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**UC Master Gardener Program  
Mission Statement**

The purpose of the UC Master Gardener Program is to extend to the public research-based information verified by UC experts about home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape.

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## Desert Area Grow Lab – a Real Possibility



(See story and photos page 2.)

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Riverside County Master Gardeners.

**In this issue:**

- **Desert Area Grow Lab is a Real Possibility, page 2**
- **Butterfly Gardens, UCR Botanic Gardens, page 2**
- **Cathy Konyn Memorial Award Winners, page 3**
- **Tribute to Master Gardener, Chris Curtis, page 5**
- **Garden Tours, Riverside Community, page 5**
- **From the Desert Hotline Archive, page 6**
- **What's Blooming in the Desert? Page 6**
- **Membership Initiative, page 7**
- **Mind Grow Challenge: Rooted Project, Succulents, page 8**
- **Mind Grow Challenge: Rooted Project, Cacti or Succulents? page 9**
- **UCCE MG Grow Lab Plant Sale, page 11**
- **Mystery Tree Identified! page 11**
- **Janet's Jottings page 12**
- **News from Rosa! page 14**
- **Riverside County Master Gardener Rosters, page 15**

## Desert Area Grow Lab is a Real Possibility

*Contributed by Jim Thompson, UCCE Master Gardener*

UCCE Master Gardeners of Riverside County, Desert Area, are in initial stages of creating a Permaculture Demonstration Site at the UCR Palm Desert Campus. We are excited to announce this site will also be the site of the long-awaited Desert Grow Lab. Located at 75080 Frank Sinatra Dr, Palm Desert ([www.palmdesert.ucr.edu](http://www.palmdesert.ucr.edu)). MGs are collaborating with a coalition of community partners, such as UC Naturalists, UC Climate Stewards, and Desert Composting, to enhance this demonstration site. This campus is in the heart of the Coachella Valley and will facilitate education and events that inspire community climate resilience.

The University of California has been active in the Coachella Valley for nearly 100 years, initially supporting the agriculture industry and more recently impacting modern growth issues through research in areas such as transportation, air quality, energy, and water conservation. Established in 2005, the Palm Desert campus serves as a base for several UCR research programs, a host to international academic conferences, continuing education, and a variety of public service programs. UCR Palm Desert also provides outreach efforts for local schools to promote and improve college-going rates in the Coachella Valley.

Master Gardeners will support and hold educational events at UCR Palm Desert, such as, Master Gardener training, Home Gardening Classes, Demonstration Gardens, and Grow Lab activities. The UCR campus has multiple areas that are appropriate for demonstrations. We are collaborating with other campuses and community organizations in creating several permaculture demonstration sites such as Habitat Restoration and Preservation, Water Harvesting and Management, Composting and Mulching. Educational topics will include propagation, beneficial insects, companion

planting, pollinators, native plants, and drought tolerant landscaping.

UCCE Master Gardeners of Riverside County, Desert Area, are proud to be of service to our local and global community as we continue our journey to create a Master Gardener presence and Grow Lab at UCR Palm Desert.



UCR Palm Desert Campus



UC RIVERSIDE  
BOTANIC GARDENS  
EST. 1963

**NEW!**

Master Gardener docents are available in the Butterfly Garden on the first and third Sundays of the month 9:00 am to 12:00 pm to answer questions about **Gardening for Butterflies** including the life cycle of butterflies and which plants to choose to attract butterflies.

UC RIVERSIDE  
Botanic Gardens

1 Botanic Gardens Dr. Riverside, CA 92507  
951-827-7090 | [gardens.ucr.edu](http://gardens.ucr.edu)

## Our 2020-2021 Cathy Konyn Memorial Award Winners

Contributed by Georgia Renne, UCCE Master Gardener

To prepare for this article showcasing our Cathy Konyn Memorial Award winners, I interviewed Marcia Stone from the Desert and Debra Corbin-Euston from West County. I asked them to share with readers their most memorable MG experience, their biggest MG challenge, and any other words of wisdom they have for us. Their answers fully highlight why they exemplify the spirit of Cathy Konyn.

