



# High on the Desert Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter

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The University of Arizona and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

## The Virtual Gardener—Habitat Network Groups

Participants in the YardMap project, as I have described it so far, are largely passive. They create maps of their yards, answer questions about the things portrayed on their maps, and send the data off to a database at Cornell University. The heavy lifting is done by the scientists who manage the program, process the data submitted by participants, and draw conclusions about the state of urban wildlife habitats. This month I want to cover aspects of the program that allow participants to become more actively engaged in habitat conservation.

One of the principal features of the program is the ability of participants to organize social networks called groups. Groups are formed to link participants with common interests. A common group theme is location. People living in a single community or region may elect to participate in a group. Similarly, groups may form among people with common interests or conservation goals, regardless of location. Some of these special interest groups include people who participate in other Cornell Ornithology Lab projects. For example, there is a group called *Project FeederWatch* comprising people who are enrolled in the Cornell program

that tracks the numbers and types of birds that visit backyard birdfeeders. Another is the *GGBBCG (The Great-Backyard-Bird-Count Group)* that comprises YardMap members who are participants in the 2016 Great Backyard Bird Count project of the Ornithology Lab.

Of course, birders are not the only YardMap participants who form groups. Among the many other special interest groups that have formed are the *Measure Your Lawn* group that tracks the proportion of members' yards that are covered in turf (not a good thing for wildlife!). This group currently includes members from California, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Virginia. Another group is more climatologically oriented and comprises only YardMappers who have Mediterranean-style gardens.

A primary purpose of a group is to allow members to communicate with one another. Members can provide comments to share ideas and news, coordinate projects, seek help from one another, or just commiserate when things aren't quite working right. Depending upon how the group is set up, the comments can be open

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
AND LIFE SCIENCES  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
Cochise County

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to all YardMappers or restricted to only group members. As long as they meet the group membership requirements, YardMappers can join one or many groups.

Any YardMapper may also propose a new group to be added to the project, but the final approval for the group to be officially recognized lies with the YardMap project administrators. Detailed instructions for creating a new group can be found [here](#).

The first step in proposing a new group is determining whether there is already an existing group of the type proposed. If the new group is to be a special purpose one, it may take a little effort to find potential duplicates. In addition to searching group titles with similar sounding names, it will be necessary to read descriptions and perhaps even membership requirements. Be careful to check for synonyms of the words you are proposing to use. A group named "Low water use gardening" might be the essentially same as one named "Xeriscape gardening."

Proposed groups based on geography are probably the easiest to check for duplicates because geographical names tend to be more definitive and searching for geographical areas—cities, states, counties, *etc.*—is easy in the YardMap database. For example, as of this writing, I can find no groups focused on High Desert gardening in Arizona. Only two geographical groups specifically include Arizona, one for [Semi-Desert and Desert Gardeners](#) that is focused on low desert gardening and one for [Arizona-New Mexico mountain gardeners](#) such as those living in the White Mountains.

Once you have established the uniqueness of the group you would like to establish, you can begin creating its characteristics.

As a group creator, you will automatically be its administrator. This means that you will be notified whenever someone requests to join the group and be responsible for

determining if the applicant meets the membership requirements for the group. You can also initially select up to three additional YardMappers as fellow administrators.

At the time of application, you must also decide whether the group will be "open" or "private." If a group is open, any YardMap participant can view the list of sites in the group and read messages between group members. If the group is designated as private, the total number of sites in the group, its name, description, and membership requirements can be seen by any YardMap participant, but the internal details of the group are visible only to group members.

The last step of the application process is to list the membership requirements. Will the group be limited to only those living in a specific area? Will group members be required to belong to some other group, subscribe to a certain philosophy (*e.g.*, be organic gardeners), or have to pay dues? The requirements are up to you.

At this point the proposal is forwarded to the YardMap project administrators for approval. If approved, you will receive a message back from YardMap welcoming the group to the program and you are open for business.

YardMap groups represent a great opportunity for gardeners and wildlife conservationists to work together to accomplish a common goal. And for groups such as Master Gardeners with a public outreach mission, they represent a perfect instrument for accomplishing their mission.

