Low Desert Gardener Profile
Thomas Ropp

Thomas Ropp has been writing the desert horticulture column for the Arizona Republic for the past 13 years. As of February 27 he will have written his last “Way to Grow” column for the paper. Beginning March 6, a desert gardening topic page will be introduced which will be a full page on Saturday of each month, and a half page the other three Saturdays of the month. Thomas will edit this new column which will be written by Terry Mikel and Lucy Bradley, Agents for Extension; Mary Irish of the Desert Botanical Garden; and Janet Rademaker of Mountain States Nursery.

Thomas was first hired by the newspaper in 1979 as a staff writer for the old Arizona Magazine. When the magazine folded in 1985, he landed in the features department. With his life sciences background, it was determined that he would write about gardening. More important than Thomas’ own background, he says, is knowing Terry Mikel, Commercial Horticulture Agent, who he describes as his own personal Rambo. “He’s a genius, you know,” Thomas said.

In addition to writing about desert horticulture, Thomas does more editing these days than ever. “I also write a column on metaphysics called Offramp, a travel column called Tours, and a column in the Healthy Living section called Jumpstarts,” he said. “Additionally, I do daily stories if an editor needs something. On any given day I can receive questions ranging from: “How do you start an avocado?” to “What’s the best method to relieve cramps?” He says he has to be careful not to get the answers mixed up.

How many gardening questions has Thomas answered through the years? “Basically, the same two dozen or so questions about 35,000 times.” What plants/problems has Thomas been asked about the most? “I’m told 100,000 new residents move into the Valley every year. That’s a city the size of Berkeley, California. It seems that all of these new residents buy a citrus trees. Questions reflect that trend. I’m fairly certain most citrus trees don’t live up to the unrealistic expectations of their owners.”

Is there a weirdest question that Thomas has been asked? “The questions are amazingly similar. Sometimes they’re rather disturbing. People want trees that don’t shed leaves, gardens without bees, silent birds, and perfect saguaros that resemble wax figurines.”

Aside from Terry Mikel, what sources does Thomas use the most to help answer the questions he receives? “Before Terry there was Lowell True, Citrus Specialist at Extension, now retired, and Extension Agent Allen Boettcher, also now retired. Local horticulturist Judy Mielke, Rita Jo Anthony of Wild Seeds, Mary Irish and Patrick Quirk of the Desert Botanical Garden, and Carol Crosswhite of the Boyce Thompson Southwest Arboretum are among the regulars who help me out.”

When did Thomas first become interested in gardening? “My mother Pauline introduced me to the world of bulb gardening when I was knee high to a pocket gopher back in Brookfield, Illinois.”

What is Thomas’ most favorite thing about gardening? “Eating garden fresh vegetables.” What does Thomas like best about gardening? “I like hand pollination, and drowning snails in shallow pans of beer before they can eat my fresh vegetables.”

What is Thomas’ most challenging aspect about gardening? “Trying to educate people that a healthy garden ecosystem needs to be a balanced one. That means that insects, worms, birds and your favorite roses should be given an opportunity to work it out without the introduction of insecticides and other chemicals that usually do more harm that good in the big picture.”

What gardening tips does Thomas have for newcomers? Buy desert adapted plants. Avoid lantana, hibiscus and other wildly favorites. Understand how even desert adapted plants need lots of water to get them through their first summer. And, that after most plants establish a root system, you should water deeply and less frequently.”

What are Thomas’ favorite magazines, books, catalogs? “I like Sunset Western Gardening, Organic Gardening, and the Native Seed SEARCH indigenous peoples catalogs.”

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The Orchid Society of Arizona

Orchid Society of Arizona, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to community service and the study of orchids. OSA provides free assistance to any group requesting a program presentation. OSA's mission is to help the non-greenhouse grower select plants that will do well in his or her growing environment. We stress the need for reading culture books, talking with veteran orchid growers, exercising common sense, and for being creative. Our growers use windowsills, light stands, aquariums, and even rabbit cages as growing environments. The goal of our programs is to dispel the notion that orchids are difficult to grow and expensive. Any person can successfully grow orchids in a home environment. No other plant family is as diverse as the orchid family or as colorful, and no other houseplants offer flowers that can remain in bloom for months.

