Sandoval Extension Master Gardener Newsletter

http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/

New Mexico State University • Cooperative Extension Service • U.S. Department of Agriculture

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SEMG Newsletter Submissions Deadline: 25st each mo.

Please submit news, articles, events and photographs to: semgnews@gmail.com

Editor:
Kate Shadock

December 2020

From Barbara Boyd, Advisory Council Chair

As we near the end of the calendar year, it is a great time to look over the Master Gardeners calendar on our website. There are classes in December on Gardening Gift ideas and Hybrid Grapes, Hardwood Cuttings, and Holiday Wine Pairings.

In January there are classes on Houseplant Care and the Health Benefits of Gardening; all given by NMSU.

You are always welcome to attend the SEMG Advisory Council meetings via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month.

Our Intern classes will start up again in February, so you can plan on getting some of your education hours through that venue. Please see the Education Committee updates in this newsletter.

To help with the itch to garden, make sure you've ordered your seed and plant catalogs. If you already have them, make wonderful plans to make a difference in your yard or in your community.

Do you have a gardening themed book recommendation to help the rest of us make it to spring? We would love to hear from you!

Please email your ideas to semgnews@gmail.com.

Let's give a shout out to SEMG's own **Penny Davis** who was honored by New Mexico Magazine for her work with **Seed2Need**. The food donations they have provided to the needed are extraordinary. Please consider volunteering for **Seed2Need** to help keep this great program strong.

~ *Barbara*

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HOME GROWN HEROES!

Kate Shadock – SEMG 2018

Many SEMG members were surprised and delighted to find our own Penny Davis, with her husband Sandy, on the cover of the December 2020 issue of the New Mexico Magazine.

We know Penny and Sandy as the founders of **Seed2Need**, the farm-to-food-bank program that attracts up to 500 volunteers each year from Master Gardeners, Scout troops, local businesses, church groups, members of the general public and students from Bosque School, Albuquerque Academy and Cibola High School.

Penny, a 2007 SEMG graduate, and Sandy started their operation in 2008, just as the economy collapsed and people lost jobs. They started growing vegetables in their neighbor's empty horse corral with the commitment to donate the yield to Storehouse West in Rio Rancho. Penny admitted to being thrilled when a few years later, with more donated land and dedicated volunteers, the project produced 1,900 pounds of food for the food banks.

In 2010 the Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners agreed to sponsor **Seed2Need**. Since 2010 this project has donated more than 590,000 pounds of farm fresh fruits and to five local foodbanks and Roadrunner Food Bank.

In addition to planting, caring for, and harvesting the vegetable crops **Seed2Need** also coordinates volunteer teams for gleaning fruit from orchards all over the valley. A harvest of 10,000 pounds of apples from a single orchard is not uncommon. **Seed2Need** coordinates these large gleaning projects with Roadrunner Foodbank as they can consolidate and re-distribute to foodbanks all over the state.

When asked what the best part of **Seed2Need** is, beyond providing tons of healthy food for people in Sandoval and Bernalillo county. Penny didn't hesitate to respond, "Getting to know so many nice people!" Penny and Sandy Davis are genuinely nice people as well.

Volunteer signup sheets and photos of the project can be found on **Seed2Need** Facebook page. https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=seed2need Volunteers are always welcome.
To find out more about volunteering for **Seed2Need**, as well as other programs, check out the Sandoval Extension Master Gardener website. http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/

From the first day I heard about **Seed2Need**, Margaret Mead's famous quote has continued to repeat in my head.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

Sources: December 2020 New Mexico Magazine article by Gabriella Marks
Interview with Penny Davis

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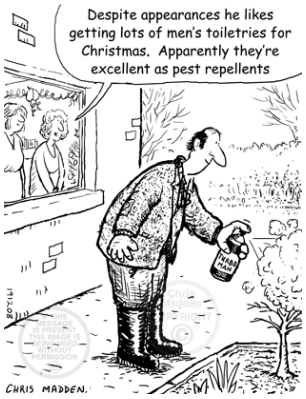
December Garden Checklist

1. Separate succulent pups to give as gifts
2. Give a gift certificate for bulbs from your favorite bulb supplier
3. Rake fallen leaves off the lawn – if using for compost keep away from the trunk/stem
4. Sweet potatoes make lush house plants, and their leaves are packed with nutrients
5. Select a Pinon Pine as a living Christmas tree

Source: Month-By-Month Gardening: Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico. Jacqueline A. Sole



2021 Master Gardener Training to Begin Tuesday, February 2, 2021

To apply for the training fill out the application on our webpage
. *http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/recources/members-only-information/*

Classes include:

Sustainability
Botany and Plant Identification –
Soil Biology
Vegetable Production
Fruit Production
Entomology
Integrated Pest Management
Vertebrate Pest Control
Shrubs and Trees
Water - irrigation/capture/erosion
Plant Pathology
Weeds
Pollinators
Perennials
Helpline Support

Enrollment is limited to 24 students with a waiting list available.
Students will work in small groups with 3 to 4 mentors for each group.
Students and mentors need to have sufficient computer skills and available technology to work and meet online.

