



The Arizona Herb Association

June 2026

A Publication for Members & Friends

<https://azherb.org>

Happy June to the Herbies,

As we roll into midyear, I truly thank you for your hard work and volunteering spirit. This association runs on the enthusiastic fumes of its members! As we convene at our next general meeting, I would like to promote an AHA fundraiser. Bring a plant (herb, vegetable, annual or houseplant) that you can give away. Decorate in a fashionable container pot, if you so wish. Price the plant (and container pot) accordingly. All proceeds will be donated to the AHA general fund. Chris George, our longtime treasurer, would much appreciate your efforts, as would the board members.

Before the extreme heat arrives, we can still take advantage of gardening at home and/or at the next Weed & Feed on Saturday, June 6 at 7:00 a.m. Dress appropriately with lightweight, long-sleeved cotton shirt (or maybe you bought some "gardening sleeves" that Katherine Tarr so elegantly donned). Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Hydrate! Bring a snack to share with other Herbies.

Between now and the end of June, I will be harvesting some leaves, stems and remaining flowers of the creosote bushes in order to make some herbal tea. I am still dividing up some agave and aloe pups and will be bringing some to the June meeting.

After our June general meeting, we have a break in July and August. We reconvene at the September 3rd meeting. Please continue to volunteer at the Weed & Feed in July and August! Reach out to Katherine Tarr, VP of AHA's Ways and Means committee. Katherine, Lauren and Bernie could use your help in putting dried seeds into seed packets to sell at future events.

Whether July brings a much-welcomed start to the monsoon rain or not, I will still try my hand after July 15th and plant sweet corn, pinto beans, Armenian cucumber, and cantaloupe seeds. Do any of you have experience planting vegetable seeds this time of year? Let's talk!

I will leave you with a few book references that are very useful throughout the year:

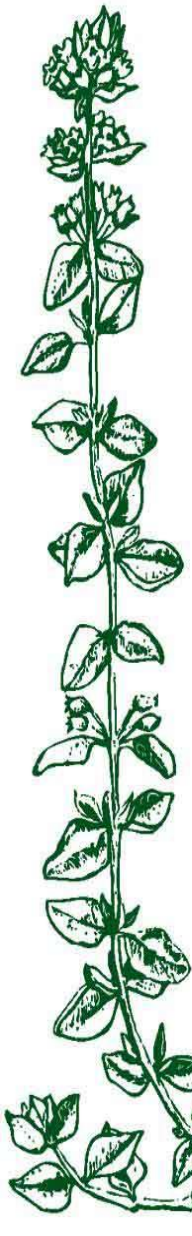
Cromell, Cathy, Linda A. Guy, and Lucy K. Bradley. Desert Gardening for Beginners: How to Grow Vegetables, Flowers and Herbs in an Arid Climate. Arizona Master Gardener Press, 1999.

Irish, Mary. Month-By-Month Gardening in the Deserts of Arizona: What to Do Each Month to Have a Beautiful Garden All Year. Cool Springs Press, 2007.

Enjoy your gardening,

Shay Emmers
AHA President

P.S. In April, Shay Emmers won a Presidential Citation for excellent leadership and AHA received awards for our website design, newsletter and civic achievement from our affiliate, Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs. Thank you to our volunteers whose many hours of dedicated efforts made these honors possible.



Calendar

June 2026

Thursday, June 4: AHA general meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Smart Shopping at the Garden Center



Speaker: Maureen T.
Herb of the Month: Lemongrass
Presenter: Drew Templeton

Saturday, June 6: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:00 a.m.
Come help get the garden ready for summer.



Saturday, June 6: Culinary Event
Theme: A Lime Festival
Hosts: Drew and Todd Templeton
Time: 6:00 p.m.

Sign up on the calendar at <https://azherb.org>

Saturday, June 13: Education and Mesquite Bean
Forage Walk at Granada Park

Saturday, June 20: Education and Mesquite Bean
Forage Walk at Rio Salado Park Tempe
Time: 8:00 a.m.

Sign up: <https://www.urbanfarm.org/mesquite/>
More information on page 3

Saturday, June 13: Flagstaff Native Herb Fest
Location: Willow Bend Center
703 E Sawmill Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

<https://www.willowbendcenter.org/events/herbfest>

Saturday, June 20: Medicinal Herbs and Flowers
Location: Arizona Worm Farm
8430 S.19th Avenue, Phoenix
Time: 8:00 a.m.

