



# Master Gardener Newsletter

New Mexico State University  
Cooperative Extension Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
College of Agriculture & Home Economics

Doña Ana County Office  
530 North Church Street  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
Phone: (575) 525-6649 Fax: (575) 525-6652

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## Hotline Data Analysis: First Cut

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### HOTLINE CONTACT SHEET DATABASE: A BEGINNING ANALYSIS

Compilation & Analysis of Data Conducted By  
Craig Severy, Certified Master Gardener  
\*Significant Data Missing in 2003 & 2004  
(Data for these years not counted in averages)

<u>Year</u>	<u>#Contacts</u>	<u>#Questions</u>
2000	414	470
2001	307	371
2002	471	544
2003*	025	032
2004*	001	001
2005	229	264
2006	424	494
2007	484	560
2008	397	436
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2752</b>	<b>3172</b>
<b>Average/Year</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>448</b>

### QUESTION CATEGORIES (highest to lowest)

#1 Plant	2347
#2 Animal (not plant specific)	452
#3 Insect	307
#4 Landscape	66
#5 Plant (potted)	60
#6 Water	51
#7 Soil	35
#8 Garden	29
#9 Compost	27
#10 Termites	22

### PLANT Category (Top 10 Questions)

#1 Tree, deciduous fruit	507
#2 Shrub & Shrub/Tree	323
#3 Tree, deciduous	297
#4 Vegetables & Vegetables/Herbs	253
#5 Tree, evergreen	213
#6 Turf	194
#7 Weeds	102
#8 Vines	76
#9 Succulents	70
#10 Flowers	67

This information is just a first cut of Craig's collected data, which is still under review and analysis. Remember, this data comes from anecdotal accounts written on Hotline Contact forms and is not a scientific research review. In August, data may be ready so that we can then breakdown information for the first five highest categories of questions under Plants for Item #1 (Tree, Deciduous Fruit) through Item #5 (Tree, Evergreen).

Please submit information and suggested topics for the August newsletter to Ann Shine-Ring by Saturday, the 25th of July:  
Contact Info:  
[asring@hughes.net](mailto:asring@hughes.net)  
(575) 640-7177



## GARDEN TOOL BASICS

By Andrew Hind, Bradford, Ontario

Excerpt from *Backyard Living Magazine*, June/July 2008

Caring for your garden requires special tools, but it's easy to become bewildered by the bevy available at nurseries and hardware stores. That's why it's important to take a few minutes to understand what task each garden tool is designed for before pulling out your wallet. Regardless of your experience or your garden's size, purchase quality tools. They'll be in regular use for many years, and while it may be tempting to buy cheap, you and your garden will soon realize the difference. Pruners that cut poorly, for example, damage plant tissue and are hard on your wrist. And cheap garden forks that bend upon contact with compact soil are an unnecessary source of frustration. But even the best quality tool can be used incorrectly—damaging the tool or its user. With these points in mind, here's a list of essentials, what to consider before purchasing them and how to use each correctly.

**HOES.** Used for weeding around plants and for cultivating topsoil, vegetable gardeners find hoes particularly useful because their reach allows gardeners to work amid plants without disturbing them. There are specialized kinds, such as onion- and triangular-shaped hoes, on the market, but these are unnecessary for the average gardener. A simple hoe is fine for general tasks.

**SPADES, SHOVELS & FORKS.** Although there are various sizes of spades and forks, don't be misled into thinking you need one of each to suit each task. A single round-point shovel for digging, a flat-edged spade for edging and double digging (a technique of turning soil for a new garden bed) and a simple garden fork for cultivating soil is all you need.

These tools are in constant use, so make sure they're comfortable to handle. Lightness and strength are key, as you'll use them for lifting and leverage. Look for shovels and forks with long, wooden shafts, as they're strong and relatively inexpensive. A D-shaped handle provides the best grip. Stainless steel is the best material for the head because it won't rust (although it can be expensive). Coated-steel blades are more affordable and age well if kept clean.

Weight is another factor—if you're slight, a heavy spade or shovel may be difficult to use. You could strain your back, especially if you're lifting heavy earth. Lift and test a variety of tools to find the one that feels right for you.

**LEAF RAKE.** Leaf rake heads are fan-shaped and often made of plastic, metal or bamboo. It's one of the more useful tools, good for leaf removal, spring cleanup of lawns and all the other important general clean-up duties. Because you'll use it a lot, buy one with a comfort grip along the shaft. Leaf rakes are ill suited to the heavier tasks that are given to the garden rake, and can be damaged in the process if not used the proper way.

**EDGERS.** Edgers are often overlooked, but they are really versatile tools. Their principal task is to tidy lawn and garden edges to create a finished look. But they're also almost mandatory for cutting and laying sod, and can be used for dividing plants, cultivating and even light digging in a pinch. When selecting an edger, look for the same qualities as you would with a spade.

