



March 2025

A Publication for Members & Friends

<http://www.azherb.org>

Dear Herbies,

Spring sprang early in most of our gardens and, with the longer days, the soil is beginning to warm. This is the perfect time to start planning, planting and preparing for a vibrant season ahead.

March is also a month of renewal and community. Whether you're starting seeds indoors, pruning perennials, or dreaming of new garden projects, remember that gardening is not just about the plants, it's about the joy, friendships and knowledge we share along the way.

This month we have some exciting events planned that will allow us to grow our friendships, as well as our gardens. Join us March 8 (note- this is the 2nd Saturday of the month) for our monthly Weed & Feed. Learn alongside experienced Herbies as we care for our herb demonstration garden; then connect with friends as we share food and conversation. Both Desert Botanical Garden and Boyce Thompson Arboretum have plant sales this month. Get your garden going early by planting from starts instead of seeds. Join us for a cowboy themed Culinary Brunch at the home of new member Annie Alvarado. I encourage you all to participate, exchange ideas, and celebrate the beauty of nature together.

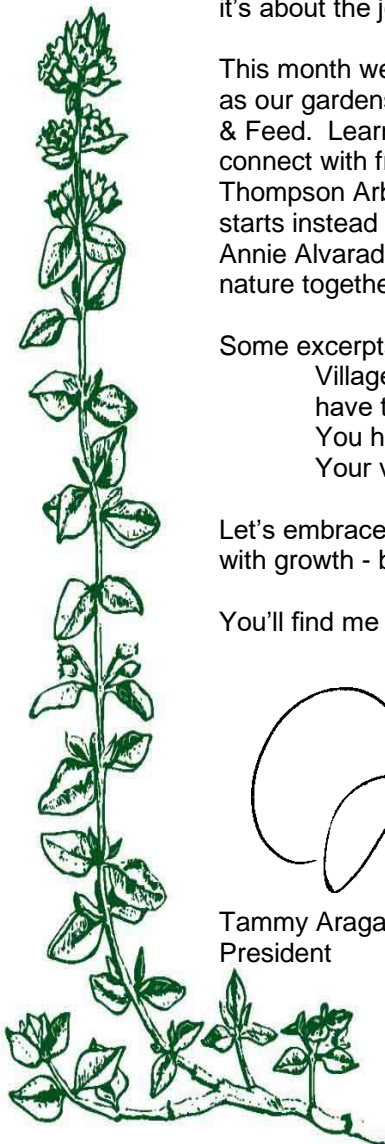
Some excerpts from an article on building a village by Kelsey Pomeroy:

Villages and communities aren't going to spontaneously appear in your living room... you have to interact with strangers again and again until they're not strangers anymore. You have to show up; don't think it's only your loss; it's their loss too. Your village can't be built if you're not willing to be a villager.

Let's embrace the season with enthusiasm and inspiration. Wishing you all a wonderful month filled with growth - both in the garden and in our friendships.

You'll find me singing in my garden,

Tammy Aragaki
President



Since we have so many new members, we want to introduce you to the different herb themes in the demonstration garden. Come check it out!

Calendar

March 2025

Thursday, March 6: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: The Traveling Gardener
Speaker: Master Gardener Linda Larson
Herb of the Month: Cardamom
Presenter: Diane Knudsen

Saturday, March 8: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, March 22: Culinary Brunch
Hostess: Annie Alvarado
Theme: Cowboy Cookin'
Location: Wickenburg Time: 1:00 p.m.
Sign up at AHA website <https://azherb.org/>

March 15 to May 11: Orchid Fever Exhibit
Location: Desert Botanical Garden
Info: <https://dbg.org/events/orchid-fever/2025-03-15/>



DBG Spring Plant Sale
Thursday, March 13: Member's Day
Friday, March 14– Sunday, March 16
Time: 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Reservations required

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Spring Plant Sale
Friday, March 14 – Member Preview Sale
Saturday, March 15 – Sunday, March 30
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Scottsdale Community College Spring Plant Sale
Thursday, March 20 and Friday, March 21
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
https://www.scottsdalecc.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/CNUW_Plant_Sale_Flyer_SP2025_web_xc0228.pdf

April 2025

Thursday, April 3: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Desert Medicine
Speaker: Herbalist Joann Sanchez
Herb of the Month: Nasturtiums
Presenter: Bernie Arnecki

Saturday, March 5: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, April 12: Culinary Event
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Hostess: Janet Coleman
Theme: A Posh Picnic

March General Meeting

Join us at our March 6, 2025 general meeting when our featured speaker will be Master Gardener Linda Larson. Known as “the traveling gardener,” Linda has traveled the world in search of the most beautiful gardens. She will take us on a breathtaking journey of her most treasured gardening memories. Titled "In Search of Wonder - Traveling 1,000 Gardens," this presentation is a must-see event!



