



Master Gardener Newsletter

- New Mexico State University
- Cooperative Extension Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

Doña Ana County Office
 530 North Church Street
 Las Cruces, NM 88001
 Phone: (575) 525-6649 Fax: (575) 525-6652

◀ October 2009 ▶

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Plant of the Month

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MEXICAN SYCAMORE

The Mexican Sycamore (*platanus mexicana*) is a fast-growing deciduous tree with large maple-like blue-green leaves with silvery-white undersides that are most striking when there's a breeze. Its lobbed leaves are also large at up to 8 inches wide and they are smooth green on the top and cottony white to silvery below. Though the Mexican and American Sycamores are similar, the Mexican species tends to produce a massive trunk base that soon splits into smaller two to several smaller trunks. This tree is known for its attractive bark—it has beautiful peeling “camouflage” (mottled gray in color) bark that absolutely glows in the winter light.

In warmer climates, the Mexican Sycamore can be nearly evergreen. Its foliage stays an attractive olive-green normally through December before it starts to defoliate. In the fall in colder areas, its foliage changes to yellow or orange if the weather cooperates, otherwise its leaves may just turn brown.

The Mexican Sycamore adapts well to dry, rocky alkaline soils. It tolerates a wide range of soils, along with being quite drought tolerant and flood tolerant. It handles full sun, alkaline soils, and intense heat, as long as moderate irrigation is provided. It is hardy in Zones 7–10a.

The Mexican Sycamore has a pyramidal growth habit and can grow up to 60-80 feet. It needs adequate space to grow but makes an excellent shade tree where space permits. Its flowers are rather inconspicuous, followed by rounded, bristly, rounded fruit on long stalks. This tree flowers from December to February, then its fruits mature from April to August.

Mexican Sycamores are native to northeastern and central Mexico down to Guatemala. Mexico is also home to the Chiapas and Oaxaca Sycamores in the south, Gentry's Sycamore in the west, Rzedowski's Sycamore in the east and the Arizona Sycamore in the northwest. On the whole planet only about ten sycamore species are recognized so a good bet is that the first primitive sycamores arose in Mexico. Sycamore species also occur in Asia and Europe. It's interesting that when European species are crossed with American ones, fertile hybrids are produced. (Article continued on page 2)

Please submit information, articles, and suggested topics for the November newsletter to Ann Shine-Ring by Monday, the 26th of October:

Contact Info:
asring@hughes.net
 (575) 640-7177

Mexican Sycamore – Continued from Front Page

FORM–

Semi Deciduous, formal, moderate to fast growing to 60-80'with 40-50'spread. Broad open crown of spreading to slightly drooping branches and coarse foliage. Retains its leaves into December.

TRUNK–

Straight and stout. Variable bark, smooth in youth, becoming patchy and shedding with age to reveal smooth cream-colored bark along upper trunk and larger limbs.

FOLIAGE–

Large leaves that measure up to 8"across. Green on top and silver on the underside. The contrast in foliage and the shape of the leaves is very striking.

FLOWERS/FRUIT–

Inconspicuous spring flowers, male and female on separate twigs. Brown, ball-like bristly seed clusters hang singly or in strings of 2 (rarely 3) on pendent stalks throughout the winter.

CLEARANCES–

Suitable for 7 foot minimum parkways, medians or cutouts.

***WARNING:** Many fast-growing trees can mean trouble. They can be weak-wooded and prone to disease and insects. Also, many fast-growing trees have shorter lives than slower-growing trees. But there are exceptions, so get all the information you can before planting.



Height:	60-80 feet
Width:	40-50 feet
Flower Season	Spring
Growth Rate:	Fast*
Light Requirements:	Full Sun to Partial Shade
Soil:	Can grow in most soils
Ideal Planting Time:	Fall through spring
Water Requirements:	Low to moderate; benefits from periodic deep soakings; drought tolerant once established
Cold Tolerance:	Hardy and will survive mild winter without significant damage
Disease	Anthracnose-resistant and resistant to lace bug infestation; high tolerance to mildew
Uses:	Shade; the downside to any of the Sycamores is their large leaves, which make quite a mess in the fall. Do not plant near pools.

Sources:

- Magnolia Gardens Nursery
- "Mexican Sycamore," Naturalist Newsletter, December 2006
- Mountain States Nursery Plant Database, 2004
- Natural Organic Gardening & Living
- OrnamentalOutlook.com
- "Soul of the Garden" by Tom Spencer
- "Ten Fast-Growing Trees Worth Considering", Houston Chronicle, January 2008
- "Totally Tenacious and Texas Tough!" By Heidi Sheesley w/ TreeSearch Farms Inc., Houston, 2004
- Yucca Do Nursery, Inc.

(Research and compilation of information for this article conducted by Ann Shine-Ring, Certified Master Gardener)



Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Pumpkins...and More



BASIC TYPES OF PUMPKINS

"Curcubita" is the family of plants that the pumpkin belongs to. This species also includes squash, watermelon, and cucumbers. Focusing specifically on the pumpkin varieties, there are a number of varieties:

Curcubita Moschata: This group includes pumpkins frequently used for commercially canned pumpkin. They tend to be oblong pumpkins and have tan skin. Other members include: winter crookneck squash, butternut squash, and cushaw squash.

