

Community Gardens of Tucson



a bimonthly guide to community gardening activities in the Greater Tucson area

January/February 2005

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New Beginnings for a New Year

It seems we expect changes as the calendar rolls around, and the move from 2004 to 2005 promises not to disappoint this expectation. This year we will fondly bid farewell to the original community garden, the site that started it all: the First Avenue Garden. At the same time, we welcome a new director to the program: Andy Stevens. Always we search for balance, and seek opportunities where it seems only challenges are obvious; at the beginning of this new year our opportunities are many, even if we aren't sure where to look for them.

For example, where once we had plots in existing gardens laying fallow, now we can look forward to gardening with new friends migrating from the closing First Avenue Garden. The owner of the property on which the First Avenue Garden sits has sold it, and this sale will close on February 28. Although the new owner will not begin development of the property until May, whether water will remain available after February 28 is still in question. Regardless of the timeline, First Avenue gardeners will soon be searching for a new place to get their hands dirty. Rather than lose these valuable friends, let's make an effort to encourage their migration to an existing garden while the search for a new garden space is underway. Vacant plots exist at the Wilson and Presidio Gardens and the new director, Andy Stevens has volunteered to swing a pick-ax to break ground for any First Avenue gardener wishing to move to one of these plots. Meanwhile, our own George Brookbank is continuing to beat the bushes in search of a new garden space. If you have any leads on a space that may work, please give him a call. If you would like to volunteer your time or any materials to help First Avenue gardeners make their transition, please call Shirley McReynolds.

Personnel transitions also come with their own special kind of opportunities. After a long, diligent, and recurring shift as the director of the Community Gardens of Tucson, Darlene Schacht is handing over the spade, as it were, to Andy Stevens from the Presidio Garden. Darlene has worked tirelessly to promote, organize, and develop the community garden association and she's ready to spend a little more time tending seedlings, digging in steer manure, and enjoying her harvests. Darlene will continue to serve on the community garden steering committee and assist Andy with the transition. Andy Stevens has become very familiar with the organizational gears that keep the community gardens turning, as he's been an active participant in the steering committee meetings for the past year. He keeps a plot at the Presidio Garden and has experience holding board positions for a variety of non-profit groups, including the Greater Arizona Bicycling Association and the Trail Riders of Southern Arizona. Both Darlene and Andy encourage your suggestions for ways in which to broaden the appeal of and strengthen community gardening in Tucson. They welcome your emails, phone calls, or attendance at community garden steering committee meetings.

Community Garden of Tucson Steering Committee Meetings
Second Thursday of each month, 9:00 am
2940 North Santa Rosa



George Says . . .

by George Brookbank

There's good news for those gardeners who reserved a bit of space for planting onions. Plants will be here during the first week of January and Site Coordinators will be collecting them from my house. The variety is Texas White Granex and there are sixty plants to a bunch. Please tell your Site Coordinator by telephone how many bunches you'd like. These onions are a New Year's gift from your Steering Committee.

Set out the plants at two inches apart in all directions and later in the year thin to four inches apart. This will give an early harvest of green onions. At our little trial last year at Presidio garden, the dried crop was harvested at the beginning of June. And we got fifty-four pounds from sixty bulbs. This variety stored well until the end of November.

Your garden plot, if it were planted to nothing but onions, would give you about three hundred pounds of onions. Calculate your own expected yield according to the planting space you have. Of course, you can set out the plants between cabbages, broccoli, lettuce and anything else you've planted because onions don't take up a lot of room.

Loosen up the soil with a little scratching before you set out the bulbs at the same level as they sat in the growing fields. The manure, phosphate and sulfur that you dug into your plot earlier on should be enough for good growth. A month after planting a light top dressing of ammonium sulfate will give the plants a boost. Scatter a pound to a hundred square feet and water it in. This can be repeated after another month.

The bad news is that you have lost your peppers and tomatoes, but this was to be expected. It's possible, but not likely, that only the tops were killed and the roots will sprout with warm weather. However, it's good farming practice to remove crop residues in order to prevent a build up of harmful soil organisms.