Linda's adventures have given her a unique perspective on the world. She explores the human stories behind each garden, appreciates the significance of its location and architecture, and marvels at the land's beauty. To Linda, gardens are not just places of tranquility; they are gateways to understanding the world we inhabit. She is an advocate for the importance of public green space and the value of nature in our lives.

In 2025, our Herb of the Month theme is "**Invigorate the Senses.**" For our March Herb of the Month, speaker Diane Knudsen will spice up our night with a presentation on cardamom. Come ready to share food, fun, and herbal knowledge.



Snacks are always appreciated for our meeting break; a recipe or ingredient list helps those with dietary concerns. Consider using our herb of the month, cardamom. Bringing your own table service helps reduce our carbon footprint.

If you can't attend in person, you can join us via Zoom at the link below.

Topic: March AHA General Meeting
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025
Meeting begins promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81288082383?pwd=ciryfLyjJUDuyspcmvTEELZcfH705tb.1>

Meeting ID: 812 8808 2383
Passcode: 088744

Welcome New AHA Members:

Rebecca Phillips
Zip Code: 85207

Bobby Evans, AHA Scholarship Recipient
Zip Code: 85250

Brittany Corral, AHA Scholarship Recipient
Zip Code: 85282

Kathy Canuel
Zip Code: 85201

Andrew Winchel
Zip Code: 85207

Joanna Ornelas
Zip Code: 85008

Patricia Evans
Zip Code: 85297

Taylor Rooney
Zip Code: 85282

Stella Hemp
Zip Code: 85016

Alan Salas
Zip Code: 85051

Kyle Williams Family
Zip Code: 85207

Becky Biciouls
Zip Code: 85020

Myles Franklin
Zip Code: 85024

Keosha Anderson
Zip Code: 85024

Sheila Douglas
Zip Code: 85205

Trista Sims
Zip Code: 85339

Tammy Aragaki, Membership Committee



Learn about native bees

A program that might be of special interest to herbies is being presented by Pima County Environmental Education on Zoom on Thursday evening, April 15 at 7:00 p.m. The monthly look into the lives of insects and other invertebrates will focus on Native Bees.

Receive the Zoom link by securing your ticket at <https://pima-county-environmental-education.ticketleap.com/> And, while you are there, check out their numerous other offerings.

Banner photos highlight spring in the Demo Garden (from left to right): Seeds we've gathered will be sold at our events; Teri gets ready to plant a new addition in the garden; the always amazing hollyhocks are hard to miss; tools of the trade with new plants ready to be added to the garden; and the loving tending of the herbs. Our President reminds us this month to enjoy growing friendships as well as our gardens. May this bring joy to all!

Be sure to check out some of the best native plants and herbs for sale this month. For plant sale dates at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Desert Botanical Garden, or Scottsdale Community College, see information on our page 2 calendar.



West Valley Campus Community Garden

At our February AHA general meeting, we learned about the community garden on ASU's West Valley Campus from students Lindsey Stevens and Bryan Bergford, and Dr. Ken Sweat, their faculty lead for the project. We started with some history of the project.



Lindsey Stevens, Bryan Bergford and Dr. Ken Sweat presented at our February meeting on the ASU West Valley Campus Community Garden. Photo by Lee Ann Aronson

During the time period of 2004 to 2022, a group of professors at ASU's West Valley Campus wanted to have a garden. Ken Sweat, Susannah Sandrin, Jennifer Keahey and Christopher Higgins were consistently being told no when they asked, due to a lack of dedicated student engagement (Who would take care of this garden?) and an inhibition about giving up land for the project.

And then in 2022, a group of students entered the picture. Rae Stusen was in one of Professor Higgins' classes and had to make a project to work on relating to their course concepts. Rae and classmates chose to write the proposal "ASU West Valley Campus Community Garden Proposal." Independently Bryan Bergford, RJ Ramos, and Diego Lara started the Plant Club, dedicated to educating students about plants and their importance and purposes. They created a plant database with the goal of having a community garden where fellow students would be able to grow plants on campus. Lindsey Stevens wanted a garden on campus and she was friends with Rae, Bryan, RJ and Diego. Together, they decided to create a student group dedicated to the garden, and Professor Higgins did the same with the faculty.

Two additional years were spent debating with administration about the logistics of the garden, seen by unsupportive faculty and administration as

lofty, impossible and idealistic. Rather than take "no" for an answer, a campaign of resistance began – from the ground up!

Utilizing connections from faculty, staff, students, colleges, outside organizations and community members, Lindsey created a mass email of all the garden supporters – over 60 recipients - calling for support and knowledge in the form of attendance at a meeting with the administration. Attendees came from all of these backgrounds to show support for the garden and dedication for its continued existence. Administration and facilities continued to deny the request over logistics of space and budgetary means, but the group continued to find creative solutions.