**GARDEN RAKES.** The garden rake is different from a leaf rake and intended for a different function. A general-purpose cultivation tool, the garden rake (as opposed to the soft-tined leaf rake) can be used to break up the surface of the soil and collect stones, leaves and other debris. Inverted, it's used to level the ground.

Choose a rake with a head of suitable width for the scale of the raking job you most commonly undertake. Also, as with shovels and spades, consider the shaft length carefully. To avoid back sprain, you should be able to rake without bending. The rake's handle should come to about the bridge of your nose. So, while a standard 5-foot shaft suits most people, taller or shorter gardeners may want to consider something different. The strongest rake heads are made of a single piece, unlike the cheaper, riveted heads, with their individual nail-like prongs, which may break or bend.

**HAND FORKS AND TROWELS.** The two "hand tools" most commonly used in the garden are forks and trowels. These are required for weeding and cultivating in small areas, as well as dividing plants. As with pruners, they should fit comfortably in your hand. Hand forks have two basic types: those with wide and flat prongs, and those with round and narrow prongs. The former is more suited to weeding, since weeds are more easily trapped and held between the wider prongs. The latter, on the other hand, is better suited for cultivating.

**PRUNERS.** Pruners are essential for light cutting in the garden. That includes everything from cutting back shrubs and pruning roses to gathering cut flowers. A good bypass pruner cuts cleanly and easily through woody stems up to at least 1/2 inch in diameter (for larger cuts, shears, loppers or pruning saws are required). Get a good-quality blade, because a poor blade results in uneven cuts that might promote disease. Take the time to select tools that fit your hands comfortably; a tool fitted to your hand's size and shape requires less effort to cut and therefore places less stress on your joints and muscles. This is an especially important consideration for the elderly or those suffering from arthritis or tendinitis. But even good-quality pruners can cause problems in the yard if used incorrectly. What's the Number One error? Lack of sanitation. Sterilize your pruners after pruning each plant, or you'll risk spreading disease from one plant to another. ■





## CLEAN, SHARP GARDEN TOOLS WORK BETTER:

Following a Regular Maintenance  
Routine Can Also Mean  
Fewer Blisters & Backaches.

Author: Ken Textor  
(Excerpt: Fine Gardening, #69)

Sometimes we'd rather spend time gardening than tending to our tools. Many of us have probably put away shovels that were dirty and rusty, set aside dull and stained hoes, and "fixed" the cracked handle of a favorite rake with a tight wrapping of electrician's tape. As a result, often our tools don't work as well as they should. Instead of wasting time struggling with dull or broken tools, we can develop a brief, regular maintenance regime so we can spend more efficient, productive hours in our gardens.

### ✓ Clean tools last longer

### ✓ After every use, wash soil and grime from tools with a steady spray of water from the garden hose

If nothing else, tools should be cleaned after each use. Doing so keeps diseases, fungi, insect eggs, and weed seeds from being unwittingly spread around the garden. Cleaning also extends the life of a tool by removing moisture-laden, rust-enhancing soil from steel surfaces. For tools with a keen edge, a good cleaning keeps rust from eating the edge away. Spades, rakes, hoes, trowels, and any other tools that come into contact with soil should be hosed off with water after each use. With the garden hose nozzle adjusted for maximum pressure, average garden soil washes away easily. To remove heavy clay soil, some scrubbing with a hard bristle brush also may be necessary. After washing any tool, dry it with a cotton rag before putting it away.

Tools that don't come in contact with soil, particularly those with sharpened edges like axes, pruning shears, and knives, should be wiped down with a thick, rough cotton cloth to remove any gums and saps from their blades. When working on pitch-producing plants like conifers, dampen a cloth with a little paint thinner before wiping. In all cases, once dirt and residue are removed, dry the tool with a clean cotton rag.

### ✓ Apply oil to prevent rust

### ✓ Oil steel tool heads to prevent them from oxidizing. The oil creates a barrier between the air and the steel

Even after washing and drying, steel tool heads are still susceptible to rust when exposed to oxygen. In fact, as a general rule, the better the grade of steel used, the more vulnerable it is to rusting. So, considering the high cost of quality gardening tools, it just makes sense to keep rusting to a minimum.

Motor oil is inexpensive and an effective rust preventer. When applied to steel surfaces, the oil insulates the steel and prevents it from oxidizing. To thin the oil out and make it easier to work with and to better coat both porous and smooth steel surfaces, mix one quart of non-detergent 30W motor oil (any brand will do) with a pint of kerosene or lamp oil. This 2:1 ratio of oil to kerosene can either then be wiped onto the steel surface with a clean cotton rag or sprayed on to metal surfaces—a recycled household-cleaner spray bottle works well. Store the mixture away from heat sources and dispose of it as you would any motor oil. Whichever way the oil is applied, keep the coating thin so it won't drip off the tool head and onto the floor. Because oil is organically based and breaks down rapidly in soil, you don't have to worry about this small amount of oil adversely affecting your soils.