### Marcia Stone



*“As Chair, Marcia led the Desert Area Board with skill and grace. She faced the unique challenges of steering the Master Gardener program through the Covid19 pandemic when in-person participation was impossible.” (From*

*her nomination statement submitted by a Master Gardener)*

**MS:** One memory that stands out in my mind is attending the Community Gardening Day at UCR Palm Desert in 2015. The Master Gardener Table was set in a conspicuous spot. I approached and innocently asked “How do you become a Master Gardener?” The Master Gardeners who were sitting at the table pointed to a woman nearby and said, “You should ask Joan.” I nervously approached Joan Kyle, asked my question, and was told that becoming a Master Gardener wasn’t easy, wasn’t for everyone, required a lot of work, and commitment. She looked at me skeptically as I told her I moved to the desert from Maine where I was an avid gardener. I was told the desert wasn’t Maine, but if I wanted to be considered I should apply. I applied, interviewed, was considered, worked hard, made friends and haven’t looked back.

My biggest challenge came in the fall of 2019 and continued for the next 18 months. As Chair-elect I

found myself occupying the Chair position of DAB prematurely, and then Covid came our way. Navigating the waters of the Covid epidemic presented the challenge of Zoom meetings, embracing necessary change and encouraging others to do the same. Patience, a willingness to do things in new ways, and the accomplishments of fellow Master Gardeners turned this challenge into an incredible learning experience. When we face challenges, we often emerge stronger for the experience. This strength can be personal strength, as well as programmatic...perhaps there is some wisdom there.

Volunteering at 1000 Palms Oasis as a Docent/Hike Leader and as a mentor to trainees have been memorable and rewarding. I will carry these two experiences with me always. At the Thousand Palms Oasis people who walk with me are introduced to our lush desert environment. They learn to identify native plants, their uses past and present, and thank me for opening their eyes to the desert. They slow down to take time to see things that they would otherwise miss. Serving as a mentor provides a similar experience; as the mentoring requires care, thoughtfulness, and paying attention. As we slow down—sharing our knowledge, care, and encouragement—we gain and gain so much. The two mentees I worked with have a special place in my heart.

### Debra Corbin-Euston



*“Her enthusiasm for the program took her to the Grow Lab where she grew this project increasing the sales of plants. Her strong mentoring skills taught and motivated others to become officers, project coordinators, presenters, and leaders.” (From her nomination statement*

*submitted by a Master Gardener)*

**DCE:** My most memorable MG experience would be my time at the Grow Lab since it was my very most favorite place to be and in part because it was just two miles from my home. So, it was very

easy to spend a lot of time there and I did! I loved taking on the Grow Lab and cleaning it out and up with the help of my friend, Sue Hill, and my husband, Murray Euston. We got that place in tip top shape in no time! I truly loved everything about planning for our yearly sales from the ordering of seeds, soil, containers, all supplies and even scheduling on VMS to get all the helpers we needed. Even working the “back-office admin” part as well as the marketing and the hustle of getting the plantings ready for selling were memorable.

Biggest MG challenge would also be managing the Grow Lab because there was so much to do there. As mentioned above. The grounds themselves were a great responsibility along with the many months of preparation for our plant sales and events. I’ve always wanted to have a backyard nursery be it small. I still want to do it. Soon I hope! I especially love growing plants by way of cuttings from my gardens and then sharing with others. I’ve always loved going to nurseries ever since I was a child. Nurseries and farms, along with my grandparent’s and neighbors’ gardens. I just like growing things and watching the miracles happen. Oh! And all the critters that flit and scurry about the garden taking care of the insects and pollinations. I love lizards because they love spiders!

My best advice for new Master Gardener is to “Hang in there,” during this trying time making certain you embrace the areas of gardening you are most passionate about and share your knowledge and experiences with others in the program. Being a Master Gardener has truly been a blessing for me. I thank David and Karen Brandtman for having their house on a garden tour so my husband and I could explore more about becoming MGs’ back in 2014. The Brandtman’s gardens were a big influence on us to create our own wildlife habitat at our own home.

I loved Cathy Konyn and dearly miss her. I think of her often. It is truly an honor and a privilege to receive this award. I am grateful.

**What is the Cathy Konyn Memorial Award?**

The Cathy Konyn Memorial Award is an honorary Riverside County Master Gardener award presented annually to one or two members from each of Riverside Master Gardener areas, West County and Desert, who exemplify the best of what a Master Gardener can be. The Cathy Konyn Award was created to honor and preserve the memory of Cathy Konyn, a graduate of the MG Class of 2013. According to her husband, Sam, she had it in her mind for more than 20 years to become a Master Gardener when she retired. Cathy was truly loved by her fellow Master Gardeners. Her tireless efforts to make the UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Program a shining star provided inspiration to all. Her sudden passing was a tremendous loss for Riverside County Master Gardeners.

