



April 2026

A Publication for Members & Friends

<https://azherb.org>

Dear Herbies,

The Nonflowering Purple-leaf Plum Tree

Akin to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, I am forlornly missing some signs of spring, as I experience "winter-turned-summer" temperatures. Whether these record-setting high temperatures be long or short-lived, only time will tell.

Seasons bring reveries and we can create new memories, too. I look forward to springtime, especially in the Valley of the Sun. One such delightful sign of spring is the flowering plum tree, with abundant white to light pink florescence. How beautiful! Well, except this year, my purple-leaf plum tree, with its luscious, dark wine-colored foliage, produced no spring flowers

Why? The leaves didn't fall off the tree this winter because nighttime low temperatures weren't cold enough. Notwithstanding, the plum tree, *Prunus cerasifera*, grows not only in the low desert, but also through Prescott and the Flagstaff area. So, I can breathe a sigh of relief because, most assuredly, the flowering plum tree will flower somewhere in Arizona this spring—it's just a matter of taking on new adventures to experience the "flowering plum."

New adventures await – whether attending an AHA general meeting for the first time, becoming an AHA member, inaugural volunteering at Weed & Feed, or debuting as culinary host or attendee, adventure awaits! Thank goodness that we have opportunities to create wonderful memories with each other and in our communities through the Arizona Herb Association. A sincere thank you to all the gardening association volunteers.

Have you tackled any new gardening projects this year? It's time to add some mulch or compost to garden beds – to help stave off the heat – although the heat has already arrived. I plan to divide up some aloes and thyme and plant them in container pots and hand them out as gifts to family and friends. I am hopeful that our perennial Easter lilies will bloom for Easter this year – but those hungry rabbits...darn. Gardening is an adventure and a joy—just like life!

Kind regards,

Shay Emmers
AHA President



Calendar

April 2026

Thursday, April 2: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Culinary Remedies
Speaker: joAnna Sanchez
Herb of the Month: Ginkgo Biloba
Presenter: April Lillard



Saturday, April 4: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:30 a.m.

Thursday, April 9: Agaves in the Sonoran Desert
Location: Tucson Botanical Garden
Time: 4:00 pm to 5:30 p.m.
Speaker: Wendy Hodgson
Free, but register at <https://tucsonbotanical.org/event/ahf-howard-scott-gentry-lecture/>

Saturday, April 16: Culinary Event
Theme: A Taste of Your Favorite Vacation
Hosts: Susan & Eric Adamczyk
Sign up on the calendar at <https://azherb.org>

Friday-Sunday, April 24-26
Wild Edible, Medicinal & Useful Plants
Location: Reeves Mountain School
<https://www.reevismountain.org/product-page/herb-study-class>

Saturday, April 25: Earth Day
Location: Phoenix Zoo
Time: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Included with general admission or membership

May 2026

Saturday, May 2: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:00 a.m.
Come help get the garden ready for summer



Thursday, May 7: Annual Salad Supper
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Come early to tour the Demo Garden
Guests welcome!
Topic: Herb of the Year - Turmeric
Speaker: Mike Hills

Saturday, May 9: Culinary Event
Theme: Blue Zone Dining
Hostess: Shay Emmers
Sign up on the calendar at <https://azherb.org>

Wednesday, May 27: AHA Board Meeting
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Watch for more details.

April 2026 General Meeting

You won't want to miss our general meeting on Thursday, April 2, when our featured speaker will be Herbie and Herbalist joAnna Sanchez.



Join us for an instructive, sample-based presentation on **Culinary Remedies**—

practical “food-as-medicine” approaches you can make in your own kitchen. Rather than a live demonstration, joAnna will walk us through the process, ingredients, and best practices for preparing simple, supportive culinary preparations designed for everyday wellness.

Attendees will have the opportunity to try **two companion selections**:

- **One remedy to sample during the meeting**, and
- **One remedy to take home**, so you can continue the experience afterwards.

Herbie April Lillard will tell us about the Herb of the Month, Ginkgo Biloba, shown left in a pot, growing in our Demo Garden.



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.

