

## 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 late spring)  
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



The Tucson Loofah Users' Group meets regularly to discuss the latest exfoliating techniques. This month: clockwise or counter-clockwise?

# Community Gardens of Tucson

Volume 6 - Issue 2



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

March/April 2005

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## CONTACTS

### Administrative Director

Andy Stevens  
520-990-1459  
andy@solvomassage.com

### Education Director

George Brookbank  
520-888-4586  
wgeob@aol.com

### Treasurer

Pete DiCurti  
520-299-5581  
dicurti@msn.com

### Newsletter Editor

Dianne Stevens  
520-990-7254  
dianne@bluestockingdocs.com

### Steering Committee

Gary Cooper - 520-751-6769  
Bob Ishmael - 520-572-6315  
Shirley McReynolds - 520-408-0659  
Angela Powers - 520-293-2817  
Darlene Schacht - 520-795-6393  
John Swanson - 520-882-9102  
Henry Yglecias - 520-885-1142  
Lyle Ziegler - 520-825-2545

## Recipes from the Community Gardens

Much of the joy we recognize as community gardeners results from the opportunity to share our experiences with others who can both celebrate or commiserate with us, depending on the success of the season. In this issue we give space to the impulse to share that other thing that gardeners love so well: food. Favorite recipes from your community garden neighbors appear on page 8. A few may be just right for your maturing spring vegetables.

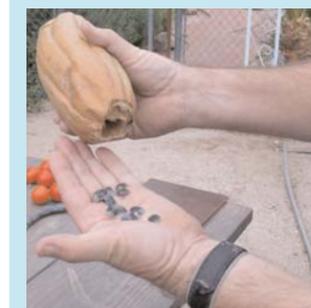
On this page, Sam Wymer of the Corbett Garden shares his experience and success growing a crop that isn't necessarily used for its nutritional value. Food or no, it looks like he has the ingredients for a relaxing soak in the tub or a hit children's cartoon series.

by Sam Wymer

## Growing Sponges

As an experiment, I tried growing luffa (loofah) in the Corbett gardens. I planted a half dozen or so in late summer and by October I had a bumper crop. They take up a bit of room; I grew them on a trellis, but I got about two dozen loofah sponges by November. A member of the Cucurbitaceae family, luffa is closely related to and has similar cultural requirements as the cucumber.

When harvesting them, simply wait until the gourd is mature, then cure them in a warm, dry location until the outer skin becomes papery, which is then peeled off. Shake out the seeds and you have a loofah sponge. Some of mine took over a month to cure, but it's worth the wait.



I'm told the small young fruit, smaller than six inches long, are delicious when used in a soup or stew. They can also be cooked like summer squash. I decided, however, to harvest all of mine mature, so I now have enough seeds for anyone who would like them, just call me at 747-2775 and I'll send you some.

# Community Gardens of Tucson

2940 North Santa Rosa Place  
Tucson, Arizona 85712  
520-795-8823  
www.CommunityGardensofTucson.org



# George Says . . .

by George Brookbank

These next two months are the months of change. Cool season vegetables do well in the warming March days and they will grow more quickly—even growing flowers that we don't necessarily want, though you can enjoy broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage flowers.

You can still plant cool season leafy things and sow seeds of bush beans and the "rooty" things such as carrot, turnips, beets, and radish, but time is running out mid-March.

Most of our eager anticipation is for the summer vegetables, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and the squashes and melons. Often, we are in a hurry to get those in the ground, especially if we have a week of warm sunshine in early March. But it's not the air temperature that's important. It's the soil temperature that allows plants to get established and growing and we should not set out plants too early and let them sit there without moving. Each group of plants has their minimum and optimum soil temperatures for good performance. To help you in this choice your newsletters have listed them frequently. In fact, if you have your old volumes handy look through those of Sept-Oct (2003 and 2004), Jan-Feb, March-April and Nov-Dec 2004. You've no excuse in saying you don't know these. But you may have the excuse that you don't have a soil thermometer. Go buy one at a nursery or even a hardware store for less than ten dollars. It's a good investment.