Lindsey and Rae both served in the Undergraduate Student Government, Rae as the Vice President of Services and Lindsey as the Vice President of Policy. Through her budget in the student government, Lindsey purchased the first four garden beds, hoses and hose bibs, soil and tools. Dr. Ken Sweat finally received a go ahead from facilities, and work on the garden began. The rest is history.

At their last meeting, the group tackled issues such as

Leadership recruitment: They are going to be meeting with the Undergraduate Student Government to begin a committee within their framework that supports their garden work.

Use of USDA grant: It was decided that the grant funding will be used to purchase seven more garden beds, plus shades, commemorative plaques, seeds, compost, buckets and soil.

Preparing the beds for new crops

Making a website

Naming the garden beds

Community Classes in Barrett Honors

College: Rae and the professors were able to secure a class surrounding garden involvement to be offered within Barrett, the Honors College at ASU.

Creating a seed library near the garden for students

Conducting educational events for students:

They are planning specific events such as Plant Therapy, Crafting with Plants, Yoga in the Garden, Soapmaking with Homegrown Herbs, a Plant Parenthood Workshop, dorm cooking tutorials, and discussions around sustainable futures.



Newly installed raised beds garden at West Valley Campus Community Garden

Additional next steps for the group include:

Working with our EPICS teams (Engineering Projects in Community Service). These engineering students have been creating improvements to the garden beds through irrigation, moisture sensors, adding mobility, etc.

Institutionalization: We want to continue to create community partnerships and to ensure that our garden is long-lasting and helpful for the community for years to come.

In the spirit of support for this project, Katherine Tarr presented the students with AHA's The Low Desert Herb Gardening Handbook and several packages of seeds.

About our Presenters

Lindsey Stevens is a senior studying Social Justice and Human Rights at ASU West Valley Campus and is a Co-Founder and the Communications Director of the West Valley Gardens. She works as a Coordinator for Community Engagement at St. Vincent de Paul. Lindsey grows her own plants at home and has a love for propagating aloes. She considers herself a grandmother of her plants as her aloes have created generations of new plants.

Bryan Bergford is a third-year student at ASU studying Social Work. He helped found the ASU West Valley Campus community garden. A hobby of his is collecting plants, mainly cactus and succulents and he has had a passion for plants since childhood.

Dr. Sweat is a teaching professor and Senior Global Futures Scientist in the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences at ASU West Valley campus and has worked there since the fall of 2000. As part of his work at the West Valley campus, Dr. Sweat is the faculty plant lead for the community garden and organizing faculty member for the Desert Restoration Zone/Carbon Sequestration Forest.

February Herb of the Month: Cotton From Dirt to Shirt

By President Tammy Aragaki



At our February meeting, our President Tammy Aragaki, told us of her desire to grow cotton herself with the aspirations of eventually making enough thread to weave a shirt, and what she has learned about it in the process. She

reminded us of the importance of cotton here; in Arizona, we are known for our five "C's": citrus, climate, cattle, copper, and of course, cotton.

The cotton plant is in the mallow family, the genus is *Gossypium*. The plants sport yellow flowers, which later turn pink. The plant grows in the heat of the summer.

Cotton History & Trivia

The word cotton has Arabic roots, derived from the word قطن (*qutn* or *qutun*). The earliest evidence of the use of cotton is 5500 BC in Pakistan.

Cotton bolls found in Mexico have been dated to as early as 5500 BC, but this date has been challenged.

In 2019, China sent cotton seeds to the moon. These seeds have since been sprouted.

Cotton may be used as a sage green, brown or pink dye plant depending on the variety.

Yeah, but...Can you eat it?

The short answer is "no" - you cannot eat cotton because cotton contains gossypol which is toxic.

However, cottonseed oil is specially processed to remove gossypol in a three-step process that uses Ferric Chloride. The first cottonseed oil commercially produced was used primarily as fuel in lamps to replace whale-oil and as a lubricant for machinery. Cottonseed oil these days has been used to make salad oil (mayonnaise, salad dressings, sauces and marinades), cooking oil for frying in both commercial and home cooking, and margarine or shortening for baked goods.

How to Grow Cotton

Cotton requires lots of full sun. It may be grown in heavy, native soils. This soil does not necessarily need to be nutrient dense. Cotton requires moderate water. It is known as a thirsty crop when compared to other fiber crops, but cotton can withstand drought.



Cotton boll
Photos by Lee Ann Aronson

Cotton is a perennial plant which is grown as an annual to control insects. The seed is planted here between February and April and bolls are harvested in the fall. It is best to plant early as it has a long growing season, from 150 to 180 days.

Arizona is known for its varietal "Pima cotton," developed from Arizona wild cotton (*Gossypium thurberi*) by the Pima Native American tribe, and known for its long staple length, softness and high quality. Tammy grew a variety called Davis Green.

Cotton Pests

The Boll Weevil has been mostly eradicated in North America. Cotton pests here are mainly aphids and ants which love cotton plants, and bugs such as harlequin bugs and stink bugs. Mice and packrats can also be problematic for cotton.

