

# The Chuparosa

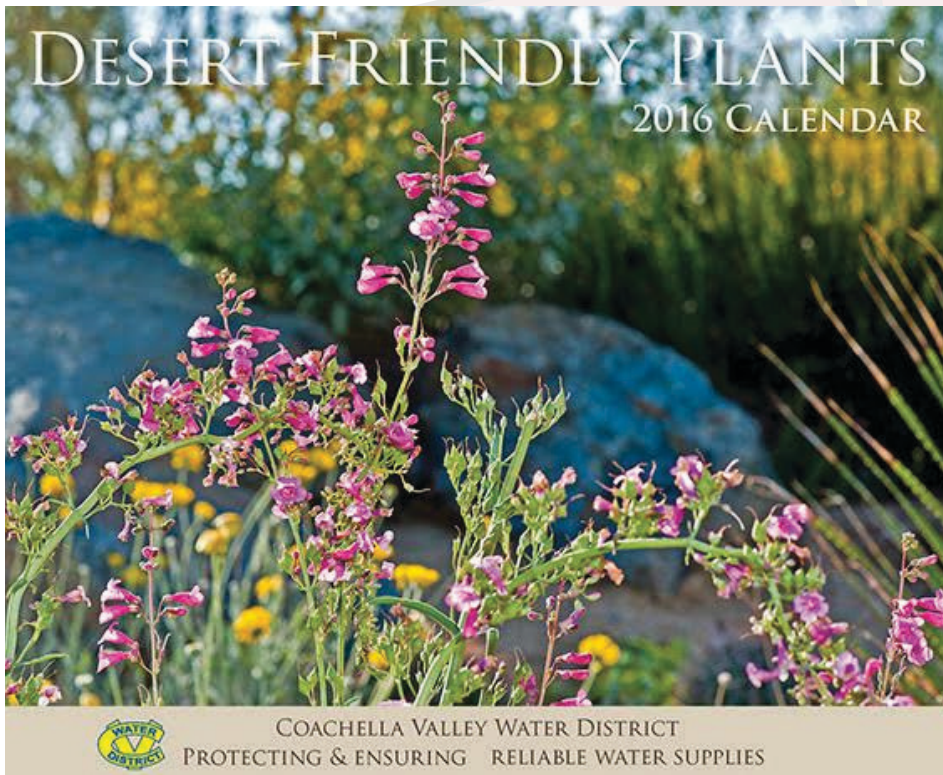
Chapter Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 1 - January 2016



Desert  
Horticultural  
Society of the Coachella Valley

## Water district offers free plant calendars for 2016



A different desert-friendly plant is featured each month in free 2016 calendars published by the Coachella Valley Water District.

Also included are key information, including a short plant description, watering and sun requirements, bloom season and color, and growth measurements.

Helpful month-to-month gardening tips are offered along with a monthly irrigation guide.

Get your free calendar at the Jan. 20th meeting of the Desert Horticultural Society. You can also pick up a calendar at 75-525 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, or order at [CVWD.org/FormCenter](http://CVWD.org/FormCenter).

### In This Issue

*Desert-Friendly Plants  
Calendar from CVWD*

*Calendar of Events, page 2*

*Society Announcements,  
page 3*

*Discovering Desert  
Dudleya, page 4*

*Insects 101, page 5*

*Growing Vegetables in  
the Desert: Book Review,  
page 6*

*January Maintenance,  
page 7*

*Plant of the Month:  
Sacaton, page 8*

*This & That, page 9*

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

Kirk Anderson, Curator of Gardens at The Living Desert, will introduce us to some local Coachella Valley native plants and show us the best ways to use them in the landscape.

As the valley continues to grow and build out, using even a few native plants in each landscape can help connect the valley's natural open spaces and support the valley's native fauna. Anderson was hired by The Living Desert in 1986 while taking horticulture classes at College of the Desert. Although he never intended to stay through one summer, let alone 29, the job turned out to be a perfect blend of his interests—gardening, xeriscaping, native plants, wildflowers, natural history, conservation—local and global. He has been Curator of Gardens since 2003.

