Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, May 18 6:30pm, See address page for map. Our speaker will be Bill Cook to talk on fruit trees. See page 7 for Arboretum trip info!

Yavapai Rose Society - May 16, 2:00 PM at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Rd. Prescott. This months program is on a demonstration on drying roses. 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 2nd 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

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Yavapai Gardens
Master Gardener Newsletter
May 2005

TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULDN’T GARDEN

By The Absurd Gardener

All kinds of reasons are offered for gardening, from relaxation or psychotherapy to attracting birds or being closer to God, but none are ever given as to why we shouldn’t. The unwary public deserves to know the truth before undertaking such a questionable, if not downright hazardous, activity.

Plants die. This is an indisputable fact verified many times by independent observers around the world. No matter how hard you garden or how great your gardening skills, the end result will always be the same. What is the point of this futile exercise, knowing your plants are all doomed?

Plants grow. Growing plants require lots more watering, fertilizing, staking, deadheading and pruning. The bigger the plant, the more work. Soon you will have no time left for anything else. Is your life so worthless that you would give it all up for a shrub?

Plants don’t stop at one. It is the nature of all living things to make more of themselves. Before you know it, your garden, not to mention every square inch of your living space, will be awash in baby plants demanding your attention. You brought them into this world, now you must take care of them. The happy-go-lucky life you once led is over.

Plants attract animals. The minute a plant pops out of the ground some animal will find it. Some will eat your plants. Some will use them for construction sites or materials. And some will just trample or pee on your plants.

Gardens get noticed. It starts with an innocent compliment from one of your neighbors about “how nice your pansies look this year.” But don’t be fooled. The compliment is a foil to distract you from what your neighbors are really thinking: that your garden looks like crap and you don’t know flowers from a hill of beans. Pretty soon your local homeowner’s Gestapo association will be paying a visit to inform you that your garden does not meet neighborhood code and
to weed it before nightfall or face execution.

Plants and gardens are imperfect and so are you. Since no plant is perfect and the state of perfection is but an ideal, the attainment of a perfect garden is physically impossible. You will always feel inadequate and worthless to the task. There are plenty of other things in life that make you feel this way, so why add one more?

Gardens attract thieves and other lowlifes. Your garden and all the plants in it might be so close to perfection, however, that it attracts the wrong kind of people. They will steal your plants. They will steal your ideas. And they will steal all of your free time by asking you to make a garden for them just like yours.

Gardening involves the use of sharp objects. Though gardening is often described as a gentle pastime, it is quite the contrary. More often it is a brutal affair involving lots of cutting, clearing, thrashing, sawing, tilling and killing. The books never mention the ugly wounds that can be inflicted by careless use of sharp trowels, not to mention Rototillers.

Gardening encourages profanity. At best, gardening is mostly a losing proposition. You spend all those hours sweating in the hot sun, breaking your back and your fingernails, then planting, weeding, cultivating and watering your little charges in an unending cycle of toil, only to find them one day flattened by wind or ravaged by snails. Though gardeners sometimes claim to be closer to God in their gardens, the words that come out of their mouths at such moments are not exactly fit for God’s ears.

Gardening is insane. Ask any gardener—once you start gardening you never want to stop. Performing an activity over and over again that always brings the same result - pain and suffering - is an unmistakable sign of insanity.

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**THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WORMS**

By Vicki Luna

As a child, I had absolutely no interest in worms whatsoever! However, while researching the subject of vermicomposting, or composting with worms, I came to realize how extremely wonderful they are.

The common Redworm or Red Wiggler, known as Eisenia fetida, is an epigeic worm, which means it lives on the surface of the soil or within the top 10” of the topsoil, where it voraciously feeds upon decomposing organic matter. Amazingly, the redworm can eat up to its body weight in food every single day, which makes it a great choice for vermicomposting. In fact, 1# of Redworms can eat approximately 1/2# to 1# of food daily.

The mature Redworm can be recognized by its alternating red and buff stripes and grows to about 6”- 8” in length. It is also hermaphroditic, as it possesses both male and female reproductive organs.

Redworms are extremely beneficial to the environment in a number of ways. They will ingest almost anything organic or decaying and turn it into a high quality compost or organic fertilizer, thereby reducing the burden on landfills and water supplies while preserving valuable resources. Kitchen scraps, yard waste, paper, and newspaper, can be converted by worms into a compost that is superior to conventional compost, in far less time and with considerably less labor.