At our break, Tammy demonstrated how she spins cotton thread from a boll of cotton that still has the seeds intact. Please see the video on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1435178594110257>

Tammy gave out Davis Green cotton seeds to those in attendance. Maybe you, too, will be inspired to plant those seeds and try growing cotton.

The Versatile Iris

A petite trickster, with blueish purple blossoms and yellow nectar guides, seems to be growing from the aloes in the Desert Botanical Garden. The drought tolerant plant's disguise is betrayed by 3 to 6-inch sword-like green leaves, sighted nestled next



to the broader leaves of the succulents. Meet the perennial *Moraea polystachya*, also known by many popular names as butterfly iris, Cape blue tulip and the very descriptive "many-flowered-blue-eyed-grass." Hailing from the *Iridaceae* family, the deciduous green foliage at maturity is 6 to 12 inches wide and can range in height from 1 to 2 feet.

Moraea polystachya
Photo by Sandy Cielaszzyk

Though absent leaves during drought and when not in bloom, the plant is quietly underground, storing energy as a bulb, corm or tuber, which will produce dazzling petite blossoms. At the top of strong 2-inch stems are usually one or two flowers lasting only one day, but successive blooms appear over the 6 to 8 week growing season. These natives of South Africa and Namibia are as at home in grasslands, rocky places, and disturbed areas as in a cultivated

garden or in a flowerpot. Although not much published research is associated specifically with *Moraea polystachya*, the attractive foliage and showy blossoms are popular ornamental additions to many gardens.

In contrast, many of the *Moraea*'s cousins are well known historically for their medicinal properties. The *Iris* spp has the honor of being the first entry in "De materia Medica," the extremely influential pharmacopoeia of medicinal plants written between 50 and 70 C.E. In the 6th century, the first illustrated images appeared, describing the iris rhizomes as beneficial for multiple purposes, including inducing sleep and tears, treating ulcers and even fading freckles. Even today, in various parts of Europe, rhizomes of *I. germanica*, *I. florentina*, and *I. pallida* are used as a tea to remedy coughs.

In the New World, native Americans found *I. versicolor*, *I. foetidissima* and *I. pseudacorus* useful when purgatives and diuretics were needed. *I. germanica* and *I. pallida* (orris roots) are used to ameliorate not only bad breath, nasal polyps, teething, tumors, and scars, but also muscle and joint pain, burns, and cuts. *I. tenax* is a reported remedy for conditions related to the mind, stomach and head disorders. *I. tenax* has also been used for reducing feelings of fear, gloominess and sadness.

The versatile *Iris* family has contributed to many useful products. For example, oil from Tuscany is made from orris root, a sought-after fixative, and is employed as long-lasting violet-like base notes in perfume. Indigenous people in North America found that the fibers in the leaves of several types of iris were highly durable as string or rope which was used to make fish nets and deer snares. Where fiber is present, not too far away is paper, another gift from the Iris leaves. Ink can be created from *I. pseudacorus* (common name yellow flag) - yellow dye from the flowers and brown or black dye from the roots.

Humans are not alone in appreciating the family *Iridaceae*. Hummingbirds are attracted to the red hues of the copper iris (*I. fulva*). Bees, bumblebees, flies and hummingbirds seek nectar from the sweet-smelling *I. tenax*. Even some species of odorless iris, e.g., *I. atropurpurea* or *I. bismarckiana*, provide overnight shelter in their large red to dark purple flowers for male Eucera bees...the first bed and breakfast?

By Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener and Master Naturalist

Foods of Love and Kindness February Culinary Dinner 2025

Fifteen Herbies gathered at Eric and Susan Adamczyk's beautiful home on Saturday, February 15. We enjoyed exploring their gardens before we settled in for a Valentine's dinner, celebrating Foods of Love and Friendship.

Janet Coleman and Zac Thayer brought Strawberry Basil Tea.

For the appetizer, we had Pam Posten's Seeded Crackers with Beet Humus

Kathy Eastman also celebrated Arizona Statehood Day with her Quinoa Salad with Orange-Cumin Vinaigrette. Janet Coleman made a simple but intriguing Asparagus Walnut Salad, and Chris Lueck's Egyptian Barley Salad with Feta and Pomegranate was both showy and delicious.

Eric Adamczyk made wonderful Eggplant Parmigiana. Drew and Todd Templeton brought love in the form of comfort food - Lentil Soup.



February culinary hosts, Susan and Eric Adamczyk

Elizabeth and Mike Trembath-Reichert baked Basil Walnut Sourdough with salted Lemon Butter, and Susan Adamczyk made a no-knead loaf of Whole Wheat with New Zealand Butter.

We had plenty of sweets, too! Donna and Keith Lorch celebrated their love with his favorite Raspberry Pie; Pam Schuler baked Lemon Bars; Janet Coleman made a picture-perfect Banana Cake with Banana Custard and Strawberry Glaze; and Pam Posten shared Pebernodder Cookies made from the Pederson House recipe.

