**Summer Bulbs** *(Continued from page 4)*

A similar plant is *Allium tuberosum*, Chinese Chives. Its flat garlic-smelling leaves and heads of white flowers are great added to summer salads.

Two wonderful plants for summer gardens are Elephant’s Ear (*Colocasia esculenta*) and caladiums. Both are grown for their foliage. The large leaves of Elephant’s Ear give the garden a tropical aspect. Caladiums have arrow-shaped leaves in bright shades of red, orange, yellow or white veined with deep green. These bulbs do best in dappled shade and ordinary garden soil. They will also do well in pots and tucked into shady spots which need a bit of color to brighten them.

**Sources for summer flowering bulbs:**
McClure & Zimmerman, 414/326-4220; The Daffodil Mart, 800/255-2852; Jackson & Perkins, 800/292-4769; Van Bourgondien Bros, 800/622-9997

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**Evelyn Helm**
*Master Gardener*

**Natural Dyes for Easter Eggs**

Clean eggs before dyeing - you can either clean them with vinegar or wash in soapy water and rinse well. Handle the eggs as little as possible because the smallest amount of oil from your fingertips will keep the egg from taking the dye. There are 3 kinds of eggs you can use for dyeing: eggs which are boiled for approximately 20 minutes, hollow or blown eggs, and eggs which you boil at least 3 hours so you can use them as decorations from year to year. If using from year to year, store the eggs in the original egg cartons and put them in a cool space. There will be no odor of spoiled eggs as long as the shells are unbroken.

Bring 2 cups of water to a boil, add plant materials plus 1 lbs. of vinegar and simmer for 10 to 20 minutes. Strain out plant materials, then dip and simmer eggs for at least 10 minutes. Only simmer 1 layer of eggs in a pan. Use an enamel, glass, or teflon-coated pan for dyeing (pans of copper, tin, aluminum or iron will change the color of the dye). You can usually add up to 4 cups of fruits and vegetables per quart of water. Dip the dyed eggs in a container of brown vinegar to make sure the color is set. Remove eggs with slotted spoon and place on paper towels to dry. After eggs are dry, use vegetable oil and soft cloth to polish them.

Don’t eat any eggs you dye with material that you aren’t positive is safe. Don’t try to eat eggs that have been dyed in onion skins - the eggs inside look and taste horrible. If you use alum or cream of tartar in dye water, it will make the colors brighter. Don’t use vinegar with onion skins as it will give the eggs a brown color (and you can buy brown eggs at the store without dyeing them). For deeper shades, refrigerate eggs in dye water overnight.

**SPOTS:** Use candles to drip wax onto eggs. When the wax sets, then dip the eggs into some dye. Take the eggs out and let them dry. You can either peel the wax off or you can drip some more wax on the eggs and dye them more (either in the original color or in an entirely different color). You can also use different colored wax on the eggs - if you do this, start with the lightest colored wax first. The wax can be boiled off, if necessary.

**STRIPES:** Wrap rubber bands all over the eggs. Take some of the rubber bands off halfway through and you will have multi-colored eggs.

**DESIGNS:** Before putting a raw egg in water, place a plant leaf on the egg, wrap a layer of cheese cloth tightly around the egg and tie the ends with twine, dental floss, narrow rubber bands or a twist-em. You might also want to try 3 or 4 different layers of color. Experiment with onion skins - if you dampen the onion skins it helps them stick to the egg. You might also try drawing designs on the eggs with a wax pencil - the color of the pencil will boil off.

**BLUE/BLUE-GREEN:** Slice red cabbage. Cover with water and boil for 30 minutes. Let cabbage dye water cool before adding eggs. (Dye will look purple but will dye eggs a soft robin’s egg blue.) The more cabbage you use, the darker the color will be.

**CLEAR, BRIGHT YELLOW:** Prune a couple of small branches from an apple tree. Scrape the bark into a pot. Cover with water and boil 30 minutes. Use ¾ cup of bark and 2 quarts of water, add 1 tsp. of alum (alum will bring out the yellow dye).

