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Staff Change

Lupe Reyes has taken a position with the SNAP-Ed program.

As an Instructional Specialist her bi-lingual skills will serve the SNAP-Ed community well. Lupe was a bright spot in the Master Gardener Program and although we miss her already, we wish her well.

Submitted by Yvonne Cooper, yvonnecooper@email.arizona.edu
Monsoon!

Vegetable gardeners spend all summer anticipating October. The monsoon season is when determined gardeners anticipate October for harvesting, not just for planting weather. Planting calendars suggest winter squash and pumpkins are best planted before August 15th for a fall harvest. Choose varieties that will mature in 90 days or less for success. Try a petite spaghetti squash found at Johnny’s Select Seeds called ‘Angel Hair’ for a change. Remember, delicata types do not need to cure to enhance sweetness or flavor, and butternuts are reliable producers. String beans, summer squashes, slicing and pickling cucumbers, even corn can be planted after August 15th. Varieties which are better adapted to cooling soils, shorter, cooler days, and mature within 50 to 90 days work best going into late fall and early winter. There is a sense of satisfaction when harvesting these “summer” crops in the fall even as we are shoe-horning the winter crops into our gardens. Fresh picked-from-your-garden squash, corn, or cucumbers as well as the baby greens for salads and sweet potatoes are all possible for a Thanksgiving feast or maybe earlier!

Zinnias, cosmos, perhaps even marigolds will brighten up the garden, invite pollinators, and make great cut flowers. They can be planted during monsoon as well. Many of the amaranths sprout well at this time. Desert-adapted tepary beans can be planted with the monsoon rains for a late fall harvest of protein-rich dried beans.

The cucurbits are not a bit tolerant when temperatures plunge in late November and covering does not always help. You can plan on that garden real estate to open up in November, allowing for a crop of Asian greens, lettuces, kale, or chard… or possibly a late planting of cabbage or broccoli. The U of A planting calendar provides great suggestions for when to plant your favorite crops. Go to:

http://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1055.pdf

As the summer crops of melons, black-eyed peas, and okra finish, or we tire of eating them, they can be removed. Urban gardeners often garden in small spaces. The trick to successful seasonal harvests is recognizing when a plant has met our needs or is becoming less and less productive. They can be dispatched to the compost pile to make way for the next season’s crop. Prepare for fall planting by amending the soil with compost and other organic materials. Recommended amounts of a balanced fertilizer will put nutrients at the root zones. As soils cool, plants are less able to take up nutrients. Having them at the root zone increases availability. A good discussion about soil prep to prepare your vegetable garden for planting is at:

http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/vegetable/preparation.html

Add a balanced fertilizer as you prepare soil. You can use granular, or a water soluble type to drench the soil. A slow release type is another option. Time-released fertilizers may release more slowly as the soil temps fall. A balanced fertilizer has equal or almost equal amounts of the big three elements: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Nitrogen promotes green leafy growth. Healthy green leaves are essential for photosynthesis, which is what really grows your plants! Phosphorus is important for root development, flowering and fruit set. Potassium is important for overall growth, and seed and fruit growth. Use small amounts. Nitrogen leaches from soils quickly, often before plants take it up. Most of the winter greens do better when soils are a little ‘lean’- meaning they are not over rich in nitrogen. For information about fertilizers and an explanation of terms take a quick look at:

http://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1020.pdf

This will help dispel urban myths and inform you on how to select products for fertilizing a vegetable garden.

Refresh containers with additional soil mix. It is not your imagination that containers look less full. The organic materials in soil mixes continue to decompose and disappear in containers, just as they do in raised beds and gardens. As they decompose, they release nutrients the plants use while growing. This is a good thing, but we need to top them up every so often! Try to turn the soils in the pot all the way to the bottom to reduce compaction.

Many of the leafy cool season vegetables are shallow rooted and do not need deep soil. These quick, low demand crops grow in containers we would never dream of using in the summer. Shallower containers make a good home for romaine, or butter head lettuce, baby Asian greens, spinach. But they may need irrigation a little more often to become established while days are still warm. Letting them become too dry impacts flavor as well as the vigor of the plants.

