

COMMUNITY GARDENS

of Tucson



Cold Weather Protection

AND HOW TO KNOW IF YOU NEED IT

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 6

George provides tips for protecting your crops from the overnight frosts, and techniques to determine if you are at risk.

DONATIONS

We asked for donations in the last newsletter and we got a couple. Thank you to those you gave us tools and supplies. The wheelbarrows can be a major expense and the donated ones will be a big help – but we need more – PLEASE! It takes a lot of stuff to set up and keep our gardens running. Next time you are throwing out things or setting them by the curb or see them in your neighborhood or at a yard sale, please think of donating them to CGT. When you are at a yard sale, frequently the sellers will donate the items to you if you explain that they are for the all-volunteer not-for-profit Community Gardens of Tucson. Here are some other things that we can always use:

Hard rakes, Leaf rakes, Hoes, Long & Short handled pointed and square shovels, Buckets, Garbage cans with lids, Railroad ties, Small hand trowels, Wheelbarrows, Fencing, Fence posts, Sheds, Hoses, Brooms, Machetes, Rain Gauges, Hammers

A BIMONTHLY GUIDE TO
TUCSON GARDENING

Inside



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Onion Planting Time

Darlene describes her techniques for planting onions.

What Works and What Doesn't

Darlene provides some fall gardening tips from her experiences.

Gardening News

New Heirloom Varieties

Check the back page for a list of new or re-introduced heirloom varieties!

Planting Guide



Newly updated!

Be sure to switch over to George's and John's newest version, which will help you hit that optimal planting window.

Garden Reports

Sunrise Garden provides an update, and due to increased water expenses, CGT membership dues are going up.

George Says...

by George Brookbank

Not many of us are thinking of the freezes that will hit us in November and December. Often those in November are mild reminders of worse to come in December--and they can be killers. Here are some strategies you may want to consider to protect your crops.

If you have good yielding plants of Eggplant, Peppers and Tomatoes that you think are worth saving for next year (yes, these are truly more than annual plants), cut them back to something like two feet tall and dig them up with as much roots on them and store them in a five-gallon container. Keep them in good light, even direct sunshine, but water them sparingly because you don't want them to produce a lot of new growth. On freezing nights take them to a sheltered place until the freeze is over. In the case of tomatoes you can take six-inch shoots off the plants and root them in water and then put them in soil for a March planting in your garden after they have rooted. Meanwhile, back in your garden, pull out all the frost-tender summer vegetables to make room for sowing, or planting, cool-season broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, etc. Add soil amendments and dig deep. It's important to rake over the ground to get a perfectly level seed bed if you are going to sow seeds. Hills and valleys on your bed will give you dry spots and wet spots, with resultant poor germination.

Our winter vegetables are generally resistant to cold weather but they will slow down in their growth if we get sunless days and cold nights. Frosts usually come at night and if we have sunny days, and the soil is open to the sun (We don't want mulches during the winter months) there will be enough residual heat from the day's warming to help our plants get through a cool night. This strategy applies to citrus trees as well as our small vegetable plants--cover them up before the sun goes down and remove the sheet early in the morning to let the plants benefit from sunshine. If you don't want to do this daily chore you can cover your plants with a Floating Row Cover (these can be found at nurseries and hardware stores) and leave it on all the time. This is a lightweight fabric that holds in the day's heat and lets in enough light. Simply lay it over the plants, there's no need to build any framework, but you'll need to hold it down with bricks to prevent the wind from uncovering your plants. This step will also protect young seedlings from birds!

If you want to get involved in record-keeping to some purpose you must listen to the weather forecasts. Write down these useful figures and compare them with the temperatures you actually experience at your garden. Over a few weeks you will have adequate proof whether you are in a cold (or warm) part of town. Soon, you will know whether to worry about protecting your frost-tender plants or not, as you listen to the late evening forecasts of the rest of the winter. You'll need a minimum-maximum thermometer (they are sold at hardware stores) and you use a little magnet to re-adjust the information every morning. While you rest comfortably in a warm bed the thermometer records how cold it got during the night. If we get a severe winter you'll appreciate this little technology and your patient study of your environment.

