



# GARDEN VIEWS

UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Program Newsletter

January & February 2017

**University of California Cooperative Extension  
Riverside County**

21150 Box Springs Road, #202  
Moreno Valley, CA 92557-8781  
(951) 683-6491 X231  
(760) 342-6437

81077 Indio Blvd., Ste. H,  
Indio, CA 92201  
(760)342-6437

**Website**

[www.ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG](http://www.ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG)

**Email**

[anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu)  
[anrmgindio@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgindio@ucanr.edu)

**In This Issue**

Search for the Sacred San Pedro Cactus	1
Social Events	4
Start Your Seeds in January	5
How to Start Your Seeds Indoors	5
Personality of Colors in Nature	6
Grow Lab Report	7
Making Your Own Loose Leaf Tea	8
Desert Water from Soup to Nuts	8
WMWD Garden Committee:	10
Speakers Bureau	10
Desert Area Committee Meeting	11
Happy New Year!!!	11
UCR Botanic Gardens	12
Janet's Jottings	12
Dragon Fruit	14
Riverside Training Class	15



## Search for the Sacred San Pedro Cactus

*Contributed by Dave Brandtman*

Plant name identification is often a challenge, especially in the world of cacti and succulents. Natural variations from seed propagation and a host of hybrids can lead to mutants that defy simple identification. When calamity struck and the high winds of December blew over an eight foot tall orphan cactus of mine, I was confronted by the question: Exactly what species of cactus was it? This led to a long search for what certainly *looked* like a *Cereus* of some kind, with a tall columnar shape and large white night-blooming blossoms. This orphan cactus, however, did not have the same deep ribbing as the *Cereus peruvianus* and its coloration was more of a greenish than bluish hue. (Continued on Page 2)

## Search for the Sacred San Pedro Cactus – Continued from front page

Whether my goal was to give away or sell what amounted to fifteen columns, each measuring from four to six feet in length, it is important to know the botanical name, which meant my next step was to start googling. Since I thought it was some kind of *Cereus*, that was my first search word. From there I hit many dead-ends, but eventually found photos that matched my orphan cactus.



One of the key identifiers was the blossom and the axil that connects it to the stem. The pistil extends beyond the stamen. While opening at night, the blossom will remain open in the daylight for a couple of days. In contrast to the *Cereus*, the axil has scales and is covered in black hairs that rapidly fade to gray.



These same black hairs also cover the ovary, looking like little puff balls on the side of the stems.

The fruit is also different, being soft and rapidly falling off.

Oddly enough, there was more than

one name with proper taxonomic nomenclature. The name they all shared was "San Pedro." So, which was the correct scientific name?

According to [cactiguide.com](http://cactiguide.com), ([cactiguide.com](http://cactiguide.com)) the correct name is *Echinopsis pachanoi*, first identified by Britton and Rose in 1920. Their authoritative publication, The Cactaceae, is often cited by writers on the subject. ([biodiversitylibrary.org](http://biodiversitylibrary.org)) It was named after Abelardo Pachano, who accompanied Dr. Rose on a trip to Ecuador in 1918.

At that time, the name given was *Trichocereus pachanoi*. More recently, however, this species was assigned to the genera *Echinopsis* and *Trichocereus* was dropped as a genus, hence the correct name is *Echinopsis pachanoi*. That does not mean that the old name is wrong, because there is a wealth of information to be gleaned from texts and web sites using the original name.

What they share is the common name San Pedro, along with the following names.

- Andachuma
- Aguacolla
- Giganton
- Huachuma

The history and mythology of San Pedro date back over 3,000 years. Its name comes from St. Peter, because the missionary priests were aware of the enlightenment that the natives reportedly received after ingesting a cactus tea. More recently, it is known as one of the cacti containing the drug mescaline. Consequently, it can be sold as an ornamental but not for consumption. That may account for its rarity at your local nursery and its common listing on sites like Amazon and Craig's List "for propagation".