**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 Kirk Anderson

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

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

### ***Borrow Books from the DHSCV Lending Library***

Glenn Huntington generously donated much of his extraordinary library of books about plants, gardening, and sustainable living to the DHSCV. Borrow books and expand your knowledge. See Tom Edwards at our meeting.

## 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).

**Jan. 14 California Deserts: Floristic Frontier on the Brink:** Lecture by James Andre, director of Granite Mountains Desert Research Center. 6-7:30 p.m., UCR Palm Desert

auditorium, 75-080 Frank Sinatra Drive, Palm Desert.

**Jan. 20 Society meeting: With presentation by Kirk Anderson,** Curator of Gardens at The Living Desert, Palm Desert. 6 p.m. Hoover Room, The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert

**Jan. 22 Gardens, Landscapes, Luncheon:** Themed walk, lunch at Smoke Tree Ranch, Palm Springs, with Living Desert staff. 9 a.m.-1

p.m. \$55. [Livingdesert.org](http://Livingdesert.org), (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

**Jan. 28 Farm to Table:** Explore the University of California Desert Research and Extension Center. Field tour, lecture, U-Pick vegetables, lunch, prizes, ice cream. 1004 E. Holton Road, Holtville. Carpools leave Palm Springs at 6:30 a.m. Registration 9 a.m., program 9:30 a.m. Cost: \$20 paid at the site. Register at [deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://deserthorticulturalsociety.org)

## Upcoming events, cont'd

### **Feb. 13 Propagation of Desert Plants:**

Hands-on workshop. Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. 9 a.m.-noon, \$25, \$35. Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

### **March 9 Desert Gardening Workshop:**

With UC Master Gardeners. 9 a.m.-2 p.m., The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. \$25, \$35. Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

### **March 10 Climate-Driven Diversity Decline in California:**

Lecture by Dr. Susan Harrison of UC Davis. UCR Palm Desert auditorium, 6-7:30 p.m. 75-080 Frank Sinatra Drive, Palm Desert

### **March 17 Plants of The Living Desert:**

1-4 p.m. The Living Desert,

47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. \$20, \$30. Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

### **March 19 Anatomy of A Desert Garden:**

A 50 year history of one desert garden, includes breakfast, at Martin and Mary Brent Wehrli's garden in Palm Springs. 9 a.m.-noon. \$45, \$55. Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

### **April 3 11th annual Desert Garden Tour:**

Starts at Wellness Park, Palm Springs. 11:45 a.m.-4 p.m. Details TBA

### **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

## We need your ideas

Members have an open opportunity to help board members plan events, schedule speakers and further the goals of the horticulture society.

"We are always interested in what our members would like," says president Mary Brent Wehrli.

For instance, are there particular speakers members would like to hear at meetings? Can class topics be expanded or improved at the annual Garden Day in October? Do members know of houses in Palm Springs with stellar desert gardens that would enhance the annual Desert Garden Tour in April?

Any and all ideas are welcome, says Wehrli. Conversation is welcome at [deserthorticulturalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:deserthorticulturalsociety@gmail.com)

## Society to host Garden Club

DHSCV will host the Tuesday, Jan. 26 meeting of the Palms to Pines chapter of the California Garden Clubs Inc. at the Welwood Murray Memorial Library in downtown Palm Springs.

Start time is 11 a.m. The program will include a demonstration of flower arranging to encourage members to submit an arrangement for the Palms to Pines Flower Show in March. After the meeting, attendees

may gather at a fun spot for lunch.

The library is on the southeast corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Tahquitz Canyon Way.

DHSCV members are encouraged to attend and welcome guests from other garden clubs. Members who'd like to give a hand hosting this meeting should contact Mary Brent Wehrli at (760) 320-3252

## Society to elect officers at meeting

DHSCV will elect officers at its first meeting of 2016, Wednesday, Jan. 20.

Three positions are on the ballot – president, secretary and treasurer. Each office is described in the By-laws on the DHSCV website.

If you would like to nominate yourself or another DHSCV member for one of these offices, please send the nomination to [deserthorticulturalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:deserthorticulturalsociety@gmail.com).



