Doña Ana County Master Gardener Monthly Magazine

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Plant-of-the-Month

YELLOW BELL S
(Tecoma stans)

Tecoma stans is a species of flowering perennial shrub in the trumpet vine family, Bignoniaceae that is native to the Americas. Tecoma stans or Yellow Bells (also commonly known as Esperanza) is an attractive plant that is cultivated as an ornamental. It has sharply-toothed, lance-shaped green leaves and bears large, showy, bright golden yellow trumpet-shaped flowers. It is drought-tolerant and grows well in warm climates.

Its flowers attract bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Tecoma is desirable fodder when it grows in fields grazed by livestock. This plant is a ruderal species, that is, it is first to colonize disturbed lands. It readily colonizes disturbed, rocky, sandy, and cleared land and occasionally becomes an invasive weed.

Tecoma is an evergreen deciduous shrub or small tree that is irregularly shaped. In the U.S. it normally grows to 3 to 6 feet tall, but more southerly varieties can reach 9 feet. It has several stems and slender, erect branches. Clusters of large, trumpet-shaped, yellow flowers are very showy against the lance-shaped, olive-green leaves. Long, thin seedpods are conspicuous in autumn.

Typically, the Tecoma plant is taller than it is wide, and grows larger in frost-free areas than in locations where frosts can occur. For example, in Tucson this plant may grow to 8-9 feet tall, while in Phoenix it might reach a height of 15 feet. Its rich green leaves are divided into 5-13 leaflets. Flowering can begin as early as April and continue into fall. Flowering will start later and stop earlier in places where frost occurs. Tecoma flowers are followed by 6" long, tan pods that are filled with small, papery winged seeds.

The leaves and roots of Tecoma contain bioactive compounds, especially monoterpenes, which may have medicinal uses. Honeybees are attracted to it but unlike most flowering plants the honey produced from Tecoma's nectar/pollen is poisonous.

Article Continues on Page 2

Contents:

• Plant-of-the-Month 1-4
  Description.................................1-2
  Origin & Range…………………………2
  Identification……………………………2
  Native American Uses…………………2
  Disease/Pests…………………………2
  Landscaping Applications………………2
  Facts……………………………………3
  Culture/Maintenance…………………..3
  Cultivars……………………………...3
  Summary……………………………...3
  References……………………………3

June's Plant-of-the-Month:
Silverleaf Oak

• Natural-Looking Stone Design 4-5
• May Lunch & Learn Presentation 6
• Thanks for the Goodies 6
• May MG Birthdays 6
• Timeline for May Magazine Articles 6
• USDA Plant Hardiness Map Link 6
• May Honey-Do List 7-8
• Beneficial Insects in the Garden 9-11
• Weed & Invasive Species Watch: Camelthorn (Alhagi maurorum) 12-13
• Worldwide Shortage of Peat Moss 13
• Veggies A-Z: Three Sisters Garden 14-15
• Master Gardener Intern Profile 16
• 2012 State MG Conference 16
• MG Matters 17-18
• Hotline Assignments 19

Master Gardener Hotline Client Data
(March 31 to April 30, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of Inquiry</th>
<th># Total Contacts</th>
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Thank you to Certified MGs Joan Lane, Janie Elliot & Valice Raffi for collecting this data.
Tecoma adds lots of color to gardens in warmer climates in USDA hardiness zones 9 to 11. Rather easy to care for, this sun-loving plant also makes a great container specimen when grown in cooler climates. Consider placing containers of Tecoma around a pool or near a porch, patio or deck to enjoy its bright color all summer long.

Tecoma stans is the official flower of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the floral emblem of the Bahamas. The name Tecoma originates from the native name ‘tecomaxochitl’. The specific name *stans* means *standing* and refers to the plant's habit.

**Origin & Range:** Tecoma has an enormous natural range, extending from south Texas west to Arizona and south through Mexico and Central America to South America as far as northern Argentina, as well as in southern Florida south through much of the Caribbean. Plants native to the southwestern U.S. and adjacent Mexico are *Tecoma stans var. angustata*, which is shorter, more drought-tolerant, and more cold tolerant than some of the tropical varieties sold in nurseries.

Tecoma has been introduced to several other regions, such as southern Africa, the Philippines and Hawaii. It has become a nuisance weed on several Pacific islands, especially in French Polynesia, where it is called *piti*.

This small to medium-sized shrub grows up to 5 feet tall and 4 feet wide, forming mounds of attractive green, glossy foliage. The sun- and heat-loving plant produces fragrant, bright yellow, bell-shaped flowers that bloom all summer long.

As a designated Texas Super Star plant, *Esperanza (Tecoma)* has recently become a popular ornamental plant in Texas gardens. In the wild it can be found growing on rocky slopes near San Antonio and in the Trans-Pecos, north into New Mexico and Arizona, east to Florida and south into Central and South America in well drained soil and full sun. The Trans-Pecos plants are considered to be the most cold hardy, but they are still only really hardy to Zone 8b. North of there it should be used as an annual or as a fast growing, large container plant that may be moved into warmer winter quarters. The striking, tubular 2 1/2-inch bright yellow flowers are highlighted by the attractive, shiny, green foliage and continue through the heat of the summer.

Judith Phillips states that, “Yellow Bells (Tecoma) are native to the southern foothills near Las Cruces and are now grown and distributed by commercial nurseries throughout the warm desert areas of the Southwest.”

Tecoma plants growing naturally in New Mexico are found at elevations of 3000 to 5,500 feet on dry, stony or gravelly, southern slopes.

**Identification:** There are two varieties of *Tecoma stans*. The first variety, *Tecoma stans var. stans*, is from subtropical and tropical regions of the Americas. The other variety is *Tecoma stans var. angustata*, which is native to southern Arizona, Texas, and northern Mexico. The variety *stans* has larger leaves and is less hardy than the variety *angustata*, which has narrower leaves. Both varieties are easily distinguished from other *Tecoma* species by the yellow flower color.

*...Tecoma stans var. angustata* is a shrub native from Texas and New Mexico. It can reach 10 feet in height and has more deeply toothed, narrower leaves.

*...Tecoma stans var. stans* is a small tropical tree that often reaches 25 feet in height and comes from Mexico and Central America. It has wider leaves.

**Native American Uses:** The Indians made bows from Tecoma wood, and in Mexico a beer was prepared from its roots; it has also been used for a variety of medicines.

**Landscaping Applications:** Tecoma blooms all summer long with glorious clusters of large yellow flowers. Even when not in bloom, the rich green foliage is a welcome addition to desert gardens.

The subtropical appearance created by the lush foliage and showy flowers allow *Tecoma stans* to be used as a patio or poolside plant, although be aware that its seedpods are rather messy. It can be used alone as a colorful accent, or massed for a knockout flower display.

The flowers attract hummingbirds, so Tecoma makes a great addition to a bird-attracting garden. Use it with large accent plants that will carry an area through the winter if Tecoma is frozen back.

Judith Phillips recommends nestling Tecoma up against south- and west-facing courtyard entry walls, or between boulders along dry streambeds and pathways. She states this plant blends nicely with Russian sage, catmint, salvias and Texas sage.