The Cathy Konyn Award is given to individuals selected by the memberships of the Desert and West County each year for contributions to the program reflecting the dedication and inspiration that Cathy projected in her role as a Master Gardener. The names of the award recipients are added as an engraved leaf to the tree shaped memorial plaque housed at the UCCE Riverside County Office, and they receive specially engraved wood handled pruners.

**We honor and celebrate present and past Cathy Konyn Memorial Award Recipients:**

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>2020-2021</b>    | <b>2017-2018</b>  |
| Marcia Stone        | Karen Fleisher    |
| Debra Corbin-Euston | Dave Brandtman    |
| <b>2019-2020</b>    | Maureen Austin    |
| Mernell Wong        | Joan Kyle-Baerman |
| Linda Powell        | <b>2016-2017</b>  |
| <b>2018-2019</b>    | Lucy Heyming      |
| Barbara Kay-Levin   |                   |
| Linda Lane          |                   |
| Cindy Peterson      |                   |
| Thurman Howard      |                   |



### Tribute to Master Gardener Chris Curtis

Contributed by Kim Coons-Leonard, UCCE Master Gardener



Upon learning that Chris Curtis had unexpectedly passed away, a teacher at Barnett Elementary School in Temecula responded, "This just breaks our hearts!

What a great loss." Those simple, heartfelt words sum up the reaction of all who knew and worked with Chris whether it was volunteering at a school garden, working an information table, or propagating plants at Grow Lab, Chris had a positive impact on everyone she met and a profound impact on our Master Gardener program.

Her greatest impact was in her volunteer work as a Co-Coordinator of the Youth-School Gardens Project. During the pandemic, Chris transitioned from being the school-liaison for our south county school partners to a coordinator working with colleagues, Brad Hardison and Kim Coons-Leonard, to expand available resources for our youth and school programs. This included the development of online learning lessons TK-12, forming a Countywide School Garden Committee, providing many professional development opportunities for Master Gardeners, and establishing a partnership with the Riverside County Office of Education. Chris worked tirelessly to make this possible and had just recently earned her Gold Badge (1,000 Hours).

For Chris, though, it always came back to the volunteer work at our partner schools. Shortly before Chris passed away, she expressed excitement over Menifee Valley Middle School becoming our first secondary school partner in the south county. Though volunteering at the schools has been difficult during the pandemic, Chris stayed in touch with the teachers she worked with and found opportunities to still assist with the hands-on work always needed in

the garden. Red Hawke Elementary Teacher, Danielle Leatham provides a fitting tribute to our colleague.

I have known Chris for a few years working at the Red Hawk Garden. After Covid hit and the schools were shut down Red Hawk's Garden became overgrown. On a hot summer day this past August, Chris, Janice (Rosner) and I met and cleaned out this forgotten about crazy garden.

It was daunting, and I was so hot, tired and overwhelmed. But, while we were working, Chris started giving off ideas of what we could plant and do for the garden, and a few hours later I started to see her vision.

Chris loved gardening and had a wealth of knowledge she wanted to share, and she wanted the young students at Red Hawk to learn to love to garden as well.

We are all better Master Gardeners and people for having known and worked with her.

2022 Annual Riverside Community

## Garden Tour

"Homegrown Harvest"

6 Local Gardens  
FREE Admission

Saturday, Apr 23  
and  
Sunday, Apr 24  
2022  
10 am - 4 pm

Craft Fair  
Sims Tree Farm  
Handcrafts, Plants  
Garden Art for Sale

Riverside Community Flower Show & Garden Tours

See our website for the 2022 Tour Details:  
[www.RiversideFlowerShow.com](http://www.RiversideFlowerShow.com)  
Facebook/RiversideFlowerShow ☎ 951-850-8277

## From the Desert Help Line Archive: Plumeria and Irrigation Questions

*Contributed by Ralph Thompson, UCCE Master Gardener, Desert Help Line Coordinator*

### Question from the Client:

I am from Florida where nothing needs to be watered, just protect plants from an occasional freeze. I moved here 3 years ago, and still I keep losing my plants but not sure what to do.

I have lost at least 8 plumeria plants over the last 2 years. They were all small. I purchased larger ones this year (at least 4 feet tall) and they are not doing well again. I made cuttings from some of the larger ones and am trying to grow them but have lost some of those also.

What am I doing wrong? Am I over water or under watering?

Debora

### Helpline Response to the Client:

Hello Deborah,

Thank you for contacting the Desert Help Line with your question. And thank you for the photos.