## Discovering Desert Dudleya



Photos by Maureen Gilmer

By Maureen Gilmer

In the garden I inherited with my Morongo Valley house lay treasures. After I started irrigating again, the large desert garden planted by the original owner came to life. That first spring I discovered a small, light blue succulent bearing an exquisite branching flower stalk that so resembled those of blue chalk sticks. I thought it was an exotic. But then I came upon this species in my references, it is truly native here. *Dudleya saxosa var aloides* is endemic to inland deserts of Southern California.

This species is native in Morongo Valley and mountains around the Coachella Valley. This south facing

alluvial slope of mine is not its typical habitat though, so the original owners likely transplanted them from the wild.

This fall I found the wild Dudleyas up in Little Morongo Canyon a short hike from the house. They perch on sheltered rock cliffs. They're anchored tightly into fissures in solid rock with deep roots for anchorage and to access moisture deep inside. I will return to see these ancient specimens bloom to photograph when more visible in situ after the rains return.

The wild Dudleyas may be dying out from lack of moisture as mine are doing here in the garden because I saw the remnants of other plants

dead, yet still up in the rocks. Some of these are nestled in small pockets where decomposing organic matter collects with decomposed granite. Which ones still have living roots remains to be seen.

Realizing these precious native succulents were dying in the garden, I brought the first one into my greenhouse half dead. I transplanted it into a blend of 50% potting soil 50% local decomposed granite off the property. Just a few weeks after adding water it sprung to life and flourished.



Such sudden responses make me wonder if this curious little native might make a good landscape plant for desert rock gardens. My first test of whether it's amenable to transplanting and cultivation in containers over time will fill in a few more gaps in its profile.

If there is adequate seed production after our next wet spell, or if my greenhouse specimens are pollinated by the hummingbirds that hang out in there, maybe I'll be able to germinate the seed. If these are like



## Dudleya, cont'd

many other desert wildflowers, they may readily respond to moisture. It remains to be seen how they respond to summer irrigation and whether they may resist dying back if there is no drought to force it.

Dudleya proved to me that some natives may surprise us, but only if we take the time to know and grow them ourselves. It took awhile to understand these beautiful little gems already here in the garden.

Over the past years observation proved they are much more adaptable than I thought. So like me, all gardeners have the ability to discover, analyze, draw conclusions and then take risks with new and unusual plants from the back country that all too often prove the salvation of droughty gardens.

*Maureen Gilmer has worked in horticulture for more than 25 years. She's written 16 books. Her syndicated column appears in publications across the nation. Her work appears frequently in major magazines. [moplants.com](http://moplants.com)*



## Insects 101: Leafhopper Assassin Bug



Photo & Text By Brian K. Rolf

**Common name:**

Leafhopper Assassin Bug

**Scientific name:** *Zelus renardii*

**Size:** 1.5 – 2.0 cm

**Range/habitat:** North and Central America; additional range due to human activity: Hawaii Islands and other Pacific Islands, parts of South America and areas of the Mediterranean.

The leafhopper assassin bug feeds on leafhopper insects (the *Cicadellidae* family) and **are considered beneficial insects**. The assassin bugs also feed on aphids, fruit flies, and other flying things in the garden in fact, they will pretty much feed on any small creature they find.

They are very stealthy predators as they detect and hone in on their

prey. They feed by inserting stylets that extends from their mouth and folded up under their body. A simple description for the stylets is to think of them as a feeding tube. As they attack prey, they fold out their stylets and insert it into the prey in order to feed.

Adults are good flyers and are able to travel to new areas to hunt and lay eggs.