Until next time, happy surfing!

Gary Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
virtualgardener@cox.net

*The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Master Gardener  
Landscaping & Gardening  
Conference will be held  
March 9 & 10.*

## Cuttings 'N' Clippings

✿ Cochise County Master Gardeners Association Board will meet **Wednesday, January 11 at 2:00 PM** in UASV Room 503. The January meeting will be held **Thursday, January 12 at 2:00 PM** in Room 503. For information contact Valerie at:

[valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu](mailto:valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu)  
or the Cochise County Master Gardeners web site at:

<http://cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/>

You can also follow them on Facebook at:

[www.Facebook.com/CochiseCountyMasterGardeners](http://www.Facebook.com/CochiseCountyMasterGardeners)

✿ The next Water Wise presentation will be held **Saturday, January 21 from 10:00—11:30 AM** at UA Sierra Vista. The subject will be *Sustainable Groundwater Use in the Sierra Vista Subwatershed* presented by Bruce Gungle, Hydrologist USGS.

Contact the Cooperative Extension at 458-8278, Ext. 2141 for more information. Check out the Water Wise web site for their 2017 schedule at:

<http://waterwise.arizona.edu/>

✿ The Cochise Chapter of the Arizona Native Plant Society's next program will be held **Friday, January 20 at 5:00 PM**. They meet in the Cochise County Community Development Office conference room, 4001 Foothills Dr. Sierra Vista. The speaker will be Mirna Manteca, Conservation Coordinator, Sky Island Alliance on *Sky Island Alliance Butterfly Pollinator Conservation Efforts in Southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico*. For more information, follow AZ Native Plant Society on their web site:

<http://www.aznps.com/chapters/cochise/cochise.htm>

Cochise County Master  
Gardener Newsletter Editor  
Carolyn Gruenhagen

## 2017 Master Gardener Class Series Begins January 25

The new Master Gardener class for 2017 will begin Wednesday, January 25 and continue for 16 weeks through May 17. Class will meet each Wednesday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM in room 503 of Groth Hall on the U of A Sierra Vista Campus. There will be no class on Wednesday, March 8, as our 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Master Gardener Landscaping & Gardening Conference is March 9 & 10.

A wide variety of topics will be covered to include but not limited to: AZ soils ~ Botany ~ Planting Zones ~ Planting Techniques ~ Irrigation ~ Fertilization ~ Pruning Techniques ~ Tree Care ~ Veggie, Herbs, Berries, & Fruit Tree Growing ~ Propagation ~ Container Gardening ~ Pests & Disease ~ Native & Desert Adapted Plants and Proper Selection ~ Cacti & Succulents ~ Favorite Books ~ Garden Tools & Their Care ~ Theme Gardens ~ Landscape Concepts ~ Habitat & Pollinator Gardening Concepts.

The Master Gardener program is primarily based on teaching University research-based information and disseminating education on responsible and efficient gardening practices and land stewardship throughout our community. Classes are taught by U of A Cooperative Extension faculty and other horticulture experts.

To become a Certified Master Gardener, participants must successfully complete the class series and donate 50 hours of volunteer service within 12 months of completing the class. Because the MG program is based upon helping to educate our communities, sharing volunteer service is a vital part of the program. Volunteer hours also become a very beneficial part of the participants' education as well.

There is a wide variety of service opportunities such as answering questions submitted by the public to

our MG office, working with approved school garden projects, educational participation in public events, speaking to groups, writing for our MG Newsletter, and working with our Discovery Gardens at the U of A Sierra Vista.

Fee for this level of class and required volunteer participation which result in complete Master Gardener certification is \$165.00 and includes the Master Gardener Manual, a Master Gardener T-shirt, and an official MG name badge.

There is a second fee option available for \$265.00 which does not require the 50 hours of volunteer participation. This fee includes the class and the MG manual, but does not result in MG certification.

