



The Arizona Herb Association

September 2025

A Publication for Members & Friends

<https://azherb.org/>

Dear Herbies,

I hope you all enjoyed a restful summer, and perhaps were able to travel to some cooler climes to enjoy the variety of flora the earth has to offer. As the seasons turn, I'm excited to welcome everyone back after our summer hiatus to more gardening camaraderie, learning, and fun.

Our first meeting of the fall season will be **Thursday, September 4th**. I look forward to hearing about your summer garden successes, challenges, and maybe even a few unexpected surprises. It's hard to believe that it's already time to start planning and planting our fall crops!

Our other herbie events will be starting up again as well. Keep a close eye on your calendar, newsletter, and meeting announcements so you don't miss a thing.

As we begin, it's also the time to think about our club's future leadership. **Nominations for board members are now open**. Serving on the board is a wonderful way to contribute your talents, share ideas, and help shape the direction of our club. It's also a lot of fun and a great way to make friends with some truly wonderful people. Whether you'd like to nominate yourself or another member, please reach out to me as soon as possible. Let's make this a season full of inspiration, growth, and community.

I can't wait to see you all again and dive into another year of gardening adventures together.

You'll find me singing in my garden,

Tammy Aragaki
President



Calendar

September 2025

Thursday, September 4: General Meeting

Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.

Topic: Herbs for the Immune System

Speaker: Clinical Herbalist Brittney Sounart

Herb of the Month: Lemon Verbena

Presenter: Liz Lonetti



Saturday, September 6: Weed & Feed

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Thursday, September 11: AZRFG meeting

Location: Garden Valley Center; Time: 7:00 p.m.

Topic: Fruits of the Desert

Saturday, September 27: Herbal Workshop

Theme: Herbal Medicine Making

Instructor: Herbalist Ashley Johnston

Location: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

Palo Verde Room

Sign up on the AHA calendar.

Saturday, September 27: Culinary Event

Theme: Fall Holiday Foods

Hosts: Nancy & Jerry Greenberg

Details on AHA online calendar

<https://azherb.org/>

October 2025

Thursday, October 2: General Meeting

Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.

Topic: TBD

Speaker: Students of JoAnn Sanchez

Herb of the Month: Moujean Tea Plant

Presenter: Mike Hills



Saturday, October 4: Weed & Feed

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Saturday, October 25: Culinary Event

Theme: Vegetarian Fall Flavors

Hosts: Hazel & Les Davis

Details and Sign-up at <https://azherb.org/>

Wednesday, October 29: AHA Board Meeting

Time: 7:00 p.m. Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85178400220?pwd=YbUnRIHPRC2zfWUMV6gZu1GwfyhJIP.1>

Meeting ID: 851 7840 0220

Passcode: 616018

See a listing of Fall Plant and Seed Sales
on page 4

September General Meeting

Welcome back all to our September AHA general meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 4. We are pleased to welcome back Brittney Sounart as our featured September speaker. Brittney's herbal career sprouted out of necessity -- beget with uncomfortable digestive issues, she sought answers for her gastral malady.



In 1999, she opened an herb store and holistic shop, Desert Sage Herbs in Chandler, AZ with her mom. Then Brittney pursued her dream of becoming an herbalist in the herbalism program at SWIHA. In 2001, she became a clinical herbalist. Her speaking presentation "*Top 5 Herbs & Mushrooms to Strengthen the Immune System*" is a must-see, didactic event! She will also be bringing in tea for us to sample and will have handouts for the Herbies.



Our dear Herbie Liz Lonetti, Past AHA President, is known as a servant leader and dynamic speaker. She is an active member and contributor of AHA plus works full-time as a senior planner and associate at an architectural firm. Liz has selected Lemon Verbena as the September Herb of the Month.