In the past four years, OSA has introduced over 600 Arizona school children to orchids, as well as presented programs for 22 senior centers, various garden clubs, the Arizona State Veteran Home, and the Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Prescott. All community service programs begin with a display of various blooming orchids loaned by the members who grew the plants. For adult audiences, part of the program is a door prize drawing of an orchid plant. For school children, OSA purchases orchid seedlings so that the children may have hands-on experience potting orchids. We also instruct the students how to make a mini-greenhouse out of a plastic gallon milk jug. OSA donates all of the plants and potting supplies for use in the programs. (To date we have donated over 400 plants to students in kindergarten through 8th grade. This represents a sizable investment, but we believe our money has been well spent because we who present the programs, have witnessed the joy the plants bring to the children.) Teachers and Activities Directors will verify the therapeutic and educational value of introducing audiences to orchids. Also, it is OSA's sincere hope that by exposing children at an early age to orchids, we will have the opportunity to implant an idea among one or more students to go on to become botanists.

In 1996, OSA donated a collection of orchid reference works to the Phoenix Public Library. This donation enables members of the community to access an otherwise unavailable resource. To date, the value of the books we donated is over $2800. And each year, we make additional donations of books to PPL. In the past two years, OSA has awarded scholarships to two Arizona students majoring in Botany. To date our donations total $3000.

OSA's monthly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the 1st Thursday of the month at the Valley Garden Center, 1809 N. 15th Ave., Phoenix. We try to alternate our programs so that one month we have an in-house program stressing one or more practical aspects of orchid culture, and the next month an "imported" speaker noted as an expert on a particular orchid genus. We have had such illustrious speakers as Dr. Henry Oakley, Fellow of the Linnean Society; Dr. Robert Dressler, considered the father of modern taxonomy; and Dr. John Atwood, Director of the Orchid Identification Center, Selby Gardens. Sarasota, Fl., to name a few.

Our meetings are open to the public, and there is no fee for non-members regardless of the program scheduled for the evening. Each of our monthly meetings also features a fund-raising raffle for which members, non-members who support our community service agenda, and businesses donate orchids and orchid-related items. Our December meeting is devoted to our annual, major, live, fund-raising auction. At this event we raise a large portion of the funds we need for community service programs, the annual field trip, and outside speakers. Because so many of our members work hard as a team, we also sponsor a major field trip each year for all OSA members who wish to participate. Thus far our destinations have been to Santa Barbara and San Diego, Ca.

Our annual November orchid show is a non-competitive event. This affords us the opportunity to be creative and to have fun. At least half of our display area is devoted to duplicating a household setting wherein one sees an actual area where orchids are grown.

OSA was established in 1962 and is affiliated with the American Orchid Society, the Orchid Digest, the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs, and The Nature Conservancy. For further information, visit OSA's web site at http://welcome.to/orchidsocietyaz or to inquire about scheduling an orchid appreciation program, telephone Wilella Stimmell, Community Service Program Coordinator, at 947-8479 (e-mail: wilellas@worldnet.att.net). Feel free to ask orchid culture questions! You need not be a member of OSA for us to be helpful!
Fragrant Plants for Desert Gardens

Fragrant plants fall into two main categories: seasonally fragrant (usually due to fragrant flowers), and constantly fragrant (usually from fragrant foliage), and of these groups: annuals or perennials. Here are some tried and true plants to grow if you’ve been wanting to add fragrance to your garden.

Spring is a wonderful season for fragrances of all kinds. Two easy annual flowers are Sweet Alyssum (Lobularia maritima) or Stocks (Matthiola incana), bedding plants which can be purchased at local nurseries and garden centers. Sweet Alyssum comes in colors ranging from white to pink and purple or mixtures of all three and has a honey-like fragrance. The entire plant can be sheared back after blooming to encourage re-bloom. It will frequently self-sow and perpetuate itself year after year.

Some spring fragrance requires planning in the fall. Sweet Peas (Lathyrus odoratus) for example, should be planted in September and October for bloom the following March but are well worth the effort. The most fragrant varieties are the oldest ones, closest to the wild Sicilian vines from which modern Sweet Peas were developed. These have the added bonus of being more heat tolerant and blooming longer in the spring. “Old Spice” or “Painted Lady” (first introduced in 1737) are two such varieties which are offered in several seed catalogs.

