



The Arizona Herb Association

September 2026

A Publication for Members & Friends

<https://azherb.org>

Beat the Heat

Welcome back, Herbies! Our September general meeting is almost here.

It's HOT! The blistering sun and record-setting daytime and nighttime temperatures necessitate creative ways to beat the heat. As hot and dry as it has been in the Valley this year, I am *amazed* at the perseverance of plants and animals. I smiled at a rabbit that had dug a shallow hole in the ground and proceeded to recline in the "cooler" dirt underneath our shade tree.



Even with scant rainfall, limited irrigation and no fertilizers, our roses are now producing juvenile flowers with pretty scents.



Try buying a drought-tolerant plant like a vinca. I planted one in a

hanging pot, put the pot into a galvanized steel tray, and placed it on a north-facing porch. I water once a day by putting water into the bottom of the steel tray. Flowers are consistent, even this time of year, and a galvanized tub defies algae and mineral deposits. The two-month-old flowering vinca has been able to withstand the heat with some partial shade and water!



Another way to withstand the heat is to stay indoors and plant some seeds. Consult resources like *The Low Desert Herb Gardening Handbook* and download the University of Arizona publication # AZ1005 titled "Vegetable Planting Calendar for Maricopa County." I will be planting green onion and kale seeds in late August to early September.

One more way to beat the heat is to stay involved in Herbie indoor events like going on tours, attending general meetings, packing seeds into seed packets, and signing up for hosting or attending a culinary event or workshop.

Important message to members: Please come to our Thursday, September 3 general meeting at 7:00 PM and vote in person to approve the proposed bylaws. Lots of hard work from dedicated Herbies makes our organization attractive, pleasurable, and purposeful. Come join us. Thank you, volunteers!



Stay cool and motivated,

Shay Emmers

Shay Emmers
AHA President



Calendar

September 2026

Thursday, September 3: AHA general meeting

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

Topic: From Backyard Dream to

Certified Organic Urban Farm

Speaker: Padmaja Potharaju

Herb of the Month: Mexican Mint Marigold

Presenter: Donna Lorch

Thursday, September 10: AZRFG Meeting

Location: Valley Garden Center

1809 N 15th Avenue, Phoenix, 85007

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Topic: TBA

Saturday, September 12: Weed & Feed

Note: This is the second Saturday of the month!

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, September 26: Culinary Event

Theme: Sharing a Special Family Recipe

Hosts: Diane and Chris Knudsen

Time: 6:00 p.m.

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

October 2026

Thursday, October 1: AHA general meeting

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

Topic: Día de los Muertos

Speaker: Liz Lonetti

Herb of the Month: Maize

Presenter: Miriam Segura

Saturday, October 3: Weed & Feed

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, October 24: Culinary Event

Theme: TBA

Hosts: Hazel and Les Davis

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

Wednesday, October 28: AHA Board Meeting

Time: 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

November 2026

Saturday, November 7: Boyce Thompson Arboretum

4th Annual Green Gala Fundraiser

Time: 4:00 to 9:00 p.m.

See a list of Fall plant and seed events
on pages 3 and 4

September 2026 General Meeting



Join us on Thursday, September 3, 2026, at our first meeting after our summer hiatus for a talk by Herbie Padmaja Potharaju, who 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.



The September Herb of the Month - Mexican Mint Marigold, *Tagetes lucida* – will be presented by Past President Donna Lorch.

Katherine Tarr will have sign-up sheets for two fall events (see page 3 for details) and will also have available for sale quart size bags of worm castings for \$5. A recipe for a planting mix will be provided with each bag sold. If you have herbie bucks, remember to bring them!

Remember to bring your own plates, bowls, beverage holders and utensils to help us reduce waste! Snacks for our meeting break are welcomed; a recipe or list of ingredients for your dish is also appreciated, as it helps those with dietary concerns make their choices.

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=2bEbsoHmiH0kevN1sMvablM8j45qG.1>

Meeting ID: 851 4117 0155

Passcode: 383611

Welcome New and Returning AHA Members:

Amy Meyertholen
Zip Code: 85053

Sara Starkebaum
Zip Code: 85209

Sherron Stone
Zip Code: 85203

Diane Knudsen, Membership Chair



Fall 2026 Herb Association Events

Hello and welcome back from our summer break. There are two events this Fall for which I will need volunteers.

The first is the Metro Tech Fall Festival and Plant Sale on Saturday, October 24, 2026. It will be held at Metro Tech High School, 1900 W Thomas Road, Phoenix, 85015. Set up is generally from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., with the event open to the public from 8:00 a.m. till 1:00 p.m. We almost always get a really good booth space that is shaded. The culinary department at the school offers food and beverages for sale and past offerings have been very tasty.

The second event is the Arizona Rare Fruit Growers Fall Plant Sale on Saturday, November 7, 2026. The event will be at Lehi Montessori School, 2415 N Terrace Circle, Mesa, 85203. The event runs from 9:00 a.m. till noon, with set up starting at 8:00 a.m.

Anyone interested in helping out with set-up, sales, etc., please email me at ktarrbaby@yahoo.com. I will also have sign-up sheets at the AHA general meetings. All volunteers get herbie bucks for helping.

Thank you,
Katherine Tarr
AHA VP Ways and Means

Fall 2026 Plant and Seed Events!

Event: Fall Plant sale

Where: Flagstaff Arboretum
4001 S Woody Mountain Road
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

When: Saturday, September 12

Time: 9:00 to 11:00 am – members only
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – general public

Event: Fall Seed Swap

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

When: Sunday,
October 11

Time: 1:30 p.m. to
3:30 p.m.



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

You can participate in the seed sharing even if you do not bring seeds. Envelopes and markers will be provided. Everyone and all ages are welcome! There will be a raffle for a desert gardening book!