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

## New book tells how to grow veggies in hot, dry places

By Jamie Lee Pricer

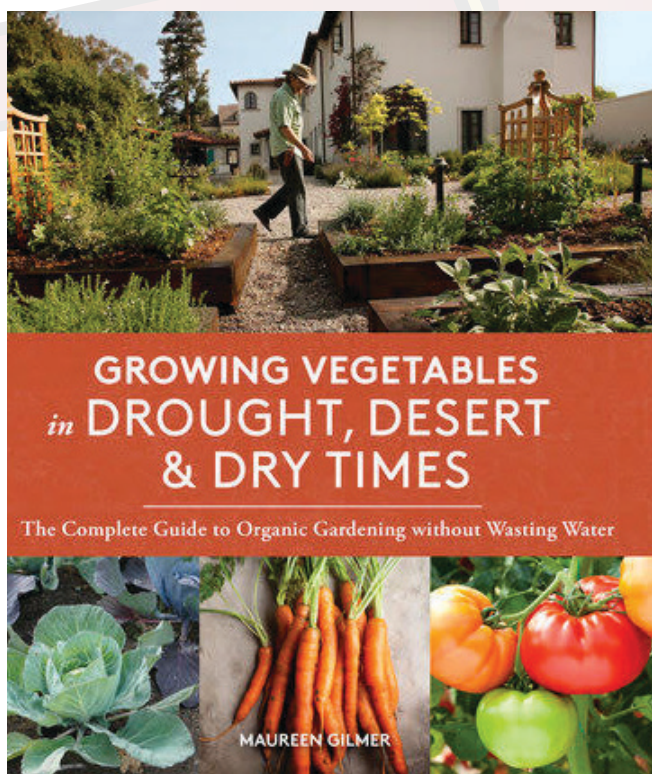
In 224 pages, desert resident, gardener and author Maureen Gilmer gives readers the A to Z on how to grow vegetables mindful of wise water use in her new book, "Growing Vegetables in Drought, Desert & Dry Times."

Considering our water restrictions, the subtitle—"The Complete Guide to Organic Gardening Without Wasting Water"—should be of particular interest to Coachella Valley gardeners.

Gilmer is a syndicated gardening columnist and author of 18 books on gardening and landscaping design. A former resident of Palm Springs for many years she now lives in Morongo Valley on a ranch with plots of lush cactus, greenhouses and stretches of desert dedicated to organic gardening experiments.

Gilmer mixes old and new. Her tested advice uses modern technology as well as tips and stories from native traditions ranging from the Southwestern United States to the Middle East. She includes the newest innovations in conservation, varietal recommendations and a seasonal crop guide.

Heavily illustrated with photographs and drawings, the book that was released just prior to the new year also features clearly written definitions and tips set aside in color blocks.



Before leaping into selecting and nurturing specific vegetables, Gilmer's easy-to-read informative chapters explain the basis of desert gardening. Readers will learn about seasons, climate modification, how to build organic soil, the skinny on water and insects and pests.

The 39-page Seasonal Crop Guide is sure to become the book's most

well-thumbed section. She groups plants in "tribes," recognizing their response to similar conditions. That's why the plants are not listed in alphabetical order. Each listing contains information like type, exposure, season, planting method, cultivation, frost tolerance, pests and diseases.

"Growing Vegetables..." has already won high praise from noted gardening experts. For instance, Sally Wasowski, author and award-winning gardening expert on native landscaping, says: "With this timely book, learn how to grow your own healthy organic vegetables without wasting water and, in the process, how to assess your local soil, wind, and heat conditions. This is a guide everyone should own and use."

It belongs on every desert gardener's bookshelf.

"Growing Vegetables in Drought, Desert & Dry Times," Maureen Gilmer, 224 pages, \$22.95, Sasquatch Books. Formats: Trade paperback, eBook. Available on Amazon and at Barnes and Noble.



## Maintenance by the Month: January

By Troy Bankord

With 'Season' now in full-swing, we can find ourselves easily distracted in the desert with events and social activities. But it's also a great time to get out and enjoy those temperatures, while cleaning up your garden.

for temperatures that hover around the 30-degree mark. So, you'll want to provide frost protection to some succulents, cacti and frost-tender plantings. Some succulents are sensitive at 36 degrees or less.

Also remember that cold air settles in

(*Desmettiana*, *Attenuata*, *Sansivaria*, *Portulacaria*—elephant food, bougainvillea, *Euphorbia* species, lantana, certain citrus (lemon and lime), hibiscus, natal plum, roses and annual flowers and vegetables should be draped with drape frost cloth, burlap or old sheets and blankets (never plastic!).

I've found that frost cloth tends to be the most effective, as it retains the warmth from the soil while also repelling water, keeping the actual cold off your plantings. (Burlap, sheets and blankets will allow the moisture through them, often causing plant and tip die back.) Frost cloth can be purchased at local garden centers and at larger home retail outlets.