According to UC Davis research, many more home garden plants die from over-watering than from under-watering. So, the odds are you're overwatering. I know when we moved here (desert) it took some time for me to learn how to reliably gauge soil moisture. And to know when to add more water and just how much to add. Basically, it took time for me to re-train my 'gut' instinct that *"it's dry here so everything needs to be watered everyday if not several times a day."* The best investment I ever made was a \$10 moisture meter. Now, years later, I still regularly check soil moisture with the moisture meter or a 'finger-check.'

- How often and how long to water your garden will be determined by evaporation, your soil, and what's in your garden.
- During hot periods, check your plants several times a week in early morning and mid-afternoon.

- Soil that remains wet or damp is being irrigated too frequently or for too long a period.
- Morning wilt is a reliable indicator that your garden needs more frequent irrigation, perhaps every other day instead of twice a week, or every day instead of every other day.
- Leaves that look healthy in the morning but droop or wilt by mid-afternoon are an indication that the plant is being heat-stressed and losing too much water to evaporation and should receive more irrigation.

As for plumeria, they do exceptionally well here. Most of the plants I see in your photos are looking fine, and the soil mixture looks correct. As you've probably heard, plumeria don't like "wet feet." It's not that they don't like and need water; it's that their delicate roots will easily succumb to root rot if soil moisture is too high. Plumeria are adapted to porous, well-draining soil and need air pockets around the roots. Get a water meter and water only when partially dry.



**Ralph Thompson**

A cautionary note: direct sunlight on black plastic pots quickly overheat a plant's roots. You may want to position the plants so the black pots are shaded or protected during mid-day afternoon heat. And one last thought, there is a

very active Coachella Valley Plumeria Society, both with a web and FaceBook presence.

### What's Blooming in the Desert?

*Contributed by Marcia Stone, UCCE Master Gardener*

Now in our Desert many of the shrubs and trees are blooming or in readiness. Sadly the wildflowers are waiting for a more opportune season. Our Desert has lacked enough rain, so the seed bank awaits for another year. However,

please note: some wildflowers can be found on the roadsides. Here are our Desert beauties!



**Arrow Weed**

**Bull Rush**



**Creosote (Larrea tridentia)**



**Seep willow with catkins (Baccharis salicifolia)**



**Cheese bush (Ambrosia salsola)**

## Membership Initiative...What's in a name?

*Contributed by Jim Thompson & Amy Clayton, UCCE Master Gardeners*

The goal of this new Membership Initiative is to inform and inspire Master Gardeners about the UCCE Master Gardener Program of Riverside County and its mission of “extending to the public research-based information verified by UC experts about home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape.”

The Membership Initiative, above all else, will focus on the essentials of delivering a well-run UCCE MG Program. In a nutshell, most current projects focus on the MG mission of home horticulture education. This Initiative will focus on helping MGs improve their skills to better lead, organize, and participate in the UCCE Program of Riverside County to be stronger volunteers and leaders. We believe in the value of big ideas, but those ideas must be built on the foundation of a MG Program that does the essentials well. We feel now is a perfect opportunity to better serve our 280+ volunteers by refocusing our resources on assisting Project Coordinators and Volunteers to improve our current activities.

A team of MG volunteers will lead and contribute their expertise by surveying volunteer concerns and expectations about the MG Program, creating content, procuring speakers, and scheduling information sessions. Core topics will include lessons on Public Speaking and how to use VMS and Collaborative Tools. Project Coordinators will also have opportunities to showcase their projects, committees, and activities to volunteers. Leadership workshops will be offered to help Project Coordinators develop in their roles.

This Initiative will begin July 2022 with in person and Zoom sessions held throughout the next program year.

Help us in creating a name that captures the essence of a new Membership Initiative! Please submit your recommendation for this Initiative to

jim.catcity@gmail.com and amy.jpc@gmail.com by April 24 with the winner announced May 1. If your submission is chosen, you will win a \$100 gift card!



Please submit by April 24.  
Winner announced May 1, 2022.

### Mind Grow Challenge: Rooted Project

In 2020 Patti Bonawitz created the Rooted Project to assist new First and Second Year Master Gardeners to become more active in the Program and accrue their required hours to reappoint by June, becoming “Rooted.” Through the current Rooted Project, MGs from the 2020 and 2021 training classes are offered new opportunities to complete their hours. One of these opportunities is the “Mind Grow Challenge” where they use guidelines to research and write a *Garden Views* article on their recent class presentation by Linda Powell highlighting succulents.