### ✓ Remove rust with a wire brush

Extremely rusty tools require special attention. Use a sheet of 80-grit sandpaper to remove light coatings of rust. For a slightly heavier coat, a stiff wire brush can be effective. But, when rust has turned a steel surface rough, like the texture of medium-grit sandpaper, a heavy-handed approach is needed. On badly pitted steel surfaces like those on tools you find at yard sales, the quickest and most sensible option is an electric drill with a wire brush attachment.

### ✓ Sand away a light coating of rust. 80-grit sandpaper should be coarse enough to get the job done

### ✓ Use a wire brush to remove a layer of rust

### ✓ For a very heavy coat of rust, use a drill with a wire brush attachment

Before taking any kind of wire brush to a tool, always put on a pair of safety glasses. The rust particles or the wire bristles can fly off at high speeds and in unpredictable directions. Once you've removed as much rust as possible, then apply a coat of an oil mixture to the newly exposed steel to stop the oxidation process in its tracks and keep in check the almost-invisible residual rust that couldn't be removed.

—Article Continued on Page 4—

**Clean, Sharp Gardening Tools Work Better – Continued**

✓ **Sharpen tools for peak efficiency**

Sharpening tools is a slightly more complicated procedure than removing rust. Some tools like shovels, axes, hoes, and trowels are best sharpened with a hand file, while other tools like pruning shears and knives call for a honing stone. Depending on how dull an edge is, some tools may require a session with a high-speed grinding stone.

The tools needed for basic sharpening are neither expensive nor complicated. The most basic sharpening tool is an 8-inch-long mill file with a bastard cut which you can purchase at any hardware store for about \$8. When sharpening a tool with a mill file, work by drawing the cutting teeth in one direction over the edge being sharpened. For best results, hold the tool steady in a clamp, vise, or other bracing system, keeping the file at an angle from the plane of the tool's working surface as you push it along the edge you are sharpening. And since sharpening edges with a mill file requires two hands, get one that has a handle on one end. This makes it easier to maneuver and get a good edge.

For pruning shears and knives, it's possible to get good results with any of the diamond, ceramic, or high-carbon steel honing devices that are on the market. However, oilstones are the easiest to use when honing knives and pruning shears. To sharpen a blade on an oilstone, simply slide the blade over the flat surface of the stone in one direction until you reach the desired sharpness. No matter which device you choose to sharpen your cutting blades, it should come with directions for use.

- ✓ Use a hand-held mill file to sharpen hoes and shovels. The key to successful sharpening is keeping the tool steady and the file at the proper angle.
- ✓ Sharpen pruning blades and knives by sliding an oiled honing stone in one direction across the tool's beveled edge.

**How sharp is sharp enough?**

- ✓ Grind battered tools into shape
- ✓ Grinding sharpens tools quickly. Lawn-mower blades and axes that take a lot of abuse deserve an annual trip to a professional grinder.

Since the grinding process removes metal quickly, only the most battered tools are candidates for regular grinding. High-speed grinding should be done with caution. Even with the extra eye shields provided on some machines, you should always wear safety glasses when grinding tools. A bench grinder/buffer can be purchased for around \$40. You can also do some basic touch-up grinding with a small grinding wheel (less than \$10) made to fit an electric drill.

**Store each tool in its own space**

- ✓ Drill holes in tool handles so they can be easily hung from nails affixed to the walls of a garage or storage shed.

It's important to store your clean, oiled, and sharpened tools properly. Organize your tools according to when and where you use them. Weeding tools are near the door closest to the garden; cutting and pruning tools are near the door closest to the shrubs and woods. And always return them all to the same spot when you're finished to save time looking for tools.

Hanging tools by their handles on a storage shed or garage wall not only keeps them out of the way but also prevents damage to sharpened edges. A 10-penny finish nail driven into a handy two-by-four is the easiest way to keep tools aloft. Drill 1/4-inch holes through the handles of axes, shovels, hoes, rakes, and other long-handled tools so you can hang them on the nails. Keep the business end of the tool hanging toward the floor so when if the tool falls off its nail, it won't swing down and hit something or someone. ■



**JULY BIRTHDAYS**

Larry Dickson	July 3
Frank Connor	July 7
Dee Davis	July 10
Marion Good	July 16
Mona Nelson	July 17
Nancy DeLouise	July 18
Joan Lane	July 29

**MANY THANKS FOR THE GOODIES:**  
We appreciate your thoughtfulness

July Goodies  
Frank Collins  
Val Fernandez

August Goodies  
Doug Brown  
Ann Palormo



**Keep Your Tools Rust-Free**

After your garden tools have been cleaned and dried following a day in the dirt, mist them lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Then wipe them with a clean, dry cloth to keep them rust-free and ready for gardening. *(Catherine Young, Virginia)*

**Disinfect Your Pruners With No Drips**

Sterilizing your pruners is an important way to keep your plants healthy and disease-free. An easier way to clean them instead of using a bleach-solution, is to use disinfectant wipes to clean your pruners between cuts—no more messy jars or drips on your clothing. *(Earl Simmons, Maryland)*