Bring your enthusiasm, a friend, and some food to share at our meeting break. A recipe or list of ingredients is most helpful to those with dietary concerns. **A reminder to please bring your own plate and utensils. Pack them up now so you don't forget.**

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

Topic: September AHA General Meeting

Date: Thursday, September 4, 2025

Meeting begins promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81288082383?pwd=ciryfLyJUDuyspcmvTEELZcfH705tb.1>

Meeting ID: 812 8808 2383

Passcode: 088744

Welcome New AHA Members:

Jane Haynes Scholarship recipient
Tanya Klymenko
Zip Code: 85032

Joshua Murphy
Zip Code: 85201

Gordie Hunt
Zip Code: 85383

Mackenzie Cotlow
Zip Code: 85250

Tammy and Michael Toguchi
Zip Code: 85297

Deborah Betz
Zip Code: 85282

Allison Wiener
Zip Code: 85016

Cynthia (Cindy) Daniels
Zip Code: 85260

April Lillard
Zip Code: 85041

Kyle Schroeder
Zip Code: 85258

Lauren Fieman
Zip Code: 85048

Tammy Aragaki, Membership Committee



Ways and Means News

Dear Herbies,

Welcome back! There are several events coming up this Fall and it's time to prepare. For those of you that can propagate native plants from your gardens, I would like you to get started. Our first big event is the Master Gardener Metro Tech Fall Festival on Saturday, October 25th. The event goes from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and I will need volunteers to man the booth, help with set up and tear down, and do plant delivery. We will order plants from Premier at Whitfield Nursery, just as we have in the past. Any plants that the membership can propagate and donate will make the event that much more profitable for us.

We have two events on Saturday, November 8th.

The first is an information/ free seeds booth at Nature Fest PHX 2025. I will need one or two volunteers for that event, which runs from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It's at 2801 South 7th Avenue (Rio Salado 7th Avenue Trailhead). The event is always well attended and there will be a food truck in the parking lot.

The second event is the Arizona Rare Fruit Growers Fall Sale at Lehigh Montessori in Mesa. This event is from 8:00 a.m. to noon. We have participated in this event in the past, so it will be business as usual. If they don't cancel, we will need volunteers to help with set up, take down and selling merchandise.

Mike Hills will be speaking about Moujean at the October general meeting, and we plan on ordering a flat of those plants from our old supplier-Mountain Valley Growers. I hope to get them delivered in time to sell to members at our October meeting; we will bring remaining plants to sell at the MG/Metro Tech event. As this will be a special order, the cost to the membership will be in the \$12- \$15 range.

Over the summer Bernie Arnecke, Lauren Espinoza and I have been trying to propagate Seep Willow. I have had limited success, but I think Bernie has been more successful. Those that survive the summer will be available at the MG/Metro Tech Fall Festival. Learn more about the plant here:

https://southwestdesertflora.com/WebsiteFolders/All_Species/Asteraceae/Baccharis%20salicifolia,%20Seepwillow.html

Katherine Tarr
Vice President - Ways and Means

Treasurer's Report (as of August 20, 2025)



Cash on Hand	
Wells Fargo Checking	\$ 6,492.22
Wells Fargo Savings	\$ 1,000.69
Cash Boxes (2)	\$ 300.00
TOTAL	\$ 7,792.91

Fiscal Year (7.1.24-6.30.25)

Fundraising Income	\$15,766.85
Expenses	\$13,239.12
Net Gain	\$ 2,527.73

Chris George
AHA Treasurer

A huge thank you to Chris George for her years of service as our Treasurer. She has been a devoted member of our AHA Board and we are grateful for her leadership and help keeping us a viable association!

Fall 2025 Plant and Seed Events!

Event: Fall Seed Swap

Where: Chandler Sunset Library
4930 W Ray Road
Chandler, AZ 85226

When: Sunday, September 14

Time: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Fall planting season has arrived! Visit the Chandler Sunset Library and share seeds, seed starts, and plant cuttings with your neighbors. Meet local gardeners, Master Gardeners, and other community members with the expertise to help you start or maintain your desert garden, conserve water when and where you can, and more!

You can participate even if you do not bring seeds. It's the perfect opportunity for new Arizona residents who want to establish a garden of their own. Envelopes and markers will be provided. Everyone and all ages are welcome! There will be a prize raffle to win a desert gardening book! Kathy Eastman and Lee Ann Aronson will host a table for AHA.

<https://chandler.bibliocommons.com/events/68701a3c84614f42001c9f7b>

Event: Great American Seed-UP

Where: North Phoenix Baptist Church
5757 N. Central Ave, Building B
Phoenix, AZ 85012

When: Friday, November 7, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

When: Saturday, November 8, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

This is an opportunity to purchase adaptable, non-GMO, and heirloom seeds in bulk.

