



# GARDEN VIEWS

UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Program Newsletter

December 2016

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## Desert Area Training Class Begins

The Desert Area Master Gardeners welcomed the 40 trainees of the class of 2016-2017 to the first class session on November 2. The class members come from an exciting and talented diversity of backgrounds and the enthusiasm in the class and among the veteran Master Gardeners is high. We look forward to welcoming the trainees as certified Master Gardeners in a few months!

## Brenda Costantino - New Class Coordinator

Submitted by Mary Ann Egan

With Brenda Costantino as class coordinator, the Desert Area Master Gardener training class of 2016-2017 is in very good hands. This is one organized, thorough gal! Brenda retired a few years ago from a career in nursing administration. The trainees in the new class benefit from her attention to detail and her organizational skills, but it is Brenda's rediscovered love of gardening which really shines through and energizes the class.

Brenda grew up first in Pennsylvania and then later in New Jersey. She comes from a long line of gardeners-- in the early 1900's her maternal grandfather worked on the flower clock in front of Edinburgh castle and both of her parents had very green thumbs. Her mom was an avid gardener devoted to growing flowers and would even sit out at night with a flashlight to watch her night-blooming pitahaya. Brenda's dad, a surgeon, found his gardening gift in growing vegetables, and became locally renowned for his vegetables and strawberries. Those two gardening parents put Brenda and her sister, who was 5 years older, to work in the garden and involved them in all aspects of the gardening, from soil preparation all the way through harvest. When she was little, Brenda's assigned specialty was weeding. Her dad explained why: "You are the best little weed picker! Plus... you are closest to the ground."

After Brenda had raised 4 kids, she enrolled in nursing school, earned a degree in nursing and then worked in administration in the area of pediatric care. When Brenda and her husband came out to visit her brother-in-law in the Coachella Valley, they fell in love with the desert, and when they decided to change their lives a few years ago, the desert pulled them here. Even though Brenda had not gardened very much as an adult in New Jersey, she was fascinated by desert

plants and rediscovered her love of gardening. She says that the green thumb she inherited from her mom for flowers on one of her hands, and the green thumb she got from her dad for vegetables on her other hand both awakened when she moved to the desert. Brenda also discovered that weeding is a calming, enjoyable exercise for her and she now loves to pull weeds.



Brenda signed up for the Master Gardening training class of 2015-2016, graduated with that class and became a certified Master Gardener. She expressed an interest in helping with the next training class which was to be coordinated by Tony Larson. When Tony was called permanently to Minnesota for family reasons, Brenda found that her offer to help coordinate the class suddenly put her front and center for the job.

And she has stepped up admirably. Brenda started working on getting the notices out about the new training class last May and worked through the summer organizing the myriad of details required to put the new class together. Brenda now leads a class of 40 energized, enthusiastic trainees.

# The Founding Mothers

## A Short History of the Desert Area Master Gardener Program

*Contributed by Mary Ann Egan*

Gardening in the Coachella Valley is not a simple thing. The collection of complex conditions faced by a gardener here in the desert can have the most intrepid of them scratching their heads and searching for available sources to get some answers.

The temperatures here can hit highs in the 120-degree range in the summer and drop to well below freezing in the winter. Humidity is low and rainfall is scarce. Plant suitability, plant selection and plant placement can make a huge difference between success and failure. The soils range from very gravelly sands to very fine loams. The 5 major soil types within the Valley have vastly different water holding capacities and permeability rates, and that fact makes giving or getting advice about the vitally important issue of irrigation a tricky matter. Weather issues, soil issues, irrigation issues, plant suitability issues, and orientation issues endemic to the desert area are vastly different than those issues faced by gardeners in a Mediterranean climate.

When several desert area residents came to the conclusion about 6 years ago that the Coachella Valley needed some Master Gardeners to help address the need for information about gardening in a desert climate, the seeds for the formation of the Desert Area Committee were planted.

Chris Lyman, a gardening enthusiast and longtime resident of Coachella Valley, recognized that there was a population of about 500,000 Valley residents who had no real resources to turn to for answers about gardening in the desert. One of the few reliable sources for problems faced by desert gardeners was information put out by the University of Arizona, but the climate and growing conditions in Arizona, while similar, are not the same as those in the Coachella Valley. More



relevant information and more local resources were definitely needed.