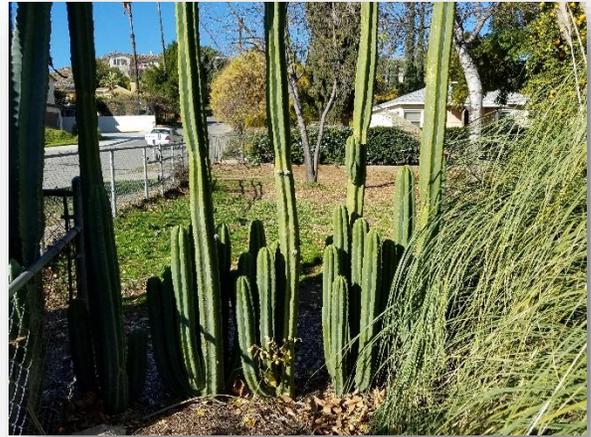
While this aspect of the San Pedro is not customary discussion among Master Gardeners, it is quite likely that you may be asked a question at one of our events. Having a good story to tell adds to the serious information that Master Gardeners can share with the public.

San Pedro has been used to create living fences for centuries. I have a small stretch of living fence in my own yard

#### Calling All Veterans

Veteran Master Gardeners are encouraged to sign up for our increasing number of **Information Tables**. These events are an excellent opportunity to meet the gardening public while mentoring trainees and first year MG's.

**Help Line** needs more Veterans to sign up. Share your knowledge and learn even more as you answer questions phoned or emailed to the UCCE offices in Riverside and Indio.



Propagation can be as simple as digging a post hole and dropping it in, but it is best to make a clean cut, letting it callous over a two-week period. This can prevent infection by fungus. Plant the column in prepared cactus mix four inches deep in a pot. Tall columns should be secured to assure healthy root development. The tall column can be tied to a fence or a tripod to prevent it from falling over.

To conclude my saga of the San Pedro, they have been donated to Master Gardeners and Gates Cactus & Succulent Society, as soon as they can come to pick them up. 😊



## Social Events

*Contributed by Yolan Browning*

Pictures tell the story of fun at this year's social at Hillside Farms in Norco.



### **Annual Master Gardener Soup & Bread Potluck.**

**Saturday February 4th 1-3pm**

**In the UCR Botanic Garden Conference Room**

**Bring your savory and tasty family recipes of soup, stews  
or favorite breads in for us to share for this potluck.**

- Everyone is invited to attend and share.
- Guests welcome
- Please bring your dish with the name on it.
- Plant Exchange
- Contest match the dish with the chef.
- Parking is metered
- Questions; [ybrowning1@aol.com](mailto:ybrowning1@aol.com)

## Start Your Seeds in January

*Contributed by Beverley Scray*

It's that time of the year to get a head start on your spring garden. There are dozens and dozens of seed companies from which to choose your seeds. Some specialize in heirloom seeds; others just tomatoes or peppers or Asian vegetables or edible plants from the ocean. Other categories to check out before making your choices include: Organic seeds, open pollinated seeds, seeds grown for specific zones of the countries and for containers. Below I have a brief review of several California seed companies. Googling these companies will give you a more complete picture of their specific offerings. Additionally, this will give you a tip or two on the best way to plant and their choice of planting supplies. You can also sign up for newsletters if you wish. Many companies still offer to send you print copies of their catalogs.

Sustainable Seed Co., 355 East 20<sup>th</sup> St., Chico, Calif., 95928 sells rare, organic, and heirloom seeds for the back yard gardener. You will need to create a profile to place an order.

Kitazawa Seed Co., 201 4<sup>th</sup> St. #206 Oakland, Ca., 94607, specializes in Asian seeds from greens or daikon radishes as well as seeds for sprouting. The seed catalog tells the history of this company and its restart after WWII. A mail order catalog is available to download as a PDF file, or you can

## How to Start Your Seeds Indoors

*Contributed by Beverley Scray*

Now that you've ordered your favorite variety of seeds, you're ready to decide the starter mix and the containers you want. Labels are important as well, especially if you plant several varieties of tomatoes or peppers in the same container. The

request a paper version on line or by calling 510 595 1860. [Kitazawaseed.com](http://Kitazawaseed.com).

Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co. is involved in searching the world for rare heirloom seeds and in the seed bank preservation process. Their catalog is an education to any gardener. Both flower and food seeds are available at 199 Petaluma Blvd., North, Petaluma, Ca., 94954. [www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com)

Stover Seed Co., PO Box 861715, L.A., Ca., 90086, sells veggie and herb seeds that are not genetically modified. Seed varieties offered have been selected for their performance in Western climates and soils.