Sunrise Garden Update

by Frans Tax

Fall has arrived in the Sunrise garden! This means lots of changes in the plants growing in the eleven community plots and the six school plots. Throughout the garden, summer plantings of pumpkins, watermelons, bitter melons, luffa gourds, cucumbers, corn, zucchini, and cantaloupe are being replaced by peas, beans, greens, onions, garlic, and the many members of the cabbage family. The fourth grade classes have planted lentils, beans, peas, greens, onions and garlic in conjunction with their study of the Native Americans who have lived in the area for centuries. The third grade classes have started carrots, peas, beets, radishes and greens from seed while also learning about the different parts of plants from watching the seeds from these plants grow in paper towels in their classrooms. Several of the kindergarten and first grade classes have beds of radishes, carrots and peas. It's great to watch the students pause and look at the plants as they walk by the garden during their school day.

One of the best parts of the community garden is learning about interesting plants from other gardeners. After this year's experiences, many gardeners will plant the striped Armenian cucumbers that several people enjoyed from their plots. Luffa gourds, pumpkins, and okra were also very successful this hot summer.

Many individuals and groups that contributed to the several year long planning and building of the Sunrise garden were honored at a Friday kiva (assembly). Organized by Lisa Hawkins, many of the volunteers (including Gene Zonge and Darlene Schacht) and donors were presented with thank you cards and bouquets of sunflowers by a group of Sunrise students who have been actively helping in the garden.

Onion Planting Time

by Darlene Schact

For quite a few years your Steering Committee has ordered onion plants each fall. They are given free to all CGT gardeners who want to plant them. And most years were a whopping success with lots of large, sweet onions to eat and share in the spring or early summer. However, this past year was quite a disappointment and we're still puzzling about it. The Contessas didn't perform for us like other years. I spoke with our Texas supplier about it and one of his conclusions was "well, that's farming." Another theory he had was that by planting them in November perhaps they were starting to grow and then going into dormancy when cold temperatures come. Then when our days warm up again the plants come out of dormancy and produce flowers instead of big bulbs. Therefore, we have decided to wait until January for our onion planting this time.

We have also decided to try a different variety--the Candy onion which has been a big seller at the local Farmer's Markets and it grows well in Tucson.

After you've amended your soil well, place your onion plants about 1/2 to 1 inch deep about 4-5 inches apart. If you plant them any deeper they won't develop a nice globe. Or you can plant them about 2-3 inches apart with the plan to eat every other one as they grow bigger. But if you want nice big onions give them enough space.

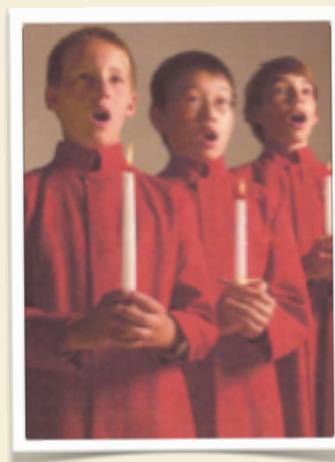
In the past, we have advised gardeners to break off the stem if it starts to send out a flower for seed so the energy would go toward growing a larger bulb instead. Now the theory is to not break or bend the top; the leaf is hollow, and breaking it will allow water to go into the center of the onion and cause it to rot. Even if you don't have a flower stalk, do not water your onions from the top.

George is going to do a trial this year to see if breaking the tops slows their development or causes the center to rot. You can help by reporting to him what percentage of your plants produced flowers. Our onions will be arriving in mid-January and your Site Coordinators will deliver them to your garden sites. One bunch will be available per plot with each bunch containing approximately 30-40 onions. If you don't want any onions please let us know soon.

Announcements



Thank you all for attending our Fall Potluck. The party was a big success. The weather was fantastic. The entire Cooper family was able to attend to hear George talk about his memories of Gary Cooper and to see the picnic table that has been dedicated in his memory. We are fortunate to have known Gary and we continue to benefit from his and his family's generosity.



The Benedictine Monastery is celebrating their 70th anniversary with the Tucson Arizona Boys Chorus on Saturday, November 31st at 3pm and 7pm at the Benedictine Monastery, which is located at 800 North Country Club Road. For tickets call 325-6401. All proceeds go towards the preservation of the historic Benedictine Chapel.

From the Administrator

by Gene Zonge

As you probably know, the **water rates went up in July**. They seem to go up every year. The last time the plot dues increased was January 2005. We have had many water rate increases since then and we have held the dues constant but, as you can guess, there is a limit to how long we can keep from raising the plot dues. The Steering Committee has analyzed the CGT finances and determined that, in order to have sufficient funds to pay all of our bills in 2009, **it is necessary to raise the plot dues to \$15 per month starting on January 1, 2010**. Also, in order to try to help improve our finances, we are going to go through the process of becoming an official nonprofit 501(c)(3). If you have any questions about these things, please contact me admin@communitygardensoftucson.org.