In 2010 Chris and fellow desert gardener Jacquin “Jackie” Smith headed over to Riverside to take the Master Gardener training classes offered there. To fulfill some of the required volunteer hours without having to travel to Riverside repeatedly, Jackie started handling the help line phone in the Indio UCCE office, and Chris provided a table and tent to set up at various desert area events so she could hand out Master Gardener materials and respond to questions. Chris and Jackie graduated with the Riverside class in 2011 and became certified Master Gardeners that year, but more than two desert-based Master Gardeners were needed.

In 2012 Chris Lyman and Stephanie Pocock, former volunteer services coordinator for UCCE Riverside County who was reporting to now retired UCCE Advisor Mike Henry, began organizing the first

Master Gardener training class in the desert. With the support and guidance of board member Lucy Heyming, things started to take shape. Stephanie, Chris and Tamara Hedges at UCR Palm Desert got a classroom arranged, and notices and advertising to raise interest in the new desert training class went out from UCR. The fledgling program got an unexpected boost when two Coachella Valley residents who had transferred their Master Gardener membership to Riverside County stepped up to help. Suzanne Jarvinen, a Master Gardener transfer from the Colorado MG program where there was a “native plant manager,” saw a clear need for Master Gardeners who were knowledgeable about native and desert plants. And Janna Calkins, a gold badge Master Gardener in Ventura County, moved to the Coachella Valley and transferred her membership to Riverside County. These two veteran Master Gardeners got actively involved in the new training class. Their hands-on dedicated efforts provided some very welcome day-to-day guidance and information for the newly minted Master Gardeners who were organizing the class.

Chris Lyman served as the class coordinator for the first Desert Area class of 2012-2013. The drawbacks inherent in any start-up program were definitely present. With very few veteran Master Gardeners available to do interviews or serve as mentors, those working on getting the class up and running simply had to make do without those aspects of the training program. Maybe because starting another training class was a new enterprise for both the Riverside MG’s and the Desert Area MG’s, there was sort of “pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps” determination and energy from the Desert Area volunteers borne out of necessity. The first class started with about 40 trainees, but was soon reduced to 15 trainees who stayed in the program and graduated. Chris organized some “Ask the Gardener” information tables at local events so the trainees could volunteer locally, but for the most part the trainees were required to go to Riverside projects for their hours. The trainees who stayed and graduated in 2013 were a very

committed group: 9 of the 15 graduates in the first class are still active Master Gardeners now.

The Desert Area Committee was formed after the first class had graduated and had started volunteering as certified Master Gardeners. The area needed new projects, and veterans and trainees alike were encouraged to suggest ideas that would help satisfy the state-wide Master Gardener mission of becoming an educated resource for the gardening public. The ideas started coming and were put into action: e.g., a retired teacher who was in the first graduating class wanted to continue working with kids and suggested, as one of the very first Desert Area projects, a garden project at a local elementary school. As ideas for new projects continued to come, the program has matured out of its infancy and, in a few short years, the Desert Area Committee has become a dynamic, experienced and thriving entity.

The second, third and fourth Desert Area training classes graduated in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Administrative changes occurred, as well, with the appointments of Rosa Olaiz and Janet Hartin as volunteer services coordinator for valley and desert Master Gardener programs and program director, respectively. The fifth Desert Area class, which is 40 trainees strong, just started on November 2, 2016. There are now 54 active Desert Area veterans working on a variety of exciting desert-oriented gardening projects: propagation programs at Moorten Botanical Garden and at the Living Desert, docent tours at Moorten Botanical Garden and at the Coachella Valley Preserve, weekly classes at the Braille Institute, free hour-long classes open to the public once a month at the Cathedral City Library, “Ask the Gardener” tables at local community events and at 3 local farmers markets either weekly or bi-weekly, a monthly speaker series at La Quinta Wellness Center and, of course, on-going speaker opportunities and staffing the Help Line at the UCCE office in Indio.

As I was writing up this history, I spent some time thinking about what has kept the volunteer

enthusiasm high and allowed the desert program to grow into the dynamic group that it is. The best I could come up with is an explanation which parallels my experience with desert area plants. My own garden in Palm Springs was planted with native and desert-friendly plants about 13 years ago. Watching the plants thrive (and some that died), I adopted this rule about plants that volunteer in this challenging desert climate: Unless the plant is likely to cause problems where it has chosen to grow, I will leave it alone and let it help shape my landscape. The plant has, after all, volunteered to grow there.