Roses often come to mind when fragrant flowers are mentioned but today’s modern roses do not compare to their ancestors where fragrance is concerned. Antique or Old Garden Roses are those classes of roses that were developed before 1867, the date the first Hybrid Tea “La France” was introduced. Old Garden Roses usually perform better and require less care in our desert environment than the more delicate hybridized Modern Roses. This is especially true of Chinas and Teas, two classes of rose which cannot tolerate cold climates. Although there is only space here to touch on this topic, two examples to mention are “Hermosa,” a pink-flowered China dating to 1837, and “Frances Dubreuil,” a crimson Tea from 1894. Both of these are very fragrant, bloom throughout the year, and are of a size (3- to 4-ft.) which fits into many home gardens. To learn more about Old Garden Roses visit the Heritage Rose Garden on the west side of the Cooperative Extension Office.

Herbs can add fragrance and sometimes also color to your garden through their foliage and flowers. Among the annuals, basil (Ocimum basilicum) is a good choice which thrives in the summer heat and can easily be grown from seed. Although known as a culinary plant, some varieties, especially the purple basils, are primarily ornamental and add color as well as their spicy fragrance to the landscape. Purple varieties include “Dark Opal,” “Purple Ruffles,” and “Red Rubin.” All have purple leaves and pink flowering stems. Purple basils tend to bleach/bronze out in full sun and benefit from some afternoon shade. “Cinnamon” basil and “African Blue” (a perennial) are two varieties which are green-leaved with purple highlights and can grow in full sun. All basils are very frost sensitive.

Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis) is an excellent selection for putting along a walkway where it will release its piney scent when brushed against. It also provides color and cheer in the winter months when blooming, now in colors ranging from white to blue, violet and pink. To bloom well rosemary should be in full sun, however some plants seem to bloom more than others.

Other notable perennial herbs for year round fragrant foliage are the scented geraniums or more correctly Pelargoniums. These are not to be confused with the geraniums valued for their red flowers such as “Lady Washington” (Pelargonium domesticum). Scented geraniums are known for their fragrant leaves, their flowers are not significant. The major fragrances to be found are rose-scented, mint-scented, lemon/citrus-scented and fruit or nut-scented. The fragrance of scented geraniums is borne on the breeze and a scented geranium or two in pots would make a great addition to an enclosed patio. Scented geraniums can grow in full sun although afternoon shade is beneficial and they must be protected from frost. The larger the leaf of the scented geranium the more tender it is. Varieties with more deeply divided and lobed leaves can better withstand our extremes of temperature.

What about native or desert adapted fragrant plants? There are several choices which could fit into a desert landscape. Some examples of shrubs which have fragrant foliage are Chaparral Sage (Salvia clevelandii), Desert Lavender (Hyptis emoryi), and Mt. Lemon Marigold (Tagetes lemmonii). Chaparral Sage has a sharp “sagey” scent and can also be substituted for culinary sage in

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Compost is King
Special Composting Situations
(Last Article of the Series)

So... you think composting is a great idea, but you're looking around your teeny apartment and wondering where you could put a compost bin? Or perhaps you have a condo and you have 6 plants in about 20 sq. ft. of 'backyard'... where could you put a compost heap? Maybe you're a gardening minimalist and the only thing you want to grow is a few landscape plants that don't need a lot of care and a patch of turf so the kids can accumulate the required number of grass stains on their clothes?

All is not lost! You don't have to send your organic wastes to a landfill; there are some very clever and innovative methods that gardeners, engineers, and thinkers have developed for coping with these various situations so your organic waste products can still be used to benefit your landscape, houseplants, and turf.

The Worm and The Bin
If you thought the micro-workers in the regulation “compost heap” were good, meet the Superstars of Composting! These guys ought to wear blue spandex suits with the letter “S” emblazoned on the front and have bright red capes flowing behind them! While this special variety of red worms will cost a little to ‘hire,’ you certainly don’t have to pay a superstar’s salary. All they need is a little bedding, a little moisture, and your vegetable scraps to be as happy as can be. The end result of all their happiness is the famed fertilizer known as “worm castings.” This is a naturally rich organic fertilizer which is odorless enough to be used for houseplants... which, of course, makes your houseplants quite happy.