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Many Hands Make Light Work

HELP WANTED #1

Psst! Hey, over here!

Say, you want to get out of the house, and not just in your garden?
Well, I have an inside job available, if you'll take it.
The Sandoval County Admin Building has some indoor plants that are in sore need of watering.
If you are interested, please contact Eydie Francis at eydie.francis@gmail.com.
I will be able to give you details. It takes about 2 hours to water all 3 floors.
We will be following state protocol for COVID-19 precautions.

HELP WANTED #2

Master Gardener Veterans to sign up for
2 - week email helpline shifts
in December & January

Sign up on our website

REWARD
2 week shift = 10 outreach hours
Register for a shift here

HELP WANTED #3

SEMG Education Committee has several Master Gardener positions to fill for the upcoming Intern classes.

1. 2021 Intern Class Coordinator
2. Mentor Coordinator
3. Intern Mentors
4. Class Evaluation Coordinator
5. Technical Adviser
6. Advanced Class Coordinator
7. Class Monitors

These job scopes are well documented for each role.
For details, contact John Thompson johnandsamthompson@gmail.com mobile: 505-328-6650

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These are Few of My Favorite Things

Michelle Wittie - SEMG 2020 & Kate Shadock - SEMG 2018

Editors Note: We want to hear from our members. Tell us what excites, frustrates, or inspires you in your garden – outside and in. If you prefer not to write – we're happy to work with you to capture your message and write the article for you.

I asked Michelle Wittie, SEMG 2020, also monitor and administrator of the popular Facebook group, GARDENING IN RIO RANCHO, https://www.facebook.com/groups/1190136411098993/?ref=share and-avowed 'Houseplant Doyenne' what is her favorite holiday plant.

Thanksgiving Cactus are one of my favorite holiday plants. Most all distributors have them available to purchase, they come in multiple beautiful colors and have extremely easy care. They are almost always a plant that can be brought home from the store without repotting and enjoyed throughout the holidays with beautiful colors and low water needs. This is a cactus that blooms 3-4 times a year with proper care.

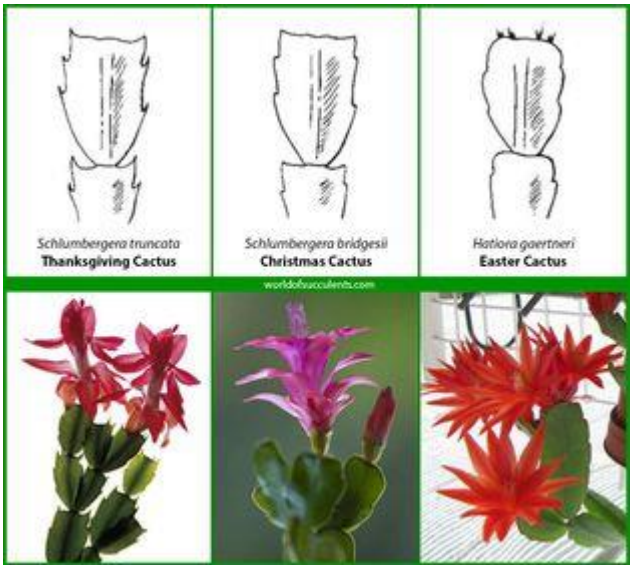
It needs bright light but the colors that sparkle on the flowers are worth the space it will take up near your window. Thanksgiving Cactus is a good gift for people who don't have a lot of plant knowledge, as these cacti show signs of needing water by shriveling slightly when they feel to dry. These cacti are also quite easy to propagate by sticking a piece of it right into some soil. They root fast and grow quickly. Once they are established, they will flower continuously, and the flowers last a long time.

Unlike mine, Michelle's plants bloom profusely. She advised the two most common reasons for not blooming.

1. Root binding is common, and they won't bloom of they are root bound.
2. Not enough light is what I find most often…my east light ones never bloom the South light plants bloom four times a year.

When they get the amount of sunshine they need the ends turn purple and then they flower. However, the smaller varieties don't need as much sun to bloom. Remember, even though these are cacti, they will require more water when they get moved to a sunnier location.

Over the years I've had several "Christmas Cactus" according to the pot label – though I noticed a distinct difference in the leaves. blooms and when they bloomed. I asked Michelle how to tell them apart. She provided this handy chart. Until I saw this, I'd never heard of Easter Cactus. What a lovely option to the ubiquitous Easter Lilies.



They have the roundest leaves – which are easier to see on an actual plant.

