The Pecan & Wine Festival was a great success again this year. This event grows each year. The Master Gardeners really played an important role in this year’s event. Cecy Gilbert & Nora Graf co-chaired the Pecan portion of the event. Dr. Michael W. Kilby, University of Arizona, Tucson joined us again this year to oversee the preparation and judging of the Pecans. Jeff Schalau, County Director & Extension Agent worked with our volunteers in the preparation of the pecans. Volunteers Tacla Machesney, Dolores Johnson, Jonella Blake, Eunice Ricklefs, Nora Graf and Cecy Gilbert, and Ralph Young all worked preparing the pecans for judging. The grading & judging of the pecans is an intricate process. Our volunteers felt it was a great learning experience. Master Gardeners also staffed a Master Gardener table both Saturday & Sunday. Nora Graf took on the responsibility of scheduling all of these volunteers for both days. Saturday the table was staffed by Kitty Schlueter, Lindsay Schramm, Judi Bennett, Orville Gilmore, Rosh Preuss & Cecy Gilbert. Sunday’s staffing was Bernadette Selna, Rhonda Peck, Lisa Spears, Brenda Pakay, Jane Davis, John Gillian & Laura James. The public enjoyed our involvement and it was a great learning experience for all of us. We look forward to doing this again next year. Thank you all again for your enthusiasm & support of this event.

Beverly Emerson,
Volunteer Coordinator
Yavapai County
Have I ever told you about my greenhouse project? It started after I bought my house in Camp Verde. One selling point of the house was it had enough space for a greenhouse. It took a couple of years before I could get it started and in reality it isn’t finished yet, some 6-7 years later.

The biggest hurdle as usual was money so I decided to build my own vs. buying a kit. The expense of putting in a large kit greenhouse was more than I could afford all at once. I figured I could pay for one gradually, if I could find someone to do the block foundation and wall and then the framing.

I enlisted the help of a new neighbor (not a recommended practice) who worked in construction. He failed to tell me he didn’t really do framing. He built metal buildings.

The foundation and the 2 foot wall the framing would set on, went well, ok sort of well. I specifically told him I wanted to have the doors at grade so I could easily carry things in and out and even run a wheel barrow through. So I come home from work one day and there is one-block high step into the greenhouse (and then one step down to the greenhouse floor.) After knocking out (badly) the problematic blocks, he started the framing. Truthfully I think I could have framed better and I can barely cut a straight line. There were gaps between some pieces, but I was assured when it was completed it would all come together. Well it didn’t. I ended up screwing together the entire framework in the end in hopes that it wouldn’t come down in a strong wind.

What really peeves me to this day is his failure to measure. I had wanted something besides a lean-to type greenhouse (another mistake) and so I needed a long heavy beam to support the roof. He ordered the wrong size, something that wasn’t discovered until it was painted and ready to put in place. Tough to return a painted beam to the hardware store. He ended up having to put two additional supports in the greenhouse to hold the beam, leaving me with nearly four feet of almost useless space.

Then there was the door—I had bought a fairly expensive, heavy door for the south end. It came framed so theoretically should have been easy to put up. He nailed it in! After a few months the weight of the door started pulling the nails out and I couldn’t close the door anymore. It stayed that way for a considerable time until my brother came up and reset it. Meanwhile it had rained—a lot (back in those days when it did rain) and the outside panel of the door seriously warped. It’s still that way today because I can get the door closed and other projects were a priority.

I finally told him that was all I really needed him for, that I could finish the rest. I then spent more money and time trying to repair the mess he left when he knocked the blocks in the doors out. Lots of time and finally rental of a jack hammer to knock it loose. Another friend helped me put on the fiberglass skin and a third friend put on the roofing and the electricity both which ended successfully. There was more time spent getting the floor in. I put in cement pavers over sand only to discover that probably wasn’t the best idea. They quickly became covered with algae and the floor gets quite slippery after a while. A future project is to replace some pavers with crushed granite to improve drainage.
A cooler was necessary with temperatures frequently going over 100°F. Along the north wall I placed barrels with water to help mitigate temperature changes. Before the barrels the space was going over 150°. The first cooler I put in worked fine, for a while, then it started blowing out its capacitor. After replacing the capacitor five times in less than three summers of use, I replaced it with a larger more reliable unit. The old one is now sitting in the driveway waiting to be hauled to the dump.

A heater was also necessary. I ordered a propane heater from Southern Burner. I had never dealt with hooking up gas appliances so ended up letting it sit the first winter. Then I found some kind folks at a propane company to set it up and running the second. Except the fact that it uses a lot of propane it works fine. I generally shut it off before I leave for work to save on gas.

There is still the water quality issue to deal with. The water from the well is extremely hard and between the cooler and misters disperses a fine layer of white deposits over everything. The Reverse Osmosis unit is next summer’s project hopefully.

