Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, August 17, 6:30pm, Cottonwood. Our speaker will be Dawn Sutherland on butterfly gardening.

Yavapai Rose Society - , Aug. 15, 7:00 PM at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek, Prescott. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300.

Alta Vista Gardening Club, Prescott, fourth Tuesday of the month, 12:30pm. Call 928-443-0464 for location and information.

Prescott Area Gourd Society, third Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm, at the Smoki Museum.

Pond Club -this is an informal group that meets every couple of months, usually the 3rd week. Email aquaticgardens@esedona.net for more information.

The Organic Gardening Club meets on the 2rd Saturday of the month, 10845 Cornville, Call 649-6099 for information.

Prescott Orchid Society, meets 3rd Sunday of the month, 2pm at the Prescott Library, call Cynthia for information. (928) 717-0623

WOW (With Out Water)
by Pattie Conrad

After gardening in Northern Arizona for almost 35 years and having worked in the plant nursery for over 12 years, (some of this time was in a propagation greenhouse and retail area in Flagstaff,) I will never overcome my genuine surprise at the lack of common sense and the inability to do simple consequential thinking of the general public. With our rush to amass great tonnage's of information, we have deleted the important step of pondering with discernment any decision we may make. People look up plants on the internet, plan their entire yard, buy and install inappropriate plant material and then complain that there is something wrong with the plants. What's wrong with this picture? It isn't the plant's fault; some human being made the mistake.

It seems ironic to me, as a gardener, that our city and county governments encourage everyone to conserve water, create defensible space and beautify Prescott, while at the same time encourage thousands and thousands of new homes to be built, and not only built, but built so close together that defensible space can only be created with asbestos walls between the buildings. It is also ironic that the water-conserving plants for shade, such as cedars, junipers and cypresses, are by their very nature of being drought tolerant and low-water using, highly flammable because of their resinous sap. If I was to try and do everything at the same time, I think I would end up with a 30 foot cleared space around my brick house with a metal roof, protected by a 15 foot wall of prickly pear cactus filled with its moisture-rich juice, but I don't think there is such a variety which could grow at our elevation. Perhaps there is one lurking in South America somewhere on the side of an extinct volcano in Argentina.
if I did find it, no one would want to plant it anyway. Most people I talk to in the garden center moved to the greater Prescott area to leave the cactus behind in Phoenix. They want pretty things; they want flowers; they want GREEN, GREEN, GREEN.

We all know, that is, we Master Gardeners all know, that there will come a time of “critical mass” regarding our water supply. We will have plenty of water to drink and shower in, but not a drop to put on our beloved gardens, if this trend continues unchecked. But this is depressing. So, as an optimist, (as are most all true gardeners,) I will enjoy my happy bright-colored garden every minute I can and, being also a practical thinker, I will also plant W.O.W. plants.

W.O.W. plants are those which have won my heart by their toughness and beauty and, of course, are those which do not need to be watered by me. All of these yuccas qualify: Yucca angustissima, Yucca baccate, Yucca elata, Yucca schottii, Yucca navjoa, Yucca recurvifolia. Yucca filamentosa and Yucca flaccida need regular water, but they can make pretty good drought-tolerant container plants in large sized containers. Depending on where you put these last two, they can be water sippers, given some shade. A gardener can achieve quite a nice arrangement with plenty of diversity through the planting of lots of yuccas of all types. Another W.O.W. plant that I love is the red yucca, which is not really a yucca, but a hesperaloe. My favorite color is the coral-colored bloom, but the light butter yellow is also lovely and blends in any landscape because of its softness. It blends equally with greys, reds and blues. Plant lots of them is my motto. Hesperaloe is also a favorite of hummingbirds. After the first year, I threw some water on them once a month. After their second year they only get water from me twice a summer. This applies to the yuccas in my yard, too.

