

# The Chuparosa

Chapter Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 4 - April 2016



## Last reminder: Annual Desert Garden Tour on Sunday, April 3



Photos by Mark Astorga

The Desert Horticultural Society of Coachella Valley 11th annual Desert Garden tour will feature desert-friendly, water conserving gardens of all sizes, from small patios to HOA conversions.

From noon to 4 p.m. Sunday April 3 guests can take self-guided walks

through Palm Springs gardens showcasing a variety of landscapes and gardens both large and small. Created by homeowners and design professionals, these gardens offer insight and inspiration that speak to every garden landscape.

**Continued on page 3**

### In This Issue

**11th Annual Garden Tour**

**Calendar of events, page 2**

**Best native plants for the desert, page 4**

**Insects 101, page 5**

**Huntington Horticulture Collection has moved, page 5**

**Leucophyllum, 'The Barometer Bush', page 6**

**This & That, page 8**

**Plant of the Month, Dalea capitata, page 9**

**Garden Maintenance for April, page 10**

## Our Next Meeting: April 20 at 6 p.m.

Jessyca Frederick, an expert on water conservation in the landscape, will talk about common outdoor practices in Coachella Valley that lead to water waste, over-irrigation and why it all really matters here when there's so much water in our aquifer. She and her company, Water Wise Now, work to change the way our communities, residents and businesses think about applying water to our lawns and gardens.

**5:30 p.m.** Plant exchange. Bring pups, cuttings, plants to share with others. Even if cannot bring plants feel free to adopt and watch your garden grow.

**6 p.m.** Regular DHSCV meeting with presentation by Jessyca Frederick

**7:30 p.m.** Refreshments

Where: Hoover Room, The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert

## More Upcoming Events

Here's a cache of events and meetings of interest to members of the Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley and fellow gardening enthusiasts. Read more at [www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org).

**Ongoing: Ask the Gardener:** Master Gardener volunteers serve "Ask the Gardener" tables at farmer's markets. Palm Springs, 8 a.m.-noon, Saturdays, Camelot Theatre parking lot, 2300 E. Baristo Road; Palm Desert, 8 a.m.-noon, second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, Chamber of Commerce parking lot, 72-559 Highway 111; La Quinta, 8 a.m.-noon, second and fourth Sundays of the month, Main Street, Old Town La Quinta

**April 3 11th annual Desert Garden Tour:** See 5 water-conserving Palm Springs gardens. Starts at Wellness Park, Palm Springs. Noon -4 p.m. Members free, others \$15. See story in this issue for details.

**April 9 "Native and Desert Adaptive Plants":** Lecture with Mountain States Nursery representative Wendy Proud. 10 a.m.-noon. \$10. Cactus Mart, 49-889 29 Palms Highway, Morongo Valley. [Cactusmart.net](http://Cactusmart.net), (760) 363-6076

**April 9-10 44th annual show & sale:** South Coast Cactus & Succulent Society, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. South Coast Botanic Garden, 26-300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula. \$6-\$9. [Southcoastcss.org](http://Southcoastcss.org)

**April 12 "Earth Under Fire":** How and why our climate is changing. Lec-

ture at UC Riverside Palm Desert, 75-080 Frank Sinatra Drive. 7-8 p.m. Free. (951) 827-5089

**April 14 Garden Talk - "Exploring the Beauty of California's Native Flora":** Wildflowers once blanketed California's mountains, deserts, and valleys; only small pockets remain. Award-winning photographer David Leaser brings attention to these vanishing botanical treasures with his new collection of fine art photographs. Free; no reservations required. 2:30 p.m., Brody Botanical Center, Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino. [Huntington.org](http://Huntington.org)

**April 16-17 69th Riverside Flower Show and Garden Tour:** Tours at 10 a.m., 4 p.m. both days. Flower show 1-6 p.m. April 16, 10 a.m.-4



## Upcoming events, cont'd

p.m. April 17. Elks Lodge, 6166 Brockton Drive, Riverside. \$10. [Riversideflowershow.info](http://Riversideflowershow.info), (951) 777-0746

**April 20 Society meeting:** With presentation by Jessyca Frederick of Water Wise Now. 6 p.m. Hoover Room, The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert

**April 27 Smoke Tree Ranch Tour:** Walking tour of the lush desert gardens at one of the valley's oldest gated communities in Palm Springs. 10 a.m.-noon. Optional buffet lunch \$27, tax and tip included. See more details at [deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://deserthorticulturalsociety.org).