**Disease/Pests:** Tecoma is not susceptible to any insect pests or fungal diseases. It is frost-sensitive and may be browsed by wildlife. However, in the Phoenix area and in Texas, *phytophthora root rot fungi* occasionally causes sudden plant death, usually only in heavy soils with former agricultural use history. It does attract aphids in the spring.

*Article Continues on Page 3*
Tecoma stans—Continued From Page 2

Also Known as: Yellow Bells, Esperanza, Yellow Trumpetbush, Yellow Elder, Trumpetflower, and Ginger-Thomas

Family: Bignoniaceae (Trumpet-Creeper Family)

Habit: Small or medium-sized shrub or small tree; multi-trunked, fast growing; deciduous semi-evergreen

Origin: From Arizona to Argentina; *T. stans var. angustata* is native of Sonoran & Chihuahuan Deserts

Elevation: 3,000 to 5,500 feet

Height: 6 up to 10 feet depending on environment; known to grow up to 15 ft. tall in Phoenix

Width: 6 up to 10 feet depending on environment

Spacing: 12 to 15 feet

Hardiness: *Tecoma stans var. angustata* is hardy to 10°F; *Tecoma stans var. stans* is hardy to high 20’s°F; can freeze to the ground during hard freezes; good heat tolerance

Exposure: Full sun to light shade; reflected heat—low to moderate

Flower Color: Bright yellow trumpet-shaped flowers about 2” long and 2” wide; occur in large clusters.

Fragrance: Flowers have odd but pleasing fragrance

Blooming Period: Spring—summer—fall

Leaves: Leaflets are 1.5-4” long and 0.75-2” wide.

Fruit Characteristics: 4-inch to 6-inch-long capsule

Water Requirements: Water regularly but do not overwater; once established, needs little water

Soil Requirements: Neutral alkaline (6.6 to 7.5)

Temp Zone: USDA 8 to 11

Seed Collecting: Allow seedheads to dry on plants; remove and collect seed; sow indoors before last frost

Propagation: From semi-hard wood stem cuttings

Warning: *Parts of plant are poisonous if ingested.*

Wildlife: Provides nectar to bees; attractive to butterflies and/or birds; moderately deer resistant; larval host to *Pierianthus sphinx* (Dogface Butterfly).

Cultural Practice: Prune late winter after the last frost; prune out frozen stems in late winter or early spring

Disease/Pests: Not susceptible to any insect pests or fungal diseases. However, in the Phoenix area and in Texas, *phytophthora root rot fungi* occasionally causes sudden plant death, usually only in heavy soils with former agricultural use history; aphids in spring

Other Comments: Moderate litter; no thorns; no fertilizer needed; considered an invasive plant in Hawaii.

**Culture/Maintenance:** Tecoma stans var. stans can suffer some minor frost damage when temps drop into the high 20’s F. In low 20’s F, major damage and even total death can occur, although this is rare if the plant is well established. Some frost damage can even be beneficial, as the new spring growth provides has increased flower production.

Tecoma has a fast growth rate, and is moderately drought-tolerant once established. For best results, plant it in full sun or reflected sun and in a soil with good drainage. Frost damaged areas should be pruned out in late winter or early spring.

**Planting:** Tecoma prefer well-drained soil that receives full sun. The plants also thrive if they receive plenty of morning sun and afternoon shade. In preparation for planting, till the soil to a depth of 8 to 10 inches and work 3 or 4 inches of organic matter into the soil if it drains poorly. Dig the planting hole two to three times the size of the root ball, but make sure to place plant at the same depth as it was in the container it came in.

**Fertilizing:** Consider adding a slow-release 19-5-9 fertilizer when preparing the soil for planting. Otherwise, the plant grows best when fertilized every 4 to 6 weeks with light fertilizer applications.

**Maintenance:** Water Tecoma regularly from spring through fall to keep the plants blooming all summer long. In the heat of the summer, the plants require more frequent watering. To keep flowers blooming, remove the seedpods as soon as they form. Use the seeds for planting the following spring. As winter approaches, protect the semi-evergreen plants from frost to encourage the plants to grow and bloom the following spring.

**Container Gardening:** Yellow Bells make a great fast-growing container plant, especially in cooler climates. Make sure the containers drain well. Plan to apply a diluted water-soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer every other week. Controlled-release fertilizer also works well. If watering daily, the plants may require more frequent fertilization. To keep plants blooming all summer, place the containers in full sun from spring through the fall.

**Cultivars:** Tecoma is a great large accent shrub for large spaces. It can look sparse during periods of winter cold and high summer heat. *T. stans var. angustata* (Arizona Yellow Bells) is a smaller, more fine textured, northern varietal from southern Arizona, New Mexico, west Texas and northern Mexico that is more drought tolerant, but also more susceptible to Texas root rot in most formerly agricultural soils.

Other superior cultivars of Tecoma in the Phoenix area include ‘Gold Star’ and ‘Sundance’, both of which are of smaller size and flower profusely. The cultivar ‘Gold Star’ was selected by Texas plant breeder Greg Grant from a private garden in San Antonio, Texas. ‘Sunrise’ is a cultivar that has yellow blooms veined with copper threads. ‘Sierra Apricot’ is a unique dwarf hybrid cultivar with abundant apricot-colored flowers that grows to about 3 to 4 feet in height with a slightly greater spread. It is a heat tolerant hybrid of *Tecoma stans* and *Tecoma alata*.

**Summary:** Tecoma is considered a low maintenance plant that produces great, attention-grabbing yellow blossoms. In recent years, it has become a popular landscaping plant valued as much for its drought-tolerance as for its spectacular appearance.

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*Tecoma Article References Listed on Page 4*
Rocks anchor the garden to earth. Rocks are the bones of the garden on which to hang the heavenly flesh of green growth and flowers. In their massive homogeneity they give relief from all the busyness of leaves. They make a subtle backdrop for star performers. You can sit on them and take a moment's rest. They don't need sun or shade, water or pruning, pest control or fertilizer. They ask for nothing but the proper site to show off their quiet charm.

In order to learn more about stone design, I went to Mother Nature with my sketchbook and found a sense of harmony and beauty about her work with stones in the wild.

Here are ten rules for working effectively with landscape stones. These rules are guidelines based on pleasing arrangements of stone I've found in nature. Don't be afraid to fool around with placement and sizes. But if you want something genuine and uncontrived, these ideas will serve you well.

#1 Use one large, dominant rock with several smaller ones. One of the smaller rocks might be two-thirds the size of the major stone, another half the size, another about a third the size.

#2 Use an odd number of stones in the group. The groups that look best usually have an odd number of stones: three, five, seven. More than that, they become a scattering instead of a coherent group.

#3 Use rocks of the same kind and color. Rocks in nature tend to be pieces of the same bedrock. In the garden rocks look more natural when they are the same kind and color.

#4 Don't buy or haul dinky stones. Little stones will soon get lost under foliage. Get stones as big as you or the stonemonger can wrestle, or rent a front loader. Minimum size for a dominant rock: big enough to make a bold statement. Minimum size of secondary rocks: a third the size of the dominant rock.