The byproduct of the worm’s digestive process, the worm castings or worm manure, contain a highly active mixture of good bacteria, enzymes, and rich, water-soluble nutrients. This natural fertilizer contains essential minerals such as concentrated nitrates, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, and calcium. It also contains manganese, copper, zinc, cobalt, borax, iron, carbon, and nitrogen in a form which is immediately available to plants.

The worm castings and finished compost can also be used to make a “tea,” a natural liquid fertilizer, which when used to soak the root zone of plants or sprayed on both sides of the leaves, will help improve the plant’s resistance to disease by delivering microbes that help outcompete anaerobic and other pathogenic organisms by occupying infection sites on the plant’s root and leaf surfaces.

Because Redworms are hardy and will tolerate a wide range of temperatures, they are also used by fishermen as bait and by gardeners to reestablish worm populations in their yard or garden that have been depleted by chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
This is a plant just coming into its own in gardens, in part because it has some limitations, but in the right location it can really add to your landscape. Hyssop comes in many different species and colors but they are all herbaceous perennials that average two to three feet tall and nearly as wide. They have small oval leaves to pointed leaves and they often have a wonderful aroma. They have nicknames like “licorice plant” and “bubble gum plant”, so you can imagine the fragrance they emit. Agastache are members of the mint family.

Long spikes of rosy red, coral, apricot to purple flowers cover the plant. It is slightly reminiscent of penstemons, but there is a airy, lighter quality to the flowers. The flowers are favorites of hummingbirds and many insects and finches like the seeds. Agastache is a summer-to-first-frost bloomer, so it helps provide a nice bloom when many other things have given up for the season. By deadheading; you will keep the plant blooming longer.

One limitations is that they might not do well in our full hot sun. They grow in higher elevations in the wild, generally above 5000 feet. I have one growing in a site that only gets morning sun. It did quite well last summer, and while I worried about it surviving, it has started a new flush of spring growth, so they can be grown—in the right location. Whether it will survive in the long run only time will tell. Another I planted in full sun and it quickly died although I am not entirely sure why. Whether it was the heat, herbicide damage (my neighbor sometimes sprays) or something else, I’m not sure.

Agastache is a completely native North American plant with an many species growing throughout the country. Most come from Texas, though. Don’t be afraid to try one. They are very cold tolerant, (to -20°F) and heat tolerant if given enough water. It is not a plant that can withstand prolonged dryness, though. It will need to be deep-watered every two weeks in the summer and watered monthly in the winter. Good drainage is a must.

I purchased mine as a plant, but they can be grown by seed. I have grown one called Korean Hyssop, or Licorice Plant, from seeds as an annual in my vegetable garden. (It attracted a lot of pollinators.) Germination of many species can be tough; the seeds need to set for six months after picking. They may be light-sensitive, so just press lightly in the soil surface. Interestingly, though, you can take softwood cuttings anytime before blooming. Dip the cuttings into Rootone and place under misters and you should get new plants.

Plants and foliage are edible. Use the flowers to decorate salads and deserts; the leaves and flowers can be dried and used as a tea. If you can bear to pick the stems before they flower, that would be the best time if you want to dry them. One source likened the flowers to “Stewart’s Root Beer.” There are many species and new varieties of Hyssop that are coming onto the market, some with new colors and sizes. Below are a few of them, along with sources.

**Agastache aurantiaca**

This orange-flower agastache comes from the higher elevations of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains in Mexico. It likes an enriched soil and more
water—at least once a week during the summer. Can be grown in a container. Comes in a number of varieties with different orange colors. Zone 6 to 10

**Agastache cana**
This is the plant you will often see in catalogs now. They have cheerful raspberry pink flowers. Hummingbirds love these plants. This plant is originally native to New Mexico and Texas. Flower spikes are two to three feet tall.