Event: Boyce Thompson Fall Plant Sale

Where: Boyce Thompson Arboretum
37615 E Arboretum Way
Superior, AZ 85173

When: Friday, October 16 (members only)
Saturday, October 17 to Sunday, November 1
(general public)

Time: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum's Fall Plant Sale is the perfect time to pick up new trees, shrubs, perennials, and more for your garden or landscape. The sale features an array of plants from around the world, including native plants and plants native to the southwestern states and northern Mexico. These plants are better adapted to a climate like ours, making them more sustainable and water-wise.
<https://btarboretum.org/event/fall-plant-sale-2026/>

Event: DBG 50th Anniversary Plant Sale

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

When: Thursday to
Monday, October 22 –
October 26

Thursday, October 22 –
Members only

Friday to Monday, Oct 23 – 26: general public
Time: 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

No reservations required, except for Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. which is a VIP ticketed shopping event. Additionally, the DBG will not be having a Spring Plant Sale in 2027.

Details at <https://dbg.org/explore/events/>



Event: Master Gardener Metro Tech Festival

Where: Metro Tech High School
1900 W Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85015
When: Saturday, October 24
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



This festival is a great place to get locally propagated plants and find garden related merchandise and crafts. Come early for the best selection! It also features a variety of food vendors and a rummage sale. Free Admission and Parking. Bring cash, as some vendors and student clubs can only accept cash.

Event: Great American Seed-UP

Where: North Phoenix Baptist Church
5757 N Central Ave, Building B
Phoenix, AZ 85012
When: Friday, November 6, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
When: Saturday, November 7, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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

More info & tickets:

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

Event: Arizona Rare Fruit Growers Sale

Where: Lehi Montessori School
2415 N Terrace Circle
Mesa, AZ 85203
When: Saturday, November 7
Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon

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

Event: Nature Fest PHX 2026

Where: Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area
2801 South 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85003
When: Saturday, November 14
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Event: Herb and Veggie transplants for sale

Where: Arizona Worm Farm
8430 S 19th Avenue, Phoenix, 85041
When: During regular hours of operation



Fruits & veggies are available for purchase anytime we are open; supplies are always limited because we only sell what we can't eat ourselves. Transplants are available during regular hours of operation.

<https://arizonawormfarm.com/>

Treasurer's Report (as of August 16, 2026)



Cash on Hand	
Wells Fargo Checking	\$ 9,069.40
Wells Fargo Savings	\$ 1,000.78
Cash Boxes (2)	\$ 300.00
TOTAL	\$ 10,370.18

Fiscal Year (7.1.25-6.30.26)

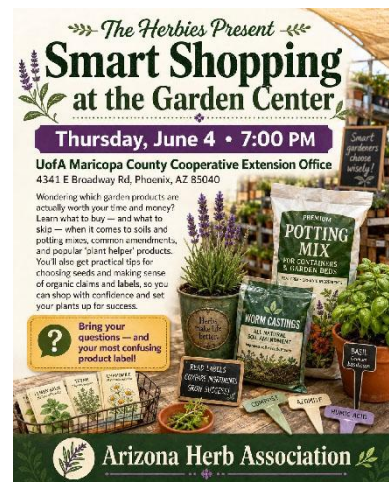
Fundraising Income	\$10,955.05
Expenses	\$ 9,929.14
Net Gain	\$ 1,025.91

Chris George
AHA Treasurer

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

Shopping at the Garden Center

Master Gardener and Herbie Maureen T. spoke on "Smart Shopping at the Garden Center" at our AHA general meeting on Thursday, June 4. She explained 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. She gave us practical tips for choosing seeds and making sense of product claims and labels, so we can shop with confidence and set our plants up for success.



She began her presentation by explaining labels on agricultural products that may be confusing. She said "organic" and "natural" have no real meaning. Stick to these indicators to assure the produce meets organic standards: 1) USDA Organic on seeds, 2) OMRI, and 3) CDFA.

When buying **seeds**, Maureen said not to spend more money on packages labeled "non GMO" as this is purely a marketing tool. Home growers cannot buy GMO seeds on the retail market. A more helpful label you may not be familiar with is "AAS" which stands for All American Selection winner. This American organization is like the consumer

reports for seeds, as they test seeds all over the country and promote those that perform best as National or Regional winners. If you want to save seeds to use next season, buy heirloom seed varieties.

As for **soil amendments**, these are products you add to change the physical properties of your soil. When using native plants in the landscape, always put them in native soil; they do not need soil amendments. When you look at a bag of soil amendments for raised beds or potting mixes, consider using 'coir,' ground up coconut husks, as an ingredient. It adds excellent moisture control by absorbing up to 30% more water than peat and prevents soils from drying out instantly. Coco coir is an exceptional soil amendment for Arizona's harsh desert climate, prized for its superior water retention, lightweight aeration, and ability to outperform peat moss by staying easier to rehydrate. Worm castings and compost are organic and provide nutrients to soil; be sure to get them from a trusted source.



Perlite, pumice and vermiculite amendments all lighten a heavy clay soil and hold and drain water, but all are dusty. Maureen recommended wearing eye protection and a mask when using these products. Pumice is often used for cactus in pots; it does not float to the surface as much as perlite. Vermiculite holds nutrients so this works well in seed starting mixes. Water crystals and gels, while hyped on the package, do not do well in our hot and dry climate outside and are not recommended for use here, except possibly with houseplants.

Mulch might be decomposed granite, bark or wood chips, straw, colored mulch, rubber pellets, or ground up tires. Maureen cautioned us that colored mulches may contain fire retardants, etc., rubber pellets are not good for the soil, and ground-up tires are hot and don't allow water penetration. Rubber pellets or ground up tires used as rings around trees are NOT healthy for trees. She said to be especially careful regarding the use of flammable items.

Colored mulches are often made from reclaimed pallets or wood and may harbor chemicals. Read the label to see if the mulch has been sourced from natural materials. And, as we need to be aware of fire danger, have at least a 15-foot defensible space near your home for any burnable mulches.

Topsoil and soil conditioners are fine to use as top dressing, as filler for holes in your yard and to create berms. Note the following additives ARE NOT needed in our desert soils: 1) Lime, 2) Gypsum (okay for lawns but not plants in native soil; gypsum

does not break down caliche) and 3) Sulphur (which may be mined naturally or sourced from industrial smoke stacks). Save your money, as you generally do not need these soil conditioners.