Article Continues on Page 5
#5 **Balance the rocks in your group.**

View the group from where you’ll most often see it. Imagine the center of gravity of the dominant rock is the fulcrum of a seesaw. Place the other rocks on either side of the dominant rock, balancing the seesaw. The closer to the dominant rock, the less weight a rock will have; that is, a rock placed out on the end would create more downward push than one right next to the fulcrum. One large rock at the end of the seesaw could be balanced by a small one on the same side but closer to the fulcrum, plus two medium rocks on the other side about half to two-thirds the size, another about a third the size.

#6 **Arrange the balanced rocks in two dimensions.**

Now the rocks are balanced, but they’re in a straight line. Erase the mental image of the seesaw and think about a circular platform with a diameter the length of your seesaw. The platform balances on the dominant rock at its center, but the other rocks can be moved out of the straight line and space anywhere around the dominate rock, as long as they maintain their proper distance from the fulcrum.

Site the secondary rocks so they vary in distance from one another—some close together, others single and apart, but all maintaining the original distance from the center of the dominant rock.

#7 **Make sure that the rocks are bottom heavy.**

A roughly triangular rock does not look natural if its wide side is up and its pointy side is down. For each rock to look natural, it will have to have its heaviest part against the earth.

#8 **Turn the rocks’ most interesting sides toward where they’ll most frequently seen.**

Leaving the rocks where you have sited them, twist or turn them as you wish. A sheer face, visible layers in sedimentary rock, an interesting patina or other features you like should be given prominence.

#9 **Bury the rocks.**

Nature seldom presents a rock that sits on top of the soil like a marble on a tabletop. For the most natural appearance, the rocks should be buried at least a third of their height down into the soil; even two-thirds of the height can be buried. The group will look most natural if the heights of the rocks vary after having their bottoms buried. The dominant rock should stand somewhat taller than any supporting rocks.

#10 **Keep the rocks proportionate to the landscape.**

The group may have an intrinsic beauty, but if it’s too small for the overall landscape, it will fail to bring drama and weight to the picture. If it’s too big, it could look overwrought. Before you collect your stone, stand 20 to 30 feet from where you’ll site the group. Hold your arms out in front of you wide enough that you can just clearly and easily see both arms. Now move your arms toward each other, a little more than half the distance to where they’d meet. Your stone grouping should approximately fill the space between your hands.
BRANIGAN MEMORIAL LIBRARY
“LUNCH & LEARN” PRESENTATION

Date: Thursday, May 17, 2012
Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Place: Branigan Memorial Library
Location: Roadrunner Meeting Room

Speaker: Dr. Jamshid Ashigh
Extension Weed Specialist/Assistant Professor
NMSU Extension Plant Sciences

Topic: Principles of Weed Management in Landscapes

Synopsis: The presentation will outline different components of weed management including weed identification, weed biology and weed control tools.

Information provided by Sylvia Hacker, Certified MG

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

Link: http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/

For a much more practical and useful USDA Plant Hardiness Map, check out this link provided by Certified MG, Dale Petzold. Note the search capabilities at the top.

The 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature, divided into 10-degree F zones.

For the first time, the map is available as an interactive GIS-based map, for which a broadband Internet connection is recommended, and as static images for those with slower Internet access. Users may also simply type in a ZIP Code and find the hardiness zone for that area.

No posters of the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map have been printed. But state, regional, and national images of the map can be downloaded and printed in a variety of sizes and resolutions.

MANY THANKS FOR THE GOODIES
We appreciate your thoughtfulness

May Goodies July* Goodies
Jana Melvin Joan Lane
Hope Movsesian Dwight Eggers
Kelly Covert Dorian Dodson

* Remember, there is no June monthly meeting.

MAY BIRTHDAYS
Dixie LaRock May 13
Katrin Sumpter May 13
Linda Schukei May 19
Ann Palormo May 20
Honey-Do List for May 2012

General: If you live in sparsely populated areas, cut down dried grasses and weeds that are growing within 10 feet of your house or in nearby vacant areas in order to reduce the possibility of wildfires occurring in your area.

ORNAMENTALS
• Continue planting container-grown plants but provide extra water and shade as May temperatures rise.
• For spring and summer flowering bedding plants, fertilize every 2 to 4 weeks using a product with higher phosphorus content.
• As irises complete their bloom period reduce irrigation to allow rhizomes to “rest.”
• Continue to fertilize bulbs until leaves begin to die back, then discontinue for the rest of the summer.
• Deadhead flowers.
• Pinch back chrysanthemums and others to maintain a compact form.

FRUIT, NUT, CITRUS & SHADE TREES
• Increase watering frequency as temperatures rise; water to a depth of 18 inches.
• Continue zinc sprays to pecans.
• Continue cover sprays to pome fruits (e.g. apples, pears, etc.)
• Harvest fruit as soon as it ripens and remove buggy or diseased fruit promptly.
• Protect young trees from sunburn with shade cloth or tree wrap.
• As temperatures rise, begin planting palm trees. Water newly planted palms frequently until established, then reduce frequency to about once every 2 weeks.
• Fertilize established palms with a product formulated specifically for palms.
• If birds are a problem on fruit trees, cover them with bird netting just as fruit begins to increase in size. It is very important to spread the netting before the fruit begins to ripen as birds may poke holes in the fruit and ruin it.
• If you don’t have an irrigation system, build up basins that extend to the drip line around trees. Fill basins with water regularly.

VEGETABLES, FRUIT & HERBS
• Pinch back side shoots on tomatoes to increase fruit production.
• Shade plants to reduce beet leafhopper pressure and sunburn.
• Keep an eye open for signs of curly top on tomatoes and peppers. Remove infected plants promptly.
• Lightly fertilize summer herbs such as basil, oregano, and mints.
• Plant sweet potato slips.
• Continue planting summer vegetables such as corn and squash.

Lawns / Turf / Ornamental Grasses
• Continue planting warm-season turf species. Keep plantings moist but not soggy.
• Fertilize established warm season turf. Apply 1lb N/1000 ft².
• After mid-month, discontinue fertilization of cool-season grasses.
• Depending on temperatures and winds, water at least once a week to a depth of 6–8 inches.
• Mow as needed to maintain desired turf quality. Mowing height also influences rooting depth so mow at the greatest height recommended for your turf species.
• If needed, apply a pre-emergent herbicide to established turf for control of late summer weeds.

READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY! Water well after application.

Much of our suggested garden task information comes 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. Also, some of our recommendations come from Southwest Planting Tips by the Month and the Tucson Gardening Calendar both of which are produced by the Tucson Botanical Gardens.
ROSES
- Continue to plant container-grown roses this month. Plastic pots are better than clay; clay allows for evaporation on all sides of the pot and this can dry out the rose during the summer.
- Water roses and other plants that are susceptible to powdery mildew early in the day.
- Many roses begin to slow down as the weather heats up. If roses are planted in areas that receive over six hours of afternoon sun or are in an area of reflected heat (e.g. near a wall or side of the house), you may want to provide some artificial shade (e.g. shade cloth or box frame) during the summer.
- As temperatures rise, if you have been using a liquid fertilizer, switch to a granular or slow-release fertilizer on roses or discontinue fertilization completely until September.
- Apply heavy mulch, up to 6” around your roses, but keep mulch away from the rose’s main stem to avoid too much moisture on it.
- Roses like abundant water, but will decline quickly if kept continuously wet. Water frequently, but let the soil dry out slightly between waterings. Once the soil is dry 6” below the surface, it’s time to water again, usually every 3-4 days to a depth of 16-18”. Roses kept in pots, may need daily watering.
- Regularly wash off roses to control powdery mildew, aphids and spider mites. Aphids can easily be removed by hand, a strong jet of water or soapy water spray but spray early in the day as you may burn the leaves when the sun is out.
- Do not prune roses in May other than to remove spent flowers or diseased or dead canes.

