

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter



Yellow pineleaf penstemon with weeping blue Atlas cedar and a peony. Photo by Kathy Haq.

Year-Round Color Brings Joy to This Gardener

by Kathy Haq

My courtyard garden was established in 2018 in partnership with a professional landscape designer. It was inspired by multiple visits to local nurseries, the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, and my Master Gardener internship. It is very much what I hoped it would be: a colorful, low-water pollinator garden for all seasons. I've made slight changes over the past two years, largely because of shade and water preferences, but my goals have remained the same.

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Year-Round Color—cont. from page 1



'Raydon's Favorite' aromatic aster. Photo by Kathy Haq.

By early March, the brighter greens of new growth begin to poke through the tangled debris of last year's spent garden. Within weeks, crowning perennials burst with the promise of what's to come. By late April, the garden is alive with young plants.

The first plant to bloom in May is the Serbian yarrow; its small mounds of tufted white flowers are at their best mid-May to early June. Well into late October, the colors come in waves, with each plant taking center stage as its predecessors step back.

Come June the palette expands to include the bright yellows of golden columbine and pineleaf penstemon as well as the deep pink of a showy peony that was unplanned but is welcome just the same. Soon, the buttery Julia Child roses appear, followed later in the month by the stately white prickly poppies that are so very popular with the bees. Around this time, the Miss Molly butterfly bushes, with a flower color described by one grower as

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Year-Round Color—cont. from page 2



Parry's agave poking through snow. Photo by Kathy Haq.

“Sangria-red,” have begun attracting painted lady butterflies, which will visit by the dozens into early fall.

By early July, the lavenders and black-eyed Susans, which begin to flower in June, are really coming into their own, adding new shades of purple, gold, and bright green to the mix. Come mid-month, the purple coneflowers are just hitting their stride, as is the lavender bee balm that will peak in early August. In late July, the Shenandoah switchgrass introduces delicate wands of pinkish-red flowers to the mix.

The main walkway is dominated by agastaches that are nearly ready to bloom by this time. Their fragrant pink flowers will attract ever more hummingbirds and some sphinx moths to the yard from about mid-August to mid-October.

By mid-September, the Boston ivy begins to turn red, and there are tiny brown cones on the weeping blue Atlas cedar. The pink and ruby stalks of the switchgrass and ruby muhly grass dance in the slightest breeze, while the leaves on two dwarf burning bushes are starting to turn a variegated green. Aromatic asters are beginning to bloom, and three plants together create a waist-high wall of purple flowers that summon bees until late October.

As Halloween approaches, the dwarf burning bushes steal the show with their leaves of eye-catching crimson—or as one grower describes them, “traffic-stopping red.” Both the asters and burning bushes were still showing their colors when the first snow arrived in late October of last year.

Even in winter, the blue-greys and greens of the weeping blue Atlas cedar, Parry's agave, and pineleaf penstemon combine with the wheat-colored shades of dried grasses and agastache to provide contrast to the otherwise wintry landscape. Lichens on the boulders offer touches of color as well.

Message from the President

by Wendy Wilson

Today I woke up thinking about legacy. My father loved to spend time in his garden. For him, there was a meditative quality found in spading. Even in his last years, he would take his walker out to the garden, sit on its seat, and dig bindweed with a small camping spade. He felt useful and productive out there, in the yard, his paradise. In Wisconsin, my husband's grandfather grew figs, grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, beans, basil, and other foods that he grew up eating in Calabria. My father-in-law was a Master Gardener, and what he knew about gardening could have filled a textbook. I learned about flower gardening from my friend's mothers. I grow irises now because of those two women.



2020 SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson

What will your gardening legacy be? To whom will you pass your knowledge? Whom will you inspire? Through the Master Gardener program, we reach people that would have never had the confidence to plant a tomato, coddle an iris, or create a compost pile.

The SFEMG Board met on April 16 for our monthly meeting. Succession planning was a major topic of discussion. How do we nurture members to take on project leader, support board, and board positions? We are considering ways to systematically "raise up" MGs into positions of leadership. One way to learn about a board/support board position is by joining one of our eight committees: education, social, garden festival, nominating, budget, projects, membership/internship, and branding.