As for the Desert Area Master Gardener program, I think it helps to keep in mind that the people in the program are, first and foremost, volunteers. The need to grow the program here in the Coachella Valley has resulted in encouraging everyone in the program to contribute ideas and to offer suggestions for projects where they would like to volunteer their time and energy. Critical to the

success of the program is the fact that the volunteers feel that they can truly make a difference, not only in becoming a resource to the gardening public, but also as people who can help shape the "landscape" of the Desert Area Master Gardener program.



## Grow Lab Report

Contributed by Debra Corbin-Euston

Fall Plant sales were \$2,102.00, which are split 50% to UCR Botanic Gardens and 50% to Master Gardeners. We have submitted for a check from UC Regents and it is being processed.

Our own Grow Lab sale produced \$108.00. We are working on ways to improve this.

Linda Zummo is our new Watering Coordinator within Grow Lab.

Darrilyn Erickson has created spreadsheets for propagation and the plant sales.

Pat Kircher is now doing VMS for the Grow Lab and Flower Show and Garden Tour calendar activities as far as requesting MG help.

The Grow Lab Posse is growing right along and getting strong.

We have also created an email list for future Grow Lab plant sales throughout the year.

We have been preparing for the Fall/Spring and spring propagation.

We have a new "carport" type structure located in the Experimental Garden area. Trainee Jon Jackson procured this and set it up for us. We are planning to create some kind of a greenhouse/shade area out of it.

We have donated some vegetable plants to Karen Bradford for the Healthy Jurupa Valley which was started by a grant from Kaiser; she is the co-chair of the gardens and markets committee, and their mission is connecting residents with "food's earthy origins."

We will be donating the rest to other community gardens.



### MGP Veterans Meeting

Elaine Byrd listens attentively to the evening's featured speaker Dr. Siavash Taravati, an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisor at UC ANR's [UC Cooperative Extension \(UCCE\) in Los Angeles County](#). His job involves doing research and extension on different aspects of structural IPM.

## Compliance with IPM Request

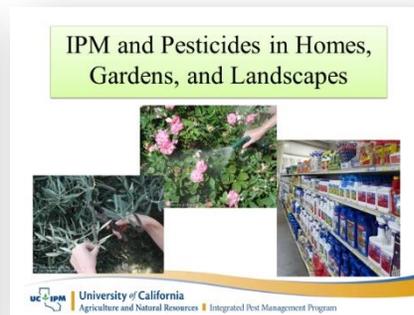
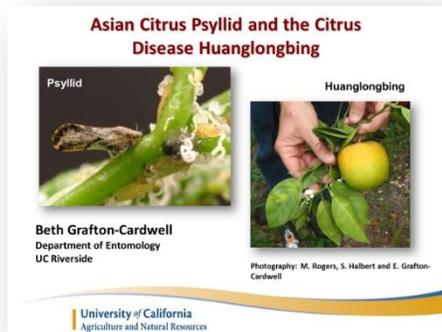
*Submitted by Thurman Howard*

While attending the last IPM workshop we were asked by our hosts to submit a plan on how to broadcast what we learned at the workshop to our county's Master Gardener Program. The three areas covered were the Asian Citrus Psyllid/HLB disease (greening), how to read labels on pesticides and herbicides and finally, Weeds.

Cathy Konyn was in my workshop class and we kicked around a few ideas on how we could return to Riverside with a kick ass plan. The last call I made to her was to get together to hammer out our ideas. The only thing we talked about was how to use the information help line as a tool to get the word out to the public. This was the trigger that started the ball rolling to have us use all three facets to broadcast this information to the Riverside gardening public. I was never able to finish the conversation that we started; however, Marilyn and I have come up with a plan to be submitted.

1. **INFORMATION HELP LINE:** When an incoming call comes in to the call center and the caller has been given the help requested, ask if he/she was aware of the Asian Citrus Psyllid and HLB disease that is damaging our state's citrus. During January & February. If the caller is interested, ask them if they would like an email with information regarding this topic. Then March and April we will focus on herbicides and pesticides. In May and June, we will ask callers if they need more information on weeds and how to treat them.
2. **THE SPEAKERS BUREAU:** Will create a slide for speaker's PowerPoint to bring the awareness to the public. If there is any interest we will request an email address for us to forward information to them, or advise them of the IPM website.

## EXAMPLES OF IPM SLIDES



3. **INFORMATION TABLES:** With the cooperation of the Gold Miners, the Speakers' Bureau will have a speaker visit the information table with a power board and give impromptu talks to stir interest on the focus topic.