More info & tickets:

<https://greatamericanseedup.org> Under "events"

Event: Fall Plant Sale

Where: Desert Botanical Garden
1201 N. Galvin Parkway
Phoenix, AZ 85008

When: Thursday to Sunday, October 16 – 19

Thursday, October 16 – Members only

Friday to Sunday, Oct 17-19 – general public

Time: 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Reservations required

<https://dbg.org/events/spring-plant-sale-3/2025-10-16/>



Event: Master Gardener Metro Tech Festival

Where: Metro Tech High School
1900 W Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85015

When: Saturday, October 25

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

This festival is a great place to get plants and garden related merchandise. Come early for the best selection!

Event: Nature Fest PHX 2025

Where: Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area 2801 South 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85003

When: Sunday, November 8

Time: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Event: Arizona Rare Fruit Growers Sale

Where: Lehi Montessori School
2415 N Terrace Circle
Mesa, AZ 85203

When: Saturday, November 8

Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon

This is a chance to get plants and trees propagated by AZRFG members.

September Workshop

Join us for a hands-on workshop where you'll discover the art and practice of herbal medicine-making.

You'll learn to:

- 🌿 How to properly harvest and dry medicinal herbs
- 🌿 The basics of herbal energetics and choosing plants for wellness
- 🌿 Step-by-step guidance on formulating your own therapeutic herbal tea

Each participant will take home herbal samples of their own custom tea blend!

27th | SATURDAY | At 11am

RESERVE YOUR SPOT:

<https://AZHerb.org>

Location: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Palo Verde Room

June's HOT Culinary with the Templetons



On Saturday, June 7, 2025, twenty-two Herbies gathered at the home of Drew and Todd Templeton for An Herbie Baked Potato Party. The planned patio event got moved indoors at the last minute due to the record-breaking 105° temperature; we wanted to bake the potatoes but not the guests!

This dinner worked a bit differently than usual. We provided the potatoes, and those attending signed up to bring a variety of toppings. So many delicious combinations to mix and match and try!

Guests and their contribution of toppings included Janet (Herbed Lemon Butter, Dill Sour Cream and Smoked Salmon); Pam Schuler (Sour Cream, both Dairy and Vegan, and Cheddar Cheese); Donna and Keith Lorch (Bacon Crumbles and Ratatouille); Timorie Coleman (Diced Salami, Blue Cheese, and Ranch Sauce); Rachel and John Diamant (Sautéed Mushrooms and Sautéed Onions); Chris Lueck (Cowboy Caviar); Tami and Tim Phillips (Pinenuts); Bernie Arnecke (Roasted Veggies); Todd Templeton (Ginger Miso Sauce); Pam Perry and Henry Harding (Tapenade and Tzatziki); and Nancy Greenberg (Spicy Peanut Butter Sauce).

And, to round out our dinner, Janet Coleman brought Green Salad with Vinaigrette and Tami Phillips made Quinoa Tabouli Salad with Feta.

To sweeten the evening, Jerry Greenberg provided homemade Vin D' Orange and Drew brought out the homemade Limoncello.

For a different take on our baked potato theme, Drew made a Sweet Potato Cake with Lemon Ginger Icing, Nancy Greenberg baked a delicious Chocolate Zucchini Cake, and Janet Coleman created a beautiful Limoncello Mascarpone Cake.

Join us on Saturday, September 27, 2025, when Nancy and Jerry Greenberg will host with the theme Fall Holiday Foods. Sign up here for our next culinary event:

<https://azherb.org/calendar/#!/event/2025/9/27/september-culinary-dinner>

Drew

Drew Templeton, Culinary Chair



At our latest AHA Herbal Workshop on Moringa, participants learned how to grow it, brew it, and boost their health! Photo by Liz Lonetti

Moringa Herbal Workshop

At our August 16, 2025 AHA Workshop on Moringa, participants learned about the nutritional benefits and medicinal uses of the plant often referred to as the "miracle tree" or the "drumstick tree." All parts of the moringa tree are useful – leaves, pods, seeds, flowers, bark and roots!