**ORANGE/REDDISH BROWN/GOLDEN BRONZE:** Yellow and red onion skins or just yellow onion skins. Cover the onion skins with water and boil about 30 minutes. Add eggs. Watch the color at various time lengths in the dye - it starts orange and gradually turns to brown the longer they stay in the water. If you use yellow skins only, at 5 minutes in the dye the eggs will be yellow, 10 minutes they will be golden, 20 minutes rich gold and at 30 minutes they will be a rich brown. Some reports say using red onion skins gives the eggs a dingy, dishwater color. *Continued on page 9.*
Grey in the Garden

I cannot imagine how grey got to be the color of gloom and dreariness; too much rain can ruin perspective it seems. For me, it is a bright, light color, one that makes a plant look unfettered and buoyant, as if it floated into the garden. It is this illusion that helps grey plants relieve the tedium and redundancy of many perennial plantings. It can simultaneously soften the hues of harsher, more difficult colors and create a jolt of contrast into a planting, transforming a pedantic collection of plants into a feast for the eye.

Desert gardens are good homes for grey plants chiefly because so many grey plants are from desert or arid regions. The reason for this lies in how the grey is created on the leaf. Grey is rarely a pigmented color in a plant, rather it is the result of tiny hairs on the surface of the leaf, the more there are the more grey or even white the plant will appear. These tiny hairs - shaped in a myriad of forms - are minute umbrellas to shade the surface of the leaf cutting down on water loss and helping lower the temperature of the surface. These adaptations make many grey plants well suited to our gardening conditions and blend well with other desert perennials.

Brittlebush (Encelia farinosa) is a lovely grey choice, one suitable for the most difficult growing areas; hard, rocky slopes, or unirrigated, full sun areas. Locally native, established plants can live in the roughest of soils with no supplemental irrigation. In gardens one has to be attentive to watering to maintain the best grey color. Grown with ample water Brittlebush loses most of the grey blush and fades to a dull green. Plants grown without constant irrigation, particularly without excessive summer irrigation, retain a brilliant grey-white caste. Brittlebush can make the toughest corner look wonderful with minimal care.

Every year at the front door, where the roof directs a torrent onto the ground, a minute speck of furry grey breaks through the crust. It is a seedling of Desert Marigold (Baileya multiradiata). There is so much hair on these plants when young they remind me of dust balls, but later they mature into a fine, small grey plant. Easily moved in the cool months of winter, this little crop is the only way I have been able to have Desert Marigold establish in my yard.

Another good native of grey color, Artemesia ludoviciana, has made the transcontinental horticultural trip so common in a lot of native perennials. Noticed by English gardeners in the earlier part of the century, it took hold in Europe for its graceful, grey cut-leaf form and tolerance of a wide range of conditions. Two selections, ‘Silver King’ and ‘Silver Queen’ are now common in the trade, returning in triumph to the area of their origin.

Artmeseia is often large (up to 4 ft. wide), especially when grown in enriched soils and ample water, but growing it a bit harder keeps it under control. Artemesia is semi-dormant in the winter, a feature that is hard to identify in an established plant but makes it a daunting plant to move in the winter. Having once undertaken to relocate one in November, normally a great time to move perennials around, it sat, it sulked, it lost all but one stem, in short I was terrified I had lost it. But come spring, it was reinvigorated and now looks magnificent again. I understand that it puts on the same performance in pots. It is worth it all. The soft leaves fit in well with other perennials but the pale grey hue reveals a colorful exuberance in adjoining blues and reds and purples. At the curve of a path, or in the nook of a stairwell it is inviting, hinting at hidden delights just around the corner.

There are countless other members of the genus Artemesia used horticulturally. Most of these are known as Wormwood. Some of the Mediterranean members of the genus have very small leaves on gnarled woody stems. They look old, wise, settled and can have a powerful impact in a large succulent planting.