This time of year "Christmas" cactus are easy to find, even in the grocery store. Pick one up, follow Michelle's tips and enjoy vivid blooms this winter.

Photos: M. Wittie

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Garden2Table Corner

December is upon us, and this year's holiday season may not be as jolly for many of us, but we still need to nourish our bodies and souls. That means preparing foods that boost our health, many of which can be comforting as well. In the spirit of the season and with our health on our minds, I am focusing on pears, cream of root vegetable soup, and foods that boost our health during a COVID-19 winter.

Pears

Of all fruits, pears seem synonymous with the holiday season. (Though if you asked a child, they may say "sugarplums," which unfortunately, are just hardened sugar balls that contain no fruit.) Pears grow in the U.S. Department of Agriculture hardiness zones 3 through 10 and, depending on the variety, are harvested from August through February. There are seven common types of pears, all of which can be divided into two simple categories: European and Asian (www.epicurious.com/ingredients/types-and-varities-of-pears-delicious-recipes-article). At about 100 calories each, pears have many health benefits and are a good source of vitamins C and K, fiber, and antioxidants (www.healthline.com/nutrition/benefits-of-pears).

At our former property in the North Valley, we had both Asian and Bosc pear trees that produced abundant large perfect pears every year (being late bloomers, they weren't susceptible to damaging late frosts). I learned a lot about pears then. Pears are one of only a few common fruits that don't ripen on the tree; you store them inside a punctured paper bag in a cool place or refrigerator until you are ready to ripen them. They reach peak texture and flavor when left to sit at room temperature and are ready to eat when their neck yields to gentle pressure. I also learned that your friends, neighbors, and co-workers are only going to volunteer to take so many pears, so you give away plenty to the food pantries and then discover new ways of storing, preserving, and using them.

To ready your pears to store in the freezer for future baking or cooking, peel them first, as their skin grows tough when heated. You can peel your pears with a paring knife or vegetable peeler or submerge them in boiling water for about 30 seconds and peel them with your fingers by sliding off the skin. Slice them in half lengthwise, core them, and then cut into slices or chunks. Layer them on a cookie sheet and pop them into the freezer until frozen, and then store them in freezer bags until you are ready to make that cobbler, pie, or bread or a savory main meal. With the other fruits I grew, I discovered many delicious barbeque sauces that can be made with a variety of fruit and then canned or frozen. I'll share my plum chipotle barbeque sauce recipe in a later column. One instant pot savory pear dish that is a must try is the *Pear BBQ Pulled Pork Sandwiches with Pear Slaw* (www.thespeckledpalate.com/pear-bb-pulled-park-sandwiches-with-pear-slaw/).

If you have received a gift box of fresh pears from a dear friend or relative or have pears you have harvested sitting in a paper bag in the garage or refrigerator, there are many ways to consume them freshly ripened. If they are too ripened you end up with a mushy, grainy pear. Add a slice or two to your grilled cheese sandwich. Or when hosting a party or asked to bring an appetizer or dessert, slice the pears lengthwise, core them using a melon baller, cut them into thin or thick slices, and serve them topped with sliceable or warm gooey brie, the perfect compliment. You can also consider adding to your appetizer or dessert tray slices of honey crisp apples topped with sharp cheddar cheese and a bowl of raspberries stuffed with a chip or two of white chocolate. For more fruit and cheese pairing ideas, check out the Cheese Whisperer's blog at www.skagitfoodcoop.com/category/the-cheese-whisperer/.

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Garden2Table Corner (cont.)

Creamy Root Vegetable Comfort Soup

I chose the ***One-Hour Cream of Winter Vegetable Soup*** for this month's featured recipe due to its quick and easy preparation, heartiness, nutrition, and versatility. I have made this soup multiple times—once as written and other times substituting and adding ingredients and using different techniques. As written, you throw carrots, leeks, turnips, potatoes, garlic, and a bouquet garni in a pot, cover with water, and simmer until tender for about 40 minutes. You then run it through a food mill using a course blade. However, you can also use an immersion blender for a less chunky soup or a blender for a silky smooth soup. I've also substituted various root vegetables for the turnips and have added a variety of spices to supercharge the flavor. Included at the bottom of the recipe are some of my recommendations for substitutions and additions. Use your imagination and the ingredients you have on hand to whip up this soup on a cold winter evening to satisfy your own tastes and cravings.

Foods to Boost Your Health in COVID-19 Winter

(Note: This nutritional information comes from a Wall Street Journal article dated 11-17-20. Like the New York Times, unless you have a subscription, you won't be able to view the link. Therefore, I have summarized this important article because we can boost our health by the foods we eat.)

With COVID-19 cases surging as winter approaches, our energy levels and immune systems could use a boost. We often turn to comfort foods on cold, dreary days. Eating the right foods can strengthen our bodies in better ways. Here are some of the most helpful nutrients for winter, and the foods to find them in.

