



# GARDEN VIEWS

UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Program Newsletter

June 2016

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Riverside County

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## Farewell from the Chair....

*Submitted by Cathy Konyn*

My year as Master Gardener Chair is coming to a close – as the great Dr. Seuss said, “How did it get so late so soon?”

Although busy and sometimes challenging, it has been a very good year thanks to all the support I have received. I want like to thank the many people who have made this year a success. First, a big THANK YOU to the Advisory Board members, Project Coordinators, and Gold Miners for all your hard work not just keeping our program running, but making it better and better. Until I became a board member myself, I had no idea how

**Riverside County Master Gardener Program**

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much these dedicated people contribute.

Thank you Dave Brandtman, Eben Longfellow, Karen Brandtman, Jean Texera, Larry Browning, Yolan Browning, Debbbra Corbin-Euston, Khara Dizmon, Darrilyn Erickson, Karen Fleisher, Cathy Godfrey, Denise Gonglanian, Carol Haffter, Lucy Heyming, Sue Hill, Thurman Howard, Sheila James, Nancy Johnson, Barbara Lauck, Deborah Lewis, Donna King, Joan Kyle-Baerman, Connie Mettler, Sean Nealon, Nanci Nelson, Sandi Norton, Pauline Pedigo, Cindy Peterson, Patti Bonowitz, Bill Reid, and Jean Wagner. I am proud to have worked closely with, and become friends with, all of these great people.

I also want to thank all the Master Gardeners and MG Trainees for volunteering their time and talents. The information tables, helplines, and speaker events could not exist with you, nor could the DAC, WMWD, Grow Lab, and other various projects. Since the year is not quite over, not all volunteer hours have been recorded on VMS, but it looks like collectively we will have contributed close to 20,000 hours!

I am so proud of our efforts to assist Riverside County residents practice safe and sustainable gardening. From the very bottom of my heart, I thank all of you who have helped with all aspects of our program this year. I look forward to my next role as Past-Chair working with all of you to even further expand our services and community outreach. And so, with much gratitude, I turn over my gavel to Eben Longfellow, your next Chair of the Riverside County Master Gardener Advisory Board.

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## Janet's Jottings

Congratulations to all the recent graduates from the valley and desert class. Welcome to the Master Gardener family and thank you so much for the gift of your time and passion. Your collective efforts reach thousands of county residents each year.

With all of the outdoor activities continuing into summer there are always lots of questions about poisonous plants. I wanted to let you know that the Poisonous Plants chapter of the Master Gardener handbook is now available as a FREE publication online at <http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8560.pdf>. Please spread the word!

Keep in mind that hundreds of commonly grown ornamentals contain highly toxic plant parts including sap, leaves, seeds, flowers, and stems that result in mild to severe skin rashes, serious illness, and even death to pets and people. Recently, dog deaths due to ingestion of sago palm plant parts have been reported in the news, drawing attention to this important issue. Ingestion of even a small amount of any part of the sago palm plant can be lethal. (Seeds, however, contain the highest concentration of toxins and a single seed can kill a dog.)

Annually approximately 70,000 people call poison control centers across the nation regarding adverse reactions to plants and mushrooms. Twenty five percent of calls involve an exposure to a plant of unknown identity, leading to precious time wasted due to incomplete information. Identifying the plant resulting in the toxic response is critical.

As lead author Dr. Judith Alsop state in the publication: "Do not assume a plant is nontoxic

because birds or animals eat it without harmful effects. Eating a small amount of a poisonous plant may not be problem, but large or repeated small doses could cause toxic symptoms. The signs of poisoning may not appear for many hours after tasting, chewing, or swallowing poisonous plant parts. If you suspect that someone has been poisoned by a plant, telephone your doctor or the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. The information you provide about the plant that was consumed will help a health professional determine the proper treatment. If you are advised to go to the hospital, take a sample of the plant with you, if possible."

Better yet, avoid the problem altogether. Teach children to avoid sucking or eating seeds, berries, mushrooms, or leaves from any plant at any time when not in the presence of a knowledgeable adult. Also keep in mind that adverse reactions also occur from medicinal teas and home-made remedies that heating or cooking does not necessarily eliminate.