The premier reference book for using worms to compost is called “Worms Eat My Garbage” by Mary Appelhof and is highly recommended for the beginning vermicomposter. Vermicomposting begins with hiring the right worms. If you’re lucky enough to have a garden bed teeming with earthworms and you think you’d like to use them instead of hiring the right worms for the job... well, it’s a mistake. Common earthworms won’t be happy in a bin and will do their utmost to escape. That’s not the best discovery to make at 2 a.m. in your bare feet! The right worm for the job is known as a red wiggler A.K.A. Eisenia fetida and it will be perfectly happy living in captivity. This variety of worm comes with excellent references!

Sometimes you can find red wigglers at the bait shop or you can order them fairly inexpensively from sources in the back of the gardening magazines. Inspect the worms to see if they are vigorous and healthy before putting them in your special bin; you don’t want to be disappointed with results given by frail or frozen worms. Make sure your worms won’t be cooking in a hot mailbox all day waiting for you to come home either; Arizona summer heat can be a bit much for them to take.

A plastic bin with a lid such as a Rubbermaid tote in the 10-15 gal. range is about the right size to start your worms. Drill ½-in. to 1-in. sized holes all around the bin up close to the lid so that you have air flow through the container and your superstars can breathe. If you’re afraid the little guys will escape anyway, you can cover the airholes with fine wire or similar material which is porous.

Then add bedding for them to burrow through. Put in enough damp peat moss to cover the bottom of the bin (about 1-in. or so). Worms absolutely need moisture at all times, but be sure their environment isn’t too wet. If it gets too wet for them, they will crawl up the sides of the bin to try and escape. Can’t blame them; I wouldn’t want to drown either! Next, put enough moistened and fluffed 1-in. strips of newspaper on top of the peat moss to add another 3-in. or so. You can put your worms on top and they will crawl down into the bedding without help. If you like, you may add a layer of dry paper strips on top just so the worms have somewhere to go if it gets too wet down below. There are also commercial worm bins such as Can-O-Worms which have been developed to make vermicomposting even easier. Check the gardening magazines for sources of and instructions for commercial bins.

Feeding The Fellas
A worm has to suck its food in (they don’t have any teeth), so the smaller the pieces of food are, the better it is for them. (They even eat bacteria and fungi.) You can also take your kitchen scraps and run them through the blender to form a kind of fruit & vegetable slurry.

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Compost is King (Continued from page 11)

They will appreciate the kindness, but it really isn’t necessary. Lift up a corner of the shredded paper and add about a cup of food scraps. Then cover the scraps with paper to discourage fruit flies from hanging around and to keep any potential odors down. (A well-run bin doesn’t smell.) Rotate the places where you add the food, perhaps choosing to add food in a clockwise fashion around the bin to get some sort of order to the process.

When you start with a pound of worms, start slowly with feeding until you see all the food disappearing. Then gradually add more and more as the worms do ‘what comes naturally’ and multiply. (Those little white or pinkish-red round things you may find in the bedding are egg cases full of baby worms.) Worms love most vegetable and fruit scraps, but they don’t do well with melon rinds. Just like a regular outdoor compost heap, don’t add meat, grease, or dairy products. About every 4-6 weeks, add a teaspoon of sand or finely crushed dry eggs shells to provide their tummies with grit to digest the food scraps. Worms can eat up to half their body weight in a day. They can even eat the newspaper and pet moss in their bedding, so make sure there is enough left when they leave the dinner table.

Harvesting The Castings

After about 3 or 4 months of fine worm-ish dining, you can harvest the castings. If you don’t have a second bin prepared for them to enjoy, then you can simply pull the old bedding over to one side of the bin. Add new bedding and fresh food to the now-empty side and wait a week for the worms to migrate to the new food supply. Then put down a large piece of plastic and find a bright light to shine on it or take it outside into the sunlight. Using your gloved hands, scoop out the old bedding and place it in piles on the plastic. Make sure the light shines brightly on the piles.

Worms hate light and will burrow deeply into the small piles to escape it. Shortly, you will be able to gently lift off the castings and collect them in a bag. The worms will burrow even deeper into the small piles and you can repeat the process until you are basically left with a pile of worms. Add the very slow and stubborn little wigglers into the new bed with all their cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.

Allow the castings to dry out for awhile then add them to your houseplants, your garden, or give them as gifts to your gardening friends. As you keep getting richer and richer in numbers of worms, you can also give those as gifts, sell them for fishing bait, give them to a school for a science project, or whatever. The Superstars won’t survive if you put them directly into the garden, but their little remains will still enrich the soil, naturally. You can also add them to an outdoor compost heap — especially if you do ‘cold’ composting; they can survive in that situation. If the compost heap heats up, they will burrow down until they find a temperature they can stand.