According to the by-laws, the vice president, secretary, and two member-at-large positions are scheduled for vote this year. Additionally, the project director, communications director, membership director, and education director positions need to be filled. We are now asking you to consider one of these important jobs. The nominating committee, led by MG secretary Christine Hauschel, is now taking nominations. All nominations are due by August 1, nominee biographies are due by September 1, and voting will occur at the member-wide annual meeting on October 3. There are position descriptions available on the Members Only website. Any of the current Master Gardeners that hold these positions would be glad to talk with you. As always, I am here to answer any questions: wendylinneawilson@hotmail.com.

Vegetable Container Gardening, Part 2

by Jannine Cabossel

If you read last month's newsletter about vegetable container gardening, you may be interested in this follow-up. We've gotten questions about how to care for your veggies after you plant them in containers.

Staking: Plants grown in containers might need to be staked or supported. Bamboo stakes are fine for small plants that don't get too tall, but indeterminate tomatoes or vining plants will need either taller staking or caging for support. Varieties like bush tomatoes (determinate) can get by with smaller tomato supports, and dwarf tomatoes may not need staking at all. Vining beans will need stakes, or else consider putting a trellis next to them. Taller cages can be found online.



Bush cucumbers can be grown in pots.



Swiss chard growing in pots.

Watering: Plants grown in containers need more water than ones grown in the ground. You might need to water them as much as twice a day. Soil in containers heats up faster, which leads to more water evaporation. Besides how hot it is outside, the container itself can influence how much to water. Plastic containers don't lose water as quickly as clay containers. To help slow evaporation, put a couple of inches of mulch like straw around the base of the plants in your pots. You could put a tray underneath the pots to capture the water that runs off; just be sure the plants don't sit in standing water too long.

Fertilizing: You need to fertilize vegetables in pots more often than those growing in the ground. I recommend

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fertilizing twice a month. A combination of fish emulsion and liquid seaweed is a good source of organic fertilizer for any vegetable plants grown in pots.

Fungal diseases: To help thwart fungal diseases, put straw under the containers, which covers the soil hiding where some diseases may live. Remember, straw is good for slowing evaporation too. Water at the base of the plant, not overhead.

If you get a fungal disease, spray with an organic fungicide like Companion, liquid copper, or neem oil. It is best to use these as a preventative, but they can also slow down fungal diseases.



Spinach grown in pots in early spring.

Insect pests: To prevent the beet leafhopper from biting your tomato plants, you'll need to cover your plant completely with row cover to provide a physical barrier. Use clothesline pins to help attach the row cover to your cage. After the monsoons come (usually in July), you remove the row cover. Leafhoppers transmit a disease called curly top virus (CTV), and any plant that gets this will die. All tomatoes are self-pollinating, so don't worry that covering them will prevent them from being pollinated. Neem oil or AzaMax can be applied for aphids, thrips, and cucumber beetles. Safer Soap works for aphids. Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) can be used for caterpillars or cabbage loopers. Always follow the directions on the label. Don't spray insecticides in full sun as plants may burn. To protect bees, spray in the evening after they go to bed.

Other methods for contending with insects include handpicking squash bugs off plants or using row cover to keep the bugs away. Don't forget to take the row cover off squash plants when blossoms arrive so bees can pollinate them.

Photos via Pinterest



Plains Larkspur (*Delphinium wootonii*)

by Elaine Carson

Plains larkspur is a relative of my favorite flower in my parents' Ohio garden—delphiniums. The typical garden varieties are native to eastern North America, but there are a number of *Delphinium* species endemic to our region. Plains larkspur also goes by the common names of Organ Mountain larkspur and ghost delphinium. The genus name *Delphinium* comes from the Greek word for dolphin, in reference to the flower shape. The species name *wootonii* honors New Mexico botanist Elmer Otis Wooton (1865–1945).