I would like to start the first topic the Asian Citrus Psyllid in January, then in March change the topic to Reading labels on pesticides and herbicides. Then in May start the discussion on weeds.

To complete the project, we propose that we have the three-topics presented to a Lunch and Learn or Veterans meeting, by three Riverside Master Gardeners who are well versed on these topics.

We welcome other Ideas to submit to IPM. If you feel there are other resources that we have in the Master Gardener Program that we have overlooked, please bring it to our attention.

## Message from the Chair

*Submitted by Eben Longfellow*

### Happy Holidays!!!

With December 1<sup>st</sup> arriving and Thanksgiving past we are in the beginning of the holiday season and a wonderful time to share what we are thankful for, share the love of life with one another and to celebrate the new year.

I wish each of you a joyous holiday season with health & happiness.

Eben



A society grows great when old men plant trees  
whose shade they know they shall never sit in.

*Greek proverb*

## WMWD Garden Committee

*Submitted by Karen Fleisher*

**Garden Day, November 9:** Sixteen WMWD Garden Volunteers planted 22 native and water-efficient plants.

**Seed Propagation, October 27:** Eight of the WMWD committee members met at the WMWD garden and propagated approximately six different varieties of CA native seeds.

**WMWD Garden Volunteer Fall Seminar, November 5:** Speakers Lisa Novick of Theodore Payne Foundation and Ann Platzer, MG. Attended by 35 WMWD garden volunteers. Coordinated by Sandy Starkey – thank you Sandy for another successful seminar!

**November Workshop November 12:**  
“California Natives for your Southern California Landscape”



Pamela Clarke  
& Camille Lucero



The scheduled speaker, Susan Jett of CNPS, had a medical emergency at the last minute. Linda Powell and Susan Cline stepped in with 5 minutes notice and presented the talk, assisted by Karen Fleisher.

Thank you Linda and Susan!

Thank you to the WMWD garden volunteers who assisted attendees with questions about water-efficient landscaping at the new water-efficient landscape info table and also took visitors out into the garden to answer questions.

Attendance was a total of 87, including 16 Garden Volunteers. The audience expressed enthusiasm & wonderful feedback comments.

## Speakers Bureau Report

*Contributed by Thurman S. Howard, SBC*

We spoke to 11 venues this month, twice as much as we did last year during the month of October. The Bureau has been working on speaking engagements for next year through different areas of interest.

This month, Rosa and I met with the University of California, Riverside Health Services. They reached out to us last year to see how the Master Gardeners could help them with many of these grants that are targeted toward Nutrition and Gardening. They suggested a few projects to work on with them. We now have a better understanding of their needs and what we can provide them.

Our gardening classes that have been going on in the city of Menifee have produced much interest. The city plans to expand from one garden center to other venues throughout the city. We have been placed on a committee to share our ideas as Master Gardeners and to find common ground on how to expand into other areas where there is

gardening interest. This meeting will be held bi-monthly.

Our Perris winter garden project is concluding. Christen Lampe, has done an outstanding job working with their gardening project. We plan to meet with the city to go over any improvements that we can apply to next year's spring series. The city of Perris, has taken on a very vigorous attempt to spread gardens throughout their city. I am sure they will use our program to help.

I spoke with the Riverside Optimist Club and they have booked ten speaking engagements for next year, the first starting on December 7<sup>th</sup>. I will also meet with Inter Valley Health Plan in December to book 20 speaking engagements for next year.

The Speakers' Bureau will be a part of the IPM challenge to bring back to the community the three topics from our last work shop. Besides featuring power point slides during our presentations, we plan to have speakers to speak on these topics at our information tables. We plan to kick this off on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November.

## Amaryllis Papilio

*Contributed by Dave Brandtman, Editor*

*Hippeastrum papilio* is a variety of amaryllis you may not have seen at your local nursery or big box store. I ordered mine several years back and was unimpressed by its indoor performance the first year, but look at it now planted in the ground. I discovered that this is an epiphytic species in its native habitat of the Brazilian Atlantic forests. Another name for it is the Butterfly Amaryllis.

It is now available from several web vendors that can be quickly found in a quick google search. Some vendors have them prepared as gifts for the holidays, but you can get some good deals by purchasing loose bulbs. Pot your own with a

colorful ribbon and you can give people a gift that keeps giving year after year.

Happy Holidays!