Nobody wanted to declare favorites, everything was too good! We voted for which recipes we'd like to try

making: Egyptian Salad, Asparagus Salad, and Eggplant Parmesan.

Join us on Saturday, March 22, when Annie Alvarado will host a Cowboy Cookin' brunch in Wickenburg at 1:00 p.m.

Drew Templeton, Culinary Chair

<https://alexandracooks.com/2021/05/02/raw-asparagus-salad-with-walnuts-parmesan/>



<https://cookieandkate.com/italian-eggplant-parmesan-recipe/>



<https://www.onceuponachef.com/recipes/egyptian-barley-salad-with-pomegranate-vinaigrette.html#tabrecipe>

Egyptian Barley Salad with Pomegranate Vinaigrette

from *Once Upon a Chef*

Servings: 6 to 8

- 1-1/2 cups pearl barley
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 2 1/2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses (see note)
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
- 1/2 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 cup unsalted shelled pistachios or walnuts, chopped coarse
- 4 oz feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes



- 1/2 cup scallions, green parts only, thinly sliced (you'll need 4 to 6 scallions)
- 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds

1. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in a large pot or Dutch oven. Add barley and 1 tablespoon salt, return to boil, and cook until tender, about 45 minutes, or according to package instructions. Drain barley, spread onto rimmed baking sheet, and let cool completely, about 15 minutes.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, sugar, cinnamon, cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon salt.

3. Add the barley, cilantro, raisins, and pistachios (or walnuts) and gently toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Spread barley salad evenly on serving platter and arrange feta, scallions, and pomegranate seeds in separate diagonal rows on top. Drizzle with extra oil and serve.

4. Make Ahead: The cooked barley and vinaigrette can be refrigerated separately for up to 3 days. To serve, bring barley and vinaigrette to room temperature, whisk vinaigrette to recombine, and continue with step 3, seasoning to taste as necessary. Dressed salad can be held up to 2 hours at room temperature before serving.

Note: Pomegranate molasses is sold at some large grocers, Whole Foods or Middle Eastern markets. You can also buy it online.

Exploring among Saguaros – Bluedicks

By Jane Haynes, Founder and Past AHA President

Editor's Note: This is an article written by Jane Haynes and reprinted from the May, 1991 issue of the Arizona Herb Association newsletter. The botanical drawing was also done by Jane.

If you are in Arizona's rolling hills from late February until May, you will no doubt be attracted by a pretty pale blue to blue-violet flower on a slender, leafless stalk about 10 to 14 inches tall. It is the common, and often abundant, Bluedicks, *Dichelostemma pulchellum*, a delicate member of the Lily family. It may occur in colonies or alone, scattered on mesas and open slopes or on rolling hillsides, below 5,000 feet elevation, from southwestern New Mexico to Oregon, and in California, Baja California and Sonora, Mexico. Locally, we find it in the higher, hillier parts of Fountain Hills in the McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

In Arizona, the most common form of the species is var. *pauciflorum*. Its flowers are paler blue in color

with narrower bracts. There are six stamens hidden within the flower tube.

Bluedicks are known by many names: Brodiaea, Desert Hyacinth, Covena, Papago-lily and Grassnuts. Its old botanical name was *Brodiaea capitata pauciflora*, named for the Scottish botanist James J. Brodie. *Capitata* meant having a head, and *pauciflora* meant few flowers. In many localities it is still known as Brodiea, pronounced Bro-DEE-uh. Pulchellum in its valid name means pretty, which indeed it is.

Bluedicks flowers are in a few flowered clusters at the top of a slender naked stalk which rises from a small perennial bulb. The bulb has a papery covering. The basal leaves are single and smooth. They resemble an onion leaf and may be a foot or more long. Look for the leaves early in their growing season, for they dry up and disappear before the flower has finished blooming.



Sometimes the bluedicks flower is mistakenly thought to be that of the Bursage because they are often found growing up through that plant's branches. Bursage acts as a nurse plant, protecting it. If you follow the flower stalk down to the leaves, you will see how this is so.



For centuries, the Southwestern Indians have relied upon the desert's wild resources for survival. The small edible bluedicks bulb was one of those resources and was used by the Pimas and Papagos. Thus, the name Papago-lily. When the white settlers came, they too used them and called them "grassnuts."

Look for this pretty little flower. It is a delight.



Students and Dr. Sweat supporting the West Valley Campus Community Garden. See article on page 4.

A Love Affair with the “Love Apple”

Part 2

Unraveling the Mysteries & Myths of the Tomato



Heirloom Tomatoes with Stories:

All of these tomatoes are worth experimenting with in your gardens, however, if you are just starting out, the varieties with the (*) will be the easier plants to find success with here in the low desert. FYI, the beefsteak tomatoes are generally the most challenging tomato to grow in the desert (they are prone to splitting) with the cherry tomatoes being the easiest.

