



Master Gardener Newsletter

- New Mexico State University
- Cooperative Extension Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

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◀ March 2010 ▶

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Plant-of-the-Month

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BARREL CACTI

The barrel cactus is a member of the plant family *Cactaceae* (Cactus family), which is classified into two genera, *Echinocactus* and *Ferocactus*, both of which are found in the Mojave, Sonora, and Chihuahuan deserts located in Baja, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas, and Central Mexico. It can be spotted in desert washes and slopes in the southwestern U.S., but can also be found growing along canyon walls and in the high limestone altitudes of Mexico.

The scientific name for barrel cactus is *Ferocactus*, which translates as "fierce or wild" cactus. *Ferocactus* was first described by botanists N. Lord Britton and J. N. Rose in 1922. These plants are generally cylindrical or barrel-shaped and are usually among the largest cacti found in North American deserts. Members of this genus have prominent ribs and are covered with fiercely heavy spines or needles. There are 25 species of *Ferocactus* in the world.

Description of the Cactus Family

Most people think they recognize a cactus when they see one, but they are often mistaken. **All cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti.** Agaves, ocotillos, aloes, and the succulent euphorbias (such as African milk trees) are among the swollen or spiny plants that are often mistaken for cacti.

However, the term cactus refers to a particular family of plants defined by a distinctive flower pattern. To be a cactus, the plant must produce flowers with the following characteristics: many tepals (combined sepals and petals) that intergrade with each other; many stamens (usually hundreds), and numerous stigma lobes (rarely only three). **If a plant lacks such a flower, it cannot be a cactus.**

The Cactus family is nearly endemic to North America from southern Canada to southern South America. There is an exception—one of its 1,800 species occurs naturally in Africa, Sri Lanka, and Madagascar. However, introduced cacti have gone wild and sometimes become pests in several regions. Cacti are most common (in numbers of both plants and species) in semiarid habitats with low rainfall, yet with dependable rainy seasons. A few species occur in extremely arid deserts and wet tropical forests.

Article Continued on Page 2

Please submit information, articles, and suggested topics for the April 2010 newsletter to Ann Shine-Ring by Thursday, March 25th.

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Barrel Cacti—Continued from Front Page**Plant Characteristics:**

The barrel cactus is easy to grow and relatively fast growing. It may also produce round offshoots from the main stem, called "pups". The Baja Barrel seedling can reach a height of three feet with a one-foot girth. The Fishhook Barrel blooms in orange, a great contrast to its silvery spines. It and the Compass Barrel grow with their tops tilted to the southwest. Cactus spines screen harsh sunlight from its skin. They also collect rainwater and dew, which then drip straight toward the root zone. Cacti can survive incredibly hot temperatures and some take surprisingly low temperatures, including snowfall.

Most barrel cacti are round and green. Their needles can be red, violet, or yellow. These stout-ribbed plants can reach heights up to 10 feet high. When fully hydrated, a cactus can be 90%-94% water, to last months or years until the next rains. Even a small barrel cactus can weigh hundreds of pounds because of the water it can hold.

The barrel cactus is also a flowering plant. Its flowers always grow at the top of the plant. Fruits become fleshy and often juicy when mature, but are not usually considered edible. They bear no spines and only a few scales.

Many people mistakenly believe that the common sight of a tipped over barrel cactus is due to the cactus falling over from water weight. Actually, they fall over because they grow towards the sun, just like any other plant. Unlike other plants, however, the barrel cactus usually grows towards the south to prevent sunburn.

Most barrel cacti have 1-1/2 to 2-1/2" yellow-green or red flowers growing in a crown near the top of the stem. Most species bloom April through June, depending on local conditions. Growing up to 10 ft. high, all have stout ribs and dense clusters of spines that usually grow along the ribs, sometimes forming a cross in the center of the cluster.

Common Characteristics of Barrel Cacti:

- Accordion-type ribs with waxy outer coating instead of branches (the waxiness helps plant retain water and ribs decrease the amount of surface area exposed to the desert climate).
- Sharp, hooked needles instead of leaves (the abundant needles provide shade from the harsh sun, and protect against hungry and thirsty desert animal life).
- Expanding and contracting sponge-like body to store water (the body swells to store as much water as possible when it rains and contracts as it uses up its water supply).
- A mesh netting of roots near the ground surface instead of those that grow thick and deep into the ground (the roots' netting helps the plant soak up rain as soon as it falls).
- Smaller surface pores that close during the day and open at night (this helps the plant reduce transpiration, i.e., the evaporation of water into the atmosphere from the leaves and stems of plants).
- Brightly-colored fruit blossoms (small animals and birds eat the fruit and later deposit seeds in nearby areas to grow new barrel cacti).

The barrel cactus is the last of the cacti to bloom in the calendar year. When it does bloom, bright flowers appear, the color depending on the species of barrel cactus. Flowers yield to a yellow small pineapple-shaped fruit that has a slightly tangy, zesty taste with just enough sweetness. The unique taste has made this fruit popular in the health food community.

Article Continued Page 3

**FACTS PAGE**

Family:	Cactaceae (Cactus)
Genus:	Echinocactus and Ferocactus
Type:	Accent plant; evergreen
Water Usage:	Rainfall
Hardiness:	Varies by cacti type
Exposure:	Full sun
Flower Season:	Summer; some species late autumn/early winter
Wildlife Value:	Ripe fruit relished by desert animals; seeds; nectar; shelter for packrats
Flower Color:	Varies by species
<i>F. chrysanthus</i>	Yellow
<i>F. cylindraceus</i>	Yellow-orange
<i>F. echidne</i>	Lemon-yellow
<i>F. flavovirens</i>	Yellow
<i>F. fordii</i>	Red
<i>F. glaucescens</i>	Yellow
<i>F. macrodiscus</i>	Dark red flowers
<i>F. penisulae</i>	Red
<i>F. potsii</i>	Yellow
<i>F. robustus</i>	Yellow

SOURCES:

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- [Arizonan-Sonoran Desert Digital Library](#)
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- <http://www.desert-tropicals.com>
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- Plant Sciences Center of Sierra Vista, Arizona
- [Roll Out the Barrels](#). Scott Calhoun, Horticulture Magazine, June/July 2009.
- www.blueplanetbiomes.org/barrel_cactus.htm
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(Research and compilation of information for this article conducted by Ann Shine-Ring, Certified Master Gardener)

Barrel Cacti—Continued from Page 2

Historical & Conservation Issues: Like many plants of the world, the barrel cactus has numerous uses. Native Americans who lived in the desert found this plant very useful as it provided some very important provisions for them. Natives boiled young flowers in water to eat like cabbage and mashed older boiled flowers for a drink. They also used the cactus as a cooking pot by cutting off its top, scooping out the pulp and inserting hot stones together with food. The spines were used as needles, awls and in tattooing. Natives got water to drink from the pulp and they made fishhooks from the spines, which are pointed at the end.

Barrel cacti have endured a history of indignities in this country and Mexico. During the 1920s and 1930s, candy-makers eradicated most of the Compass Barrels in the natural areas of Los Angeles County. The candy-makers would burn off the barrel cactus' spines and slice up the pulpy body into little squares that were boiled with sugar and sold to tourists as a novelty called Cactus Candy. In a 1940 letter to Arizona Highways Magazine, Frank Lloyd Wright warned that Arizonans must beware of the "candy-makers and cactus-hunters" out to rob the desert of its precious spiny flora. In Mexico, barrels, or "biznagas" were, and sometimes still are, doused with kerosene, lit on fire to burn off their spines and fed to pigs. These issues, in addition to illegal harvesting, have also accounted for its destruction and, therefore, protected status in many areas.