For information and/or registration, please call the Cooperative Extension at the U of A Sierra Vista at 520-458-8278, ext. 2141, or visit our website at [cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/about](http://cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/about)

*Jan Groth, Master Gardener Program Coordinator*

## A Gardener's Holiday

Can a Master Gardener take a vacation from her garden just like ordinary folk? I was on a mission to find out! I left my home and my cool High Desert gardens in capable hands and headed off to Baja Mexico. I was going to the Low Desert to a solar house off the grid (and on the beach) for rest and relaxation. I wanted nothing more than to soothe my soul with the sound of the surf, spend countless hours on the beach, watch whales migrate down the Pacific coast, spend pesos, and speak Spanish badly.

So we traveled to Southern Baja to enjoy the land where the desert meets the sea. Our destination was Villa del Mar, on the beach about 10 miles south of the Tropic of Cancer, that invisible

line that demarcates the tropical zone and passes through the town of Todos Santos in Baja Mexico Sur. Upon arrival at our beach house, we luxuriated in the lush tropical foliage around the house and pool, much different yet strangely similar to home. I could recognize many plants, but they were much larger than their cousins back at my high desert home. Succulents that are small and treasured here were large and imposing there. The landscaping was lush and imaginative, incorporating hardscapes such as the ubiquitous cow skull, unusual rocks, and carvings hidden in corners. The weather was delightful and the flowers were abundant.

On our second night, while watching the sun set into the Pacific, I mentioned to our hosts, Keith and Sharon, that I was a Master Gardener and was enjoying their landscaping of the grounds. Little did I know that this would be the start of a long, lazy, dialog about gardening, and a blooming friendship. We knew they had a hurricane earlier in the year, and I had noticed some leaves on the smaller palms around our beach house that looked stressed, so I asked if they would mind if I did a little trimming, proving that you can take the gardener out of her gardens, but you can't stop the gardener from gardening! So the days went on languidly, and I happily pattered with my clippers between long walks on the beach, sightseeing, spending pesos, watching for whales, and of course, speaking Spanish badly.



One day Keith asked me a gardening question. I became a little nervous. What if I didn't know the answer?

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But I bravely said I would help if I could. It seems he had tried several times to start a garden of bougainvillea on a south-facing area of the large palapa next to the pool. A palapa is a thatched roof open structure that provides cool breezes and much needed shade during the warmer months in tropical areas. There were bougainvilleas growing quite nicely in other areas of their large property. So I told him I would think about it.

Visions of our class came to mind. I could almost hear our teacher, Jan, saying, "Fall is the best time to plant! The plants have all winter to grow strong roots and be ready for the long hot summer." Being in a south-facing location, the plants would get punishing sun all day in the summer, and needed extra TLC to get a good start for the heat, so we also discussed making a raised bed for them with lots of rocks for mulching. ("Rocks are considered mulch in the desert Southwest and give protection from the sun drying out the bed," said my teacher in my ear.) The next day Keith was hard at work with three newly purchased bougainvillea, hauling dirt and rocks for his raised bed. I watched. Hey, I was on vacation!

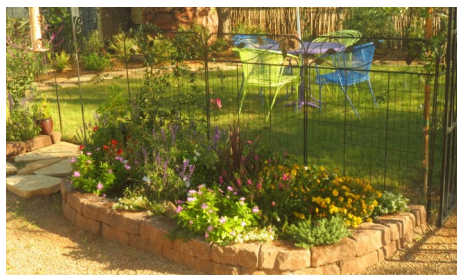
So the lesson of this little story is that gardeners are everywhere. You can make friends anywhere you go with your gardening knowledge that you learned in the Master Gardener class. You may not always have the answer, but if you think about it and give it the old college try you can often come up with something helpful, and make a new friend. And if you haven't taken the Master Gardener class, I highly recommend it! I have made so many friends and had so much fun amongst my classmates and the other Master Gardeners that it would be worth it just for that. But the cool thing is I learned a huge amount of interesting stuff, too. And now I have friends in Baja.

*Kris Williams, RPh, Master Gardener*

## Discover Discovery Gardens

Take a quick video tour of Discovery Gardens [here](#) and see what's happening!

## Discovery Gardens Update



The Discovery Gardens, our demonstration gardens being developed at the U of A Sierra Vista, continue to progress and grow each week. Filled with native and desert adapted trees, shrubs, perennials, cacti & succulents, veggies, herbs, and pots of seasonal annuals, the Gardens this autumn were a riot of blooming color everywhere. With pollinator and habitat gardening concepts running throughout all of the theme gardens in the Discovery Gardens, the hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, and several species of backyard birds became our constant companions in their newly discovered paradise.