Pre-Mixed Potting Soils vary and you should always read the label. Potting soil mixes are okay for containers and grow bags. They usually contain perlite and can add extra drainage to heavy soils. Raised bed mixes are okay for raised beds and grow bags. Check the label for amendments. Cactus and succulent mixes usually contain perlite or pumice. Seed starter mixes are sterile and may contain all three: perlite, vermiculite and pumice. Use them for starting seeds. For specialty mixes (indoor plants, tropical plants, flowers) check the label to see what is being provided.

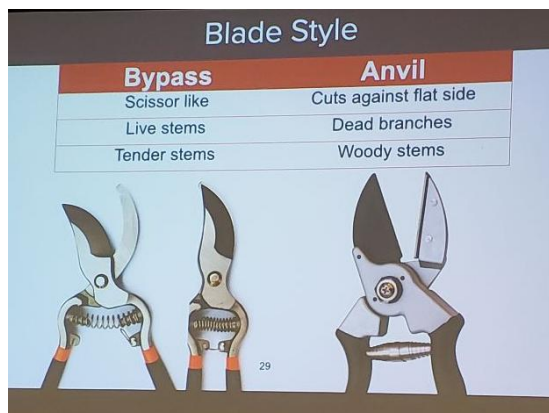
Fertilizers are vitamins for plants and, by law, need to have a guaranteed analysis percentage (by weight) of N (nitrogen) P (phosphorous) and K (potassium), on the bag. A "balanced" fertilizer means the same percentage of each of the three macro-nutrients are included, such as 10%-10%-10%. If you are fertilizing grass, for example, you only need a high percentage of Nitrogen, not Phosphorous or Potassium which are nutrients that are used for roots and fruits. A fertilizer marked "All Purpose" may or may not be balanced. If a label says it is "Specific" for say tomatoes, you can use it on other plants, not just tomatoes. A fertilizer marketed for "blooms" will be high in 'P' phosphorus such as 15-30-15. Citrus fertilizers should be high nitrogen, with low 'K' (potassium). Maureen suggested using the local Master Gardener recommendations for the amounts of citrus fertilizer to be used (found at the following website) <https://extension.arizona.edu/publication/citrus-fertilization-chart-arizona> rather than what is suggested on the bag. "Cactus and Succulent" fertilizers are low in 'N' nitrogen. Use a spray bottle for these types. "Complete" fertilizer means other micro-nutrients have been included in the product.

Mycorrhizae are beneficial fungus and won't hurt your plants, but they are a waste of money. Don't spend extra to have this included.

Organic versus Synthetic fertilizers: Plants do not know the difference. Natural products vary in effectiveness here in the desert. Bonemeal is not as effective here; bloodmeal is better. Fish emulsion is slow-acting, as the material has to break down to be useful. Organic fertilizers are slow acting, but can still be harmful if used improperly. Synthetic fertilizers have the advantage of being available to the plant right away. Native plants in the ground generally don't need fertilizer, but you do need to feed your plants in pots.

Forms of fertilizers include 1) liquid (some are ready-to-use), 2) water soluble, 3) powder, 4) granules, and 5) time-release pellets. Fertilizer spikes are not useful as the fertilizer stays in a small space; buy a fertilizer that can be broadcast over a larger area.

Decoding garden fabrics: Do not use a Weed Barrier like plastic as it tears, blocks water and weeds grow through it as it breaks down. Shade cloth is sold by percentage of shade provided and when temperatures rise can be used as follows for best results: 30% to 40% for cacti and succulents, 50% for leafy plants and 60% plus for humans and pets. Maureen suggested we start using shade cloth in May or June. Frost cloth does not let in light or water and should be used only during the night and removed in the morning. Row cover material is breathable and lets in light and water; it can be left on for days. Bird netting is used to protect seeds as they germinate or seedlings; you may use fine tulle or nylon net as a bird netting. Bird netting on the ground may also deter cats and larger birds like grackles and thrashers from digging in your garden; hold the netting down with large rocks.



A reminder: do not use Anvil Cutters (pictured above on the right) on tender living plant tissue, as they can crush it.

Hand tool tips: Use scissor-like bypass pruners on live, tender stems; an anvil style pruner crushes rather than cuts and is better used for dried branches or woody stems. Cut against the flat side of the pruners. Snips are used to cut small and tender herbs, while loppers or compound loppers are for cutting larger branches. Maureen joked that we don't need a hedge trimmer. Keep your blades sharp and sanitize them in a bleach solution between plants to stop the spread of disease.

As time ran out, Maureen hinted that she may do a Smart Shopping Part 2 in the future. Until then, she said for our safety when gardening, we should wear gloves, closed toe shoes, sleeves or a long sleeve shirt, long pants, safety glasses or sunglasses; and drink plenty of water as you work.

June Culinary Event: A Lime Festival at the Templetons

On Saturday, June 6, the culinary group met at Drew and Todd Templeton's in Phoenix to celebrate limes. Host Todd dished up guacamole with fresh lime juice and toasted the celebration with sublime lime mojitos, while Drew made refreshing Sparkling Limeade and cooked up a steaming bowl of Lime Alfredo Sauce on Bowtie Pasta.

Donna and Keith Lorch prepared Honey Lime Garlic Buttered Salmon. Another entrée, Vegan Tofu Fajitas, brought by Diane Knudsen with all the trimmings, filled the plates and engaged the palate! A vegetable dish, Baby Potatoes with Lime and Parsley, contributed by Helen Maxwell, rounded out the evening meal. Pam Perry and Henry Harding made a refreshing cool Cucumber, Mint and Lime Salad. Lee Ann Aronson's salad combined julienned jicama, mango and red onion with a light cilantro and fresh lime dressing.

For dessert, Pam Schuler made an exquisite silky Key Lime Pie with graham cracker crust (makes my mouth water just thinking about it!) And a simple but enticing dessert made by Donna Lorch was mixed fresh berries (strawberries, blackberries and blueberries) with lime syrup.

The top favorites were Baby Potatoes with Lime and Parsley, Jicama Mango Salad with Cilantro and Lime, and the Key Lime Pie! Recipes follow.

Join us next time, when Diane and Chris Knudsen will host on Saturday, September 26, with the theme: Sharing a Special Family Recipe!