Caution: Many native wild cacti are protected by state laws; it's illegal to take or destroy them. In addition, most barrels cannot branch, so cutting out the top is lethal. (See our February 2010 MG Newsletter, Unethical Native Plant Harvesting, pages 9-10)

Soldiers and explorers claimed they could survive in the desert by drinking the liquid from the barrel cactus. In truth, the pulp fiber is full of alkali which makes the liquid unfit to drink. In an emergency, the pulp of the stem can be chewed for its food and water content, but obvious care must be taken during such an operation. The taste can vary greatly depending on the cactus species.

In spite of these depredations, populations of wild barrel cactus have survived and even thrived into this century. For gardeners in hot, arid regions facing watering restrictions, several species of barrel cactus have become important garden plants. No group has played a bigger role in rescuing and reintroducing the barrel cactus than the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society (www.tucsoncactus.org). Since 1999, more than 40,000 plants, mostly barrel cacti, have been saved from development and replanted in private gardens.

Pollination & Pests: The majority of *Ferocactus* species flower in summer and are pollinated by *Lithurge* genus bees that specialize in cacti. Cactus bees are all solitary, but in some species the females congregate by hundreds of thousands at nesting sites to dig their individual nest burrows, which are densely concentrated in an area of a few thousand square feet. Cactus pollen is packed into these burrows to feed the grubs, which the parents do not tend. Some barrel cacti are pollinated by birds, moths, or bats.

This plant is eaten by cactus beetles (*Moneilema gigas* and other species). The barrel cactus' fruit and seeds are also eaten by rodents, birds, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and javelina. Propagation is by seed.

Barrel Cacti Species:

Two barrel cacti that are native to the Southwest, Fishhook and Compass Barrels, are less known and less planted in gardens in comparison to Golden Barrels, but their design possibilities are numerous. Although we generally think of barrels as spherical in shape, many native Southwestern species, including the Colville, Fishhook and Compass Barrels, can become massive columnar specimens 5-6 ft high, more than 30" in diameter and weighing several hundred pounds.

Mass plantings of the Golden Barrel at gardens like the Huntington Botanical Gardens and Getty Gardens make eye-popping displays as these barrels that have a distinctive clustering habit. The Huntington Desert Garden in California, has what may be the largest and finest collection of Golden Barrels in the world.



BAJA FIRE BARREL (*Ferocactus gracilis coloratus*)

Its stems are globular to columnar, usually unbranched, and pleated, ranging from less than a foot tall in the smallest species to 6-12 ft. The central spines are the larger of two types and arise from the center of the areole; the principle central spine often has a different shape from that of all the other spines. This solitary columnar plant has red gracefully curved spines and red or pale yellow flowers. Its seeds are packed in a dry interior, not embedded in pulp. Can be grown in container. **Origin:** Baja, California; hardy in Arizona. Cold hardy to 15°F.



COASTAL or SAN DIEGO BARREL (*Ferocactus viridescens*)

The Coast Barrel is inconspicuous due to its small size, growing to only about a foot high and wide, with a globular or cylindrical shape. Its spines can be reddish or golden yellow, eventually turning gray as the plant ages. The four to nine central spines are curved and its radials are stout or bristle-like. Greenish yellow flowers each 2 to 2 1/2" wide bloom in summer and are followed by light green or red globular fruits. The Coast Barrel is found only in sandy or gravelly soils of the coastal chaparral vegetation of southwestern California and northwestern Baja California. **Elevation:** 30-500 feet



DEVIL'S TONGUE / CROW'S CLAW BARREL (*Ferocactus latispinus*)

Found in Mexico at altitudes of more than 9,800 feet above sea level and grows to over 1.5 ft tall. Its central spines are most interesting--they project from whitish to pink radial spines, are flat, point down-ward and are curved outward. Their color is an intense red with yellow and its flowers are whitish to pink to purple.

Very popular in cultivation because it blooms very early and many young plants will bloom when they reach 4" in diameter. Its young spines are a great looking red.

Description: *F. latispinus* is a modest-sized ball-shaped or flat-topped barrel cactus, which normally remains a solitary plant, without dividing or producing offsets. It has 9-15 radial spines that range from thin and white to dark and stout, and is most prevalent. The '*spiralis*' subspecies has 5-7 stout radial spines.

Ribs: 13 to 23 ribs, sharp.

Areoles: Large, grey to blackish.

Central Spines: Four large, the lowest one is conspicuously wider, thick and flat, bent downward and hooked up to 4cm long and lies flat against the plant's body. This prominent spine is usually red or grey-red, but may be amber-colored or yellow (*var. flavispinus*).

Flowers: Beautiful "glassy" rich-purple to straw-yellow

Blooming Habits: The Devil's Tongue Barrel has pinkish purple or yellow flowers, 1 to 1.5" in diameter. It blooms in late autumn to early winter, usually in October, but flowers only if weather is warm and sunny (needs a fair amount of bright sunlight to form).



EMORY'S/COVILLE'S/SONORA BARREL (*F. covillei* or *F. emoryi*; *ssp. rectispinus*)

Plants are solitary, globe-shaped to cylindrical, growing up to 8 ft. tall and 3.5 ft. in diameter. It occurs in Arizona, and Sonora and Sinaloa, Mexico.

It has one very stout, straight, curved or hooked central spine and few radials are present. Large showy flowers ring the stem tips in summer and may be yellow, mahogany red, or a mixture of both. Emory's Barrel occurs in rocky or gravelly soils or on hillsides, mesas, and desert flats. Its emerging central spines have been used by the Seri Indians to make rose-colored face paint.

Younger plants have colored spines and often a purple hue. It has very few spines that are strongly crosshatched ridges. The very long central spines are only slightly flat and not hooked. This magnificent plant has some of the longest straightest spines of the *Ferocacti*. In late summer it produces large yellow flowers. *F. rectispinus*, grows to 5 ft. tall with 21 ribs; has unusually long, straight spines; and occurs only in northern Baja California, Mexico.

Stems: Erect, globular when young to a stout cylinder when older

Ribs: 15-21, shallowly notched immediately above each areole.

Areoles: Oval w/ brown wool, 3-4cm apart.

Radial spines: 5 to 9, spreading, not hooked, 2.5 to 7 cm long, with the upper 3 larger

Flowers: Large, light yellow, 6-7.5cm long and 5-7.5cm in diameter

Blooming season: Summer

Range: Southern Arizona; Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California, Mexico

Spines: Deep red under a surface layer of gray
Flowers: Yellow, orange or maroon appear in July and August

Elevation: 1,500 to 3,000 feet



FISHHOOK /COMPASS /ARIZONA BARREL (*Ferocactus wislizenii*)

The native Fishhook barrel is common in the Tucson desert and is our local area barrel. It produces large clusters of showy flowers either yellow, red or orange in color. A bright, many seeded pineapple-like fruit follows the flower which birds and other desert wildlife eat. Its thorns can be very treacherous especially around pets. It is a solitary plant, usually globe-shaped but sometimes cylindrical. Four central spines form a cross, the lower ones stout and usually strongly hooked. Satiny, brilliant orange, but sometimes yellow or red flowers crown this plant in late summer, followed by lemon yellow, spineless fruit that resemble small pineapples. Fruits may persist for a year unless consumed by birds, squirrels or large mammals. Compass Barrels have red and yellow spines that glow vividly following rain, and yellow flowers that open in the late spring.

For Fishhook Barrels, the spines are flat and gray. They curve like thick fishing hooks. The flowers of the fishhook barrel range from orange to red, and they often bloom in stunning circles that sit on the top of the cactus in a halo-like fashion.

