School Gardening Journal
Will it grow?

I am praying for the garden gods to help tonight. There’s a patch of freshly dug dirt at Lagos Elementary School with seeds of all kinds that are waiting to grow. I’m wet, tired and cold from the gusting wind. But still, I smile. The garden I will pray for is not of my own design. The hands that planted it are much smaller than mine. The sweat from turning the soil is not mine either. I am exhausted and my throat is parched from talking. I have loaded up my car and look at the nine raised beds bordering the once barren school grounds.

As I turn to leave, doubts are stomping in and out of my thoughts. “Should I really have tried this? With this wacky weather, will it grow? And, what was I thinking, planting in this exposure and so late in the season?”

Then, I hear little voices call out “Night-night plants, grow strong.” The sweetness in their voices calms me and I am re-energized as I watch them blow kisses of goodbye to their plants as they form a line and begrudgingly head back inside to class.

The journey that brought me here to Kyrene de Los Lagos Elementary School began a long time ago on a tiny patch of earth on Plumb Road in Connecticut. As a child, I begged my father to make me a garden. He obliged and dug up a square in the back yard. I remember that I chose the vegetables (cucumbers and radishes), I planted it, I nurtured it, and I harvested it. Despite the freedom I felt, my father still wanted to make sure I didn’t fail. His touch was subtle but present. I remember being disappointed because he bought the seeds already neatly lined up on a roll of tape. I thought it more fun to have a packet of seeds to juggle as I worked. But, this was his way of assuring I would be given the best start. The seeds would be protected from invading beetles and evenly spaced for growth.

I feel like my father now. I don’t want this garden to fail. I want the children who trust in me to feel like I did when I tugged on my Dad’s arm and asked if it would grow. I thought surely my Dad the chemist and family brainiac was not going to let my garden fail. But, he said it was up to me and Mother Nature now.

While this garden is not mine, I feel responsible for its success. The children at Lagos Elementary in the Ahwatsu-kee Foothills area will also need to learn that even the best of gardens have some failures. Or as I like to say, Mother Nature had different plans. I can’t believe that I have already helped 300 children take their first steps to become more connected with the earth.

My decision to take part in this garden project was something I was destined to do. It found me. I was fortunate to be a founding committee member of the Southwest Region Community and School/Youth Gardening Conference. And now, it’s time for me to practice what I preach! I am on my way to learning and discovering the ups and downs of school gardening.

In a series of articles, I will share my experiences and invite you to come along on the journey to see how our “Desert Mustang” garden grows! After all, it’s up to the children and Mother Nature now.

Leslie Honaker
Master Gardener

New Desert Gardening Book!

Desert Gardening for Beginners: How to Grow Vegetables, Flowers and Herbs in an Arid Climate is the second book published by Arizona Master Gardener Press. Everything you need to know to grow fresh, tasty vegetables, fragrant herbs and colorful flowers is covered. The authors, Cathy Cromell, Linda A. Guy and Lucy K. Bradley, have translated the most current horticultural information from University of Arizona researchers into easy-to-understand language for new gardeners.

There are chapters on desert soil characteristics, soil preparation, removing Bermudagrass, garden design and location, making compost, planting and tending, effective watering, managing insects and diagnosing problems, as well as specific pointers for vegetables, flowers and herbs.

The book is at the printer and will be available mid-to late-May. It can be purchased at the Extension Office, Satellite Offices, bookstores (ISBN 0-9651987-2-3), or through the mail. Cost is $7.95, plus $2.00 shipping. Make checks payable to University of Arizona and mail to Arizona Master Gardener Press, 4341 E. Broadway Road, Box 100, Phoenix, AZ 85040-8807.
Garden Books for Kids

“A garden after winter is a wonder to see just brown and waiting for someone,” begins Cynthia Rylant’s book called This Year’s Garden. This line more aptly describes a Phoenix garden after summer but Rylant grew up in the Appalachians so this book is about gardening everywhere but the desert. The writing is descriptive and to the point. In the spring the country folk spend their time discussing what to plant, waiting for the rain to quit, the ground to dry out, the last frost. Then on to planting and talking about the future of the plants. Summer comes with sunburns, fingernails full of dirt and insects. Finally there is pulling vegetables, shucking corn, snapping beans, canning lids popping and then it’s fall and winter waiting again. The pictures are two page spreads done in pastel pencils, each one a delight to see as they illustrate the story. This book could begin a good discussion on how planting and seasons differ in the desert and how people from all regions are alike in their love of gardening.