See a list of classes at
<https://arizonawormfarm.com/classes-1>

July and August 2026

There will be no monthly general meetings,
culinary events or newsletters
for the months of July and August.

Weed & Feeds continue all summer!



Saturday, July 11: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, August 1: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:00 a.m.

June 2026 General Meeting



Wondering which garden products are actually worth your time and money? Join us on Thursday, June 4, at 7:00 p.m. when Maureen T. will speak on “Smart Shopping at the Garden Center.” We’ll break down what to buy (and what to skip) when it comes to soils and

potting mixes, common amendments, and popular “plant helper” products—what works, what’s hype, and how to read the bag.

You’ll also get practical tips for choosing seeds and making sense of organic claims and labels, so you can shop with confidence and set your plants up for success.



The Herb of the Month is lemongrass and we will learn about this herb from Drew Templeton.

Remember to bring your own plates, bowls, beverage holders and utensils to help us reduce waste! A recipe or list of ingredients for your dish is also appreciated; it helps those with dietary concerns make their choices. Think about also donating a plant for our fundraiser.

There will also be burlap bags available to members for their garden needs.

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=2bEbsoHmiH0kevN1sMvablfM8j45qG.1>

Meeting ID: 851 4117 0155
Passcode: 383611

Mesquite Foraging and Milling Events

Thank you to Herbie Jordan Stejskal for sharing the following information regarding this Mesquite Milling event sponsored by Urban Farm.



Education and Harvesting Forage Walk Granada Park

Date: Saturday, June 13; Time: 8:00 a.m.
Peggy Sue Sorensen (now Creekmore) and Mike Clow

Education and Harvesting Forage Walk Rio Salado Park in Tempe

Date: Saturday, June 20; Time: 8:00 a.m.
Don Titus and Jordan Stejskal

Milling Dates - Urban Farm Nursery

Dates: Friday, June 26 and Saturday, June 27
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Here's the link for the website where folks can sign up for all of the education events as well as make a milling appointment.

<https://www.urbanfarm.org/mesquite/>

Anyone interested in volunteering for the milling event (check-in table, inspection table, mill operator, weighing station or checkout station) is welcome!!

Please contact Peggy at

peggysuecreekmore@gmail.com

Welcome New and Returning AHA Members:

Kelly Athena
Zip Code: 85048

Diane Knudsen, Membership Chair



Looking Ahead to Fall September General Meeting Preview



Padmaja Potharaju joined the Arizona Herb Association in 2023 and is the founder of Silverlining Homestead LLC, a USDA Organic certified urban farm in Queen Creek, Arizona. Certified through [CCOF](#) for crops and handling, Silverlining Homestead focuses on regenerative, pollinator-centered, and climate-resilient farming practices.

Inspired by her agricultural roots in India and a lifelong passion for gardening, Padmaja brings more than 18 years of hands-on growing experience, along with a professional background in information technology and systems management. Her work integrates sustainable agriculture, organic growing methods, pollinator stewardship, and community-centered education through an innovative multi-layer farming approach known as the Earthwise Moringa model, currently being implemented through the City of Phoenix Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture (RSA) federal grant project.

Padmaja actively participates in agricultural education and mentorship programs through Cooperative Extension, Arizona State University's TOPP Arizona Cooperative Initiative under [Arizona Transition to Organic Partnership Program](#), and regional seed stewardship collaborations with organizations including [Native Seeds/SEARCH](#). She is passionate about helping others grow food sustainably in the desert while strengthening local food systems, pollinator awareness, and environmental stewardship.

From Backyard Dream to Certified Organic

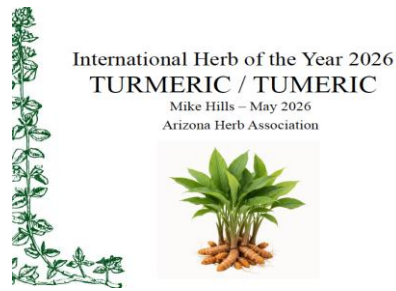
Urban Farm: Herbie member Padmaja Potharaju will share the inspiring story of Silverlining Homestead LLC, her certified organic urban farm in Queen Creek. She will discuss how the homestead evolved from a backyard dream into a productive USDA Organic certified operation and what it took to navigate the organic certification process in Arizona's low desert environment.