I was at a garden this afternoon and I just happened to see a beautiful small baby bird tangled in the plastic bird netting covering one of the rows. It took me a while but I eventually got it untangled and set it free. If it doesn't die of the stress and trauma, it might make it. **CGT strongly discourages the use of the product commonly called "bird netting"**. It is a black plastic net that is cruel and lethal to most wildlife. We know for certain that the netting kills birds, lizards and snakes. It will probably kill baby rabbits too. There is nothing that can ruin a good day at the garden faster than finding a dead maggot-ridden animal rotting in the netting. Please consider using "floating row cover". It is a very light-weight fabric like cheesecloth, it is inexpensive and it is very friendly to all of God's creatures. You can buy it at the Community Food Bank for \$0.15 per foot. Your plots are either 20 or 25 feet long, so it will cost you all of about \$3.50 to be kind and caring to our scaly, furry and feathered friends, plus you will be helping the Community Food Bank. Everybody wins. Please think about it.



I get quite a few gardening magazines and newsletters. I have accumulated some tidbits that I thought you might be interested in. Most of them are from a newsletter called The Avant Gardener. In no particular order:

Miniature cabbages might just be the perfect fall vegetable says Organic Gardening magazine. They

come in a range of pretty colors – tints of pink, purple, pale green, and white – thrive in cool weather, mature in just a couple of months, and have super sweet, mild-flavored leaves. Best of all, these little cabbages weigh in at around 2 pounds, which makes it very easy to find a place for them in your garden and your refrigerator. Miniature cabbages may be harvested any time after the heads form. Fully mature heads feel hard, dense, and unyielding to the touch. To harvest, simply slice through the stalk at the base of the head. Cutting a cross in the cut stalk will encourage small cabbages to form in each quadrant. Recommended varieties: Caraflex, Red Express, Savoy Express.



The "Eastern Shore Select" super-gourmet sweet potato, which has been described as **pure gastronomic ecstasy** is actually the "Hayman", preserved for almost 80 years and still grown by the family of Alma Blanch Maddox (28147 Groton Town Road, Hallwood, VA 23359; 757-824-4796). Another source may be www.sandhillpreservation.com/. This sweet potato has white flesh that turns sage green when cooked. It is said to have smooth creamy sweet flesh that needs no butter or salt. It is an heirloom dating back nearly 200 years.



Row covers and reflective plastic mulches keep aphids away from plants but are expensive and pose disposal problems, so **researchers are working to develop spray-on soil paints** made with non-harmful, fast degrading organic clay pigments to bounce wavelengths of light that disorient the pests.



The July/August 2009 edition of Fruit Gardener, the periodical from the California Rare Fruit Growers, has a study regarding coffee grounds. They planted tomato plants in soil with varying percentages of coffee grounds, from 10% to 50%. Their findings are startling. Whether the coffee grounds are well-composted or not, the tomato plants were severely stunted and had mostly necrotic leaves. Moreover, the toxicity persisted in the soil for more than 2 years. The author speculates that **soil consisting of no more than 3% coffee grounds may be safe to use**.

What Works & What Doesn't

by Darlene Schact

Fall is an exciting time for desert gardeners. The weather is more comfortable for us as well as our plants so once again we start over with a new palette. Seed catalogues are so exciting and inviting with so many options. New gardeners are always asking "what should I plant now?" Some of the guesswork should disappear with the help of our helpful Planting Guide. But there's always the puzzle of which variety grows the best in our climate and soil. For instance, last year while perusing one of my favorite seed catalogues, Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds--my ultimate fantasy book with lots of enticing pictures in full color--I just had to try their Tigger Melon. They said "it was the most fragrant melons we have tried, with a rich sweet, intoxicating aroma that will fill a room. The flesh gets sweeter in dry climates. A vigorous plant, even in dry conditions." I thought--how could I miss? It turned out to be a miserable tasting melon and not to be repeated in my plot ever.

Fortunately, on that same seed order I bought some Painted Serpent cucumber seeds that were outstanding. They have it listed as a melon but describe it as an Armenian-type of cucumber. John Swanson got us hooked on these several years ago and it's a definite 'must' for spring planting.