Out in the sunshine at midday your soil will be warmer than during the night and if you use this noon reading you'll likely be a week or two early with your planting. Leave the thermometer in the garden overnight and read it before you leave for work to get a true reading of how your new plants can start their life. As with humans, the early days are important.

**2** It may seem strange to repeat the addition of steer manure, ammonium phosphate and soil sulfur again. We did this a mere six months

ago, yet our soils consume the organic matter and our plants use up the nutrients. They need to be replaced. The new rototiller will mix them efficiently and it can be steered close to the cool-season plants you still have in the garden, without damaging them.

What does a good plant look like at the nursery? It should have good green color, not too dark and not pale either. It should have lots of leaves, right down to the bottom. It should be compact and not leggy. A tomato and eggplant and pepper should be about six inches tall. I don't think there's any benefit in buying a plant with flowers, though it looks determined enough to give you an early harvest. But, most important, it should have a mass of white roots filling the container, but not going round and round.

Brown roots are usually dead and tell you that the plant has been in its container too long.

Here's a trick if the season is late and you can get a tomato that is leggy. Strip off the lower half of the stem and plant by laying the plant on its side in a shallow ditch (where the topsoil is warmer than deeper down). In a day or two the growing point will turn upright and the stem will produce additional roots to give you a strong high-powered plant. This method seems to work only with tomatoes.

Be adventurous at the nursery and buy two plants of three kinds to give you a variety of early, midseason and late harvests, besides differences of taste and adaptability to desert conditions. Share this adventure with fellow gardeners to avoid buying too many plants.

Finally, please label your plants with permanent stakes. You'll want to know, in August, which variety is doing best. And your friends and neighbors will, too.

As at all times, Good Luck.



## Stewed Chicken with Sunchokes

6 tbsp. soy sauce  
2 tbsp. vegetable oil  
4 small shallots, chopped  
1 tbsp. dry sherry  
1 tbsp. sugar  
1-2 pounds chicken, boned and cut to 1-inch pieces  
2 tbsp. chopped ginger root  
1 pound sunchokes, washed and sliced  
2 cups water

In medium bowl, mix soy sauce and sherry. Add chicken and marinate 15-20 minutes. Heat oil in large skillet; add chicken mixture, ginger, and half of shallots. Cook until chicken is golden brown, stirring often. Add sunchokes, water, and sugar. Bring to boil, cover and simmer 40 minutes or until chicken is tender. Garnish with remaining shallots. Serve hot (with rice is nice).

## Sunchoke Chicken Salad

3 cups chicken, cubed and cooked  
1 cup diced celery  
1 tbsp. mayonnaise  
1 tbsp. mustard (prepared)  
3 tbsp. pickle relish  
3/4 cup fresh sunchokes, chopped  
3 hard-boiled eggs, quartered

Combine chicken, celery, eggs, relish, and sunchokes in bowl. Stir in mustard and mayonnaise to coat well. Chill for 1 hour. Serves 4-6.

## Tomato Cucumber Mint Salad

2 large cucumbers, halved lengthwise and sliced  
1/3 cup red wine vinegar  
1 tbsp. white sugar  
1 tsp. salt  
3 large tomatoes, seeded and chopped coarsely  
2/3 cup red onion, chopped coarsely  
1/2 cup mint leaves, chopped  
3 tbsp. olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

Mix cucumbers, vinegar, sugar, and salt and let stand 1 hour, covered.

Add tomatoes, onion, mint, and oil. Toss to blend. Season with salt and pepper.

## Sugar Snap Peas with Mint

2 tsp. olive oil  
3/4 pound sugar snap peas, trimmed  
3 green onions, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, diced  
1/8 tsp each, salt and pepper  
1 tbsp. chopped mint

Heat oil on medium-high. Add peas, onion, garlic, salt, and pepper. Saute 4 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir in mint.

Serve warm.

## Gorse Fires

Cattle out of their byres are dungy still, lambs  
Have stepped from last year as from an enclosure.  
Five or six men stand gazing at a rusty tractor  
Before carrying implements to separate fields.