Drew and Todd Templeton hosted our June culinary with the theme: 'A Lime Celebration.' Left, Todd is making Mojitos.

Next page the culinary group enjoying every last crumb of Pam's Key Lime Pie!

Culinary photos and write up by Lee Ann Aronson

Todd's Mojitos for 15 People

Prepare Mojito Base ahead of time:

11.25 ounces for 1-1/2 cups fresh lime juice

11.25 ounces for 1-1/2 cups simple syrup

90 to 150 fresh mint leaves, muddled or added fresh

At serving time, mix Mojito base, a jigger of white rum and club soda to taste in each glass with ice; add fresh mint leaves, stir and enjoy!

Donna's Honey Lime Garlic Butter Salmon

1/3 cup unsalted butter

1/4 cup honey

4 cloves large garlic, crushed

2 limes, juiced

2-1/2 pounds of salmon

Sea salt and cracked black pepper to taste

lime slices to serve

1/4 cup fresh parsley chopped, divided



Position a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat oven to 375° F. Line a baking sheet with a large piece of aluminum foil.

In a small saucepan, melt the butter over low-medium heat. Add the honey, garlic and lime juice, and whisk until the honey has melted through the butter and the mixture is well combined. Place the salmon onto the lined baking sheet. Evenly pour the honey-lime mixture over the salmon. Season with salt and cracked pepper; sprinkle with about 2 tablespoons of parsley. Fold the sides of the foil up beside the salmon to keep the sauce under the fillet.

Bake until cooked through (about 15-18 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish), then change oven temperature to broil (or grill) for about 2 to 3 minutes on medium heat to caramelize the top. Garnish with the remaining parsley and serve immediately with fresh lime slices.

Prepared by Donna Lorch for the Celebrate Lime culinary event.

Helen's Baby Potatoes with Lime and Parsley

1 pound baby red potatoes

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons soy sauce, or to taste

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce, or to taste

2 tablespoons freshly



squeezed lime juice

1/4 teaspoon kosher or coarse sea salt, or to taste

Pinch of freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley

Bring a medium sauce pan or salted water to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the potatoes, reduce the heat slightly, and cook at a medium simmer for 12 minutes, or until the potatoes are just cooked through and the tip of a knife can pierce them easily; they shouldn't be falling apart. Drain thoroughly.

Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat until hot but not smoking. Add the potatoes and cook for 5 to 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle with the soy sauce, Worcestershire, lime juice, salt and pepper and toss as the potatoes continue to brown on all sides, 6 to 8 more minutes. Sprinkle with the parsley, give it another stir, and serve.

Adapted from Pati's Mexican Table: The Secrets of Mexican Home Cooking by Pati Jinich

Prepared by Helen Maxwell for the Celebrate Lime culinary.

Jicama Mango Salad with Cilantro and Lime

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/233495/jicama-mango-salad-with-cilantro-and-lime/>



Note: Lee Ann used a chipotle infused honey and did not include the cayenne pepper in her version.

Pam Schuler's Key Lime Pie recipe: [Best Key Lime Pie - Mom On Timeout](#)



Banner Photos: from left to right, Pam Perry cools off in the shade of the demonstration garden; Mike Hills, our "retired grass man" reminds us that Asian Ponysfoot, *Dichondra* is an herb too; it thrives through summer and has traditional medicinal uses in China. Donna Lorch records Mindy and Courney in a video for our social media. Holy Basil could not be happier in the heat. Far right is Hyssop Spurge, *Chamaesyce hyssopifolia*. A weedy annual plant that thrives in sun, it is a non-native trickster hiding among our summer lovelies. Photos from Mike Hills and Teri Thorpe

Arizona Science Center Tour: Julia Child 'A Recipe for Life' Exhibit August 2



Past President Liz Lonetti alerted Teri Thorpe about an engaging indoor exhibit with free admission for Seniors at the Arizona Science Center (yeah—an air-conditioned event in the midst of our dog days of summer heat!!).

Herbies stepped into a replica setup of Julia Child's famous television kitchen. They viewed 124 historical images, 28 period items, and 18 kitchen tools from Julia's personal collection (*batterie de cuisine*). At one interactive station on the topic of Bouillabaisse, you were encouraged to lift the lid of the copper pot to enjoy the smells of fennel, citrus and savory fish stew.



Julia Child's Batterie de Cuisine Photo by Liz Lonetti

If you missed this tour, the exhibit continues in downtown Phoenix through September 20, 2026. Herbies reminisced about an AHA culinary event with the theme of Julia Child held in March 2013 hosted by the Thayer's. It's been 13 years and we just cannot forget the fantastic food and extraordinary memories Julia's "recipes for life" elicit.

A Reminder about your AHA Membership Dues:

Please renew your membership between now and the end of December.

You can pay at our next meeting, renew online or find more ways to pay here:

<https://azherb.org/members-only/>

We Say Goodbye to Peter Kennedy

Long time herbies will recall Peter Kennedy, a dedicated Lifetime member who did Herb of the Month talks, helped at Weed & Feeds, and was active at many culinary gatherings with his wife, Mary. He also did special projects for us, such as making a large device to sift rocks and grass from the dirt in the demonstration garden and propagating herb plants he shared with other herbies.

Peter is pictured here in a photo from November 2009, when he gave the Herb of the Month talk on Spearmint. He was also quite excited to give a presentation on Comfrey at one of our meetings.



We only recently learned of Peter's passing on May 30, 2023 from his son, Jim. Peter will live on for many of us as an enthusiastic herbie, who loved to learn and share his knowledge. Peter, you are missed!

Herb of the Month *Cymbopogon citratus*, Lemongrass with Drew Templeton

Lemongrass, *Cymbopogon citratus*, is a tropical herb cultivated for its culinary, aromatic, and medicinal properties. It has tall, slender stalks and a fresh, lemony scent. A perennial native to the tropical regions of Asia, it is now grown across the world in Africa, Australia, and North and South America.



Lemongrass is a staple in many Southeast Asian dishes, imparting a fresh, citrusy flavor that is both distinct and subtly complex. Lemongrass is also popular for its essential oils, which are used in aromatherapy and skincare products. Lemongrass extract is used to provide the fresh scent in many soaps, candles, disinfectants, and insect repellants.