Herbalist Ashley Johnston, shared with those attending a recipe for Moringa Lemonade and encouraged participants to add moringa to their meals. Photo by Mike Hills

Growing moringa is relatively easy, even for beginners. Ashley gave tips for growing the plant, done either with seeds or cuttings. Moringa is drought tolerant, once established. Leaves can be harvested regularly; pods are typically harvested when young and tender.

See information on our next AHA Herbal Workshop on the topic of herbal medicine making on page 4.

Moringa Lemonade

Ingredients:

One gallon water

2 cups dry Moringa leaves

Make tea by steeping leaves for 10 to 15 minutes. Add the juice of 7 lemons, and honey to your liking.

The Power of Poison: An Interactive and Unforgettable AHA Tour

Visible from afternoon until after midnight on the third of August, a waxing gibbous moon was the faithful companion of members of the AHA who entered into a tantalizing, perilous trek through the world of poisons. The exhibit, the Power of Poison, clearly captivating and paradoxical, drew the members into an enchanting exploration of nature's toxic arsenals and their equally fascinating antidotes.

We learned that too large a sample of poisons absorbed, inhaled or ingested can result in death, even though most can claim organic credentials. Ironically, without some poisons, life can be snuffed out as quickly as a candle flame on a dark and windy night. Think digitalis, better known as foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*).

Foxgloves, as the story goes, can "raise the dead and kill the living." A sufficient quantity of this innocent looking poisonous plant and the final curtain is drawn; yet medicines made from this angiosperm's dried leaves are used to treat congestive heart failure, high blood pressure and other related cardiac conditions.

On the AHA magical mystery tour, we learned to be less trusting of the "organic" or "natural" moniker often associated with unsullied green produce. Potentially poisonous chemicals can be natural; for example, belladonna, botulinum and tetrodotoxin produce deadly chemicals naturally. The most toxic compound is botulinum (*Clostridium botulinum*), which is a million times more deadly than dioxin, the deadliest manufactured compound. A new respect for wrinkles developed as we learned that botulinum is the compound that is used in Botox®. The toxin blocks nerve impulses and temporarily paralyses the muscles that cause wrinkles, giving the skin a smoother appearance. Botulinum is also used for medical procedures such as the treatment of muscle spasms.

Almost overwhelming, the tour widened the knowledge base of our members. There were five sections in the exhibit; each highlighted a unique aspect of poisons:

- Poison In Nature
- Poison in Myth & Legends
- Detecting Poison
- Poison by Accident
- Poison for Good



Pam Schuler at the Arizona Science Center on August 3 for AHA's Tour to "The Power of Poison" Exhibit. As you turned the pages of this magic book, a new story was projected onto it. Photo by Liz Lonetti

Through cleverly displayed readings and interactive dioramas, AHA members were mesmerized. We even interacted with a magic book. Touch a blank page and writing would appear, explaining an illustrated poison, pedigree, uses and effects. One member even commented that she was going to be more careful about tasting unknown plants. To test our ability to come to the rescue in the event of poisoning, games were offered, giving clues on the way to solutions. Most of us decided to keep our day jobs and check with more qualified diagnosticians.

By Kathleen McCoy

Fall Garden Tours

Many thanks to Liz Lonetti for the heavy lifting on the Herbie tour to the Arizona Science Center a few Sundays back, and to Sandy Cielaszyk for getting the message out to our members!

The focus of Fall 2025 tours will on community gardens. Do you have one you want us to visit? If so, please send details, with contacts to:

teriinthegarden@gmail.com

Teri Thorpe,
AHA Tour Coordinator



Surprising Secrets of Common Purslane

I became aware of common purslane (*Portulaca oleracea* L.) in the UA Demonstration Garden, where the weed was summarily plucked from the soil like an unwanted guest at a family reunion. This ancient wanderer, known for over 4000 years, is thought to be native to Iran or India and was already at home in the New World when European colonization occurred, providing an abundant and free source of greens. This prolific succulent thrives in a wide range of climates, cultures, and regions, including the arid and inhospitable low desert of Arizona. Frost and too much water bestow mortal blows for purslane.