I am traveling from one April to another.  
It is the same train between the same embankments.  
Gorse fires are smoking, but primroses burn  
And celandines and white may and gorse flowers.

—Michael Longley

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Keith Cooper  
Operations Manager

4555 S. Palo Verde, Suite 151  
Tucson, Arizona 85714  
520.748.9094  
FAX 520.747.2938  
kcooper@agpaloverde.com

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.

# Community Garden Recipes

## Broccoli and Cauliflower Salad

1 large head broccoli, flowerets only, cut in bite size  
 1 small head cauliflower, flowerets only, cut in bite size  
 1 small red onion, cut in slivers or half-rings  
 1 tsp. salt  
 1 tsp. pepper  
 1 tsp. dry mustard  
 1 cup mayonnaise  
 1/3 cup vinegar  
 1/2 cup sugar or 16 packets Equal

Combine broccoli, cauliflower and onion in a serving bowl. In a small bowl whisk together salt, pepper, mustard, mayonnaise, vinegar and sugar. Pour over vegetables, toss, and chill for 3 hours.

Serves 6 to 8 as side dish

## Spinach Casserole

24 ounces cottage cheese  
 8-12 ounces fresh spinach  
 1/2 pound sharp cheddar  
 4 eggs  
 1 tbsp. melted butter  
 4 tbsp. whole wheat flour  
 1/4 tsp. salt

Preheat oven to 350.

Beat eggs until mixed; add flour, butter, and salt; continue beating until stiff. Fold in cottage cheese and cheddar cheese. Add spinach. This mixture can be refrigerated up to two days until you are ready to bake the casserole.

Pour mixture into 8 x 11 casserole dish. Bake at 350 for 50 minutes. Check center to make sure the casserole has cooked completely.

Let stand for 5-10 minutes after baking.

## Candy Cane Candy

1 package white chocolate chips  
 6 regular Candy Canes  
 1 teaspoon peppermint extract

Melt chocolate chips on low heat. Add extract (optional). Crush candy canes. Add to chocolate. Remove from heat. Pour into pan to cool. Break into pieces. Enjoy.

## Sour Cream Apple Coffee Cake

1 cup butter or margarine  
 1 cup sugar  
 1 tsp vanilla  
 2 eggs  
 2 cups sifted flour  
 1 tsp. baking powder  
 1 tsp. baking soda  
 1/2 tsp salt  
 1 cup sour cream  
 1 or 2 medium apples, peeled and sliced thin  
 2 tsp cinnamon  
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts

### Sugar-Nut Mixture

Mix well in small bowl: 3/4 cup sugar, walnuts, and cinnamon. Set aside.

### Batter

Beat butter/margarine, remaining sugar, and vanilla until creamy. Add eggs individually, beating well after each. Separately in smaller bowl, sift flour with baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Alternate adding flour mixture and sour cream to butter mixture.

Grease and flour 9-inch angel food or bundt pan. Spread 1/2 of batter across bottom of pan. Layer 1/3 of sugar-nut mixture over batter and top with apples. Layer apples with second third of sugar-nut mixture. Cover this with remaining batter and top batter with remaining sugar-nut mixture.

Bake 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Cake is done when knife inserted into center is removed clean. Let cool in pan for one hour. Loosen cake from sides of pan with knife. Cake should come easily onto a plate.

# A Planter's Guide

to March and April

Vegetables	*	March 1 to March 15	March 15 to March 31	April 1 to April 15	April 15 to April 30
Asian Cabbages	P				
Asian Leafy Greens	P				
Beets	P				
Bush Beans	S,P				
Pole Beans	P				
Carrot	S				
Corn	S,P				
Chard	S,P				
Collards	P				
Cucumber	S,P				
Dandelion Greens	S,P				
Eggplant	P				
Endive	P				
Escarole	P				
Leaf Lettuce	P				
Bibb Lettuce	P				
Melon	S,P				
Mustard Greens	P				
New Zealand Spinach	S,P				
Pepper	P				
Radish	S				
Squash	S,P				
Spinach	P				
Tomato	P				
Tomatillo	P				
<b>Herbs</b>					
Basil	P				
Chervil	P				
Cilantro	P				
Chives	P				
Dill	P				
Fennel	P				
Epazote	P				
Lemon Grass	P				
Lemon Balm	P				
Mint	P				
Oregano	P				
Parsley	P				
Rosemary	P				
Sage	P				
Tarragon(Texas)	P				
Thyme	P				