Meeting begins at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85141170155?pwd=2bEboHmiH0kevN1sMvablfM8j45qG.1>

Meeting ID: 812 8808 2383
Passcode: 088744

Welcome New AHA Members:

Helen and Brian Maxwell
Zip Code: 85038

Michelle Davalos
Zip Code: 85339

Donna Naugle (Scholarship Recipient)
Zip Code: 85207

Rebekah Grieser
Zip Code: 85226

Hollie Liles
Zip Code: 85024

Lauren Fieman
Zip Code: 85048

Eileen Carolyn Plouffe
Zip Code: 85023

Tia Biakaiddy and Kevin Barr
Zip Code: 85014

Margaret and John Mogelnicki
Zip Code: 85248

Susanna and Anil Kapoor
Zip Code: 85284ip

Zach Zipser
Zip Code: 85020

Edlyn Soderman and Stu Meckler
Zip Code: 85015

Jennifer Cefalu
Zip Code: 85255

Diane Knudsen, Membership Chair



A Very Phoenix Winter

While watering the garden this week (mid March), I found myself staring at a patch of purslane and thinking, just how mild was this last winter? Purslane is not something I usually expect to sail through a Phoenix winter, and yet there it was, still going strong. Then I started noticing other clues. My mulberry held onto a surprising number of leaves through winter and is now fully leafed-out with lots of little green mulberries. Meanwhile, my Cot-N-Candy Aprium still has not broken bud, which has me wondering whether we simply did not get enough winter chill for it to wake up the way I had hoped.

As it turns out, the garden was onto something. Phoenix really did have an unusually warm winter. The National Weather Service reports that December 2025 was the warmest December on record at Sky Harbor for mean temperature, January 2026 also ranked among the warmest on record, and February 2026 was the warmest February on record there as well. Warm winter nights can make a real difference in the garden, especially for tender plants that would normally get knocked back by frost.

Of course, a mild winter is not necessarily good news for everything. University of Arizona Cooperative Extension notes that deciduous fruit trees need a certain amount of winter chilling to break dormancy properly, and when chilling is lacking, bloom and leaf-out can be delayed or uneven. That may help explain why one part of my yard seems to be racing ahead while my aprium is still taking its sweet time.

Sometimes the garden tells the story before the weather report does. This year, at least in my yard, the purslane, the mulberry, and the sleepy aprium all seem to be saying the same thing: Phoenix had a very mild winter indeed.



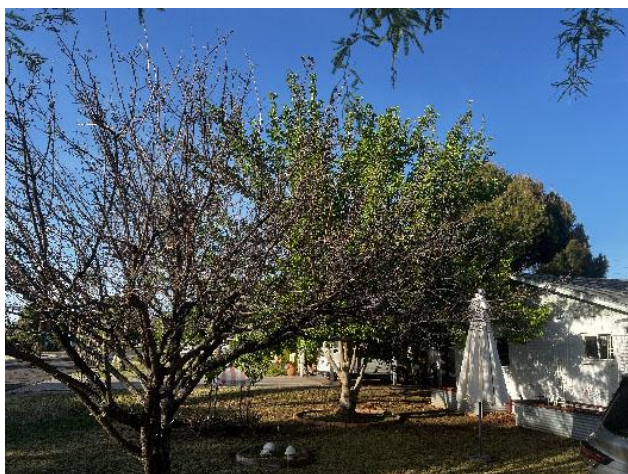
Pictured left, Purslane still going strong after an unusually mild Phoenix winter.

Next page: Liz Lonetti's Cot-N-Candy Aprium is still sleeping, with the mulberry leafed out behind it and already setting tiny green fruit.

Article and Photos by Liz Lonetti

Banner photos: Mullein, renowned for treating ear aches and respiratory issues, such as coughs, bronchitis and asthma due to its expectorant and anti-inflammatory properties, happily grows in a pot in joAnna Sanchez's herb garden; Katherine Tarr, with Herbies and Master Gardeners, get ready for shoppers at the MG Spring Plant sale in the Palo Verde room at Extension; a lovely pink colored globe mallow flower, *Sphaeralcea ambigua*, also seen on our tour of joAnna's garden.

Photos by Mike Hills



Sources: National Weather Service Phoenix climate summaries for December 2025, January 2026, and February 2026; University of Arizona Cooperative Extension publications on fruit tree chilling requirements and low-desert deciduous fruit.