Beginning in September we can begin to plant many of the root and leaf crops to provide us with fresh vegetables during fall and winter. Along with cooler temperatures we know that the sun gets lower on the horizon and shade...
patterns change. Parts of the landscape previously exposed to unrelenting sun become too shady for vegetables in the winter. Be aware of how the sun’s patterns affect your landscape’s microclimates. Vegetables are most productive when they get at least six hours of sun. More, especially in fall and winter, really IS better!

Broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower take up lots of room in the garden. They are needy and require nutrients over several months to grow the crop we wish to harvest. Follow spacing suggestions for the variety you choose. They will use up the fertilizer added during soil preparation within a few weeks and benefit from a side dressing of balanced fertilizer, perhaps a water-soluble type to drench the soil before nights get too cold and again as they begin to produce heads.

Snow or sugar snap peas can be trellised along a wall or the edge of the bed. They are at their peak when harvested and eaten fresh. A short row will add lots of snap or sugar pod peas to stir fry, salads, or just snacking. Many times the harvest never makes it to the kitchen. Gardeners enjoy them fresh, right off the vine, snacking through the rest of the day’s projects.

Thin, thin, thin your leafy crops and do not let this bounty of baby greens go to waste! Those tender little leaves are great in salads or just barely heated through. If you prefer greens this size, by all means, harvest them out completely or plant them in cut-and-come-again rows, clipping them off just above the growing tips. Several small plantings over the course of the winter will guarantee lots of baby greens for your table!

The herb garden may look a little weary and over blown as the oreganos and basils have bloomed themselves out, the thymes are a bit crispy from the heat, and some plants simply did not survive. Do not rush in to rectify these challenges! Plant fresh basil if yours has been used for too many batches of pesto. The sages may have most likely expired during the monsoon. Chives often do not make it through the summer. Garlic chives should be deadheaded before the seeds scatter everywhere. Most likely the seeds will all sprout and you will be overrun with garlic chives!

Mints look a little stringy, but use them moderately and once we get to fall they can be trimmed back and they will grow a fresh new flush of leaves! September will be early enough to trim, replant and get ready for the cool season annual herbs.

In the desert-adapted landscape we will enjoy the leucophylums as they explode into glorious color when humidity is high and we get some rain. Plants that bloom most enthusiastically are ones that have not been repeatedly cut back or sheared. Remember, the flowers are all on the new growth. Summer haircuts render them just another grayish, crispy-looking desert plant.

If there is no rain, a long, deep soak at some point will help move salts below the root zone in desert landscapes. Clean up any damage after monsoon storms and make proper pruning cuts where branches have broken from trees. This is not the best time to start any major landscape overhauls. Wait for cooler temperatures. You and your plants will benefit from this strategy!

If you use a pre-emergent to control weeds in a desert landscape, buy it now, keep it on hand and distribute it when rain is in the forecast. If the neighborhood a mile away gets the rain but you don’t, you may have to activate your pre-emergent with the garden hose. Don’t just leave it! Follow through on the instructions for applying it for best effectiveness. If you prefer manual weed control methods, eliminate weeds with a hoe or by hand pulling while they are small and not well rooted.

See you in a garden!
Do you find yourself wanting to block the summer sun for several hours a day in a location where in other times of the year gets no sun? Perhaps the sun is shining through a window on plants that don’t need quite that much summer sun. Or maybe the sun’s angle has changed just enough to burn a large, shade loving plant that normally would be sheltered by your patio roof. The solution does not have to be to move your plants or drape them in shade cloth. It also does not have to be permanent or expensive. Forget custom awnings, wooden blinds or electric rollup shades. Try a fabric shower curtain to solve the temporary problem. A fabric shower curtain has sturdy, regularly spaced holes along the top that can be inserted in hooks, nails or screws, and many fabrics can take the heat (and monsoon winds) for several summers, especially if you chose a pattern that is reversible. Or flip it and thread a spring tension curtain rod through the hem. A high quality designer shower curtain that is on sale at a major home goods supplier is a good choice.