Radicle Seed Co. supplies the Salinas Valley, Central Valley, and both the coastal and desert region of our state.

The last California seed company I researched is the San Diego Seed Co. Googling all of these companies will give you much more information about their selections, prices, and shipping costs.

There are a number of other seed companies that can serve you well: Territorial Seed Co., Park Seed Co., Seed Savers Exchange, Seeds of Change, Ferry Morse and Burpee Seeds catalogs are worth a search on the web.

sky's the limit if you order from seed companies. Or you can easily create your own set up at a very reasonable price. Here are some suggestions and materials that are very economical and produce beautiful seedlings.

Do it yourself materials include: masking tape and a black permanent marker for labeling; chop sticks and skewers for making small dents into the planting medium for each seed; and a variety of repurposed containers such as yogurt cups, half gallon milk containers, egg cartons, etc. In choosing a commercial mix or making your own seed starter mix, remember that a balance between moisture and drainage is the goal. To meet these needs you need both drain holes in your containers and a mix that is light, smooth and porous.

Here are three websites that take you through the step by step process of selecting your ingredients for your seed starter mix. If time is a factor, commercial seed starter mix, both organic and regular, is available at your local nursery. [www.oregonlive.com](http://www.oregonlive.com). Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with Oregon State University's

Extension Services, explains the materials and the amounts of each needed for your own seed starter mix.

[www.rodalorganiclife.com](http://www.rodalorganiclife.com)>[garden](http://www.gardenbetty.com)  
[www.gardenbetty.com](http://www.gardenbetty.com).

Heating pads available on line are placed under your prepared containers. Again, a working substitute is a small goose-necked neon desk lamp. Place your prepared container close to the light/heat source-books covered with plastic wrap get the container close to the light. Rotate your container so all seeds receive the heat and light. Spray a mist of water as needed and Voila! Soon your seeds will emerge and grow into beautiful seedlings. As the seasons warm up place your seeded containers in a safe semi shade/sun location and the sprouted seeds will emerge as well. Happy Gardening!

## Personality of Colors in Nature

The presentation by Master Gardener, GJ dePillis, at December's Veterans' meeting was both entertaining and enlightening for all. GJ is a veteran of the 2014 class. Equiped with a colorful Power Point and a wealth of knowledge, she began with an overview of the historical role of color in the gardens of europe and then moved into the world of flowers and how they can be be a reflection of our moods and preferences.



**Master Gardeners** are invited to give presentations at Veteran and L&L Meetings. **CE Hours** earned by attendees. **Volunteer Hours** for *Speakers and Helpers.*

## Grow Lab Report

Contributed by Debra Corbin-Euston



### LEARN IT. DO IT. TEACH IT

We accomplished so much on Saturday, the 21st! Thank you everyone who helped! You are so appreciated. ☺

We got all the hoops up for all the tables to put whatever type of cover we need on them. We started propagation. Next week and the following week we will need lots of propagators! So, come and plant some seeds with us.

We will also be putting more plastic on our table top greenhouses to help these plantings along.



**HELP:** We will need TRUCKS for transporting for

the spring sale. Lots of them. We will be transporting odd shaped containers with the container gardens and our displays will take up more room.

**Container Gardening** is a big project this year. We need several people to plant container gardens for the upcoming sales. If you who are interested in container gardening, please let me know. Look up some information on it and bring those ideas with you. Remember many people have **only** small spaces and places to grow. They need this already done for them, or they can see what we have done and then recreate it for themselves.

We would like to have a few different displays of these container gardens to bring to the sale to teach with and to inspire.



**THINK:** Edible container gardens and decorative color spot container gardens. You may have books on this already. A great source of information is naturally to be found at <http://ucanr.edu/>. Enter container gardening in the search box. Read, take notes and bring your knowledge with you to get this project on its way.

## Making Your Own Loose Leaf Tea

*Contributed by GJ dePillis*

When you make an effort to grow edible goodies, one way to preserve your harvest is to dry out and blend your own teas. Chamomile and mint are common, but did you know you could also use the leaves of some fruit trees? Persimmon leaf tea is very pleasant and mild and can be mixed with the leaves of other fruit trees.