2 It's possible that we'll get frosts for the next

two or three months. If you want to get good growth from new plantings (of lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, etc.) you might try laying down clear plastic and, with a cookie cutter, make planting holes through it. There are pictures of this practice (and other soil warming ideas) on pages 14 and 15 of my book *Desert Gardening* (Hint, the book is an excellent gift for your favorite gardener!!).

Tunnel gardening (pictured on page 258 of that same handsome book!) is another way to warm up the environment around your plants, but it will call for some supervision on sunny days when the inside temperature may get too hot. If temperatures do warm quickly, simply open up the ends of the tunnel early in the day and remember to close them before nightfall. Also watch for any buildup of aphids or spider mites that may thrive in the warmth of the tunnel.

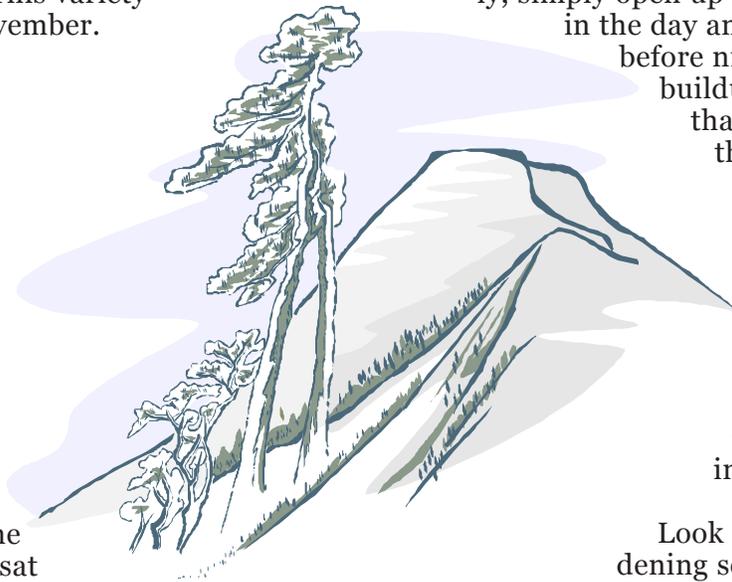
Inside the tunnel you'll get good germination of seeds and a rapid growth of seedlings. A tunnel is a good place for strawberries because they'll grow and gather strength for a profusion of flowering and fruits in February and March.

Look forward to a change of gardening season in mid-March. This means soil preparation in late February.

If you garden on the "square basis" you're sure to have small patches of empty garden as well as productive "squares" of winter vegetables. Our wonderful rototiller can work quite close to plants in limited spaces. Plan ahead for this to be done in early March.

Most gardeners did a good job of soil preparation and the amendments should be more than enough for good growth. However, if you are dissatisfied with plant performance you should think of scattering ammonium nitrate (NOT sulfate) around the plants and watering it in. You'll get a rapid response even in cold weather.

Liven up your garden with colorful winter flowering plants. Be Happy.



A Planter's Guide

to January and February

Cooler temperatures and seasonal rains make the next two months ideal for growing some of our favorite stand-by vegetables. This is the perfect time to enjoy lettuce and cabbage straight from the garden, and peas planted now will be ready through spring.

Plants: Chinese cabbage, collard, leek, parsley, parsnip			
Seeds: eggplant, pepper, irish potato, peas, rutabega, spinach, turnip			
Plants: green onion bunch, endive, kohlrabi, mustard, horseradish			
Plants: kale, dry onion sets			
Seeds: asparagus, beet, carrot, radish, tomato			
Plants: chard, leaf lettuce, turnip, rutabega, spinach, asparagus, rhubarb			
			Seeds: bush bean, lima bean, cantaloupe, sweet corn, musk melon, watermelon Plants: tomato
Jan 1	Jan 15	Feb 1	Feb 15
			Feb 31

shaded bar marks those dates safe for planting

Grow Up?

by Tom Watson

It was something we were all told to do by parents and other adults when we were young. Regrettably, many people do so-and frankly, adulthood isn't what it's all cracked up to be. But that's psychology, and I'd rather talk about gardening. And in a garden, growing up means taking advantage of the vertical space above the soil you cultivate.