However, before you run to the store (or your linen closet), take a moment to think where/how you can hang your curtain and whether your Homeowners Association allows it. Sometimes exterior curtains are only permitted in behind fences or in backyards. A tension rod works well in a small to medium opening as shown in photo #1. Cup hooks, nails, or screws, can be unobtrusively spaced along a roof rafter or wooden window trim as in photo #2 and left there from year to year and used for holiday or party lights as well!

You may need to pre-drill stucco before inserting hooks, nails or screws. If using nails or screws, be sure they are angled in such a way that monsoon winds do not make a kite out of your curtain. When hanging a curtain from the top holes, consider doubling the curtain over itself rather than cutting it if a smaller opening size is desired. Also a tieback made out of a sash, scarf, cloth belt or Velcro may be useful at times if the curtain is in a high traffic area.

Shower curtains in the garden seemed like a silly topic for an article until I learned that other gardeners had employed the same idea during our hot summer months. If you have a creative solution you would like to share with fellow Master Gardeners, consider writing an article about it and submitting it to Roots and Shoots. Articles may be submitted any time, but the 15th of the month is the deadline to make it into the next month’s edition.

And remember, the time you spend writing can be recorded as volunteer hours. Send your article to editorobiadi@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you!
Photo #3
Karen Sankman uses shade cloth cut to size and sewn to fit between the columns of her patio.

Photo #4
Kelly Obiadi’s no-sew option is to use a painter’s drop cloth from the home improvement store.

Photo #5
Kelly used pipe and pipe fittings to fashion a curtain rod. The drop cloth is hung using drapery rings with clips.
We would like to remind you to register for the upcoming National Gardening Clubs Landscape Design School Course I scheduled for November 12-14, 2016. This course is the first of four being offered by the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. and the University of Arizona Master Gardeners. The class is being offered to all club members, Master Gardeners, and the general public, and will be held at the University of Arizona Extension office in Phoenix. Course II is scheduled for March 4-6, 2017, and the other two will be offered approximately six months apart over the next two years.

This is the first time in over twenty years that these courses have been held in Arizona and we are very excited to offer them to you. The registration form (pictured below) and more information can be found by visiting our website at www.azgardenclubs.com and clicking on either the Home or Calendar tab.

For further information and/or a full size registration form, please contact Linda Rominger, LSROM@cox.net.

REGISTRATION FORM
Landscape Design School - Course I

November 12-14, 2016
U of AZ Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office
4341 E Broadway
Phoenix, AZ 85040

NAME: ________________________________________________

PHONE: ____________________________________________

ADDRESS: __________________________________________

CITY/ST/ZIP: _________________________________________

DISTRICT/CLUB: ____________________________

MASTER GARDENER Yes: No: __________________________

E-MAIL: ____________________________________________

Fees:
☐ Both Days including lunch -------------- $80
☐ Both Days After Oct 15 -------------- $85
☐ Optional, but a Requirement for NGC Credit
Exam*------------------------ $5
Refresher*---------------------- $5

Total Enclosed______ Check Number ________

Your confirmation by E-mail? Yes/No

Please make check payable to:
Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs

Mail Check and Registration to:
Linda Rominger
4515 E Ashurst Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85048
480-759-5338

CONTACT INFORMATION
Local Chairman: Linda Rominger
480-759-5338
Lsrom@cox.net

AFGCLDS Chairman: Joyce Girvin
774-217-8253
joycegrvin@gmail.com

AFGC President: Judy Tolbert
602-421-5290
tolbertjl10@gmail.com

AVAILABLE LODGING

Drury Inn & Suites
3333 E. University Dr.
Phoenix, AZ 85034
602-437-8400
$109.99 + tax
Ask for "Landscape Design School Rate"
Available thru 10/10/16
Hot breakfast
5:30 Kickback
Free airport shuttle

Sheraton Phoenix Airport
1600 S. 52nd Street
Tempe, AZ 85281
480-967-6600

NGC LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL COURSE 1

Sponsored by:
Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs
www.azgardenclubs.com
and
Maricopa County Master Gardeners
https://extension.arizona.edu/maricopamg

November 12 – 13, 2016
Exam on November 14, 2016

U of AZ Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Office
4341 E Broadway Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85040

This course is open to the public
WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR COMPOST?