Vitamin B12: *Found in foods such as milk, meat, and fortified foods like breakfast cereals.* Vitamin B12 can help combat the winter blues. It plays an important role in producing serotonin, which helps regulate mood, thwarting symptoms of fatigue and even depression.

Vitamin C: *Found in foods including citrus fruits, tomatoes, and potatoes*. Vitamin C helps the immune system function properly. It won't likely cure or prevent colds, but it has been shown to slightly reduce the duration of symptoms. It may also help those whose systems are under strain.

Vitamin D: *Found in fatty fish, eggs, liver, and mushrooms.* Some researchers are looking into links between vitamin D deficiencies and COVID-19. Findings from studies examining the use of vitamin D to prevent or treat COVID-19 are not conclusive, though some are very promising.

Zinc: *Found in foods including oysters, red meat, poultry, crab, and lobsters, as well as beans, nuts, and whole grains.* Zinc can help the immune system fight bacteria and viruses. Research has shown that taking zinc at the first sign of a cold can shorten its duration.

Iron: *Found in foods including meat, seafood, poultry, beans, spinach, and iron-fortified cereals and breads.* Not getting enough iron can lead to anemia, which symptoms can include tiredness, memory and concentration lapses, and reduced ability to fight infections.

Wishing You a Healthy Holiday Season,
Cassandra D'Antonio
Chair, Garden2Table Outreach Committee

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Garden2Table Recipe for December

ONE-HOUR CREAM OF WINTER VEGETABLE SOUP

This deceptively simple soup is made with root vegetables that you can find in the supermarket. Using different pureeing techniques, you can make the soup as chunky or as smooth as you'd like. Though the recipe makes for a good and hearty comfort soup as is, it can also serve as a base recipe that readily takes on the flavors of all kinds of spices and allows for substitutions depending on what root vegetables you have on hand. Use your culinary creativity or the recommendations I provide at the bottom of the recipe to make a soup that will satisfy your tastes or cravings.

Ready in 1 hour | Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

2 large leeks (1 to ½ lbs.), white parts only, cleaned, and sliced ½ inch thick
2 large garlic cloves, minced
3 large carrots (10 oz.), diced
1 large celery stalk, diced
1 large or 2 medium turnips (10 oz.), peeled and diced
1 lb. of russet potatoes
1 bouquet garni made with a bay leaf and a few sprigs each of thyme and parsley
¼ cup crème fraiche
Salt and black pepper
Chopped fresh parsley or tarragon for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot, combine the leeks, garlic, carrots, celery, turnips, potatoes, bouquet garni, 1 ½ quarts of water, 2-3 teaspoons of salt, and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 40 to 45 minutes, or until the vegetables are very soft.
2. Pass the soup through the coarse blade of a food mill.
3. Return soup to the pot and whisk in ¼ cup of crème fraiche (or more to taste). Heat through and adjust seasonings, being generous with the salt and pepper).
4. To serve, ladle soup into large bowls and garnish with a spoonful of crème fraiche and parsley or tarragon.

Substitution Recommendations

- ❖ Substitute russets for sweet potatoes, and turnips for parsnips, rutabagas, or celery root.
- ❖ Substitute leeks for shallots.
- ❖ Leave root vegetables unpeeled for more fiber and vitamins.
- ❖ Sauté vegetables in olive oil prior to adding water or stock.
- ❖ Use vegetable or chicken stock instead of water.
- ❖ Mix up the herbs in the bouquet garni and garnish.
- ❖ Add a teaspoon or two of your favorite spices (garam masala, allspice, cumin, smoked paprika, or curry).
- ❖ If you don't have a food mill or prefer your soup creamier, use a blender or immersion blender.
- ❖ Substitute crème fraiche for coconut milk, sour cream, heavy cream, or yogurt.
- ❖ Add a splash of sherry vinegar or another acid to brighten the soup.

Recipe by Martha Rose Shulman
Published by: The New York Times (www.cooking.nytimes.com)

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Southwest Plant of the Month

Golden columbine

Aquilegia chrysantha

General Information

Plant Form	Flower	**Plant Size**	2' x 2'
Plant Type	Perennial	**Water Usage**	Medium
Sunlight	Partial Shade, Full Shade	**Colors**	Yellow

Physical Description: Delicate, shade tolerant perennial with large golden-yellow flowers and attractive lacey foliage.

Care and Maintenance: Short lived but reseeds. Aphids. Needs regular water and maintenance to look best.

Gardener's Notes: Use this Southwestern native and avoid other more commonly available columbine species since they are poorly adapted to desert conditions. Long spurred variety, known as "Longissima", is especially attractive. It is often sold under the name "Texas Gold".

Photo and information from: https://desertblooms.nmsu.edu/plantadvisor/

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