Weed & Feed March 2026

A lovely, unseasonably warm morning in the garden looked and felt more like April than March. It has been such a long warm spring. Lots of plants are in bloom. The hollyhock flowers are working their way up stems; they started blooming before January. Brittlebush and coreopsis, lavenders and rosemary, basil never missed a beat. Marjoram and oreganos are spiking, the cotton under the chaste tree just keeps flowering.

The desert native Arizona beggarticks (*Bidens aurea*) is blooming. We are trying to capture a few seeds for the seed savers.

Ornamental carrots are beginning to bloom, to the delight of many beneficial insects who lived on chamomiles until they went to seed. Cilantro is bolting, dill flowers are making seed, but no scapes or flower stems on the garlics yet. The chamomile made a splendid show, beginning last winter, and, although covered all spring with powdery mildew, it made lots of seed and hosted half a dozen beneficial insect varieties.



We planted a couple penstemon, a couple salvias and a chiltepin, and a grass Mike found on a treasure hunt in a Tucson nursery. Seed for sesame was planted, as well as some for tufted evening primrose. We shall see how they come up, as the days get **not** incrementally hotter going forward. This is a record setting/breaking meteorological year

for sure. The Jerusalem artichokes are still not dormant: what is with that??

Bagged sunflower seeds were collected from now worn-out plants. That was a successful seed collection strategy that we will continue to use. We are now bagging milkweed seeds (photo at left), which tend to open when no one is looking, sharing seed with gardens far and near.



Keith did irrigation chores. The bunnies nibble regularly.... We pulled a few weeds, locating a couple previously tucked in specimens that are doing well. Heidi brought in an interesting collection of plants from her yard, leading to a conversation about native bees and native plants, along with identification and notes of treasures lurking on the grounds.

The lemon scented Palmarosa grass (*Cymbopogon martinii* var. *motia*) has been less than happy in the shade of the twisted myrtle. We dug it out, shared some pieces and replanted it. More is rooting in water if the sudden heat wave is not conducive to the transplanting. Jane M. tidied the rosemary collection on the east side of the garden, making room for other plants to thrive. Bless the gardeners who undertook to weed the bulb garden. The grass is happily announcing itself. While engaged in that activity, they found the squill blooming. A nice reward.

We adjourned to snack on salads, fruits, and crackers. Jo Setliff joined us, sharing snacks and conversation. We cleaned up, packed up and patted ourselves on the back for jobs well done! Lots done, thank you all and come again for more fun next month!

Thank you all for your blessings, good words and prayers. Your friendship and support have been overwhelming. I am so lucky to be a part of this group of people. It has been a surreal 8 months or so, but I am well, recovering and going forward to meet the next challenge in good health considering. Thank you, my friends.

Pam Perry
Demo Garden Co-Captain and Past President

March 2026 Herb of the Month Herb of the Month - Fennel Pollen

At our March meeting, Herb of the Month chair Alisha O'Hara introduced us to fennel pollen, a topic new to many of us. It was described by Peggy Knickerbocker in the May/June 2000 issue of *Saveur* magazine with these words: "If angels sprinkled a spice from their wings, this would be it." Most associated with Tuscan cooking, fennel pollen was popularized in the United States in the 1990s by chefs for its intense, aromatic, floral, citrus flavor with a hint of licorice/anise.



Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is in the Apiaceae/Umbelliferae family, along with carrots and parsley. Although it has many names, including wild fennel, bulbing fennel, bronze fennel, "Victoria", and "Finnocchio" – all are the same plant; it is the only genus in the species.



Fennel is an upright, branching, bushy plant which may have a bulbed base. The stems are ridged and leaves are feathery and thread-like, similar to dill. When crushed, the leaves have an anise smell. Flowers: are small, light to bright yellow and arranged in upside-down, umbrella-shaped clusters called umbels. All parts of the plant are edible, but very mature stems are tough.

Why grow fennel?