Agaves are as beautiful as diamonds to me. The blue Parry’s agave will multiply like crazy given a tad more water. I have a patch of them that get the runoff from my whisky barrels. I use this patch as seed stock to replace those out front which finally bloom and end their life cycle. This gives me an unending supply to tuck in here and there as art dictates in the overall scheme. A large one placed as a showpiece will last some years before blooming if I starve it for water—just the treatment I had in mind. The Agave Victoiae reginae, the Queen Victoria Agave is supposed to be cold-hardy here. Mary Irish inspired me to try some in my garden after seeing her in person at the Master Gardener Conference in Payson. I just wish it wasn’t so expensive. Watch for it in unexpected places; you may find it for sale at one of those large hardware/lumber emporiums which just happen to have some plants out back, but you better know exactly what your are looking for. However, I admit it; I am a plant shark. I am always cruising around anywhere there are plants for sale, looking for “the strike, the score, the bargain,” and I pounce on it like a half-crazed, eccentric, old, grizzled gold miner, yelling Eureka! —internally so as not to draw a crowd. Then I rub my hands together with glee having placed my treasure in the trunk of my car and I congratulate myself on my quick thinking. Try an Agave montana, too, if you can find them. Because we have a real four season climate in the Prescott area, I would not recommend planting your W.O.W. plants after the first of September, to be safe. Most of them like heat and they really do not like being transplanted going into the fall/winter season. If you locate a treasure in the cool season, keep it as a houseplant until the next May.

Apache plume, Fallugia paradoxa, is another W.O.W. shrub. It can eventually be weaned off its starter watering schedule to be just as durable as the yuccas. It gives the gardener a very long season of interest; first, the late spring bloom of bright white flowers, then the graceful pinkish seed puffs that gleam in the sun when backlit. These seed heads last and last, giving weeks of pleasure while daintily bobbing in the breeze. I love them. They are not difficult to transplant either. They are infinitely more lovely than the cliffrose. This W.O.W. shrub planted in quantity surrounded with red yuccas in great swathes accented by blue agave, is a water conservationist’s dream.

The desert spoon, or sotol, Dasylirion wheeleri, is another W.O.W. plant. It has some intimidating thorns along its branches, but they are not nearly
as nasty as the needles on a cactus. The thorns do not come off the plant and lodge in your arm or hands when working close to them. It is much easier to retrieve trash from around a desert spoon than from around a prickly pear. Also, the desert spoon makes a superb barrier when planted in groups to ward off trespassers, both human and other wise. Please do not plant it to accent your mailbox, the USPS will NOT be happy. Use the red yucca instead for this and tuck in sprigs of some type of sedum. This brings me to another class of W.O.W. plants, the succulents. There are great numbers of sedums out there; some of my choices are the blue spruce sedum, the pine needle sedum, and the orangey-red one called pork n' beans. Of course there's the ubiquitous dragon's bloom sedum. Rabbits will eat these when thirsty, so you may want to spray them with Liquid Fence animal repellent—(the plants, not the rabbits!!) The family of plants called sempervirens are the Hens and Chicks, another set of W.O.W. plants. I also have nursery beds for these in low red clay "bowls" where I grow the pups into Big Dogs for placing in the garden at strategic places where I can enjoy them up close. These will go anywhere, and I do mean anywhere: growing in any spot where there is a bit of bare earth. They look as good as a big flower bloom to me and they come in so many color variations. The nursery pots themselves look great while I am waiting and it takes only once a week watering, depending on how much shade they get in the afternoon. If you want a spectacular container for a truly hot as hell area, buy a huge brightly colored pot to complement the house and plant it up with a yucca or desert spoon, some sedums and some Hens and Chicks. If you make it tall enough and substantial enough, even the javelina won't be able to ravage it. You only have to water it once a week, if that often. Now, when you go to France for the bicycle races, you won't have to worry about your potted plants.

A W.O.W. tree is the hackberry, both the Celtis reticulata and the Celtis occidentalis (common hackberry.) The western hackberry is a true native to Arizona which can be sculpted up similar to the look of a mesquite for a patio tree, but it takes awhile. I would recommend planting a grouping of three or five as a center point for the patio area so they lean out over the pavers. Yes, they will drop their leaves in winter, but they are not nearly as messy as the junipers which drop all kinds of junk on the bricks. However, I do NOT recommend the cutting down of a grandfatherly, dignified alligator juniper so one can plant a clump of hackberries. Use what you already have; nature will kill things off in its own time anyway. This brings me to the matter of scrub oak. I like them. Please do not cut them down to plant other stuff, work around them, sculpting them up in artistic forms and incorporating them into your W.O.W. landscape. You will have the last laugh when your neighbor's water-greedy willows dwindle and decline if there are water restrictions imposed by law. The Celtis occidentalis is native to the eastern US and is resistant to oak root fungus. It has the look of an elm. They are easy to grow and survive in cases of extreme drought. I do not have a clue as to why the industry doesn't sell them here in northern Arizona. They make great shade trees and you could use them for a cluster of patio shade trees too. Perhaps if "the public" starts clamoring for them, the growers will start offering them to the retailers. The hackberries also make tiny berries which the birds like, although I must say, I have never seen clouds of birds on mine. The berries all disappear, though, so somebody's eating them. I have never seen lots of bird droppings under the tree, either. The birds must dine there and go somewhere else to dispose of the seeds. Wherever that is, there must be a nice grove of hackberries by now. I wouldn't worry about any bird messes; I sweep up more wind delivered debris than anything the birds bring to me.