Curcubita Pepo: These are the Jack-o-Lantern varieties you most commonly see, and the cute little pumpkins that fit in the palm of your hand. Common pumpkin varieties include Connecticut field pumpkins, Howden pumpkins, and Howden Biggie pumpkins. Other members include: most summer squashes, gourds, Pattypan summer squash, crookneck squash, scallop summer squash, and zucchini.

Curcubita Maxima: Whether you consider these to be squash, pumpkins, pumpkin squash or any other name, these are the beasts of the pumpkin patch. Members include PrizeWinner Hybrid, Big Max and, of course, the infamous Atlantic Giant. Other members include: Hubbard squash, Boston squash, most winter squashes, turban squash, banana squash, buttercup squash, and lumina.

Curcubita Mixta: Some Interesting Varieties

Miniature Pumpkins: Often called Jack B. Little Pumpkins (a specific variety). They are also abbreviated as "JBL".

White Pumpkins: Relatively new on the scene.

Other Colors of Pumpkins: Blue or Blue-Green pumpkins are called Australian Blue or Jalhrude pumpkins. A blue variety can be found in Eastern Europe and there is also a red variety, called "Rouge D'Etant".

Hull-Less Seeded Pumpkins: Also a relatively new variety.



HISTORY OF THE PUMPKIN

Pumpkins are believed to have originated in North America. Seeds from related plants have been found in Mexico dating back to 7000 to 5500 B.C. References to pumpkins date back many centuries. The name pumpkin originated from the Greek word for "large melon" which is "pepon." "Pepon" was changed by the French into "pompon." The English changed "pompon" to "Pumpion."

Native American Indians used pumpkin as a staple in their diets centuries before the pilgrims landed. They also dried strips of pumpkin and wove them into mats. Indians would also roast long strips of pumpkin on the open fire and eat them. When white settlers arrived, they saw the pumpkins grown by the Indians and the pumpkin soon became a staple in their diets.

As happens today, early settlers used pumpkins in a wide variety of recipes from desserts to stews and soups. The origin of pumpkin pie is thought to have occurred when the colonists sliced off the pumpkin top, removed the seeds, and then filled it with milk, spices and honey. The pumpkin was then baked in the hot ashes of a dying fire.



FUN FACTS ABOUT THE PUMPKIN!

- Pumpkins contain potassium and Vitamin A; they are 80%-90% water.
- The largest pumpkin pie ever made was over five feet in diameter and weighed over 350 pounds. It used 80 pounds of cooked pumpkin, 36 pounds of sugar, 12 dozen eggs and took six hours to bake.
- In early colonial times, pumpkins were used as an ingredient for the crust of pies, not the filling.
- Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snakebites.
- The largest pumpkin ever grown weighed 1,140 pounds.
- The Connecticut field variety is the traditional American pumpkin.
- Eighty percent of the pumpkin supply in the United States is available in October.
- Native Americans called pumpkins "isquom squash." They used pumpkin seeds for food and medicine.
- Six of the seven continents can grow pumpkins including Alaska! Antarctica is the only continent that they won't grow in.
- The "pumpkin capital" of the world is Morton, Illinois. This self-proclaimed pumpkin capital is where you'll find the home of the Libby Corporation's pumpkin industry.
- The Irish brought the tradition of pumpkin carving to America. It originally started with the carving of turnips. When the Irish immigrated to the U.S., they found pumpkins a plenty and they were much easier to carve for their ancient holiday.

All About Pumpkins – Continued from Page 3**PUMPKIN ANATOMY**

Brains: Okay, the proper name is fibrous strands. But, just about everyone calls them "brains". There are a lot of other names for this slimy, mushy, mass of strings and seeds.

Blossom End: When the fruit was very young, a flower blossom was at the end of the fruit (now its bottom). This is the blossom end. That female flower was pollinated, and the fruit then developed. The flower died off, leaving a scar in its place.

Leaves: The leaves of a pumpkin absorb energy from the sun for plant and fruit growth. In reality, the stem doesn't have leaves—the vine does (further away from the stem). Also, once removed from the plant, those green leaves would not remain fresh and green for long.

Nut: Located inside of the seed, the nut eventually develops into a new pumpkin. When a seed is planted, moisture and warmth triggers the nut to begin to grow.

Pulp: Also called "meat". This is the yummy part of the pumpkin that you can use to cook with, and to make hundreds of tasty recipes and treats. You use pumpkin in everything from main courses to desserts, ice cream and even beer!

Ribs: Look at the outside of a pumpkin. There are indented ridges running from top to bottom. These are called ribs. Sometimes, they are shallow. Sometimes, they are very deep.

Seeds: Seeds are the beginning of next year's pumpkins. Seeds are also a delicious and nutritious snack. A pumpkin has hundreds of seeds.

Seed Coat: Also called "seed jacket". It is the outer layer of the seed. Nature provides this to protect the nut inside that will eventually emerge into a pumpkin plant.

Skin: The thin, shiny, orange outer layer of a pumpkin is called the skin. It is also called the "rind". It is a protective layer to keep insects and disease out of the fruit. It is not edible.

Stem: Located on the very top of the pumpkin. It is brown to brownish green, and slightly curved. During the growing season, the stem is attached to the vine. It is the umbilical cord, bringing nutrients to grow the fruit. For the fall /Halloween season, the stem gives the pumpkin "Character". Be careful not to lift a pumpkin by its stem, as it can easily break off of the fruit.