This, of course, requires the use of a trellis, a fancy word for something stuck in the ground to support the growth of plants that produce vines or similarly rambling growth. Think cucumbers for the former, indeterminate tomatoes for the latter. Using a trellis in effect makes your garden larger, by getting the vines up out of the way and leaving ground available for other plants (it also keeps fruit off the ground, and therefore cleaner). A trellis can be a complex and fancy affair, but for most of us with vegetable gardens they are generally simple things. In my garden a trellis is a pair of 7-foot, steel fence posts spaced just far enough to accommodate a section of concrete reinforcement mesh (both items being available in local home improvement stores). The only real work is setting the fence posts into the ground; the rest involves a few scraps of wire to secure the mesh between the posts. Placement needs some consideration, to avoid shading plants in the ground below-a problem in winter, when sunshine is in short supply, but often a blessing in June.

I plant seeds directly below the bottom edge of the trellis, using standard spacing instruction for any give species, and then thin until I have one seedling for each of the vertical lines of support provided by the wires of the mesh. If you use different materials for your trellis

you will, of course, need to adjust accordingly. Plants such as beans and many cucurbits (the cucumbers and their relatives) take to a trellis and climb without needing much assistance (although you may sometimes need to play traffic cop to keep each vine on its own wire). These plants are derived from species for which climbing was a necessary part of survival, allowing them to climb over and thus compete with trees and shrubs that might otherwise shade them out. Tomatoes, if you chose to grow them this way (I don't, preferring to let mine form a self-shading mass partially supported by old tomato cages, but I know people here who do and get good results) need all the help they can get. They don't know from climbing and need constant direction and encouragement. Frankly, I find it more trouble than it's worth, and reserve my trellis space for plants that love to climb, but that's just me.

Ever wonder how a plant such as a bean knows to curl around the trellis? It's called a thigmotactic response, which essentially means that plants-without any need for nerves-have a sense of touch. When new growth (usually at or near the tip of a vine) comes into contact with something that might offer support, the cells around the point of contact don't enlarge to the degree young, growing cells normally do, while the cells opposite them continue to do so. One side of the stem grows more than the other, so the stem twists and curls. As this happens, other parts of the vine touch the trellis, have the same reaction, and the vine coils. The pressure on the outer surface of the plant apparently triggers biochemical signals that act as instructions: this side expands, this side does not, and around and around and up we grow!

Administrative Notes

Plot Fees for the first semester are now due

As indicated by the bright new signs posted at each garden, plot user fees are now due. Remember, plot fees have increased \$2 over 2004 rates and are now \$72 per plot per semester (Jan 1- June 31). Please send your plot fees to the attention of Treasurer Pete Dicurto at:

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6642 N. Longfellow Drive
Tucson, AZ 85718

Potluck Recipes Wanted!

Did you bring a favorite dish to George Brookbank's annual potluck? Did you leave with an empty dish, or one much lighter than you came with? In the next issue, we'll be publishing a special issue dedicated to your recipes, so send them in! You can send them by email to dianne@bluestockingdocs.com, or by post to:

Dianne Stevens
2017 N. Swan
Tucson, Arizona 85712.

Deadline is February 18.