Along the way, Padmaja will share practical lessons learned about soil building, irrigation, pollinator integration, herbs, moringa, and regenerative growing practices, as well as the joys and challenges of creating a climate-resilient urban farm. Her presentation will offer encouragement and real-world insights for gardeners, herb enthusiasts, and anyone interested in growing food with purpose and sustainability in the desert.

By Liz Lonetti, Programs Chair

Herb of the Year: Turmeric, *Curcuma longa*

By Mike Hills, Past President



In recognition of its worldwide importance, the International Herb Association (IHA) and the Herb Society of America (HSA) selected Turmeric as the 2026 Herb of the Year. The Arizona Herb Association celebrated this Herb of the Year designation during our annual “Salad Supper” event the first Thursday in May, when we invited friends and family to enjoy an evening of sharing salads, learning and camaraderie. This year SWIHA students also joined in the fun.

Turmeric is a yellow spice derived from the root of the Asian plant *Curcuma longa*. It is used in cooking, as a dye, and for its aromatic properties.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Cambridge English Dictionary defines turmeric as a yellow powder, used as a spice to flavor particular foods, especially curry, and give them a yellow color.

There are multiple species of *Curcuma*, but the most widely cultivated is *Curcuma longa*. Local cultivars, selections and varieties are available. Some are most likely hybrids of the different species. ‘Hawaiian Red’ is a common variety grown in the continental United States. The red, orange and yellow-colored tubers have the strongest medicine and the strongest culinary flavor.

Turmeric History:

- Origin source is considered to be portions of the Indian sub-continent
- Long cultivated in India and nearby Southeast Asian countries
- Use in Ayurvedic medicines since approximately 500 BC

Historic Health Uses: Turmeric powder, nutritional supplements, or other edible extracts are made from the rhizome – where most of the plant’s flavor, color, and nutrients are stored. The rhizomes also contain the most important active ingredient in turmeric: curcumin.

Thousands of scientific studies show that curcumin is one of the most beneficial medicinal herb compounds in existence! With its strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, curcumin has been proven to reduce inflammation, improve memory, prevent and slow cancer development, boost antioxidant activity, regulate blood pressure, and more. And, whether turmeric is used fresh or dried, the majority of the benefits survive cooking.

Rhizome Planting Sources

For planting, look for rhizomes that are organic and have not been treated. You may find Turmeric at local organic grocery stores such as Sprouts, Fry’s, Whole Foods, or Safeway. Check farmer’s markets. There are also many online sources including:

OHIO Natural Production farm
www.FarmOnCentral.com

Christopher Ranch Organic
www.ChristopherRanch.com

Mike quotes AI as saying that growing turmeric in Arizona is highly successful in USDA Zones 8 and higher, providing a 7 to 10-month frost-free growing season with ample water, partial shade and rich soil. Plant in March when soil is warmer than 55° F, in containers or amended raised beds. Protect plants with shade cloth from intense summer heat.

There are many details on growing USDA zones 7-10 and information on harvesting, drying and using turmeric at Homestead and Chill website:
<https://homesteadandchill.com/how-to-grow-turmeric>

Tips for Growing Include:

- Soil and air temperatures should both be over 50° F.
- Plant in a moist but not soggy soil which could rot rhizomes
- It takes 6-10 weeks for the tips to emerge after root has developed

- Turmeric prefers humidity
- You can start turmeric rhizomes indoors for outdoor transplanting after frost danger has passed
- Add fresh compost or organic fertilizer once a month
- Grow turmeric under deciduous trees here in the Phoenix area

Turmeric rhizomes require a long season of growth. Harvest after the first frost, when leaves are yellow and brown, to get more reserves/nutrients into the roots. Dig gently to avoid bruising the rhizomes. Clean and dry the rhizomes immediately. Store in a crisper until used or re-planted.

Turmeric blooms in the second or third year when grown in ground or in large pots, if the rhizomes are not disturbed.



Turmeric as a Culinary Spice

Turmeric is a popular culinary spice that is used fresh or dried (as turmeric powder) in a wide variety of dishes, including curries, soup, stew, marinades, rice, vegetable dishes and more. In addition to infusing the meal with its golden-orange color and earthy, mildly spicy flavor, turmeric also adds a wealth of nutrients. Recipes can be found online for using turmeric to make golden milk. The fresh leaves of turmeric can be used to wrap fish or other foods for steaming to add a subtle earthy flavor.