Seeds by George Shannon is another good read aloud book. This is a story about neighbors. Warren, a young child, visits Bill in his garden each day entertaining him with riddles and stories from school. Bill is a writer. Each day Warren appears asking Bill “What’s new?” Instead of giving him an involved answer Bill simply tells him to “Look around.” Warren does and in his imagination sees a garden zoo with snapdragons, larkspur rabbits, pink turtle heads, hen and chicks and monkey faces in the pansies. All goes well until Warren moves to another town. Here he has his own room that looks out over a huge bare yard. All Warren sees is dirt. Bill is also lonely. Warren’s imagination has given him inspiration. The garden is too still. They write and finally Warren asks Bill for seeds and creates his own garden zoo. This inspires Bill to write a book about squirrels that move away. The characters are believable. The illustrations are watercolors and add detail to the story.

Another story about neighbors is Miss Penny and Mr. Grubbs by Lisa Campbell Ernst. For 48 years Miss Penny and Mr. Grubbs were neighbors. Miss Penny grew enormous vegetables each year but Mr. Grubbs’ did not fare as well. Miss Penny won blue ribbons each year at the fair, Mr. Grubb did not. Being a cantankerous old man, Mr. Grubbs out of envy decided to get even with Miss Penny. One night he slipped two rabbits into her vegetable garden. Miss Penny built a fence. Mr. Grubbs cut holes in it. Miss Penny set up a scarecrow. Mr. Grubbs fed the rabbits carrots in her garden. In his revenge he neglects his own garden. Miss Penny tries everything to rid her garden of the rabbits, but they just keep multiplying. Rabbits are everywhere and the garden is eaten down to the ground. She has nothing for the fair — until she notices how fat and glossy the rabbits are. She again wins another blue ribbon. At the end of the story she being a generous neighbor presents Mr. Grubbs with a pair of fine rabbits. The illustrations are a delight in this book. They are colorful and quite humorous. Especially once the rabbits enter the scene.

A child is never too young to enjoy a good book and reading aloud at home instills good reading habits later in life. Reading aloud a gardening book may instill a love of reading and a love of gardening. What a combination to carry you through life. Visit your local library and stock up for the hot days ahead.

Sharon Leezer
Master Gardener

Harvest Recipes
Sautéed Onions, Peppers and Corn

2 tbs. butter or margarine
1 tbs. salad oil
3 c. sliced sweet onions
1 bell pepper, juliened
1 large clove garlic, crushed
1 large tomato, peeled and chopped
1 tsp. chili powder
¼ tsp. salt
10 oz. corn
½ c. thinly sliced, stuffed green olives

Heat butter and oil in heavy skillet. Sauté onions, green pepper and garlic until onions are almost tender (about 10 minutes). Add the rest of the ingredients. Cook and stir until hot.
The Garden Tourist

I make a point of visiting botanical gardens wherever I travel and I have never been disappointed. Each one is unique. If you have an opportunity to travel to British Columbia, make a stop at Butchart Gardens in Victoria, BC, Canada.

Butchart Gardens began in 1904 as a quarry for manufacturing Portland Cement. As Mr. Butchart excavated the limestone, his wife, Jenny, had tons of topsoil hauled in by horse and cart from nearby farmland. Soon the exhausted quarry became a beautiful sunken garden. Over the years they added ponds, fountains, birds, lawns, a rose garden, a Japanese Garden, an Italian Garden and much more. The Gardens are still family owned and show the pride with which Jenny Butchart began this amazing venture.

The Gardens have an international reputation for their continuous display of flowering plants. Over 1,000,000 bedding plants in 700 varieties are used throughout. We were there in late May. The weather was cool and damp. It seemed spring had just sprung! Arizona was already hot and our flower season was about over. But in the Pacific Northwest the flowering season had just begun. We were too early to see a nice display of roses although some early varieties were beginning to bloom. The bulbs, azaleas, rhododendrons and flowering trees provided a riot of color and the aroma of so many blooms was almost overwhelming. For more information, or to visit as a ‘virtual’ tourist, check out their web site at http://butchartgardens.bc.ca/butchart/.