Many plants are commonly associated with allergic contact dermatitis. It is important to keep in mind that many of these plants cause other more dangerous symptoms than just allergic dermatitis, especially when ingested. Some of the plants that cause allergic contact dermatitis include: aster, birch, daffodil, narcissus, castor bean, cayenne pepper, cedar, celery, chrysanthemum, citrus, English ivy, garlic, geranium, ginger, ginkgo (fruit), laurel, lichen, liverwort, magnolia, oleander, onion, philodendron, primroses, poison oak, Grecian laurel, Brazilian pepper, silk oak, smoke tree, and others.

Please refer to the free download or your Master Gardener handbook for more complete information on this topic!

## WMWD Garden Docents Visit to Waterwise Botanicals

Submitted by Janis Binam



For dedicated gardeners and plant enthusiasts, few activities can rival the pleasure of exploring a fine nursery on a spring morning. On April 27, a group of Master Gardeners who serve as docents for the Western Municipal Water District Garden experienced that pleasure during a fieldtrip to Waterwise Botanicals in Bonsall. We planned to tour the nursery, and as a bonus, we were scheduled to see a succulent bonsai demonstration by Tom Jesch, the nursery's owner,

When we arrived we were welcomed with information about the nursery and given maps so that we could explore the grounds before gathering for the bonsai demonstration. Much of the twenty acre nursery consists of propagation areas where succulents, roses, shrubs, trees, and ornamental grasses are grown for later movement to the sale area. Particular species in both the

propagation and sale areas are easy to find with the map. Golden Barrel Stairway indicates where you will find a ribbon-like swath of *Echinocactus grusonii* on a hillside. You probably can guess which plants are available for sale in Neanderthaloe Land.

Some nursery visitors may appreciate guidance in selecting plants and creating a garden design. To assist them, several areas at the nursery entrance are landscaped to demonstrate ways to create distinct garden styles. Customers can see growth habits and how colors and textures of the plants complement each other. One would expect the Desert Garden to contain plants that require little water, but the Tropical Garden and the Country Cottage Garden show how to achieve a lush appearance while still being water efficient.

Some gardeners may prefer to garden on a scale smaller than the landscaped demonstration gardens. For them, a shade house contains small succulents suitable for creating dish gardens and features examples of little gardens cleverly arranged in kettles, colanders, cups, bathtubs, and other unusual and fun containers.

After exploring the nursery and gardens, we regrouped to see Tom's succulent bonsai demonstration. He explained that the first step in the process is finding a suitable species to shape and train. Branching succulents with small leaves are good bonsai candidates. *Euphorbia xanti*, also known as the Cherry Blossom Euphorbia or Baja Spurge, makes a particularly attractive bonsai. It has a delicate branching appearance, and its small fragrant flowers bloom for several months. *Crassula arborescens undulatifolia*, known commonly as Ripple Jade, with its natural tree-like appearance is also a good choice. However, for the demonstration, Tom selected a *Portulacaria afra*, or Elephant Bush. It has small leaves and branches that can be trained to grow either upright or in a cascade. Perhaps, he also has a particular respect for the durability of the species. As a young man at his first nursery job, he noticed one that had fallen

off a truck and had been run over numerous times. He finally rescued it, and though being badly damaged, it flourished after some trimming and care. One of the advantages of using succulents for bonsai is that they can be quite tough.

Once a plant has been selected, the next step in creating the bonsai is finding a suitable container and appropriate tools for shaping the plant. The very word bonsai generally conjures images of an art form involving delicate tools and the patient, gentle coercion of a young plant until it takes the miniaturized form of a mature tree. We knew we were in for a different experience when Tom brought out his toolkit: a large hammer, a pipe wrench, and a formidable looking knife. Giving his best Crocodile Dundee impersonation ("That's not a knife..."), he exchanged the knife for an even larger one that could be mistaken for a small machete. As we gasped, he began vigorously hitting and cutting the plant to modify its shape.