A Composting Article by a Very Determined Apartment Dweller

I get this question a lot. “What do you do with your compost when it is done?” They ask me that because I live in an apartment with a patio that gets no sun and anything I try to grow, other than a few potted plants, dies. So when I talk about my compost pile people are confused. “What do you do with the compost when it is done?” The answer “Nothing!”

I started composting about a year and a half ago after I volunteered at an event where Bonnie Newhoff was demonstrating composting. I suddenly realized all those leaves I was sweeping up from my patio each week had a purpose other than being tossed in the dumpster. My patio is about 40’ x 25’ with dirt planting areas around the perimeter. We have a lot of hardscape in our complex. The trees are not as healthy as they could be and they drop a lot of leaves.

During most of the year I can sweep up two tall kitchen bags full of leaves per week and when the mulberry tree on the east end of the patio starts to lose leaves that amount can double. During the first six months at my apartment I took a lot of leaves to the dumpster, so composting was my solution to filling the dumpster.

Residents of the City of Phoenix can obtain a compost bin made out of old garbage cans for $5 at one of two disposal facilities in Phoenix. I chose the 27th Avenue Transfer Station on 27th Avenue and Lower Buckeye Road and the garbage bin just fit inside my Hyundai Tucson. Keep this in mind if you have something other than an SUV or truck and want a compost bin. You may have to enlist a friend with a larger vehicle to help you get the bin home. I was now likely the only resident in my apartment complex to have a compost bin. I was excited to start composting.

I don’t cook a lot so most of my initial batch was the leaves from my patio. I put in what food waste I could but I had a terrible wood roach problem in my bin. The neighborhood geckos knew dinner was available at my patio though and every time I opened the bin several geckos ran out. After a few months I chose to rest my pile but a few months later my compost was gray which was definitely not right. FAIL! I tossed the gray compost to the side and noticed the neighborhood cats had a fun time rolling in it so at least someone got some use of the compost.

I started my second attempt at the end of the summer in 2015 with three additions to the process. The first was a composting thermometer because I suspected if I could raise the temperature, the wood roaches would find the compost less desirable. Second, since I am not a coffee drinker, I asked my coworkers to save the K-cups from the office coffee machine so that I had the coffee from inside the cups for my compost bin. The third addition was the spent grain that my boyfriend would have thrown away after making his craft beers.
Batch #2 kept going over the course of the next year because my goal was not to produce compost because I couldn’t use it. At best I could sprinkle it around the complex. But I wanted to learn so I kept at it. My compost pile was now reaching temperatures never before reached - over 130 degrees F. The cockroach issue I had been struggling with went away and I noticed my pile was a lot healthier. This batch looked like compost (see below) but since I had nowhere to use it, I just kept piling stuff in the compost bin after I took a small amount of compost out of the bin.

In early summer 2016, a friend gave me several bags of vegetable scraps he had been saving for me in his freezer (including whole onions and apples which I decided not to cut up since they were so far into the decay process). When I opened the compost bin to throw them in I noticed the contents in places was undulating up and down. This was really creepy! Why was my compost moving? I moved some of the material with my pitch fork and found what looked like maggots eating away at something in the compost bin. As any good Master Gardener would do, I went right inside to search the internet for what I had found and discovered these were soldier fly larvae.