CACTI & SUCCULENTS
- Separate yucca and agave “pups” from parent plant. Allow agave pups to dry in the shade for a few days before replanting.
- Continue to cut back frost-damaged cactus. To maintain size and shape of prickly pear, remove young pads.
- Continue to set out warm-season succulents. Water newly planted succulents weekly and established ones every 2–3 weeks, but be sure they are not getting sunburn. Pale surfaces or yellowed patches that appear suddenly are often signs of sunburn.
- Divide aloes by cutting out plants along the edge until you have reduced the size of the clump by at least one-half.
- Yucca should not be pruned unless it is necessary to remove dead or diseased stems.
- Water large cactus, ocotillos, and large yuccas at least once a month from now through September. Water agaves, smaller yuccas, prickly pear and smaller cactus every three weeks throughout the summer. Barrel cactus and beaver-tail prickly pear do not need as much water as most other succulents, but watering them every 5-6 weeks in the summer retains their vigor.
- Succulents planted in the ground do not need frequent fertilization. Fertilize container-grown succulents with a water-soluble fertilizer once in May. Use it at half strength of what is recommended for houseplants.
- Look for signs of dry rot on prickly pear. Remove any affected pads and discard them.

Some of the above recommendations came from the Tucson Botanical Garden’s monthly “calendar of care” for cacti and succulents.

PESTS
- As temperatures rise, so do spider mite populations. Put a sheet of white paper under a suspect stem or leaf, tap the leaf, and look for tiny red specks scurrying around on the paper. Blast plant with water or spray with an appropriate insecticide.
- Regularly wash off roses to control powdery mildew, aphids and spider mites. Aphids can easily be removed by hand, a strong jet of water or soapy water spray but spray early in the day as you may burn the leaves when the sun is out.
- Irises can be invaded by the iris borer. Symptoms include a sudden decline of a flowering stalk or failure of the buds to open, coupled with a dark, watery mass on the leaves. Cut off and destroy the infected part and the insect inside. It is possible to use systemic insecticides to prevent infestations, but they must be applied according to package instructions.
- Watch out for hornworms/corn earworm and other caterpillars. Handpick or treat with an appropriate B.T. preparation.

It is always important to correctly identify any insect you suspect may have caused damage to your plants. If you do not know what the insect is, collect one in a plastic bag or small jar and take it to the Doña Ana County Cooperative Extension Office located at 530 N. Church in Las Cruces (located just north of the Main Post Office downtown.)

Miscellaneous
- Mulch plantings to reduce both water loss and weed competition.
- Water all annuals from below, rather than spraying foliage. This helps prevent leaf diseases from infecting your plants.
- Take time to record successes and failures of cool season crops in a garden journal. Also note current crop growth and development.
Beyond Butterflies:  
Put Out The Welcome Mat For These Beneficial Insects  
Author: Bill Johnson in Birds & Blooms, May 2010

When we think of beneficial insects in the garden, butterflies are usually at the top of the list. However, if we could take a bug census, we would discover that butterflies make up one of the smallest percentages of all insects visiting our gardens.

From dragonflies to bees, hundreds of insects frequent our backyards. And while a small handful are considered pests, most are beneficial or are completely harmless.

In my own backyard, we leave a small part of our lawn wild to create a natural habitat for our insect visitors. In turn, we attract a wide variety of crawlers, fliers and hoppers that pollinate our flowers, gather nectar and eat pesky bugs. In addition, they enhance the garden experience with their beautiful colors or sounds.

While specific insects vary greatly by region, there are a few that you actually want to see in your yard this spring and summer. Go ahead and take a closer look outside. You just might be amazed at what you find.

**Twelve-Spotted Skimmer**

*Twelve-Spotted Skimmer (Libellula pulchella)* You’ll notice these dragonflies throughout the summer, flying over gardens looking for food. Because they—and all dragonflies—have multifaceted eyes, they are extremely good hunters and eat all sorts of insects, especially mosquitoes. (It has a 3-inch wingspan.)

**Green Darter Dragonfly**

*Green Darter Dragonfly (Anax junius)* These are our largest dragonflies (4+ inch wingspan). They are very strong fliers and commonly seen, they’re nymphs in water and emerge as winged adults. Nymphs eat mosquito larvae, and the adults eat the mosquitoes that bite us.

**Widow Skimmer Dragonfly**

*Widow Skimmer Dragonfly (Libellula luctuosa)* You can often spot this common dragonfly perched upon the tip of a stick or branch, staking out a territory for hunting. They will chase off other dragonflies. They eat mosquitoes and many other insects. The white patches on the wings and the pale blue abdomen identify this one as male. The female has no white on her wings, and her abdomen is brown with orange stripes on the sides.

**Milkweed Leaf Beetle**

*Milkweed Leaf Beetle (Labidomera cliviollis)* This distinctly colored beetle is common in gardens where milkweed has been allowed to grow. Often mistaken for ladybugs, they’re almost twice the size of the common ladybug. (It is 3/8 inch in length)

*Article Continues on Page 10*
Beneficial Insects – Continued From Page 9

Beets—Continued.

Pennsylvania Leatherwing Beetle (Chauliognathus pennsylvanicus)
Common in gardens and considered beneficial, these beetles transfer pollen from flower to flower, plus they eat aphids and other insect pests. If you have goldenrod or Joe Pye weed in your garden, you’ll very likely see them on those plants. (It’s 5/8 inch in length).

Red Milkweed Beetle (Tetraopes tetrophthalmus) If there are any milkweeds in your garden, this beetle will show up, especially if you grow common milkweed, its favorite host plant. Its bright red color warns birds and other insects, “Don’t eat me. I’m toxic.” (It’s ½ inch long.)

Bees—Continued.

Honey Bee (Apis mellifera) Besides being the producers of the honey that we eat, honeybees serve as major pollinators of flowers and crops. They’re known as social insects because they live in large colonies. Although they’re capable of stinging, they will do so only when they feel threatened. (It’s 5/8 inch long.)

Bumble Bee (Bombus species) One of the most entertaining insects in the garden, it’s a rather clumsy flier and stays on flowers such as monarda and coneflowers long enough for you to take a picture. You can see the pollen sacs on its hind legs. A very beneficial pollinator, it is capable of stinging, but will only do so if it thinks you plan to harm it. (It’s ¾ inch long.)

Virescent Green Metallic Bee (Agapostemon virescens) You’ll see this bee in most gardens. A shiny green metallic head and thorax and banded abdomen clearly make it stand out from other bees and wasps. This bee, which is a pollinator, makes its nest in the ground. (It’s ⅜ inch long.)