The artemisias are all to be admired. I put eight Artemisia tridentata out front and lost three after their fifth year of no water from me, but I figure that's pretty good considering that nature probably loses more babies than that. Those that did survive are very healthy and look great. My soil is very bad there, very hard
and full of caliche, so I am pleased with the result. Boy! Do they look great with those red yuccas I mentioned earlier. I also recommend *A. stelleriana*, “Silver Brocade,” and *A. ludoviciana*, “Silver King.” Some people say that they are weeds, but that’s why I like them for the dry land areas as W.O.W. plants. There are a group of plants called *Tanacetum* which are similar to the artemisias, with the *T. densum* being wonderful, if you can find it. Its common name is Partridge Feather. It has never had bugs on it and no rabbits or rodents have eaten it the ten years that I have had it in the garden. I have been trying to get the nursery to carry it for sale, but, so far, I am told that it is unavailable through their suppliers. So get out there and be a “plant shark” and start circling. Maybe I’ll see you at the plant tables looking for the next big find!

**Expedition North**

**Report on the Field Trip to the Arboretum at Flagstaff, 2005**

by Pattie Conrad

For those of you Master Gardeners who have never been to the Arboretum at Flagstaff, please mark your calendars now for the next year; you will not want to miss being a part of this fun, educational trip. The real name of the Arboretum is “The Transitional Zone Horticultural Institute,” but no one ever calls it that—takes too long to say. It is located out Woody Mountain Road about four miles from where it leaves Old Highway 66, making it about six miles from the center of Flagstaff. It is hard to believe that it is really so close to town, being out on a dirt Forest Service road, but when you get there, it is a plant wonderland and well worth the trip. There is the visitor’s center, of course, with educational displays of native wildflowers and perhaps invasive weeds. There is a native plant perennial flower garden to walk through where the plants are signed. In this area there is an elderly Amur Maple which has been sculpted into a small tree, making it look like a Japanese Maple, for the sunnier areas. There are columbine, wild geraniums, snowberries and rue, combined in cool glades. The herb garden is especially fun with plants that you can touch which reward your interest with fragrances to rival a Turkish Bazaar. The lovage they have growing there is absolutely huge, five to six feet tall and has been there for years. In the herb garden they showcase landscaping, using herbs in an artful manner, making you think it is a flower garden and not an herb patch. In this herb garden is the landscape feature which I particularly admire and that is the new “ruin” of a surrounding wall that encloses the terrace in the herb garden using a stone wall with crumbling “windows” making you feel that you have discovered something special.

The shade garden to tour is also lovely, with more artful use of a wide variety of plants combined in multiples so it does not have the feel of a collection of specimen plants. Wild strawberries, snowberries, lamiums, and lots of coral bells and bluebells of Scotland, mingle with the creeping mahonia. There are hostas there, too. Too many plants for me to name them all... you’ll just have to go and see them for yourself. In the shade area, the Arboretum shows you how to take what could be a liability and turn it into an asset, by positioning the deck over the dry creek bed which acts as a runoff diverter in the spring. It is not very high off the ground so it acts as a bridge between the two sides of the yard as well as a sitting area. Of course we toured the lawn grass demonstration area and the wildflower meadow test area. The greenhouse was open to tour through where we saw the enormously tall solar-heated water tubes which store energy to help heat the greenhouse. Located in the greenhouse is now an insect display which fascinated some and repelled others of our group. I really enjoyed it. It usually seems so peaceful out in the garden or in the woods, but there is a constant battle going on between the insects themselves and the insects and the plants. Wouldn’t it be interesting to make an insect collection of your own?