The Fishhook Barrel grows to 6.5 ft. high and is initially globular and then becomes cylindrical. Its radial spines are as fine as bristles; only the red central spines are large, curved and, in some cases, hooked. The flowers are yellow to red. It is the largest barrel cacti found in the U.S., with mature plants reaching 8-10 ft. tall and living for about a century. It favors rocky, sandy, or gravelly soils on low hills and flats in deserts and grasslands. **Range:** Central/southern Arizona, southern New Mexico, southwestern Texas and northwestern Mexico

Height: 8-10 feet **Spines:** Red beneath a gray surface layer **Flowers:** Orange, red or yellow bloom in July to September **Fruit:** Bright yellow, fleshy **Elevation:** 1,000-5,600 feet



GOLDEN or GOLDEN BALL BARREL
(*Echinocactus grusonii*)

It is probably the most well known barrel cactus with its bright yellow spines. Its unusual coloring makes it a popular container plant or a point of interest in the garden. Unlike some of the native barrels with their green color and strong fishhook thorns the Golden Barrels' thorns have more of a gentle curve.

This species of cactus is native to central Mexico from San Luis Potosi to Hidalgo. It belongs to the small genus *Echinocactus*, which together with the related genus *Ferocactus*, are commonly referred to as barrel cacti. Despite being one of the most popular cacti in cultivation, it is rare and critically endangered in the wild. Growing as a large roughly spherical globe, it may eventually reach over a meter in height after many years. There may be up to 35 pronounced ribs in mature plants, though they are not evident in young plants, which may have a knobby appearance. **Note:** Younger Golden Barrels do not look similar to mature ones. The sharp spines are long, straight or slightly curved, and various shades of yellow or, occasionally, white. Small yellow flowers appear in summer around the plant's crown, but only after twenty years or so.

Echinocactus grusonii, is the spineless form. Widely cultivated in warmer climates, it is considered easy to grow and relatively fast growing. A white-spined form is also in cultivation, as is a short-spined form.

While easy to grow, these plants do have some basic requirements; it needs an average minimum winter temperature of 15°F, good drainage with less watering in winter. Excess water in cool periods may lead to rot. Outside Mexico, specimens may be seen in collections of desert plants in many botanical gardens.



MEXICAN FIRE "Hairy" BARREL
(*Ferocactus stainesii*)

This plant is a simple or clumping barrel/column cactus with thick red spines. In habitat, plants must be a great age, often forming into quite massive groups, with several subsidiary barrels growing from the main one, with deep green bodies densely covered with bright red spines up its entire length.

Most plants have bright red spines with bristlelike, white radials—a wonderful contrast, but in some populations the white bristles are occasionally absent. Such variation has led to establishment of several names for this species

It grows mainly in Mexico. After several (40/50) years, this plant can grow as high as 8 ft. tall and can "clump" to over 10 ft. in diameter. It has very red spines and winter red flesh. This plant needs to be moderately large before it flowers.

There is also a variety with additional wispy spines is known as *Ferocactus pilosus*, which bears orange flowers. It is one of the most spectacular species in this genus.

Origin: Nuevo Leon, Mexico

Heat & Frost Tolerance: Handles hot, dry Texas sun quite well. It is extremely drought tolerant. Hardy to the low 20's F but wrap to protect from north wind.

Watering Needs: Little to moderate water once established

Growing Habits: Up to around 8' tall & 3' in diameter. Its average growth rate is only a few inches each year.

Bloom: Red with yellow

Location: Full Sun

Propagation: Seeds



SPINY / FIRE or CALIFORNIA BARREL
(*F. cylindraceus* and *F. acanthodes*)

The Spiny Barrel is typically cylindrical in shape and rarely branching. The four to seen central spines vary in color and may be white, red, yellow or brown. Spines may be curved or slightly hooked, and round or flattened in cross section. Radial spines intergrade with the centrals. Light yellow flowers emerge in a ring at the stem tips in spring. The yellow fruits are spineless and round, releasing seeds through basal pores. Spiny barrel typically grows on steep, rocky slopes in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts.

Thriving in hot deserts, this barrel cactus enjoys precipitous habitats. There is no pronounced difference between its central and radial spines, but central ones are stouter, curved, ridged, and sometimes hooked.

Ssp. cylindraceus, has twisted yellow, red or brown central spines, 15 to 25 radials and can grow to 10 feet tall. It occurs in southern California, southwestern Arizona and northern Baja and northwestern Sonora, Mexico.

Ssp., lecontei, does not have twisted or hooked spines and occurs in southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, southern California and much of Arizona.

Ssp., torulospinus, has shorter stems, often has flattened tips and twisted gray spines. It occurs only in northern Baja California, Mexico.

Range: Southern California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona; Baja California and Sonora, Mexico

Height: 4-8 feet

Spines: Dense, light yellow to bright red hiding the plant barrel

Flowers: Orange, red or yellow appear in July and August

Fruit: Yellow, fleshy

Elevation: 1,000-5,000 feet



TEXAS BARREL CACTUS (*Ferocactus hamatacanthus*)

The Texas Barrel is usually solitary, growing up to 2 ft. high and a foot in diameter, with mostly brownish-red spines. The thin, hooked and straw-colored or orange-red central spines, up to 8" long, are a distinguishing feature of this species. Flowers are showy, yellow or yellow with red centers, clustering at the top of the stem. Small fruits, 1-2" wide, ripen to a reddish-brown color. This small, globe-shaped cactus is usually green but may turn purple under full sunlight. The long central spine may be up to 6" long and curved back on itself at the tip. This plant is found on gravelly soils in desert and grassland in the Chihuahuan Desert in elevations sea level to 5,000 feet.

Ssp. hamatacanthus, has stems to 2' high, 4 to 8 central spines, and yellow flowers with deep red centers. It occurs in southeastern New Mexico, southwestern Texas, and northern Mexico. *Ssp. sinuatus*, grows to only a foot tall, has four central spines and yellow flowers. It occurs in southeast Texas and northern Mexico. The flower buds, or "cahuches", of *F. hamatacanthus* are harvested commercially in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. They are cooked and added to salads, soups, and other dishes.

Range: Chihuahuan Desert of NM & Texas; north Central Mexico



EAGLE'S CLAW / DEVIL'S HEAD / BLUE BARREL
(*Echinocactus horizontalonius*)

Growing to about softball-size, it is usually solitary but occasionally will form small clumps. This endangered cactus' body is an attractive blue-green color with distinctive ribs, usually eight, lined with spine clusters that are gray or reddish. Brilliant pink flowers emerge in a cluster at the stem tips in late spring and summer. The 1" long fruits are covered with dense, woolly hairs that eventually fall off as the stem grows, dropping the seeds at the base of the plant.

Variety, *F. horizontalonius*, is common in limestone soils or rocky hills throughout a broad area of the Chihuahuan Desert. It does not cluster and rarely grows higher than 10 inches. Variety, *F. nicholii*, is listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. It is rare in Southern Arizona and northwestern Sonora, Mexico. **Range:** Southern Arizona, New Mexico & Texas south to San Luis Potosi, Mexico **Height:** To 10 inches **Spines:** Gray or reddish **Flowers:** Pink in late spring and summer **Fruit:** 1" long with woolly hairs **Elevation:** 1,300 to 5,500 feet

Barrel Cacti-Continued

Summary: The enormous popularity of cacti among gardeners and plant collectors is only surpassed by their love of roses and orchids. Cactus' appeal extends far beyond its native habitat; there are legions of devotees in the eastern United States, Europe, and Japan. The desire to possess these strange yet beautiful plants supports hundreds of specialty nurseries; the largest shops grow and sell millions of plants annually.