Bee Fly (Poecilanthrax species) This flier gets its name because it resembles a furry bee. What looks like a stinger going into a flower is actually a proboscis (tongue) it uses to gather nectar. It’s harmless, can’t sting and serves as a beneficial pollinator. (It’s ⅜ inch long.)

Article Continues on Page 11
Other Beneficial Bugs—Continued From Page 10

Bees—Continued.

**Long-Legged Fly (Condylostylus species)** These very common flies can be seen racing around on leaves. They eat aphids, mites and other small insects. Their metallic colors—in bronze, blue, green or gold—make them easy to see when sunlight hits them. (It’s ¼ inch long.)

**Flower Fly (Helophilus fasciatus)** These flies help control aphids, especially their larvae. They also pollinate by flying from flower to flower. As part of their self-defense, several species are considered very good bee mimics with coloration that looks quite similar to bees. But because they’re flies, they don’t have the ability to sting. (It’s 5/8 inch long.)

Other Beneficial Bugs.

**Broad-Winged Katydid (Microcentrum rhombifolium)** Katydid are a common site at night near light sources. The night calls of the adults are part of the evening symphony throughout the summer into fall.

**Green Lacewing (Chrysopa species)** This beautiful insect is very common and very beneficial. Its larvae eat as many aphids as they can find. You’ll see it during the day throughout the garden and at night near light sources.

**Snowy Tree Cricket (Oecanthus fultoni)** You probably haven’t seen these, but you’ve definitely heard them. In late summer and into the fall, the chirping you hear in the evening comes from snowy tree crickets. They’re not very long, but they can make an amazing amount of noise. (It’s ¾ inches long.)

**Web Plus:** See more beneficial bugs and also learn which bugs you do not want in your backyard on the gardening section of link: http://www.birdsandblooms.com/Gardening/General/Good-and-Bad-Bugs

**Oleander Aphids**
**Weed & Invasive Species Watch:**  
**CAMELTHORN (Alhagi pseudalhagi)**

**Common Names:** Alhagi pseudalhagi and Caspian manna  
**NM Noxious Weed:** Listed as a Class A Species on the New Mexico Noxious Weed List. Class A species are not currently present in New Mexico, or have limited distribution. Preventing new infestations of these species and eradicating existing infestations is the highest priority.

**Origin:** Introduced to the U.S. in 1915 in shipments of alfalfa seed from Turkestan and in camel dung packing around date palm offshoots. This invasive weed is a native of the Turanian Desert and Iranian Plateau. The common name is derived from the high affinity that camels have for eating the plant in its native range.

**U.S. Habitat:** Camelthorn occurs principally in deep moist soil, but it also occurs in dry, rocky, or saline soils. The plant is especially abundant along riverbanks, canals, and irrigation ditches, but it sometimes spreads into cultivated fields.

**Description:** Camelthorn is a perennial desert shrub. Initial infestations were first documented in California and have now spread to many of the western states. It is listed as a noxious weed in many states, including New Mexico.

Camelthorn has the ability to thrive in very adverse conditions. While its primary habitat is deep, moist soils, it can also be found in dry, rocky, and saline soils.

**Potential Damage & Impact:** Camelthorn infestations are a serious risk to private landowners. Thorns from the plant can inhibit recreational activity and can be injurious to humans and livestock. Camelthorn will grow through materials impenetrable to other plant species, such as pavement, concrete, and foundations of homes. Camelthorn also out-competes native vegetation and landscape plants.

Camelthorn is strongly competitive with other plants. Its rapid and aggressive growth allows it to out compete both native vegetation and cultivated crops. Because of its rhizomatic growth habit, dense stands may form that are impenetrable because of its spiny stems. It is especially troublesome in cereal and horticultural croplands, where repeated cultivation aids its spread.

**Flower** The small (3/8 inch), pea-like flowers are pinkish purple to maroon and are borne on short, spine-tipped branches that rise from the leaf axils; flowers from June to July.

**Habit** Deep-rooted, rhizomatous, perennial shrub, with roots that can extend six to seven feet into the ground; spiny, intricately-branched shrub reaches 1.5 to four feet in height. The plant is grayish green and hairless.

**Leaf** Simple, entire leaves that are alternately arranged. Leaf shape is oval to lance-shaped

**Fruit** Reddish-brown to tan fruits are constricted between the seeds, with a short narrow beak at the end.

**Stems** Greenish stems have slender, yellow-tipped, greenish spines that are .25” to1.75” long.

**Roots** Camelthorn has an extensive, woody root system. Roots often reach depths of 6 to 7 feet. Rhizomes at this depth will sprout new shoots. These new shoots in turn produce rhizomes that spread equally as far. Rate of spread can reach 30 feet per year.

**Biology & Spread:** Reproduction is mostly by vegetative clones from rhizomes, occasionally from seed. Seed is dispersed primarily by livestock browsing on fruits, but also by water and high winds blowing clumps of branches with fruits. Passing through an herbivore digestive tract or acid scarification appears to stimulate germination. Light appears to inhibit germination. Seeds can survive submersion in water for at least 8 months and can remain viable for several years in semi-arid soils. Viability decreases rapidly after 1 year in cool, moist soil conditions.

Moving livestock that has browsed on fruits can disperse seeds to new locations. Lack of soil moisture during the warm growing season discourages seedling survival. Mechanical removal can encourage clonal reproduction and spread.

*Article Continues on Page 13*
Camelthorn—Continued from Page 12

**Key Characteristics:**
- Slender, greenish spines
- Alternate, wedge-shaped leaves
- Leaves are hairless on top and hairy underneath
- Maroon to red seedpod color
- Extensive root system

**Management Do's & Don't:**
- Prevention and maintenance of a healthy plant community are the best management methods.
- Hand removal is effective if most of the root systems can be removed.
- Herbicides are effective.
- Mechanical removal techniques spread root fragments and are ineffective.

**Control:** Control measures should be initiated as quickly as possible when Camelthorn is identified. This is done to contain the infestation to as small an area as possible for treatment.

Like other deep-rooted perennials, mechanical control of Camelthorn is difficult. Digging and uprooting is not effective unless done frequently over a period of years. This is difficult if the infestation is significantly large. The deep roots are broken and severed and will produce new vegetative growth. Also, bio-control measures are not an option as there are no known effective methods at this time.

Chemical control is the most effective means of control. The most effective and available herbicides are glyphosate products (Roundup® etc.) and can be found at local garden centers. Applications are most effective when made in the spring or fall. It is important to follow label directions for application methods and rates.

**Summary:** Currently, Camelthorn has a limited distribution in New Mexico, though Arizona has a serious problem with this weed. It has impacted areas including right-of-ways, pastures, and recreational areas.