Tendrils: Attached to the stem are thin, hair-like "tendrils". During the growing season, tendrils on the vine are green. They twist around objects to help anchor the vine and protect it from the wind. After harvesting, there are sometimes dried, brown tendrils on the stem.

**GUIDE TO GROWING PUMPKINS**

Growing a pumpkin is easy, fun and rewarding. Good seed is an important first step. If pumpkin seeds have been stored properly, they can last for several years. Even so, if you want a high germination percentage, and healthy and vibrant plants, you should start with fresh seed from a reputable company. Try to purchase seed that is the exact variety you want, not a generic seed like you sometimes find at big box stores or bargain seed at drugstores that just read "Pie Pumpkin" or "Jack-O-Lantern".

If you have a short growing season, you can start your seeds indoors. However, plants started indoors can quickly get spindly, and aren't too fond of being transplanted. Only start seeds indoors if you absolutely must. Again, the same as with seeds, if you choose to purchase seedlings instead of growing your own, be sure to purchase from a nursery that lists actual varieties. Many big box stores will label them simply as a pumpkin.

Growing Pumpkins – Continued

Where to Plant: The second step is choosing an area to grow your pumpkins. First you need to choose an area that gets full sun. The vines get quite long (usually 20 - 30 feet) and need room to grow. If you have a long bed on the backside of your house or a garage, this can be the perfect place to grow a pumpkin. Your site also needs to have good drainage. If water stands during the rainy season in the soil strip alongside your garage, this won't be a good place to grow pumpkins.

If your soil has been used in the past to grow flowers, a vegetable garden, or even a lush patch of weeds, then it will be suitable to use for planting pumpkins. If you have compost available, work some into the soil.

Contrary to what you read on seed packets, pumpkins don't have to be planted in a mound of soil. The exception for mounding would be if you live in an area that has frequent rain during the summer months, and/or your soil has poor drainage. Mounding can help prevent some diseases caused by the soil being continually wet around the stem.

Choose a spot in your garden or flower bed where you can plant your seed roughly at the center of where you expect the vines to spread. If you plant in an unprotected area with a lot of wind, you might want to consider planting your vine rows based on the wind direction. You can also put up shade cloth or temporary fencing to help protect your vines.

When to Plant: Pumpkins are very frost sensitive. You should wait until the days average at least 70°F and the last chance of frost has passed. Depending upon where you are in the United States, you can generally plant between late May and late June. If you plant any later than late June, large pumpkin varieties won't be mature in time for Halloween, and may be damaged by fall frosts.

Most pumpkin varieties take between 85-125 days to mature. Most heirloom and larger varieties are on the longer end of the spectrum. The number of days to maturity will be listed on your seed packet. If you would like to have pumpkins on October 1st, count backwards to decide when to plant.

How to Plant: Plant your seeds 1-2 inches deep. Don't worry about which end is up. The plant will find its way to the surface. Your seeds should sprout in 7-10 days.

Once your seedling sprouts is a good time to add additional compost around the plant. The compost will help to keep weeds down and retain moisture. Again, if you don't have compost, don't stress, pumpkin vines are pretty resilient.

How to Water: Pumpkins are about 80-90% water, so they use a lot in their growth. The secret is to only water pumpkins when they need it. Check the soil with a trowel or a hoe. As long as the moisture is good and your plant looks happy, leave it alone. When the soil is starting to dry out, or the plant starts to look a bit droopy, give it a long deep drink. Deep but infrequent watering results in a healthier plant.

It is important to not get water on the leaves, and water in the morning instead of late in the evening, to help stave off fungal diseases. When your pumpkin fruit starts to turn orange, gradually decrease the amount of water. Your pumpkins will store longer if you cut off water 7-10 days before you harvest.

All About Pumpkins – Continued from Page 4

Pruning: Pumpkins plants are vigorous growers. Pumpkin vines withstand pruning quite well. Properly done, it strengthens the plant and helps it thrive. Every pumpkin plant has a main and a secondary vine that usually grow in opposite directions. Each of these two vines produces shoots (or tertiary vines) which can be selectively pruned as the plant develops. It is best to clip when these new side shoots begin to develop. The plant will leak or bleed a little when it is clipped, but it seals over quickly. The amount of pruning usually depends on how much garden space is available.

Flowering and Fruiting: About a week after the two baby leaves appear, the first "true" leaf, sporting jagged edges, starts to grow from the center of the young sprout, providing a glimpse of the plant to come. After three true leaves are established, the pumpkin plant moves into wild and crazy leaf and root development that lasts about eight weeks. At its peak, the vine can grow as much as 6" a day. Ten weeks after planting, the first flowers suddenly appear between leaves and the tendrils.

Fertilizing: When considering fertilizer growers recommend *Organic Osmocote*. It is time released, which makes it almost impossible to over fertilize or burn a young plant. Another recommended fertilizer is *Dr. Earth*. Another important organic product is *Organic Preen*. It is a bit pricey, but can save hours and hours of weeding.

Disease: Another important aspect to watering is to not get water directly on the plant's leaves. Almost all pumpkins are susceptible to a fungal disease called *powdery mildew*. Powdery mildew looks like your pumpkin leaves were dusted with talcum powder. The leaves will gradually wither and die. Sometimes the whole vine will die as a result.

Downy mildew first shows itself as yellow or light green patches on your leaves. The bottom of the leaves will have a gray fuzzy mildew developing. These patches will turn black and the leaf will die. Keeping water off of the leaves, and watering in the morning instead of late in the evening, can help stave off this disease. If you have a bad outbreak of powdery or downy mildew, it can kill your vine and affect crop quality and production.