According to an online article I found through the University of Florida, the black soldier fly (picture on next page) is sometimes confused with a wasp but has two wings instead of four and they don’t sting. The adult black soldier fly mates two days after it emerges from the pupal case and the female black soldier fly will lay about 500 eggs near decaying organic matter. The black soldier fly is common in agricultural areas due to the large amount of organic waste from livestock, but the black soldier fly will also lay the eggs in dumpsters and COMPOST BINS! Within about four days, the eggs will hatch into larvae, which are insatiable feeders. I wondered just how long it would take the black soldier fly larvae to eat all those good decaying vegetables my friend gave me so I checked back in a week and everything except the red onion was now just random pieces (understandable - I don’t like red onions either). Those larvae really ARE insatiable feeders!

Batch 2 stayed consistently at about 100 degrees until my boyfriend gave me another quarter bucket of grain and then the temperature increased to between 120 and 140 degrees. One weekend I was going to take out some compost, but when I checked on the pile I discovered more larvae chomping away so I decided to wait a few weeks. I recorded a video of the larvae the second time I found them in my bin.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7XVfMfwhcL-3dEN4dD1JUVTX2s/view?usp=sharing

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR COMPOST?... continued
When I started this article I had no intention of finishing compost batch 2, but since the Roots & Shoots crew took a vacation, I decided that finishing the second batch and moving on to a third would be a great way to end the article. On July 11th, I unloaded the contents of my second batch of compost into a wheelbarrow and spent the next two hours sifting it.

Meanwhile I had a visit from a black soldier fly that I suspect was upset with me for destroying her nursery. Over the course of a few hours a friend, my brother, and my boyfriend all asked what I was doing with the compost. My response was “NOTHING!” I ended up filling two five-gallon buckets and had a little extra, so I likely had about 12 gallons of compost.

Batch 3 is ready to get started. In addition to a bag of kitchen scraps I have been saving, my friend has given me another two bags of decaying vegetables, I also have a large shopping bag full of K-cups to empty, and my boyfriend has given me a five-gallon bucket three quarters full of grain. I have learned a lot about composting, wood roaches, sow bugs, and black soldier flies during my experiment and when I move, I will find my compost bin a home elsewhere in the apartment complex so someone else can learn as well. After all, isn’t that our role as Master Gardeners?

For More Information:

City of Phoenix Composting Web Page

University of Florida IFAS Extension - Black Soldier Fly
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in830
Wandering, Wondering, Noticing... Pearl Fryar Topiary Garden

In 2006, PBS aired the documentary film “A Man Named Pearl” about a topiary artist's garden in South Carolina. Seeing the film made a lasting impression on me, so much so that I recently headed to the town of Bishopville to see Pearl Fryar’s garden. Arriving at his home there are no gates, no posted hours, just a welcome sign and a donation box. A homemade kiosk holds small brochures with information about the garden. My husband Rich and I walked right into Pearl’s garden and by the end of our visit we had met Pearl, wandered through his garden, and left feeling grateful and inspired.

In 1981, Pearl wanted to do something special in his yard so he could be in a competition for the “Yard of the Month” award. He saw a pom-pom evergreen at the local nursery and asked the owner how that was done. Pearl received a three-minute lesson and from there went back to his house to give it a try. Pearl has now been cutting up bushes and trees for over three decades. He doesn’t create animal shapes or formal geometrics, but instead does abstract topiary. Pearl says “the plants are his canvas” and, while he likes some varieties better than others, he really just wants to see what he can create. He has saved many a plant from the castoffs at the nursery. With patience and talent, Pearl is quite comfortable planting a bush or tree and working on it for 5 or 10 years before it becomes a work of art. He doesn’t work from a drawing, but sees the structure of the plant as the key to how it can be shaped.

Tall, slim, and strong, he works atop a 20’ ladder with his hedge trimmer and clippers shaping his creations. Among them are sailing ships, a fishbone tree, mushrooms, words, and more. He wanted to be creative and wanted to make a difference so he would come home from his day job (12 hour shifts, four days a week) and work on his plants late into the night using spotlights to see by. As his work began to attract attention, he received advice and often his skeptics would say, “You shouldn’t be able to do that to that plant.” He received how-to books on how the professionals do it, and… he won the “Yard of the Month.”