Community Garden

Calendar

January 2005

8 Corbet Garden Meeting, 9:00am

14 CGT Steering Committee Meeting at Darlene Schacht's, 2940 N. Santa Rosa, 9:00am. All CGT members invited.

15 Presidio Garden Meeting 9:00am



22 First Avenue Garden Meeting 9:00am

23 Chaverim Garden Meeting 9:00am

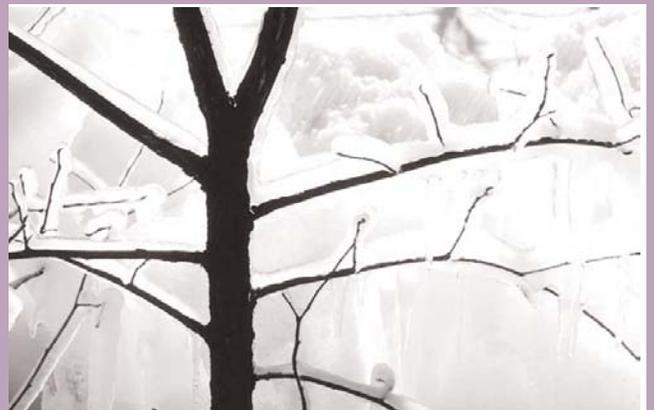
29 Wilson Garden Meeting 9:00am

February 2005

5 Corbet Garden Meeting, 9:00am

9 CGT Steering Committee Meeting at Darlene Schacht's, . All CGT members invited.

12 Presidio Garden Meeting, 9:00am



18 Deadline for Newsletter Submissions

19 First Avenue Garden Meeting 9:00am

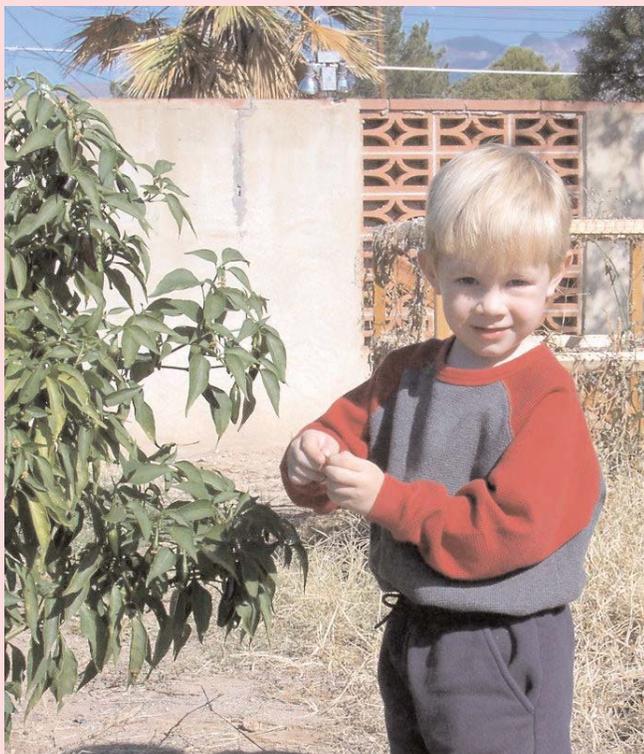
20 Chaverim Garden Meeting 9:00am

26 Wilson Garden Meeting, 9:00am

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Community Garden

Activities



Clockwise from top left: Matt Coulthard of the Presidio Garden harvests late jalapeno peppers from his grandparents' pepper "tree;" George Brookbank shows a willing crowd the treasure beneath a Jerusalem artichoke; Naniloa Smith of the Corbett Garden provides a close-up of this end-of-year treat; Jonathan and Carolyn Pickney-Baird of the Presidio Garden pull up the last of their famous tomato plants to make way for peas and baby lettuces.

Photos courtesy of Darlene Schacht

Cucumber Beetles

understanding a common pest

by Signa Roswell

These little dudes can do a tremendous lot of damage to our vegetables and are definitely "critters non grata" in our garden plots. Even though they're not visible at this time of year, they may well be subterranean lurkers ready to cause us trouble again come spring.

How do we know them when we see them? Actually, the mature beetles kind of resemble lady bugs, except that they are not red but yellowish-green, and have distinct black spots on their topsides. The variety most common here do, anyway, and are officially called Spotted Cucumber Beetles, as opposed to their relatives, the Striped Cucumber Beetles, which are more common in northern parts of the country.

Where do these uninvited guests come from? Being strong fliers, they can come from quite a distance - flying as far as 500 miles in three or four days' time if they catch a ride on strong upper air currents. So we can't automatically blame our next-door neighbor for spreading them to us. The spotted variety can't survive harsh, freezing weather, so when they find themselves up north, they wisely take an annual flight south for the winter. Consequently, we see them for a large part of the year here where we live. Lucky us, NOT!

Here, they survive our milder winters just fine and are able to produce up to three generations per year. A single female Cucumber Beetle is said to lay from 200 to 1200 eggs at a time, so the beetle population can explode astronomically before our eyes. The more generations per season they produce, the more damage we are going to see in our gardens.