Salute the Red Wiggler for it’s Superstar efforts on your behalf, but try to avoid being hit by the teeny red capes as you harvest the castings.

The Kitchen Composter

A way to take advantage of a very small yard is to create a special place to compost just small amounts of kitchen scraps. Find a suitable can in a size to fit your personal situation (One person or family size?) and cut the bottom out of the can. Make sure the can has a very tight-fitting lid. Sink the can into the soil for 8- to 12-in. so whatever you place in the can will have direct contact with the soil. Then add the kitchen scraps which you have chopped or broken down into very small pieces.

This process takes advantage of natural fermentation and will be somewhat smelly, but it shouldn’t be a problem since the tight-fitting lid contains the aromas. You can also scatter a small amount of soil over the contents each time you add something, if you like. After 2 or 3 years when everything is completely decomposed, you can plant something directly in the compost pit. (That plant will be very happy!) You will, of course, have long since moved the compost container to another location and already have begun the composting process in the new site.

Grass-cycling

Anywhere from 10 to 50% of the average waste from traditional residential lots can be grass clippings. That is a substantial amount of refuse for the municipal landfill to absorb. Why not use your grass clippings to enhance

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your turf? Grass clippings are 95% water and contain the specific nutrients that turf needs to thrive. Since you are adding the nitrogen-rich grass clippings directly to the turf, it saves time, effort, and money spent on unnecessary amendments. In other words, you are recycling and composting your grass clippings directly and placing them where they are most needed - all at once.

One of the most prevalent myths about Grass-cycling is that it causes the build-up of thatch. Thatch is caused by a mass of grass roots at the surface of the soil and is generally caused by the use of too much fertilizer and shallow watering practices. Roots are not encouraged to penetrate the soil with shallow watering. Why go deep for water and nutrients when the roots can be very lazy and just absorb what’s on top? The downside is that the roots dry out quickly and the turf is injured. Water deeply and not too often; use the watering guide published in the newspaper for seasonal needs.

Any grass can be Grass-cycled. No special mower is necessary, however, the mower blades need to be kept sharp in order to cut rather than tear the grass blade. Generally, mow the turf when the turf is dry and remember to cut off no more than a third of the grass blade. Mowing often enough to keep the clippings in the 1-in. size range is optimum.

In order to scatter the clippings fairly evenly across the turf, mow in a criss-cross pattern. You will have to remove the grass catcher from your power mower if you have one in place. The clippings rapidly sink through the living grass blades and are barely noticeable in the turf.

As you can see, even if you haven’t the room for a traditional compost heap, there are methods and ways you can still contribute to Mother Nature’s Grand Recycling Pattern and benefit yourself substantially in the process. Whether it’s using a compost factory and employing lots of Micro-workers, using Red Wiggler Superstars, or simply Grass-cycling, you are making a big difference in the quality of life for the inhabitants of the Valley of the Sun and of Mother Earth.

Finally, there is an immense personal satisfaction in looking at the rich, black finished compost you can hold in your two open hands. As the compost trickles through your fingers, the glorious smell of a moist, sun-warmed earth wafts into your nostrils. The sensual texture of the compost feels like the softest velvet imaginable. And in that special moment, just before you give the compost you helped create to your garden soil, you can be aware that you are a part of Nature and a part of the All that is. It’s a wonderful feeling! Happy Composting!

C. Dawn Earle
Master Gardener and Master Composter
Official Compost Princess and Compost Lady-in-Waiting

Resources: Master Gardener Manual from the Master Composter Program sponsored by the Arizona Recyling Coalition Organic Products Committee, the U of A Maricopa County Cooperative Extension, and Wyatt Roberge. Worm farmer logo from Connecticut Valley Worm Farm.

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cooking. Its purple flowers in the spring are attractive to bees and hummingbirds. Desert Lavender has lavendernscented gray foliage, small bluish flowers in spring and can grow to a height of 8- to 10-ft. Mt. Lemmon Marigold has strong, pungently scented foliage, said to be a blend of marigold, mint and lemon, which does not appeal to some people. It produces single yellow flowers in the winter months when not much else is blooming.