As we continually work to make your newsletter more interesting and useful to you, we gladly accept and encourage suggestions that improve the overall quality of newsletter features. We'd like to thank John Swanson for suggesting the improvements to the planter's guide that you see on this page.

When planting this spring remember that the current cool weather will be short lived; pick your varieties of seeds and plants accordingly. Hot weather will be upon us in May, and for the best yields of cool-season plants, be sure to select varieties that mature early.

John Swanson regularly offers these, as well as many other seasonal plants, at the Palomino Plaza and St Phillip's Farmers Markets on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

S = Seed, P = Plant

shaded bar marks those dates safe for planting

# Time for Tom

## Stability

by Tom Watson

For anyone who has kept a garden plot here in Tucson it is hardly necessary to repeat the need for adding organic material to what passes for soil around here. So instead, I'm going to remind you to keep adding organic material to the soil. Garden soil in any region is always a work in progress, and soil building requires input from the gardener. The need to constantly replenish the organic matter in your soil is never ending.

Organic material in the soil, whether compost or living plant roots, supports a large and fantastic ecosystem made up of creatures ranging in size from bacteria to earthworms and beetle grubs. Bacteria and fungi break the organic matter down over time and render it suitable fare for other organisms, or become food themselves. Mineral nutrients such as iron, nitrogen, and sulfur are released into the soil as these organisms break down the organic matter, and are later broken down in their turn. As this cycle proceeds, the amount of organic material steadily decreases, until not enough of this basic resource remains to support a healthy soil ecosystem. So you feed the cycle. Add organic material such as compost or steer manure every time you do a major seasonal planting, and then mulch the bed with something like straw or shredded paper. You will have met the immediate needs of the soil critters, and given them something to work on through the growing season by providing a layer of organic mulch at the surface. Where the mulch touches the soil (which it keeps more evenly moist and therefore biologically active) the process of decay releases a steady trickle of resources into the soil from above. Eventually, that mulch can be composted and added to the soil more directly.

Over time you will see a gradual change in your soil. It will look different, becoming darker; it will smell differ-

ent, with a stronger, richer 'earthy' aroma; it will feel different, becoming more friable when moist than the original clay-rich soil it was in the beginning. What you are seeing is the effect of a build up of stable humus, the residue of all those months and (we hope!) years of soil building. Stable humus is a collection of organic acids and solid particle that resist any further degradation. They linger, and increase in quantity as you continue to amend the soil. This material, like the compost and/or manure it came from, can profoundly influence the quality of your soil. It breaks up clay, creates a beneficial chemical environment for plant roots, and holds moisture and nutrients in a way that leaves them more readily available to plant roots. It can also help to modify the pH of the soil somewhat, although this effect can take years to become noticeable.

Several inches of manure dug deeply into the soil of a garden bed will, when it has decayed down to stable humus, yield very little of the good stuff. And although stable humus does resist decay, it is not immune to it. For this reason we add compost, etc. at the beginnings of our major planting seasons, and do so generously. One of the first things I noticed when I un-learned my Illinois style of gardening was how much more manure and compost I needed to add to the soil here, in order to build it up into something worthy of tomatoes, garlic, and basil. It took me a while to realize that, because the soil here never actually freezes up in the winter, the decay process never stops. In fact, it never really slows down. And so we have voracious soil, when it comes to organic material. Of course, this also means you build up stable humus a little more quickly, and couldn't we all use a bit more stability in our lives?

