Community Gardens of Tucson

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Mother’s Day in the Garden

The Sabino Vista Garden’s May meeting fell on Mother’s Day this year and it was good to see all of the moms who came out to spend the afternoon with children and plants.

Teddy Carney, our Sabino Vista garden host, poses behind an artichoke plant that apparently plans to take over most of the garden. The plant’s stalks at the bottom are baseball-bat sized.
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.

If you’ve ever wondered what to do with the extra produce that your plots provide, the Community Food Bank has the answer to your problem of abundance. They will take the produce that you drop off and sell it at the CFBA Farmers Market or at the Santa Cruz Farmers Market. They get a small percentage of the sale, and you get to choose whether you would like to get back any unsold produce, or just donate it to the food bank. Either way, everyone wins. If you’re interested, contact Amanda Morse at 622-0525 x237 or at amorse@communityfoodbank.com

The weather is turning, in case you haven’t noticed, and it’s going to turn some more. Here are some things to attend to at the beginning of summer.

**Mulching**

To keep the soil cool, cover it with a four-inch layer of vegetable material. The best is alfalfa hay because it adds nutrients to the soil although this is not the prime reason using a mulch. The worst material to use is Bermuda grass hay because it’s likely to contain seeds. We don’t want those. In between there’s oat straw, barley straw and wheat straw. The best way to use these materials is to break off flakes that are about four inches thick and lay them down like giant tiles. They won’t blow away, as will scattered straw and compost. An advantage of a mulch is that the irrigation tapes are hidden from thirsty birds and the sun thereby preserving them and preventing evaporation of salts from the water. Loose straw is available at a cheaper rate from some feed stores and it’s better than nothing.

**Watering**

Keep an eye on the moisture in the soil by using a soil probe. Disregard the crusty dry surface, but check for moisture down at root level. If you think the water delivery is not to your liking give a call to your Site Coordinator and please don’t adjust the garden timer. You may adjust the green valves to your plot if you think too much water is coming out. Repair leaks yourself as you were taught by George Brookbank but if you can’t manage this please call the Site Coordinator or Gene himself as soon as possible. If a neighbor’s plot has a leak please turn off his/her valves and immediately let him/her know.

Don’t spray your plants, because the water will evaporate and leave a salt residue and this is harmful, especially on tender new shoots

**Shade**

You can use an old white sheet ( or buy special stuff from a nursery called floating row cover, or Reemay, etc ) and completely cover your tomatoes and eggplant and peppers but don’t cover zucchini squash or melons or corn or okra or Chinese Pole Beans. These summer plants like our sunshine and, incidentally, you can sow their seeds during the next two months.

**Tomatoes**

During the early stages of flowering it helps to ensure pollination of the flowers by tapping the stems. This helps the pollen to do its stuff. Gentle winds do the same, though in June and July your tomato plants should be covered with a shade cloth and that will keep out the wind.

Try to plant two plants of one variety and two of another and two of a third, rather than setting out six all of one kind. This strategy applies to peppers and eggplant also, in fact any vegetable that has several kinds. We still don’t know “the Best Variety” and once we find it another summer will favor another.

**Pests**

Tomato Hornworm and Squash Vine Borer are likely to bother us sooner or later, but we’ll face those challenges at our monthly meetings. The big problem that will surface (literally) is Bermuda grass. Please, please, for your own good don’t let it get started. It will creep from the pathways into your garden plot if you don’t see it. As soon as you see one, dig it out. It’s no good simply pulling off the top because the roots are INVASIVE.

Be a Happy Gardener!

**Selling That Extra Produce!**

In a few weeks, it will be the first anniversary of my gardening efforts at Presidio Garden. It is a good time to look back on the lessons I learned. I know that all of the experienced gardeners learned these, and much more, long ago.

Mark the plants/seeds with sturdy fade resistant labels that indicate the variety, the date planted, the germination time and the days to maturity. After a few weeks waiting for the seeds to sprout, it is impossible to remember what you planted where and when. Good labels also make it easier to share your successes with your fellow gardeners.

Make sure that you want to eat what you plant and make sure that you thin the plants to an appropriate quantity. It is no fun to start harvesting a really big crop of something you really don’t like.

Keep track of where you buy the seeds so that you can find them again.

Pay attention to the recommended soil temperature and plant spacing. Proper temperature helps germination and proper spacing leads to healthier plants.

Pull weeds early and often.

Make sure that you are pulling the weeds and not something you planted. Good labels help.

Don’t believe the seed catalogs. None of them seem to know a thing about our seasons and our growing conditions in Tucson.

Straw works really well in the summer to preserve the moisture in the soil until the plants get big enough to shade the soil. When the time comes to switch to the fall/winter crops, take the straw off of the plot - do NOT turn it under.

A carpeted garden is a clean garden.

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**A Year of Learning**

by Gene Zonge

There is actually a cabbage in this photo. Planting dates and adequate spacing will help you keep your head.
The feeling of summer greets my skin these days whenever I go into the daylight and that’s a good reminder to start rounding up the old sheets that will shield the plants. Soon, all of the gardens will look like a neighbor’s laundry line.

Jerusalem Artichokes will begin to tower over the gardens shortly. There’s an interesting story behind that name of that plant, so while you’re inside beating the heat this summer, look it up. It’s sure to make you wonder what other plant names have been trampled and muddied by history.

Enjoy Today.

