



The Arizona Herb Association

February 2026

Publication for Members & Friends

<https://azherb.org>

Dear Herbies,

As we revel in winter gardening during these “cooler” months, do you find yourself checking the calendar to see if spring has already sprung? Notwithstanding some already record high temperatures in 2026, there *is* reason to applaud warmer weather. For instance, if you volunteered at the Weed & Feed on Saturday, January 3, at the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Demonstration Garden, you benefited from working in very comfortable weather alongside fellow Herbies -- all in good cheer to cultivate the gardens. Some spring flowers were already in bloom, bees were buzzing, a mockingbird delighted the volunteers with flirtatious bird calls, and the hummingbirds danced amongst fresh Moringa flower nectar. *That's* the beauty of being in a park-like setting! The garden is just one of many ways to volunteer.

As we prepare for our first board meeting on February 25, please take a moment to consider how you can help our association thrive by providing your input and volunteering spirit. Encourage each other with kindness and friendship. *There's room for you to grow. We all belong!* Please talk to any of the board members or committee members during the next month as to your level of interest, as we are eager to help you showcase your talents at AHA.

You won't want to miss a bit of all the AHA fun planned for the year ahead. Be sure to renew your membership this month at our website <https://azherb.org> or pay at our meeting on February 5th.

Quick reminder -- this new year brings us a *Conservation is Key* sustainability framework from the AFGC. If you attended the January general meeting, you heard Jennifer Moreland, President of AFGC, speak about the sustainability challenge for the garden clubs, which includes AHA. On the <https://azgardenclubs.com/> website, please sign the gardener's pledge, take a few minutes to read through the four sustainability initiatives, and then take a quick “quiz” under each sustainability topic. Our AHA earns “tokens” for your sustainability pledge and quiz participation, and the results can benefit our group financially over the next few years.

Until we meet in February, enjoy your gardening pursuits with zeal! I have been diligent in removing stinknet from my yard, and have had the pleasure of harvesting some leaves for tea from horehound, London rocket, and the creosote bush.

Kind regards,

Shay Emmers
AHA President

Calendar

February 2026

Sunday, February 1: Culinary Event
Theme: American Classics
Hosts: Liz & Dan Lonetti and Finn
Details & Sign-up at <https://azherb.org>

Thursday, February 5: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Provisions, Pleasures and Poisons
of the Sonoran Desert
Speaker: Dr. Ken Sweat of ASU
Herb of the Month: Wood Sorrel
Presenter: Rachel Diamant



Saturday, February 7: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Come learn hands-on in the Demo Garden!
There will be plants and seeds for sale.

Monday, February 9: First Firewise webinar
See page 4 for details.

Wednesday, February 11: Milkweed Butterflies
Pima County Zoom Presentation
Sign up for a spot here
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/order-up-milkweed-butterflies-tickets-1852599267279>



Saturday, February 21: Culinary Event
Theme: A Taste of India
Hosts: Diane and Chris Knudsen
Details & Sign-up at <https://azherb.org>

Wednesday, February 25: AHA Board Meeting

See page 5 for news on February
Seed Swaps and Plant Sales

March 2026

Thursday, March 5: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: TBD
Speaker: Rebecca Senior
Herb of the Month: Fennel Pollen
Presenter: Alisha O'Hara



Saturday, March 7: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Come learn hands-on in the Demo Garden!

Saturday, March 21: Culinary Event
Theme: A Culinary Color Party
Host: Janet Coleman
Wear the color of the food you bring!
Details & Sign-up at <https://azherb.org>

February 2026 General Meeting

Join us at our Thursday, February 5, 2026 general meeting when Dr. Ken Sweat of ASU will speak to us on the topic "Provisions, Pleasures and Poisons of the Sonoran Desert."



For centuries, people have been using Sonoran Desert plants for food, as components of religious ceremonies, and as poisons, for purposes both beneficial and diabolic. From the highly nutritious mesquite bean to the hallucinogenic and often fatal sacred datura, Dr. Sweat's talk will explore a collection of our local plants used for such purposes by both native and modern cultures.

Herbie Rachel Diamant will present our Herb of the Month presentation on Wood Sorrel.



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

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.**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85141170155?pwd=2bEbs0HmiH0kevN1sMvablfM8j45qG.1>

View meeting insights with Zoom AI Companion

<https://us06web.zoom.us/launch/edl?muid=1a80a085-72cf-4a4b-88dd-5cb0268fde3d>

Meeting ID: 851 4117 0155

Passcode: 383611

Meeting begins promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Our January culinary review and recipes will appear in the March issue of the newsletter.

Welcome New AHA Members:

Alexis Elizaga
Andrew Keana
Zip Code: 85045

Diane Knudsen, Membership Chair



January Herb of the Month – *Viola Tricolor* By President Shay Emmers

AHA President Shay Emmers presented our January Herb of the Month – *Viola tricolor*. She shared that this was her mom's favorite flower.