Barrel cacti are a rare species of plant life. They can take decades to reach their full size. The number of mature Barrel Cacti is extremely limited because of over-harvesting and illegal poaching on protected lands. Barrel cacti are fabulous and unmistakable in gardens. Simply put, no plant peers come close to providing the bold spherical shapes and texture-like inverted nests of interwoven spines-that barrels do. ■



Mexican "Hairy" Barrel (*F. stainesii*)

SAVE THE DATES



Spring Master Gardener GARDEN EXPO
Sat/Sun, April 10-11 at Enchanted Gardens

We still need a few more volunteers for Sunday's sessions, particularly for roses and cacti. If you can help, please e-mail Ann Palermo at apalormo@nmsu.edu Ann will have a final schedule to share with everyone at the March meeting; she will e-mail people who have already signed up to confirm their commitments, but after March 15th because she will be out of town until then.



How To Propagate Agaves & Cacti From Cuttings and Seed (AZ-1483)

By Jack Kelly, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension
This is one our newest articles recently added to our Hotline Resource Library. Kelly states that this propagation procedure is very simple and he provides us with a guide to ensure a successful propagation.

Link: <http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1483.pdf>

Topics included in this article are:

- ✓Vegetative Propagation
- ✓Step-By-Step Procedure for Rooting Cacti from Cuttings
- ✓Seed Propagation
- ✓Maintenance: Fertilizer, Light and Moisture



HOW TO TRANSPLANT A CACTUS (AZ-1376)

By Jack Kelly, University of Arizona Coop. Extension
This is another new research article recently added to our Hotline Resource Library. Kelly provides us with easy-to-follow steps to successfully move a cactus within our landscapes.

Issues discussed include: 1) light exposure, 2) freeze potential, 3) excessive heat, 4) soil type and texture, 5) irrigation method and schedule, 6) orientation, and 6) other abiotic factors to consider.

Kelly also provides photos of each step in transplanting a cactus. He also discusses issues with moving a larger cactus or a saguaro.

Link: <http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1376.pdf>



2010 SALSA CONTEST RECIPES

Congratulations to Our Contest Winners!

First Prize—Myles Munoz

YELLOW CHILE SALSA

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 yellow Chile | 1-2 cloves garlic (minced) |
| 3 medium tomatoes | 1-2 Tbsp. olive oil |
| 1 large tomatillo | Juice of 1 lime |
| 1 white onion (sliced) | Salt to taste |

1. Roast Chile, tomatoes, and tomatillo on grill or griddle to burn skin all around. After roasting is done, cool, then peel off the skins and set aside.
2. In a small pan, heat olive oil and sauté onions for about 5 min. until clear and soft. Add minced garlic to pan and keep on heat for about 1 to 2 minutes. Do not burn garlic.
3. Put roasted and peeled Chile, tomatoes, and tomatillo into a food processor. Add sautéed onion and garlic mixture and lime juice and salt. Chop for about 1 minute until all ingredients are well chopped and mixed.

2nd Prize—Mona Nelson

GRILLED PINEAPPLE SALSA

- 1 ripe pineapple, peeled and cut into 1-inch "wheels"
- 3-4 Jalapeno or Serrano Chiles, seeded and minced*
- 1 Red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp. cilantro, finely chopped
- 3-4 Tsp. brown sugar
- 2 tsp white wine vinegar
- Juice of one lime

(*You can use your favorite New Mexico Chiles depending on the degree of heat that you like.)

1. Grill pineapple wheels. Cool. Dice into small pieces, removing the core.
2. Mix all ingredients. Adjust ingredients to taste.
3. Best served at room temperature.
4. Excellent served with pork, chicken, and fish.

3rd Prize—Joe LaRock

SMOKEY SALSA

- 1 Jalapeno Chile, chopped
- 1 Medium onion, chopped
- 3 Garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbsp Chipotle powder
- 2-15 oz cans tomatoes (diced)
- Dash of smokey steak seasoning

1. Mix all ingredients in blender.
2. Cook blended salsa until it bubbles.
3. Remove from heat and transfer to a jar / bowl.

(More 2010 Salsa Recipes in the April MG Newsletter)

2010 New Mexico Master Gardener Conference, June 10-12!



One of the reasons we all look forward to State Master Gardener Conferences is the opportunity to meet and learn from other MG's from across New Mexico, and to have fun with people who share a passion for gardening. This year's Conference, besides offering fabulous tours and speakers, will give us lots of opportunity to do just that!

Before the Conference even starts, we will have an opportunity to attend a **Leadership Workshop** on Thursday morning. Workshop attendees will fill out a survey before coming which will give a snapshot of how various MG organizations across the state recruit and train MG's, what types of volunteer opportunities and fundraisers are most popular and successful, and what issues they might have with retention, developing leaders and other challenges. At this facilitated workshop, there will be time to share best practices, brainstorm issues, and establish contacts across the state.

At the Conference's Friday lunch, MG's from different counties will set up tables describing their organizations and the types of programs that have been successful. A box lunch will be provided so we can visit the various displays, chat with other MG's, and get lots of new ideas to incorporate in our own organizations.

We are also going to have time to socialize and eat great food! On Thursday evening, we'll be attending a big **Welcome Party and Silent Auction at the Albuquerque Garden Center**. Dinner will begin at 6:30 but the Garden Center will be open at 5:30pm to tour the gardens and bid on the Silent Auction items. This dinner is FREE to all registered participants and only \$15.00 for guests (please limit 1 guest/registrant). A delicious BBQ dinner will be served—pulled pork sandwiches, rotisserie chicken and side dishes to satisfy every taste. It will be our first event as a big group and should be lots of fun.

MG's from across the state are going to be asked to round up great, unique items and services, which will be sold at in the **Silent Auction**. The money raised through the Silent Auction will be used to fund our 2010 MG Conference. The cost of the Leadership Workshop, the Welcome Barbeque and Friday's lunch are all included in the Conference registration fee. Stay tuned. You'll be hearing more about the type of items that are needed for the Silent Auction to make it a fun, profitable event.

Our website is now up and running and registration has begun! Log on to www.regonline.com/2010_NM_MG_Conf and register early to get the tours, hands-on workshops and conference sessions that you want. You'll have the opportunity to personalize your learning experience—your only problem will be deciding among all the great choices! **Registering early can also save you over \$20.** And just to entice you even more, here are a few of the great talks that you can expect:

- **Art, Gardening and Photography—A New Way of Seeing the Garden**
- **Sustaining Green in Dry Climates—Creating Synergy Between Plants and the Hard Surfaces Around Them**
- **What's Going On Under Our Feet—All You Ever Wanted to Know about Tree Roots**
- **How Do We Get the Most From Fruit Trees, Kitchen Herbs, Garden Herbs?**

So get registered, mark your calendar and plan to have fun! Send us an email at nmmgstateconf@yahoo.com if you need additional information, and if you do that, we will also put you in our system and send you any additional noteworthy news as it comes up!



HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN WINDSOCK

(This article is a follow-up to Mona Nelson's educational presentation at our February 17th Master Gardener meeting).

This activity will show you how to make a windsock using materials you have at home or school. You can then use it to show which direction the wind is blowing and to give you some idea of how strong the wind's strength is.

Materials You'll Need:

- Sleeve of a large, old long-sleeved shirt
- Wire
- Needle and thread
- Small rock or weight of some kind
- String or twine

Procedure:

1. Cut one sleeve off an old long-sleeved shirt.
2. Bend the wire into a circle the same size as the top of the sleeve.
3. Place the wire into the top end of the sleeve and attach it with a few stitches. You have now made the mouth of the windsock.
4. Place the rock or weight in some cloth on one edge of the wire. Sew it on tight to hold it in place.
5. Tie the string onto the wire opposite the rock.
6. Tie the other end of the string to a branch where it can move freely. The rock will keep the windsock facing into the wind.