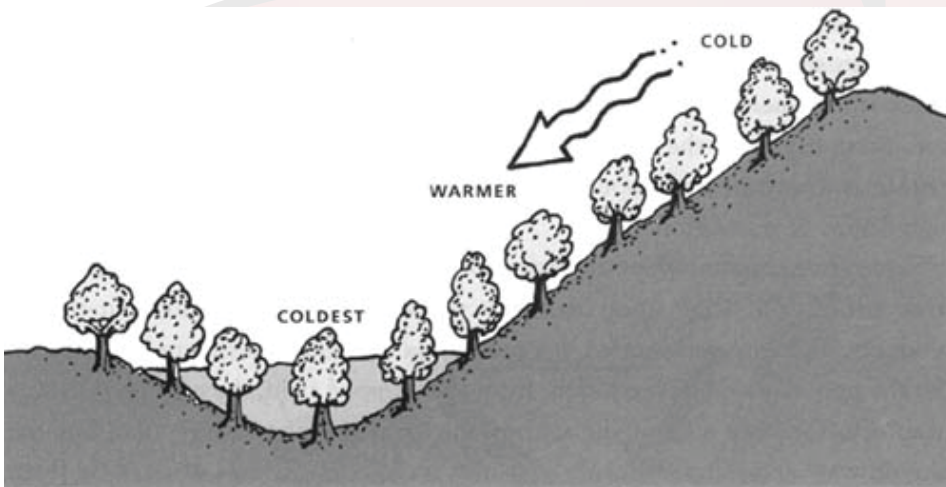


Image borrowed from Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y7223e/y7223e0c.htm>

### Frost protection

Although we are not often prone to freezing temperatures, there are colder "pockets" and microclimates in Coachella Valley where frost protection may be necessary.

Monitor your weather forecasts and check online for nights that will drop to 36 degrees or less. I've found Weather.com to be one of the most accurate sources. Remember, if you reside in a cooler area of the valley and they are calling for a low of 36 degrees, some of you may be in

lower areas and sunny areas of your home and garden will retain some warmth through the night, where areas on the north side of your home will not. As an example, my rear garden is at least 5 degrees cooler than the garden in the front of my home. I almost never experience frost in the front, whereas I usually find frost and freezing in the rear of my home.

If freezing temperatures are predicted, cover the tips of columnar cacti with foam cups. At sunset, your frost-sensitive plantings such as succulents, certain aloe species,

Extend the canopy over the entire plant or area, allowing it to hang to the ground. If possible, support the cloth on temporary framework so that it does not touch foliage. With our occasional winds, you may also need to tie the frost cloth onto the plants or stabilize it in place with stones, bricks or stakes. The covering should be removed the following morning before temperatures reach 50 degrees.

### Garden clean-up

January is a great month to get in there and remove dead wood from your evergreen trees and plantings. In addition, you may want to clear

## January maintenance, cont'd

out any underlying debris, which can sometimes enhance root rot or suffocation of our desert plants.

Grasses can be cut back almost to the ground this time of year and will slowly flush out (with the exception of purple fountain grass, which can be frost sensitive). Your cold-hardy plantings such as privet, olive, myrtle, sage, cassia, creosote, dalea, etc. can be cut back now for spring, but keep in mind that you will be looking at stubs for much of the winter as they are dormant. Refrain from any major cutting back or pruning of frost-sensitive plantings at this time for obvious reasons.

### January bloomers



*Tagetes lemmonii*, Mt. Lemmon Marigold

You might see these plants in bloom: *Aloe* species, *Bulbine*, *Cassia* (*Senna*) species, *Caesalpinia cacolaco*, Sweet Acacia, *Encelia farinosa* (Brittlebush), *Dalea versicolor*, *Eremophila maculata*

'Valentine', Angelita Daisy, *Justicia can-dicans* (Ovata), and *Tagetes lemmonii* (Mt. Lemmon Marigold).

Troy Bankord of Troy Bankord Design in Palm Springs has been a landscape and interior designer for 30 years. His award-winning 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. He was named, 'Master of the Southwest' by Phoenix Home & Garden Magazine in 2006, and is a graduate of Marquette University.