**Agastache rugosa, Korean Hyssop**
Found in Korea, it has a strong mint fragrance and deep violet blue flowers. Will bloom all summer if the plant is deadheaded. Leaves are deep glossy green and strongly mint-scented. This plant is adapted to wetter conditions. Zone 5 to 9

**Agastache rupestris (Sunset hyssop, Licorice Mint)**
This is another favorite you should be able to find easily. The foliage is gray-green and it has salmon colored flowers. The leaves have a spicy fragrance. It can endure very dry conditions once the plant has been established. Zones 5 to 9

**Agastache foeniculum x rugosa “Blue Fortune”**
This is a very hardy plant and a favorite of butterflies. Powder-blue flowers grace its tall stems. Very strongly licorice-scented leaves. Zones 6 to 10

**Agastache x “Desert Sunrise” (A. rupestris x A. cana)**
This variety was developed by High Country Gardens and is known for its “sunrise” colors of orange, pink and lavender. It is tall—up to four feet. It is well adapted to dry conditions. Hummingbirds love it. Zones 5 to 10

**Agastache “tutti-frutti” (A. barberi x A. mexicana)**
This is a hybrid of two other species with amazing raspberry-red flowers on two to three foot stems. It can be grown in containers. As you might guess, another hummingbird favorite. Zones 7-10

**Agastache neomexican**
Lavender-pink flowers attract bumblebees and butterflies. It blooms starting midsummer. The scent is a sweet lavender. Great for dried arrangements. Zone 5-10

**Sources**
Avant Gardens  
710 High Hill Road  
North Dartmouth, MA 02747  
508-998-8819  
www.avantgardensne.com

Canyon Creek Nursery  
3527 Dry Creek Road  
Oroville, CA 95965  
530-533-2166  
www.canyoncreeknursery.com

Goodwin Creek Gardens  
P.O. Box 83  
Williams, OR 97544  
800-846-7359  
www.goodwincreekgardens.com

High Country Gardens (they really specialize in these plants and have a lot of interesting varieties available.)  
2902 Rufina Street  
Santa Fe, NM 87507  
800-925-9387  
www.highcountrygardens.com

Loomis Creek Nursery  
29 Van Deusen Road  
Hudson, NY 12534  
518-851-9801  
www.loomiscreek.com

**Hummingbirds**

Since I am talking about a plant that is a favorite of hummingbirds, I thought I’d throw in a few things on attracting the birds to your home. While you can put out hummingbird feeders, the easiest way to attract them is to provide them with natural sources of nectar including plants like agastache and penstemons. Hummingbirds may visit between 1500 and 3000 flowers per day. But they are also heavy insect eaters, so adding plants that attract insects also helps the hummers. Hummingbird babies are fed insects! An adult hummingbird
eats 75% nectar, 25% insects. Use feeders to supplement a great garden!

Avoid broad spectrum pesticides as they will kill insects that hummers feed on and the pesticides can harm the birds.

The proper ration for the sugar solution is 4 parts water to 1 part sugar. (1/4 cup sugar per 1 cup of water) Heat the water and sugar until the sugar is dissolved. Store in the refrigerator. DO NOT USE HONEY!! You also do not need to add food coloring. The feeder design is enough color to attract them. Keep feeders clean. Do not use bleach, but give them a good washing before refilling. I keep several around so that I always have a clean feeder to put out. A number of diseases can be transmitted from bird to bird via feeders, so keep them clean. Replace sugar water every couple of days and clean feeder.

Provide water for them. Water is appreciated by all birds, hummingbirds included. They especially like moving or dripping water. Make sure the water is shallow. The same concerns about a feeder apply to a water source—Keep it clean.

While the birds are already nesting, for next year put out some dryer lint for them to line their nests with. Snag it on rose bushes or tree limbs and they will appreciate the extra softness.

For more information on hummingbird, go to www.hummingbirdsoctory.org

Seminar Teaches About Invasive/Noxious Weeds

Invasive, noxious weeds impact everyone by displacing native plants and wildlife, impacting recreation, and lowering property values. To learn more noxious weeds, attend this seminar sponsored by the West Yavapai Weed Management Area (WYWMA). The seminar will be held on Saturday May 7, 2004 from 9 AM to 3 PM at the Mackin Building on the Prescott Rodeo Grounds, 840 Rodeo Dr, Building A. The morning will be an indoor seminar covering: identification and management strategies for noxious weeds, the extent of noxious weeds in Arizona and other western states, the ten highest priority noxious weeds in Yavapai County, what is being done to raise awareness and control noxious weeds in the WYWMA, a special presentation on how noxious weeds affect soil properties, and how the average citizen can make a difference in controlling the spread of noxious weeds. Lunch (provided) and a local field trip will follow the morning seminar.