Turmeric as a Dye

Only natural materials such as cotton, wool or silk may be dyed using turmeric. An historical use of turmeric was in the dyeing of the robes of Buddhist monks. Turmeric is used today in the crafting of some handmade soaps.

Turmeric as a Tea and Supplement:

Turmeric is offered in commercial tea products, such as Bigelow's Golden Turmeric Honey Herbal Tea. This blend includes adaptogens, turmeric, dandelion root and Tulsi. It is sweetened with natural honey granules and Mike offered samples of this tea to take home to try. He showed an example of a MegaFood Supplement that combines turmeric root extract with tart cherry and other fruits, and extracts of black raspberry, cranberry, Holy Basil leaf and black pepper.

Sources for Turmeric:

Winter Sun Trading Co. Flagstaff, AZ offers dried roots, powdered turmeric and a turmeric chai herbal blend.

Little Mama makes homemade, luxury soap with turmeric that may be found at the Roadrunner Farmer's Market at 3502 E Cactus Road.

A look ahead: The 2027 Herb of the Year will be Flax, *Linum usitatissimum*.

A Visit to Veterans Oasis Park



Thanks to Herbie Perry Green, a group of AHA members and friends were able to get a private tour of the Nature Center at Veterans Oasis Park in Chandler and a behind the scenes look into the Native Plant Oasis there on Saturday, May 23. The

morning started with a birthday celebration for Teri, Donna, Sandy and Mike, with a selection of cupcakes and muffins brought by Mike Hills. Derrek Gerson, the Nature Center Supervisor, was our guide and host for the morning.



First, Derrek discussed the set-up of Veterans Oasis Park and led us through the Nature Center. The focus of the Nature Center

is education about native plants, animals, geology, and water conservation, and it is free for the public. It has many interesting displays and interactive exhibits to view or touch.

A "Mineral Cave" displays samples of rocks, gems, ore, and crystals all found in Arizona. A seed library is available. Arizona mammals, birds, and insects are exhibited in a taxidermy display. Live specimens of reptiles, amphibians, fish, and arachnids (i.e., scorpions and spiders) are exhibited, including some

that have names - “Elvis” the king snake, “Bob” the gopher snake, “Blondie” the tarantula, “Ricardo” the Apache trout, and a baby Sonoran Desert tortoise named “Camino.”

Veterans Oasis Park is similar in arrangement to Gilbert’s Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch. The Park has a main lake that is stocked with rainbow trout and catfish and is open for community fishing. Plus, many acres of recharge basins for treated reclaimed water from Chandler’s Airport Water Reclamation facility work as water resource management. As a result, the park has developed riparian and wetland habitat areas that have attracted numerous birds, small mammals, and other wildlife. During our walk around the lake toward the Native Plant Oasis, the group saw rabbits, round-tailed ground squirrels, and a coyote.



The highlight of the trip was a tour through the Native Plant Oasis, which is not regularly open to the public, except for educational events. The focus of the project is to support native pollinators, and it hosts native wildflowers and

native plants and has a seasonal vegetable garden. Currently, the Native Plant Oasis has large raised beds of various milkweed plants of Arizona, including Arizona milkweed (*Asclepias angustifolia*), Giant Sand milkweed (*Asclepias erosa*), Desert milkweed (*Asclepias subulata*), Pine Needle milkweed (*Asclepias linaria*), and Milkweed vine (*Funastrum cynanchoides*).

Two caterpillars of the Queen Butterfly were seen enjoying the milkweed plants. Several varieties of milkweed plants were being grown in the



propagation section of the garden. The wildflower bed still had flowering penstemon, Arizona poppies, gaillardia, Tahoka daisy, globe mallow, common sunflower and desert marigold.

A plant that caught everyone’s eye was Desert Lavender (*Hyptis emoryi* or *Condea emoryi*). It is not a true lavender, but is part of the mint family.

The plant can become a six-foot wide shrub, with a lavender scent and grey leaves with hairs that are soft when touched. Its flowers are very attractive to native pollinators. Another interesting vining plant that was being coaxed up support beams was *Passiflora pentaschista*, or desert passion fruit, a rare drought tolerant vine native to Baja California and Mexico.