## Plant of the Month: Giant Sacaton Grass



*Sporobolus Wrightii* 'Windbreaker'  
(Giant Sacaton Grass)

This newly introduced grass reaches up to 10 feet and is considered to be an excellent candidate for wind-

breaks. Thriving in the deserts of West Texas clear to southeastern Arizona at elevations of 2,000 to 7,000 feet, it grows well in our alkaline soils and on rocky slopes.

Blooming in late summer, showy, branched feath-

er-like seed heads are produced on slender stalks to 12 feet. The leaves are grey-green, turning yellow in the fall and finally, beige, in the winter.

It's an excellent choice for screening, privacy or along large freeways, public lakes, pools, retention basins and dry creek beds. In addition this grass is a clever choice for water municipalities, zoos, other commercial projects or perhaps where one has a large garden corner to fill.

Deep rooted and very tough, this Sacaton grass needs little water, grows very quickly and is hardy to -30 degrees. Cutting back the entire plant to promote new green growth and rejuvenate its appearance is most effective when done in mid-winter prior to the flush of new spring growth. It's the perfect alternative for standard old pampas grass.



## This and That

### ***Sunset magazine spotlights gardens in Palm Springs***

If you haven't seen the January issue of *Sunset*, borrow it, buy it or peruse a copy at one of the local libraries. This issue features "Gardens of the Sun" and says "The seven wonders of Palm Springs are some of the most beautiful desert landscapes in the world."

Boasting even more—"It's also a landscape that inspires some of the most extraordinary gardens on earth—gardens that not only endure the warm, dry climate but also celebrate it."

The seven wonders: Korakia Pensione, Thousand Palms Oasis, Sunland Cactus Nursery, Sunnylands, Park Palm Springs, Smoke Tree Ranch and Moorten Botanical Garden.

### ***Symposium to cover California water law***

The complex legal and regulatory framework for allocating water in California will be the topic at a symposium at Cal State San Bernardino's Palm Desert Campus on Thursday, Feb. 11.

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: region-

al water resources and hydrology, surface water rights, groundwater rights, environmental laws regulating 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..

Presenter David Sandino served as chief counsel for the California Department of Water Resources from 2006-2010, and currently serves as senior staff counsel. He has worked on significant water, environmental, tribal and energy issues during his 20-year career with the department.

Register by Jan. 19 at (909) 537-5975, e-mail [pace@csusb.edu](mailto:pace@csusb.edu) or [pace.csusb.edu](http://pace.csusb.edu).

### ***Kudos to Kobaly***

DHSCV favorite Robin Kobaly, executive director of The Summer Tree Institute, wrote a Valley Voice piece for The Desert Sun supporting the designation of the Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow and Castle Mountains national monuments.

Kobaly, who has hosted society visits to her Morongo Valley institute and who gives talks at society meetings, points out the critical value of our native plant landscapes.

In addition she says: "We need places where we have all decided together to protect the darkness of the night sky, so we can see stars so bright that it seems we could touch them. We need to keep some big spaces in our cramped, packed lives; we need to create some quiet spaces in our loud lives, some magical spaces to counter the mundane."

Her eloquent piece was published on Dec. 17.

### ***How much water does it take to grow grass?***

No, not the kind you don't have in your front yard anymore. The kind you smoke.

With nary a word about water use, Desert Hot Springs has permitted three pot cultivation facilities on a hunk of land in the city's western region. These big-scale grow operations at Two Bunch Palms Trail and Little Morongo Road could become Southern California's marijuana Mecca.

Possibly the first business to establish at the site will be Coachella Valley Patients Collective, which has won city approval to erect about 380,000 square feet of cultivation space. The Collective hopes to start planting crops in the first of five planned buildings early this year.

## A Special Thank You to Our Sponsors



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## Want to Get More Involved?

*We have so many opportunities for members to become more actively involved with the Desert Horticultural Society of Coachella Valley. Jump in!*

## Send Us Your Photos & Favorite Websites!

We like to show off photos of gardens or plants that horticulture society members have collected. Please send your jpeg photos at full size attached to an email with your name, where the photo was taken and information about the photo subject.

And, have you come across online gardens, educational sources or conservation links you like? Email links and photos to Jamie Lee Pricer at [jlp6@hotmail.com](mailto:jlp6@hotmail.com). We'll share them in future newsletters.