Snap peas are always a favorite of mine for fall planting because they are so versatile and you eat the whole thing, both the pod and the peas. There are so many varieties from which to choose and they come under the names of snow, sugar or snap peas. I prefer the old standby Sugar Snap, not just because it was an All-American Winner, but because they are so sweet when plump and consistently produce well over a long period if I keep the vines picked clean. They have to have a place to climb as they grow 5 ft. tall. I plant them in late September or early October.

So I'm hoping you will all help me fill this little corner of our newsletter by telling me what worked for you and what didn't. If it was a wonderful surprise--or not--please let me know about it. When did you plant? By seed or transplant? How long to germination? Seed source? Anything that will help your fellow gardeners. I'll keep going with this in future newsletters if you will send me your findings. Drop me an line at omadarlene@gmail.com and let me know What's Working and What's Not in your garden.

From the Water Meister

In order to make sure that water emergencies, as well as the day-to-day irrigation maintenance, are handled quickly and efficiently, we have decided to deputize several Regional Water Meisters. We don't have all of the details completely worked out but each garden will have a sign posted with a call list of who gardeners are supposed to call when there is a water problem.

Zach MacDonald will be taking care of garden irrigation at Chaverim, Highland Vista, St. Gregory and Sunrise. John Swanson will be the "Midtown Regional Water Meister" and will take care of garden irrigation at Benedictine, Presidio, Wilson and Keeling. Sam Wymer will take care of garden irrigation at New Spirit. We haven't figured out who will be the Regional Water Meister for Sabino Vista. Gene Zonge will be the back-up person for all of the gardens, at least for now. Please watch for the new signs and instructions at your gardens.

Thanks to our Volunteers!

- Don Benzel with the Shed Shoppe for donating a new shed to the Highland Vista Garden.
- Les Shipley with Civano Nursery for donating compost to the New Spirit Garden.
- Jason Tankersley with Fairfax Companies LLC. for arranging for the compost for New Spirit Garden and for donating excavator time and spending several days running the excavator at New Spirit Garden.
- Thunderbird Heights Wilmot Desert Estates for donating money towards the Chaverim expansion.
- Indian Ridge Garden Club for donating money to our general fund.
- And of course, a thank you to all of the hard working volunteers who make CGT possible.
- Romeo Tree Service for delivering several loads of free mulch to help reduce dust in the Presidio Garden parking lot.

Planter's Guide

	Germ. Soil Temp. °F	November		December		January		February	
		1-15	15-30	1-15	15-31	1-15	15-31	1-15	15-28
Vegetables	Artichoke/Cardoon	70-80	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Arugula	40-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Asian Greens	45-85	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Beans (Bush)	65-85							
	Beans (Fava)	65-85	S	S				S	S
	Beets	50-85	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	Black-eyed Peas	65-95							
	Broccoli	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Broccoli Raab	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Brussels Sprouts	45-95	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Cabbage	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Cauliflower	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Carrots	45-85	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
	Chinese Pole Beans	65-100							
	Collards	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Corn	60-95							S
	Cucumber (Armenian)	70-95							
	Cucumber	65-95							
	Eggplant	75-90							
	Endive	65-80	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
Garlic/Shallots	45-85	S	ST	T	T	T	T		
Irish Potato ²	45-75					T	T	T	
Jerusalem Artichoke ²	70-80					T	T	T	
Kale	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	
Kohlrabi	65-80	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	
Leaf Lettuce	40-80	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	
Melons	75-95								
Mustard Greens	45-95	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	
Okra	70-95								
Onion/Leeks	50-95/70-75	S	ST	T	T	T	T		
Parsnip	50-70								
Peas	45-75	S	S	S	S	S	S		
Peppers	65-95								
Pumpkin ³	70-95								
Radish	45-90	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
Rutabaga	60-75	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
Spinach (Winter)	45-75	ST	ST	T	T	T	T	ST	
Spinach (NZ & Malabar)	70-80								
Squash (Summer)	70-95								
Squash (Winter)	70-95								
Sweet Potato	75-85								
Swiss Chard	50-85	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	
Tomato	60-85							T	
Turnip	60-105	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	
Herbs⁴	Basil	55-75							
	Chives	55-75	S	ST	T	T	T	T	
	Cilantro	55-75	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Dill	60-80	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST	ST
	Mint ³	65-75	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Oregano	45-80	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Parsley	40-90	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Rosemary	50-80	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Sage	60-80	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	Tarragon (French)	60-80	T	T					
	Thyme	60-80	T	T	T	T	T	T	T

