and Fall Plant Sales at the Desert Botanical Garden, the Boyce Thompson Herb Fair (usually the first Saturday in May) and the Flagstaff Arboretum’s annual plant sale in June. Dues are $25 a year, $35 for family membership.

For information, call 470-8086, ext. 830, visit web page at www.accesarizona.com/community/groups/azherb or e-mail azherbl@home.com.

Carole Palmer
Master Gardener

Low Desert Gardener Profile
Jim Baker

Seventy-five-year-old Jim Baker has owned Baker’s Nursery in Phoenix for nearly 31 years. Jim thinks of himself as a nurseryman rather than a gardener. He got his start in the business after WWII. Earning only $78 a month in the Navy, he and his wife, Collette, couldn’t afford any furniture. They did love to window shop though, and found some furniture they wanted for their home. After being discharged, Jim talked to the owner of the store about a job so that he could get the furniture. Seeing that Jim has only 6 years of a self-taught education, the owner wanted to help Jim find his niche. He had Jim start by selling pots and pans door-to-door. Every 30 days, Jim’s job changed, eventually, he ended up at a feed and garden store.

Jim moved on to run a garden store in Santa Cruz, CA, then recruited by Suncrest Nursery in Phoenix to run their operation. Later he worked for Germin’s Wholesale Seed and Garden Supplies, being named “Man of the Year,” for the most sales. Jim made enough money in this job to purchase 10 acres to open Baker’s Nursery.

Jim feels his nursery has the edge over the ‘big guys.’ He always pays cash to his suppliers so he gets a better price, offers knowledgeable and professional advice to customers, and is conservative in his pricing. Jim says his biggest selling item is the Baker Blend Fertilizer. He sold more than 5,000 bags last year.

Most Interesting Gardening Adventure: his and Collett’s hobby has been to tour all the famous gardens in the world, and believe me, he has been everywhere. The most memorial one was a private garden in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Advice to New Arizona Gardeners: seek out information from Master Gardeners and small nurseries.

Current Goals: to fully recover from a stroke suffered last March, enjoy his 6 daughters, (2 are twins), 13 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren, and journey to Guadalajara, Mexico to see how a tree he planted 30 years ago in the United Nations Building Friendship Garden is doing.

Continued on page 9.