Benefits to Beneficials: With hundreds of florets per umbel, high amounts of pollen and nectar, accessible flower shape, and successive flowering waves, fennel attracts and feeds important pollinators and beneficials, including:

- Hover flies, (resemble small bees or wasps):
- Pollinators and aphid predators

- Bees - honey, bumble, solitary
 - Lady bugs aphid predators
 - Black and Anise Swallowtail Butterflies
- Fennel is a premier host plant, especially bronze and sweet varieties.

For the fennel pollen: All varieties will produce flowers, but herb fennels will produce more umbels than bulbing varieties. Ideal varieties included common/wild fennel, bronze fennel, sweet fennel, and purpureum. Plant maturity, day length, and spring heat trigger flowering.

To encourage flowering:

- Skip fertilizers – nitrogen will delay flowering and phosphorus isn't needed
- Don't harvest the bulb
- Limit frond harvesting
- Allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings.

To Harvest the pollen:

Each umbel has about a week at peak pollen, but plants flower over weeks. Flowers should be fully open, bright yellow, and dry. One umbel releases from 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon of pollen.

Friend to Pollinators Method: Bend the stalk and shake the flower into a bag or over a tray lined with parchment. The flower remains on the plant and there's plenty of pollen left for beneficial insects. Once seeds form you can deadhead the plants to prevent spread.

Higher Yield Method: Cut the flowers and dry them upside down in a paper bag for a week. Shake the flower heads into the bag or onto a sheet of parchment to release the pollen.

After the harvest: Check your pollen for bugs! You can use a sieve to remove flower pieces if desired – they are edible too! Dry and store your pollen in an airtight glass container in a cool, dry, dark place for 6-12 months. Dried fennel pollen will have a different – but not undesirable! – flavor than fresh.

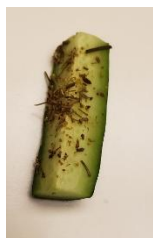
Just prior to use, if desired, you can grind the pollen by pulsing in a burr grinder or crushing with a mortar and pestle to create a finer or more uniform texture.

Uses for Fennel Pollen:

Remember, a little goes a long way!

- Mix into olive oil or whipped mild cheese and serve with bread or crackers.
- Use as a rub, in marinades, or in dressings.
- Sprinkle on cucumbers, avocado, or roasted vegetables,
- Bake in focaccia, citrus or olive oil desserts, or shortbread
- Sprinkle on vanilla or citrus sorbet or gelato

Ashley shared with us these recipes for using fennel pollen. She also shared a taste – fennel pollen sprinkled on cucumber spears!



Fennel Pollen Whipped Ricotta

1 cup ricotta
2 tablespoons olive oil + additional
1/2 teaspoon fennel pollen + additional

Mix ingredients together, top with additional olive oil and fennel pollen as garnish.

Fennel Pollen Bread Dip

1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon fennel pollen
1/4 teaspoon flaky sea salt

Gently warm olive oil in a pan. Add 1/4 teaspoon fennel pollen and turn off heat. Let sit for 10 minutes. Add salt and mix. Taste and add additional fennel pollen if desired.

Fennel Pollen Sugar

- Fresh fennel flowers (just a handful will do!)
- Granulated sugar (fine-grain is ideal)
- Clean, dry glass jar with lid
- Parchment-lined baking sheet

Layer flowers & sugar in jar. Seal and let set for 4 to 5 days, shaking gently each day. Remove the flowers and flower bits.

Bake the sugar in a low oven (200F or lower) on parchment for 30 minutes to dry.

Cool the sugar, then store in a labeled jar. It will retain flavor/fragrance for several months if kept in a cool dark place.



Health Notes:

Technically, fennel pollen:

- Is high in antioxidants like quercetin, rutin, and kaempferol
- Contains anethole, the aromatic compound responsible for the licorice flavor and scent, a digestive aid with multiple health benefits.
- Contains vitamins and minerals
- Fennel is insect pollinated, not wind pollinated • The pollen is sticky and heavy and does not become heavily airborne.

Fennel pollen is used in such small amounts it generally cannot be considered a meaningful source of any benefits from these constituents.

Caution: Those allergic to celery, carrot, dill could potentially react to fennel pollen.

A look-alike plant that should not be confused with fennel is Poison Hemlock or Water Hemlock. All parts of this plant are poisonous. While hemlock has an upright, branching form, it has smooth stems that may have purple blotches. The leaves are more leafy than thready and there is no anise scent. Flowers are in umbels, but white in color.