## Blossom End-Rot (Guide A-231)

Author: Natalie P. Goldberg, Extension Plant Pathologist

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, New Mexico State University

### Diagnosis At A Glance:

<b>Causal Agent:</b>	Calcium deficiency in developing fruit
<b>Hosts:</b>	Many vegetable crops, notably peppers, tomatoes, and watermelons
<b>Symptoms:</b>	Light tan to brown lesion at the blossom-end of fruit. Lesion becomes sunken and leathery with time. Lesions turn black with invasion by secondary organisms.
<b>Conditions for Disease:</b>	Moisture stress. Too much N, Mg, K, or Na fertilization. High salt levels in soil or water.
<b>Management:</b>	Good water and fertilizer management. Avoid injury to roots.

Every year many commercial growers and home gardeners become concerned about a large tan to black spot on the bottom of fruit, especially on peppers and tomatoes. No fungi, bacteria, or any other living disease organisms are known to cause the condition, and it is not spread from one plant to another. This is "blossom-end rot," a physiological disorder caused by a calcium deficiency in the developing fruit compounded by an imbalance in water and plant nutrients.

The disorder first appears as brown discoloration on the blossom end of the fruit (the end opposite the stem) (figures 1A and 1B). On chile fruit, the spot occasionally will be off to the side of the blossom end. The spot enlarges as the fruit matures and may eventually cover up to half the fruit. With age, lesion tissue becomes sunken and leathery. Eventually, secondary fungi or bacteria may invade the tissue. Secondary invasion results in a black or watery appearance (figures 2A and 2B). Affected fruit ripens faster than unaffected fruit.



Figure 1A



Figure 1B



Figure 2A



Figure 2B

Calcium deficiency may result from insufficient calcium in soil or an inability of plants to take up sufficient amounts of the mineral. Insufficient uptake can occur due to 1) too much nitrogen, magnesium, potassium, or sodium fertilization, 2) very wet or very dry conditions, 3) high salts, or 4) a combination of the above. As the weather warms and the plants begin to grow more rapidly, requirements for water and calcium increase. Because calcium is not a highly mobile element, a fluctuation in water availability, even for a short period, can result in a deficiency. It is at this time that fruit begins to show symptoms of blossom-end rot.

Blossom-end rot is best controlled by following a management program that includes pre- and post-planting practices. Using some or all of these control practices should help reduce the incidence and severity of this disorder.

### PRE-PLANT TREATMENTS

1. Take a pre-plant soil test to determine pH and nutrient levels.
2. Adjust pH of the soil to 6.8-7.2
3. Use only moderate amounts of fertilizer—enough to keep plants green and vigorous, but not too lush. About 1 1/2 pounds of 10-20-10 per 100 square feet mixed into the topsoil just before planting is usually enough. Remember to check your soil test and adjust to your specific needs.
4. Select cultivars that are more tolerant of conditions that lead to blossom-end rot (shorter, rounder fruited varieties tend to be more tolerant than long-fruited varieties).
5. Plant in an area with good drainage. Plants sitting in saturated soils for prolonged periods will have problems associated with diseases that result in loss of roots. **(Article continued on page 6)**



## Blossom End-Rot – Continued from Page 5

### POST-PLANT TREATMENTS

1. Water carefully so the soil is never too wet or too dry, to a depth of 2 feet. Routinely check the soil moisture in the root zone by digging with a trowel to a depth of 1 foot. To avoid water stress, the soil in the root zone should be moist enough to easily form a ball. This technique can be used to determine when to irrigate.
2. Fertilize with a nitrogen side-dressing only if necessary to maintain "normal" green color and moderate growth. Use calcium nitrate or ammonium sulfate at the rate of 1/4 pound per 100 square feet.
3. Restrict all cultivations to the top inch or two to avoid damage to the roots, or use a mulch to eliminate the need for cultivation.
4. Although erratic, some success has been found using calcium sprays during the growing season. To try this treatment, spray the plants (leaves and fruit) with 2 level tablespoons of calcium chloride in 1 gallon of water. Apply 2 more sprays at 1-week intervals. Be careful not to wash spray residues off the leaves and fruit with irrigation water.

Topic suggested by  
Bonnie Eisenberg, Certified Master Gardener



### EFFECTIVE PAIRING OF PLANTS:

#### Eye-Catching Plant Combos Tips

Excerpt from *Backyard Living*, 2008

Like any beautifully composed work of art, the success of eye-catching plant combinations relies on following a few basic rules. Consider the following as you plan your own distinctive plantings:

- ❁ **Suitable sites:** Mix plants that share the same soil, light, and moisture requirements.
- ❁ **Bloom times:** Pick plants that will bloom around the same time and that will continue to flower together over a similar period of time.
- ❁ **Companionable colors:** Choose flowering plants with blooms that harmonize with each other and with surrounding plantings. Complementary hues—two colors situated across from each other on the color wheel—make for more dramatic displays. Bright-shaded flowers will appear to advance in the landscape, while lighter-colored blooms will seem to recede.
- ❁ **Good forms:** Stagger tall, medium and low-growing plants for an interesting interplay of heights and incorporate plants with varying shapes. Blend plants with prostrate, trailing or tidily mounded forms with bushier and upright statures for a garden that looks great from ground level on up.
- ❁ **Fine-tuned foliage:** Employ plants with varying shaded, shaped and sized leaves to create a garden that continues to please after flowers fade. Add plants that bear silver, sage-gray, dark green, chartreuse, deep purple, burgundy and variegated foliage. Fashion a textural tableau by weaving together plants that boast strap-like, feathery, smooth, shiny, bristly, spiky and grass-like leaves.