Victoria is on an island so you must take the ferry from the mainland which is scenic and enjoyable. Anything that includes cool water is enjoyable for us Arizonans, isn't it? The old buildings of the Gardens house several restaurants and an extensive gift shop. Following our tour of the gardens we chose to take a short drive into the City for “high tea” at the Empress Hotel. Victoria is said to be the most English City outside of England. I'll let you know. I will be traveling to England, Scotland and Ireland this summer and plan to visit many gardens, including the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew.

In case you can’t get as far away as Canada, the gardens of the new Getty Center in Los Angeles are a work of art in themselves; dramatic and inspiring. Admission to the Center is free but advance-parking reservations are required. The Holiday Inn just a mile south of the Center will provide parking space for your car and shuttle you to and from the Getty for a few dollars. I expect other hotels in the area provide the same service.

Have a great summer. Find a cool spot to sit in a garden and contemplate the wonders of nature!

Joan Andrunas
Master Gardener Intern

Africanized Bees (Continued from page 6)

Examine areas of standing water. Pet water and bird baths may be attractive to bees. Extension Fact Sheet MC63 suggests the following: add 2 ts. vinegar to each gallon of water to discourage the bees. Place a few ounces of pine scented cleaner in the water of evaporative coolers to discourage solitary bees.

Here are some more safety suggestions for dealing with Africanized honey bees:

- Let bees gather their pollen alone. Do not disturb them.
- Do not disturb bees nest or swarms. Don’t throw rocks at hives.
- Don’t try to use a spray of water from a garden hose to take down a nest.
- When outdoors in a park, be aware of your surroundings and watch for bees. If a bee gets into your hair or clothing, help it get out.
- If you are allergic to bees, carry an EPI bee sting kit prescribed by your health care provider.

Bees are a part of our world, we must learn to coexist with them. But in the event of a stinging incident, we should ‘bee’ smart and ‘bee’ safe.

Vicky Burke
Master Gardener, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

References: Extension Fact Sheet MC63; Living with Killer Bees, Greg Flakus, 1993.
Garden Book Reviews

How-To-Grow World Class GIANT Pumpkins and How-To-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins, II by Don Langevin. Annedawn Publishing, Box 247, Norton, MA 02766 for $14.95 and $17.95, respectively. Phone 1-800-985-7878.

Do you have aspirations to grow a really big (a GIANT) pumpkin? If you are serious about all this, here are two books that should be on your suggested reading list.

How-To-Grow World Class GIANT Pumpkins by Don Langevin covers some of the same things that How-To-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins II covers. After all, they are both authored by the same person. This book was written first and it was thought by many that it said all there is to say about growing those big pumpkins. No, they both have a lot to say and it would be a good idea to have both in your library.

The “heavy hitters” in the gigantic pumpkin world are featured. Insight into their experiences may help in your quest for the big one. Their addresses are included for extra help. For extra growing information you can also call our own pumpkin guru and local expert, Master Gardener Sam Kelsall at 234-1999.

An entire chapter is devoted to preparing the soil. Wayne Hackney, pumpkin grower and author says, “There are literally dozens and dozens of factors that affect plant growth and every one must be optimized to get a record breaker.” Both books have many wonderful brightly colored photographs that are a joy to look at “just for the pictures.”

How-To-Grow World Class Giant Pumpkins, II by Don Langevin is the second how-to volume on growing record breaking pumpkins. A lot went into the production of this book, as goes into the growing of a champion pumpkin. This is where soil preparation is very important; soil pH is also important. It is essential to keep the entire plant and fruit free from damaging weather and wildlife. Watch out for insects!

Continued on page 20.

The Arizona Rare Fruit Growers

A ‘Cultivar’ of the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc.

The Arizona chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc. is a non-profit club organized in 1996 by Scottsdale Physician, Dr. Fred Yerger and his daughter, Allison, a landscaper and a student of horticulture at Arizona State University. Doctor Yerger has successfully cultivated a wide variety of tropical and subtropical fruit trees for years at his home in Scottsdale. A desire to share the experience and knowledge evolved into a viable unit whose purpose is to promote the culture and preservation in the home garden of rare plant species having edible seeds, fruit, leaves, roots or stems not commonly grown commercially. Membership is $6 annually. Membership in the parent group, CRFG, Inc. is $21, including a subscription to the Fruit Gardener bimonthly magazine.