Resources:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4137549/>
<https://botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/f/fennel01.html>
<https://foragerchef.com/wild-fennel/>
<https://gardenbetty.com/harvesting-wild-fennel-pollen/>
https://specialtyproduce.com/produce/Fennel_Pollen_Spice_1747.php
<https://plantura.garden/uk/vegetables/fennel/types-of-fennel>
<https://plantura.garden/uk/vegetables/fennel/harvesting-fennel>

Meet the Owl Clover

While I was meandering through a butterfly garden, I saw at least four types of checkerspots (*Chlosyne*) flitting from vibrant purple tip to vibrant purple tip of an odd-looking plant called purple owl clover (*Castilleja exserta*). The resemblance to a feathered friend seems odd, but truer to form, Spanish speakers from the southwest called these plants *escobitas* or "little whisk brooms". Another common name for this fast growing two foot tall one-foot-wide wildflower is Indian paintbrush. Blooming in early to late spring, the dense velvety pink-purple



flowers are dotted on their lower lip with white or yellow, appearing like splotches of paint. Erect stems with fine threadlike hairy leaves form the handle of the "brush." The plant produces pods containing seeds slightly more than 3/8 to 5/8 inches long, covered with a loose alveolate coat pitted like a honeycomb. Herbalists throughout the past have identified owl

clover by its many leaves and the subtle sweet fragrance of its flowers. Of the 225 species of *Castilleja*, 16 of the mostly herbaceous forbs are found in Arizona, resplendent in full sun and needing little to no water.

When owl clover lives side by side with California poppies, lupines, and California goldfields, the combination forms a visually impressive orange and purple tapestry, cloaking various habitats, such as

coastal sage scrub, foothill woodland, chaparral and valley grassland, like an endless floral cape. This partnership with neighbors holds an underground secret. *C. exserta* has specialized roots (haustoria) that attach to the roots of a host plant. As a partial root parasite, our purple friend absorbs most of its nutrients and water directly from the roots of other forbs and grasses, often perennial species. Not without consequence, the leaves are slightly smaller than those of typical plants. Willing to give as well as receive, owl clover provides pollen and nectar for bats, bees, caterpillars, moths and, of course, butterflies. Humans also profit from the generosity of owl clover, as it has been used in alternative approaches to healthcare for centuries.



Owl clover photos by Sandy Cielaszyk

This amazing forb offers a distinctive blend of antioxidants, as well as enzymes and vitamins. Its healing properties have been used for hundreds of years to strengthen the immune system, address inflammation and deal with issues related to digestion. Various active compounds include flavonoids, saponins, and essential oils, commonly used via infusions and often administered through creams and gels directly onto the skin to target specific areas of pain and discomfort. Over and above these significant health contributions, owl clover contains phytoestrogens, which have been linked with the possibility of boosting brain health, protecting bones and easing menopause symptoms. Because some of the compounds in owl clover mimic estrogen, addressing issues commonly associated with hormonal imbalance, such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular concerns, is another gift in the plant's health tool box. There are many reasons to give a hoot about the wonderful purple owl clover.

Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist

The Australian Genus *Eremophila* Water-Conserving Plants for Valley Landscapes

By Rebecca Senior

A favorite AHA speaker, Rebecca Senior presented a program on Australian plants that are ideal choices for Sonoran Desert gardens...the *Eremophilas*! Often called "emu" bushes, *Eremophila* plants have a natural drought resistance and are used to poor soil. With most species having beautiful tube-shaped flowers attractive to hummingbirds, no thorns, and an adaptation to our alkaline soil, you are sure to find one that works in your landscape.



Australia is divided into 89 ecological bioregions

- Regions are defined by climate, geology, landform and vegetation
- Arid and semi-arid regions dominate the continent
- Many *Eremophila* species originate from Western Australian desert regions such as the Great Victoria Desert, Mulga Lands and Mallee shrublands.

Temperature Comparison:

Phoenix summer temperatures frequently exceed 110°F., while interior Western Australia deserts often exceed 104°-113°F.