The group ended their tour of the Veterans Oasis Park by walking along the native plant walk which hosts the following desert specimens: flowering chuparosa, globe mallow, desert marigold, jojoba, mesquite, ironwood, elephant tree (*Bursera multiflora*), saguaro, cholla, creosote, and brittle bush.

Park hours are 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. for those who would like to come and explore this hidden gem of native plants, birds and reptiles in Chandler, Arizona.

Write-up by Herbie Rachel Diamant
 Photos shared by Donna Lorch, Rachel Diamant and Sandy Cielaszyk
 A huge thank you to Teri Thorpe and Perry Green for making the tour arrangements!

American Trixis
A true native of the Southwest

Have you yearned for a native xeriscape plant that remains green the whole year, flowers from summer through winter and needs almost no attention, but have ranked your odds of discovery along with the probability of finding a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow? Felicitates, your piggy bank is about to overflow with botanical treasure.



Kathleen McCoy

Meet *Trixis californica*, also known variously by American threefold, American trixis, California trixis, and trixis and in Spanish: arnica, hierba del aire, plumilla, Santa Lucía, hierba del pasmo and ruina.

Worldwide, 42 accepted species names and an additional 66 scientific names of subspecies represent *Trixis*. Surprisingly, in most of the United States only one variety of *T. californica* occurs for this plant of many names, which grows like a free spirit in the desert lands of Arizona, as well as California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Texas is the exception with two varieties of trixis.

A member of the sunflower family, the slightly boxy 2 feet by 2 1/2 feet perennial subshrub, once established, needs very little water, but requires well-draining soil under full sun. *T. californica* also appreciates partial shade, like the kind provided by palo verde trees. Total shade is unwelcome.



https://southwestdesertflora.com/WebsiteFolders/All_Species/Asteraceae/Trixis%20californica,%20American%20Threefold.html for pictures in this article.

Multiple stiff branches standing upright and resembling a botanical quiver of arrows provide the perfect base for dark green leaves. The narrow oval 2-inch leaf tapers to a point at each end, barely displaying any teeth along the outer edge. Predominantly rigid leaves often are rolled under or curled like flirty finger waves.



Good luck pinning down the flowering season. Depending on the quirks of the monsoon, the American threefold can blossom any time between January and July, again in August through October, or simply grace the desert the entire

year with bright yellow flowers. *T. californica* blossoms are nestled in leafy bracts. The bloom looks like a golden bugle with ruffles around the rim. Slightly whimsical with floral distribution, 10 to 15 multiple flower heads delicately balance on the plant tips or sometimes only one flower goes solo at the end of a slender, brittle branch.

The youngest flowers are at the top or center, blooming progressively outwards or downwards. Two floral lips, one slightly larger than the other, fade to white as the flower matures and produces a small, dry, hard, fruit covered seed. The seeds form a ball shape attached by fine hairs to the stalk. Picture feathery white dandelion heads. When ready to leave the mother plant, each parachute-type seed is pushed by the wind, released from the plant, and is literally on to new adventures, sometimes traveling over 100 miles.

Appreciated by rodents and grain eating birds, seeds are a high value item among desert animals. Hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, flies, honeybees, native bees and other insects are rewarded with nectar and food. The woody compact form of threefold offers protection and shelter for small desert creatures.

As for humans, meager information is provided in popular literature; medicinal history is not forthcoming. *T. californica* and the slightly smaller *T. angustifolia* appear almost identical in habits, and their names are often used synonymously. In fact, the two trixis cross-pollinate. Some citations claim that the Seri touted *T. californica* as a gift from the gods; other sources put *T. angustifolia* as a cure-all. Multiple sources report that the Seri used *T. californica* for everything from relaxation (by smoking leaves) to easing pains of childbirth. The same claims are made by fans of *T. angustifolia*. Information is more forthcoming with *T. angustifolia*, which is commonly used today in traditional Mexican medicine for antimycobacterial and hypoglycemic properties.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12755760>

In any event, *American Trixis* is a hardy southwest subshrub bringing interest to an evergreen pollinator garden and, quite possibly, an example of the resilience of true desert plants. With future research, American threefold may also become as medically important as its cousin *T. angustifolia*.

Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist

May Culinary Event: Blue Zone Dining

On Saturday, May 9, a dozen Herbies gathered at Shay and Steve Emmers home in Wittmann, AZ to enjoy brunch. Our theme was Blue Zone Dining, and dishes reflected the healthy foods eaten in communities which are deemed "Blue Zones" due to the 100+-year longevity of their inhabitants! We were also treated to a tour of their property, with lots of desert plants and a shady garden area.