Now your windsock is working, use a compass to find out which direction the wind is blowing from.

In addition to Mona's instructions on creating your own Windsock, she also discussed the Beaufort Scale (wind strength forces). If you want some additional very interesting information use the link below. This information is presented in a simple and entertaining language. ■

Link: <http://www.rcn27.dial.pipex.com/cloudsrus/beaufort.html>

Article submitted by Mona Nelson, Certified Master Gardener



COFFEE GROUNDS—WILL THEY PERK UP PLANTS?

By Linda Chalker-Scott, Ph.D.
Source: Gardening123.com



Many people use coffee grounds as part of their compost pile, but increasing numbers of people are using them straight up as mulch, claiming they repel cats, kill slugs, prevent weeds, aerate and acidify the soil, provide nitrogen, attract earthworms and the list goes on.

Dr. Chalker-Scott, an organic mulch advocate, investigated the science behind using coffee grounds in the garden and landscape. She reviewed several research articles that examined using coffee ground dregs.

Researchers have found that spent coffee grounds can be used for:

- ✓ Growth media for lab insects and earthworms
- ✓ Silage and herbal remedies for livestock, including cattle, buffalo, sheep, pigs and chickens.
- ✓ Biofuel and biogas production
- ✓ Composite building materials
- ✓ Controlling mosquito larvae (albeit with variable success)
- ✓ Treating wastewater
- ✓ A natural antioxidant for treatment of diabetes and cardiovascular disease
- ✓ Compost and mulch materials for gardens and landscapes.

Dr. Chalker-Scott further discusses the following topics: 1) Chemical Composition, 2) Decomposition, 3) Disease Suppression, 4) Effects on Plant Growth, 5) Additional Plant Benefits, and 6) Recommendations for Compost and Mulching.

Dale states that this article is the most complete discussion about the effects and use of coffee grounds he has ever read. It is certainly very comprehensive and informative.

Link:

http://www.gardening123.com/articles/display_article.asp?ID=103550&Page=1&MS=6&SS=60

Article submitted By Dale Petzold, Certified Master Gardener

FIVE GREAT CLIMBING ROSES For the SOUTHWEST

Excerpt From Garden Gate Magazine, Feb. 2009

There's a lot of heat in the Southwest but not a lot of water, so drought-tolerant roses like the ones recommended here are your best bet. But these beauties will need more moisture than rainfall can provide in a climate as dry as ours. To save on watering, apply a 3-to 4-inch layer of organic mulch and water even established roses deeply every 7-10 days. Use a soaker hose or drip irrigation to cut down on evaporation.

Our afternoon sun can get a bit too hot in the summer, even for roses. So plant them where they'll get at least six hours morning light and some shade in the afternoon.



AMERICAN PILLAR (Rambler-blooms only once per season; 12-20 ft.); salmon-pink with a white center; fragrant; cold hardy in USDA Zones 6-9; heat-tolerant in American Horticultural Society (AHS) Zones 9-1



CLIMBING ICEBERG (8-10 ft.); double white; fragrant; cold hardy in USDA Zones 6-9; heat-tolerant in AHS Zones 9-1



CLIMBING PINKIE (9-10 ft.); semi-double pink; fragrant; cold hardy in USDA Zones 6-9; heat-tolerant in AHS Zones 9-1

Climbing Roses-Continued



CRÉPUSCULE (8ft.); double copper to buff; fragrant; cold hardy in USDA Zones 7-9; heat-tolerant in AHS Zones 9-1



SALLY HOLMES (6-13 ft.); creamy flowers change to white as they age; fragrant; cold hardy in USDA Zones 5-9; heat-tolerant in AHS Zones 9-1

KEEP YOUR CLIMBER BLOOMING

Spring: As temperatures warm, new canes start growing and they'll need to be trained to the structure the rose is growing on. Gently bend (or wrestle, as the case may be) the cane toward the support structure. If you can fan the canes out a bit, you'll get more blooms. If the stem is growing straight up and down, it will have flowers only at the tip. But if the cane grows at a 45° angle, it will be loaded with buds all along the stem.

Use twine or a piece of old stocking (or pantyhose), something soft that won't dig into the stem to tie the canes in a figure eight to the lattice. That way the cane doesn't rub against the support structure and create a wound where insects or disease can enter.

Late Spring: It's now time to remove spent blossoms. Just use your pruners or your hands to pinch spent flowers anywhere from 1 to 4 inches below the base of the bloom. If it's a rose that has clusters, cut individual flowers as they fade or wait and remove the whole spray when it's done flowering.

Late Winter: If you live where winters are mild, gentle pruning the second year will keep your rose from getting away from you. But if you live where it's colder, don't prune your climbing rose the first two years so that it can get established. Wait until late winter of the third year to prune. First, remove any dead branches. They'll be brown or gray in color, not green. Now, step back and evaluate the whole plant. Get rid of branches that are growing in the wrong direction or detract from the shape of the shrub. As the plant matures, cut out older, woodier-looking canes. This will encourage new canes (bright green ones), which will, in turn, produce more flowers. ■



Eastern Bluebirds

JUVENILE BIRDS

George Harrison, *Birds & Blooms*, Aug/Sept 2009

Juvenile birds are fun to watch, especially this time of year. Most juvenile birds have similarly "scruffy" appearances. Incidentally, technically a "juvenile" is any bird that is still in its first plumage (the one it leaves the nest in) and an "immature" is any bird that's not yet an adult regardless of its plumage or age.

Here are some observations that Harrison has made about Juvenile birds over the years:

- Most Juvenile Birds, both males and females, are marked and colored much like their mothers. They do not molt into their adult plumage until late summer or early fall.
- Some Juveniles, such as ducks and turkeys, leave their nests within hours after hatching, while robins, cardinals and chickadees remain in their nests for a couple of weeks so they can grow feathers and fly.
- When juvenile songbirds leave their nests, they usually scatter in all directions. Their parents locate them when the fledglings call for food.
- Parents feed juvenile songbirds for several weeks after they leave their nests.
- Youngsters will follow their parents to bird feeders to learn how to eat. After a demonstration period of a few days, the juveniles are expected to be independent.
- Juvenile songbirds are as large as their parents within a week or two after leaving their nests.
- Some juveniles from the year's first brood, such as bluebirds, will help their parents feed the second brood.
- Juvenile males learn to sing by listening to adult males of their kind.
- Juveniles found alone aren't orphans. In nearly every case, the parents are nearby, though out of sight.
- Although most juveniles breed the following spring, there are some larger birds, such as eagles and albatross, which require several years to mature. ■

New Master Gardener: Evicta Harvey



(Sorry no photo of Evicta was available)

Gardening has been part of Evicta's life for over 40 years. As a child, both sets of grandparents had an interest in gardening and her mother "employed" her and her sisters in keeping up the landscaping on their property.

Evicta has called Mesquite home for the last eight years and now she gardens on a space she describes as "ample for her gardening needs." However Evicta has worked on agricultural projects in the Philippines, Dominican Republic and Ghana. She even had an experience in urban gardening while living in North Carolina.

Now Evicta's preference is to grow tomatoes and herbs but because of her outdoor pets, she has to be selective about where she plants them. She enrolled in the Master Gardener Program to extend her knowledge about gardening in the Southwest.

Evicta describes herself as "generally self-employed" and believes she will probably never retire. Her life has been one of a perennial student and life-long learner.

Evicta was a military officer in Europe and after a stint of living in suburbia, she returned to school and international travel. She relocated to the Southwest with the intent of completing her doctoral dissertation in organizational/ industrial psychology. Now after completing her doctorate, her specialty areas are training and organizational development. Even though one of Evicta's current clients has her traveling rather extensively, she still thinks of herself as a "homebody."