One of the most common Mediterranean grey shrubs is Lavender Cotton (Santolina chamaecyparissus). I cannot fathom its common name, but it is a terrific plant, particularly in a full sun, rocky hot spot. It too, does best with less water, overwatered plants tend to flop and the middle collapses. The bloom is a little silly, tiny buttons of yellow perched on thread thin stems, but few plants are more rugged and give you so much beauty for such little care. A hard prune in the spring helps keep this rambunctious plant in better form. Santolina smooths out Rosemary and Lavender, offering good contrast to the former’s relentless green and a good color background for the latter’s bloom.

Continued on page 7.
Plant a Row for the Hungry in 1998

An estimated 30 million Americans, including elderly people and children, go to bed hungry each night or not knowing when their next meal will be. According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ annual study on hunger and homelessness released in December, in 1997 about 19% of the requests for emergency food went unfulfilled. The GWAA, oldest and largest association of professional garden communicators, hopes to reduce the problem. Members of the Garden Writers Association of America (GWAA), a non-profit trade association for garden communicators, are launching Plant a Row for the Hungry, a publicity campaign that will dramatically increase the amount of fresh food made available to the hungry. Its aim is to enlist the nation’s 78 million gardeners in helping to feed the hungry by donating fresh produce to area food banks. The program is surprisingly simple: garden communicators via print, radio and TV are mounting a campaign calling on everyone who plants a vegetable garden this spring to add an extra row for neighborhood food banks, church soup kitchens, day care centers and homeless shelters.

Here is what gardeners can do to ensure the success of Plant a Row for the Hungry in their own communities:

- Whether your vegetable garden is large or small, you can contribute. If you usually put in 4 tomato plants, plant 8 instead. If you plant a window box full of herbs, plant 2 (fresh herbs improve the flavor of most anything and contain valuable minerals).
- Some produce travels and keeps especially well. Plant extras that withstand handling - broccoli, cabbage, carrots, peas, green beans, tomatoes, sweet peppers, eggplants, summer squash (including zucchini), winter squash, onions and beets.
- Clean the produce thoroughly before you bring it in.
- Fruit trees provide a wealth of good eating. If you can’t gather the fruit yourself, call a food bank for help. Often they will send volunteers to strip the tree for you. Or ask young people in your neighborhood to climb the ladder and assist in the harvest.
- Wait, let your crops go and grow, and harvest more. Pick 4-in. bean babies for your own table, and let a give-away portion of the crop mature to 7- and 8-in.
- Too many tomatoes is what happens when you let the plants sucker; they’ll slow the crop a bit but yield lots later. You’ll have loads of extra cucumbers, zucchini and squash if you allow the plants to mature to 10-in. vegetables instead of harvesting 4- and 5-inchers.
- Don’t allow fruit to rot on the ground; bag it and take it where it will do some good!
- To sustain the extra growth, scratch a little compost, or fertilizer, into the soil beside the plants designated for increased yields and giving.
- To have produce to give later, start seeds of the vegetables early.

A few apples or oranges, a sack of tomatoes, or a handful of cucumbers may not seem like much, but when the gardeners in a community get going they can deliver big time! In a single month in San Jose, Texas, the donations of gardeners responding to Plant a Row appeals amounted to 6,500 pounds of citrus fruits!

How can you get involved? First, visit the new GWAA (http://www.hygexpo.com/gwaa/plant-a-row/) or Second Harvest (http://www.secondharvest.org/websecha/) websites to find out about local food banks near you. You can also phone Second Harvest at 312/263-2303 or Foodchain at 800/845-3008 to get this information. Next, contact Jacqui Heriteau at 202/546-2818 to order row markers, a how-to kit, advertisements, and more. Included are instructions for organizing your fellow gardeners across the city, county or state!

Grey in the Garden (Continued from page 6)

As yet not well known, Poliomentha incana is another grey Arizona native for desert gardens. This is a finer plant than most grey-leaved plants, with an open, light form and very thin leaves. This plant is native at much higher elevations than the Valley, but has done extremely well here in garden conditions. Hard to find, but worth the journey.