Beefsteak Tomatoes (Indeterminant)

- **Mortgage Lifter:** This variety was bred in the 1930s by a farmer who claimed that selling these large, meaty tomatoes helped him pay off his mortgage.
- **Gold Medal:** A large, meaty, and juicy bi-colored heirloom, this beefsteak tomato is marbled red and yellow. It was originally introduced in 1921 as the Ruby Gold tomato by John Lewis Childs; in 1976, Ben Quisenberry renamed the variety Gold Medal and listed it in his catalog, describing it as "the sweetest tomato you ever tasted."
- **Red Brandywine:** This deep red beefsteak tomato that is juicy, tart, and big on sweet tomato flavor was named after Brandywine Creek in Chester County, PA, but its true origins remain a mystery. Legend says it made its way from an Ohio farm family into an ad that the Johnson and Stokes Seed Company placed in "The Ohio Farmer" newspaper in 1889.
- **Black Krim*:** This medium heirloom variety was first bred in Ukraine. The exact date of its origin is unknown, but it is likely that the

seeds were spread during the Crimean War in the 1850s. Soldiers from various European nations, likely drawn to the tomato's unique flavor and characteristics, collected the seeds. It remained relatively unknown until the 1990s, when Lars Olov Rosenstrom of Sweden introduced it to the Seed Savers Exchange, making it the first "black" tomato to be commercially available in the USA.

- **Indigo Blue Beauty:** Dr. Jim Myers of Oregon State University developed the Indigo Blue Beauty tomato by crossing cultivated tomatoes with wild tomatoes from Chile and the Galapagos Islands. The goal was to create a flavorful tomato with a unique appearance and increased nutritional value. The fruit has indigo-purple skin when exposed to sunlight, and turns bright rosy red on the bottom when ready to harvest.
- **Cherokee Purple*:** Said to have originated from seeds passed down by Cherokee farmers, this heirloom tomato boasts a rich, smoky flavor and deep purple hue.

Plum Tomatoes (may be either Determinate or Indeterminate)

- **San Marzano*:** This is a DOP-certified Italian plum tomato that is thin and pointed, with a bittersweet taste. It is ideal for stewing or saucing. One story goes that the first seed of this tomato came to Campania in 1770, as a gift from the Viceroyalty of Peru to the Kingdom of Naples, and that it was planted in the area of San Marzano sul Sarno. (indeterminate)
- **Cornue des Andes:** This is an heirloom variety native to the Andean region, specifically Peru, with its name translating to "Horn of the Andes." French explorers are credited with introducing this tomato to Europe. They were drawn to its unique, long, pointed, pepper-like shape, which made it ideal for sauces and cooking due to its meaty, dense flesh with few seeds. (indeterminate)

All Purpose Hybrid

- **Celebrity*:** A hybrid tomato variety with fruit approximately 4" in diameter, and developed by Colen Wyatt in 1984, it was recognized with the All-America Selections award for its outstanding performance, including its flavor, yield, and disease resistance. It is considered a semi-determinate, because it grows to only 3 to 4 feet, but continues to produce fruit all season.

Cherry Tomatoes (Indeterminate)

- **Punta Banda***: This heirloom variety originated on the Punta Banda peninsula in Baja California, Mexico, where it was originally found growing wild. Its story is tied to seed savers who collected its seeds and cultivated it for its unique drought-tolerant qualities. The plant produces small, meaty, cherry-sized tomatoes with a balanced sweet-tart flavor and low juice content, making it ideal for salads and pastes.
- **Sun Gold***: A vibrant, golden-yellow hybrid cherry tomato with an exceptionally sweet flavor, the Sun Gold tomato originated in Japan, developed by the Tokita Seed Company. It gained widespread popularity due to its unique taste, becoming a global sensation after being introduced to the UK market in the early 1990s by Thompson and Morgan, where it was often described as the "sweetest tomato ever."
- **Juliet***: This hybrid variety, introduced in the 1990s, quickly became popular for its grape-like shape, crack resistance, and ability to thrive in hot climates. A favorite among desert gardeners, its short 60-day maturity makes it a perfect fit for Phoenix's growing season.
- **Sweet 100***: Bred for its exceptional sweetness, this variety dates back to the 1950s and was developed to produce clusters of bite-sized tomatoes bursting with sugary flavor. It's beloved in Arizona for its heat tolerance and incredible yield, often producing hundreds of tomatoes on a single plant.
- **Yellow Pear***: This heirloom variety has been cultivated for centuries and is cherished for its whimsical, pear-shaped fruit and bright yellow color. Its mild, sweet flavor and impressive productivity make it a garden staple in Phoenix, where it thrives with proper care even during the warmer months.
- **Chocolate Cherry***: A rare heirloom variety with Russian origins, this tomato was rediscovered in the 1990s. Aaron Whaley, founder of Seed Savers Exchange and owner of A.P. Whaley Seed Co., developed this variety to improve upon the Black Cherry tomato, making it more uniform in size and flavor, while retaining its rich, sweet taste and deep, dark hue. His work helped make this delicious variety a favorite among heirloom tomato enthusiasts.