Presenters will be Larry Howery, University of Arizona Range Management Specialist, Jeff Schalau, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Agent, Bob Adams, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other local experts. The program costs $12.00 which includes lunch, refreshments, and printed materials. Pre-registration is appreciated. To pre-register, call the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension at (928) 445-6590 or E-mail: jschalau@ag.arizona.edu.

6th Annual Iris Exhibit

The Prescott Area Iris Society invites you to enter your iris blooms in our 6th Annual Iris Exhibit. The exhibit will be held Saturday, May 14 at Mortimer Nursery in Prescott from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Exhibition privileges are available to anyone who grows iris. Exhibitors may enter individual iris stalks and iris arrangements. Entries will be accepted from 8:30 a.m.—9:30 a.m.

Help us promote an awareness and appreciation of iris by entering several different iris. The public will vote for their favorite irises and the exhibitors of winning irises will be awarded prizes for Best Tall Bearded Iris, Best Other Iris, Best Artistic Design and President’s Award. Prizes will only be awarded for named iris. Unnamed iris will be for display only.

For exhibit rules or information: 776-7217 or jbook@cableone.net. Mark your calendars now for our rhizome sale, Saturday, August 6, Sharlot Hall Museum.
Bright and early Tuesday March 15, a group of eight hardy souls met in near freezing weather at Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott. Our mission for the day was to prune more than two hundred and fifty rose bushes in the Territorial Women’s Memorial Rose Garden. The garden was dedicated to the pioneer women of Arizona in 1948. A book inside the visitor center identifies each of the women who has been honored.

Richard Wise, MG and Sharlot Hall volunteer and Steve Whitley, Sharlot Hall grounds supervisor, gave us a demonstration on pruning. We cut the roses back to about knee high, leaving four to six of the strongest canes. With just a brief break for Krispy Kremes and a few good laughs, we were able to complete our task by noon.

Along with Richard and Steve, our group included Richard’s wife Randi, brother Ron, Robert Diggs and Master Gardeners Jonella Blake, Karen Wagley and Mari Dodd. Thanks to everyone for their hard work.

Richard may contact us in the future if he can use Master Gardener’s help maintaining this beautiful historic garden.

**Pictures**

Steve Whitley, grounds supervisor Sharlot Hall Museum

Richard Wise and wife Randi

L to R
Karen Wagley, Richard Wise, Jonella Blake, Robert Diggs, Steve Whitley
**MG Association News**

Sal Sorrentino is seriously ill with cancer. Sal has been a very active MG for over 10 years. He answers phones in the Ext office, has organized guest speakers for MGA meetings, set up field trips, etc. I’m sure he would be happy to get cards from his MG friends. His address is: 2683 Rainmaker, Prescott, AZ  86305

**Attention Plant Lovers!**

*Excitement, adventure, romance coming Saturday June 18 on the Master Gardener field trip to the Arboretum at Flagstaff Annual “Plant Fair”. if you want to go, call Pattie at (928)778-4810 evenings to reserve a seat on the MG van, or to get further info. Always something new to learn and see come*

**Need Money for a MG Project?**

If you need to spend money on a Master Gardener project there is a way to do the purchases, but you must plan ahead. Before making any purchases talk to Karen in the Prescott office. Explain what you need including prices and total costs along with where you want to buy it and she can arrange to have a check cut for the purchases or it can be purchased by Karen or Jeff via their purchasing cards. If you just purchase the items it will be difficult to get reimbursed, it takes time and lots of paperwork so please before you buy talk to Karen!

**Low Water Use Plants**

In conjunction with April being the League of Women Voters’ Water Awareness Month, members of the Sedona Women Water Wise Committee and the Sedona Water Wise Alliance will deliver low-water-use plant markers to five area nurseries around April 23.

The nurseries will identify and expand their low-water-use plant sections. The plant markers will display the new Sedona is Water Wise logo and indicate that each plant so marked is a low-water-use plant.

Nursery Source, Biddle Outdoor Center, Lumbermen's, Sedona Ace Hardware and Village Ace Hardware are all participating, helping their customers to have beautiful gardens and still be water wise. Other nurseries wanting to participate can call 649-0135.
MG Association Meeting: Cottonwood

May 18, 6:30pm
Speaker: Bill Cook will be taking about fruit trees, how to grow, prune, graft, etc.