Those who are transplanted Midwesterners might want to find a space for Bee Brush (Aloysia gratissima), another native shrub. It bears spikes of white flowers throughout the spring and summer months. Although officially described as vanilla-scented, many believe that Bee Brush flowers smell like lilacs and are the closest to a lilac fragrance of anything that can be grown here in the desert. Bee Brush is a deciduous branching shrub which can attain a height of 6 ft.

A flower to add to wildflower displays for fragrance is the Chocolate Flower (Berlandiera lyrata). This lemon yellow, daisy-like flower blooms from late spring until fall and smells like a Hershey’s chocolate bar!

This range of suggestions should give you some ideas to add fragrance to your garden. Once you have mastered these plants there are many more fragrant plants to try: lemon scented ones, night blooming cactus, winter bulbs. Many of these plants can be found at the Spring Garden Fair or at the Desert Botanical Garden’s Plant Sale.

Connie Heaton
Master Gardener
Healthy Gardening
Home First Aid Kit for Gardeners

Springtime is a busy season for gardeners in Arizona. Since we spend so much time in our gardens, accidents and emergencies can occur there. Are you prepared? Do you know basic first aid? Do you have the supplies you may need? And can you find them quickly?

First, everyone needs to have a list or chart of emergency numbers posted near your phone. It is a good idea to have additional copies in your first aid kit, in your car, and even folded in your wallet. If someone finds you hurt and unable to speak or unconscious, having this list handy can save precious time and might save your life. You should include the following basic information:

- **Personal** - name, age, medical conditions, current medications, allergies, insurance name and number (you might want to make a copy of your card), and the hospital of choice.

- **Emergency Phone Numbers** - 911, police, fire, the ambulance, poison control (602-253-3334 for the Maricopa County Poison Center), your family physician and any medical specialists’ names and phone numbers, the names and phone numbers of your closest family member and closest friend or neighbor.

If an accident occurs and basic first aid is appropriate, having a basic first aid kit helps by keeping your supplies handy and within easy reach. Prepackaged first aid kits can be purchased from any large store and kept in your home or car. You can also easily make up your own kit with supplies that you have in your home. Gardening accidents can be as simple as a cut or scrape requiring washing and an adhesive bandage to a serious head injury with unconsciousness. Keep your first aid items in a container that can be closed and kept dry. You might use a new tool box or tackle box, or a similar sized container. Store this in a convenient location.

Items to include in your basic first aid kit include the following:

- **Dressings**: assorted sizes of individual adhesive bandages (like Band-aids®), butterfly bandages, sterile individually wrapped gauze pads, elastic (like ACE®) bandage (2- or 3-in. wide), adhesive surgical tape, roll of gauze, sterile cotton balls, cotton swabs, sterile eye patch, large piece of cloth (to make a sling or splint).

Remember: in an emergency, household items such as disposable diapers or sanitary pads can be used as bandages and compresses. A clean dish towel or handkerchief can make a sling.

- **Instruments**: bulb syringe to rinse eyes or wounds, tweezers, safety pins, sharp needle (for splinter removal), scissors, thermometer.

- **Miscellaneous**: instant chemical cold pack (if you don’t always have ice cubes ready), disposable latex gloves, antibacterial soap (or the new solution that doesn’t need water to clean your hands), flashlight (keep batteries separate), handy wipes, magnifying glass.

- **Medications**: aspirin (or Tylenol®, Ibuprofen), antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin® or triple antibiotic ointment), syrup of ipecac (to induce vomiting in a poisoning, but always call poison control first), rubbing alcohol, Calamine lotion, antihistamine (like Benadryl®), antacids for indigestion, hydrogen peroxide, meat tenderizer for insect bites.

Remember to check your kit periodically. Check the expiration dates of your medications and replace any items you have used. Gardening is a rewarding activity, especially when we are prepared for accidents. Safe gardening is healthy gardening.

Vicky Burke
Master Gardener and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

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**Master Gardeners Need Your Help!**

In July 1999, the Maricopa County Master Gardener Program is scheduled to lose funding for a full time support position. Our ambition is to generate enough funding through alternative sources to re-hire this position. We are requesting a budget increase this spring, effective July 1, 1999, from Maricopa County to support this position.

**You can help us!**

Please fill out the enclosed postcard and mail it to your County Supervisor. Let them know that the Master Gardener Program is important to you. Please be sure to include your return address on the front of the card. Feel free to use the space next to your signature for any comments.

**Thank You!**

Maricopa County Master Gardener Program