Completely self-taught, he has become a local legend with appearances on HGTV, Victory Garden, CBS Sunday Morning, and Martha Stewart. He has spoken at Harvard, and for many other audiences in the past decade. Pearl tells his audiences, especially students, that “everyone has a talent and that talent may not show up on a test paper. But with hard work, passion, and marketing you can be somebody. You can be somebody who provides for your family, be positive thinking and you can make a difference in your community.”
His three-acre garden of 400 topiaries is internationally known and each year nearly 10,000 visitors come from all over the world. Pearl retired in 2002 and he and his wife, Metra, continue to live in their home surrounded by his garden. Up and down his street the neighbors have joined in the creative venture and topiary is everywhere. Pearl, at 76 years of age, continues to work on his garden. He is recognized as a sculpture artist, using plants as his medium. South Carolina State Museum has his sculptures on their lawn. Art students from Coker College come to his garden with their instructors to learn to see and draw curves, lines, and dimension.

Pearl says he got in trouble in grade school for trying to be creative. At age 40, after attending college, participating in the civil rights movement, doing a hitch in the army, being a member of the Woodstock generation, and working a good union job, he could finally afford to be creative. He believes life is about sharing and eagerly shares his garden with visitors. He intended this garden to just be his lifetime project but his work has achieved such accolades that the Garden Conservancy has designated the garden for preservation. Visitor donations have flowed in steadily and his supporters and friends organized to help with the garden. Pearl believes in encouraging potential, and through a non-profit foundation that provides scholarships for C students, educating from the bottom up. The foundation also provides funds for a strong, younger assistant to help Pearl in the garden. All the plants need a haircut every 4-6 weeks.

Pearl told us a story of a small bus load of visitors from San Francisco arriving at the garden one day. After touring the grounds and talking with Pearl, they were preparing to leave. Pearl was setting up one of his tall ladders to continue trimming. One of the visitors worried aloud “he’s gonna fall off that ladder and break his neck.” Another ventured that “he needed a manlift,” and Pearl agreed that would be helpful, and the visitor asked “how much would that cost?” A few minutes later the bus load of visitors had committed $25,000 to buy Pearl a manlift. He and his garden are just that inspiring.

Pearl wants visitors to leave feeling better for having visited the garden. Long inspired by words, he includes favorite quotations throughout his garden. He was inspired by a phrase he saw years ago in a garden in Korea while he was in the army. “He or she that does no more than the average will never rise above the average.” So he has “created something special that makes people feel good.” Love is an important element in his garden and in his life. He has “Love” sculpted in bushes, signs, and sculptures. He has the words “Love, Peace, and Goodwill” cut into the lawn in four foot high letters.

Pearl says “all I do is cut up bushes, I let people decide what they see.” We left the garden loving what we saw, walking peacefully through this beautiful garden, and feeling so good about all of the potential talent Pearl inspires.

Pearl’s gardens is located at 145 Broad Acres Rd, Bishopville, SC 29010.

In the center of the front yard, Pearl created his house number of 165 in perfect topiary form. After growing those numbers for 14 years, the county realigned the street numbers and changed his address. Now he says “165 is just a yard decoration, and his address is on the mailbox.”
A Traveling Gardener... continued

Resources

A Man Named Pearl is available on Youtube

Pearl Fryar Garden Website:

Article: Evergreen Surrealist—Pearl Fryar
http://www.humanflowerproject.com/index.php/weblog/comments/evergreen_surrealist_pearl_fryar/

The Way God Makes them Grow, Guideposts
https://www.guideposts.org/positive-living/life-purpose/the-way-god-makes-them-grow

Linda Larson is an advocate for the importance of public green space and the value of nature in our lives. She writes as “A Traveling Gardener, wandering, wondering, noticing...” http://travellinggardener.com/wordpress/

She is a lifelong lover of flowers, Master Gardener, and gardener in Mesa, AZ for over 30 years. One of her earliest memories is of daffodils lining the small stone path to her grandmother’s door. Personally visiting hundreds of gardens in many parts of the world, she shares her insight and discoveries entertaining readers and audiences.