While the Discovery Gardens are not yet open to the public on a continual basis, several guests were invited this fall to see all the colors, textures, and features in this developmental stage. We had visits from the assistant City Manager, the Mayor and other city council members, the SV Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, and our local newspaper editor. We also had visits from owners/managers of various businesses such as Ace Hardware, Cochise Stone, R.L. Workman Construction, and Lowe's.

Speaking of Lowe's, we are so grateful to them for an abundance of support they have given to the Discovery Gardens. They donated all the winter veggie plants and herbs which have been planted and are growing well in our Healthy Living Edible Garden. They also donated many of the plants,

flowers, and vines which were planted during the SW Gas Backyard Demonstration Project, and extended generous discounts on the decorative fencing and other materials for that project as well.

You will see in the accompanying video the somewhat unsightly gates and fencing presently surrounding the Discovery Gardens. Our very supportive U of A South Foundation will be helping us with the purchase of black wrought iron fencing to border and beautify the Gardens, and Lowe's will be helping us with special pricing on the fencing material. Many thanks to these wonderful gestures of support!

A sentimental thought . . . our very first generous cash donation was from the Sierra Vista Area Gardeners Club. We used this gift to develop our Pink Garden in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness. The many plants in this garden give us pink flowers or pink foliage. The centerpiece of this garden is a magnificent Texas Red Buckeye Oak which showed off its deep pink/maroon autumn leaves last month. As a lovely surprise, Carol Sulzbach from the SV Area Gardeners Club dropped by the Gardens one afternoon with a beautiful "Pink Ribbon" mosaic tile she had lovingly made by hand, which is also displayed in the Pink Garden. Thank you, Carol, and thank you SV Area Gardeners Club for being our very first donor!

We have indeed planted hundreds of plants and have begun to develop several features. We have room for and will be planting many more varieties of plants in the future. We still have decorative gravel and other top-dressings to lay down, paths to pave with a variety of paving materials, garden art to acquire, and habitat features to install. We are always so very grateful for any donations which may come our way . . . old pots, metal garden furniture,

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## It's a Bloomin' Cochise County Native Plant of the Month—Wright's Silktassel

### Wright's Silktassel *Garrya wrightii*

Wright's Silktassel impressed me this fall with the most astoundingly prolific fruiting I have seen in my 40 years in southern Arizona. Gazing at a particularly beautiful stand in the Santa Ritas as October was about to end, I decided at that moment to highlight this evergreen shrub for the newsletter. This Silktassel (as well as *Datura* and so many of our familiar plants) is named for Charles Wright (1811-1885), a botanical collector of plants primarily in Texas, Cuba, and Connecticut.

The name Silktassel for this dioecious genus (the only genus in the *Garryaceae* family, and the only family in its order though it has been, and still is considered by some as belonging to the *Dogwood* family) was probably originally assigned for the decorative mid-winter display of the long floral light greenish-gray pubescent drooping tassels (male catkins) of Ashy Silktassel (*G. flavescens*), which ranges through Arizona, as well as California, Utah, and Nevada. It extends into lower elevations (2,700'-8,000') than Wright's (3,900'-7,000' and higher) which grows primarily in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Northern Sonora. I have seen spectacular tree-sized specimens of the Ashy with thick trunks on the Superstitions' Peralta trail. Wright's has distinct male tassels but shorter and a bit less spectacular than those of the Ashy. The female flowers and fruits of the latter droop in dense clusters. Wright's are not pendulous but more or less erect. Being dioecious, tassels and berries appear on separate plants in both spe-

cies. Ashy has apparently been seen and collected in a few spots in Cochise County.



Photo by Mimi Kamp

*Garrya* is a genus of leathery-leaved evergreen shrubs, with quite a few species found in the Western US (many in California) and Mexico. Most prefer mid-elevation 'chaparral'. Wright's Silktassel is commonly found on rocky hillsides of igneous or granitic substrate in the oak/juniper/pinon woodlands and desert scrub, and also at somewhat higher elevations among taller conifers as part of an understory with other shrubs such as Redroot, Buckthorn, and Sumac.