**Article References**

A Homeowner’s Guide to Camelthorn, by Eric Norton, Area Assistant Agent, Agriculture, La Paz County, University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension, Guide AZ 1350 at link:
http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1350.pdf

Camelthorn (Alhagi pseudalhagi) on Texas Invasives.org website at link:

Camelthorn on Oregon.gov website at link:
http://oregon.gov/ODA/PLANTWEEDS/profile_camelthorn.shtml

New Mexico’s Invasive Weeds, Camelthorn, by Richard D. Lee, 1999
Troublesome Weeds of New Mexico, Camelthorn (Alhagi maurorum), by Mark Renz and Frank Sholedice, 2006

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**Worldwide Shortage of Peat Moss**

*Author: Paul Rodman on Dave’sGarden.com, March 2012*

I was shocked the other day when I went to my garden supply store for germination mix. The price was up almost 25% from last year while the bag was a smaller 2.8 cubic feet instead of the normal 3.0 cubic feet. After a lengthy discussion with store employees, I discovered there is a worldwide peat moss shortage.

The majority of peat moss comes from eastern Canada and to a lesser extent Western Canada and the Scandinavian countries. Due to severe wet weather conditions in this region, especially the eastern provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, Canadian peat moss production is down dramatically. This region normally produces 75%-80% of the peat moss used throughout North America. According to trade organization, The Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA), last year’s production was down to 30%-40% of normal, resulting in severe shortages in 2012.

Canadian peat is the primary ingredient in most soilless mixes, both potting and germination mixes. Peat shortages have seldom been more than a 30% deficit, and the short years were offset by surplus years. This year, however, is very different: an extreme shortage is following several lean harvest years.

Growers and garden retailers should brace themselves for significant price increases for peat-based mixes. According to Chuck Buffington, who directs sales for the Flowers Pro division of Syngenta and was VP of sales, marketing and technical services at Fafard, “We’re looking at pricing now,” he says. “It will depend on the product. The more peat that’s used, the greater the increase will be. If you do the math, if our harvest is significantly less, we’ve got a lot of fixed costs to spread over a smaller volume, which increases our costs of production significantly.”

Buffington also stated “We’re not going to play with formulas to save peat. We want growers to get the same formula they are used to receiving,” Buffington says. “We do have alternative mixes with less peat and good performance on the growing end. We’ll offer alternatives to growers to help reduce peat requirements they might have. Anytime you change growing media components, you get different results. We don’t take it lightly. Before we offer a new formulation, it’s tested.

One possible effect of the supply scene is that growers may venture into other media like compost or coir as their primary source next year. And anybody who thinks they’re going to resolve this by using coir it’s not the same product.”

To increase the amount of available peat beyond spring, Buffington says Eastern Canada will need a fairly light winter that allows peat producers to harvest bogs in April or May next year. But a light winter in those provinces is wishful thinking, Buffington says, for areas that typically receive hundreds of inches of snow per winter. So what is the average gardener and homeowner to do? Anticipate your seasonal needs now and purchase early. It will keep in your shed or garage. You can also expect to pay more for bedding plants as growers pass on the price increases to the consumer, as usual.

Statistics Courtesy of Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association
The Three Sisters Garden

A Native American Tradition

What is a Three Sisters Garden?

The Three Sisters Garden is an ancient method of gardening using an intercropping system, which grows corn, beans, and squash crops simultaneously in the same growing area that is typically a rounded mound of soil, often called a hill. The Three Sisters are the three main agricultural crops of various Native American groups in North America: squash, maize, and climbing beans (typically tepary beans or common beans).

The Three Sisters have been planted by traditional Native American gardeners in many different regions of North America. Although many different Native American people have adopted this traditional gardening technique, it originated with the Haudenosaunee or "People of the Long house".

The traditional Three Sisters Garden forms an ecosystem by creating a community of plants and animals. This system creates a beneficial relationship between the three plants--each plant helps the others grow. This is a form of companion planting.

Native Americans throughout North America are known for growing variations of Three Sisters Gardens. The milpas of Mesoamerica are farms or gardens that employ companion planting on a larger scale. The Anasazi are known for adopting this garden design in a drier environment. The Tewa and other Southwest tribes often included a “fourth sister” known as “Rocky Mountain bee plant” (Cleome serrulata), which attracts bees to help pollinate the beans and squash.

How Does It Work?

The Three Sisters all work together. Critters will find it harder to invade your garden by interplanting your corn, beans and squash. The corn stalk serves as a pole for the beans, the beans help to add the nitrogen to the soil that the corn needs, and the squash provides a ground cover of shade that helps the soil retain moisture.

1. In late May or early June, hoe up the ground and heap the earth into piles about a foot high and about 24 inches across. The centers of your mounds should be about four feet apart and should have flattened tops.
2. First, in the center of each mound, plant five or six corn kernels in a small circle.
3. After a week or two, when the corn has grown to be five inches or so, plant seven or eight pole beans in a circle about six inches away from the corn kernels.
4. A week later, at the edge of the mound about a foot away from the beans, plant seven or eight squash or pumpkin seeds.
5. When the plants begin to grow, you will need to weed out all but a few of the sturdiest of the corn plants from each mound. Also keep the sturdiest of the bean and squash plants and weed out the weaker ones.
6. As the corn and beans grow up, you want to make sure that the beans are supported by cornstalks, wrapping around the corn. The squash will crawl out between the mounds, around the corn and beans.

How Does It Work?—Continued

In one technique known as companion planting, the three crops are planted close together. Flat-topped mounds of soil are built for each cluster of crops. Each mound is about 12" high and 20" wide, and several maize seeds are planted close together in the center of each mound. In parts of the Atlantic Northeast, rotten fish or eels are buried in the mound with the maize seeds, to act as additional fertilizer where the soil is poor. When the maize is 6" tall, beans and squash are planted around the maize, alternating between the two kinds of seeds.

The three crops benefit from each other. The maize provides a structure for the beans to climb, eliminating the need for poles. The beans provide the nitrogen to the soil that the other plants utilize, and the squash spreads along the ground, blocking the sunlight, helping prevent establishment of weeds. The squash leaves also act as a “living mulch”, creating a microclimate to retain moisture in the soil, and the prickly hairs of the vine deter pests. Maize lacks the amino acids lysine and tryptophan, which the human body needs to make proteins and niacin, but beans contain both and therefore maize and beans together provide a balanced diet.

Chief Louis Farmer (Onondaga): “In late spring, we plant the corn and beans and squash. They’re not just plants—we call them the “three sisters”. We plant them together, three kinds of seeds in one hole. They want to be together with each other, just as we Indians want to be together with each other. So long as the “three sisters” are with us we know we will never starve. The Creator sends them to us each year. We celebrate them now. We thank Him for the gift. He gives us today and every day.”

Article Continues on Page 15
The Three Sisters Garden - Continued From Page 14

What Are the Three Sisters?

- **Corn** is the oldest sister. She stands tall in the center.
- **Squash** is the next sister. She grows over the mound, protecting her sisters from weeds and shades the soil from the sun with her leaves, keeping it cool and moist.
- **Beans** are the third sister. She climbs through squash and then up corn to bind all together as she reaches for the sun. Beans help keep the soil fertile by converting the sun’s energy into nitrogen filled nodules that grow on its roots. As beans grow they use the stored nitrogen as food.

How Do I Grow A Three Sisters Garden?