### Mind Grow Challenge: Succulents

Contributed by Emma Rosenthal, UCCE First Year Master Gardener

All over the Coachella Valley *Aloe vera var. Chinensis* has been putting on quite a show with

bright orange flowers spiking as high as three feet in a massive display of color and vitality. *Aloe vera var. Chinensis* is very easy to care for especially in our Sonoran Desert. It tends to prefer some shade but will survive with direct sun with some stress during the extreme summer heat. During the hotter months in direct sun the plant turns a pinkish color and is green the rest of the year. It is most at home in arid conditions and poor soil. It tolerates high heat as well as below freezing temperatures as low as 20 degrees Fahrenheit. It appreciates regular watering but is also very drought resistant and does not have a dormant season.



**Aloe vera var. Chinensis**

*Aloe vera var. Chinensis* has its origins in South Africa but it grows well and not invasively throughout the world, including Southern California. Do not mistake this aloe for *Aloe vera barbadensis* Miller which is considered edible and has yellow flowers. There remains much confusion around the orange flowering aloe, its origins, toxicity, and healing properties.

Many people drink the pulp (the yellow latex) of the aloe vera and use it to treat skin conditions. According to the Mayo Clinic, use of aloe latex internally is not recommended as it can cause cancer or kidney damage and may even be fatal.



## Garden Views

March/April 2022

Used topically, research indicates that aloe can be effective in the treatment of burns, wounds, herpes simplex, acne, psoriasis and other conditions.

Resources:

- <https://afrifoodnetwork.com/articles/facts-about-alo-vera/>
- <https://deepgreenpermaculture.com/2019/04/16/identifying-and-growing-edible-alo-vera/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements-alo/art-20362267>
- [https://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?cat\\_id=10&plant\\_id=118](https://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?cat_id=10&plant_id=118)

The **Fouquieria splendens, Ocotillo**, is native to the Western Sonoran Desert and has both medicinal and culinary value. The plant grows best in well-drained soil and is very drought resistant, dropping leaves to reserve water loss. It does not have a dormant season but can drop leaves due to drought up to five times a year.



**Fouquieria splendens, Ocotillo**

Its red flowers are edible and have been used both medicinally and for food since prehistoric precolonial days. The seed pods can be dried and ground into mush to make into cakes. Ocotillo has also been used for building fences. The Cahuilla,

the indigenous tribe in Southern California extensively used Ocotillo naming it “utush.”

Resources:

- <https://www.desertmuseum.org/kids/oz/long-fact-sheets/Ocotillo.php>
- Temalpakh: Cahuilla Indian Knowledge and Usage of Plants by Lowell John Bean and Katherine Siva Saubel | Jan 1, 1972
- <https://jornada.nmsu.edu/blog/5-things-you-didnt-know-about-ocotillo>



**Fouquieria splendens, Ocotillo**  
Photography by Emma Rosenthal

## Mind Grow Challenge: What's the Difference – Cacti or Succulents?

*Contributed by Betty Guida Ingalls, UCCE Master Gardener*

Here are some interesting contrasts between cacti and succulents.

### Cacti

- Don't have leaves or only a few
- Have indentations along the stem called “areoles” which turn into spines
- Almost all cacti are native to the New World
- Hardiness zones 4-10

### Succulents

- Have leaves or modified leaves which store water
- Plant parts are thick and fleshy
- Grow throughout the world
- Hardiness zones 3-11

Another fascinating fact is all cacti are considered succulents, but not all succulents are cacti! Succulents are the main category with cacti being a sub-category. Let's get a little more technical here: succulents are any plant that stores water in its leaves, stems and roots. Though cacti are considered a sub-category of succulents, many believe cacti should have its own category. As a result, the category, cactaceae, was created.

Almost all cactaceae range from Canada to Argentina. They can range in height from a few inches to 50 feet tall. Examples of large cacti are the *Carnegiea gigantea* or Saguaro and the *Ferocactus* or Barrel cactus.



***Carnegiea gigantea*, Saguaro**



***Ferocactus*, Barrel cactus**

Smaller cacti come in interesting forms with pads or cylinders in place of leaves and brightly colored flowers. An example is the Biznaguita (Spanish), or *Mammillaria Duwei*.

The care of cacti is simple. They need full sun and well-drained soil. Newly planted cactus should receive little water, or the roots will rot. After 4-6 weeks water them thoroughly since the roots will become active by this time.