## 10 Tips For Gardening in Small Spaces

Even small spaces can transform into beautiful, lush gardens with the right plants. Here are 10 tips to help:

- ◆ Layering helps make the most of a small yard. Work from ground level upward, filling each layer with plants. Start with ground covers, annuals and perennials, and then work up to shrubs, vines and trees.
- ◆ Plant flowering vines along fences, arbors and trellises for maximum visual impact without eating up lots of precious garden space. Brighten privacy fences with trellises and flat-backed planters.
- ◆ Mix bulbs with perennials. This provides spring color as the bulbs emerge and summer color when the perennials bloom.
- ◆ Try a tabletop garden. Select a sturdy table that can hold about 50 pounds, and fill it with pots of flowers, veggies and herbs. Upkeep is minimal, and you'll save your knees and back.
- ◆ Containers are a quick and easy way to add flowers anywhere, especially in small spaces. To minimize watering, choose drought-resistant plants and larger pots, which don't dry out as quickly.
- ◆ Even the tiniest yard needs trees or evergreens for a sense of structure. Many varieties of dwarf trees are ideal for small landscapes. Check out your local garden center...and make sure a plant marked "dwarf" is truly small enough for your backyard.
- ◆ Choosing plants that are too big for your garden can make it look even smaller and more crowded. Stick to plants with a compact growth habit. Don't be fooled because a young plant looks petite. It's the plant's mature size that you'll have to live with.
- ◆ Make room to relax. No matter how small your garden is, create an area for a bench or a chair or two. After all, gardening isn't just about planning, planting and maintaining. It's also about enjoying your hard work and effort!
- ◆ Make the most of your planting space and minimize watering chores at the same time by placing container plants directly beneath hanging baskets. When you water the pots on top, the overflow will water the ones below.
- ◆ Tuck tomatoes and peppers among sun-loving flowers, and train sprawling veggies like cucumbers and pole beans to climb up a trellis. Use lettuce as a border plant, or combine several varieties to make a low-growing bed. Think small—compact squares work just as well as long rows.

(An excerpt from Backyard Living Magazine, 2008)



**"Sago Palm" aka "Cycad"**

### SHADE TREES FOR NEW MEXICO

If you want information about a good shade tree to grow in your New Mexico yard, then you must read Guide H-426 (Shade Trees for New Mexico, Cooperative Extension Service).

Link: [http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/\\_h/h-426.pdf](http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-426.pdf)

This article, which was written by Curtis Smith, states that, "trees planted in our cities and around our homes must grow under climatic conditions and in soil that does not naturally support tree growth. Yet trees are valuable in our environment....they cool our cities, cleanse the air, and absorb noise." Smith also states that, "because many of our trees are not native to our state, they require special care."

#### Topics Covered in the Guide Include:

- ✓ Selecting a Tree
- ✓ Planting a Tree
- ✓ Caring For Trees
- ✓ Growing Zones in New Mexico
- ✓ A 3-page chart showing selected tree species for New Mexico. This chart covers:
  - a) Common tree name,
  - b) Water use,
  - c) Pollen allergy potential,
  - d) Growing zone,
  - e) Selection and planting criteria,
  - f) Potential problems, and
  - g) Tree height.

### Poisoning Alert!

Many home improvement stores sell a houseplant that can cause serious poisoning in pets and children. The plant is called the "Sago Palm" or "Cycad". It is used in outdoor landscaping in southern states, but can only survive as a houseplant in the north.

All of this plant, including the seeds and root ball are toxic. Signs of illness first appear about 12 hours after ingestion and include gastrointestinal signs such as vomiting, diarrhea and lethargy. The toxins in the plant lead to severe liver failure with progressive weakness jaundice, bruising and bleeding and other signs of liver failure that lead to death. It is estimated that 75-80% of animals ingesting this plant will die in spite of aggressive medical treatment.

If you have one of these plants in your home you will want to be sure to keep it away from pets and children, preferably by disposing of it safely in a covered trash can or "re-home" it with someone who does not have pets or young children in the household.