**April 26 "Change is the Only Constant":** 10,000 years of climate variability in California and what it means to our water supply. Lecture at UC Riverside Palm Desert, 75-080 Frank Sinatra Drive. 7-8 p.m. Free. (951) 827-5089

**April 30 Photography class: "Nature in Photography,"** by master photographer David McChesney. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. \$75. Cactus Mart, 49-889 29 Palms Highway, Morongo Valley. [Cactusmart.net](http://Cactusmart.net), (760) 363-6076

## Garden tour, cont'd



"This year we're focusing on landscapes and gardens in large and small environments," says Lisha Astorga, DHSCV events coordinator. "Some have large garden spaces, while others have small, patio size or even balcony gardens. But no matter the size, you can take ideas from these gardens that will add color and beauty and conserve water, too."

All guests check in and receive tour maps at Wellness Park on the corner of Via Miraleste and Tachevah in Palm Springs.

Pre-registration via Paypal will get you through the check-in lines faster. Guests may also register on site from noon to 2 p.m. at Wellness Park the day of the event. There is no cost for current DHSCV members. Admission is \$15 for non-members and \$5 for students (No checks or credit cards can be accepted. Cash only.) Members can pre-register for the tour at [deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://deserthorticulturalsociety.org) and can also renew their memberships at the website via PayPal prior to the tour.

More at:  
[facebook.com/dhscvgardentour](https://facebook.com/dhscvgardentour)

## Best native plants for a desert landscape

By Jamie Lee Pricer

A group of gardening fans at the Palm Springs Public Library on March 16 learned about some of the best drought-tolerant plants for a desert garden from a woman who grew up in Palm Springs when the valley included "lots of sand dunes."

Apparently those early years left a lasting impression. Jennifer Hudson, 60, fell in love with desert plants and eventually went to work for The Living Desert where she was the Botanical Garden Registrar.

A teacher since 1986, she presented samples, photos and notes on 27 plants. All are habitat plants that attract bees, hummingbirds and other pollinators. "Every plant," she said, "has something wonderful to learn about it."

Some of them and characteristics she discussed:

**Smoke tree:** Important native bee plant, hardy, pumps nitrogen into the soil, home in late August to sharp shooters.

**Creosote:** Important to native Indians, who made tea with it to prevent colds and relieve aches and pains, among other uses. With some specimens dated at 10,000-years plus they are older than bristlecone pines. She said some scientists think creosote

may have anti-cancer agents.

**Chuparosa:** Edible blossoms taste like cucumber, very hardy. Stands grow near South Palm Canyon Drive towards the Indian Canyons in Palm Springs.

**Autumn sage:** A favorite of hummingbirds.

**Desert lavender:** Hardy, easy to prune.

**Desert fan palm:** The only native palm in California with a range from Baja to Death Valley. Is the only palm with fronds that will remain for its lifetime, forming a "skirt." Produces a small edible fruit. Is important habitat for owls, bats, hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. Hooded orioles strip fiber from the palm fronds to make nests.

**Texas ranger:** Is a "barometer" plant as it flowers throughout the year when it senses humidity.

**Desert milkweed:** Critical plant for Monarch and Queen butterflies, which in 26 days can complete a lifecycle on this plant from egg to chrysalis.

**Honey pod mesquite:** Important to Indians who ground high-protein flour from mesquite pods. Is winter deciduous and can have tap roots reaching down 150 feet. (Hudson

shared gingersnap-type cookies made with mesquite flour.)

**Egyptian star cluster:** Native to Yemen and East Africa, this plant, like many of the others she discussed are self-seeding.

**Whirling butterflies:** In the evening primrose family, this plant blooms year-round.

**Desert agave:** Hardy with long life cycle, produces many pups. Indians separated sharp plant tips to use as needles.

**Jumping cholla:** A favorite nesting site for cactus wrens.

**Brittlebush:** Hardy desert plant, one of the first to bloom, birds favor the seeds.

**Ocotillo:** Tall spindly plant blooms in response to rain, up to seven times a year; flowers can be dried to make tea.

**Others:** Mecca aster, indigo bush, elephant tree, goldeneye, barrel cactus, desert marigold, golden barrel cactus, coral vine, pink Baja fairy duster, desert mallow and desert ruellia.