To make your tea, make sure you are only picking leaves, which have not been sprayed with chemicals. Also remember that although the leaves of most fruit trees are fine for tea, you must stay away from the fruit seeds and the calyx. Those can contain toxins or poisons.

When you bring them in, carefully rinse them and let them dry on a towel. Next, you can either air dry your leaves or you can speed up the process by using a dehydrator. If you don't air dry, another option is to use a cookie sheet. Line it with wax paper or parchment paper or use an elevated rack so that the leaves get air circulation.

Lay out the leaves in a single layer. Set your oven to a low heat and make sure you leave the door

open just a crack. Keep checking your tea leaves until they are brittle and crumbling. The length of time the leaves remain in your oven will depend on the thickness of leaves you have selected.

Next, pull the cookie sheet out with an oven mitt protecting your hand. Sprinkle the leaves into a bowl and start crushing them. Some augment the flavor by adding bits of nuts and dried fruit.

Finally, you can place your new loose leaf tea into your own tea bags. For a fine selection, please see some options below:

- [LeVon](#)
- [Musings](#)
- [Bsteam](#)
- [Heartly](#)
- [Reusable silicone tea bags](#)
- [Stainless steel bags](#)
- [Sometimes homemade is better than commercial bought](#)

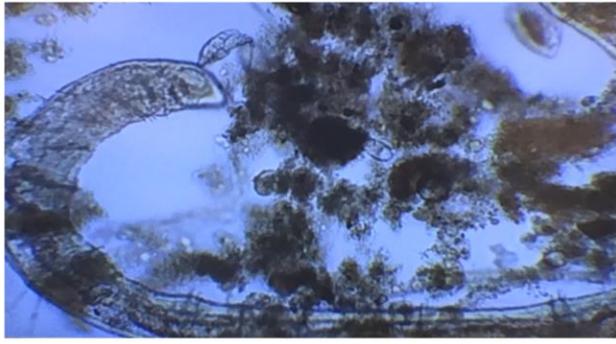
So enjoy mixing your own teas!

## Desert Water from Soup to Nuts

*Contributed by Mary Ann Egan*

As we Master Gardeners know all too well, a reliable source of water is the lifeblood of gardening in the arid West. In mid-December, veteran Master Gardeners were treated to a tour of the facilities of the Coachella Valley Water District ("CVWD") to learn about the water supply

that nourishes our part of California. The recent intense drought in California has reminded us all of the importance of making the most of the water we have, and the motto of the CVWD is "making every drop count since 1918." They take their work very seriously.



**Microbes at work**

The Coachella Valley receives about 3 inches of rainfall annually, which is not enough to support much of anything except cactus and creosote bushes. Understandably, the CVWD doesn't rely on rainfall for its water supply, but looks to and



**Aquifer Recharge Pump**

manages 4 different water sources. The Coachella Valley is fortunate to sit on an immense underground aquifer, and groundwater was historically the only source of water for the area. As agriculture uses and the Valley's population increased, groundwater was no longer sufficient and in 1918 the District began to turn to other sources to meet the growing need. Now in addition to numerous local wells, the Colorado River, the State Water Project and reclaimed water all contribute to

meeting the needs of the community.

Complicating this is the fact that the aquifer has been over-drawn, causing the land to subside. Recharging the aquifer, so that groundwater can continue to be utilized, is one of the key priorities of the CVWD.

The staff at CVWD designed a tour that would allow the Master Gardeners to see first-hand a cross-section of the infrastructure managed by the District. An introductory overview of the basic issues facing the District was followed by a "cook's tour" of the facilities. An on-site demonstration of one of the groundwater wells in operation included an explanation of the drilling and functioning of a well. A sample of water-bearing rock was on hand to show us what well drillers are looking for. Water bearing rock is just small gravel, in case you, like I, have ever wondered what that magic stuff is.