Common names for this plant include wild pansy, Johnny-jump-up and violet. In Europe and Asia, the plant is known as heartsease. Violas are in the family Violaceae.



Pansies and violas are often confused; Shay explained that while all pansies are violas, not all violas are pansies. *Viola* flowers are smaller and have two petals pointing upward and three petals pointing downward. Pansy flowers have four petals pointing upward, with one pointing downward. Typically, the upper two petals are purple or violet, with the next two petals white and blended at the base with the color of the lowest petal, often yellow. Some varieties are of a single color.



History: Carl Linnaeus was the first to formally describe the *viola* plant in 1753. The plant has a long history of garden use and has been cultivated since the Middle Ages.

Culinary uses:
The beautiful *viola* flowers provide

great visual appeal when used with greens, in fruit salads or as plate garnishes. Candied violas are used to decorate various baked goods, cookies to cakes. When frozen in ice cubes, they add color to punch bowls or individual drinks.

And, they are nutritional as well. The main chemical components of plants from the genus *Viola* consist of flavonoids, coumarins, alkaloids, lignans, sesquiterpenes, cyclotides, etc. One study suggested that the plant could be used to improve the quality of food.

Medicinal Treatments / Benefits: These same phytochemical constituents are useful in herbal medicines. Originally, *Viola tricolor* was studied for use against skin disorders, including eczema, itching and impetigo. Plants of this genus have also been used by traditional healers for the management and treatment of bronchitis, asthma, respiratory inflammation, epilepsy, difficulty breathing, and rheumatism.

Other uses include as a metabolism boost and for their calming/sedative properties.

Cultivation tips: *Viola* thrive in cooler weather, in planting zones 3 to 9. Tips for successful growth include:

- Plant in sun/part sun
- Plant in ground or container pot with well-draining soil
- Fertilize when planting and then again one month later
- Deadhead flowers to reduce seed formation and increase flower production
- Allow top of soil to dry out before re-watering
- Use shade cloth on violas when sun intensifies

Shrewsbury Cakes with Lemon Icing and Candied Pansies (or Violas)

(Recipe from Drew Templeton, Photo by Julie DiMaria from March 2015 Culinary Event)
Makes 2 dozen cookies

Ingredients:

4 ounces butter, softened
5 ounces caster sugar (I used granulated sugar and it worked fine)
2 egg yolks
8 ounces plain flour
Zest of 1 lemon or orange
2 ounces chopped dried fruit, such as dried apricots, raisins, candied ginger or candied citrus peel (Optional)



Pre-heat oven to 350°. Grease two large baking sheets.

Cream the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add

the egg yolks and beat well. Stir in the flour and grated lemon rind and mix to a fairly firm dough.

Turn out on a lightly floured surface and knead lightly. Roll out to 1/4 inch thick. Cut into rounds with a cookie cutter or the rim of a glass, and place on the baking sheets.

Bake at 350° for about 15 minutes, until firm and a very light brown.

Candied Pansies

24 freshly picked pansies or violas (or more to garnish serving platter). Flowers should be from a source known not to have been sprayed with chemicals.

1 egg white, well beaten

1/4 cup sugar

Waxed paper

Wash flowers under a light spray of water, and set on paper towels to dry. Leave the stems on to serve as a handle. Using a small clean paintbrush or silicon pastry brush, brush each blossom with egg white, then sprinkle with a pinch of sugar to cover each petal. Set on waxed paper to dry for an hour.

Icing

1 cup powdered sugar

1 tablespoon milk

1-2 teaspoons lemon juice

Lemon zest for garnish, if not using pansies

Blend sugar and milk thoroughly, then add lemon juice to desired consistency and tartness. Spread on cooled cookies with a spatula. Decorate with candied pansies (trim the stem off before you place the flower on your cookie) or a sprinkle of zest. Ice and decorate a few at a time before the icing hardens.

Go Wild, Go Green, Go Garden! A Conservation Challenge from AFGC

Herbie Kim Rosenlof introduced our January speaker Jennifer Moreland, President of the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. (AFGC). The Federation is made up of 16 garden clubs, and since 2017, our Arizona Herb Association is one of those clubs.



Jennifer started with a fun quiz to find out how much we already knew about the organization and then gave a brief overview of the structure of the National Garden Clubs (the parent organization is

headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri). In Arizona, there are five districts: Central (that's where we fit in), Northern (Sedona, Kingman), Southern (Tucson), Eastern (Gold Canyon, Chandler, Sun Lakes), and Western (Yuma).