## Upcoming Events and Educational Tours

Don't forget to check VMS for all upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. Follow the link to quickly see what's going on this month. [VMS Calendar Events](#)

You will want to attend the following.

- Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 [Tree of Life Nursery behind the scene tour](#)
- Thursday, December 08, 2016 [Mullins Family Avocado Farm Tour - So County](#)
- Thursday, December 08, 2016 [Veterans Class - The Personality of Flowers and the Meaning of Colors in Landscaping](#)
- Friday December 9<sup>th</sup> 11 am – 4:30 pm **Desert Area Holiday Luncheon, [Holiday Luncheon](#)**
- Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup> 4 pm - 7:30 pm **Riverside County Master Gardener Program Holiday Social, @ Hillside Farms in Norco [Holiday Social](#)**



### Janet's Jottings

*Contributed by Janet Hartin*

**Thank you!** It's hard to believe that 2016 is nearly over! It has been so gratifying to watch the two new training classes come alive and to get to know so many of you trainees and reconnect with long-term Master Gardeners, as well. Thank you – one and all - for all you do to help 'green' your communities and happiest of holidays!

**History of the poinsettia.** What we now refer to as 'poinsettia' is a Mexican native originally called 'cuetlaxochitl' by the Aztecs signifying "flower that withers, mortal flower that perishes like all that is pure." Montezuma, the last of the Aztec Kings who died in 1520, decorated his palaces with poinsettias. Christian links did not occur until the 17th century when Franciscan missionaries settled in Southern Mexico and added poinsettias to their nativity procession. Many legends ensued including one describing how Pepita, a poor young heartbroken Mexican girl with no money to buy baby Jesus a present was summoned by an angel instructing her to "gather a bundle of the weeds growing nearby" which miraculously turned into

glorious red poinsettias when presented to baby Jesus. Yet another legend describes Franciscan friars celebrating Christmas with a nativity scene during mass, when suddenly the Star of Bethlehem shone overhead turning the green 'leaves' (bracts) from green to bright red. Henceforth, the poinsettia, at one time associated with Aztec sacrifice, symbolized the blood of Christ and became a staple of the Christmas season.



When was the cuetlaxochitl plant renamed poinsettia? In 1828, Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first USA Ambassador to the new Republic of Mexico was so taken by the plant he first saw in the Taxco region that he sent clippings back to his hometown of Charleston, South Carolina. What is now the poinsettia was assigned the botanical name *Euphorbia pulcherrima* ('very beautiful') by German botanist Wilenow in 1833 but was renamed *Poinsettia Pucherrima* in honor of Dr. Poinsett in 1837 by William Hickling Prescott, a historian and gardener. Coincidentally, In Mexico, the Poinsettia is officially celebrated each year on Dia de la Virgen, December 12. In the USA 'Poinsettia Day' also falls on December 12 in remembrance of Joel Poinsette who died on that day in 1851.

Enter the Ecke family, German immigrants who grew poinsettias in Southern California for four generations, dominating the industry worldwide. Poinsettias remain the top selling potted plant in the USA, with over 100 million sold annually over a few short weeks. The first Ecke poinsettias were grown by Albert Ecke in the early 1900s on farmland near Hollywood and sold on the street.

During the 1920s, son Paul Ecke Sr. developed a breeding program that transformed the once delicate and gangly plant into the sturdy, compact plant it is today. His son, Paul Ecke Jr., further expanded the business in the 1960s by growing poinsettias in greenhouses in Encinitas (tagged the 'poinsettia capital of the world') and selling cuttings that were flown to their destinations rather than relying on the expense of using rails to haul mature potted plants. Paul Ecke Jr. also sent free poinsettias to TV stations right after Thanksgiving and personally appeared on The Tonight Show and several Bob Hope's holiday specials, boosting the market substantially.

From 1991 to 2012, Pau Ecke III (affectionately known as P3) introduced New Guinea impatiens and geraniums but was forced to transfer growing operations to Guatemala in response to competition from the global market. The Encinitas ranch was sold to the Leichtag Foundation, a nonprofit philanthropic organization, in 2012.

## Rosa's Report

*Contributed by Rosa Olaiz*

As we end 2016 and face a new year, I want to express my deep gratitude to all of our volunteers for your year of hard work in supporting our program. Every one of you brings your unique talents to the Master Gardeners of Riverside, and I appreciate your enthusiasm as you give your knowledge and expertise to our community. I look forward to working with each one of you in the coming year as we continue to share our love of gardening with our neighbors and friends.

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

**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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