Our hosts, Shay and Steve Emmers.

Cindy Jepsen created a colorful Kumquat Salsa with Blue Corn Chips. Janet Coleman and Zac Thayer brought Herb Sardinia Soup with sourdough and Tomato Salad. Pam Perry and Henry Harding concocted an Avocado Salad with Edamame and l'itoni Onions from their garden. Drew Templeton invented a Lentil Salad with Carrots and Preserved Lemon. Teri Thorpe brought her sister Molly Kelly, as well as cherries, watermelon, and two kinds of noodle salad.

Shay and Steve Emmers prepared Cuban Black Beans with Coconut Rice, Roasted Brussels Sprouts, and charcuterie the Blue Zone way: dried fruit and nuts, including dragon fruit, mango, figs, apricots, and pineapple!

Pam Schuler prepared a unique Pumpkin Marinara Pasta, while Todd Templeton made a flavorful Cashew Tofu Stir Fry

The favorites were the Kumquat Salsa, Lentil Salad and Tofu Stir Fry.

Join us on Saturday, June 6, at Drew and Todd Templeton's for a Lime Festival evening celebrating the flavors of summer!

If you would like to host an herbie culinary event at your home, the month of September is available. Let Drew Templeton know your theme and date. Contact Drew for more details: drewtempleton@outlook.com

Cashew Tofu Stir Fry

Prepared by Todd Templeton



You can find the recipe for the Cashew Tofu Stir Fry at: [Cashew Tofu Stir Fry - Delish Knowledge](#)

Lentil Salad with Preserved Lemons

Prepared by Drew Templeton



2 cups French green lentils
6 cups water
1/2 teaspoon Liquid Smoke (optional)
1 tablespoon salt

Bring to a boil, then simmer until the lentils are tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain off the excess liquid.

1 carrot, grated
2 to 3 tablespoons minced preserved lemon
1/4 cup lemon brine, or more to taste
(I preserve my lemons with garlic; if you don't, add 1 to 2 cloves minced garlic)

Mix with the cooled lentils. Let rest for a few hours or overnight to absorb the flavors. At serving time, add 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley and 1/4 cup sunflower seeds.

Can be served cold or at room temperature.

Kumquat Salsa

Prepared by Cindy Jepsen



10 Meiwa kumquats, diced
4 Roma tomatoes, diced
1 small jalapeño, minced
6 scallions, chopped
2/3 cup fresh lime juice
Salt and pepper to taste

Add all ingredients to a bowl and stir. Let set several hours before serving with blue corn chips.

Drew

Drew Templeton, Culinary Chair

Weed & Feed May 2026

Spring started early this year with hollyhocks blooming in December. By today, May 2nd, they were spent. We began the day by taking down the tall stems full of seeds. Volunteers scrambled to collect some seeds of many colors. The stems were dispatched to the dumpsters a month earlier than usual.

The moringa, which got an unscheduled pruning last summer after a 'wind event' tore branches asunder, is mature enough this season to bloom and set pods. The heat has not deterred it. We will have drumsticks, as the mature pods are called! The queen's wreath also got a hard pruning last summer thanks to that same event; it is in full glory now as it covers the trellis. The elderberry continues to flower! Sunflowers bloom; the assorted members of the asclepias tribe (milkweeds) are all in flower. We will monitor and collect seeds as pods develop.

French lavenders got haircuts and will soon grace us with more flowers, and we collected old flowers to clean as seeds germinate. We should find some seed in all the duff. The canopy on the chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) was gently lifted, and we can now see the *Poliomentha incana* happily blooming under there. The new white sage plants under the Chaste look profitable and the cotton is producing for us. The Tweedia or *Oxypetulum ceruleum* bloomed when no one was looking; it too has a pod. A large truck ran over the Southeast corner of the garden, leaving tracks of double



Mindy harvested our native cotton seed.

tires across the poor caper and rearranging some of the timbers. The caper is recovering, and we will sort out the timbers and rebuild. Even static things suffer urban traffic hazards....

Thymes in pots wintered fairly well and were blooming. One of my favorite plants in a pot is the Dittany of Crete, which is happy under a pomegranate; marjorams, mints and oreganos will be bee magnets for several weeks as those stems bloom.