If you do develop one of these fungal diseases, there are several different organic products you can use. Use caution when using baking soda or other home remedies as improper ratios can do more harm than good. Check with your local garden center and read labels to find the product right for you.

Pests: There are four main pests for pumpkins:

Striped Cucumber Beetles: Cucumber beetles look like neon green ladybugs. They are very bold, can be very prolific and do a lot of damage in a short period of time. Their favorite things to munch on are new bright yellow blossoms and leaves.

Four Line Beetles: Four Line beetles are a bit more timid. Their name comes from the tiny parallel lines on their backs. You may not even realize at first that you have an infestation. They tend to congregate around the stem of plants. They eat the plant tissue and can kill young plants. They have been seen in large congregations on the underside of young tender pumpkins also.

Squash Bugs: Squash Bugs are much bigger than the beetles. They look like they are wearing mini armor and have a shield shape on their backs. They are usually a grayish black color with orange edges. They can dart and hide really quickly.

Pests—Continued

Aphids: The pest that quietly sneaks up on you is aphids. The first indication you may have of an infestation is that the tender young leaves start curling. Upon close inspection you will see thousands of these tiny insects sucking the sap from the backside of the leaves. They can do a lot of damage to female blossoms too, and decimate the emerging fruit.

For aphid control in a small garden, a strong spray of water works well. It dislodges the aphids and somehow disrupts their organized ravaging campaign. This intermission usually gives ladybugs a chance to catch up.

If you have a small garden you can control most beetles and larger bugs by picking them off the vines one by one and dropping them into a coffee can or jar filled with soapy water and ammonia.

To help lower populations, compost or till under plant material so the beetles don't have a protected spot to over-winter. Keep your fence lines clean and weed populations hoed or mowed. Plant rows of sunflowers near the pumpkin patch to work as an attractant crop. Time it so the sunflowers bloom a little in advance to the pumpkins. The cucumber beetles flock to the bright yellow sunflower heads. If the population is low they will tend to stay on the sunflowers and you won't see a lot of damage to your pumpkin crop.

You may have to resort to a pesticide. Try to use eco-friendly organic products such as those made by *Dr. Earth*.

If you need to spray your pumpkins try to do so in the early evening after the bees have headed back to their hives. The bees are only interested in the pollen, and the blossoms are only open for one day, so the bees won't come in contact with the spray on the leaves or outside the blossoms.

Weeds: A few weeds are not a problem. A lot of weeds can be a big problem. Weeds directly compete with your pumpkin plant for water and for nutrients in the soil. Some weeds also can be a host for diseases or bug populations.

A good product to use after your pumpkin seedling sprouts and has five leaves is called *Organic Preen*. When applied around your plant it can keep additional weeds from germinating. Also apply compost around your plant to discourage weeds. Be sure that your compost is fine, as large chunks like wood bark can serve as a home for pill bugs (sowbugs), earwigs, four line beetles and other unwanted pests.

If you have lots of weeds, it is time to get the hoe out. Once the vine starts to grow in size, the large leaves help to shade out small weeds that may germinate later.

Blossoms: Don't be alarmed if your plant starts to blossom and they are all simply falling off. First blossoms are almost always male. You can tell a male from a female blossom by the shape of the base where the stem attaches to the blossom. If it is straight, it is a male. If it has a small bulb at the base, it is a female. Early male blossoms have pollen that attracts bees, which helps to establish a pattern for the bees to find your pumpkin patch.

When a female blossom opens, it is only for one day, and depending upon the weather, it may only be open for a few hours. If a bee or other insect does not transfer pollen from the male to the female, the blossom will fall off and die as it was not fertilized.

You can see why bees are so very important for both small backyard growers and large pumpkin farms. Without bees, gardeners and farmers would have to hand pollinate each blossom or there would be no crop.

All About Pumpkins – Continued from Page 5

Harvesting: There are many indications that your pumpkin is ready to harvest. A Jack-O-Lantern variety should be predominately orange in color. If the vine has started to "go away" (meaning dying off and declining) this is another signal. Sometimes the stem is already starting to twist and dry. The most important indication is that the shell has started to harden. If you can easily indent the pumpkin skin using your fingernail, the fruit is still too immature to harvest. If you harvest it at this stage, your pumpkins will likely shrivel and spoil within days. When the shell has hardened, your pumpkin is ready to cut from the vine.

Use shears to cut the stem. Leave the stem as long as you possibly can. A six-inch or longer stem is a very fine thing indeed. Never pick up a pumpkin by its stem. The stem can break, and if broken at its base it will rot quickly.

 **HOW TO SELECT THE PERFECT PUMPKIN:**

- o Select a pumpkin that is completely orange. A partially green pumpkin might not ripen any further.
- o Size is an important factor. Medium pumpkins are best for pumpkin carving. Small pumpkins are better for cooking.
- o Do not pick a pumpkin that is too big for you to carry, especially if you have back problems.
- o Does the shade of orange matter? If so, there are hundreds of varieties, some with different shades of orange.
- o Selecting the shape is a matter of personal preference.
- o Often, people select shapes to fit the carving patterns they will use. Pick your pattern before you go.
- o Do not lift or carry a pumpkin by its stem. The pumpkin stem gives it character.
- o A ripe pumpkin has a hard shell that does not dent or scratch easily when pressing on it with a thumbnail. Do this on the back or bottom of the fruit—never on the face.
- o Examine the entire pumpkin carefully for soft spots. If you find even one soft spot, go on to the next pumpkin.
- o Check the pumpkin for cracks and splits. If you find one, examine it to be sure it is not turning into a soft spot or has mold inside of the crack.
- o Look for bugs and insects. Specifically, look for holes in the pumpkin, which are indicative of insect problems.