In addition to serving as a natural pest repellent and a decorative plant in gardens, lemongrass leaves and the oils derived from them have been used in traditional remedies in places like India, Thailand, and the Philippines.

This herb's ability to thrive in warm climates and its low maintenance make it a favorite among gardeners and chefs alike. It grows well here in the Valley of the Sun!

Cultivation: Plant lemongrass transplants or cuttings in a sunny location; this plant likes heat! A tropical plant, it does best in moist, well-draining soil, but it needs consistent water. The clump will expand as it grows; give it at least a square foot. Lemongrass does well in large pots - at least 10 inches deep. Divide when the clump gets too crowded, roughly every 3 years, in spring or fall.

After the plant reaches 12 inches in height, you can start to harvest. Cut a stalk at the base, no more than 1/3 of the plant at a time. The stalks will regrow. After cutting off the root and removing the outer leaves, finely mince the tender stalk (or use a food processor) to add to cooked dishes. Use the leaves or mashed stalk to flavor teas or sauces; remove before serving. Store in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks, freeze in plastic bags for 6 months, or dry and use within a year. For more information, check out <https://growinginthegarden.com/how-to-grow-harvest-divide-and-use-lemongrass/>

Cooking with Lemongrass: Lemongrass imparts a fresh, lemony, and slightly gingery flavor to dishes and beverages. This unique taste profile makes it an excellent addition to a variety of recipes, enhancing flavors with its bright and aromatic notes. When used in cooking, it can transform a simple meal into an exotic dish with its vibrant citrusy essence.

Use it as a marinade for pork, shrimp, chicken, or tofu. Try combining lemongrass with olive oil, lime, scallions, brown sugar, and garlic.

Add lemongrass and your favorite herbs and spices to Greek yogurt or sour cream to make a dipping



sauce. Coconut milk, fresh ginger, green onions, jalapeño, or garlic make good additions.

Add finely sliced and minced lemongrass as a seasoning to your favorite recipes for meatloaf, meatballs, burgers, stews, soups, salads, and stir-fries.

Make a simple syrup by adding water, sugar, and lemongrass to a saucepan and cooking until the mixture thickens. Use this syrup as an infused drink sweetener for lemonade, iced tea, or mocktails.

Make compound butter by finely mincing lemongrass and mixing it into your butter with other herbs and seasonings. Roll the mixture into a log, wrap it in plastic, and keep refrigerated until ready to use.

Lemongrass tea is naturally caffeine-free, making it a soothing drink that can be enjoyed at any time of the day without affecting sleep patterns. Drew shared Lemongrass Tea with us at the meeting.

How to Steep Lemongrass Tea

1. Boil fresh, filtered water and let it cool for a few minutes.
2. Add 1 to 2 teaspoons of organic lemongrass loose leaf tea to a tea bag or infuser for every 8 ounces (240ml) of water.
3. Place the tea bag or infuser in a cup or mug and pour the hot water over the tea.
4. Let it steep for 5 to 7 minutes, depending on how strong you prefer your tea.

Lemongrass reportedly has antibacterial and antifungal properties. It has traditionally been used as a pain reliever and fever reducer. Other pros to lemongrass include:

Digestive Health: Lemongrass can aid digestion, relieve bloating, reduce stomach cramps, and help with conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) by stimulating gastric mucus production and reducing stomach acid.

Anti-Inflammatory and Antioxidant Effects: Rich in citral, quercetin, and other flavonoids, lemongrass has strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, which may help reduce chronic inflammation, lower the risk of heart disease, and inhibit cancer cell growth.

Antimicrobial and Antifungal Properties: Lemongrass essential oil exhibits antibacterial, antifungal, and antimicrobial effects, making it useful for treating skin infections, wounds, and even digestive tract infections caused by bacteria like E. coli. One study found that lemongrass extract

effectively reduces the toxicity of E. coli cultures and can help treat bacterial infections in the digestive tract.

Heart Health: Studies suggest lemongrass may help lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides while supporting healthy blood circulation, potentially reducing the risk of hypertension and heart disease. Lemongrass is used in Africa as a treatment for coronary heart disease.

Weight Management and

Detoxification: Lemongrass acts as a diuretic, promoting fluid elimination, reducing bloating, and supporting detoxification of the liver and kidneys.



Stress Relief and Sleep Support:

The soothing aroma of lemongrass has natural sedative properties that may reduce stress, lower cortisol levels, and improve sleep.

Less Dandruff: Some studies suggest that using shampoos or hair tonics with lemongrass may help significantly improve dandruff.

Better Dental Health: Using mouthwash with 0.25% lemongrass oil may improve mild periodontitis or gum disease. This can help protect against cardiovascular disease. Lemongrass may be a good alternative to mouthwashes containing chlorhexidine, which can cause unwanted side effects. Note: More research on the long-term use is needed.

Less Arthritis Pain: Early research in adults with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) found that applying pure lemongrass essential oil to the skin daily for 30 days reduced pain by 30%.

Fewer Fungal Infections: Lemongrass essential oil has been shown to successfully break up biofilms in *Candida albicans* (a species of yeast, or fungi, in the human body that can overgrow and cause infection). Biofilms are sticky shields that surround bacteria and fungi, making them difficult to kill. By breaking these shields, lemongrass can make fungal infections easier to treat.

While lemongrass shows promise for various health benefits, more human studies are needed to confirm its effectiveness for certain conditions, such as skin infections or cholesterol management. Eating large quantities of lemongrass may cause unwanted side effects like dizziness, dry mouth, excessive tiredness, frequent urination, increased appetite, or itching and rash. Other cons of Lemongrass include:

Allergic Reactions: Some individuals may experience skin irritation or allergic reactions when using lemongrass essential oil topically. If you experience an allergic reaction after applying the oil to your skin, you may also want to avoid consuming lemongrass orally.

Potential Drug Interactions: Lemongrass may interact with medications, particularly those for diabetes, blood pressure, or anticoagulants, so consultation with a healthcare provider is recommended before use.