Hudson said native plant nurseries are listed by site by the California Native Plant Link Exchange at [www.cnplx.info/](http://www.cnplx.info/).



## Insects 101: Convergent Lady Beetle



Photos & Text By Brian K. Rolf

**Common name:**

Convergent Lady Beetle

**Scientific name:**

*Hippodamia convergens*

**Size:** ~1 cm

**Range:** North America into South America.

Lady beetles are one of the world's best known beneficial insects. The lady beetle is often one of the first insects we learn about as children.

The commonly seen lady beetle in our area is the convergent lady beetle. This species is often called the 12-spotted lady beetle in that it has 12 spots. A common myth about lady beetles is you can tell how old

a lady beetle is by counting its spots. This is a purely myth.

The California lady beetle (*Coccinella californica*) doesn't have spots at all. while the 2-Spotted Lady Beetle (*Adalia bipunctata*) has 2. Asian lady beetle (*Harmonia axyridis*) can have as many as 20 spots.

A successful predator, lady beetles eat mostly aphids but will also eat other soft bodied insects.

How many lady beetles do you see in the desert during the summer months? Probably not that many as with higher temperatures, the beetles' food source becomes scarce and the beetles travel up into mountain canyons to get out of the heat and to find food. In the early fall the beetles move up even higher to hibernate as they congregate together by the millions.

Should a gardener buy lady beetles to put in their gardens? Sure, just know that they will probably fly away within a few days.

Brian K. Rolf is owner of Seattle Bug Safari, a traveling bug zoo. [brolf@seattlebugsaferi.com](mailto:brolf@seattlebugsaferi.com), (425) 829-4869

## Palm Springs Library accepts Huntington Horticulture Book Collection

By Tom Edwards

Approximately two years ago, Glenn Huntington, an original founder of the Desert Horticultural Society, donated his horticultural reference books collection to the society. During the last two years the collection has grown from other donations.

The books have been available for members to check out at our monthly meetings, but lacked a permanent space. After discussion, the society board agreed to donate the collection to the Palm Springs Public Library, which has recognized the gift.

So now, nearly 200 historical and topical books in the Glenn Huntington /Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley Collection will housed in the Palm Springs Public Library.

An up-to date bibliography of the collection was compiled and will be available to members on the society's website. Members may continue to donate their own reference books that will be added to the bibliography maintained by the library.

Some of the collection is shelved in the library (Aisle 19) with other books dedicated to Coachella Valley local interest and history. The remaining books have been added to the library reference collection.

Copies of the bibliography and information about the library and the collection will be offered at the April 20 membership meeting.

## Shrub of many names, *Leucophyllum* finds happy homes in the desert

By Bryan Stone

*Leucophyllum* originated from New Mexico, but Texas and Northern Mexico farmers once used this shrub to predict rain. I have yet to encounter this phenomenon, but the “Barometerbush” supposedly would bloom a few days before a hard rain.

Other names are Texas ranger, Texas sage, Cenizo, silver leaf, Sierra bouquet, fragrant rain sage, thunder cloud, Cimarron and so on.

The first time I encountered this many-named plant was while working on a wind break planted with *Casasia* (now known as *Senna*) and *Leucophyllum*, with an occasional palo verde or willow acacia plopped in the hedge. The plants in this living wall were taller than me (I am 5’11” and  $\frac{3}{4}$ ”). Our goal was to prune the base to expose the main stem to make checking the irrigation easier and keep rattlesnakes from nesting under them. The leaf fibers released while pruning made me cough for days. When working with this shrub please be careful and wear a dust mask and always do your research before working with an unfamiliar plant.

All *Leucophyllum* are low water use, and have bell or funnel shaped flowers varying from white to magenta to purple. All *Leucophyllum* leaves have trichomes, a desert-adaptation of tiny hairs that shade the leaves and

act as a water collector. Depending on hybrid selection, environmental conditions and pruning habits, *Leucophyllum* range in sizes from 2’-3’ high and wide to 8’ or more.

Out of the 14 species that I am aware of six are the most popular in the desert.



*Leucophyllum candidum*. Images courtesy of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery (mswn.com)

***L. candidum*** - The silver cloud and thunder cloud, probably the best varieties for smaller spaces, range from 2-3’ high and wide and boost indigo and violet flowers. Mass plantings can be spectacular.

***L. frutescens*** - The infamous Texas ranger, the first *Leucophyllum* to be brought into cultivation, is the rangiest of the bunch reaching as high and wide as 8’.