The stop at the well site was followed by a visit to one of the reservoirs used for storage of domestic water; then, a look at a lake created by the District to store water for agriculture use; and next, a visit to the pump station and holding ponds where Colorado River water is used to replenish the aquifer. As we traveled to the last stop on the tour, we heard about how important urban water



**The Master Gardener tour group at one of the water storage sites**

conservation is in the District's ability to meet the growing needs of water in the area. The final stop on the tour was the reclamation station in Palm Desert where water is recycled for use on golf courses and other landscaped areas. There, we were able to see microbes at work. As we watched those little critters break down the some of the stuff that winds up in the sewer system, the staff

gave us an overview of the closely-monitored conditions which allow the microbes to do their job. This, indeed, was "farming" on a different scale. We thank the staff at CVWD for the amazing job they did in educating us about the water supply that we simply take for granted as we plan, plant and tend our gardens.

## WMWD Garden Committee:

*Contributed by Karen Fleischer*

Our January Workshop, "Ancient Plants for Contemporary Gardeners: Lessons from Southern California Native Peoples," given by Jean Weiss was attended by about 50 people and was outstanding. Jean covered about 12 native plants used by the Cahuilla for food, shelter, medicine and then highlighted how those plants could be used in our landscape. Thurman Howard was also present to talk about the citrus psyllid. Our water-efficiency Karen

landscape information table is attracting a lot of interest. There will be a garden work day on Wednesday, January 18. The February workshop will be "The Beauty and Relevance of the Well-Chosen Southern California Garden" presented by Nan Simonsen. Planning for Ask the Experts to be held the third Saturday in June will begin next month.

## Speakers Bureau

Contributed by Thurman Howard

We closed out the month of November with 14 speaking events. One of the winter season series was capped off with an information table along with the awareness of the Asian Citrus Psyllids.

An impromptu review with the managing members of the **Perris Garden Project** revealed how pleased and excited they are about moving this project forward. Christine Lampe has done an outstanding job! Faces lit up when I mentioned her name to gardeners who attended the series. The city of

Perris plans to expand this model throughout the city in 30 locations.

I worked with other coordinators, introducing our IPM project. We will be using the UCCE platform to enhance a model to train other Master Gardeners. Speakers' Bureau training is not required to present the IPM project. I encourage trainees to sign up for this to complete their hours.

## Desert Area Committee Meeting

Contributed by Joan Kyle-Baerman, DAC Coordinator

The projects for Braille Institute, Living Desert, and Moortens Cactus Botanical Garden are continuing with a full complement of veterans and trainees.

The Desert Trainee class is now at 37. An additional person dropped out after a hand accident and is unable to drive. The Survey monkey has shown that so far, the classes have an average 4.2 (out of 5) ranking for interest, information, and speaker rating.

The speaker's bureau is very busy with monthly talks in Cathedral City and La Quinta; many upcoming garden club and school talks; a request

by the Rotary Club for a 6 week (weekly) talk to a new community garden; and the Riverside Fair and Date Festival (10 days of talks). There is a workshop March 18<sup>th</sup> at the Living Desert with 3 MG speakers, but this is sponsored by the Living Desert and is a paid event.

There are three events coming up: Wildflower Festival, March 4; Coachella Valley Heritage Festival March 18; and Environment Day April 22. MGs will be used as Docents at the Desert Horticultural Garden Tours March 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Happy New Year!!!

Contributed by Eben Longfellow, Advisory Board Chair

This time of year, we need to give thanks for what we have, express our feelings for those that we love, reflect on what's gone on, re-check the plan(s) for the future, adjust and enthusiastically lead - encourage - support excellence.

What a great group of people we have in our organization – people who value the earth, naturally growing things and helping others. A lot of good energy comes from us getting together and doing things, helping others, having fun and sharing our Master Gardener knowledge. And ... what a wealth of knowledge and experiences we have in our fellow MG's, their families & friends.

Cathy Konyn's loss is still reverberating all over Southern California, and especially with me – she was such a force, especially with Master Gardeners

... she is truly missed. Let's reflect on our joys from being around Cathy by remembering what she has taught us and help others.



2017 has a lot of Master Gardener events being planned and it will be an exciting & busy year. With our collective good spirits and energy, we will be a force of great good. May 2017 be one of your best and let's make 2017 our best and most successful Master Gardener year ever!!!

Good Tidings to You & Your Family!!!