Hallmarks of purslane include diffusely branched, smooth and glossy green or red stems up to one foot long with a very thin diameter, less than one inch. Flat, egg-shaped, slightly fleshy leaves about 2-inches long are wider at the tip than the base, and lie almost flat to the ground. Beginning in May, and continuing through the first frost, each purslane tip hosts a single flower no larger than the size of .28-inch button. Five petaled purple, white, orange or yellow blooms usually open during sunny mid-morning and close by early afternoon. Each plant can produce 200,000 seeds with a 30 to 40-year viable shelf life. Which brings us to why common purslane is considered a weed.

Purslane has survival superpower. Even the tiniest part of a stem or root left in the ground can keep producing new plants. Purslane's flat plant structure and rapid growth rate suffocates less robust native plants due to lack of space or light, effectively reducing native animals which need plant diversity to survive. In fact, common purslane has the honor of being on the Arizona Noxious Weed List.

Yet farmers in the Northeastern United States are creating cultivars and harvesting the weed to export to markets around the world, where the food and medicinal value harbored in this humble plant are highly prized. Edible seeds and leaves are used in many countries in Latin American and the Middle East. Numerous kitchens in Europe use purslane too, and, with French cuisine as the most notable cheerleader, no wonder the plant has been the star of many cookbooks throughout the ages. Due to its tart and salty flavor, purslane is a favorite ingredient in salads, soups, stews and tomato sauces. To make a pesto, exchange basil leaves for purslane. Replace lettuce with a layer of purslane to spice up a sandwich. Move over cornstarch; when cooked, purslane becomes mucilaginous and acts as a thickener.

Beyond the kitchen cupboard, common purslane is a [nutritional dynamo](#). Containing more health benefits than a rosary has beads, purslane contains Vitamins A, B, and C, Potassium, Calcium, Iron, Choline, and Magnesium. This amazing succulent holds 10 to 20 times more melatonin, an antioxidant, and more omega 3 fatty acids than any other fruit or vegetable on earth.

Purslane has been linked to heart and bone health and diabetes management. Purslane, rich in folate, supports well-being in multiple ways from vision to brain health. The World Health Organization lauds purslane as one of the most used medicinal plants on the planet.



<https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/common-purslane-portulaca-oleracea/>

By Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist

Sources:
<https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-purslane>

<https://azinvasiveplants.arizona.edu/invasive-plant/purslane>

Moujean Tea Plant

Nashia inaguensis, also known as Moujean Tea or Bahama Berry, is a fragrant, evergreen shrub, grown for its aromatic leaves used in making herbal tea. Mike Hills reports that we have a plant, five to seven years old and about three feet tall, on the south side of the twisted myrtle in the AHA Demonstration Garden.

The plant has white blooms in spring followed by small orange berries about 1/8-inch in diameter.



Mike will share more about this plant when he presents is as the Herb of the Month in October. Katherine Tarr hopes to have the plant available for purchase by members at that meeting. Come check it out at September's Weed & Feed!

Industrial Hemp: The Hardworking Sibling of the Hippie Weed With Dr. Ken Sweat



Dr. Ken Sweat, our June guest speaker, and Shay Emmers, AHA VP in charge of programs

When did humans first start growing and using hemp? Some archaeological evidence suggests a single domestication origin of *C. sativa* in East Asia. Other studies suggest a multiregional origin of cannabis utilization in different parts of Eurasia is more likely. And, additional domestication centers cannot be ruled out, since other regions in Eurasia still lack systematic archaeobotanical investigations. It appears that cannabis, like cotton, was domesticated more than once. Scientists were left frustrated because studies weren't consistent.

What we do know, however, is that hemp was one of the first domesticated plants. Carbon dating confirmed cannabis use in China from 4000 BC. Hemp was an important source of fiber for clothing and cordage in Japan approximately six to ten thousand years ago. And, more recently, hemp has been grown for cannabinoids such as cannabidiol (CBD).

At our general meeting on Thursday, June 5, we learned from Dr. Ken Sweat, professor from ASU West Campus, about the use of hemp in medicinal, recreational, industrial and commercial sectors, as well as some new research developments for its use.

Hemp is dioecious plant, with some plants being female and others male. However, only female plants produce flower buds with cannabinoids, and only until they are pollinated. Once pollinated, female plants produce seeds, which are very nutritious and can be a source of seed oil. Hemp as a fiber can be used in making cloth and paper; in fact, our constitution was written on hemp.