A smaller variety, ‘*Compacta*,’ will grow to 4’. ‘*White Cloud*’ has been developed from this species, which



*Leucophyllum frutescens*. Images courtesy of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery (mswn.com)

produces a gray foliage and white flowers. ‘*Rain Cloud*’ is a hybrid crossed with *L. minus* that I think has the brightest flowers among the varieties, turning a violet-blue. ‘*Rain Cloud*’ has an unusual vertical growth habit with powder gray foliage and is difficult to shape, but is an excellent specimen plant if you can find it.



*Leucophyllum laevigatum*. Image courtesy of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery (mswn.com)

***L. laevigatum*** - Probably one of my favorites is the Chihuahuan, because they are rather fickle. The Chihuahuan in nature grows at the bottom



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Chapter Newsletter: Volume 3, Issue 4 - April 2016

## *Leucophyllum* cont'd

of canyons and ravines but can be very sensitive to cold within the first couple months of being planted. It does not like water against the main stem or being over watered.



*Leucophyllum langmaniae*. Images courtesy of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery (mswn.com)

***L. langmaniae*** - Cinnamon sage is the strongest in the family in my experience, and typically has the densest foliage and the best flower performance. It's a slow grower, but if you want something that is hard to kill this is the one for you. A hardy cultivar of this species is the 'Rio Bravo.'



*Leucophyllum pruinosom*. Image courtesy of Camissonia's Corner (camissonia.blogspot.com)

***L. pruinosom*** - 'Sierra Bouquet' is a fragrant variety that smells like

grape bubblegum. If you like caring for plants this one is a fun project. Keep water away from the main stem and do not over water. I prefer to raise the foliage a little just as a reassurance so I can check the water easily. In my experience this variety attracts the most avian wildlife. Beautiful as a specimen plant or mass plantings, the occasional white *L. pruinosom* with bright purple blooms against a mountain backdrop can draw the eye.



*Leucophyllum zygophyllum*. Image courtesy of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery (mswn.com)

***L. zygophyllum*** - Much like the 'Rio Bravo,' the 'Blue Ranger,' growing to 6' high and wide, *L. zygophyllum* has a naturally round form, is not too rangy and has a silvery blue-green leaf that cups upward.

Plant selection at nurseries is easy for *Leucophyllum*. Search for fibrous roots near the surface with your hands near the main stem (watch for spiders). If you do not find any roots within the top 2 inches of soil move on to the next plant.

When removing the shrub from the pot, do not grab the main stem and yank up. Either cut the container or

place two fingers around the main stem and push down on the root ball, turn it to the side and gently remove it from the container.

Care is simple as well. Prune the occasional elongated stem shooting from the side of the main leader. Occasionally rake below the plant as foliage drop can build up quickly around the base. Once every couple years it is okay to prune out some of the wood allowing new foliage to grow in giving the look of a nice, almost new, healthy plant. Make sure you leave plenty of space for the shrub to grow at the specifications of the variety. They can be used in medians, parkways, windbreaks and sound breaks.

I see Texas Rangers being hedged in spheres, cubes and pyramids, which isn't a great practice. Hedging reduces flowering and increases wounding and makes the plant focus on healing instead of showing its beautiful colors, shapes and structure.

*Bryan Stone is a certified arborist and horticulturist. Born and raised in the Coachella Valley, he learned to respect the landscape and plant life at an early age from his parents and grandparents, helping care for the pines, eucalyptus, citrus and avocado trees on their ranch. As a licensed landscape contractor, Bryan also works with other professionals in the valley on projects like consultation, installation, tree pruning, irrigation and yearly plant maintenance.*

## This & That

### **Workshops to discuss possible rate changes**

Coachella Valley Water District is evaluating the costs of providing domestic (drinking) water service to customers.

Staff is proposing a five-year plan for domestic water rates and rate structure changes that are fair and reflect the true cost of service to promote financial stability, said a CVWD spokesman. If approved on June 14, the new rates would go into effect on July 1 and would be the first rate increases for domestic water since 2010.

The proposed adjustments will impact residents, businesses and HOAs differently because the new proposed fixed rates vary based on customer class. A homeowner who efficiently uses water may only see a small monthly increase in their water bill, said the spokesman.

The matter will be discussed at these public workshops.