Both regions experience intense sun and high evaporation rates. Plants from these climates evolve strong heat and drought tolerance.

Rainfall Comparison:

Phoenix annual rainfall averages about 7 to 9 inches. Central Australian deserts typically receive 6-10 inches annually.

Rainfall in both regions is irregular and seasonal. Plants adapted to Australian deserts are well suited to Phoenix landscapes.

Climate Match: Phoenix vs Western Australian Desert Cities

Several cities in Western Australia have desert climates very similar to Phoenix. These climates explain why Australian arid plants—especially *Eremophila*—perform well in the Sonoran Desert.

City	Average Rainfall	Typical Summer High	Climate Type
Phoenix, Arizona	7–9 in (180–230 mm)	105–115°F (40–46°C)	Hot Sonoran Desert
Kalgoorlie, WA	9–10 in (230–260 mm)	95–108°F (35–42°C)	Arid Interior Desert
Alice Springs, NT	10–11 in (250–280 mm)	97–108°F (36–42°C)	Central Australian Desert
Port Hedland, WA	11–12 in (280–300 mm)	100–108°F (38–42°C)	Hot Arid Coastal Desert

Eremophila is a genus of more than 270 species of plants in the figwort family, Scrophulariaceae, all of which are endemic to mainland Australia. There are many hybrids, and plant forms range from 3-inch tall ground covers to at last one that can be pruned to a small tree (*E. bignoniiflora*).

The plants are known as “poverty bushes” because of the ability of many to survive in very dry, inhospitable environments. Most are found in areas receiving less than 250mm rain (approximately 8”) per year.

Eremophila maculata, in general, and the trademarked *E. maculata* ‘Valentine’ are woody evergreen shrubs which grow 3 to 6 feet tall and wide. A common name is spotted emu bush, so named because the tubular flowers (red in the Valentine cultivar) which hang from the branches from January to mid-April, have spotted throats. The plant prefers full sun.



Eremophila hygrophana, sometimes referred to as blue emu bush, is an evergreen shrub known for its silvery foliage and showy violet-blue or purplish flowers. Another variety with lilac to blue-purple flowers is *Eremophila westonia*. Foliage is grey, with heart-shaped leaves.

Many *Eremophila* varieties are groundcovers, that can grow over the top of mulch. These would include:

Eremophila glabra: Cultivars of this plant can be either shrubs or ground covers. Outback Sunrise can take full sun and even reflected heat and still be very drought tolerant once established. Tubular yellow flowers cover the plant in spring.

Eremophila biserrata: Often called “prostrate *Eremophila*,” this low growing ground cover featured serrated leaves and greenish-yellow flowers. Well-suited for our hot summers, this plant can also tolerate frost. It is endemic to a small area in the south of Western Australia.

Eremophila serpens: This plant has the common name of snake *Eremophila*, named for its long, snake-like branches that often root where they touch the ground. It makes an excellent groundcover for difficult to plant garden areas.

Eremophila subterretifolia: Known as Lake King *Eremophila*, this low growing shrub features distinctive orange or orange-red tubular flowers. It tends to be less common in nurseries.

Eremophila nivea: This plant has trichome hairs on its leaves, giving it a silvery appearance, and mauve color flowers. It can take more heat than some others,

Other Australian plants that work well in our low desert include:

Melaleuca alternifolia: This is a tall shrub or small tree, known for papery white bark and aromatic, narrow leaves. It is the source of tea tree oil. It is a member of the myrtle family and has white or cream-colored flowers.

Dodonaea viscosa: Hopbush is a fast-growing, drought-tolerant evergreen shrub with glossy leaves and showy, winged seed pods. It thrives in full sun and is often used for screening as it tolerates being “hedged.”

All these Australian plants should be watered deeply but infrequently. Once established, a summer schedule might involve watering every 14 to 21 days; winter watering might be needed only every 4 to 6 weeks.