A genome study looked at over 110 types of hemp and found four basic family groups of hemp: basal cannabis (ancient lineages), hemp, drug (marijuana) and a feral drug type (wild growing cannabis that escaped cultivation). Legally, <0.3 THC is considered a hemp plant while >0.03 THC is considered to be marijuana.

In 2019, hemp, primarily for CBD, was everywhere. There were about 100 farms in Arizona growing hemp. With the flooding of the market, the price of hemp collapsed. Today there is one Arizona farm which continues to grow hemp as a commercial crop.

Besides pricing, problems for farmers also included:

1. Processing of CBD oil was not easy; it was not well known how to do this.
2. There was genetic variability and inconsistency in seed sources.
3. Crops with more than .3% CBD were marijuana and illegal. They needed to be destroyed.
4. There was a lack of knowledge about the plant life cycle. Hemp plants measure night light, not day light. Growth and dates of bloom can be manipulated with growth chambers, but outdoor fields were at the whim of Mother Nature.
5. Diseases:
 - a. Beet curly top virus, spread by leaf hoppers
 - b. Pythium crown and root rot, related to water mold and potato hoppers

Addressing these factors will go far in making hemp a profitable and widespread crop in Arizona. Additionally, hemp grown for new applications offers other pathways for successful hemp agriculture in the state.



Other uses for hemp include pulling contaminants, such as heavy metal toxins, out of the ground in a process called Phytoremediation. The toxins are taken up by the aerial parts of the plant but do not go into the seed. Research was conducted with hemp, sunflower, castor and bamboo plants, and hemp came out best in removing toxic substances such as cadmium. New research is also being done on hemp microgreens as a commercial crop and using "Hempcrete" fiber as precast bricks.

You will find more about the boom and bust of hemp in Arizona at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10251686/>

You can access “Physical Evidence for the Antiquity of Cannabis sativa L.” and other research referenced by Dr. Sweat using the QR Code below.

Use the following QR code to download the slideshow!



Summer Work Days in the Demo Garden

Weed & Feed June 2025

Early birds had gear out of the shed and hollyhocks felled long before I arrived at 7 a.m. It was great to get a very early start on the day. Hollyhock seed contained in tarps for transferring to the dumpster made for easy collection by folks who wanted to take seed home. The rest will not germinate in the vegetable garden. The last couple of hot weeks did the flowers in; up until then, they were scraggly but still colorful.

Mike had a collection of “weeds to watch for” on the table, along with a couple of plant specimens offered to others by those attending.



Sweet Basil, a summer delight!

Elise Pitterle donated sweet basil plants and Pam had a rescued Lady Jane Grey scented geranium to plant. Spring flowers were abundant this year and volunteers scattered with seed bags to collect their seeds; hollyhocks are not the only things going to seed. Others set up shop under the tarp to clean seeds for packaging. Weeds were pulled, and the basil corner was cleared of Mexican primrose and nutsedge, assorted weeds, and old basil carcasses to make room for the young plants.

Lady Grey landed in a pot under the moringa. Rebecca Senior joined us and, after making a few carefully considered cuts on the Red Push Pistache, she undertook to lift the canopy and remove select water shoots growing on the vitex tree. Several volunteers helped and got a thoughtful review of pruning practices, and a great tool primer, too. Keith and Donna updated signs and checked irrigation. With bunnies happy in the garden, checking irrigation needs doing every week, as well as on the day we are working in the garden.

As the morning warmed, volunteers collected water bottles and other stuff, and headed off to the next project for the day. Several of us adjourned to the Palo Verde room to pass judgment on the new furnishings (very nice), snack on hummus, fruit, and chocolate, and chat about things horticultural and otherwise. Going into high summer the garden is holding its own.

Weed & Feed July 2025

A hot and sweaty group of Herbies and Master Gardeners worked hard in the demonstration garden on July 12th, cleaning up dead plants, pulling weeds, harvesting and cleaning seeds for future sales, and repairing irrigation leaks. Basically, we attempted to give our demonstration garden plants attention and moral support to help them make it thru the summer heat.



Weed & Feed August 2025

Herbies were joined today by a fresh crop of master gardener interns for the hottest workday so far this year. We reviewed the ‘Do not do’ list as covered in the AHA Low Desert Handbook: Do not prune. Do not plant. Do not propagate. Postponing the educational hour, we toured the garden, identifying various weeds and projects and set ourselves to work in the cooler part of the morning.