## Administrative Notes

*Address Change for Newsletter Submissions by Post*  
Andy and Dianne Stevens recently moved and now are neighbors to the lovely Signa Roswell of the Chaverim Garden. As a consequence, any newsletter submissions by post should be sent to their new address:

Dianne Stevens  
6151 East 21st Street  
Tucson, Arizona 85711

*Thanks so much to everyone who contributed to this newsletter, whether by email or post. Your efforts are well appreciated!*

### *Overdue Plot Fees*

The plot fee reminder signs that went up in January were a successful reminder to many of us to get our plot fees into Pete DiCurti. If you happened to miss the signs and find that you're a little behind, don't worry! Pete will still take your check. Remember, plot fees are now \$72 per plot per semester (Jan 1- June 31). You can send your check to:

CGT Treasurer Pete DiCurti  
6642 North Longfellow Drive  
Tucson, Arizona 85718

# Garden Reports

## First Avenue Garden

Despite the strong likelihood that our gardening days on 1st Ave are limited, (we're thinking June '05 at this point), there are a lot of healthy looking plants that don't seem the least bit worried. With the recent rains there appears to be nothing but abundance in our future. Nevertheless, a few of us have reserved spots in the Wilson garden to receive our spring plantings. At this point, Jacques Gerstenfeld, John Churchill and Shirley McReynolds will be making the move to Wilson. Some of our other gardeners know that they only have a few more months in Tucson and so will not be looking for another plot. The search is still on for another location in the same general area so maybe by the next newsletter the "1st Ave" garden will be reborn at a different address.

I will continue to act as Site Mgr for the 1st Ave location until it is no more. Since this was CGT's "firstborn" and the site of most of the Potlucks and other gatherings, it will be very sad to have to say goodbye. We were most fortunate to have a wonderful relationship with the landowner and the neighboring business. We thank Patsy Frannea and Buck's Automotive for many years of help and cooperation.

—Happy planting to all, Shirley McReynolds

## Chaverim Garden

Currently all 18 of our plots are taken, since we recently welcomed two new sets of gardeners. Gerard White and roommate Steve are growing strawberries, onions and broccoli in plot 6-S, with an empty space currently awaiting a new spring crop - tomatoes or ? Gerard has also very kindly worked on weeding beyond just cleaning his own plot. Patti Hartman and friends Bruce and Isaac are busily preparing plot 8-S by deep hand digging and addition of organics. They'll be all set for spring and summer crops to go in soon.

Our garden has been producing some great broccoli, cauliflower, lettuces, chard and spinach this winter season, as well as anticipating production soon from strawberries, sugar snap and English peas. We even have some carrots, beets, turnips, rutabagas and collards a-growing, along with the White Granex onions we were all so generously provided. Gwen has been raising some Celebrity tomatoes at home from seed in time for our gardeners' March tomato planting. I see many plots have spaces reserved, likely for soon-to-be-planted spring crops such as the luscious melons that were so popular in our garden last year. We're enjoying last season's plantings and are off to a great start for 2005!

—Signa Roswell

## March-April Lunar Phases

Waning Half Moon



March 3  
April 1

New Moon

March 10  
April 8  
(solar eclipse)

Waxing Half Moon



March 17  
April 16

Full Moon



March 25  
April 24  
(lunar eclipse)

# Community Garden

## Calendar

### March 2005

**5** Corbet Garden Meeting, 9:00am

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

**12** Presidio Garden Meeting 9:00am



**19** First Avenue Garden Meeting 9:00am

**20** Chaverim Garden Meeting 9:00am

**26** Wilson Garden Meeting 9:00am

### April 2005

**2** Corbet Garden Meeting, 9:00am

**9** Presidio Garden Meeting, 9:00am

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



**16** First Avenue Garden Meeting 9:00am

**18** Deadline for Newsletter Submissions

**17** Chaverim Garden Meeting 9:00am

**23** Wilson Garden Meeting, 9:00am

**5**

# Community Garden

## Activities



Photos courtesy of Andy Stevens



This issue's community garden activity photos were all taken at the Chaverim Garden during that garden's February meeting and are shown to illustrate how prolific a community garden space can become in one short year. Not only are the plants thriving, but the community of gardeners is also alive and doing very well.

**6**