Evicta has worked with computers for over 25 years. She has done mainframe programming and training on various applications. She has also taught a variety of courses at area colleges and universities to both graduate and undergraduate students.

Evicta is pleased that despite the many other influences in her life she was able to successfully complete the internship program and become a certified Master Gardener. ■

Written by Ann Palormo, Certified Master Gardener

Dixie's Honey-Do List for March



Many of our suggested garden tasks is information coming directly from [*Month-by-Month Gardening in the Desert Southwest*](#) by Mary Irish (2002). We wanted you to know that this is an outstanding gardening resource book.

General: We are all eager to get outside and start planting but remember our average last freeze date is between April 1 and April 20! Be prepared to protect young plants from the desiccating winds and cold nights of March. Row covers, old blankets, and walls of water come to mind. Check your irrigation systems and add more drip emitters if needed to water under the drip line of plants. Irrigate established shrubs and trees, preferably to a depth of 2 feet. Use a soil probe to determine depth. **And, don't forget to start new plants for our April 17th plant sale.**

Ornamentals

- Plant canna, crinum, dahlia transplants, verbena, gaillardia, gazania, marigold seeds, Mexican and Maximilian sunflower, aster, coreopsis, statice, petunia and zinnia.
- Plant hollyhocks now through May.
- Divide and replant perennials such as chrysanthemum, daylily, and Shasta daisy.
- Seed of warm-season annuals that were planted in February should be germinated, and the small seedlings will be growing quickly. This regularly to keep the plants from crowding each other.



Fruits, Nuts & Shade Trees



- Begin mid-month to fertilize established fruit and nut trees. Be careful not to fertilize fruit while it's blooming; this can shock the plant, causing blossom drop and subsequent loss of fruit.
- Be careful about spraying fruit trees and other blooming edible plants. Bees and other insects are working hard to pollinate flowers so there will be a good fruit set.
- As soon as fruit has set on deciduous fruit trees, especially apples, peaches, pears and apricots, and is about the size of a walnut, begin to thin the fruit.

Trees, Shrubs & Vines

- Finish planting bareroot material before mid-month.
- Cut back overgrown or freeze-damaged shrubs and vines.
- Grapes begin to grow rapidly at this time of year. Thin out extra shoots and tendrils to continue to train the vine to the arbor or trellis.
- Plant Carolina Jessamine, Virginia creeper, trumpet vines, silver lace vine, and Lady Banks roses.



Vegetables, Fruit and Herbs

- Finish planting Cole crops, radishes, parsley, lettuces, kohlrabi, and leafy greens.
- Plant garlic, beets, Brussel sprouts, and Chinese cabbage.
- In late March, plant tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, summer squash, sweet corn, and 'New Zealand' summer spinach.
- Plant strawberries and grape vines.
- Cut back frost-damaged perennial herbs such as mint and sage, then fertilize and water.

Dixie's Honey-Dos for March—Continued



Lawns/Grasses

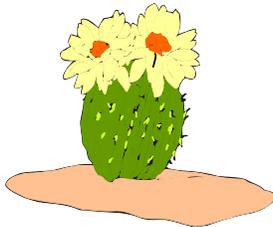
- If you didn't fertilize cool-season grass in February, do so now.
- Clean up cool-season ornamental grasses by "combing" with your fingers or a rake. If plant is large and ratty-looking, cut it back also.
- Scalp warm-season grasses, lower mower height and mow to remove dead leaf tissue. Rake or bag clippings. Clean air filter often during this process and be sure to wear a dust mask.
- Cut back pampas grass and other warm-season ornamental grasses.
- Take your lawn mower to the shop for a tune up.

Roses

- To encourage larger flowers, remove any side buds that arise out of Hybrid teas. On shrub roses, Floribunda or Grandiflora roses, remove the center bud of the cluster to increase flower size.
- Renew a regular fertilization schedule for established roses. Many gardeners fertilize once a month, but discontinue it during the hottest part of the summer. Roses are heavy feeders, and those grown in containers or in soils that have not been heavily amended when the roses were planted, may need more frequent fertilization.
- In late March, fertilize newly planted roses with a mild fertilizer of fish emulsion. Do not use granular-formulated fertilizers, even if they are geared for roses, until mid-April when the red-colored new budding begins as it could burn your roses and stunt blooming.
- Organic fertilizers like alfalfa meal, compost or other formulations for roses that blend many ingredients, work more slowly and can be applied more frequently.
- Finish up any roses that still need some pruning. Remove all leaves and weak crossing, diseased or damaged canes, and cut back the entire rose plant to approximately 24 inches tall. Leave three to five healthy canes.
- Every 5-7 days, water established roses weekly to a depth of 16"-18". Remember, it is more important to water deeply than to water often.
- Continue to monitor for aphids and powdery mildew on your roses. Keep the area around your roses free of debris, and mulch heavily to prevent splashing from any overhead watering.



Cacti & Succulents



- Begin to plant warm-season succulents now through May.
- Watch newly planted succulents like agaves and cactus to be sure they are not sunburning. Protect the south or west side of these plants with a sunscreen a shade cloth or a light-colored cloth. Protection can be draped directly on the plant or laid over a frame. Pale-skin or yellowed patches that appear suddenly on the plant are the first signs of sunburn.
- Remove dead ocotillo canes. Bend cane gently; if it snaps off, it's dead. Then make a clean cut with loppers.
- Increase watering of warm-season succulents to twice a month. As with most plants, it is better to water deeply but infrequently.
- Water winter-dormant succulents only when leaves first show, then begin to water regularly.
- Prune any frost damage from succulents with a clean cut, dusting the cut with sulphur when complete. Cut back chollas and prickly pears if they have become too big as they will begin to grow quickly by the end of the month.

Pests

- Keep an eye out for aphids on the new succulent growth of roses, lilacs, and others. Hose them off early in the morning with a strong jet of water.
- To reduce problems with powdery mildew, water susceptible plants in the early morning as well. Also, clean leaf litter from under plants. This will reduce pathogens.
- Flea beetles will attack Mexican evening primrose foliage and tender spring vegetables. Watch out for them.



WEED WATCH: PUNCTUREVINE / GOATHEADS

Source: Goatheads.com

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Ground bur-nut, caltrop, Bull's head, Texas Sandbur, Mexican Sandbur **NATIVE RANGE:** Eurasia and Africa
ENTRY INTO THE U.S.: Seedpods of the plant probably contaminated the wool of sheep imported from the Mediterranean region into the Midwestern U.S. Puncturevine was first reported in California in 1903.

BIOLOGY:

Life Duration/Habit: The plant is a prostrate, herbaceous annual.

Reproduction: Seeds.

Roots: The root system of puncturevine consists of a simple taproot branching into a network of fine rootlets.

Stems and leaves: The plant produces prostrate stems that radiate from the root crown to form a mat. The stems often grow to 2 in (6.6 ft) long, are green to reddish or brownish in color, and are very hairy.

Flowers: Flowering occurs from June to September. The small yellow flowers are produced leaf axils.

Habitat: This weed is most commonly found in dry, sandy areas such as waste lots or on areas that rain is artificially implemented such as irrigation ditches. Puncturevine spreads by seeds, which are protected by the tack-like fruiting structures.

FRUITS AND SEEDS: The spiny fruits are made up of five burrs that break apart at maturity. Each burr has two stout spines and contains 2-4 seeds.

INFESTATIONS: Puncturevine is widespread; the worst infestations are found in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, and Texas.

Habitat: This plant is found most often in croplands, pastures, along transportation rights-of-way, and in urban areas.

Impacts: The spiny burrs can cause injury to the mouths and digestive tracts of livestock, are a nuisance to people, and diminish the value of alfalfa hay and wool.