Some great websites for more information on pumpkins are:

How to Carve a Pumpkin

<http://www.pumpkinnook.com/hween/carve.htm>

Many Different Varieties of Pumpkin

www.allaboutpumpkins.com/varieties.html and

www.pumpkin-patch.com/



GROWING PUMPKINS IN NEW MEXICO

If you want to know more about growing pumpkins commercially in New Mexico, read Guide-231 ([Commerical Pumpkin Production for New Mexico](#), Cooperative Extension Service).

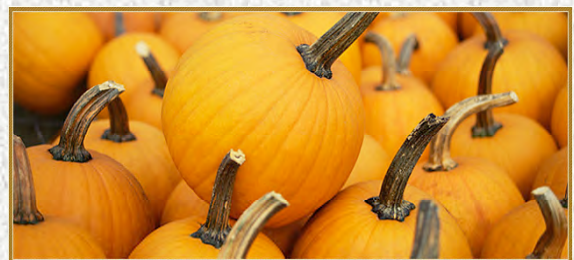
Link: http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_h/h-231.pdf

This article was written by George W. Dickerson, Extension Horticulture Specialist. He states that, "A good pumpkin variety is one that performs well under a wide range of environmental conditions. Choice of variety also depends on market requirements including its intended use and size.

This Guide discusses:

- ✓ Temperature and Soil Considerations
- ✓ Seedbed Preparation and Fertilization
- ✓ Planting
- ✓ Irrigation
- ✓ Pollination and Fruit Set
- ✓ Harvesting and Storage
- ✓ Pest Control
- ✓ Varieties covered include:

Big Moon	Spirit
Big Max	Funny Face
Connecticut Field	Jack-o-Lantern
Howden	Triple Treat
Ghostrider	New England Pie
Autumn Gold	Jack Be Little



Dixie's Honey Do List for October



If our bullets are followed by (MI), the information came from *Month by Month Gardening in the Desert Southwest* by Mary Irish. We just wanted you to know that this is an outstanding book.

In General: We have about one more month yet of frost-free gardening. Our average first freeze date is November 6. Get busy! Remember, "Do not prune in October!" (MI)

Ornamentals

- Continue planting spring blooming bulbs such as crocus, anemone, and oxalis.
- As a general rule, plant bulbs to a depth of 3 times their diameter.
- Plant cool season annuals such as pansies, sweet pea, and flowering kale.
- Cool season perennials and hardy natives such as gaura, penstemon, and salvia may be planted now.
- Begin seeding Iceland and Shirley poppies.
- For Christmas bloom, give poinsettias 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness per day.
- Groom, repot, and prepare to bring patio plants in for the winter.
- Sow seeds of wildflowers including California poppy, toadflax, and larkspur. Keep seedbed moist through germination to the five true leaf stage. Then reduce watering as tolerated.
- If you are leaving tender plants in the ground for winter, then mulch them heavily.
- For large tender container plants, get blankets or other coverings ready.
- Reduce irrigation frequency and discontinue fertilization to roses.



Fruits, Nuts & Shade Trees



- Plant low growing junipers.
- Continue planting winter hardy trees and shrubs but wait to plant species such as Red Bird of Paradise, true Palo Verde, eucalyptus, and oleander.
- Reduce irrigation frequency to established non-fruit bearing trees and shrubs.
- Continue to irrigate pecans.
- Continue root pruning proposed transplants.
- Spray fruit trees with dormant oil containing a copper fungicide after 75% of the leaves have fallen.
- Continue with good orchard sanitation practices.
- Do not prune citrus this month except to take off suckers from below the graft. (MI)

Vegetables & Herbs

- Plant onions, garlic, and rapidly maturing crops such as radishes now.
- Plant seeds of coriander, parsley, and dill now.
- Chives, Mexican tarragon, oregano, oregano, rosemary, thyme, and winter savory may go in now.
- A good way to propagate woody perennial herbs such as rosemary and oregano is by layering. Take a low growing stem, press it gently to the soil surface, and secure it to the ground with a hairpin. Cover the hairpin with soil; keep it moist and undisturbed for about a month. After a month, check gently for root growth. After roots develop, sever new plant from parent stem (MI).
- Reduce irrigation frequency to grapes in preparation for winter.



Dixie's Honey Do List for October- Continued



Lawns

- Finish pre-emergent application to established turf.
- Finish seeding cool season grasses.
- Fertilize cool season grasses and continue irrigation and mowing.
- Stop fertilizing warm season species; reduce irrigation frequency as winter dormancy nears.
- If you are through mowing for the year, winterize the lawn mower but wait until after spring "scalping" to tune it up.