In mid-spring clear a sunny garden area of grasses, weeds, and large stones. The area should be roundish in shape and at least eight feet across. Cover the area with a few inches of compost or well-rotted manure. Turn the compost in to loosen the area should be roundish in shape and at least eight feet across. Cover the area with single layer and not touching each other, which can foster rot. Squash can last at least two months, depending on the variety.

--- References ---

Celebrate the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash by Alice Formiga on Renee’s Garden website at link: [http://www.reneesgarden.com/articles/3sisters.html](http://www.reneesgarden.com/articles/3sisters.html)

Native American Three Sisters Garden on NMSU website at link: [http://idl.nmsu.edu/kids/webquests/wqthreesisters_k.html](http://idl.nmsu.edu/kids/webquests/wqthreesisters_k.html)

Planting a Three Sisters Garden on NMSU website at link: [http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/threesisters.html](http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/threesisters.html)


Lynn Bryant - Enhancing Her Gardening Skills

Participating in the 2011 Master Gardener Program has added another layer of enthusiasm to Lynn Bryant's gardening appetite. She has been a gardener in the Las Cruces area for nearly three decades but when she retired, Lynn decided it was time to broaden her knowledge about what it takes to garden in this climate.

“I've always considered growing plants a magical process and gardeners as magical people! I wanted some of that magic to rub off! I love container gardening, growing herbs, roses and trees but I decided I wanted to learn more. I have always wanted to grow a veggie garden, have beautiful flowers and trees surrounding my home and have a Japanese garden.”

After completing the MG Course Lynn realized that gardening takes persistence, time and lots of planning (and patience) to be successful and there is a lot more to learn. Lynn has a list of goals she hopes to accomplish as she goes forward in the Master Gardener Program.

- Identify plants (magical gardeners can look at a picture of a plant and know the name);
- Grow a vegetable garden, rose garden and beautiful trees;
- Landscape my yard;
- Help my friends and community members with their gardens, plants and disease/pest problems; and
- Continue to learn about gardening!

Lynn loves traveling and has been fascinated with gardens and plants in other parts of the world. She traveled to Italy in February and to China in March and was enthralled with the gardens and landscaping she saw in those countries.

Lynn’s gardening enthusiasm began when she was a child working with her father in the family garden in Las Vegas, NM. Now, she and her husband live on North Valley Drive on a 1.5-acre lot. Her husband is semi-retired from White Sands Missile Range. They have a son and daughter and a soon-to-be 7-year-old granddaughter who loves helping in the garden.

Profile Provided by Ann Palormo, Certified MG

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2012 New Mexico Master Gardener Conference
—Las Cruces, June 7-8, 2012—

Our Conference now has a Facebook page! Updates and information will be posted there as they become available. The Planning Committee decided to try a free Facebook page instead of paying for a website.


This page should be accessible to everyone.

Please let Sylvia know if you’re having trouble. Sylvia’s email is: slh303@yahoo.com

Conference Attendees:

Only individuals who are Certified Master Gardeners or Naturalists (MG/MN) or are currently enrolled and working toward certification in a New Mexico, Texas, or Arizona MG/MN Cooperative Extension Program are eligible to attend this Conference.

The Conference is not open to the general public. Also, seating will not be available for spouses, other family members or friends. Service animals are welcome, but not pets are allowed.

All MGs who plan to attend this Conference (including Doña Ana County MGs) must pay the registration fee!
Welcome—Jeff Anderson welcomed all MGs to the meeting. Jeff presented Mona Nelson with a basket to hold tickets for the Conference drawings. He thanked Carla Clouser, Ann Palormo (sub for Sherry Hulsey who was out of the country) and Ann Shine-Ring for bringing our meeting refreshments.

Committee/Project Reports

- **MG Magazine**—(Ann Shine-Ring) The May Magazine’s Plant-of-the-Month will be Yellow Bells also known as Tecoma stans or Esperanza. One of the cultivars of that plant, which is a shrub, is the official flower of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Another cultivar of that plant is a native of Las Cruces found in the southern foothills. The Veggie Column will feature the “Three Sisters Garden” which is corn, beans and squash planted by Native Americans. The Weed/Invasives Column will feature Cameltom. Another article will be on beneficial insects in the garden: dragonflies, flies and bees.
- **Lunch & Learn Presentation**—(Sylvia Hacker) The Lunch & Learn Presentation will be held on April 19th. The guest presenter will be John White who will discuss “Water Wise and Beautiful Too”. John will also talk about landscape gardens and plants to choose for the Chihuahuan Desert. Sylvia stated that the May 17th Lunch & Learn topic would be “Noxious and Invasive Weeds”.
- **MG Plant Sale**—(Dixie LaRock) Does everybody have their plants “perky” for the sale? The plant sale will be held on April 14th this coming Saturday. We will be located on the east side of the downtown mall in front of the meat market. Park in Lot 4. We will have wagons and wheelbarrows to help unload. (Subsequently, the Plant Sale was rescheduled to April 21st because of a giant dust storm.)
- **Finance Committee**—(Mary Thompson) We have purchased a cord to connect speakers’ laptops. Mary handed out copies of a Summary of MG Conference Financial Data to date.

2012 MG STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

1. **Russ Boor** (Overall Coordinator) April 26th is the deadline for Conference fee payments. After that, rates will go up $20. The showing is not very strong yet for Doña Ana County people signups. However, we are doing well in most categories—over halfway regarding meeting estimates. Ann and Dick Hiss are putting the Conference Program book together. Russ also stated that the Hospitality Crew will wear a Badge/Ribbon so you can identify them if people have any questions.

2. **Mary Thompson** (Treasurer): We have 24 registrants from Doña Ana County MGs. Overall 63 people have registered, 32 T-shirts sold, and 9 guests at banquet. We will make $5 on every guest. Let Mary know if you forgot to indicate a vegan meal. Also, all money for ads to be included in the Conference Program must be sent directly to her.

3. **Dick Hiss** (in charge of Conference Program): Wanted to reduce cost of printing Program through ads. Pick up ad forms in the Tower in our MG Office. It was suggested we give a discount to MGs for securing ads. Price of ad is $30 business card size and $50 for a quarter page. Contact Dick if you have any questions about ads. Ads needed ASAP because Ann Shine-Ring will be designing the layout of the Program after she gets back from vacation the first week in May. Ads do not have to be garden-related. You can email the ad form directly to Ann at asring@powerc.net. We now have a color scheme for our Conference Program that matches the color scheme of our T-shirts. Info and maps will be listed in the Program.

4. **Sylvia** (in charge of Speakers) We will need room moderators for each class. Moderators will introduce the speaker and set timer. A clipboard for signups was provided. Sign up to be a Moderator for classes listed on page. If you’re taking classes, sign up to be a Moderator for one or more of the classes. No feedback necessary on Moderator. Please do not sign up to be a Moderator unless you’re coming and paying for registration. Russ stated that Moderators will be checking if a person has a nametag to indicate that they have paid their registration fee to attend classes.

5. **Mona** (Silent auction & door prizes) If you volunteered to donate something, get it to Mona at our next meeting or send her an email. You can also drop your donation off at her husband’s office where she works during the day.