Succulents come from deserts or semideserts in warmer parts of the world, like Mexico or South Africa. The care of succulents is, of course, much the same as cacti. One simple guideline is to water them enough to keep the "leaves" plump. How much water will depend on the humidity, heat and rainfall. Maybe a good way to think of the care of succulents is to remember "water sparingly."



***Aeonium lancerottense*, Tree houseleek**



**Blue Agave, *Agave tequilana***

For those of us who are avid gardeners, the technicalities may not have much interest. We can enjoy these unique plants for what they are.



## UCCE Riverside County Master Gardener Grow Lab Plant Sale

We have a large seasonal selection of flowers, herbs and vegetables grown by Master Gardeners, without any pesticides or herbicides.



**Saturday, May 7  
& Saturday, May 14  
Time: 9am - 1pm**

We accept Cash or Checks

For questions or more information, please contact us at: [anmgriverside@ucanr.edu](mailto:anmgriverside@ucanr.edu)

Directions: Enter the Grow Lab from the back alley (behind the house @ 3555 Crowell) off Diana Street. Park along the east side of the alley along the wall.  
No parking allowed on the west side of the alley.

## Mystery Tree Identified!

*Contributed by Georgia Renne, UCCE Master Gardener*

When I posted in the last issue of *Garden Views* how my son played stump the Master Gardener with me using photos of a mystery tree planted in Laguna Beach, I hoped to discover from other Master Gardeners the identification of this strange forty-foot tree with red-purple blooming spikes sprouting from its top branches. Not only did I receive five emails identifying the tree, *Schefflera actinophylla*, but also these MGs shared their own investigative process of discovering the answer.

My first answer from Master Gardeners came almost immediately from **Smoky Zeidel** whom I asked how she made the identification so quickly. "It is an Australian umbrella tree, *Schefflera*

*actinophylla*. The leaves looked like *schefflera* leaves, so I googled images of different varieties of *schefflera*. Easy peasy."

**Mike Reandeau** wrote, "Hi Georgia, the tree you're trying to identify is a *Schefflera actinophylla*." He used the University of Florida website, IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences)

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ST585> that fully describes and pictures the tree.

**Dave Brandtman** correctly identified the Umbrella or Octopus Tree explaining how he used our own MG website. "On the MG WEB Internet Resources page, you can find the Tree Selection Guide. I filtered by Palmate leaf structure and scrolled through to find the answer from *SelecTree: A Tree Selection Guide* ([calpoly.edu](http://calpoly.edu))." He even wanted to know what his prize was!

**George Spiliotis** wrote how he correctly identified our mystery tree.

It took me all of ten seconds using the "Lens" feature in Google Photos to identify it as *Schefflera actinophylla* (formerly *Brassaia actinophylla*), the Australian (or Queensland or Hawaiian) Umbrella Tree. I also saw it referred to as Octopus Tree and Australian Ivy Palm. Apparently, it is toxic to dogs and cats. I have used the same Google Photos feature to identify many plants, including a houseplant recently given to me by a friend. I am not good with houseplants, so I needed to know the name to prepare its tombstone.

**Suzanne Breshears** shared at first she guessed incorrectly that it was a *Tupidanthus*, another member of the *Aralia* family. Then she wrote how she missed the clue of those unique flower spikes and her further research into our tree.

## Plant Identification Starts with the Anatomy of the Flower

*Contributed by Suzanne Breshears, UCCE Master Gardener*

When I saw the Mystery Plant challenge to identify the tree in the picture, I relied on my memory of the appearance of the leaves.

I felt the leaf structure and the way the leaf tip seemed to point downward made me think it was a plant I used to lease as *Tupidanthus calyptratus* or Mallet Flower, a member of the *Aralia* family as is the *Schefflera*. I sent my guess in as *Tupidanthus*. I was wrong. I also missed the clue, the flower that was circled. Flower parts are the major factor in plant identification. Further research revealed the only way to tell the two trees apart is when they flower. The *Schefflera actinophylla* only blooms on the terminal branches, apparent from the picture. I enjoyed seeing the radiant spikes in bloom on the *Schefflera actinophylla*, and the research the article inspired me to make.



So now readers, thanks to our detective Master Gardeners we have five (new) ways to identify mystery trees. I love that I am always learning from my fellow Master Gardeners!