STATUS: Puncturevine is a problem weed because the seeds have strong spines, which are strong enough to puncture auto tires! It is also a problem in agriculture because of aggressive nature of this weed.

COMMENTS: The plant has been controlled with biological control agents in areas without cold winters.

Tribulus terrestris L. from the *Zygophyllaceae* or (Caltrop family) and sometimes better known as a goathead, is a plant designed to survive. From the time the seed sprouts until it blooms and starts to form seed can vary, but usually only takes 2-3 weeks. The plant will continue to grow and produce seed until it is stopped. The first freeze will kill the plant, but don't wait for that. A few well-timed sprays can alleviate a nasty crop of stickers ready to unleash their wrath of pain and misery later. Pull plants that already have seed. A shovel or hoe works well to sever the stem if plants get away from you. Great care should be exercised not to shake the seed loose from the green plant. Plants can then be pulled up and placed in a proper location i.e., trash receptacle, burning barrel, burn pile, etc. If plants are allowed to dry, the seed will detach from the plant so try to pick them up as soon as you separate the plant from the soil. Seed may have already fallen from large, mature plants. When this happens we're losing ground in the fight against Puncturevine! ■



MARCH MG BIRTHDAYS

Russ Boor	March 1
Kristee West	March 7
Sarah Wood	March 12
Linden Ranelis	March 19

MANY THANKS FOR THE GOODIES

We appreciate your thoughtfulness

February Goodies

Ann Palarmo
 Janice Servais
 Mary Thompson

March Goodies

Maya Brewington
 Kelly Covert
 Hope Movsesian



Seed Exchange Suggestion

Hope Movsesian, Certified Master Gardener, has suggested that we do a seed exchange at our monthly meetings. Anyone with seeds to share is encouraged to bring them. Perhaps, we could make this a monthly exchange?

Educational Program for March MG Meeting
CULTIVANDO TRADICIÓN

On March 17th will have a presentation by Aaron Sharratt, Project Coordinator, for the Colonias Development Council's Community and School Gardening Programs. He will discuss collaborative gardening and food programs in Southern Doña Ana County, and the influence they are having countywide and he will discuss opportunities for MG participation. "The aim of the Cultivando Tradición Program is to work with the *colonia* community residents in southern New Mexico to create culturally-appropriate, educational, and healthy community garden spaces. These spaces link food production and consumption to social, environmental, and economic justice issues. The Cultivando Tradición Program incorporates video documentary making, artistic expression, nutrition and health education, community awareness, and appropriate economic development as organizing tools. In doing so, Program staff seek to address community concerns regarding high rates of diabetes, obesity, hunger, and inadequate access to healthy and fresh foods; especially among the many low- to very-low income women and youth who live in southern New Mexico's colonia communities. Over the past year, Cultivando Tradición staff have learned a tremendous amount about food and youth-related issues from the residents of Anthony, Chaparral, and Vado who have participated in community and youth garden projects. ■

Information provided by Darrol Shillingburg, Certified MG

BRANIGAN LIBRARY
"LUNCH & LEARN" PRESENTATION

Since March is the official beginning of the Mesilla Valley's hummingbird season, March's topic for our first "Lunch & Learn" presentation will be on hummingbirds.

Date: Thursday, March 18th
Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Place: Thomas Branigan Library
 (Upstairs in the Terrace Gallery)
Topic: "Creating a Hummingbird Refuge"
Speaker: Sylvia Hacker, Certified MG
Synopsis: Learn tips on creating a hummingbird refuge in your yard.

VEGGIES: A TO Z

Sources: NMSU and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension



Our featured veggie this month is **Asparagus**. *Asparagus officinalis* is a highly desirable, early-spring vegetable as well as a perennial crop that can remain productive for 10-15 years. The plant is composed of ferns, a crown, and root system. The fern is a photosynthetically active modified stem. The crown is a series of rhizomes (underground root-like stems) attached to the base of the main plant. New crown buds, from which spears (immature ferns) arise, are formed the previous year. Larger buds generally result in larger spears, while smaller buds yield small spears. Bud size is most influenced by the plant's overall vigor the previous year. Growing conditions that favor healthy fern development and the accumulation of carbohydrates (food reserves) in the crown and root system enhance the size and vigor of buds and subsequent spears.

Asparagus has an extensive root system composed of fleshy storage roots and finer feeder roots. The mature asparagus plant's root system can reach 5-10 ft deep and 10-12 ft wide. Storage roots attached to the crown that store carbohydrates are the diameter of a pencil. Fibrous feeder roots develop from storage roots to accumulate nutrients and absorb moisture.

Asparagus has separate male and female plants (i.e. dioecious). Non-hybrid varieties allowed to cross-pollinate freely produce almost equal numbers of male and female plants. The plant's sex has a pronounced effect on the quality and quantity of spears and on crop management practices. Female plants produce larger diameter spears, but lower yields. They also produce seed that can become a serious weed problem if allowed to germinate and establish. Lower yields for females are probably caused by energy used for seed production at the expense of carbohydrate accumulation that could be used for subsequent spear production. Male plants have higher yields, live longer, begin to produce earlier in the spring, and do not produce seed.

Grown for its stems or spears, asparagus yields 8-10 lbs. or more per 100 sq. ft. of bed if tended well. For most home gardeners, a 20-ft. row or 100 square feet of bed is adequate for a family of four. That's equivalent to 20 planted crowns or 10 lbs. of harvested asparagus per season. ■

Both NMSU & Texas A&M articles provide detailed information on:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Site Selection | Care During the Season |
| Soils & Soil Preparation | Dormant Season Management |
| Variety Selection | General Pest Management |
| Planting Techniques | Insects & Diseases |
| Fertilizer Requirements | Harvesting |
| Watering & Irrigation Needs | Storage |
| Weed Control | |

NMSU Link: http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/H-227.pdf

TX A&M Link: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/easygardening/E-503_asparagus.pdf

Master Gardener Matters

—Monthly Meeting, February 17, 2010—

▣ WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Ann Shine Ring conducted the meeting in Juliet's absence, as Juliet was ill.

▣ COMMITTEE/PROJECT REPORTS

MG Hotline—Pam Crane reported that the Hotline assignment slots are filled up for March and April except for a number of open intern slots. Our pink binder in the MG Office now has a new index, thanks to Ann Shine-Ring, so now it is much easier to look things up. Ann also mentioned she has found many new articles that will be added to our Hotline Library Resource files.

Refreshment Sign-Ups—MG's were asked to volunteer to provide refreshments for our 2010 monthly meetings. There still are many open slots.

Newsletter—March's Plant-of-the-Month will be barrel cacti. There will also be articles on how to transplant and propagate cactus and an article on five great climbing roses for the Southwest and how to keep these climbers blooming. Starting in March, there will be two new columns: Vegetables A-Z and Weed Watch. Ann also mentioned a statewide MG Leadership Pre-Conference meeting has been scheduled for the State MG Conference—more information to follow.

Spring Garden Expo—Ann Palormo reported on a tentative agenda for the Expo. There is still some room for MG's to volunteer to present workshops. The dates will be April 10 & 11. We also need volunteers for general help during those two days. A sign-up sheet was passed around. If anyone is interested in learning more about a topic, sign up to help with that workshop as it would be a great way to learn more.

Farmer's Market—A sign-up sheet was passed around for the March 13 Farmers' Market. Dixie reported she went to the vendors' organization and found that they are no longer assigning tables ahead of time—it is now on a first come, first serve basis. We now have to go to one of the block captains to see if there is a non-profit space available in their block. Last month we were right in front of the Rio Grande theatre and we will be in that spot in March as well.