Found in semidesert grassland/shrubland and woodland habitats at elevations from 2,500 to 6,000 feet (possibly higher), plains larkspur is native to New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas. Its structure is a single erect stem producing spikes of showy flowers in late spring, from May into June. The leaves of *D. wootonii* are only around the base of the plant; its tall, curly-haired stems are leafless. The flowers have special value to native bees and hummingbirds.



Delphinium wootonii volunteering in an Eldorado garden.
Photo by Lesley Mansfield.

Landscape use: This pale lavender perennial is a good choice for a native, drought-tolerant garden. Like many natives, it can be expected to naturalize if conditions are favorable.

Planting and care: Plant in full sun in well-draining soils. To encourage rebloom, deadhead immediately after initial flowering. *Caution: All members of the Delphinium genus are toxic to humans and livestock when ingested.*

Propagation: Propagate by seeds sown in early fall or in spring. To collect seeds, allow pods to dry on plant before breaking them open.

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Plains Larkspur—cont. from page 7

Plant type: perennial herb

Bloom time: late spring

Size: 1–3 feet high x 1 foot wide

Sun: full

Soil: well-drained

Water: low

USDA zones: 5–7

References:

Phillips, Judith. *Southwestern Landscaping with Native Plants* (Museum of New Mexico, 1987)

SEINet, [Delphinium wootonii](#)

SNaPP, [A Guide to Native Plants for the Santa Fe Landscape](#), 2019



USPS Releases American Gardens Stamps

On May 13, 2020, the United States Postal Service issued 10 new forever stamps celebrating the beauty of American public gardens, including Biltmore Estate Gardens, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Chicago Botanic Garden, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Dumberton Oaks Garden, the Huntington Botanical Gardens, Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, Norfolk Botanical Garden, Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens, and Winterthur Garden. While the lineup consists almost entirely of eastern U.S. gardens, still it's good to see these incredible spaces honored.

“Soil Loves Compost”

—US Composting Council

by Kathy Morse

Now is the time for setting up that compost bin you have always thought about. Since we've been temporarily sequestered, how about helping mother nature by sequestering some carbon and producing some compost? Adding compost to your garden soil produces healthier soil.



Scientists are studying the effects soil has on food and nutrition. These are some of the

benefits of adding compost to your soil, as described by the US Composting Council:

1. Improves soil structure and porosity, creating a better plant-root environment;
2. Increases moisture infiltration and permeability and reduces bulk density of heavy soils, reducing erosion and runoff;
3. Improves the moisture holding capacity of light soils, reducing water loss and nutrient leaching;
4. Improves the cation exchange capacity (CEC) of soils;
5. Supplies organic matter;
6. Aids the proliferation of soil microbes;
7. Supplies beneficial microorganisms to soils and growing media;
8. Encourages vigorous root growth;
9. Allows plants to more effectively utilize nutrients, while reducing nutrient loss by leaching;
10. Enables soils to retain nutrients longer;
11. Contains humus, assisting in soil aggregation and making nutrients more available for plant uptake;
12. Buffers soil pH.

“Soil Loves Compost”—*cont. from page 9*

A few basic requirements will reward you with nutrient-rich compost, full of microorganisms to assist in conditioning your soil for growing the kinds of plants you wish to grow. Although the hot composting method produces the absolute best compost, there are several other options for the home composter that help handle yard and food waste and make an impact on the environment. Refer to this New Mexico State University [bulletin](#) to review the composting process and some of the methods available.

Whatever method you select, make it one that is as simple for you to use as possible. Compost “bins” can be made or purchased, and the internet has lots of information on the subject.

Local Resources

For straw bales, go to either of our local feed stores. For worms, ask a friend who does worm composting or purchase some at the farmers market or through the internet. Payne’s Organic Soil Yard and Reunity Resources sell regular and worm compost. The Santa Fe Compost Action Team (SCAT) regrets that we had to cancel our composting educational activities this spring due to the corona virus, but we hope to be able to bring you events at some time this season. In the meantime, do not hesitate to send us your questions. We can also provide you with a copy of a presentation called “Methods of Composting.” Email us at SCATinfo505@gmail.com or call the Master Gardener hotline (505-471-6251). Our team maintains the Compost Demonstration Site at the County Fairgrounds; it is open for you anytime the big white gates are open—hopefully, they will be open soon.