About My Garden Plot:

Notes

1. If planting seeds indoors, plant 8 weeks before planting times above. The average dates for first and last frosts are November 15 and March 15.
2. Potatoes and Jerusalem Artichokes are planted from seed potatoes.
3. There may be restrictions when planting pumpkins and mint at CGT gardens. Mints may need to be planted in containers. See your Site Coordinator.
4. Quality herb production is best achieved with filtered sun/open shade during hot months.
5. Speak to the site coordinator about Amaranth, Asparagus, Chervil, Cress, Dandelion, Epazote, Fennel, Horseradish, Lemon Balm, Lemon Verbena, Lemon Grass, Lima Beans, Mache, Marjoram, Purslane, Rhubarb, Shiso, Stevia.

LEGEND

	Unwise to Plant
S	Sow Seeds
ST	Sow Seeds & Transplant
T	Transplant

GARDENING NEWS

Here are a bunch of new (or reintroduced heirloom) vegetable varieties:

- 'Honey Bear' acorn squash, bred at the University of New Hampshire, produces 3 to 5 fruits every two to three feet along the stem of the plant and features excellent disease resistance.
- 'Grete' is the earliest white eggplant available today, with 3" to 4" fruits harvestable in 55 days.
- 'Lambkin' is a specialty white fleshed Piel de Sapo or Christmas melon. It is early-maturing, high yielding and stores better than other melons.
- 'Dorinny' sweet corn from the 1930's is a 'Golden Bantam' derivative very tolerant of cold soil and producing golden kernels of top-rated flavor.
- 'Moreton Hybrid' tomato is famously super delectable.
- 'Hannah's Choice' cantaloupe is notable both for taste and disease resistance.
- 'Sweet Baby Jane' is an early orange bunching carrot of superior quality from small to fully mature.
- 'Bonsai' is a compact pak choi maturing in 35 days.
- 'Scottsdale' is a giant loose-leaf lettuce.
- 'Garden Babies' and 'Little Gem' are new mini-lettuces.
- 'Honeycomb', 'Sunnydew' and 'Snow Leopard' are new honeydew melons. The last one being the first variegated personal-size.
- 'Starbor' is a blue-green semi-dwarf kale.

"Thank you for all of your work, people are getting very excited, including myself..."

--Elie, St. Gregory Garden



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Calendar

November 2009

- 7 Sabino Vista Garden Meeting**
9:00am
- 12 Steering Committee Meeting**
9:00am at Darlene Schacht's. All CGT members are invited.
- 14 Presidio Garden Meeting**
9:00am
- 15 Chaverim Garden Meeting**
9:00am
- 21 Sunrise Garden Meeting**
9:00am
- 28 Benedictine Garden Meeting**
9:00am

December 2009

- 5 Sabino Vista Garden Meeting**
8:00am
- New Spirit Garden Meeting**
10:00am
- 10 Steering Committee Meeting**
9:00am at Darlene Schacht's. All CGT members are invited.
- 12 Presidio Garden Meeting**
8:00am
- St. Gregory Garden Meeting**
10:00am
- 15 Deadline for Newsletter Submissions**
- 19 Sunrise Garden Meeting**
8:00am
- Highland Vista Garden Meeting** 10:00am
- 20 Chaverim Garden Meeting**
9:00am
- 26 Benedictine Garden Meeting**
9:00am

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Locations

Chaverim Garden (Eastside)

Near Speedway & Craycroft
Site Coordinator - Stephanie Bourn-MacDonald
520-318-3015; Zachnsteph@cox.net

Presidio Garden (Midtown)

Near Fort Lowell & Country Club
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

Benedictine Monastery Garden (Midtown, closest to UA)

Near Speedway & Country Club
Site Coordinator - Kristen DiBone
520-884-0557; KDIBone@gmail.com

Sunrise Garden

Near Sunrise Drive & Craycroft
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

St. Gregory Garden

Near Craycroft & River
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

Sabino Vista Garden (Northeast)

Near Sabino Canyon & Cloud Rd
Site Coordinator - Teddy Carney
520-722-0334; Teddycarney@msn.com

Wilson Test Garden (Experimental Plantings only)

Near Fort Lowell & Campbell
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

New Spirit Garden (Southeast)

Near Camino Seco & Old Spanish Trail
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

Highland Vista Garden

Near 5th St. & Craycroft
Site Coordinator - Gene Zonge
520-326-0458; Zonge@aol.com

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Deliver to:

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