Scientific First:

The *Flavr Savr* tomato was the first genetically engineered food to hit grocery shelves in 1994. It was modified to stay firm and fresh longer—an innovation that stirred debate about food science and ethics. This was, in fact, the first "GMO" to be granted a license for human consumption (obtained by the Calgene company, which was later bought out by Monsanto). In the United States, 93 percent of soybeans and 88 percent of corn is genetically altered; much of it ends up unlabeled in processed foods or fed to livestock.

A Modern Revival of Tradition

In recent years, chefs and herbalists alike have rediscovered the tomato's lesser-known parts. Whether experimenting with leaves or growing heirloom varieties rich in history, the humble tomato is being celebrated, not just for its fruit, but also for its complexity as an herbaceous plant.

In your garden, consider treating tomatoes like herbs. The next time you stir up a sauce, don't be afraid to toss in a few fresh leaves or green slices and let their essence work its magic. And, if you feel inspired, share your culinary experiments with your fellow Herbies—after all, this "love apple" still has the power to enchant.

Herbie's Kitchen Lab: It's Tinker Time Tomato Style!

Tomato Skin Chips & Powder

Tomato Chips: After peeling tomatoes for a silky puree, place the skins in a food dehydrator or oven at the lowest temperature until they're crisp (3–4 hours).

Serving Tip: Sprinkle with sea salt, smoked paprika, or dried basil for a quick snack.

Tomato Powder: Pulverize the dried tomato skins in a food processor or spice grinder.

Uses for Tomato Powder:

Stir into soups and sauces for a rich umami punch.

Sprinkle onto popcorn for a savory, tangy kick.

Add to homemade bread dough for a sun-dried tomato flavor.



Tomato Leaf-Infused Olive Oil

(For Culinary Adventurers)

Ingredients:

A handful of fresh tomato leaves (washed and well dried)

1 cup olive oil

Instructions:

Gently warm the olive oil over low heat (do not boil).

Add the tomato leaves and let them steep for 15–20 minutes.

Strain the oil and store it in a glass bottle in the refrigerator for best shelf life.



Uses: Drizzle over fresh mozzarella and basil, or toss with pasta for a subtle herbal tomato note. (Note: Avoid using this oil long-term due to safety concerns with fresh plant-infused oils—best for short-term use within a week or so.)

Green Tomato Pickles (Perfect for Unripe Tomatoes)



Ingredients:

2 cups sliced green tomatoes
1 cup white vinegar
1 cup water
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
2 garlic cloves, sliced

Instructions:

Heat the vinegar,

water, sugar, and salt until dissolved.

Pack the tomatoes, mustard seeds, and garlic into a jar.

Pour the brine over the tomatoes. Seal and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Serving Tip: These pickles add a tangy crunch to sandwiches or charcuterie boards.

Tomato Stem-Infused Broth

(For a Hidden Flavor Boost)

Tomato stems have a surprisingly fragrant, earthy aroma. Here's a trick: After trimming tomatoes, wash the stems and



toss them into a simmering vegetable broth. The stems will infuse the broth with a tomato-y, garden-fresh flavor.

Remove the stems before serving. This works especially well in tomato-based soups or stews.

Tomato Gelato (Yes, You Read That Right!)



For a unique dessert and palette cleanser: Combine roasted, caramelized tomatoes with honey and fresh basil. Blend into a gelato or sorbet base for a savory-sweet treat reminiscent of heirloom tomatoes with a touch of

summer herbs. (Tomato lovers only!)

Heirloom Tomato Scrap Salt

Dry leftover tomato pulp, cores, seeds, and skins.

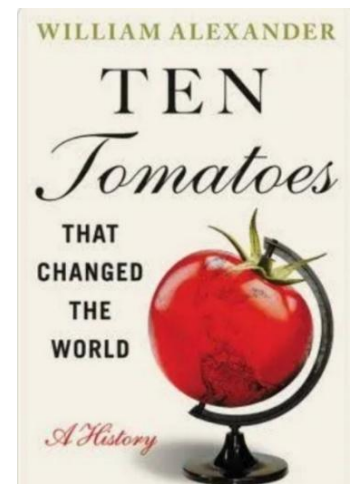
Grind them into a powder and mix with sea salt and dried herbs (like oregano or thyme).



This makes an incredible finishing salt for avocado toast, pasta, roasted veggies or a unique cocktail glass rim.

This article was written by Liz Lonetti with research assistance from her favorite AI bot, ChatGPT, who liberally sprinkled in digital bits of tomato trivia.