Old/New Business

- **NMSU Leyendecker Plant Research Center’s Centennial Planning, August 25** (Jeff Anderson) Jeff is in charge of this and it, which should be a big event—several thousand people are expected, along with many dignitaries. It will be showcasing the Centennial of the Leyendecker Farm and looking at vegetables planted in 1912. Jeff asked all MG’s to attend. It’s free. More info coming and everyone is welcomed. Please put this event on your calendars.

- **Southwest Senior Expo, March 23** (Myles Munoz) Myles thanked everyone who volunteered and those who showed up at the last minute because not enough volunteers had signed up. Attendance was not as good as at the Home and Garden Show. Otherwise, it went well and was well staged. Some people didn’t sign up thinking they had to be over 50 years of age. Hope to do this again next year. One exhibit was classic cars and even some young people showed up.

- **Arbor Day, April 7th**—(Jeff Anderson) Fifteen free trees were given away in a drawing. There was a tree planting demonstration with kids. Texas Red Oak, Chinese Pistache, and Elms were among the trees they gave away. Hauling trees home was a challenge because of the tree heights.

Continued on Page 18
OLD/NEW Business (Continued)

- Lavender Workshop, March 31—(Jeff Anderson) The world’s expert on lavender from Sequim, Washington spoke about the possibility of lavender growing here. It’s very hard to grow here. It will not grow in soil that is more than 28% clay. The expert thought the Chaparral area had the best opportunity. English lavenders don’t do well here because it’s too hot and they’re also culinary lavenders. The best lavenders that would grow here would be Intermediate varieties such as Provence. Also, the Grosso variety is the highest demanded worldwide lavender for oil production. The expert also mentioned that lavender has a life of only three to five years. The Spanish lavenders are more ornamental. It might grow here, but there is too much clay in some areas of Las Cruces but there are isolated areas where it might grow. The U.S. Northeast is ideal for English lavender. Also, most lavender sources in the U.S. say a lavender variety is Grosso but it is not really that variety.

- Desert Blooms Videos Completed, April 19—(Mona Nelson) These videos are now up on the NMSU Desert Blooms website. The freeze damage videos will be taken down soon and replaced with new ones by April 13. The videos will also go out across the U.S. on YouTube. Jeff would also like to do some 4 to 6 minute videos on our local community gardens.

- City of Las Cruces Earth Day @ City Hall, April 20th 10am – 2 pm (Jeff Anderson) Jeff will need some volunteers to answer questions about community gardening, Gomez Park and urban forestry – Darrol volunteered to be there to answer questions.

- Earth Day, White Sands Missile Range, April 27th (Jeff Anderson & Lynn Bryant) They will be at the base for Earth Day.

- UTEP Chihuahuan Gardens Plant Sale, April 28th & 29th (Sylvia Hacker) If you want to volunteer, contact Kaye Mullins (915) 747-8994 to register. There will be a 10% discount on plants for volunteers. Jeff will be driving and offered rides to UTEP. Coffee and donuts will be served. Before heading to UTEP on Sunday, contact Jeff first to see if they still need volunteers.

- Kids, Kows and More – Postponed to May 16, 17, 18 (Jeff Anderson) Juliet and Eva were coordinating the event. Since Juliet has been ill, we will need another coordinator and additional volunteers. Myles volunteered to serve as coordinator.

- 4-H Horticulture, Coaches/Tutors – (County Contest: June 9: Districts, Deming; June 20 -21 State) Marije Snell will help out and Larry Dickson will assist in tallying things.

- Tour of Gardens, Saturday, May 5th (Bonnie Eisenberg) The Tour of Gardens will be held on May 5th, not May 14th. Bonnie has tickets for people who volunteered. There were two slots left for the afternoon on the Tour. MG Volunteers were reminded that they need to work while at the gardens and make sure to visit your garden on the Tour prior to May 5th to make sure what plants are there. Bring along garden books for backup. Bonnie will need volunteers to fill out Contact Sheets to tally how many people received info from MGs. Lots of questions will need to be answered.

- Community Garden @ Gomez Park (Darrol Shillingburg) Salinity in the garden soil is a major problem because of biosolids. Originally their pH was 6.81 and anything greater than pH 5.0 is unusable in an edible garden. Recent sample was even higher. Darrol sampled five gallons of soil and found that nothing was germinating in that soil. Solution proposed by Dr. Flynn has been to flood the soil to push the salts down and that amounts to a couple of feet of water. Not sure how the City will do that yet. Darrol hasn’t heard from County yet. Darrol says he envisions using dump trucks. For a vegetable bed formulation, Darrol uses about 1½ cubic feet of compost and one shovel full of biosolids, and ½ quart of cottonseed meal for a good soil mix. Just a reminder – biosolids are fertilizer not compost. Ann Shine-Ring stated that recently there was a great editorial in the paper about the community garden. Darrol was given a round of applause for his leadership on this important project.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
1. Farmers Market Tables & Fair: Ann Palormo asked for more volunteers—she needs a Co-Chair for the Fair and help with the Saturday Farmer Markets. Kelly Covert and Ann will take over responsibility for the monthly Farmers Market table. A signup sheet was available. Markets will be held on third Saturdays as was done in the past. Signups needed for May, June and July. No Farmers’ Market will be held in August. Two shifts: 7:30-10am and 10-12:30pm.
2. Jeff stated that Juliet Williams is still not feeling as well as she had hoped. She will be unable to do 4-H Program this year. Juliet is home and has blood pressure problems. Linda recently visited Juliet—she thanked everybody for the flowers.
3. Jeff stated that the MG Program is noticed out in the community especially for our monthly Magazine. County Commissioners are sent it and read it every month. People in the County Building really do read it and are looking at the hotline stat numbers. In addition, MGs are wanted at a number of community events because of the quality work that we do.
4. Contact Sheets & Hotline Stats: Joan Lane mentioned that we need to be able to read what is written on the Contact Sheets. Please make sure to indicate all info and make it legible. Many questions are serious but may seem funny to others.
   Ann Shine-Ring stated that we do not give enough credit to Janie Elliot, Valice Raffi and Joan Lane for compiling the monthly Hotline stats shown on the front page of the MG Magazine. These stats are very important as they help people to recognize how many people we reach and how many questions and problems we address every month on our Hotline.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATION: DESIGNING YOUR GARDEN by Gonzales Landscape & Nursery

Snacks -- Thanks to Jana Melvin, Hope Movsesian & Kelly Covert who will provide our meeting snacks next month.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 11, 2012, at the Peace Lutheran Church

(There is no June meeting because of our MG Conference)

Our new meeting time is now 9:15am to 11:45am

NOTICE: In July, the Roadrunner room will not available. We will meet at the Peace Lutheran Church.

In August we're back in the Roadrunner Room.
**IMPORTANT:** Please remember to be present on your assigned date for the Hotline. If another MG forgets, please give him or her a “reminder” call. Be sure to get a copy of the Subs List, for your information.

**Hotline Changes:** Effective this year, our Hotline hours will be from 9:00-1:00 all year long. They will no longer drop back to 12:00 during the winter.

The assignments listed below were current as of May 3, 2012

### MG Hotline Assignments for **May 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday, May 1</th>
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### MG Hotline Assignments for **June 2012**

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