The Arizona club meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of every month except December at the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office, 4341 E. Broadway Rd., Phoenix. Visitors are welcomed as guests. A typical meeting format would include a speaker, plus activities with members sharing fruit and fruit products, seeds, home-propagated plants, their personal experiences and successes in propagating new plants and budding and grafting them. In 1999, outside activities will include a trip to the Fruit Festival in Petaluma, CA on August 27-29, a Christmas party and an occasional field trip.

A Subtropical Demonstration Garden at the Cooperative Extension Office is proof of the group’s convictions. Bananas, papayas, a mango, an avocado, pineapples, a white sapote, bamboo, a loquat and a guava are growing happily in apparent harmony in a desert climate, seemingly at odds with their natural environment.

Dick Gross
Arizona Rare Fruit Growers

A Gardener Is...
- A tiller of thyme
- A cultivator of chlorophyll
- A root mechanic
Garden Recycling
Containers

It’s time to talk about recycling again! In this issue, I thought I would discuss container grown plants. Do you want to pay a small fortune for those pretty terra cotta pots or the new high tech plastic pots? First look around your home and see what else can be used for an interesting pot on your patio or in your yard.

The first thing to come to mind is your average plastic bucket. I know I get the “jumbo extra large” laundry soap at our local warehouse in a 5-gallon bucket. Poke a few holes in the bottom and you have an instant plant container. If you’re fussy, paint it, decorate it, put in a tray.

What else do you have around that might make a plant container? What about an old enamel basin or pan with a hole rusted in the bottom? How about an old aluminum basin? An old ceramic crock? Of course, anything you use must be of adequate size to hold the plant you want to pot, and you have to be able to put some drainage holes in the bottom (or put a ugly plastic pot inside your recycled container!)

Even your front yard has potential for recycled containers; an old wooden box with a plastic liner, an old tire painted with a pattern. My neighbors even have an old wheelbarrow full of potting soil and flowers in their front yard. It looks rustic and wonderful. Just look around and use your imagination!!

Coral Gallaher
Master Gardener

Turf & Water Use (Continued from page 13)

only a few of the ways you can save water. Again, your city government or water company will have pamphlets on these and other ways of saving water.

Water conservation does not mean giving up a landscape that provides beauty, environmental benefits and recreational areas. As long as you follow proper maintenance and other conservation practices, you can still do your part in Arizona’s efforts to save water.

Korene Charnofsky Cohen

Computer Corner

This web site review comes from a recommendation from the Cooperative Extension Office. They use this site as a resource for entomology information. I believe anything and everything you wanted to know about insects and other related critters you can find in this site. This site is maintained by Iowa State University and is basically a collection of web sites related to entomology. And the web site is called www.ent.iastate.edu/List/.

Basically, one can search a topic or just pick on the many categories. I browsed through the biological control and Integrated Pest Management category which was very good. The Cornell University Biological Control site was especially good. It showed photos of insects and explained their purpose, habitat, commercial availability and other pertinent information. One example was the info on the lacewing; it showed photos of the egg, the larval stage and the adult. Especially the egg photo is helpful for those who want to encourage beneficial insects in their garden. The other category I checked out was the Images of Insects. This I must say is the best part of the site. The photo images and explanation are complete. There are some great photos from scorpion and tarantula to lady beetles and butterflies. There is also a category on insect sound which you need a sound card and to download the software from the site.

Kathy Caudle
Master Gardener

Garden Book Reviews (Continued from page 19).

There are tips and hints in this book from Howard Dill and other "pumpkinphiles." Most growers of giants build microclimate shelters around their prizes (probably necessary here in Arizona as protection from our harsh sun). How do you pick up and transport a pumpkin of winning size? Read this book — that is covered.

Once you’ve grown that monster pumpkin, you can take it to the local Official Pumpkin Weigh-Off. It will be held on Saturday, October 2, 1999 at Mother Nature’s Christmas Tree Ranch located on Baseline Rd. between Stapley and Gilbert Roads. For more information about the Weigh-Off, call 892-5874.