Numerous beautiful blooms can be found in the genus *Eremophila*. Rebecca mentioned this source for some of these less common varieties:

<https://www.australianoutbackplants.com/>

A Visit with joAnna Sanchez

A big thank you to Teri Thorpe for arranging the tour of herbalist and SWIHA founder joAnna Sanchez's hilltop desert herb garden and home. The garden, originally visualized as a home to native herbs, has morphed over time into a collection of the gardener's pets, favored for historical and essential use, attraction to pollinators and beneficial insects, and aesthetics.

joAnna has enjoyed the challenges of starting many of the plants in her collection from seed, with not only the climate a challenge, but also the wildlife with whom shares her desert home. She removed them from sight lines, but she has engineered some of the best rabbit cages I have ever seen. No rabbits or birds will get to the plants tucked inside those fortresses. Her vegetable garden is fenced and covered to keep marauders out as well. Gardening in the desert has so many very active predators.



I recognized old favorites from my past tucked into the gardens she built on the desert ground after she finished her lovely adobe home. Penstemons bloomed, as did her remaining desert broom and brittlebush. It truly was a spring desert garden with benefits. The garden is not so large she cannot leave it for travel, but big enough to allow for experimentation and keeping close a few favorite plants.



While her west garden is a very intimate and cozy space for lots of plants, the east patio overlooks the acres of Saguaro, brittlebush and other species native to the elevation. A hilly rocky place, it was the epitome of Arizona living in full color on a lovely spring day. Birds sang, butterflies wafted, and I did not go looking for creepy crawlies!



We shared fruit, cheese, crackers, homemade cookies, and her special tea and lemonade and we visited. She has a loom up and working again, as well as other projects beginning to fill her retirement hours. It was a lovely morning away from the city, in a moderately secluded but not isolated desert part of Maricopa County. Thank you, joAnna, for your generous hospitality in sharing this with us.



On the return trip, we remarked on how the road margins and islands were clear of stinknet, but the open fields on private and commercial lands were full of the blooming invasive weed that is becoming the scourge of the desert!

Write-up by Pam Perry
Photos by Mike Hills and Sandy Cielaszyk

March Ways & Means Events

March found AHA members busy educating the public and selling plants and related merchandise at spring plant sale events, including at Dayspring United Methodist Church and at the Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale held at the Extension office site. Thank you to all the Herbies who helped make these events successful.



Bernie Arnecke, Lauren Espinoza and Kathy Eastman were among the Herbies helping plant shoppers at Dayspring United Methodist Church's spring garden sale.

Items for sale included cuttings from Pam Perry's black jack fig tree.

A Colorful Culinary March 2026

Although Saturday, March 21, was unseasonably hot, 17 Herbies enjoyed a lovely evening at Janet Coleman's. The evening's theme was "A Colorful Culinary" and we were asked to wear an outfit that matched the color of the dish we prepared!

Eric Adamczyk made Whipped Feta Dip with Honey, Pistachios and Homegrown Pomegranates. Helen Maxwell created two types of coleslaw, while Kathy Eastman invented a version of Red Lentil Kebbi as a salad. Zac Thayer concocted a salad that featured many types of meat, assorted vegetables, pasta and cheeses!



Our Hostess, Janet Coleman

Susan Adamczyk duplicated a favorite restaurant's recipe for Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Arugula and Tahini. Diane and Chris Knudsen brought her Grandfather's Mexican Spoonbread with Salsa. Nancy and Jerry Greenberg brought a variation of Kasha Varnishkes with Zucchini, while new members Marge and John Mogelnicki prepared a Tomato Cobbler.

Timorie and Caleb Johnke prepared delicious Blanket Dumplings, while our hostess, Janet, made Zucchini Enchiladas and Chicken Enchiladas. Drew and Todd Templeton made her grandmother's Floral Pound Cake, Janet made Timorie's favorite Strawberry Lemonade Cake, and we were delighted to have Julie DiMaria return to us with Berries and Cream!

Top favorites were the two cakes, Zucchini Enchiladas and Blanket Dumplings.

Join us on April 18 when Susan and Eric Adamczyk host A Taste of Your Favorite Vacation!

Drew Templeton
Culinary Chair

**Grandmother's Pound Cake
(from Addie B. Ward)**
Prepared by Drew Templeton

This is a great special event cake, and it turns any dinner into a celebration. It freezes well (cool completely first.)

1 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
5 eggs
2 cups sifted flour
1 teaspoon vanilla
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Powdered sugar (optional)
Pansies, rinsed and patted dry for garnish. Yes, they are edible if you wish to try them!