## UCR Botanic Gardens

Contributed by Nancy Johnson

### Spring Plant Sale

- 10 vendors have committed to renting space
- Becky Levers has passed the volunteer organization of the Plant Sale on to Steve Orr and Charlotte Davidson
- Set up will be Wednesday and Thursday (previous sales it was Thursday and Friday)

### Docents

- Currently, the Gardens have 10 active docents. With increased outreach efforts, demand has grown for docent led tours.
- A new docent class will begin February 7

### Primavera

- Regular meetings to plan this important annual fundraiser will commence January 26 at noon.
- Dr. Waines will serve as advisor

### Butterfly Garden:

- Digging, clean-up and mulching has begun
- Working toward developing descriptive material
- May rely on map of garden rather than signage, as signage can distract from beauty

**Board Recruitment:** The UCRBG Board is seeking to recruit new board members. (Anyone who is interested should contact me.)

### Up-coming Events:

- February 7 - Docent Training Classes begin
- February 26 – Winter Lecture and Luncheon featuring John Trammell of the Wildlife Conservancy (\$30)
- March 11 - Native Plant Walk
- March 18 – “Planning a Garden That Attracts Wildlife” (Ann Platzer)
- April 1-2 - Spring Plant Sale
- April 22 - Spring Outing to Oak Glen Reserve
- April 29 - Keep Our Gardens Clean and Beautiful



## Janet's Jottings

*Contributed by Janet Hartin*

Thanks for another terrific year! Your accomplishments across Riverside County in 2016 are impressive and represent thousands of collective volunteer hours in the form of staffing public information booths, making presentations, answering helpline phone and email inquiries, proving assistance for community and school garden start-ups, and everything in-between. As

far as the impact of UCCE Master Gardeners across the state, last year over 6,237 MGs donated more than 328,000 hours valued at over \$9 million. Over the course of our 35 year history more than 5 million volunteer hours have been donated worth more than \$137 million to California.

With this in mind, don't forget to calendar in the statewide Master Gardener conference to be held

August 22-25, 2017 in Long Beach. Soon, you will be able to sign up for specific continuing education classes on topics that are covered only generally in annual training classes and make hundreds of new friends! (These conferences are only every three years and the 2014 conference attracted over 700 MGs from around the state.)

I also want to point out a few of the hundreds of free downloadable UC ANR publications you may find useful as you continue to help others:

**Title: Hiring a Pest Control Company;** Authors: C. A. Wilen, D. L. Haver, M. L. Flint, P. M. Geisel, and C. L. Unruh

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PDF/PESTNOTES/pnirepestcontrol.pdf>

This publication is useful to all Master Gardeners who deal with the gardening public and are frequently asked for referrals for hiring out help.

**Title: Asian Citrus Psyllid & Huanglongbing Disease;** Authors: E. Grafton-Cardwell, M. Daugherty

<http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=74155>

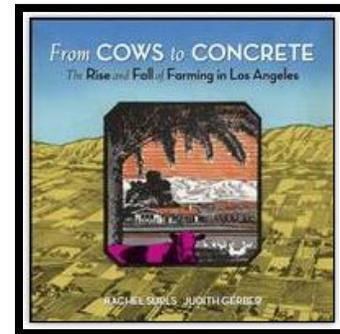
Although its tiny, the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) can spread Huanglongbing (HLB) disease, posing a serious threat to citrus trees grown in California's home gardens and farms. Help the public learn how to identify and manage this pest and the disease it carries.

**Avocados: Pest Management Guidelines (NEW UPDATE)** Authors: B.A Faber et al.

<http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Details.aspx?itemNo=3436>

While this UC ANR publication is primarily for avocado growers, Integrated Pest Management

(IPM) concepts discussed stressing prevention and non-chemical control measures are very pertinent to Master Gardeners, as well.



Since many of you attended Dr. Rachel Surls' continuing education presentation on Thursday, I wanted to include a link to her new book 'From Cows to Concrete' which can be purchased for \$40 (no UC discount since it was published outside UC) on the UC website as a courtesy:

<http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/Items.aspx?hierId=1000>

Her book is a fascinating read. Did you know that Los Angeles County was the original wine country of California, leading the state's wine production for more than a century and the agricultural center of North America until the 1950s. Cows calmly chewed their cud where freeways now prevail. Today, it is the nation's most populous urban metropolis. Ultimately, the Los Angeles farm empire spurred the very growth that paved it over, as sprawling suburbs swallowed up thousands of acres of prime farmland. And how, on the same land once squandered by corporate greed and "progress," urban farmers are making inroads to a greener future. Read how a plethora of gardens, farmer's markets, and urban farms literally rooted in Los Angeles history are making a comeback!