- Note and research the shape of its leaves
- Use the University of Florida website, IFAS Extension
- Use the SelecTree: Tree Selection Guide ([calpoly.edu](http://calpoly.edu)) on our MG WEB Internet Resources page
- Use the "Lens" feature in Google Photos
- Use the description of the flower as a starting point in investigation

**Please send me photos of any Mystery Plants you find, so we can again play stump the Master Gardener. ([grenne@earthlink.net](mailto:grenne@earthlink.net))**

### Janet's Jottings



#### Janet Hartin

Asphalt, black (dyed) mulch, and synthetic turf are heating up our cities!

As UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, you play a very important role communicating with the public that the use of asphalt, black (dyed) mulch, and synthetic lawns in our desert communities is superheating what already are extreme urban heat islands. Please continue to share with them that a better choice is drought-resistant living plants interspersed with light colored organic and inorganic mulches that reduce soil evaporation between plants. Edibles and shade trees should be prioritized during the drought, as well (discussed later in this column).

Research I conducted last summer here in the Coachella Valley and I'm continuing this summer revealed that surface temperatures of asphalt, synthetic lawns, and black mulch were more than 65 degrees F hotter (reaching over 165 degrees F) than surface temperatures of plants on several dates in May – August 2021 between 3:00 to 3:30 pm. In fact, on 10 dates, seconds after I took quick photos of these dark surfaces, my iPhone shut down, leaving me with the ominous heat warning message: "iPhone needs to cool down before you can use it." Furthermore, the paws of our pets (and of course our bare feet!) can burn in less than 30 seconds when coming into contact with these hot surfaces.



Photo. (left to right): surface temperature of black asphalt, artificial turf, concrete sidewalk, and living turf/groundcover in Palm Springs between 3:00-3:30pm in July, 2021. (Degrees F pictured on thermometer screen).

In contrast, surfaces of plants (groundcovers, vegetables, lawns) hovered around 95 to 102 degrees F during the same summer period. Why are they so much cooler? Living plants cool the environment during the process of transpiration (releasing water back into the atmosphere). Non-living surfaces don't provide this natural air-conditioning. While surfaces of concrete and light-colored mulches were warmer than plant surfaces, they were much cooler than surfaces of the non-living dark mulch, asphalt, and synthetic turf.

What else can you suggest that the public do to cool urban heat islands in their neighborhoods? Prioritize keeping their edibles and trees alive! In landscapes, trees should come first during drought and water restrictions. Making sure they are getting enough water during the drought also maximizes their ecosystem benefits (shade, air and water filters, carbon dioxide uptake and storage, oxygen release, habitat/pollinator enhancement, etc.). My research shows that trees in the Coachella Valley cool asphalt parking lots by more than 70 degrees F during summer afternoons and more than 55 degrees F in valley cities.

Sadly, many landscape trees are butchered, dying long before they reach their potential longevity due to poor care. The length of time it takes to replant and regain the lost benefits for future generations is a high price to pay for saving a few dollars accepting a low bid resulting in topped, hacked trees. Please also remind the public to check their trees for staking ties cutting into the wood; they should be loosened or removed right

away to prevent further damage. And, remind them that mature trees prefer infrequent deeper watering than groundcovers and lawns. Deep watering them with a soaker hose or garden hose just a few times during the summer (morning is best) can keep most trees alive. And, remind people who remove their lawn to save water that trees even many yards away may have been reliant on that water and need to be regularly watered.

In summary, during drought and water restrictions, simply replacing landscape plants (especially our coveted trees!) with non-living surfaces is not the answer. While these practices may save water, it's not worth the tradeoff of superheating our cities, especially in neighborhoods with low tree canopy cover and an abundance of asphalt.

A final thought. Please share the following reputable search engine links to help the public in all areas of Riverside County select appropriate landscape plants. Each search engine allows the user to select several criteria such as plant water needs, heat tolerance, pest resistance, ultimate size, flower color, and other criteria to help ensure "right plant, right place."

- Urban Forest Institute/Cal Poly: <https://selectree.calpoly.edu/>
- California Native Plant Society: <http://www.calscape.org/>
- WUCOLS IV (Water Use Classification of Landscape Species): <http://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS>
- Inland Riverside and San Bernardino County Cities Only: not desert or mountains): <https://inlandvalleygardenplanner.org/>

Thank you for helping get this information out. Neighborhood by neighborhood, city by city, you're making such an important difference!