With the hammer, he scratched and gouged one side of each main stem. The uninjured sides can still transport nutrients, but the scarred areas, after healing, look like tree bark. Later, the uninjured sides can be similarly scarred. After achieving a desired shape, he potted the plant and placed rocks and small succulents around its base to mimic a natural environment. Over time, with additional leaf pinching and branch shaping, the *P. afra* will become an even more interesting succulent bonsai.

With the bonsai demonstration concluded, our docents paid for plants we could not resist and took a last look around. With its numerous attractions, it is no wonder that some visitors to the nursery come to picnic, paint, stroll the demonstration gardens, or just sit by its ponds and watch the catfish and turtles. Tom emphasized that visitors are not required to be customers. Our group of docents certainly found it to be a welcoming environment.

## California Style Garden in Riverside

*Submitted by Linda Powell*

Western Municipal Water District and the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Riverside County Master Gardener Program are coordinating a free gardening event that will feature dozens of gardening experts **Saturday, June 11 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.** at the water district's Landscapes Southern California Style garden in Riverside.

The "**Experts in the Garden – Have Your Gardening Questions Answered**" event, which is for novice and experienced gardeners, is designed to be a "stop and learn" experience. Twenty tables will be set up throughout the grounds of the waterwise gardens. Each table will have experts sharing their knowledge about a particular garden subject. In addition, master gardeners will be available to answer any questions about the waterwise gardens.

The event will include representatives from the Rose Society, Iris Society, California Native Plant Society, Gates Cactus and Succulent Society and Rare Fruit Growers.

Also: (next page)



- ♣ **San Bernardino County Master Food Preservers** will answer questions on how to enjoy your harvest all year.
- ♣ **Kellogg Garden Products** employees will help with any soil issues.
- ♣ **Riverside-Corona Research Conservation District** and the **Inland Urban Forest Council** representatives will answer conservation and development questions.
- ♣ **Sims Tree Learning Center** officials will cover pest management problems.
- ♣ **Wild Birds Unlimited** employees will provide information on attracting native songbirds to a backyard.
- ♣ **Western Municipal Water District** representatives will be available with advice on conserving water in your outdoor landscape.



In addition, a number of other experts will be at the event to answer questions related to topics including butterfly gardening, bats and bat houses, beneficial insects, citrus and avocado growing, vegetable gardens, healthful and flavorful herbs and Mediterranean climate gardening.

A number of University of California Cooperative Extension master gardeners from Riverside County will be present. An **Earth-Friendly Gardening panel discussion** will take place at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Western Municipal Water District's Landscape Southern California Style garden is located at 450 E. Alessandro Blvd. (corner of Alessandro and Mission Grove) in Riverside.

## That's a Good Question

**Question:** Is it true that toxic chemicals will leach out of the concrete blocks I used to build my raised vegetable bed?

**Answer:** Although concrete blocks are generally considered safe, they may leach some lime into the soil over time, which could potentially increase the soil's pH. If using recycled blocks, it is important to know where the blocks came from. Blocks maybe contaminated with chemicals if salvaged from a contaminated site, perhaps a gas station. Blocks that have been painted may also pose a potential hazard. If you are uncertain about the safety of your raised bed materials, you might use a BPA-free plastic liner to prevent direct contact of plant roots with the concrete.

## Notes from the Desert

*Submitted by Mary Ann Egan*

As summer approaches, gardening in the desert shifts into low gear. The long, hot days keep all but the hardiest of gardeners in the shade or under the air conditioner for a major portion of each day.

In deference to the summer heat, many of the thriving desert area Master Gardener projects change their hours to start earlier in the day or curtail their normal operations until the arrival of cooler weather in the fall. This summer slow-down is a perfect time to step back and reflect a bit on the development of the Master Gardener program in the desert, and give a big shout-out to those who gave so many hours of dedicated time and effort to bring the program into existence and bring it through its infancy.



A significant number of new projects for trainees and veterans are now up and running, and numerous continuing education classes to keep our veterans involved and active have been offered.

### **A Trifecta of New Projects:**

At the Living Desert In Palm Desert, a propagation project designed as a learning experience for Master Gardeners was started last November. Trainees and veterans work under the knowledgeable guidance of Bob Linstead, long-time plant propagator for the Living Desert. The MG's propagate local native plants and plants from arid regions around the world from seeds, stem cuttings

and plant division. The propagated plants are used in the gardens at the Living Desert, in the retail nursery, and for Master Gardeners' use in educational programs and community events. The project provides an endless learning opportunity for our MGs in a professional setting, and will continue during the summer months.