▣ OLD / CONTINUING BUSINESS

Plant Sale (April 17th)—A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers. Ann Shine-Ring agreed to handle the advertising for the sale. A copy of the flyer Ann prepared for the Plant Sale was handed out at the meeting.

▣ NEW BUSINESS

2010 New Mexico Chile Conference & Salsa Contest—Myles won the salsa contest—again! There were 11 salsa entries. Next time, we need to be better organized, with several categories for different kinds of entries. The Conference was great, and there were lots of sales at the table we staffed. We will be participating in the International Chile Conference in September. Myles' winning salsa recipe and many others will be in the March Newsletter. Some questions: Do we need to have a rules booklet for the salsa contest so people who want to enter know exactly what they need to do? Everyone agreed that would be very helpful. Special thanks to Val Fernandez for making the salsa table look great with décor and tableware from her own house—our table got a lot of media attention!

High on the Desert Conference—(Feb. 25-26 in Sierra Vista, AZ). This Conference will feature many interesting workshops. Many MG's and Jeff will attend, so please plan to give a report next month.

Pecan Conference—(March 6-9) A number of slots are still available for volunteers March 7,8,9. Mary Thompson is the coordinator. There will be many different volunteer opportunities.

Mall Trees Update—Leigh Matthewson asked about the status of the trees in the downtown mall. Doug reported that the City has decided to save them.

Potential New Programs—Sylvia Hacker presented some ideas for new MG community outreach programs based upon her experience in Virginia as a Master Gardener.

Lunch & Learn Seminars Sylvia, with authorization from Jeff, has already met with staff at the Branigan Library to provide these seminars on the 3rd Thursday of every month. The Library is thrilled to have this program. Sylvia mentioned these one-hour presentations will be provided by MG's or other community resources. MG hours will be awarded for giving presentations, but not for attending, as the programs will be very basic, geared to general public, not to MGs. March and April are already planned. The Library will promote these presentations. Jackye Meinecke of Enchanted Gardens will also promote these seminars in her newsletter and in the Las Cruces Sun-News.

Master Gardener Matters

—Monthly Meeting, February 17, 2010 (Continued)—

▣ NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

Lunch & Learn Seminars (Continued)

Several issues were raised regarding these seminars and the educational presentations at our monthly MG meetings. Discussion: If we get enough support from MG's, then we will do most of these programs ourselves. We should also have plenty of resources in the community to support this program.

Plant a Row for the Hungry Sylvia talked about growing extra vegetables in our gardens for the homeless shelter or soup kitchens. This is a program that has been done in many communities and we could also start one here. This program would be seasonal only. We need a volunteer to coordinate this program who could also be a liaison to the soup kitchens locally. Information about this program was handed out.

Ready Set Grow This is a program for schools that coordinates with a curriculum. It is a national program that we could consider.

Junior Master Gardener This program can grow out of Ready Set Grow and is a program from Texas A & M. If there is interest we could pursue it.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH—

Help for Casa de Oro Chris Courtney, Intern, has asked that someone assist this Rehab Center with some gardening. Chris is an Ombudsman there. Chris will provide us with more detail on what needs the Center has.

Community Gardens Darrol Schillingburg stated that our March monthly meeting will feature a presentation about community gardens in the *colonias* and opportunities for MG's for service or workshops will be discussed. In May, there will be a trip to the *jardin de esperanza* here in Las Cruces. There is also a new group in the North Valley that wants to start a community garden, They have an acre they can plant, but very little gardening knowledge. They need information on both fundraising and informational assistance. They own the land and it has water available.

School Gardens Darrol has developed a planting schedule that can work with the school calendar where no one is there over the summer. The city of Las Cruces, NMSU and other resources are interested in getting gardens going in inner city schools. There may even be a part-time position funded to coordinate this program. There may be curriculum development as well. This is just getting started, but it has the potential to be big.

City of Hope It has a garden that always needs help. If you are interested, talk to Jeff about receiving MG hours.

4-H Coaches Juliet Williams will need four volunteers to transport 4-H students to a local nursery and to grocery stores so they can learn about fruits, vegetables, and plants for their contests in June and July. Each coach would work with a small group of 4-Hers to do this. It usually involves one afternoon (after school) a week. This activity will begin after March 8th. If interested, please contact Juliet at jwx2new@q.com.

Program for the Meeting: "WINDS OF CHANGE" Presenters: Joan Woodward, Mona Nelson & Darrol Schillingburg

- ◇ Joan, who is a landscape architect, talked about how to plan for the wind by the way you can design your garden. She stated that it is important to plant appropriate plants at the right time of year with necessary protection. Also, you can use the wind to your advantage by taking into consideration wind direction and planting so the wind will scatter seeds where you want them to go.
- ◇ Mona talked about how to determine wind direction. Although it is usually from the southwest, the wind can also come from the north or east. You can make a simple windsock from the sleeve of an old long-sleeved shirt: sew a wire into the wide end and add a little weight; then attach it to a string or pole where it will catch the wind. You can also use ribbons or flags to help you determine wind direction. (See page 9 in this Newsletter for detailed directions on how to make your own windsock.)
- ◇ Darrol talked about how to protect vegetables from wind damage by proper hardening off before planting, by providing protection in the winding months, or by planting very deep.

Next MG Business Meeting – Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Bonnie and Juliet



(Hotline assignments listed were current as of 3/1/10)
Reminder: As of March, our Hotline hours return to 9-1pm

Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for March

- Tuesday, Mar. 2 **Joan Woodward**
Linden Ranelis (I)
Maya Brewington (I)
- Friday, Mar. 5 **Alberta Morgan**
Linda Schukei (I)
Jodi Richardson (I)
- Tuesday, Mar. 9 **Betty Tomlin**
Holly Richardson (I)
Charlotte Duttle (I)
- Friday, Mar. 12 **Dale Petzold**
Bruce Begin (I)
Maya Brewington (I)
- Tuesday, Mar. 16 **Leigh Matthewson**
Beth Paris (I)
Maya Brewington (I)
- Friday, Mar. 19 **Marti Taylor**
Sylvia Hacker (I)
Russ Boor (I)
- Tuesday, Mar. 23 **Pam Crane**
Mary Thompson
Jane Zimmer (I)
- Friday, Mar. 26 **Nancy DeLouise**
Paul Hutchins
Bruce Begin (I)
Mary Ozenne (I)
- Tuesday, Mar. 30 **Leigh Matthewson**
Dixie LaRock
Linden Ranelis (I)
_____ (I)

Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for April

- Friday, Apr. 2 **Alberta Morgan**
Pat Anderson
Mary Ozenne (I)
_____ (I)
- Tuesday, Apr. 6 **Carla Clouser**
David Hutchinson
Holly Richardson (I)
_____ (I)
- Friday, Apr. 9 **Leigh Matthewson**
Paul Hutchins
Sylvia Hacker (I)
_____ (I)
- Tuesday, Apr. 13 **Betty Tomlin**
David Hutchinson
Mary Ozenne (I)
_____ (I)
- Friday, Apr. 16 **Ann Palermo**
Nancy DeLouise
Linda Schukei (I)
_____ (I)
- Tuesday, Apr. 20 **Leigh Matthewson**
Holly Richardson (I)
Jodi Richardson (I)
- Friday, Apr. 23 **Dale Petzold**
Paul Hutchins
Linda Morgan (I)
_____ (I)
- Tuesday, Apr. 27 **Ina Goldberg**
Carla Clouser
Bruce Begin (I)
_____ (I)
- Friday, Apr. 30 **Nancy DeLouise**
Pat Anderson
Russ Boor (I)
_____ (I)

Next Monthly Meeting of the
 Doña Ana County Master Gardeners
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March 17th @ Cooperative Extension Office
 9am-11am