Just what kind of damage do these bugs do? Adult Cucumber Beetles chew round or irregularly shaped

holes in leaves, damaging them. They favor certain plants for their repast, members of the Cucurbit family among them, but when hungry enough they will make do with any of more than 270 plants in 29 different plant families, including flowers, ornamentals and weeds. Not only do they leave plants looking rather mangy, they also are vectors for (can transmit) a couple of serious, even fatal, plant diseases. That is a garden's greatest danger from them.

Cucumber Mosaic Virus is transmitted by Cucumber Beetles. It causes a mottled pattern of yellow patches on plant leaves and fruits, eventual death of affected leaves, spreads to other leaves through the plant's own vascular system, spreads to other plants as the beetle flies from plant to plant, stunts plants and can eventually kill them.

Bacterial Wilt is spread in the larval stage of the beetle's life, when the larvae hatch out from eggs deposited on top of the soil, go underground to pupate (turn into an adult), and hungrily devour plants' roots while waiting around to grow into adults. The symptoms of this disease are unexplained wilting of an otherwise healthy plant, at first just in the afternoon and reversible by an extra irrigation, but eventually irreversible by extra watering no matter the time of day. Again, without enough healthy roots to sustain it, the plant becomes stunted and dies.

Both these diseases enter the plant through wounds made on leaves or roots during feeding; the plant becomes infected by disease organisms carried either in the beetle's mouth or in its excrement. Ugh!

Which vegetables are Cucumber Beetles' favorites? Unfortunately many of our same favorites are on the

...continued, page 8

January- February Lunar Phases

Waning Half Moon



January 3
February 2

New Moon

January 10
February 8

Waxing Half Moon



January 17
February 15

Full Moon



January 25
February 23

Garden Reports

First Avenue Garden

Happy New Year to all!

So far, winter has been kind to our garden plots. Yes, we've lost some green beans and those pepper and tomato plants that we were hanging on to are no more, but most of the crops that we expect to thrive in this season are doing so. I'm starting to harvest sugar-peas and have been getting good returns from my broccoli plants. The carrots and radishes are still growing and the lettuce and spinach are quite prolific. My sweet potato experiment was a flop, however. I tried growing a plant in a large (20 gal.) container and got a nice vine but no potato.

The garden looks great although a bit empty. We are proof of the "work is the curse of the gardening class" saying. . . or something like that. We are so sad to lose Lon and Sherri to the demands on their time made by their jobs. Hopefully they will find their schedules opening up a bit in the future to allow more digging-in-the-dirt (Hopefully, we will have a new spot in which they can rejoin us!).

Here's hoping that by the next newsletter, we will have a new address for the 1st Ave garden gang.

—Good gardening to all, Shirley

Cucumber Beetles, continued . . .

list: beans, eggplants, tomatoes, peas, peppers, summer and winter squashes, corn (said to be a particular beetle favorite), cucumbers, and melons. Those are their first choices, but they will also happily eat spinach, lettuce, beets, turnips, and on and on. I have visible evidence in my own plot that they also eat Swiss chard.

On the other hand, there are some plants that actually repel these voracious bugs. Among them are broccoli (though their larvae will eat broccoli roots if nothing better is around), calendula, catnip, goldenrod, nasturtiums, radish, rue and tansy. Marigolds can also be repellent, but NOT the yellow flowered ones! Those actually attract them. (Now I know why my yellow marigolds neither repelled the beetles on my tomatoes last summer nor survived themselves!) If you want to try marigolds as a beetle repellent, the more pungent-smelling ones such as African, French or Mexican are recommended, as long as they are a color other than yellow. (I hope I've memorized that fact by now!)

What can we do to combat a Cucumber Beetle invasion that so often arrives armed for biological warfare on our plants without resorting to the use of pesticides ourselves? One hopeful clue is in the list of

repellent plants mentioned above. Just plant some here and there among your susceptible crops and know you've taken one possible step against them.

Yet another crucial step is to keep weeds not only out of our garden plots but out of the surrounding areas as well. Cucumber Beetles will feed on these if better things aren't available, such as when our gardens are "between seasons", and weeds can be an infection source for the very virus and wilt diseases we don't want carried to our plants.

One ecologically friendly counterattack is to place yellow-painted boards or pieces of cardboard, coated with a sticky substance (like what's on fly paper), among your plants. Hang these attractants among your plants from something that suspends them low to the ground, or fasten them to low stakes. Then you just check and clean or replace your "traps" frequently so they will continue to work at catching the little culprits.