Roses

- Allow roses to adjust to dropping temperatures and prepare for cold weather by reducing the frequency of watering and discontinuing fertilizing. (MI)
- Mulch the root zone heavily with 6-8 inches of light mulch such as straw, leaves or pine needles. Be sure to also protect the bud union with mulch. (MI)
- Continue deadheading roses regularly. Remove any dead or diseased canes. (MI)
- Be sure to keep the area around rose plants clean of debris and fallen leaves, particularly if powdery mildew has been a problem. (MI)
- If the yellowed leaves occur only on the lower part of the rose bush, this is the natural die-off of old leaves. If yellow leaves appear to spread upward on the plant, this usually indicates over-watering or poor drainage. (MI)

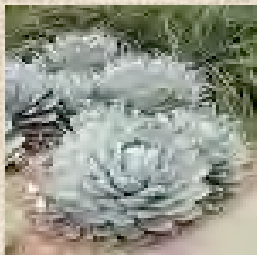


Cacti & Succulents



- At the end of October, begin encouraging Christmas cactus to rebloom. Put plant in a cool location at night—55°F to 65°F is ideal. Be sure to keep plant completely in the dark for 12-14 hours. Water regularly, but let plant dry out between watering. Flower buds will form in 4-6 weeks. (MI)
- Do not prune warm season succulents this month. You can remove spent flowers anytime. (MI)
- You can remove pups from agaves and replant them this month. (MI)
- Do not remove yucca offsets during cool weather. (MI)
- Any container grown winter-growing succulents can be fertilized monthly starting this month. Use a soluble fertilizer at 1/4 to 1/2 the recommended strength for houseplants. Do not fertilize plants that are planted in the ground this month. (MI)
- If cochineal scale is still a problem on cacti, hose them off with a strong jet of water.

SOME POPULAR SPECIES OF AGAVE THAT ARE GOOD CHOICES FOR NEW MEXICO GARDENS



Agave parryi



Agave harvardiana



Agave neomexicana



Agave murpheyi

Source:
[Month-By-Month Gardening in the Desert Southwest](#)
 by Mary Irish, 2002



Agave angustifolia



Agave americana

New Master Gardener Profile: Dick Hiss



Richard (Dick) and Sandy Hiss have called Las Cruces home for thirty years. For much of that time, they lived in the Las Alturas neighborhood east of Interstate 25 just south of University Avenue where native desert landscapes dominate the area.

Now Dick and Sandy have a townhouse east of the Telshor area. Their backyard is brick with a 2-foot wide planting area around the edge. Since there's not much room for gardening, Dick has built a small raised bed for growing flowers and a few tomato plants. He especially likes to grow flowers but has discovered that it is more challenging here than it was in his former home of Rhode Island where the total yearly rainfall averages 20 inches, not including hurricanes.

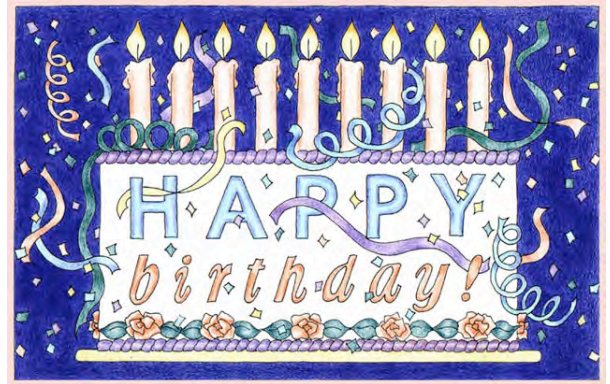
Needless to say, moving into the townhouse has been an adjustment. Not one to give up easily on any project, Dick enrolled in the Master Gardener Program last year after he planted three rows of beets and carrots and not one plant came up. Dick hoped the MG Program would help him better understand the gardening conditions here. One of the first lessons he learned was the importance of having your soil tested.

Three years ago Dick put in an 8'x 6'x 3' fishpond that seems to be his most successful gardening venture to date. His water plants are doing well; the fish don't make any noise, or require doctor visits and they don't eat much. When the fish die, they fertilize his garden. The yard is also shared with many tortoises that have the same redeeming features as the fish.

Dick is retired from White Sands where he was an engineer and program manager for several private companies there. However, he is hardly retired in any sense of the word. He did retire from a 12-year career as a volunteer with the Las Alturas Fire Department. Dick continues to volunteer with El Caldito, the Las Cruces soup kitchen. To relax, besides gardening, he enjoys model railroading. He has a track layout set up in his garage.

Dick and Sandy are great lovers of music. He sings with the Masterworks Choir at NMSU and they are strong supporters of the Las Cruces Symphony. Sandy, who retired from a career in the City Attorney's office, is a Gold Life Master bridge player. They are parents of two grown children who also live in New Mexico and two 'fabulous' grandchildren.

(Profile written by Ann Palermo)



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Dee McNutt	Oct. 1
Alberta Morgan	Oct. 1
Linda Fredrickson	Oct. 2
Juliet Williams	Oct. 4
Mary Thompson	Oct. 14
Myles Munoz	Oct. 18

MANY THANKS FOR THE GOODIES:

We appreciate your thoughtfulness

<u>October Goodies</u>	<u>November Goodies</u>
Ina Goldberg	Susan Blank
Pam Crane	Janie Elliott

Which Plant to Choose?

Are you having a terrible time figuring out which plants will work in your garden? Go to the link below and click on the Plant Selection Wizard.

This website is operated by Hortech, a wholesale nursery, and home gardeners can use it to figure out which plants will work in their garden conditions. You can look for plants by keyword, flower color, leaf color, and plant size. Or you can check boxes to indicate characteristics, such as light requirements, bloom time, deer resistance, and many others.