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Caution: High doses of lemongrass or its essential oil may not be safe during pregnancy, as it is known to start menstrual flow and could lead to miscarriage, nor while breastfeeding, and should be used cautiously.

Gastrointestinal Discomfort: Excessive consumption of lemongrass tea or supplements may cause nausea, stomach upset, or diarrhea in sensitive individuals.

NOTE: If you have kidney disease, ask your healthcare provider if lemongrass is safe for you. Drinking lemongrass tea may increase urination, which could put more pressure on your kidneys. Lemongrass is also high in potassium, which should be limited in people with kidney disorders.

Summer Heats, Summer Eats at Summer Weed & Feeds

June 2026 Weed & Feed

Gardeners are ever hopeful. We carefully tucked in a few plant treasures from the San Diego shopping excursions that complimented the nuptials of George and Danielle in early May. Shade cloth and oversight mid-week may expedite survival. More hollyhocks were deadheaded, some minor pruning on the big myrtle and the moringa were taken on by our resident tree surgeon Ron Brennan, with help from our team of volunteers. Suckers at the base of the myrtles and the vitex were removed. The identity of a mystery weed is still in question: this weed shares a pot with French lavenders, and is a lush looking plant (but expired overnight a week later!). We will watch and wait for its return and try to ID.

Resident paper wasps still rule the garden, harvesting most of the caterpillars in the garden this spring and summer and occasionally stinging our volunteers. They are having



impacts on fritillary butterfly caterpillars and probably even feeding cucumber beetle larvae from the veg garden to their young. Soooo, are these Polistes Wasps beneficials or pests in our garden?

Katherine Tarr was working on seed projects in the Palo Verde room with a group of volunteers. She had a jar of unknown pods now identified by Chris Leuck as Stock (*Matthiola incana*), and some seeds of the tall pink blooming bush morning glories (*Ipomoea carnea*). Please remember to label seeds you collect at home and turn in to the group.

It was the first really hot morning of the year, and we worked at a pace commensurate with the heat. The garden blooms, herbs grow and set seed for us to collect. Lots of little organza bags help us collect special seeds, such as those from our milkweeds. The weed count in the demo garden seemed to be less annoying than usual, and that is always a welcome state of affairs for our hard-working volunteers. The resident quail and rabbits were out to supervise and consider what we left behind for them to eat as they drink from our irrigation lines.

July 2026 Weed & Feed

Seasonally sticky: there is some humidity this year as rains start to tease us. Mike had a list of chores for Early Birds to get started working on with Teri and John. The group got busy tying up the rampant queen's wreath, weeding, and removing the really truly totally dead stuff. Annuals will expire....

We layered the hoary rosemary-mint (*Poliomentha incana*) on the west curb, hoping to get some rooted cuttings of this unusual plant to sell at our next plant sale.



Ron was back and focused on the Torote/elephant tree (*Bursera microphylla*), which is a very happy specimen in our demo garden. Our goal is to allow traffic through on the drive to employee parking, plus open up space under this fragrant and useful tree!

The remaining cuttings of the Frangipani tree (*Plumeria spp*) rescued from the conversion of the Tropicals Garden area were distributed to those with propagation skills and interest. Ruth Ann stopped by to collect some to share with the rare fruit growers as well...fingers crossed that some root successfully.

We have learned that to get the most blooms and pods on our Moringa tree we need to do our heavy pruning during monsoon. Last year a storm tore it stem to stern. We cut it back hard and watched a quick recovery. We did not cut it back to stubs this spring and watched as it bloomed and set seed.



Today Elena and Jake got out the tall ladder and made a project of harvesting ripe pods for members and to reduce stress on the tree! The plant put energy into blooming and making seed and has not become all that much larger than it was a year ago when the storm took it apart! Now it should bloom again in late summer/fall for our pollinators.



Justicia spicigera or Mexican honeysuckle plant newly added to the Demonstration Garden.
Weed & Feed photos by Mike Hills

We planted another variety of milkweed, and the Mexican honeysuckle (*Justicia spicigera*), crossing our fingers that monsoon rains will come and make the transition less traumatic for these additions. Watch for a future Herb of The Month update on Mexican honeysuckle, which we've only recently discovered has multiple traditional uses.

After many seasons, the last surviving vinca (*Catharanthus*) planted in 2025 finally expired. This

pollinator friendly bloom is a medicinal plant from Madagascar that has found a whole new purpose as a colorful flowering plant for hot summer gardens, especially here in our low desert. The last of a six-pack, it defied cool seasons, rabbits, and other impediments to life. We shall replace this hardworking specimen soon! As our winters have become milder, that south facing curb suited it admirably.

We are still deadheading hollyhocks. The sesame is up and growing steadily. Basil and Jamaica/Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) grow steadily in the heat.

We adjourned to share bean salad, lovely bread and humus, lemon pie (recipe follows), and other goodies, and chat for a while, winding down and cooling off before venturing out into the mid-day blast to the next projects in our home gardens.

August 2025 Weed & Feed

A toasty day started with a great turnout - about 25 Herbies and MCE Master Gardeners, ready to work on a chores list from Chief Pam who was off to explore lighthouses in Norway with Henry. Priority One was continued identification of nesting sites for our Paper Wasp outbreak after the warmer winter...and cautioning our volunteers as we worked around the wasps. This species is only aggressive when you mess with their nest and young, but we are prepared with remedies to help with any stings.

John and Teri worked with friends to corral the rampant queen's wreath so that our new native bee hotel could be accessed, as some Leafcutter and Mason bees moved in, starting to pack their nests with pollen and nectar balls with eggs. This new observation-style hotel can be opened like a book to observe the nests and to allow for periodic cleaning of the nesting tubes. Check it out at www.riajam.com (available in the USA on eBay for approximately \$60.00).

Katherine and Bernie gathered some volunteers to help with packaging seeds and worm castings for future sales. Other volunteers teamed up to work on our remaining patches of bermudagrass and nutsedge that continue to expand with the heat and humidity this year. Big past-their-prime



New observational bee "hotel" in our demo garden

marjorams were deadheaded to stimulate more blooms for the smaller native bees and butterflies, while spent sunflowers, hollyhocks and black-eyed Susans were pulled and seeds collected for our volunteers to take home.