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in sifted flour. Add vanilla and lemon juice. Grease and flour a 9-inch tube pan or a



Drew's Floral Pound cake in the foreground, Timorie's Favorite Strawberry Lemonade Cake prepared by Janet Coleman in the background.

loaf pan. Bake at 325° for 1 hour, or until light golden on top and a tester comes out clean. It takes longer in the loaf pan, more like an hour and 15 or 20 minutes.

Dust the top with powdered sugar and/or decorate with fresh pansies. Also good with berry puree' or as a base for strawberry shortcake.

Smoked Tomatillo Zucchini Enchiladas

Prepared by Janet Coleman

- 4 zucchini – sliced lengthwise
- 1 onion - sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 prepared recipe smoked enchilada sauce (recipe follows)
- 1 prepared recipe smoked tomatillo salsa (recipe follows)
- 8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese



Season both sides of the zucchini and onion. Grill zucchini and onion until done. Slice zucchini into strips. Roll zucchini and onion in corn tortilla and place in a 13" x 9" baking dish with a thin layer of smoked tomatillo enchilada sauce in the bottom of the pan. Layer a row of smoked tomatillo enchilada sauce and a row of smoked tomatillo salsa alternating each down the pan for a striped effect. Cover the enchilada with rows of Monterey Jack cheese in opposite rows of the sauce mixture so you can see the difference in the sauce mixtures. Bake for 30 minutes at 350° F.

Smoked Tomatillo Enchilada Sauce

- 10 large tomatillos
- 3 poblano peppers
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 onion
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons oil

Chop all vegetables into large chunks and place in a cast iron skillet and cover all vegetables in the oil. Place the block of cream cheese in the middle of the skillet.

Smoke at 250° F. for 4 hours.

Place smoked ingredients into a large bowl or jar – add:
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon pepper
Salt to taste

Blend all ingredients with an immersion blender to desired consistency.

Smoked Tomatillo Salsa

- 10 large tomatillos
 - 2 poblano peppers
 - 2 jalapeños
 - 4 garlic cloves
 - 1 onion
 - 8 ounces cream cheese
 - 2 tablespoons oil
- Chop all vegetables into large chunks and place in a cast iron skillet and cover all vegetables in the oil. Place the block of cream cheese in the middle of the skillet.

Smoke at 250° F. for 4 hours.

Place smoked ingredients into a large bowl or jar and add:

- 1 cup cilantro
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon baking soda – only if needed for acidic taste
- Salt to taste

Blend all ingredients with an immersion blender to desired consistency.

Blanket Dumplings

Prepared by Timorie and Caleb Johnke

- 1 pound ground pork
- 2 chopped green onions
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- Wonton wrappers



Garnishes:

- Soy sauce to soak in bottom of serving bowl
- Chopped green onions
- Chili oil to taste

Mix ground pork, chopped green onions, sesame oil, ginger, soy sauce, garlic and pepper in a bowl until combined. Lightly oil a pan, and heat to medium/high heat. Roll out dumplings to size, either by hand or by cookie scoop. Slightly heat all sides of the balls, giving a light browning to the outside. Cover balls with wonton wrappers in the pan and then fill pan with approximately 1/3 cup of water and cover pan with a lid. Cook for approximately 8-10 minutes. Remove from the pan and scoop out the dumplings onto a plate or a bowl. Top with garnishes and enjoy!

Pro Tip: do not put too many dumplings in the pan. Keep the wrappers away from the sides of the pan or they can stick as the water evaporates.

Arizona Herb Association
PO Box 63101
Phoenix, AZ 85082
<https://azherb.org>
Facebook.com: Arizona Herb Association



Inside this Month's Issue:

Australian Plants that Work in our Home
Landscape by Rebecca Senior

March Herb of the Month: Fennel Pollen with
Alisha O'Hara

March Weed & Feed by Pam Perry

Meet Owl Clover by Kathleen McCoy

March Culinary Event: A Culinary Color Party
at Janet Coleman's

A Visit with joAnna Sanchez

**An ordinary visit to a beautiful
garden always creates an
extraordinary time!**

— Mehmet Murat Ildan