Lenora Boner
Master Gardener
Calendar of Events

May

5/1 Plant sale (trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers at wholesale prices and also hydroponically grown tomatoes) by Peoria High School agricultural education class, 8 a.m. to noon at Peoria High School greenhouse (on the north side of the campus, beside the old gym), 11200 N 83rd Ave., Peoria. For info call 486-6323 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays.

5/1 Heritage Rose Garden Open House at Maricopa County Extension Service, 4341 E. Broadway, Phoenix, from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., tours of the garden, info and displays about the history of the garden, plants for sale, and refreshments, call Mary at 380-6840.

5/1-5/2 “Bonsai - theory and care of bonsai” taught by Bonsai Master Bill Newton, Tip Top Nurseries, free, call 539-3074 for times and locations.

5/5 “Lighting up the Outdoors” by J. Adamesen (brighten your landscape with inspiring outdoor lighting), Desert Botanical Garden, 1201 N Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m., free, call 941-1225.

5/6 “Making Herbal Tinctures & Extracts” by Herbalist Daniel Gignon of Santa Fe, NM at 7 p.m. at Pueblo Grande Museum, 4619 E Washington St., Phoenix, sponsored by Arizona Herb Assn., general admission $15, AHA members free, call 438-0251.

5/8 “Plant Heat Stress” by Gardeners World at 10 a.m. at 2 locations - 3401 E Baseline Rd., Phoenix (602-437-0700) and 7575 N 75th Ave., Glendale (623-934-0700).


5/15-5/16 Grand Canyon Sweet Onion Festival by the Grand Canyon Sweet Onion, Inc. from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Held at the Rock Springs Cafe in Black Canyon City; take I-17 north to exit #242. For info call 602-470-1556 Ext. 1006.

5/22 Summer Dried Flower Wreath class by floral artist Barb Bourscheidt, Southwest Gardener, 2809 N 15th Ave., all materials furnished for $40. Classes start at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., call 279-9510.

5/22-5/23 Helping Plants Deal with Summer Heat workshop by Tip Top Nurseries, free, call 539-3074 for times and locations.

5/25 Southwest Desert Landscaping, a series of classes on 5/25 (Landscaping Planning), 5/27 (Landscaping Design), 6/1 (Landscaping with Desert Trees), 6/3 (Landscaping with Desert Shrubs), and 6/8 (Landscaping with Succulents, Vines and Groundcovers), taught by Ron Dinchak at Desert Botanical Garden, 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., $12 per session or $50 for the series, call 941-1225.


June

6/1 Southwest Desert Landscaping (continuing - see info on May 25).

6/5 Plant Sale (trees, shrubs, vines, and ground covers at wholesale prices and also hydroponically grown tomatoes) by Peoria High School agricultural education class, 8 a.m. to noon, at Peoria High School greenhouse (located on the north side of the campus, beside the old gym), 11200 N 83rd Ave., Peoria call 486-6323 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays.

6/5-6/6 “Cool Corn and Melon Festival” at Duncan Family Farms, 17203 W Indian School Rd., Goodyear (exit freeway at Indian School and Cotton Lane), 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Family fun activities and cooking demonstrations by some of the top chefs of Phoenix (no extra charge), $2 per person admission. You can pick your own vegetables for $5 a bag (excluding corn and melons). Corn is a super sweet variety and there should be 7 or 8 different kind of melons (depending on the weather). A portion of the proceeds go to the Food Banks, call 853-0111.

6/12 “Summer Lawn Perfection” by Gardeners World at 10 a.m. at 2 locations - 3401 E Baseline Rd., Phoenix (602-437-0700) and 7575 N 75th Ave., Glendale (623-934-0700).

6/12-6/13 Water Gardening Workshop (continuing from May 15) by John Nagle at Tip Top Nurseries, free, call 539-3074 for times and locations.

6/26-6/27 “Bonsai - pruning” taught by Bonsai Master Bill Newton, Tip Top Nurseries, free, call 539-3075 for times and locations.
Become a Master Gardener Volunteer!

Don't miss the mandatory
Pre-Application Workshop
May 18, 1999
9 a.m.
Cooperative Extension Office
4341 E. Broadway Rd., Phoenix