Recipe Roundup
from Sue Lopez at Presidio

**Brunch Rice Cake**
2C Cooked Rice (brown preferred)  
2C Chopped Vegetables  
(in winter: spinach, kale, pak choi, chard, etc.)  
(in summer: tomato, squash, peppers)  
1/4C Chopped Onion or 4 green onions with tops  
1C Milk  
1/4C Olive Oil  
6 Eggs (beaten)  
3/4C Parmesan Cheese  
1t Italian Seasoning  
1t Garlic Salt  
Salt and Pepper to taste

Mix rice & vegetables. Add milk, eggs, cheese, and seasonings. Pour into 13x9 pan and bake at 325 until set which should be about 30 minutes.

Be creative with this recipe and use a combination of vegetables from your garden. Play with the seasoning and different cheeses. I’ve made it thicker with 3C of rice, 3C of vegetables, and 8 eggs.

Enjoy!
Goodbye Dear Friend

by Andy Stevens

Recently the Community Gardens of Tucson bid goodbye to Gary Cooper, a dear friend and long-time garden supporter. He passed away on March 12, 2008.

Gary was a gardener at Corbett and a steering committee member long before I took over as the administrative director. He was what my mother often refers to as a ‘good egg’. He was a kind and generous man, and a wonderful gardener. In the garden that we shared, he was often like a green-thumbed ghost. Most folks would arrive at the garden on time, only to find that Gary had beaten us there early in the morning, harvested his veggies, and had left behind beautiful well-tended plants. His love of life will continue to shine in the many wonderful friendships that he cultivated with ease.

Below is a reprint of his obituary from the Tucson newspapers:

Gary Richard Cooper, born on November 24, 1940 in Schenectady, New York, the son of Henry Whyland Cooper and Wilhelmina (Billie) Lachtrupp. He has lived with his family in Tucson, Arizona since 1978. Gary enjoyed adventures, travels with his family, always learning and taking up new hobbies. He was always willing to take risks to achieve his goals and will be remembered for his tremendous generosity and compassion. His family always came first. He leaves his wife Aida, and sons Carl G. (Wendy) Cooper and Keith A. (Ammie) Cooper; His brothers Donald and William Cooper and sister Kay Roller; grandchildren, Emelie, Christopher, Caiden, Case, Cailynn, and Ainsley Cooper, as well as many other family and friends. We will miss you dearly.

Chaverim Garden

by Bruce Plenk

Who Knew?

Leave it to George to turn a quiet Sunday garden meeting and walk into an opportunity for sex education, booty shaking, and native Southwestern cuisine opportunities. I’m referring of course to his recent discourse on squash blossoms, which all of a sudden have made their appearance in many a garden plot.

Perhaps all of this was to coincide with the Pope’s visit to the US in some way I haven’t figured out, or with Passover or the full moon, but whatever. We learned that there are male and female blossoms, that the “fruit,” really the squash, develops at the female blossom’s base from the time the flower first opens, and that it still needs to be fertilized with pollen from the male blossom if it is to fully develop. So George suggested picking the male blossom and carefully shaking some or all of the pollen into the female blossoms to ensure full squash development. This lead to a rash of gardeners crazily bending over, male blossom in hand, and shaking like crazy into the poor unsuspecting female blossom who gave no sign of interest or appreciation. Ah, but just wait, we were advised…

This of course led to discussion of what to do with unused and unnecessary or spent male squash blossoms. Turns out they can be used in a bunch of recipes. But first, and all of these tips come from Carolyn Niethammer in her interesting and useful cookbook, The Tumbleweed Gourmet: Cooking with Wild Southwestern Plants (U of A Press 1987), you have to pick the blossoms. This is apparently best done in the early morning before the have opened. Niethammer advises: “Pick them with a small section of stem attached and store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator until you wish to cook them in the evening. (They don’t store well for more than a day, two at the most.)”

OK, on to the recipes: Blossom Fritters—dip the blossoms in an egg/milk/cornmeal/flour batter and fry till golden brown. Or Squash Blossom Soup: Discard stem and green tough parts, chop blossoms, sauté with onion and garlic until limp, add to broth with or without milk, put all in blender, voila!!

Or the classic: Stuffed Squash Blossoms

Sauté ⅛ c green onions chopped with a garlic clove or two, mix with ½ c ricotta or crumbled tofu, 1/3 c Parmesan (or Asiago) cheese and 2 T chopped green chiles. Put a spoonful of the filling in each of 20 or so blossoms, twist tips to close, roll in flour to lightly coat, dip in mixture of two eggs beaten with a little water, and fry until golden brown. Drain on paper towel and there you have it…And the best of all, you still have all those baby squash, zukes and pattipans still happening on the vine for later….
### Community Garden Activities

From top left: This little tomato plant inspector has grown a lot in a couple of years. You might not recognize him these days. A sunflower waits for the right moment to show off. George discusses New Zealand Spinach and his “Big” audience is all smiles.

### Community Garden Calendar

#### May 2008

- **3** Corbett Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **8** CGT Steering Committee Meeting Cancelled - See you in June!
- **10** Presidio Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **11** Sabino Vista Garden Meeting Time TBA
- **18** Chaverim Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **24** Wilson Garden Meeting 8:00am

#### June 2008

- **7** Corbett Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **8** Sabino Vista Garden Meeting Time TBA
- **12** CGT Steering Committee Meeting at Darlene Schacht’s, 9:00am. All CGT members invited.
- **14** Presidio Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **15** Chaverim Garden Meeting 8:00am
- **18** Deadline for Newsletter Submissions
- **28** Wilson Garden Meeting 8:00am