Chewed irrigation lines

Somehow that prickly lettuce threads its way up through existing plants and waves flowers and seed heads in the air, almost laughing at us. Spurge, undeterred by hot temps, is growing, blooming, and if pulled, no longer making viable seeds! Nut sedge can be slightly discouraged by persistent pulling, as can our nemesis Mexican evening primrose.

We collected seeds from tall evening primrose, taking care to leave some to reseed the garden and feed finches. We snipped away at overgrown *Aloysia* and found *Ashwagandha* seedpods,



which were carefully removed and now have an envelope all their own. We hope to share these with members. This is a plant that can be started from seeds and will continue to grow here if the right microclimate is found. Our happiest specimen is located under the shelter of hops, jojoba and *Aloysia* on the Southwest corner of the retaining wall. It



Ashwagandha seedpods.

gets some eastern light and lots of filtered southern light.

Keith and Donna Lorch planted a few signs, finding penstemons and other favorites among the collection. Lauren Espinoza and Katherine Tarr collected seeds and cuttings from the Seep Willow or Mule Fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) to propagate plants to sell at various fundraisers. Tradition says mules tethered near these plants to graze were quite well fed mules! Maturing at 6 to 12 feet tall and 3 to 6 feet wide, depending on soil, light and irrigation, blooms attract pollinators and birds. This makes a good “bones of the garden” plant in a native plant collection. [https://calscape.org/Baccharis-salicifolia-\(Mulefat\)](https://calscape.org/Baccharis-salicifolia-(Mulefat))

Additionally Native Americans used the plant medicinally.

https://southwestdesertflora.com/WebsiteFolders/All_Species/Asteraceae/Baccharis%20salicifolia,%20Seepwillow.html

Keith made some irrigation repairs as we cleaned seeds of ornamental carrots and our very favorite sweet pea. We observed a very sleek, plump bunny making his way into the vegetable garden, completely unconcerned we might remotely pose a threat to his existence.



We did not clean the sprouts at the base of the myrtles, lift the canopy of the chaste tree, or do other pruning activities, waiting for cooler weather to prevail.

Photo by Sandy Cielaszyk

High heat brings on a summer dormancy. Plants are just hanging on, waiting for temps to change for the cooler, allowing them to resume normal photosynthesis. For now, plants are living on stored energy. We left the exhausted gaillardia alone. As the season changes it too will get deadheaded and perhaps even a little fertilizer to inspire lots of fresh new flowers.

Pomegranates are ripening, milkweeds have yellow aphids, hollyhocks have bloomed here and there on short spikes, and the garden holds well for a very warm summer. We look forward to seeing you on September 6. Thank you all for your hard work and good company.

Pam Perry and Mike Hills, Past Presidents and Demo Garden Captains

The Story of Arizona's Good Food: Film, Foraging, and Community in Superior

On Friday evening, August 22, 2025, Roosevelt Town Hall in Superior was buzzing with energy as the Prickly Pear Festival committee kicked off with a special screening of “The Story of Arizona’s Good Food,” a documentary by Local First Arizona that celebrates the people, cultures, and landscapes shaping our state’s food system. Part of the movie was familiar, as we had seen the story of Blue Sky Organic Farms during Shay Emmer’s presentation at our January 2, 2025, general meeting; but the film in its entirety casts a wider net, sharing the stories of dairy, vegetable and other local farmers across Arizona.

The event opened with a meet-and-greet, featuring an incredible spread of free foods prepared by local volunteers: mesquite samosas with mesquite chutney, homemade tamales with salsa, bacon-wrapped stuffed jalapeños, mesquite pizzelle cookies, prickly pear lemonade and mesquite horchata. It was the perfect prelude to a night dedicated to celebrating the flavors of the desert.



After the film, a panel discussion, led by Edmund Williams of LEHR Gardens, highlighted the diversity of perspectives in Arizona’s food movement. Author and forager John Slattery shared many stories, including about the Emory Oak, a tree so important that one translation of the word “Arizona” is “land of the good oak.” He noted that Emory Oak acorns are unique because they can be eaten without leaching or processing—a rare trait among acorns.