Jennifer made a point to explain various ways that both individual club members and the clubs benefit from this membership. Some of the benefits to members include social networking, floral design and flower shows, educational presentations, landscape design and scholarships. One example of educational offerings is a series of five webinars on Firewise Landscaping issues which begins on Monday, February 9 at 3:00 p.m. Arizona time. Topics for the webinars include Firewise Landscaping and Making Your Home Fire Resistant. You can sign up for the webinars here:

<https://azgardenclubs.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Pacific-Region-Firewise-Flyer-2026-with-Pacific-times.pdf>

Benefits to clubs include fundraiser support, grants, inclusion on the AFGC website, a Zoom non-profit account, and biennial conventions; the next is AFGC Biennial Convention 2027, which will be held in Tucson.

Jennifer is President of AFGC until 2027 and her President's Challenge to us over the next two years deals with sustainability and is called "Go Wild, Go Green, Go Garden!"

Take a few minutes to sign the Gardener's Pledge to wisely use and conserve natural resources through mindful daily habits here:

<https://azgardenclubs.com/TheGardenersPledge/>

Read through the four sustainability initiatives at <https://azgardenclubs.com/Conservation-is-Key/> and then take a short "quiz" under each topic – Sustainable Gardening, Reforestation, Arbor Day Tree Planting and Firewise Communities and Fire Safety. Our AHA earns "tokens" for your sustainability pledge and quiz participation, and the results can benefit our group financially over the next few years.

Earning Tokens is easy and fun. Each focus area has a set of quick definitions, links to key websites and featured online articles. There is a survey of three questions associated with the selected material. Correct answers equal tokens! It's that simple. And it's "open book."



Plant Sales & Seed Swaps In February

Chandler Sunset Library Spring Seed Swap

Details: February 8th
4930 W Ray Road
Chandler, AZ 85226
1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.



Spring planting season is fast approaching! Visit the Chandler Sunset Library on Saturday, February 8, to 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 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! Kathy Eastman and Lee Ann Aronson will host a table for AHA.

All Things Tomato Clinic



Details: Saturday, February 21
MCC Extension, 4341 E Broadway Rd.
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

There will be talks covering tomato selection, planting and basic care, tomato pests and diseases. Tomato plants will be sold. AHA will have a booth at this event. Come out and get some plants for your garden.

Phoenix Seed Swap Spring Garden Fair

Details: Saturday, February 28
Dayspring United Methodist Church
1365 E Elliot Road, Tempe 85284
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Over 15 vendors will be present, offering plants, fertilizer, amendments, and other garden goodies for sale. The event will be held in the church parking lot. Plan to bring your own boxes for transporting purchased plants. The church also has a community garden for viewing.

<https://thedesertsmellslikeveggies.com/plant-sales/>

Volunteers Needed

Katherine Tarr, VP Ways and Means, is looking for volunteers to help with the AHA booth at both the Master Gardener All Things Tomato Clinic on Saturday, February 21, and the Phoenix Seed Swap at DaySpring United Methodist Church on Saturday, February 28. Bring your calendar; she will have sign-up sheets at the February general meeting – or email her at ktarrbab@yahoo.com with your interest.



Alisha O'Hara, Herb of the Month Coordinator, is looking for volunteers to fill open slots for Herb of the Month

presentations. She will have a sign-up sheet at the February general meeting and would be happy to help anyone interested in doing an Herb of the Month presentation with ideas, research, formatting - whatever they need!

Weed & Feed January 3, 2026



Spring in the garden! Sweet peas and the elderberry in flower, along with gaillardia, yarrow and Black-eye Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*)! The desert bluebells shimmer in that lovely shade of



blue. The Jerusalem artichokes have not gone dormant, nor has the asparagus. The ginkgo dropped leaves promptly after planting in September, but has a whole new crop sunning themselves! The hollyhocks are not alone in being well ahead of schedule. Wait, no, rewind!!! This is the first Saturday in January!! What's happening???

It has been a balmy winter and even the roses are blooming, but we have powdery mildew on everything! Cool damp nights and warmish days have provided a perfect storm of conditions to support this disease, even on plants that never seem to be bothered. For most of it we will just wait out the season, and as spring comes and the humidity drops, most of the plants will outgrow the effects, but it sure looks awful right now!

A walk around the garden revealed the standard cool season weeds threading themselves among the herbs, but not so many that they crowded valued seedlings. They provide a challenge to weeder as they are small and hide well.

Led by Bernie Arnecke, herbies undertook transplanting self-sown herb seedlings into pots, while relocating some around the garden, too. Four or five dozen plants are being nurtured for upcoming plant sales. The rains this year led to abundant volunteer plants of chamomile, tobacco, rudbeckia, horehound and others.

Perry Green checked on all our containers, fertilizing them, making sure plants were happy and weeds went away. We have quite a collection of pots doing rather well these days. A little attention now and again keeps them growing.