If you want to learn more, Pam Perry turned me onto a fun book written by William Alexander, "Ten Tomatoes that Changed the World."



Weed & Feed, February 25, 2025

Volunteers gathered bright and early on a sunny morning to share food, ideas and information, and to accomplish seasonal gardening chores. Mike had his usual collection of interesting plants, some of which are weeds. He also brought several packages of heirloom beans and an informational news article on the bean club that sells them, Rancho Gordo <https://www.ranchogado.com/>

Donna and Keith Lorch arrived with fresh garden signs to replace those that have suffered from too many seasons of exposure, and new ones for plants acquired in the past few months. In a couple of trips around the garden, we collected signs currently without plants (to be saved for future use), and installed the new signs. This is a huge component of the educational outreach Herbies provide; thank you, Keith and Donna, for your continued attention to this project. Keith then was sidetracked into a couple irrigation challenges; he helps the master gardeners in the vegetable garden, as well as maintains the system in the herb gardens.

Weeds were not as plentiful as in years past, but we found a few handfuls lurking in the shadow of other plants and consigned them to compost!



Mid-February is the average last frost date for Maricopa County. Those plants that are winter pruned are pruned in February as a precaution against freeze damage on new growth. At the garden, the moringa was again topped or pollarded, and the queen's wreath was cut to the ground and removed from the trellis.

Heidi Maxson takes a turn pruning the moringa tree, as George looks on.

After consulting with Pam, George Reconco supervised the moringa pruning; several herbies took turns practicing their pruning skills.



MG trainees John and Jackie join herbies Teri Thorpe, John Barkley and Colleen Eaglehouse in the removal of the queen's wreath vine. Photos this page by Sandy Cielaszzyk

Thinning was also done on the twisted myrtle. How different the garden looks after this work. In a few months, these big plants will regain ownership of much space, the queen's wreath will fill the trellis, and both will bloom again.

Seed cleaners reorganized, after being moved while the moringa was pruned, and more seed is ready for packaging. Other volunteers were delegated to various seeding plants, and spent time collecting additional seeds, insuring work for many future seed cleaning projects! Inside the Palo Verde room, the ways and means gang was busy! Seed envelopes were stamped, seeds packaged, plants and seeds sold, and snacks enjoyed....

Pam failed to shop the nurseries for plants this month, but she had seeds to plant. A rosemary not living up to its given name was removed and rehomed, leaving a place for Shungiko seeds, the edible chrysanthemum, to be planted.

Mike contributed white sage, lemon thyme and several scented geranium plants, which were tucked into various locations. Several volunteer asparagus plants were dug and rehomed as well.

We left a tidy garden and a full dumpster. Thank you to those who shared snacks - the oranges, sour orange pie, muffins, and other snacks were welcome as energies began to flag.

Pam Perry and Mike Hills,
Demo Garden Co-captains

Herbies, this is your newsletter. If you have an herbal contribution, please email us before the 15th of the month to be in next month's edition: newsletter@azherb.org
Sandy Cielaszzyk and Lee Ann Aronson, The Newsletter Team

**REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR
ARIZONA FEDERATION OF GARDEN CLUBS
2025 CONVENTION--DON'T MISS OUT!**

Any questions, please email azgardenconvention@gmail.com.



AFGC State Convention

April 27, 2025

Pacific Region Convention

April 28-30, 2025

**Join Us in Tempe for “Wild & Water Wise” Events
LEARN - GROW - BUILD - PARTY**

Brent Leech
Master Floral
Designer
AZ Flower Market



Sunday, April 27

Kim Gray
Land Conservation
Boyce Thompson
Arboretum



Monday, April 28th

Karen Cesare
Water Conservation
Central Arizona
Project



Tuesday, April
29th

Linda Larson
Traveling Gardener
1000 Gardens



Tuesday, April
29th

Regenerative Gardening • Building Bee/Insect Hotels • Fruit Grafting • Seed Saving
NFS Reforestation • Herbal Teas • Make & Take Floral Workshops • Wild at Art
Color Theory in Design • Club Officers Networking • Membership Workshop
Low Water Use Gardening • Date Palm Harvesting • MCC Rose Garden Tour
AHA Herb Garden Tour • Boyce Thompson Arboretum Tour • Club Basket Raffle
Silent Auction • Art in Bloom Flower Show • Educational Displays

Early Registration Ends February 28

For More Information or to Register: azgardenclubs.com/conventions

Wynham Phoenix Airport/Tempe

1600 S 52nd St, Tempe AZ 85281

Rooms are going fast! Book Now from the link at azgardenclubs.com/conventions

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Inside this Month's Issue:

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- February Herb of the Month: Cotton by Tammy Aragaki
- The Versatile Iris by Kathleen McCoy
- Foods of Love & Kindness Culinary
- February Weed & Feed
- AFGC Convention Registration

*The only difference between
a flower and a weed is
judgement.*

Wayne Dyer