Warning alert provided by  
Burnt Hills Veterinary Hospital, New York. Its website:  
[www.burnthillsvethosp.com](http://www.burnthillsvethosp.com)

*(Alert contributed by Hope Movsesian, MG Intern)*



## Dixie's Honey Do List for July



If my bullets are followed by (MI), the information came from *Month by Month Gardening in the Desert Southwest* by Mary Irish. I just wanted you to know that this is an outstanding book. **Dixie**

### In General:

Hopefully the "monsoon" season will start soon but there are no guarantees. Continue life support. Be prepared to harvest rainwater with buckets placed under down spouts.

### Ornamentals

- Plant seeds of pansy, stock, and snapdragon this month for fall transplant.
- Plant or replant summer annuals such as zinnia and marigold for fall color.
- Time to order winter annuals from catalogues. Choose plants that are "summer flowering in northern climates"(MI).
- Deadhead flowering plants but stop pinching back chrysanthemums now to allow flower bud formation.
- Roses and other ornamentals may develop brown dried leaf margins. This may be due to heat stress and/or salt burn. Irrigate deeply to leach salts. Water-soluble fertilizers are salty so water well before and after application.
- This is a good time to propagate new plants for our fall plant sale.
- Provide shade for newly planted succulents, container plants, everything.
- As temperatures and humidity increase fungal infections may become a problem. Irrigate early in the day to maximize water uptake and minimize disease. Cochineal scale, which looks like a white cottony mass, may become a problem on cactus. Hose them off frequently.



### Fruits and Nuts

- Continue with cover sprays to apples and pears but reread pesticide label directions about when to stop sprays.
- Continue zinc sprays to young pecans.
- Maintain vigilance against tree pests such as stinkbugs, leaf footed bugs, and fruit beetles. All may damage ripening fruit but remember some damage is tolerable. Cut out the bad spot and enjoy the fruit.
- Be on the look out for signs of peach tree borer damage, which is a gummy exudate near the base of the tree. Treat now according to label directions.
- Continue deep watering schedule.

### PVC Plant Protectors

Take cut pieces of PVC piping and put them around newly planted plants to save them from cutworms or other insects. They make handy, reusable collars for all new young plants in your garden. *(Connie Pribnow, Wisconsin)*

### Fast Mulching

To save time, I cover my newly planted annuals and perennials with overturned containers before applying mulch. After I've applied about 3" of mulch to my flowerbed, I remove the pots and fill in around the plant with the remaining mulch. It's quick and neat and makes my yard look professionally landscaped. *(Shirley Wagstaff, Oregon)*

## Dixie's Honey Do List for July- Continued

### Vegetables

- Early this month plant Chinese cabbage, cauliflower, and sweet corn.
- Mid to late month plant bush, wax, lima, and pinto beans. Also plant broccoli, cabbage, Swiss chard, collard greens, kohlrabi, and turnips.
- Summer squash may be planted anytime this month.
- Amend soil and prepare fallow beds for fall planting.



### Lawns

- It may be necessary to raise lawn mower height again.
  - Do not fertilize fescues, blue grass, or rye grass.
  - If you did not fertilize your warm season grasses last month, then do so now.
  - Water lawns deeply to a depth of 8 – 10 inches.
- Grubworm damage may become obvious with dead patches of grass lifting up like a piece of carpet. The grass has no roots to hold it down. Treat early this month while larvae are young, near soil surface, and easier to kill.

### Miscellaneous

- Maintain compost pile by watering and turning.
- Add mulch. Use weed free grass clippings.
- This is a good time to update your garden journal with notes on plant performance successes and failures (MI).



### Geranium Problem—Any Ideas?

A woman recently called our MG Hotline. She has been having a problem with branches breaking off her geraniums. She believes that birds could possibly be the culprits. The Hotline workers suggested the caller put a protective structure around the plant, but the caller also wanted to know if anyone else has had this problem. Any other possibilities? If so, send them to Bonnie Eisenberg at [mizbons@comcast.net](mailto:mizbons@comcast.net) Thanks

Source: MG Hotline, June 19, 2009



## New Master Gardener Profile: Velina Hames



Velina Hames has gardened in Las Cruces for four years. Until this year she limited her gardening to container planting while the family removed some poorly planned trees/shrubs, etc. in their yard in preparation for landscaping in a more thoughtful way. "We have planted native plants and cactus and are also doing a vegetable garden this year plus a watermelon/cantaloupe patch," she says.

Velina and her family live in the Las Alturas area, just east of I-25 below University Avenue. Their home is on an acre of land so there is plenty of room to garden. They moved to Las Cruces from Texas where they lived in San Angelo and Dallas. They also lived in Connecticut for two years.

"I've been planting trees, flowers and shrubs for almost thirty years," Velina says, "but it was in parts of the country where it was easy to grow things." Flowers have always been her favorite but she wanted to grow her own food and teach her three teenagers how to grow food before they leave the nest. That motivated Velina to sign up for the Master Gardener Program last year.

I always tell people I never learned to "put up food" until I moved to the desert," Velina laughs. "When we lived in Texas and Connecticut we were so busy working. When I quit working I was a busy stay-at-home mom with three little ones under foot."