**Tuesday, April 5, 9 a.m.,** Administration building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert (Board will vote whether to initiate a Prop. 218 process to change and raise rates)

**Wednesday, April 27, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.,** Coachella office, 51-501 Tyler St

**Monday, May 2, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.,** Administration Building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert

**Wednesday, May 11, 10 a.m. - noon,** at Administration Building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert

**Tuesday, June 14, 9 a.m.,** Administration building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert (Board will vote whether to approve proposed rate changes and increases)

To learn more about the proposed rate changes: [www.cvwd.org/ratechanges](http://www.cvwd.org/ratechanges).

### **New database lists 130 seed banks**

DHSCV member Pam Lyford suggests checking out this database: <https://www.genesys-pgr.org/welcome>.

It's a database of world's agricultural plants valuable genetic traits. Designed and devolved by The International Crop trust to support natural plant breeding for improvement of climate, pest and disease resistance around the world, this new database lists 130 international, national and regional seed banks (aka gene banks).

Genesys is a global portal to information about Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA). It is a gateway from which

germ plasm accessions from gene banks around the world can be easily found and ordered – semi-scientific chat for “you can order seeds.”

### **Learn how to take out lawn, redo landscape**

Home gardeners who want to learn how to create their own water-efficient, desert-friendly home landscapes can attend a free Water Wise Landscape Workshop hosted by the Coachella Valley Water District.

The selected topic is converting turf to desert-friendly landscaping. The workshop is designed for local residents who want to learn more about water-efficient irrigation, desert horticulture and how to better manage their water use.

Conservation workshops for home gardeners are one of several water conservation programs designed to help customers meet their water budgets, reduce their outdoor water use and minimize or avoid drought penalty fees.

**April 13: 5:30 - 7 p.m.,** Converting turf to desert-friendly plants, drip irrigation, Steve Robbins Administration Building, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert. Information: [cvwd.org](http://cvwd.org), (760) 398-2651



## This & That

### **CSUSB Palm Desert to host symposium on water law**

The legal and regulatory framework for allocating water in California will be the topic of discussion at a symposium at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus on Wednesday, May 4.

The symposium will take place from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. in the campus's Mary Stuart Rogers Gateway Building, Room 205. Cost is \$59.

Topics of discussion include: regional water resources and hydrology, surface water rights, groundwater rights, environmental laws regulat-

ing water, the Colorado River Basin and the Salton Sea restoration plans, how California manages its water supply with its extensive water delivery system of dams and aqueducts, and how the system has managed during one of the worst droughts of record.

Symposium presenter, David Sandino, served as chief counsel for the California Department of Water Resources from 2006-2010, and serves as senior staff counsel.

Sandino's teaching portfolio includes water law and environmental law at Texas Tech University School of Law; University of Nevada, Las

Vegas; and Santa Clara University School of Law. He also created and teaches courses for environmental professionals on California water law and policy, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and Tribal Water Law. He received a distinguished teaching award from UC Davis for his contribution to natural science education, and received a 1999 Fulbright Fellowship to teach international environmental law at the Moscow State Academy.

To register: (909) 537-5975, [lpace@csusb.edu](mailto:lpace@csusb.edu), <http://pace.csusb.edu/courses/water-law.html>. Deadline is April 27.

## **Plant of the Month: *Dalea capitata* 'Sierra Gold'**

By Troy Bankord

How about this for an interesting alternative to lawn? Soft, mounding and a nice dimensional addition to otherwise flat turf areas, *Dalea capitata* looks even better on gentle slopes.

This durable groundcover grows quickly to about 8 inches tall by 3 feet wide. Because of its compact size and tolerance to reflected heat, *Dalea capitata* is often used in tight planting areas, such as street medians and parking lot planters. Rabbits seem to avoid the bright green, fine-textured, aromatic foliage.

Small yellow flower spikes carpet Sierra Gold in the spring and fall and look best if sheared in the spring following its flowering cycle. *Dalea capitata* should be planted in full sun exposures, and appreciates our

sandy, well-drained soils. It is native to Mexico and is hardy to a whopping 0 degrees.

Images courtesy of Southern Nevada Water Authority ([snwa.com](http://snwa.com))



## Maintenance by the Month, April

By Troy Bankord

Happy spring! It's a glorious time to live in the desert.

Certainly, by now our gardens are abloom and busting out all over. Keep tight on your pruning as our intense summer sun and scorching temperatures are right around the corner.