I have long wanted to create a grey garden somewhere in order to try to mix the numerous greys using both their foliage and bloom color as the interest in the planting. The deep white of Leucophyllum zygophyllum is the perfect foil for its intense, purple summer bloom, the unlikely bright yellow of Brittlebush in the winter sets of the grey foliage perfectly, delicate white stalks punctuate the chalky foliage of Salvia apiana, truly the possibilities are endless.

A new corner in the yard was recently released from its former planned activity and I might try it there. In the meanwhile, I let the greys do their work throughout the garden, nurturing color schemes that would run riot without their calm and soothing hand.
Did You Know?

Did you know that members of the Arizona Herpetological Association offer, as a public service, free removal of snakes (including rattlesnakes)? They will also remove other uninvited reptile guests, such as Gila Monsters, and other lizards. The Association maintains a hotline number (602-894-1625) for callers. A call to that number puts you in touch with someone who has an up-to-date list of the names and phone numbers of the herpetological volunteers nearest your location.

As reptiles are very likely to move, the volunteers ask that the caller watch the reptile from a safe distance until one of the members can get there and remove it. Once the member gets the call, they try to respond immediately. Tom Taylor, a member of this public-spirited group, reports that recently they responded to a 4:30 a.m. call from a burger place which reported a python in their newstand.

Did you know that you can grow your own nopalitos? Nopalitos, the edible pads of prickly-pear cactus, are used in Southwest cookery, and can be found in some supermarkets, either in the fresh produce section or as canned goods. You can grow Opuntia ficus indica, the edible prickly pear, using much the same culture as you would in growing other prickly pears.

Did you know that the Aztecs used an insect called cochineal scale, in dried form, to produce a red dye? This particular insect feeds on prickly-pear and cholla cactus, with the female secreting a protective white, waxy coating. Cactus with a bad infestation looks like someone had spent the day dabbing at the plant with a wad of cotton.

When this scarlet dye was introduced to the larger world, it was, for a time, in great demand. Michelangelo is said to have used it in his paintings, and the uniform coats of British soldiers (“Redcoats”) were dyed using this substance.

Did you know that a bill (SB 1039) has been introduced in the Arizona legislature proposing that Arizona, which already has a state flower and a state bird, also have a state soil? Sponsor of the bill is Senator Pat Conner, District 5. He proposes that Casa Grande series soil (fine-loamy, mixed, superactive, hyperthermic type, natrargids) be given this distinctive honor. If the bill becomes law, Arizona would hardly be unique. As quoted in the Wall Street Journal, Tim Gerber of the Association of Ohio Pedologists, or soil scientists, says about a dozen states already have an official state soil. Just recently, California’s legislature OK’ed a bill designating an official state dirt. Will Arizona be the next to plow that ground?

Did you know that deformed carrots might be caused by something other than an encounter with hard, heavy soil? Nematodes may be the culprit, especially when the deformed specimens are multi-legged. According to Terry Mikel, carrots, like tomatoes, are nematode sensitive. Even very low populations of nematodes can damage them. The good news is that, even if the carrots are not centerfold material, they are still edible.

How do you deal with nematodes? Chemical treatment is NOT recommended. Try rotating crops in the affected area. Another way you can combat these near-microscopic, hair-like worms is by increasing the amount of organic matter that is incorporated into the soil in that particular patch of ground.

Did you know that nighttime temperatures are a factor in determining when your bermuda grass lawn will begin to green up? Bermuda generally begins regrowth when nighttime temperatures are in the mid-sixties. Hold off de-thatching a bermuda lawn until around May. You want new growth rapidly replacing that “scratched-up” de-thatched look.

Did you know that lightning provides something more than just a spectacular sky show? That discharge of electrical energy provides some free nitrogen. This nitrogen, which is in the nitrate form (no ammonium provided) can be utilized by desert trees and other plants. The fertilizer companies, however, are in no danger of being put out of business, as only a
small quantity of nitrogen is provided by this release of energy.

*Dolly Clark*
*Master Gardener*