You'll get a list of plants that meet your criteria, and then you can click on the name of the plant for more specific details.

Link: <http://www.premiumplants.net/>

Source: Garden Gate Magazine, October 2008

Five Fall Vegetables Every Container Gardener Should Try

Everyone should taste a just picked fruit or vegetable at least once in their life—preferably a lot more than once. If you've never grown vegetables on your balcony or patio before, or you want to get out of your tomato and basil growing rut, try one of these five edibles.



All of these plants can be planted now or in the near future:

- Arugula** Nearly fail proof to grow yourself, and over priced at the supermarket makes arugula the perfect plant to grow at home. You haven't lived until you've eaten a salad with greens so fresh they melt in your mouth.
- Brussels Sprouts** Two plants will easily provide several meals worth of the sprouts, which are amazing when picked fresh and lightly roasted. Plant them in a pot that is at least 10 inches deep.
- Garlic** There are lots of varieties of garlic, most of which aren't available at even the most well-stocked grocery stores or farmer's markets.
- Kale** One of those plants that looks beautiful and tastes great. It is somewhat cold tolerant.
- Lavender** The plants and perfume are beautiful, bees love them, and there are a number of ways to cook with lavender. What's not to love?

What would you add to this list?

Source: <http://lifeonthebalcony.com/> (Fall Gardening)



Desert Rattlesnake

Do mothballs scare snakes?

No, mothballs do not repel snakes. But, even if they did the chemical ingredient in mothballs (naphthalene) is very toxic to people and animals. A few mothballs in your closet will keep moths away, but only use them according to the package instructions or you can sicken or kill pets and people.

Actually, snakes eat slugs and lots of other garden pests, so they're good to have around. But, if you'd rather keep them away, try making your garden less appealing to them. (There really aren't any chemical snake repellents.) Keep the garden clear of logs, boards, rocks or tall, weedy plants. These areas make perfect hiding places for the reptiles (and other undesirable critters.)

Source: Garden Gate Magazine, October 2009 (by Ken Kelnum, Oregon)

For more information about rattlesnakes, with emphasis on Desert Rattlesnakes, including color photos, scientific names, common names, description, behavior, range, etc. use this Link:

www.desertusa.com/may96/du_rattle.html

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

► MG Contact Sheet Now Available Online

The MG Hotline Contact Sheet can now be downloaded from the Master Gardener Webpage. It can be found under "Forms." The MG Time Sheet and the MG Application are also posted at that location. (These are PDF files and cannot be filled out and returned electronically.) Again the new "shorter" MG Web address is <http://aces.nmsu.edu/damg>
(Information provided by Jan Brydon)

► Weekly Floral Sales to Begin

The NMSU Floral Team will hold fresh flower sales from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. each Wednesday this fall semester in the Gerald Thomas Hall lobby. All proceeds go to fund team travel to regional competitions. FYI, contact advisor Sabine Green at swhitley@nmsu.edu

(Information provided by Barbara Sallach)

Master Gardener Matters

Two current Master Gardener class students, Christine Chavez and Charlette Duttle, attended our meeting. What a great way to find out what we do and who we are! Hopefully, we'll have more students attend our monthly meetings over the next few months. Christine is the Water Conservation Coordinator for Las Cruces. She asked for our help with a Project (whose deadline was imminent) obtaining information on plants that grow well in our yards.

MG Hotline—Pam Crane reminded us that the gray specimen form is only for front office use, not for sending specimens to NMSU. This, in part, led to the rearrangement of the front office staff desks. Debbie is now “our” secretary, as much as we have a secretary, and she will take care of people who come into the office with samples and/or questions for the Master Gardeners when we are not there. Jeff explained that while Barbara Arispe had always helped the Master Gardeners, her position was actually funded through nutrition education and so her replacement, Christine, now has her desk in the back room with the nutrition educators.

Newsletter—Ann Shine-Ring passed around a sign-up sheet that asked whether you need either a PDF or Word version of the newsletter file. Ann also asked everybody to update his or her emails, as she will now be distributing the newsletter. If you weren't at the meeting, please email her at asring@hughes.net so she'll know your file preference and confirm your current email address.

Weather Spotters Class—Joan Lane reported that there was a good turnout for the recent Weather Spotters class. She also agreed to be our treasurer when our new bank account, separate from NMSU, is opened.

MG Plant Sale—Barb Sallach went over details for the plant sale on September 26. Update: The sale itself went very well. It was a beautiful day and we were able to sell many of our donated plants. We made \$511, which will be used to fund our new bank account. Thanks to the many people who worked the sale and/or donated plants: Dixie LaRock, Ann Palormo, Frank Connor, Juliet Williams, Nancy DeLouise, Dick Hiss, Dale Petzold, Laurie Davidson, Janice Servais, Mary Thompson, Tom Packard, Hope Movsesian, Marti Taylor, Colette Bullock, Sylvia Hacker, and Barb Sallach. A special thanks goes to Dixie for returning after the market was over to sweep up the spilled dirt at our site and to Frank, Dale, Sylvia, Juliet, Dixie, Nancy, and Barb for taking plants home to plant sit for the next sale.

Farmer's Market—Our Farmer's Market information table is scheduled for October 24 and November 21. If you are interested in working either of those days, please let Barb Sallach know at bsallach@nmsu.edu.