A similarly "gentle" maneuver is to spread squares of aluminum foil on the soil under plants. When the foil reflects sunlight onto the bottoms of the leaves, the bugs are supposed to become confused as to which is the upper and which the

lower side of the leaf, so that they will go away and eat on something elsewhere that isn't as hard to figure out.

If you feel you present more macho an image when wielding a sprayer, there is a kaolin product that is said to work against these and other leaf-eating insects. It puts an opaque clay coating on leaves so the bugs don't recognize them as food. It has to be applied to both top and bottom sides of leaves, and has to be re-applied after rain. (Kaolin is the ingredient in Kaopectate, among other products for human consumption, so we know it's environmentally safe.)

Or, I've read, you could invest in a garden vacuum and enter your garden thus armed daily at dawn to vacuum up the bugs as they dine. Seriously, this was one control measure suggestion I found at a web site. Where you would then empty your vacuum out afterward wasn't explained.

Among the more effective-sounding (to me, anyway), organically safe methods I found doing Internet research were Neem Oil and Beneficial Nematodes. Neem Oil (or Neem Cake, an alternative form) is a product made from the leaves, bark and/or twigs of a tree native to India. Neem has been used there for centuries to keep insects out of stored rice and other grains. A product called Super Neem Oil is available for human use to treat skin disorders, and standard Neem Oil is safely applied to dogs and cattle to combat ticks. It's said to be a very safe product, harmless to pets, humans and the environment.

Beneficial Nematodes can be used either as a spray to use directly on infested plants to kill adults or as a soil application to kill their larvae before they emerge. A single soil treatment is said to last up to two years before needing to be reapplied, but some gardeners reapply it annually to be sure. Beneficial Nematodes, according to the label on the box, don't cause harm to earthworms or other "good" bugs such as ladybugs, nor to us or our animals, but they do effectively get rid of a variety of "bad" bugs of the wormy kinds. Cucumber Beetles aren't specifically mentioned in the manufacturer's literature, but Beneficial Nematodes are effective for them according to reports I found at several web sites discussing Cucumber Beetle control. If you have a serious Cucumber Beetle problem, with indications of possible Cucumber Mosaic Virus or Bacterial Wilt affecting plants in your plot, this product might be one you'd want to look into.

I tried it on my broccoli this fall. I had planted the broccoli where Cucumber Beetles had infested some tomato plants last summer (and brought a virus disease with them). When I started checking into possible causes for my broccoli going into an afternoon wilt every day, despite adequate watering, I came up with the possibility that last summer's beetles' larvae might just be nibbling on the roots. Indeed, the wilting stopped within a couple of weeks after I applied the nematodes. I'll be anxious to see come spring whether I have less of an infestation of the adult Cucumber Beetles as well, and how tomatoes do when planted back in the same spot.

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As always, we extend our warm thanks and appreciation to our friends at AlphaGraphics who not only make the publication of this newsletter possible, but make it beautiful as well.

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THAT Love is all there is,
Is all we know of Love;
It is enough, the freight should be
Proportioned to the groove.

—Emily Dickenson

Community Garden Locations

Chaverim Garden (Eastside)

5901 East 2nd Street
Site Coordinator– Julie Linde
lindej13@aol.com

Corbett Garden (Eastside)

5948 East 30th Street
Site Coordinator– Gary Cooper
520-751-6769; garyandaida@mac.com

First Avenue Garden (mid-Northwest)

4304 North First Avenue (until February 28)
Site Coordinator– Shirley McReynolds
520-408-0659; mittmc@aol.com

Presidio Garden (Midtown)

Off Fort Lowell and Country Club
Site Coordinator– Sally Coulthard
stan@coulthard.net

Wilson Garden (Midtown close to UA)

3331 North Wilson
Site Coordinator– Vladmir Kaczurkin
520-529-7415; nanross99@yahoo.com



Featured Photo



With this newsletter, we say so-long to the First Avenue garden site and look forward to the happy prospect of turning over new soil in another, possibly new, community garden.

Community Gardens of Tucson

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