In spite of that I have raised a few orchids, killed lots more. I’ve overwintered a few other plants and have started flats of seeds for my spring vegetable and flower garden. There are still struggles ahead I’m sure. All those greenhouse books I read to plan this thing, never said it would be so difficult. Would I do it again, you bet! But those kits are looking mighty good at this point.

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**Strawberry Pie**

With spring comes strawberries. Eat them plain, on cereal or ice cream. Make jam or try one of my favorites, strawberry pie. A spoonful of real whipped cream on top won’t hurt, but plain pie is great too. This recipe is from Sunset magazine.

**Pie crust:** I prefer to make my own, but people seem to have problems making a good crust, so purchase one from the store if you are inclined. Bake crust in an oven heated to 425°F until golden brown 12-15 minutes. Cool.

**Filling**

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 7 cups fresh strawberries, cleaned and hulled
- 2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur or orange juice, or to taste

In a small pan, stir together the 3/4 cup sugar, cornstarch and orange peel. In a blender or food processor combine 2 cups of the least perfect berries and 6 tablespoons water, whirl until pureed. Pour puree into sugar mixture and stir well. Cook over medium high heat, stirring often, until mixture comes to a full boil and thickens slightly (about 4 mins). Remove from heat and stir in liqueur or orange juice.

Arrange the remaining berries tips up, in pie crust, spoon hot glaze over berries, covering them completely. Refrigerate uncovered until glaze is cool and set, at least one hour before serving. Can be made the day before.

**Topping**

- 3 large oranges about 1 1/2 pounds
- 1/4 sugar

Remove peel from oranges, cut peel (orange part only) into thin slices. Squeeze oranges to extract juice, set aside. Place slivered peel in small pan and add enough water to cover the peel, bring to a boil. Drain well, then cover with water again and boil again, drain again. Add orange juice and 1/4 cup sugar. Bring to a boil, stirring often and watching carefully to prevent scorching until almost all the liquid has evaporated and syrup forms big bubbles (about 10 minutes). Remove from heat; cool, stirring occasionally to separate slivers of peel. (At this point the syrup can be cooled and refrigerated until the next day.)

Just before serving, sprinkle about a third of the candied orange peel over pie. Offer additional peel to accompany servings.
Also known as Sweet wormwood, this annual doesn’t really seem to strike a cord in most gardeners as far as I can tell. In my searches there was very little information available about it except some very technical scientific papers. But because someone asked me about it, I will include what information that I could find.

It seems to have four claims to fame. One is its size. A source said this is one of the tallest annuals reaching 79 inches. It can be used as a hedge. Second is that it seems to have anti-malarial properties. That is were the scientific papers come in. Thirdly it seems to be used in flower bouquets and other floral displays. The fourth is that it has become a weed around the world.

Its history dates back to 150 BC where ancient Chinese medical texts site its use for hemorrhoids. Later writings talk about treating fevers and infections with it. Today an active component of the plant, Artemisinin, is thought to have anti-malarial properties. Treatment with any drugs derived from this component is still considered experimental.

Originally native to Asia and eastern Europe, it has dispersed to many temperate regions. In some areas it is used to flavor beverages. A closely related plant, Artemisia absinthium (wormwood) was used to make a liqueur. Absinthe which was quite popular until it was discovered to be deadly and highly addictive. The ingredient thujone can cause damage to the central nervous system. It was eventually banned by the several countries in the 1920’s. It was a favorite beverage of the Parisian artist communities, it is believed that it killed the artist Toulouse Lautrec.

Sweet Annie is slightly fragrant with green fern-like foliage. Because it holds color and fragrance well it is used in the floral trade for fresh and dried arrangements, potpourri and sachets.

Cultivation information is slim also, but all the Artemisia species are listed as easy to grow from seeds. Reseeds itself generously, so unless you want a yard of nothing but sweet annie you might want to remove seed pods before they ripen. Grow in a sunny location.

Harvest by cutting the stalks off at the base of the plant, tie the stalks together and dry in a cool, dry location.

If you have allergies, you might want to avoid this plant without some additional treatment. Spray the stalks with hair spray to contain the allergens.

If you search the internet for “Sweet Annie seeds” you will find sources. I found if I searched under the genus and species name, my search turned up mostly scientific papers.

One source that I found is:

No Thyme Productions
www.nothyme.com/herbs
8321 SE 61st St
Mercer, WA   98040
Gayfeather is a native plant that has made the leap to commercial trade in part because of its spectacular blooms. No—the individual blooms aren’t huge or unusually colored. They are long upright stalks of brilliant rosy purple color. Gayfeather is a native of the plains’ country but has been spread across the country in gardens everywhere.