We then went to tour the wetland habitat at the lake and see the spring at the headwaters of the creek where the wild monkey flower grows. There were so many good ideas for incorporating into our gardens, that several of the Master Gardeners who attended said that this was their favorite part of the trip.

This year the Arboretum had a vendor sell-
ing gourmet coffee and pastries for the first time, and I did enjoy that addition thoroughly. Coffee makes the world go around... another benefit from the plant kingdom.

Of course, the Arboretum’s annual plant fair would not be complete without its annual plant sale that it holds as part fund raiser and part educational opportunity. The Arboretum and the invited vendors offer a staggering array of native plants many of which are only available at this once-a-year sale. All of the attendees bought something; some of us found a lot of treasures. The van was full of very happy Master Gardeners. Two separates cars went also, traveling North up the interstate after picking up passengers in Dewey. We all loved the trip. We then went into town to see Flagstaff Native Plant and Seed on Butler Avenue. Although they had a booth at the Plant Fair, they had many more plants at the the retail nursery. There they also had seeds and books for sale. One person in our group, taking his own vehicle but traveling with us, was a real plant lover who is very busy working full time now. We hope that someday soon when he retires he may become a Master Gardener, too.

We stopped at the plant nursery called Warner’s, too. It is located on Butler Avenue only a few blocks from Flagstaff Native Plant and Seed. I myself found some more of the true perennial geraniums that I love so much, as they do excellently in the dry shade at the feet of the native shrubs in my garden. I now have quite a collection of different types and with different blooming times and colors. Look for true geraniums whenever you stop at a garden center. They are easy care, the animals don’t eat them and you get red fall color of the leaves, too. What a great plant!

We then toured a new place in Flagstaff called “Violas” on 7th Avenue off of 4th Street. She specialized in perennials of all kinds and had hundreds of varieties in 4-inch pots. By this time we were pretty tired so we voted to head home, stopping in Williams on the way back for a rest stop, were we treated to a Harley-Davidson motorcycle parade as we sat in the Dairy Queen parking lot. That was a surprise!

Another of the Master Gardeners shared that she learned a lot by being challenged to look up information in the reference books concerning plants she’d never seen before. So remember, watch the MG newsletter next spring for the announcement regarding the field trip to the Arboretum. The fair is always the Saturday before Father’s Day, so mark your calendar now to leave it open for next year’s Plant Fair.

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**Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by the University of Arizona. The purpose of this project is to better understand what issues and types of information relating to wildfire are of most concern to homeowners in Arizona who live in wildland-urban interface areas.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension have teamed up to produce wildfire educational materials specific to the vegetation types found in the state of Arizona. One of the vegetation types of interest is pinyon-juniper/oak woodland. In order to produce high quality educational materials pertinent to people living in pinyon-juniper/oak woodlands, a research study is underway to: 1) investigate specific fire ecology knowledge of rural homeowners and how they typically acquire this information; 2) acquire their attitudes towards fire and its associated risks; and 3) determine what forms of educational materials relating to fire would be most interesting and useful.

The first phase of this study involves meeting with small groups of volunteers who will not only take a short survey regarding wildfire issues, but also discuss the format of the survey to make sure it is easily understood. The results of the focus groups will be used to modify the survey so that it can be easily understood over the telephone (the second phase of this study involves interviewing homeowners over the telephone). You are being invited to participate in phase one of this study.

The meeting will take place in August on a day and at a time that is convenient for all volunteers. Once volunteers have been identified, they will be contacted by Cori Dolan, principal investigator of the study, to schedule a day and time to meet. The meeting will take between one and two hours and snacks and refreshments will be provided. If you are a homeowner in a rural pinyon-juniper/oak woodland area and are interested in volunteering for this study, please contact Jeff Schalau or Mary Barnes via E-mail and send your current address and telephone number.

If you are not sure if you live in pinyon-juniper/oak woodland, you can email your address or general location to Jeff Schalau at jshalau@ag.arizona.edu and he will help you determine your vegetation type.