Pam Posten lent her years of experience with roses to rejuvenating our two shrub roses. These have struggled as the summer temps have been extreme, but seem to be recovering. As a final salute, they were fed and top-dressed with compost.

Keith and Donna worked on lists for replacing and updating signs. Just before I left for the day, I chatted with some garden visitors who commented on how well our signage program seems to be working. They found it helpful for sorting out the plants and knowing why we included them in the collection. New irrigation is working well on the east side, and Keith regularly monitors all drip lines. A new baby bunny has been sighted...mmm, so cute...In December the Monarch Society released butterflies in the garden. Several have lingered and were sighted sipping on the variety of flowers still blooming.



We are trying a new approach for collecting sunflower seeds. Little white organza bags were tied over selected sunflower seedheads, protecting the ripening seeds from being eaten by the birds.

Heidi Maxson helps with "bagging" sunflower seedheads. Photos by Sandy Cielaszyk

We can clip seedheads at maturity, remove the bags, and find, we hope, viable seed aplenty! We clean bags and bags of sunflower seeds collected each first Saturday. Sometimes the quota of seed is not worth the effort. Maybe bagging seedheads will increase our productivity and success.

'Tis the season to prune pomegranates and one of ours got a great shaping this month. The bloody sorrel has again broken dormancy under that same pomegranate. One of the prettiest cool season perennials, it not only is tasty, but also offers a change in color and texture among the cool season leafy greens. Soon garlic chives will surrender seeds to seed collectors, and not self-sow throughout the garden!

Lots left to do in February: the second pomegranate needs a good pruning; the weeds never stop;

thinning and potting up volunteer plants can continue.

Thank you all for joining us on our springtime adventure in January. We had a nice visit at the end of the morning, and Jo Setliff arrived with a black-eye pea salsa to welcome the new year in fine style. Come join us on Saturday, February 7, and get in on the gardening fun!

Pam Perry and Mike Hills
Demonstration Garden Captains

A Note from your Newsletter Team:

The deadline for all newsletter submittals is the 15th of each month. When submitting articles, please cc to both Sandy Cielaszyk and Lee Ann Aronson. We welcome questions and suggestions, as well as your herbal articles, reviews and news about upcoming events. We would love to hear from you!

Exploring among Saguaros – Lace Pod

Editor's Note: This is an excerpt of an article written by Herbie Emeritus and Past AHA President Jane Haynes in the spring of 1991. The drawing was also done by Jane.

There was evidence that many more plants were soon to perform. But the most interesting to me was a rather inconspicuous plant already in seed, the Lace Pod or Sand Fringepod (*Thysanocarpus curvipes* var. *elegans*), (old name *T. amplectans*). The plant belongs to the *Brassicaceae* or mustard family. It was easy to see that it was a relative of the pepper grass and shepherd's purse, also members of this plant family.



This is a small erect, annual plant, about 6 to 15 inches tall. It may have one simple stem or it may be sparingly branched. It is rather hard to see among all the other vegetation, except when it is backlit by the sun; then it is most curious. Lace Pod consists of a slender stem of flat, lacy seedpods.

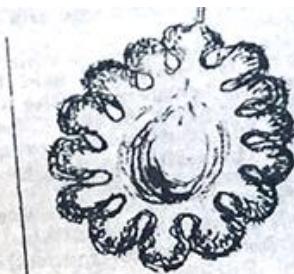
The lower fruits are first to mature. Each is no more than one-quarter of an inch in diameter. They are attached alternately on two sides of the stem by a very slender down-curved stalk.

At the top are a few under developed fruits and, just above them, are minute, 4-petaled white flowers. They are so small that they are hardly noticed.

The lowermost leaves, which are often mostly withered or dried away, are about one and one-half inches long. The leaves are sessile, with margins that vary from nearly entire to deeply toothed.

Now let's take a 10-power lens to study the lacy pod. What to the naked eye

appeared as tiny holes around the edge of the flat seed, now shows to be winged or a thin extension around the edge of the one seeded pod. It is conspicuously noted or perforated—fringed and appearing as lacy holes; thus, the name.



Lace Pod

The color of the pods is interesting, too. They are a vivid green extending to all but the very edge of the fringe, which is light tan in color.

Look for this attractive little plant in Arizona's grasslands at elevations usually below 4,000 feet. It likes moist, sandy soil and flowers from January to May.

Photo Banner: Our January Herb of the Month was *Viola tricolor* and Pansies from the demonstration garden were a gardener's delight. Find tips for growing your own *Viola tricolor* plants in the meeting review on Page 3.

Photos by Mike Hills

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Inside this Month's Issue:

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- Mistletoe by Kathleen McCoy
- AFGC President Jennifer Moreland's Address – Conservation is Key
- January Weed & Feed
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Of all the paths you take in life,
make sure a few of them are dirt.

John Muir