Other Resources

Bernalillo County Extension Master Composters, [Composting in the Desert](#)

Colorado State University Extension, [Using Compost in the Home Garden](#)

Cornell Waste Management Institute, [Preventing Animal Nuisances in Small Scale Composting](#)

Goodreads, [Composting Books](#)

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, [Diagnosing common backyard composting problems](#)

Montgomery, David R. *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health* (Norton, 2016)

PBS Independent Lens, [Dirt! The Movie](#)

Rodale Institute, [Backyard Composting Basics: A Cheatsheet](#)

US Composting Council, [Use Compost](#)

Photo via Wiki Commons

New & Noteworthy

Have you recently read a plant-related article or book, visited a horticultural website or blog, listened to a podcast, or seen a nature show or documentary you think other gardeners would enjoy or find useful? Send a link to the newsletter (news.sfemg@gmail.com) and we'll include the information in the next issue. **Note that some of these sources may have paywalls.**

Botany One, [Now is the time to start a nature diary](#), by Alun Salt

Botany One, [Scientific study shows you can garden your way to health](#), by Alun Salt

Garden Professors, [Viral Vegetables? Growing \(and Buying\) Produce in the Age of COVID-19](#), by John Porter

Garden Rant, [Superb Wine Chaser—The Gaura-Oenothera Connection](#), by Mary Vaananen

New York Times, [How \(and Why\) to Use Native Plants](#), by Margaret Roach

New Yorker, [The Secret Lives of Fungi](#), by Hua Hsu

Santa Fe New Mexican, [Arrival of flashy Bullock's oriole is a delight](#), by Anne Schmauss

Santa Fe New Mexican, [Seeking sanity outdoors during the time of the coronavirus](#), by Matt Dahlseid

Scientific American, [Bumblebees Bite Plants to Force Them to Flower \(Seriously\)](#), by Jim Daley

Smithsonian Magazine, [The World's Most Interesting Insects](#), by Meilan Solly

Southwest Yard & Garden (NMSU), [Turfgrass Water Requirements and Water Conservation](#), by Bernd Leinauer

My whole life has been spent waiting for an epiphany, a manifestation of God's presence, the kind of transcendent, magical experience that lets you see our place in the big picture. And that is what I had with my first [compost] heap.

—**Bette Midler (b. 1945)**

The Garden Journal Radio Show

Every Saturday
10–10:30 a.m.

Live from the Farmers Market



Tune in to KSFR 101.1 FM on Saturday mornings from 10 to 10:30 to listen to a lively, entertaining, and informative gardening show.

- June 06 Santa Fe Botanical Garden edition with host Lindsay Taylor
- June 13 SFEMG edition with host Christine Salem and guest Christina Selby, author of *Best Wildflower Hikes New Mexico* (Falcon Guides, 2020)
- June 20 Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute edition, “Food, Farms & Friends,” with host Carrie Core live from the Farmers Market
- June 27 Home Grown New Mexico edition with host Christine Salem and guest Jannine Cabossel, the Tomato Lady, offering tips and techniques for next month’s veggie garden; more info at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#)

Schedule subject to change. To listen to previous broadcasts, click [here](#).

Calendar of Events

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, most SFEMG classes and all face-to-face events through at least June have been cancelled or postponed. Some classes may be held electronically. Please check the SFEMG [website](#) as well as the websites of other relevant organizations for updates on the status of events.



We Are Here to Help!

If you have a gardening question, Santa Fe Master Gardeners are available to help. Go to our [website](#), click on the Garden Questions? link, and pose your question. Someone will do research and get back to you.



Mission Statement:

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners is a non-profit volunteer organization whose mission is to learn, teach, and promote locally sustainable gardening through reliable, current research-based practices

New Mexico State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educator