Garden Expo at Enchanted Gardens—Ann Palormo has gotten our Garden Expos scheduled. For fall, the dates are Oct. 17 & 18. For spring, the Garden Expo is scheduled for April 24 & 25. If you are interested in helping, please contact Ann at apalormo@nmsu.edu.

Community Events Update

- Mary Thompson announced you can find out how your soil is classified at **Link**: websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx
- Val Fernandez asked for volunteers to help at the Southern New Mexico State Fair, Sept. 28–Oct. 4 with check-ins and outs. If you'd like to help, please contact her at desert.val@hotmail.com. It's been a new experience for her and we all appreciate her volunteering in Larry Dickson's place. Frank Connor, Darrol Shillingburg, and Jeff Anderson will be the judges this year.
- There has already been one greenhouse-building workshop in September and another is scheduled for October 20. Please contact Jeff at either lantz@nmsu.edu or 525-6649 if you need more information.
- Event Coordinators are asked to write up a standard operating procedure for their event that we can keep on file for new coordinators. Things to include are: 1) the number of volunteers needed and their schedules, 2) who to call for contact information, and 3) what handouts were needed, etc. Please turn these in to Bonnie Eisenberg as soon as possible after the event has been completed.

Education Presentation—Jackye Meinecke, owner of Enchanted Gardens, gave us a presentation on “Scented Plants”. She stated that there are many scented trees, perennials, herbs, shrubs, annuals, and vines available for our area. Many plants are natives and do very well here. When you plan your garden, keep in mind how you use your garden when planning for scent. If you work all day, you may want to choose plants that bloom and scent the garden at night. Also determine if you want scent during the entire growing season or only during particular months. Scents are found in both leaves and flowers, sometimes both on the same plant, so don't limit yourself.

December Monthly Meeting—It has been decided that since the graduation/awards ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, January 9th, we will have a meeting on the third Wednesday of December, December 16, from 9–11 am as usual. However, instead of a speaker we will have a holiday potluck after the business part of the meeting.

Graduation & Awards Ceremony—January will be very busy because in addition to the graduation/awards ceremony, there will be a meeting on January 20, from 9–11 am. We will also be conducting hotline training (date & time to be announced later) for new interns and certified MG's who want to review. Those of you who coordinate events in late January and February may want to ask for volunteers at the December meeting, or possibly even the November meeting.

Thanks to David Hutchinson, Susan McNeill, and Ann Shine-Ring for our delicious snacks at the meeting. Ina Goldberg and Pam Crane will be bringing the goodies to our October 21 meeting. We hope to see you all there.

Barb, Bonnie, and Juliet



Please note the open timeslots for Interns in October and November.
 (The Hotline assignments listed below were current as of 9/29/09)*

**Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for
OCTOBER**

Friday, Oct. 2 **Pat Anderson**
 Velina Hames (I)
 David Hutchinson (I)

Tuesday, Oct. 6 **Ann Palarmo**
 Hope Movsesian (I)
 Frank Collins (I)

Friday, Oct. 9 **Pat Anderson**
 Richard Hiss (I)
 David Hutchinson (I)

Tuesday, Oct. 13 **Alberta Morgan**
 Hope Movsesian (I)
 Kelly Covert (I)

Friday, Oct. 16 **Joan Lane**
 Frank Collins (I)
 Betty Tomlin (I)

Tuesday, Oct. 20 **Mary Thompson**
 Lori Petro (I)
 David Hutchinson (I)

Friday, Oct. 23 **Leigh Matthewson**
 Chris Courtney (I)
 Open _____ (I)

Tuesday, Oct. 27 **Ina Goldberg**
 Lori Petro (I)
 Marcella Newman (I)

Friday, Oct. 30 **Pam Crane**
 Mike Smith (I)
 Hope Movsesian (I)

**Master Gardener Hotline Assignments for
NOVEMBER**

Tuesday, Nov. 3 **Ina Goldberg**
 Janice Servais (I)
 Frank Collins (I)

Friday, Nov. 6 **Leigh Matthewson**
 Velina Hames (I)
 Mike Smith (I)

Tuesday, Nov. 10 **Alberta Morgan**
Janie Elliott
 Open _____ (I)
 Open _____ (I)

Friday, Nov. 13 **Pat Anderson**
 Susan McNeill (I)
 Open _____(I)

Tuesday, Nov. 17 **Linda Fredrickson**
 Hope Movsesian (I)
 Kelly Covert (I)

Friday, Nov. 20 **Tom Packard**
 Susan McNeill (I)
 Open _____(I)

Tuesday, Nov. 24 **Pam Crane**
 Hope Movsesian (I)
 Kelly Covert (I)

Friday, Nov. 27 **Holiday**

Reminder: During the winter months of December, January, & February hotline hours at 9:00-12noon.

** Thank you to Frank Connor for providing the information on Hotline assignments.*

Certified Master Gardeners' names are shown in green

ADDITIONAL TIMESLOTS ALLOTTED FOR INTERN HOTLINE HOURS

At our May 22nd monthly meeting, the following changes were made in Hotline assignments:

January – April (1 or 2 certified MG's to one Intern)

May – December (1 or 2 certified MG's to two Interns)

This increase in Intern timeslots will give Interns greater flexibility in obtaining their hotline hours.

Next Monthly Meeting of the Doña Ana County Master Gardeners



Wednesday, October 21, 2009

9-11am Cooperative Extension Office