Another propagation project started this year at the Bob Williams Nursery in Indio focused on local native plants and other desert-friendly plants. In addition to learning about propagation techniques, Master Gardeners are establishing a potting shed/workshop to sell plants they propagate. The coordinator of this project anticipates that work will continue throughout the summer.

A project to teach and encourage Master Gardeners to grow more of their own food began this spring at the privately-owned Futterman Farm in Indio. This "kitchen garden and food forest" project, which was highlighted in last month's newsletter, is intended to address almost all aspects of creating and maintaining a successful garden of food plants. The project will close for the summer and re-activate in the fall.

### **Moorten Docent Program and Veteran Classes**

At Moorten Botanical Garden in Palm Springs, MG trainees learn to propagate and learn the cultural requirements of an impressive array of cactus and succulents. In 2013-2014 desert area MG volunteers started providing regular docent tours



of this beautiful and well-established garden of desert plants from around the world. The docent tours will be suspended during the summer months but will again be offered next November 1 to May 15, with the goal of increasing the number of tours to be offered.

A wealth of classes for continuing education credit were offered in the Coachella Valley this last winter and spring. The classes spanned a wide spectrum of interests, from tropical plumeria plants, to viticulture research, to Native American desert gardens. In several instances, the necessary in-depth knowledge and expertise for the classes was provided by our fellow Master Gardeners.

## Rancho Reubidoux

*Submitted by Beverley Scray*

The day couldn't be better for the Riverside County Regional Medical Center Foundation's Spring Garden Tour—cool and cloudy with a peep-a-boo sun warming the air a bit. Just great for the crowds to feel comfortable at Rancho Reubidoux. Winding around from the front porch to a wooden deck featuring a tall cactus fence and selected pieces of art, the visitors settled into the experience of the Rancho. Close by a chicken feeder turned into a succulent treasure chest set the stage for “What's this?; How did you get it here in one piece?; Where did it come from?; and Can you tell me all about your choice of succulents?”

Luckily for both the docents and the visitors, Reuben Munoz, the resident, designer, and artist spent the day in his garden. His stories amused gardeners of all ages, some of whom were wowed from the start saying, “This is my dream for my garden!” Others found all 5 acacia trees, looking from one to the other for a favorite. The Museum Palo Verde was in bloom and attracted the attention of many; its blossoms tend to extend the season more than other varieties and its size is manageable. Many succulent growers asked about frost damage and microclimates in Riverside and in their gardens—a real exchange of information to take home and experiment.

### And, Thank You...

... to the dedicated individuals who conceived the concept of the Desert Area Committee, who worked diligently to get the first training classes set up at UCR in Palm Desert, and who continue to devote time and effort to guide the program and move it forward. This spring was an amazing year in the desert for sand verbena wildflowers. This photo of the lush display of *Abronia villosa* is offered as a small thank you to all those caring individuals.



Reuben shared his liking of all sorts of metal containers. Older gardeners with rural and or farming backgrounds quickly identified the saucers sitting on cement column plant stands. "Sure, I can see they are plowing blades." Others were so impressed with the recycling and repurposing of such metals. Inside the pots brought another wave of interest as visitors saw a variety of agave, and aloes, in all stages of growth.

"People give me things," said Reuben as a group discovered one of the many distinct areas of the garden. "A neighbor's daughter cleared her mom's patio of plants. They looked half dead, but I thanked her, planted them in a decomposed granite bed, and they look great. Most of these



rescued were cacti and succulents. I look for varieties that have interesting architectural structure; they fit into spaces nicely."

Reuben continues his dialogue when asked about the manhole covers placed throughout the pea gravel yard. He tells the story of the biggest one. "The delivery guys needed a place to put it fast because of its weight. I told them to put it on the tank, and it fit and looks great." His tool shed was turned into a meditation center with Sol greeting everyone who comes near. A work table, an old fashioned secretary, fan, lights, and original paintings, all done by Reuben, make this space comfortable and unique. A bathtub sits nearby; a find at the Long Beach Flea Market, but originally from Belgium.