"When we moved back to Las Cruces, friends kept giving us apricots, apples, peaches, etc. so I learned to can. A friend also taught me about prickly pears and now to can the prickly pear juice for use in recipes all year long. The family also freezes lots of green chile when it is ready. "My experiences are really about getting food from other people's gardens! I am looking forward to having our own garden and harvesting our own food," Velina stated.

Velina feels that the Master Gardeners are such a talented group and that she has learned so much already. Now she wants to learn more about vegetable gardening and fruit-producing trees.

Velina is a CPA. She earned a degree in accounting from New Mexico State University. She grew up in Las Cruces and Alamogordo, graduated from NMSU, then married and moved away. Velina has returned to Las Cruces where her parents and brother live. Velina's husband passed away with cancer and now she is a single mom raising three teenagers. Her older son is 17 and she has twins (a boy and a girl) who are 14.

The family is active in their church where Velina plays the piano. She also likes to read, go camping, and play tennis. *(Profile written by Ann Palormo)*

# Master Gardener Matters

So much went on at our last meeting! We said goodbye to Barbara Arispe who is retiring as of July 7. We had chocolate cake with her and gave her a very nice bulbine plant in a pot. Barbara graduated from the second Master Gardener class. We're hoping she takes us up on our invitation to stay involved.

## MG Hotline

Craig Severy gave us an update on his project of putting all the hotline questions on a searchable database. He said that there were surprisingly few of the same questions repeated and that there were over 2,400 questions just on plants. Ann Shine-Ring is hoping to highlight some of Craig's survey results each month in the newsletter.

Just in case you missed last month's announcement, there are now two spaces available each hotline day for Interns so if you haven't signed up recently, now is your chance. The hotline assignment calendar is in our office so drop by to check for vacancies. There are still openings for certified Master Gardeners as well. Just be careful to write clearly when signing up and to make sure your name is in the correct location. (See page 14 in this newsletter for hotline openings for both Certified Master Gardeners and Interns.)

Jeff reminded us that he still needs to be the one who handles homeowner calls if homeowners wish to place blame elsewhere for their problems. For example, problems where nearby farmers may have sprayed chemicals next to a homeowner's property.

## MG Newsletter

As of the July newsletter, Ann Shine-Ring will begin to feature a Cooperative Extension publication each month. Ann still needs more people willing to help research topics for the newsletter so if you ever wanted to be published, this is your chance.

## CoCoRaHS Update

Alberta Morgan announced that the CoCoRaHS Program has recently changed its policies and now wants us to use hail pads if possible. She has hail pads to give out or you can make your own out of 1 inch thick Styrofoam. Pads should measure 12 x 12 inches and must be covered with heavy-duty foil. Remember to write on the back of each pad which way faced north. More complete directions are available on the CoCoRaHS website: [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org)

Alberta asked if people are interested in taking a basic weather spotter class. If there are enough people interested, she can arrange a class. Classes are usually held on Saturday morning and last 2 to 3 hours. If interested, please contact Alberta at: [mitzisami@yahoo.com](mailto:mitzisami@yahoo.com)

## Recycled Glass Update

Susan Blank has found two sources for recycled glass to use in the garden, Jelly Bean Glass at: [www.jellybeanglass.com](http://www.jellybeanglass.com) or American Specialty Glass at: [www.asgglass.com](http://www.asgglass.com)

Susan has also located a possible monthly meeting site for us. Dick Hiss has agreed to do more research into locating a meeting room large enough for all of us. If you have any ideas, please contact him at: [rhiss@comcast.com](mailto:rhiss@comcast.com)

## Community Garden Project

Darrol Shillingburg gave a short talk on community garden projects. Rivers Academy and Jardin de Las Esperanzas are working together on a teen gardening project involving two demonstration beds. The Three Sisters' Garden designed by Darrol has native cultivars of beans, corn, and squash. It provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate planning for and planting for the monsoon season. It also is an opportunity to discuss relationships between cultures, gardening and food. Darrol stated that using only native cultivars in our modern gardens opens up many avenues of exploration to students who are learning about growing food and food systems.

Another demonstration plot will be a summer salad bed. Darrol stated that creating this plot is an opportunity to demonstrate the use of plants to shade other plants and to reduce the soil surface during summer months. It will also introduce varieties of lettuce selectively bred to remain sweet in hot temperatures. Along with introducing those varieties, it enables teaching seed handling, ways to meet germination requirements and optimizing transplanting techniques to reduce plant shock. A summer salad bed requires students to continuously work with plants by keeping them trimmed and tied to the vertical and horizontal trellises that will eventually cover the bed. It also provides students with opportunities to measure and monitor air and soil temperatures in the microclimate created by these plant associations. If you are interested in working on this project, please contact Darrol at: [darrols@comcast.net](mailto:darrols@comcast.net)

## Educational Presentation

Our guest speaker was Dr. Sanjay Bajaj, a research specialist in Plant and Environmental Sciences at NMSU. He is working with cotton at NMSU, but has studied a variety of other plants in Burma (now known as Myanmar) and in the United States.