Pesky weeds that germinated with the fall-winter rains will begin to flower at this time. You can manually remove by hand or for larger areas spray with glyphosate/pre-emergent following directions on the label. Adding a small amount of marker dye in the glyphosate solution can be helpful to avoid spraying the same areas twice. When using a chemical spray wear an old pair of shoes that will never be worn indoors. The glyphosate product/pre-emergent can be used around cacti and most succulents without damaging them. It is also inactive in the soil, so it will not harm the roots of other plants.

### Garden maintenance

**Leaf molting:** In most cases, your plants are not dying. Many trees and plants will molt this month. It's Mother Nature's way of allowing plants to shed old leaves to allow for the new.

**Wildflower lovers:** Allow any wildflowers to dry up and go to seed. The seed heads can be shaken around the garden and will germinate next year with winter rains. Otherwise, seeds can be collected and sown elsewhere or shared.



*Baileya multiradiata* (Desert Marigold). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

**Trimming:** Continue to deadhead annuals and herbaceous perennials to encourage continued flowering, including desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), red sage (*Salvia coccinea*), angelita daisy (*Tetrandeum acaulis*), and gaillardia (*Gaillardia pulchella*).

*Senna* (formerly *Cassia*) bushes are likely going to seed. Hand-pruning or shearing/natural thinning can take place now before the heat of summer. Be sure to give the plants a good drink afterward.

Trees should be trimmed, thinned and scaled back quickly this month while they are still somewhat dormant. The sooner they are trimmed, the sooner they will partake of

the spring surge of growth that is around the corner. Trimming and thinning now in preparation for April winds is always a good idea to minimize wind damage or loss. Dead wood (in reasonable amounts) can usually be removed throughout the year without any chance of harm.

**New plants:** Continue transplanting desert-adapted trees, shrubs, groundcovers, vines, ornamental grasses, perennials, cacti and succulents. The earlier in the month they are planted, the better, giving roots time to establish before summer's heat arrives. Give them ample water in our sandy soils, keeping in mind that their roots have not yet established and have not "tapped into" any moisture in their surrounding soils. They are used to a daily drink at the nursery and will need to be watered more heavily when new, than once-established.

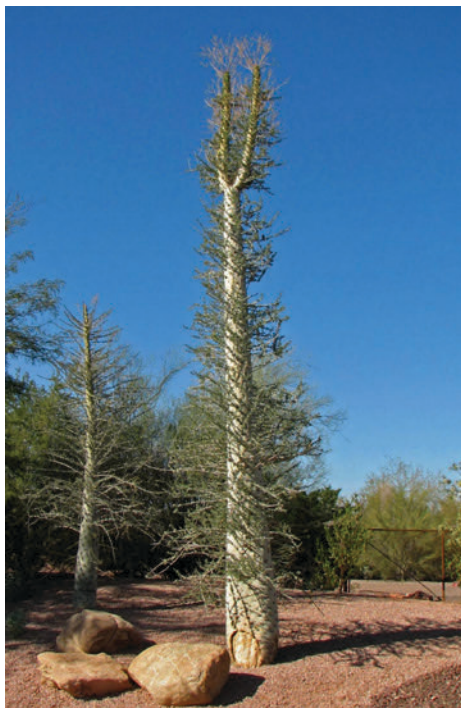


*Chilopsis linearis* (Desert Willow). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

Many deciduous trees will begin to produce new leaves as the weather becomes warmer. Look for: mes-



## April, cont'd



*Fouquieria columnaris* (Boojum tree). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

quites (*Prosopis* spp.), desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), golden leadball tree (*Leucaena retusa*), catclaw acacia (*Senegalia greggii* syn. *Acacia greggii*), feather tree (*Lysiloma watsonii*), Anacacho orchid tree (*Bauhinia lunarioides*), and kidneywood (*Eysenhardtia orthocarpa*). Leaves of the boojum tree (*Fouquieria columnaris*) and elephant tree (*Pachycormus discolor*) will begin to yellow and drop. The boojum tree and elephant tree are summer-dormant. Periods of active growth begin from about November through May. When the leaves of both succulents begin to drop, careful watering is needed.

**Citrus:** Citrus varieties ripen at dif-

ferent times, so choose a mixture to extend the harvest period. If space is limited, a single “cocktail” tree — which has several varieties grafted onto one rootstock — might be a good choice. Trees are best planted after the fruit has “set” to ensure a larger crop of citrus their first year in the ground.