Dittany of Crete

We harvested Jerusalem artichokes from the tuber Mike brought to the garden last year, variety unknown. Tall stems finally went dormant in March. This usually happens mid-November, but not this year. Not entirely sure what we would find underground, we dug. There was a wonderful surprise as several pounds of tubers had grown over a very long mild winter. Gardeners took many home for eating or planting, and we had lots left to share at the May meeting!

The following information about Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*) is from **Growing Roots, Tubers & Bulbs in Central Arizona** presented by Kathy Watts, Master Gardener, Yavapai County: "There are some 25 varieties to choose from. Easier to harvest if grown in sandy soils, they will tolerate almost any soil type and do well in alkaline desert soils. 6-12-6 fertilizer is suggested to promote setting many tubers as plants mature. They can take up to 130 days to develop a large crop of tubers. Store harvested tubers around 32-35°F. to cure and hold." Inadvertently, we gave the ones we harvested full time and got a spectacular crop! I guess I should get the few leftovers off my front porch and into the fridge.

Tubers can be eaten raw or cooked and are rich in nutrients and insoluble fibers. Recipes for eating these treasures include roasting, making soups and sweet relishes, or slicing raw into salads and slaws. They can be pickled. The trick is to eat small quantities, as they are full of that insoluble fiber which may surprise your digestive system! They are native to the Americas and most of the indigenous folks knew where to harvest them and availed themselves as they traveled. As folks settled, these perennial native sunflowers became garden staples. The stems and stalks have 28% protein, making them a good forage or feed crops for ruminants and pigs. Truly a useful plant!

John Barkley gets extra Herbie bucks for fixing the wonky picnic table; it is aging. Thank you so much for that! We tucked in a Sensational and a Phenomenal lavender, one each; yes, those are the names! Hopefully these much-touted hybrids will find homes in our garden and be as showy as their names suggest.



Lavandula x intermedia 'Phenomenal®' planted in the Demo Garden at our May Weed & Feed.

A triad of Mexican hat plants or *Ratibida columnifera* have been tucked in. Great butterfly and bee plants; they bloom all summer long. After the shopping trip prior to the George Reconco wedding in San Diego, we have a few more goodies to coddle thru the hot summer, too. Yikes!

Other excitement included Lee Ann dumpster diving in search of missing keys! She was successful! We ceded the Palo Verde room to Patty Merck and chatted and munched in the little room on the south side, sharing fruit, cookies, and conversation to wind up the day.

Items on the perpetual to do list include removing some very worn-out alfalfa plants and starting fresh seed, deadheading salvias and lavenders, collecting coreopsis seed and other likely suspects, weeding...All things we can look forward to in June. The wasps remain under that Gaillardia on the east side. They can get cranky if disturbed.

Thank you to Teri, Perry, and John, our early birds, and all who joined us for the monthly workday. We will do more of the same in June.

PLANT NOTES:

A couple years ago while perusing Nichols seeds catalogue, I came across Dragon's Head, *Dracocephalum moldavica*, listed in their herb selection. Native to eastern Europe, where it is common in tea mixes with a minty lemony flavor, it is a good pollinator plant with lovely small blue flowers. We first planted it in early spring. It got 12 to 15 inches tall and began to bloom. Foliage was tasty as described. It up and expired during monsoon. We planted it again that fall and it became a small plant overwintering easily. As the days got longer and warmer, it bloomed and eventually was about 3 by 3 feet of busy green plant with lovely blue flowers. It up and died during monsoon. We are so

not Eastern Europe. But as a quick growing, easily dried, lovely busy plant with blooms aplenty, it could earn a place in a pot, raised bed or other location with regular garden watering; and, if it had some shade as summer progressed, it would be interesting to see if it might survive monsoon...I think I have inadvertently weeded volunteers out since then; it might be a great self-sower if one were paying attention. I will plant this one again! And maybe this time around I will know when to begin to collect seeds!



A few years ago, Donna and Keith Lorch planted a queen's wreath, *Antigonon leptopus*, also known as coral vine, into a pot. It was not

a particularly spectacular specimen. Failing to meet expectations, they decided to evict it and try something else. They found about a dozen tubers under a very strong crown. Who knew! It had been busy in stressful conditions saving up for the future, storing energy in the form of those tubers.