Our friend and fellow Herbie, Peggy Sorensen (far right in above photo), stepped in as a panelist when two others were unable to attend. She emphasized the importance of festivals like this to spread awareness about local foods, while also sharing a personal story. Six years ago, while teaching a class on mesquite at this festival, she met Mike—and they’ve been together ever since. It was a beautiful reminder that food not only sustains us, but also connects us in unexpected and lasting ways.

Chef Brett Vibber shared insights from his travels and creative work with Wild Arizona Cuisine, blending local ingredients with global techniques. One example was his use of prickly pear to make ponzu sauce for Japanese-style seafood. Inspired by both the present desert landscape and its ancient past as a vast inland sea, he crafts big batches of prickly pear vinegar to use year-round in his cooking. More at:

<https://atasteofaz.com/chef-brett-vibber-of-wild-arizona-cuisine/>

Darrel Yazzie, an extension agent with Diné College and a farmer himself, highlighted the importance of traditional local knowledge. He explained that prickly pears grown in his area of northern Arizona are naturally less juicy, making them ideal for his favorite treat, prickly pear fruit leather, while those near us here in Phoenix in lower elevations are typically juicier and easier to use for making syrups. The panelists collectively advised attendees to practice sustainable harvesting, never taking more than one-third when foraging wild foods.

https://www.instagram.com/beaniefordays_22/?hl=en



The evening concluded with a lively cooking demonstration from Chef Rodney Smith, who wowed the audience with a quick bean and nopales chili paired with golden cornbread.

<https://growspacekitchenllc.squarespace.com/>

The event was more than just a film screening—it was a joyful celebration of food, knowledge, and community. From the flavors on our plates to the stories shared on stage, the night affirmed the richness of Arizona's food culture and the importance of preserving it for generations to come.

Green Chili Chili

1 purple onion
1 yellow bell pepper
1 orange bell pepper
5 green chilis
2 cloves garlic
2 Roma tomatoes
2 tablespoons avocado oil
2 to 3 nopales (prepared chopped prickly pear pads)
1 1/2 cup cooked pinto beans
1 1/2 cup cooked black beans
1 1/2 cup cooked kidney beans
Pink Himalayan salt
Basil

Chili powder
Cumin
Paprika
Oregano
Thyme
Coriander

Prep the Ingredients: Finely chop the purple onion. Dice the bell peppers and tomatoes. Remove stems and seeds from the green chilis and finely chop. Mince the garlic cloves. Cut the nopales into bite-size pieces.

Sauté the vegetables: In a large skillet or pot, heat 2 tablespoons of avocado oil over medium heat. Add onion and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes, until translucent. Stir in the diced peppers, chopped chilis, and minced garlic. Cook for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the diced tomatoes and sliced nopales to the skillet. Stir well and cook for an additional 5 to 7 minutes, until the tomatoes start to soften. Add the beans to the mixture and stir to combine. Season to taste, starting with about 1 teaspoon of each spice. Adjust to taste.

Simmer and Serve: Reduce the heat to low and cover the skillet. Let the mixture simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, to allow the flavors to meld together. Remove from heat and serve warm.

Recipe note: While the original recipe called for okra, Chef Rodney used chopped cactus pads (nopales) instead. He said this works well because each has the same mucilaginous property; something to keep in mind to try in other recipes.

Find the recipe for Vegan Jiffy Cornbread here <https://namelymarly.com/jiffy-vegan-cornbread/>

Also, here's a link to us being silly onstage https://instagram.com/p/DNrv4uL3vv7/?utm_source=qr

Article & photos by Liz Lonetti, AHA Past President

Banner Photos (from left to right): Seed elves sometimes "winnow" collected seeds to remove the chaff; Mike Hills holds our heat stressed elderberry trying to make fruit; (center) Herbies Sandy Cielaszyk, Keith and Donna Lorch commiserate over wasp stings incurred during the morning's work; Ashwaganda (known for its stress reducing and relaxation properties) and its seedpods; a Weed & Feed volunteer admires our *Bursera microphylla*, common name elephant tree or 'torote' in Spanish. Photos by Mike Hills

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*Raise your words, not
your voice; it is rain that
grows flowers, not
thunder.*

Rumi