The happy Moringa tree got some welcome relief, as the overload of ripe seedpods were harvested for sharing with volunteers and the green community. Chaste and myrtle trees, plus the elephant tree received some light shaping/ pruning to remove suckers and weak growth. A few of the rosemarys received some pruning to allow for better air flow and reduce disease issues for them in this humid summer.

Thank you to our hearty volunteers for their sweat service this summer, and we look forward to seeing more volunteers at the next garden work day on Saturday September 12, 2026, at 7:00 a.m. Note: This is the SECOND SATURDAY of the month, to avoid conflicts with the Labor Day weekend.

Mike Hills and Pam Perry, Past Presidents and AHA Demo Garden Co-Captains

Demo Garden Wasp Discussion Continues...

In our June newsletter, we covered concerns about paper wasps, including what to do about them in our demonstration garden and at home. Over the summer hiatus, we learned more about possible solutions for our demo garden from Dr. Shaku Nair, Ph.D. in Entomology, and an Associate in Extension Community IPM, who works with a team through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona.

In a discussion with Mike Hills, demonstration garden captain, Shaku suggested spraying vinegar all around the demo gardens - borders, walls, walkways, and structures - to act as a general repellent, as wasps are more sensitive to the vinegar odor than we humans.

Kathy Eastman shared this from an extension publication: "In late summer, paper wasps and yellow jackets are attracted to the odors from decaying fruit. Avoid wearing perfumes, hair sprays, or other strong scents when in areas with abundant paper wasps and yellow jackets. Also, avoid brightly colored clothing, particularly yellow, orange and red."

Mike Hills implemented his idea to open up and expose the new wasp nests that he found in the demo garden and to zap them with the STEAM essential oil spray. Flipping the nests into the open

light, plus spraying those wasps directly, will reduce the breeding and knock them out of cycle.



Pictured left, Mike Hills at August 1st Weed & Feed with wasp spray and caution tape tied to stakes used to alert garden visitors of the on-going risk of possible wasp sting in treated areas.

Photo: Lee Ann Aronson

Ankovsky (or Anke) Pie

This delicious treat was shared at July's Weed & Feed by MG Elena Faris. She also shared that this was the favorite pie of Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, author of *Anna Karenina*, *War and Peace* and other works. His son Ilya said "A birthday without Ankovsky pie is the same as a Christmas without the Christmas tree." The pie is named after the family physician, Dr. Nikolay Anke, who introduced them to the dish.

Dough

1 cup flour
1 stick butter
1/4 cup sugar
2 egg yolks
3/4 tablespoon vanilla sugar or 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt



Cream:

1 egg
4 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup sugar
Zest and juice of 1 lemon

Preparation:

1. To prepare the cake layers, mix egg yolks, sugar, and vanilla sugar (or vanilla extract).
2. Add butter to the mixture and blend well.
3. Add sifted flour in two batches. You can add a pinch of salt while sifting the flour. Knead the dough lightly and divide into 3 equal parts.
4. Roll each part out between sheets of parchment paper to prevent it from sticking to the rolling pin.
5. Carefully cut out the rounds. Combine scrap dough pieces into a smaller round to use as crumbles for decorating the cake.
6. Bake the rounds in a preheated oven at 350° F. for 11 to 13 minutes.

Now, prepare the cream.

1. Mix together the sugar, egg, butter, and lemon (both zest and juice).
2. Place the mixture over low heat. Bring to a boil while stirring constantly, until the first bubbles appear; the consistency should resemble honey.
3. Put a small amount of the hot cream on serving plate. Put down a baked round, spread with some of the cream; repeat for the remaining two cake layers and the rest of the hot cream.

Refrigerate the cake for at least 5 hours, or preferably overnight, to allow the cream to soak into the layers.

Sprinkle the cake with the crumbles before serving. Enjoy!

Pam Perry's Beans with Purslane



Soak, drain and cook one pound of dry small white beans. When almost done, season with a couple smashed garlic cloves, 1 teaspoon each thyme and marjoram and salt, and a couple bay leaves. I cleaned some i'itoi onions I had on the counter and dropped them in whole.

Let finish cooking, drain and cool.

Chop and add a cucumber, along with 1 cup fresh, chopped purslane. I added a little red pepper (the Jimmy Nardello variety cause they were there). Dice and add one avocado, a couple small raw tomatillos, and a quarter cup or so of chopped Spanish green olives. Sprinkle with about 1/3 cup feta cheese.

Dressing: Blend olive oil and lemon juice, about 1/3 cup each, with a teaspoon of honey, five more chopped olives and about 1/3 cup chopped raw tomatillos. Pour over beans and mix gently. Chill overnight.

We enjoyed the beans with naan bread brought by Mindy.

Lime Chia Pudding

A refreshing treat for summer.

Zest of two large limes
Juice of 3 or 4 large limes

13.5 or 15 ounce can of full fat coconut milk (about 1-1/2 cups)

1/4 cup water

3 tablespoons or more sugar or other sweetener to taste

a good pinch of salt

1/4 teaspoon turmeric

5 to 6 tablespoons of chia seeds



Blend the lime zest, juice, coconut milk, water, sugar or other sweetener, and turmeric until well combined. Add chia seeds and pulse once or twice in a blender to distribute the chia seeds well.

Taste and adjust sweet and tang. Add more lime juice or zest to taste and blend in.

Pour the mixture into glasses or custard cups. Stir once after an hour or so to mix the chia seeds again. Chill overnight in the refrigerator.

Garnish with whipped coconut cream and lime zest and serve.

From August Weed & Feed, brought by Lee Ann Aronson

Mullein: A Soft Touch

Interested in a multifaceted plant that reportedly acts as an expectorant, treats pain and irritation in skin wounds, creates linings for moccasins, and becomes a stand-in for rouge? The list goes on. If so, then meet *Verbascum thapsus*, most often



known as common mullein (pronounced as mull-in), but holding at least 50 other (some more colorful) monikers. My personal favorite is cowboy toilet paper. When nature calls, nature provides. Mullein, biodegradable and “free for the picking,” will do the

trick. In year one, the biennial presents as a low rosette of leaves; in year two, it bolts geyser-like up to more than 6 feet tall.