At about the same time, I got a cool text from our own favorite plant nerd Mike Hills about our favorite pink blooming plant. He had been visiting Spadefoot Nursery website and found additional information about queen's wreath. Reminding us it is a great pollinator plant (ours hums with bee activity when blooming), they also mentioned that the whole plant is edible, recommending frying battered leaves and roasting tubers. Al suggests adding leaves to salads and tea when suffering from a head cold. The plant landed in our garden as a medicinal used in pre-Columbian days. It also has antioxidant properties. It is well established. The disaster last summer disturbed it not at all. Unlike the Jerusalem artichokes, we will leave tuber digging undone. Growing in pots means they can easily be upturned and separated. No real digging required...think about it...who knew? More interesting tidbits of our edible landscape.

By Pam Perry, Demonstration Co-Captain

What To Do about Wasps?

As some of you know from being stung and chased, we have a buildup of native Paper Wasp nests in the demo gardens at the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension office. (I am also dealing with this at my house, as the silly things keep building nests inside

the Solari bells hanging on our patio. Today the barbecue repairman got chased off). In the pollinator friendly AHA demo garden and also in the veggie garden, we've chosen to spray the active nests with the safer, less toxic, more natural control and repellent sprays. These use essential oils to kill the wasps and to repel them from building again in that location. Study the labels on these products from Ace Hardware and Home Depot for your home gardens if you are dealing with these wasps. These are the same pretty golden wasps that land on pools, ponds and birdbaths to collect water for their paper mâché nests. When foraging for water, pollen, nectar or caterpillars, they are not aggressive, only when protecting their nests.



Paper Wasp nest found in our demonstration garden, pictured left. Mike Hills dons protective clothing to spray wasps in the demo garden.

It was a tough decision to control them in the demo gardens, since these are native pollinators, but too many volunteers have been stung. The adult Paper Wasps eat pollen and nectar primarily, pollinating many plants without being aggressive. They are also garden beneficients as they do hunt caterpillars eating your garden plants and feed them to their larvae in the paper nests. But in a pollinator garden we want some caterpillars, so too many Paper Wasps (*Polistes flavus*) in your garden will reduce the number of caterpillars surviving to pupate into adult butterflies and moths. And while nesting they do protect their young fairly aggressively.



Herbal based wasp sprays. Photo by Mike Hills

My general rule of thumb: If they build their paper mâché nests in a non-traffic area, then I leave them be; but if the nest is being built in a doorway or along a garden path, these stingers need to go.

Be sure to read and follow all directions on insect spray products. Read about more details at the link below as you consider these wasps in your own gardens, and how tolerant you will be.

<https://sonoranimages.wordpress.com/2021/08/31/paper-wasp-polistes-flavus-3/>

Gardeners may protect themselves from stings with protective equipment like mesh over the face, long sleeves, gloves, hats and long pants.

In the Green Pharmacy, James Duke, PhD, suggests crushing fresh lemongrass and rubbing it directly on your skin to use it as an insect repellent, as it has many of the same compounds as citronella.

Additionally, he advises, trying assorted essential oils. One mixture he used in the Amazon in Peru contained a few drops each of citronella, lavender and pennyroyal in a vegetable oil base. He described this mixture as the most effective repellent he has ever experienced. He also says that in India and Africa, people rub basil on their skin as an insect repellent.

In Peter Bigfoot's book, Natural Remedies for Bites and Stings, when stung by a tarantula wasp, he immediately chewed purslane and placed the chewed poultice over the sting site to find quick relief. The mucilaginous juices help draw out venom and reduce inflammation.

By Mike Hills, Past President and AHA Demo Garden Co-Captain

Banner Photos (left to right): Summer calls for basil in the garden. Turmeric is "Herb of the Year" for 2026; see page 4 for a review of Mike Hills' coverage of Turmeric from our May general meeting. A sunflower makes the most of the summer heat. Mesquite bean harvest and milling begins in earnest this month. And Arizona is known for its cotton crop; we are growing it in our demonstration garden as well.

Photos by Lee Ann Aronson

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Inside this Month's Issue:

- Herb of the Year: Turmeric with Past President Mike Hills
- Mesquite Class and Mesquite Milling
- American Trixis with Kathleen McCoy
- Blue Zone Culinary with Shay and Steve Emmers
- Native Plant Oasis Field Trip
- Wasps and What to Do about Them
- May Weed & Feed

Just when the caterpillar thought
the world was over, it became a
butterfly.

--Proverb