## Miscellaneous

In the June newsletter, we had provided a very long list of possible volunteer opportunities for Interns and Certified Master Gardeners. We spent the remainder of the meeting discussing these. We will continue our discussion about these opportunities next month.

We hope to see you next month on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Barb & Juliet







Val Fernandez'  
**Crawfish & Corn Chowder**  
By popular demand, here is Val's delicious recipe

- 3 lbs small creamer potatoes peeled and cut in half. (Val uses Idahos cut into bite size pieces)
- 3 tablespoons crab boil (a mixture of hot and spicy seasonings that comes in a bottle found in the spice section of your supermarket)
- 1 lb of butter (You could probably get away with 1/2 lb but that's NOT New Orleans style)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 bunches green onions chopped. (Use the light green part with the white part)
- 1 lb crawfish tails (2 -12oz frozen packs, more is always better—find in frozen foods section)
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 can niblet corn
- 1 can cream corn
- 1 tablespoon McCormick season salt or Ms dash + salt
- 1 quart half and half

**Directions:**

- Put peeled potatoes in large pot, cover with water and add crab boil. Boil until tender, drain well.
- While potatoes are cooking, melt butter in skillet and add both onion and green onions. Cook until translucent, about 5 minutes.
- Add crawfish tails and stir to let them pick up the onion flavor, about 5 minutes. Add cayenne, black pepper stir. Add both cans of corn. Let simmer for about 15 minutes until all flavors combine. Add potatoes and seasoning salt. At this point the mixture can be put aside if you are making the soup in advance. About 30 minutes before serving add half and half and heat over low heat. Taste and adjust with a dash of crab boil or other seasonings. (The mixture is quite spicy before the half and half is added.)
- Val finds "chopped" is best done in a food processor for this soup.

**Val's Warning:** This is not, and never will be, a low cal dish, but then not much in New Orleans cooking is.

Please note the open timeslots for certified MG's—one on July 7 and four in August; also too many (3) Interns signed up for July 7 & 21, August 4, and August 7—Can any of those Interns please switch dates? Please note that there are openings for two Interns on August 25. Thank you.

**Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for  
JULY**

Friday, July 3      **Holiday (Office Closed)**

Tuesday, July 7    **OPEN-Certified MG**  
Susan McNeill (I)  
Joan Woodward (I)  
Frank Collins (I)

Friday, July 10    **Dee Davis**  
**Ann Palormo**  
Betty Tomlin (I)  
Velina Hames (I)

Tuesday, July 14   **Alberta Morgan**  
Mike Lee (I)  
Terry McCatherin (I)

Friday, July 17    **Bonnie Eisenberg**  
Mike Smith (I)  
David Hutchinson (I)

Tuesday, July 21   **Risi Thompson**  
Marcella Thompson (I)  
Mona Nelson (I)  
Helen Moser (I)

Friday, July 24    **Ann Shine-Ring**  
Mike Lee (I)  
Richard Hiss (I)

Tuesday, July 28   **Dee Davis**  
Betty Tomlin (I)  
Mike Smith (I)

Friday, July 31    **Pat Anderson**  
David Hutchinson (I)  
Mike Smith (I)

**Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for  
AUGUST**

Tuesday, August 4   **OPEN-Certified MG**  
Susan McNeill (I)  
Joan Woodward (I)  
David Hutchinson (I)

Friday, August 7    **OPEN-Certified MG**  
Mike Lee (I)  
Lori Petro (I)  
Velina Hames (I)

Tuesday, August 11 **Alberta Morgan**  
Terry McCatherin (I)  
Helen Moser (I)

Friday, August 14   **Ann Shine-Ring**  
Mike Lee (I)  
Mike Smith (I)

Tuesday, August 18 **OPEN-Certified MG**  
Mona Nelson (I)  
Joan Woodward (I)

Friday, August 21   **Pat Anderson**  
Lori Petro (I)  
Mike Smith (I)

Tuesday, August 25 **OPEN-Certified MG**  
**OPEN - Intern**  
**OPEN - Intern**

Friday, August 28   **Marti Taylor**  
Betty Tomlin (I)  
David Hutchinson (I)

*\* Certified Master Gardeners' names shown in green*


*Thank you to Frank Connor for collecting the Hotline information for our newsletter.*

**ADDITIONAL TIMESLOTS ALLOTTED FOR INTERN HOTLINE HOURS**

At our May 22<sup>nd</sup> monthly meeting, the following changes were made in Hotline assignments:

January – April      (1 or 2 certified MG's to one Intern)  
May – December    (1 or 2 certified MG's to two Interns)

This increase in Intern timeslots will give Interns greater flexibility in obtaining their hotline hours.

Next Monthly Meeting of the Doña Ana County Master Gardeners  
  
 Wednesday, July 15, 2009  
 9-11am Cooperative Extension Office