Photo by Mimi Kamp

A shrub growing 6' to 8' in height, Wright's can also become a small tree, especially in somewhat shaded drainages. It has simple, opposite, predominantly upward-pointing leaves. Some folks have mistaken it for the similarly dense *Manzanita*, but a closer look reveals the differences. The leaves are larger, often slightly twisted, and lighter in color. The bark is gray to black, and rough, not red and smooth. The greenish catkins, flowering March to August, suggest wind pollination.

An attractive dense, drought-hardy and long-lived evergreen plant with some low windbreak capacity, our Silktassel appears on Firewise landscape lists (minimal leaf litter, though maintenance removal of dead wood required), and is high on the list for habitat restoration as well as wildlife habitat.

Both *Manzanita* and Silktassel are fire-adapted plants. The first, often killed by fire, needs intense heat for the germination of seed stored in the soil, which explains its density after the Huachuca fires. In upper Carr Canyon it is now forming a beautiful, and in places, impenetrable sea of brush. *Garrya*, on the other hand, dies back but sprouts from the crown. Restoration of more mature vegetation, often well-spaced, is therefore quicker, and immediate erosion control more effective. Generally its populations consist of individuals scattered among other woodies instead of occurring in solid stands like *Manzanita*, though I have seen small blocks of solid *Garrya* in a few places in the Mule Mts.

The *Garrya* sprouts that emerge after fire are excellent wildlife

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(Wright's Silktassel continued from page 5)

browse for mule and white-tail deer, elk, and bighorn. The young shoots have a much higher protein content than the leaves of mature plants. This Silktassel enhances wildlife habitat in any phase: the berries are eaten by birds, leaves (not deciduous) are a stable year-round food for the browsers. The shrub harbors reptiles as well as offering lunch for various predators, mammals, and raptors.

I usually see a few scattered dry grayish-black fruits on our Silktassel, but this year got a taste of the abundant 2-seeded fresh blue/black fruits – quite bitter really, but I appreciated them, as all parts of the plant contain strong alkaloids that find modern usage as a smooth muscle relaxant.

People most generally use the leaves—though I am thinking the fresh fruits might be more elegant—for menstrual cramps, dysentery, intestinal, gall bladder, and urinary cramping, even that caused by kidney stone passing. It is generally used as a short-term low dose medicine. Sucking on a smoky-tasting leaf is a great hiking remedy for various discomforts. Also called Quinine Bush or Feverbush, *Garrya* appeared in an 1895 *Materia Medica* (by John Vietch Shoemaker MD) and was apparently considered “more service than quinine in chronic and relapsing cases of malarial disease and acute pulmonary inflammation.” Ethnobotanical applications include colds, stomachaches, and VD. The wood has been used by the Havasupai for making whistles.

Mimi Kamp, Guest Author

[jumi@theriver.com](mailto:jumi@theriver.com)

Herbalist, Plant Illustrator, Cochise County Herbarium Curator, taxonomist and consultant



Photo by Mimi Kamp

## January Reminders

- ◆ Winter prune
- ◆ Remove old mulch & replace
- ◆ Dig tree holes
- ◆ Prepare soil for spring
- ◆ Water periodically
- ◆ Stratify seeds
- ◆ Fertilize asparagus
- ◆ General garden clean-up

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(Discovery Gardens continued from page 4)

garden art, bird houses, bird feeders, or hardscape materials such as bricks or pavers. We love it when folks stop to lend a hand for a few minutes with deadheading or raking a few fallen leaves, or just stop in for a visit!

Right now, our thought is to open to the public on the last weekend of April. This would end Earth Week and happen in conjunction with a potential Master Gardener spring plant sale. Our goal would be to be open daily from 8:30 AM ‘til dusk and offer a formal tour by a docent once weekly or by special arrangement. Lots of fun work is completed. Lots of fun work is ahead in The Discovery Gardens. Watch us grow!

Jan Groth, Master  
Gardener Program  
Coordinator



happy  
new year