Have a great month!

## Dragon Fruit

### A New Cactus Crop to Grow and Harvest

by Joan Kyle-Baerman and Susan Krings

Do you know what pitahaya are? If you haven't heard of them yet, you may be seeing more of them in gardens and commercial farms in



California. Also, known as Dragon Fruit, pitahaya are fruit-producing cacti of the genus *Hylocereus*.

Originally native to Mexico, they were transplanted to Central America and

to Asia. Paul Thomson, co-founder of the California Rare Fruit Growers Association, started pitahayas in California and named many of the varieties. Ramiro Lobo, Farm Advisor for UCCE San Diego County, presented a Farm Bureau class on "Pitahaya Production in Southern California (Update)". Mr. Lobo is an agro-economist, dedicated to finding new crops for commercial farmers. He has been working with pitahaya since 2004, and is currently growing 20 different varieties of the plant. The names of the different varieties within the *Hylocereus* species are still somewhat inconsistent, and Mr. Lobo is attempting to standardize the names and fruit.

The pitahaya is known as a super fruit – high in anti-oxidants, magnesium, iron, fiber, vitamins B2 and C. It is a digestive aid and helps lower blood pressure. The flesh is usually eaten raw (just cut the fruit open) and is mildly sweet and low in calories. The black, crunchy seeds are rich in lipids and have a nutty taste and must be chewed to be digestible.

The more popular, sweeter red fruited varieties are making their way into the local groceries. Some specialty groceries do stock yellow and white fruited varieties. The red-skinned, white flesh

varieties are mild, the pink flesh variety is much sweeter, and the more popular red flesh variety is more complex. "Physical Graffiti," which has red skin and red flesh, is easy to grow and tends to be the favored variety, but it is not the tastiest of this exotic fruit.

The pitahaya is a climbing, epiphytic cactus. It usually needs some means of support. A single post is usually used, which promotes an umbrella-like structure. The cactus will put aerial roots down from the branches in addition to the basal roots. Pitahaya can easily be grown by home gardeners in the SoCal area and do not need shade or protection except in the full desert sun. In the desert, they are often planted under palm trees or grape arbors to help shade them. The non-flattened stem segments of the cactus bear large, night blooming flowers with long floral tubes; the ovaries and fruits are covered with large, leaf-like naked scales. Because pitahaya is a night-blooming plant, it relies on bats and moths for pollination.



The flowers usually wilt by morning, so you will have to get out that flashlight and wait patiently to see the flowers in bloom.

For the botany buffs, here is the genealogy: *Cactaceae*; *Cactoideae* (glochids absent; seeds black to brown; not covered by a bony aril); *Cereeae* (habitat more or less columnar with

usually few-ribbed, jointed stems); *Hylocereinae* (epiphytic plants with aerial roots, spines weak or absent).

### **The Care and Feeding of Pitahaya**

Pitahaya plants are usually started from cuttings as they root easily. The seeds do germinate and grow well in a compost or potting soil mix. As the plants grow, they usually need some means of support. Keep in mind that pitahaya plants are epiphytes, which grow harmlessly upon another plant (such as a tree) and derive their moisture and nutrients from the air, rain, and sometimes from debris accumulating around it, without negatively affecting the host. Pitahaya growers usually use a single post system. In commercial production, the effect is like an "orchard" of umbrella-shaped plants with the fruits hanging at the end of the stems, or branches.

Self-fertilization will not produce fruit in some species, and while cross-breeding has resulted in several "self-fertile" varieties, cross-pollinating with a second plant species generally increases fruit set and quality. Ramiro Lobo recommends that the flowers be hand pollinated, as the fruit will be much bigger.

## **Riverside Training Class**

Contributed by Linda Powell

Class is doing **very** well. Many potential candidates for the various master gardener committees and projects. Not only are the trainees doing well on their volunteer hours but many of them have signed up for numerous educational workshops. As a class, they are working well together.