Working one's way around this multi-leveled garden, AGUA, Reuben's painting makes a profound statement. It illustrates the interconnectedness of nature and humans with water being essential to both. Beneath the painting is an extended bed of a variety of succulents and cacti.

This garden is featured in these books; *Cultivating Garden Style* by Rochelle Greayer and *The Water-Saving Garden* by Pam Penick. Some of the more unusual plants in his garden may be worth your while googling. Here are a few: Knife edged acacia, Museum palo verde, Australian Bottle Tree, and African Sumac. A succulent many asked about is *fureraea macdouglii*.

Thank you, master gardener Sue Hill, who has asked me to be a docent every year for the last ten years. You picked another winner. The day was delightful.



## The Daylily Experience



Submitted by Larry Fechter

Really? Growing daylilies in the desert? Of course you can, as a group of master gardeners learned from attending a veterans class at the home of Patsy and Paul Bouvion.

Not only do the Bouvions have a beautiful garden full of daylilies, but they also have a dozen “best of show” awards from daylily shows that they’ve entered. Moreover, they donated a large collection (several hundred!) of their daylilies to the LA Arboretum.

But why grow daylilies? Well, for starters, the range of colors and flower forms produced by daylilies rival roses for their jewel tones and range of flower shapes. Further, even in the desert daylilies are dependable perennials which multiply over the years, providing large clumps of plants (highly shareable) without becoming invasive. While they do require a bit more care and shade from hot afternoon sun here in the desert, those of us from the East can still get our daylily “fix” in beautiful southern California.

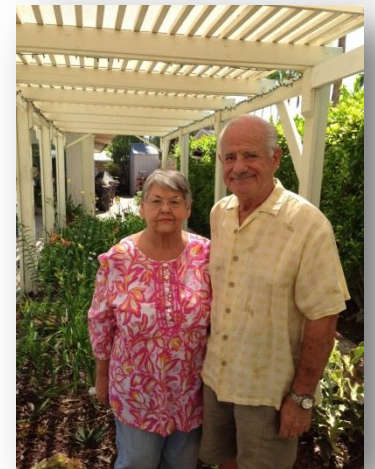
### Rosa’s Remarks

Mark your calendars, reappointment starts on June 1<sup>st</sup>. All UC Master Gardeners will be notified on Wednesday June 1 via VMS to submit reappointment paperwork.

Reappointment policy as outlined in the UC Master Gardener Handbook states:

“In order to retain active status as a MG volunteer, MG volunteers must apply for reappointment within a specific sixty (60) day period as follows. Thirty (30) days before the end date of the current program year June 30, through thirty (30) days after the end date of the current program year, July 1.”

Although you have until the end of July to complete reappointment, UC Master Gardeners should complete the process by Wednesday, July



13 to give the Riverside county office staff time to process the paperwork.

If you have not completed your 25 volunteer hour and 12 hours of continuing education there are plenty of opportunities in June. We still need volunteers at several events including the Lavender Festival in the pass area, the Riverside Home & Garden Show, the Riverside Helpline (Phone Squad) and at the farmers markets.

Save the date for the 2017 UC Master Gardener Conference The conference is being hosted by the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach on August 22-25, 2017. Registration and room rate information will be announced early next year. You can go to [ucanr.edu/2017mgconference](http://ucanr.edu/2017mgconference) for updates.

# Begin and End, Again

As we wrap up another successful year for the UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Program, the fun and satisfaction of being a Master Gardener is just beginning. As the new Editor of the Garden Views, I am taking on a task that has a long history outstanding volunteers who write articles of interest to our members. Past editors have progressively improved the production of this publication from manual typing and photocopying to the current online PDF version that you see today.

A special thanks to our most recent editor, Khara Dizmon, who took over mid-term when Donna King moved up north, and who made the transition easy for a new editor.

Send me your feedback so that we can make this the best MG Newsletter in the state.

Dave Brandtman, *Past Chair*



University of California  
Agriculture and Natural Resources UCCE Master Gardener Program

### 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.*

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