**Roses:** If roses are your thing, choose a planting site that receives about six hours of full sun daily. Eastern or southern exposures are best, with afternoon shade. Avoid areas with western exposures against walls. Backfilling with a mixture of ½ composted potting soil and ½ native desert soil gives your plants a boost. Topdressing the root



*Yucca flaccida* (Adam's Needle). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.

zones with a mound of mulch will help shade the roots and keep them moist – while providing fertilizer to the plants as the mulch breaks down naturally.

**Yucca, cactus:** Many yucca species can be planted in April with the exception of Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*). When transplanting cacti and succulents, mark either the south or west side and plant facing the orientation you marked to avoid burning tender tissues. Most nurseries will mark the side of the container to help you determine proper planting orientation.

However, if the original orientation is not known, newly planted cacti and succulents need to be covered with shade cloth if the plant surface appears to yellow or pale suddenly. Use a shade cloth rated between 30%-60% as anything higher will block most of the sunlight. You may need to keep the shade cloth on the plant until early fall. Wait a week after planting your cacti and succulents before watering to minimize the chance of rot. After the initial irrigation of your succulents, allow the soil to somewhat dry out here between watering.

Plant your ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) from March through May for best transplanting success. Karoo-roses (*Adenium* spp.) and plumeria should be “waking” from their winter dormancy. Leaves and flow-

## April, cont'd

ers should start appearing on the succulent stems. You can begin to fertilize and water your Karoo-rose throughout the warm-season.

### Watering

With summer looming, it's time to double check your sprinkler timers for efficiency. Tests the timer to see if it is working properly and replace back-up batteries if necessary. Check for leaks and clogged emitters and flush out your drip and sprinkler lines. Soaker tubing used in pots and flower beds should be changed prior to summer as holes clog easily with calcium.

Established native or desert-adapted trees should be watered at least 3 feet deep and shrubs 2 feet deep. Desert plants prefer a little drying out between watering but our sandy soils blur those lines, allowing for more water consumption but also drying out very quickly. Always allow soil to dry out between each irrigation cycle.

Newly planted native and desert-adapted trees and shrubs need to be watered more frequently until established. It can take up to 3-5 years for trees and at least 1-2 years for shrubs to become established in the landscape. After planting trees and shrubs, they should be watered immediately. Continue to water annual wildflowers at least every two

weeks to prolong flowering.

### Problems

Aphids can be found on landscape plants or on your vegetables and herbs. Allow natural predators such as lacewings, praying mantis, lady beetles, parasitic wasps, and even hummingbirds to control the aphid population. You can also spray with insecticidal soap or a forceful spray of water, but check to make sure beneficial insects are not present.

If you notice a tattered appearance on your landscape plants such as evening primroses (*Oenothera spp.*), sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*) and gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*) it may be the flea beetle in action. A different species of flea beetle may also harm your vegetables including tomatoes, eggplants, carrots and cabbages. The flea beetle larvae and adults can be destructive and difficult to control.

You may notice small, circular cuts on the leaf margins. This is the handiwork of leaf-cutter bees, important pollinators. The leaf-cutter bees use the cut leaf to line their nest and then lay an egg in each cavity. The damage is cosmetic and does not harm the plant. Control methods are unnecessary.

Agave snout weevils become active during the warm months, feeding on the root systems of your agave

specimens. Infestation may not be apparent until they decline and collapse. Insecticidal drenches or granules around their root systems in April, May and June will minimize their deadly impact.

Cochineal scale, the cottony, white substance on your prickly pears (*Opuntia spp.*) and chollas (*Cylindropuntia spp.*) may be active now. Remove with a fast stream of water or spray insecticidal soap.

### Fertilization

Now is the time to fertilize your warm-season cacti, succulents, herbaceous and woody perennials, and annuals in containers. Periodic fertilization may be needed for plants in containers as nutrients will diminish in the soil over time. Always follow directions on the label.

I've found Superthrive (natural vitamins) or Miracle Gro, mixed at half-strength, to be very effective.

*Troy Bankord of Palm Springs creates 'Places of Peace' through connective landscape and interior design. His projects have been featured in publications, on architectural tours and on television shows. In Arizona, his firm was the forerunner in native desert plant species maintenance via natural and selective pruning practices. <https://www.facebook.com/TroyBankordDesign>*



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