Last class (January 5<sup>th</sup>) was held at the Perris City Chambers. Cindy Peterson (community gardens), Betty Balo (school gardens) and Eduardo Sida, a trainee, (demonstration gardens) each gave a presentation. Special thanks to Cindy Peterson who spent many hours over the holiday creating

The plants can flower between three and six times in a year depending on growing conditions. It is 21 days from bud break to bloom, and 48 days from bloom to harvest. Yield is 20 pounds per plant. Pitaya is not a dry desert cactus and needs more water than a cactus which is native to the desert areas of California or Arizona. Watering should be about 2 gallons per week per plant. If the plant is overwatered, the plant, the flowers and the fruit may suffer. Flower drop or fruit that splits or rots may be an indication of too much water. And, once the pitaya fruit starts to mature, it may attract birds out looking for a meal.

To harvest the fruit, make a clean cut on the stem. Twisting the fruit off will damage the fruit and can cause rot.

References: Ramiro Lobo, Farm Advisor for UCCE San Diego County

*The Cactus Family*, Edward F. Anderson

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Succulents*, Gordon Rowley

and fine tuning the school and community gardens power points. After the formal presentations, the class went out to the Perris City Demonstration Garden and toured what the city has in place to promote homegrown vegetables and healthy eating habits. Not only was it an interesting and fun day but the interaction between the students made for an excellent team building exercise. I hope such outings can be integrated more often in our training schedule.

**Mission Statement**

*Master Gardener Volunteers are trained by the UCCE Advisors, Specialists and other qualified instructors to provide the gardeners of Riverside County with research-based information to promote environmentally responsible and sustainable horticultural practices. Activities of volunteers are solely educational - without inclusion of any purpose or intention of carrying on a business, trade, avocation or profession for profit.*



**University of California**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources ■ UCCE Master Gardener Program

**UCCE Riverside County**

21150 Box Springs Road, #202  
Moreno Valley, CA 92557-8781  
81077 Indio Blvd., Ste. H,  
Indio, CA 92201



Customer Address Label



**Riverside County Master Gardener Program**

UCCE Riverside County Director    Eta Takele  
UCCE MG Program Director         Janet Hartin  
Volunteer Services Coordinator    Rosa Olais

**Advisory Board Members and Coordinators**

Chair                                        Eben Longfellow  
Chair Elect                                Betty Balo  
Fiscal Officer                             Karen Brandtman  
Recording Secretary                  Jean Texera  
Past Chair                                 Dave Brandtman

**Advisory Board Member Coordinators**

Desert Area Committee                Joan Kyle-Baerman  
Grow Lab Coordinators                Debbra Corbin-Euston  
Newsletter Editor                        Dave Brandtman  
Phone Squad Coordinator              Nanci Nelson  
Information Technology  
School/Community Gardens         Cindy Peterson  
Speaker's Bureau                        Thurman Howard  
Training Class Rep  
UCR Botanic Gardens                 Nancy Johnson  
Liaison  
WMWD Landscape Garden             Karen Fleisher  
Gold Miner Committee  
Mentoring Program                     Becky Levers  
Clothing Sale Coordinator             Jean Wagner  
Public Relations                         Sean Nealon  
Social Programs                         Yolana Browning  
Tours                                         Sheila James

The **Garden Views** newsletter is published monthly, September through June, by UC Cooperative Extension, Riverside County, Master Gardeners. All reporters are Master Gardeners or Master Gardeners-in-training.

**ANR NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The University of California prohibits discrimination against or harassment of any person employed by or seeking employment application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services).

University policy also prohibits retaliation against any employee or person seeking employment for making a complaint of discrimination or harassment pursuant to this policy. This policy also prohibits retaliation against a person who assists someone with a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or participates in any manner in an investigation or resolution of a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Retaliation includes threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse actions related to employment.

The University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer. The University undertakes affirmative action to assure equal employment opportunity for minorities and women, for persons with disabilities, and for covered veterans (including veterans with disabilities, recently separated veterans, Vietnam era veterans, veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Military, Ground, Naval or Air Service during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, or Armed Forces service medal veterans). University policy is intended to be consistent with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws.

Inquiries regarding the University's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to Linda Marie Manton, Affirmative Action Contact, University of California, Davis, Agriculture and Natural Resources, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616, (530) 752-0495. with the University on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (which includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), genetic information (including family medical history), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services (as defined by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994: service in the uniformed services includes membership,