Erect stems reach from 30 to 72 inches with flowers blooming from July to September. The plant is adapted to most of the west. While you could not call it a drought tolerant plant because it needs a bit of extra water before and during blooming. It can get by with less other times of the year. As the plant matures can spread to two feet across and produce a dozen or more flower stalks.

This member of the sunflower family (Compositae) works well in a perennial garden or a wildflower garden in both cases provided vivid exclamation points in the garden. The flowers will attract bees and butterflies so works well in a wildlife garden also. I have begun to see it used in the floral trade also as a cut flower.

Liatris is commonly found in nurseries usually along with bulbs. It is not a bulb but has fleshy roots more like daylilies. If you already have a plant, it can be divided in spring or fall. It likes a well draining soil and will tolerant full sun in our area. Filtered shade is needed if you garden in a particularly hot area. Plant starts one foot apart. It works well when matched with plants like penstemons and coreopsis.

For those who like seed-starting Liatrus also starts from seeds easily. And thanks to the internet, seeds can be found. Give the plant extra water midsummer and through blooming. After that you can taper off. While the plant will probably bloom without the extra care, the water will encourage the plant to bloom better and longer. In winter the plant will go dormant. It is long-lived and can easily become an exciting highlight to the garden.

Medicinally the plant has been used as a diuretic and treat kidney complaints and sore throats.

There are several species of Liatris and some new cultivars including a white one. *L. scariosa alba* is a white species, while *L. spicata*, “Kobold” is a dwarf type growing only about 1 1/2 feet tall. *L. pycnostachya* (Kansas gayfeather) has purple flowers, ‘September Glory has deep purple blooms three to 4 feet tall. There are even a couple with tufted kind of blooms for have a really interesting look—*L. squarossa* and *aspera*. 
I have rearranged the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Web Site. Now, we have a Forest Health Page that focuses primarily on bark beetles. The major change is the addition of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Page. This page will be a dynamic, interactive source of bark beetle information. Please take a look, tell others, submit questions, etc. I will make every attempt to keep it current and be responsive.

The Forest Health Page will continue to be prominent on the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Home Page at http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/.

The bark beetle seminar for Master Gardeners will be on March 20, from 1-3 PM at the Shelby Hansen Building, Prescott Rodeo Grounds, 828 Rodeo Dr., Prescott, Arizona.

See back page for directions.

We have a huge supply of cow manure at the V-V Ranch. It is available to anyone who has a need for it. We have 4-5 semi loads available. For pick up info, call Bopper at 928-821-3299 to make arrangements for pick up and directions to the ranch. We have a loader available. No delivery. Dave Shaffer, Director V-V Ranch.

The Guest speaker for the March meeting will be Mr. Jason Lavelle. Mr. Lavelle is in charge of operations for the Arizona Botanical Gardens. Mr. Lavelle presentation will be on Xeroscape and low water use plants.

The classes will include all your materials including a gourd. I will cover the various materials that can be used, weaving techniques, woodburning, cleaning and finishing.

March 29, Camp Verde 10am-3pm
April 12, Prescott 10am-3pm

There is a $25.00 charge for the class to cover the costs of materials. Class size will be limited in both locations. It will be first come, first serve. If you don’t make either of these classes and if I have enough people interested, another may be scheduled. Please send check and contact information to:

Nora Graf
P.O. Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322

If you have questions email to: mesquite2@hotmail.com or call (928) 567-6703.
Spring Plant Sales

I have a love-hate relationship with Spring Plant Sales. I love them because they offer varieties of plants you can't find anywhere else and they are held in great locations. I hate them because I always end of buying more than I should.

If you have not been to one of Arizona botanical gardens this is a great time to go. Unfortunatley this year they are all on the same weekend, so you may have to pick and choose unless you are a real intrepid traveler.

Tucson Botanical Garden
Mar 15-16, 2150 N. Alvernon Way, (520) 326-9686
www.tucsonbotanicalgarden.org

Tohono Chul Park
Tucson, Mar 15-16, 7366 N. Paseo del Norte, (520) 742-6455 (They have plant sales year round also, but this is the time of year they have lots more).
www.tohonochulpark.org

Boyce Thompson Arboretum
Mar 15 - 30, (they give you an extra couple of weeks to shop. Superior, AZ, 37615 US Hwy 60, (520)689-2723, (You will have to pay and entrance fee to attend the plant sale, but its worth taking extra time to wander through the garden anyway.
http://ag.arizona.edu

Desert Botanical Garden
Mar 15-16, 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, (480)941-1225
www.dbg.org

The "Arizona Master Gardener Manual" is now on-line. Check out
http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/

NOTE FROM THE EDIT OR:
Let me know about your garden, the types of seeds you planted, interesting articles you found-anything of gardening interest. Send to:
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Camp Verde, AZ 86322

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