**News from Rosa!**



**Rosa Olaiz**

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month, and I want to take a moment to express appreciation to each of you. It is a blessing to have an amazing group of Master Gardener Volunteers in the program. Rest assured this program would not be the success without your support, creativity, and dedication. It is truly a privilege to be part of the UCCE Master Gardener Program in Riverside County!

Exciting news about the name badges! Every Master Gardener and Trainee will receive a new redesigned badge funded by the State Master Gardener Program. You can find the survey link on the VMS Home page to provide the necessary information. Instruction on information needed is in the survey. Do not miss the deadline to complete the survey by April 8, 2022, so that you will receive your new badge.

Before you complete the survey, make sure you enter your latest volunteer hours on VMS. You want to make sure to order the correct badge (i.e., White, Gold or Platinum).

1. White Badge, Master Gardeners with less than 1,000 volunteer hours
2. Gold Badge, Master Gardeners with more than 1,000 volunteer hours
3. Platinum, Master Gardeners with more than 2,500 volunteer hours

Trainees, please complete this survey. You are about to graduate, and, if you have completed the required 50 accreditation hours, will want to receive your badge at graduation.



**White Badge less than 1,000 volunteer hours**



**Gold Badge more than 1,000 volunteer hours**



**Platinum more than 2, 500 volunteer hours**

**“If you want to touch the past, touch a rock. If you want to touch the present, touch a flower. If you want to touch the future, touch a life.”**



**Thank you, Master Gardeners!**

Riverside County UC Master Gardeners			
UCCE Riverside County Director		Rita Clemons	
UCCE Riverside MG Program Director		Janet Hartin	
Volunteer Services Coordinator		Rosa Olaiz	
West County Advisory Board		Desert Advisory Board	
Chair	Darrilyn Erickson	Chair	Jim Thompson
Chair Elect	Amy Clayton	Chair Elect	
Past Chair	Georgia Renne	Past Chair	Marcia Stone
Secretary	Judi Newby	Secretary	Cesar Lopez Barreras
Treasurer	Jonathan Crook	Treasurer	Jim Huberty
Fiscal Officer	Jim Huberty	Fiscal Officer	Jim Huberty
Community Gardens	Thurman Howard	Class Coordinator (County)	Melody Knox
Diverse Community Projects	Thurman Howard	Coachella Valley Preserve Docents	Marcia Stone
Equipment & Inventory	Debbie Leuer	Continuing Education	Carolyn Daniels
Gold Miners	Thurman Howard	CREATE	Barbara Kay Levin
Grow Lab	Adrian Ceja	CREATE	Vivian Iyтурralde
Help Line	Susan Bookman	Event Tables	Rita Kraus
Home Gardening Class	Linda Powell	Farmers Markets	Gail Nottberg
IT/Website (Countywide)	Ralph Thompson	Helpline	Ralph Thompson
Mentoring Program	Alba Good	Home Gardening Class	Linda Borlaug
Membership	Karen Fleisher	Information Tech/Website	Ralph Thompson
MG Logo Merchandise	Jennifer Hopper	Job Descriptions	Patty Reed
Newsletter	Georgia Renne	Job Descriptions	Marcia Stone
Parliamentarian	Dave Brandtman	Member Engagement	Marsha McNamara
Parliamentarian	Cindy Peterson	Membership	Cynthia Morris-Sotelo
Public Relations eBlast	Susan Cline	Moorten's Gardens Docents	Marcia Stone
Public Relations Social Media	Pam Clarke	Moorten's Gardens Propagation	Barbara Kay-Levin
RCRCD Liaison	Steve Orr	New Projects	Carolyn Daniels
RCRCD Monarch Habitat	Linda Powell	Newsletter	Georgia Renne
Rooted	Patti Bonawitz	Publicity eBlast	Barbara Kay-Levin
School Gardens	Kim Coons-Leonard	Publicity Social Media	Pat Malone
School Gardens	Brad Hardison	Raices Cultura's Terra de Raices	Cesar Lopez Barreras
Social Recognition	Yvonne Wilczynski	School Gardens	Brad Hardison
Speaker's Bureau	Lynn Coffman	Social Events/Recognition	Kathy Miller
Tours	Linda Carpenter	Speaker's Bureau	Pat Clays
Training Class (County)	Melody Knox	WIC (Women Infants Children)	Vilma Raettig
UCR Botanic Gardens Liaison	Yvonne Wilczynski		
WMWD Liaison	Janice Rosner		

***"The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies."***

***Gertrude Jekyll***

**Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) created some 400 gardens in the UK, Europe and America; her influence on garden design has been pervasive to this day.**