Jeff Schalau  
Associate Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources  
University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
Meet a Master Gardener
by Pam Bowman

A resident of Yavapai County for 3 years and a Master Gardener for just over 2 years, Mary Barnes is using her love of gardening, managerial and communication skills and endless energy to help give, in her words, “our MG Association the opportunity to become more of a world-class organization.” Currently, Mary is the MG Association Vice President, Volunteer Coordinator, Co-chair of the Volunteer Projects Committee and a phone volunteer in the Prescott office. She has also dirtied her hands working in the gardens of the Sal Sorrentino home in Prescott, the Forest Service Ranger District office in Chino Valley and the Verde Valley Medical Center in Cottonwood.

Growing up in San Diego as 1 of 8 children, Mary began working in the family garden at a young age. Living outdoors in the warm summer evenings, the family mowed lawns, weeded flowerbeds and tended to the many fruit trees on their 1/4 acre plot of land. She notes her first memories are of the periwinkle and gazania borders planted by her mother. At the age of ten, she began cutting Shasta daisy blooms and “mashing” their stems in ink to color the petals. Their house was frequently filled with turquoise flower arrangements ‘by Mary’ during the summer months.

When Mary finally had a home of her own in San Diego, she enjoyed landscaping her new yard. She also had the opportunity to garden when she and her husband Tom, whom she met at work, moved to Livermore, California. However, working as a project manager on multi-million-dollar projects for SBC (Southern Bell Communications) involved lots of travel and her garden suffered. She would plant flowers on a weekend, leave for another city or state and return to dead flowers the following weekend. But she persisted and now, as a recent retiree, she can devote more time to her new yard.

In her new home with Tom in Chino Valley, Mary spends time on many of her hobbies. She is decorating her bare home, finishing and refinishing furniture, sewing decorative pillows and bed skirts, arranging silk flowers and reupholstering a “small” chair. Outside Mary has begun to landscape the area close to the house. She built a dry stack wall, laid sandstone walkways and is currently making concrete steppingstones. Much of their acreage has been left in native yuccas, grasses and wildflowers. She admits she likes to see wild gaura take root and grow in her more cultivated garden. In her spare time, Mary plays golf.

But Mary’s greatest interest is continuing her education. Her flower arranging projects as a child led her to using books to improve her skills and in the future she would like to take a floristry class. In Livermore, Mary enrolled in many horticulture classes, but she moved before she could attain a degree in horticulture. When looking for a place to retire, she insisted that a local college with horticulture classes was a requirement of any community she and Tom chose for retirement. Now she uses many of the educational opportunities available in Yavapai County.

No matter which hat she is wearing, Mary uses organization and communication to lead the Yavapai County MG Association further down the road to becoming more of a world-class organization. And thanks to Mary, all of us can easily find and volunteer for a wide-variety of projects and more efficiently help the public.
MG Volunteer Opportunities

MGs are needed to give 5 minute presentations/demos at the Yavapai County Fair on the following topics: composting, soils &/or fertilizers, pruning techniques, xeriscaping. The Fair is Sept 22nd thru 25th, at the Yavapai Fairgrounds in Prescott Valley. Also need volunteers to staff the booth & help the presenters. Contact Cathy Michener, cathymichener@earthlink.net, 541-9341.

We need a historian. The job would include collecting newspaper and magazine clippings and photos. For more information contact Mary Barnes.

**Prickly Pear anyone—**

I’m planning on whacking back my overgrown prickly pear. If anyone is interested in some pads to start their own plants let me know, I’d be glad to give them away. It has large pads and thorns and grows fast. Don’t know the species, but if you’re desperate to know I could probably figure it out. Call or email. Nora Graf, 567-6703, mesquite2@hotmail.com

FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. Long articles will go in as soon as possible, announcements must be in by the 15th of the month to be included.

Nora Graf
PO Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ  86322
mesquite2@hotmail.com
(928) 567-6703

Jeff Schalau
County Director, Yavapai County Extension Agent,
Agriculture & Natural Resources
email: jschalau@ag.arizona.edu

Prescott
840 Rodeo Dr.
Building C
Prescott, AZ  86305
(928) 445-6590
FAX: (928) 445-6593

Cottonwood
2657 Village Dr.
Cottonwood, AZ  86326
(928) 646-9113
MG Association Meeting

August 17, Cottonwood
6:30pm
Speaker: Dawn Sutherland, Butterfly Gardening

Put SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th on your calendar for the MGA ANNUAL PICNIC & AWARDS. This year it will be held in Prescott at Thumb Butte Natl Forest Picnic Grounds. It will be held from 11:00 to 3:00 pm.