Perhaps the first impulse regarding a common mullein is to stroke its light silvery green leaves. The surface texture of the leaves appears to be soft like a favorite baby blanket. The illusion is due to small, hair-like outgrowths (trichomes), almost velvet-like to the touch, covering every visible part of the plant. These inviting biennials, which thrive in multiple habitats throughout the world, appear somewhat like a cluster of bunny ears growing in a formation representing another example of the Fibonacci Sequence.

Leaves can be as long as 19.5 inches, but become progressively smaller the higher on the stalk. Mullein stems are thick, strong and unbranched, with alternating leaves. Leaves can be a narrow oval shape tapering to a point at the base (oblanceolate) or oblong. Fragrant flowers, roughly half an inch across, appear as a dense floral whorl, blooming sequentially from bottom to top. Blossoms consist of a multiple of five lobes and petals, like a field of small yellow flowers residing along a tall lanky stem.



The flower creates an overabundance of seeds. The prolific production has also produced major criticism. Too many seeds can an invasive plant make. Fortunately, cultivated plants tend to outpace the growth rate of mullein. Mullein's preference for disturbed areas with poor, compacted soil, like roadsides, also puts a limit on available soil and threats to native plants.

With over 360 species, not surprisingly, characteristics and uses vary. Common mullein, with all its body parts filled with mucilage and antioxidants, has been used by folk and traditional healers to ease coughs and calm sore throats. Vitamin C and flavonoids also comprise the make-up of the common mullein.

For over 2000 years, teas, tinctures, capsules, and steam inhalation grounded in mullein have been used to reduce chronic coughs and calm inflamed lungs. This ancient wonder, found throughout the temperate zones of the planet, is a superstar in the world of holistic folk medicine. For modern medical practices, the data is still out, in part because mullein is often mixed with other natural plant compounds and insufficient studies have yet to be

conducted. These reasons may be why the FDA has not approved mullein for any medical condition or health concern. To find a more complete description of the health benefits of mullein, please go to: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/mullein-benefits>

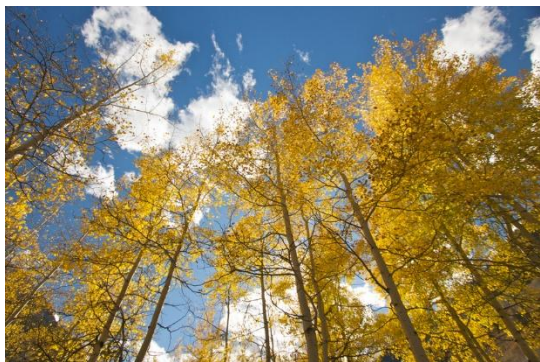
Ironically, common mullein is listed in the distinguished National Formulary for the United States and the United Kingdom. This highly respected book provides a list of medicines approved for prescription. Contents include the description, composition, selection, dispensing, administration and prescription of medicines. Although not recognized formally in the United States, mullein is a versatile plant leaving its mark throughout history on a number of people and cultures.

Kathleen McCoy, Herbie,
Master Gardener, Master
Naturalist



Historically Herbal

A Walk through the Woods



This month I thought we might take a folklorist's walk among the trees, hear the stories the old ones tell, and see how many tree names you can guess.

A: It seems appropriate to start with a tree thought to be the oldest cultivated tree on earth. This tree no longer grows in the wild and is known as a "living fossil" as it is found in fossil form dating from 225 to 280 million years ago. It has grown in its country of origin, China, around the temples and can be found growing on the Scottsdale Library grounds and many other places in the Phoenix metro area as it tolerates urban pollutants. Unfortunately, it is also known as the "stink bomb tree" as the female plant produces a fruit which is commonly described as "putrid." The fruit contains an edible kernel called

"silvery apricots" by the Chinese, whose name for the tree translates as "white nut."

B: This tree is well known in the United States and is the state tree of both Kansas and Nebraska. It tolerates drought but also grows along flood plains and can tolerate long term flooding; its roots can stand saturation for up to a month. Considered sacred by various Indian tribes, it proved useful to settlers who often fed the leaves to livestock. The wood is considered inferior and is sometimes used in plywood; it was once used for making boxes as the wood accepts dyes for wording neatly and crisply. Its bark was once made into a tea as a cure for scurvy. One of its common names is Carolina poplar.

C: This tree is not long lived, and its wood is light weight, weighing only 25 pounds per cubic foot. Weak and brittle, the wood tends to split when nailed and does not accept screws well but it has been used by the cheese industry for many years for containers because it does not affect the taste of the cheese and its light color does not alter the cheese's color. The wood does not accept stain but can be painted. This tree grows in all areas of the United States except the Ohio Valley and the Atlantic coast, south of New Jersey. Snowshoe rabbits eat the bark, moose eat the leaves, and grouse eat the buds in winter. It was used medicinally by the American Indians for tea and poultices. *Khashzha*, its Syrian name, means "to be agitated." The Balsam poplar, a related species, is the state tree of Wyoming.

D: This tree was once planted at the entrance of homes to deter witches. Any witch desiring to enter the home or just passing by was compelled to stop and count all the needles on the tree before entering. Of course, the witch would become confused and miscount and have to start over again because there were so many leaves. In frustration they would quit and leave the house in peace. The tree's strong flavored berries are used to flavor game, stews, soups and stuffing but should be used sparingly. People with kidney problems or pregnant women should avoid the tree and its berries all together. The berries are produced by female trees, but both genders of tree must be planted to yield the berries which are used in production of spirits.

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This article, one in a series of Historically Herbal articles, was written by the late Mica Steele and originally printed in our April 2011 AHA newsletter.

Answers: A. Ginkgo, *Ginkgo balboa*,
B. Cottonwood, *Populus deltoides*, C. Aspen,
Populus tremuloides, D. Juniper, *Juniperus
comminus*

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Wasps and What to Do about Them Cont'd.

Summer Weed & Feeds

**Traditional wisdom is a mixed bag—
some of it still holds up, and some
should have been composted years ago.**

~Anonymous