



# 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: 25<sup>th</sup> each mo.**

Please submit news,  
articles, events and  
photographs to:  
**newsletter Sandoval**  
**mastergardeners.org**

Editor:  
Kate Shaddock

May has been a doozy of a month! The end of another school year brings all kinds of commitments and celebrations and other events that are wonderful, but add to the busy-ness of spring. And... the garden beckons! We still have a lot of seedlings to plant out in the garden, I'm just waiting for a span of time to get them planted... I am hoping they may be happy enough to wait until the school year ends and time feels more spacious.

And, just for the 'fun' of it, I opted to take a weekly Olli class about climate change. I've learned a lot about the geology of the Sandias and the Jemez mountains from Dr. Carol Hill. Most of us already know a lot about climate change, and, if you're anything like me, sometimes it is easier to avoid adding knowledge about something we seem, at least individually, to have little control over. But I know Dr. Hill is a knowledgeable and wise teacher, and her class has been helpful in consolidating many of the factors that cause climate change. And that class has pushed me near the brink of despair, anger, alarm, and frustration.

I find myself seeking hope. Hope in nature. Hope in the world. Hope in myself.

Here are a few moments of hope that I've collected:

**Hope in myself:** I'm not ripping out desert globe mallow thinking they're weeds. Instead, I'm embracing their beauty and remembering they are more native to this place than I am.



**Hope in the world around me:** This past weekend, I picked up my first CSA share (community supported agriculture) from the Indigenous Farm Hub in Corrales - a local organization whose mission is to 'engage Indigenous communities in creating a network of farmers and families that will strengthen local and sustainable food systems by providing access to healthy foods, build prosperity for farmers and local communities through land reclamation, and reconnect the bond between language and culture to Indigenous practices of agriculture.' On Saturday, I got to meet two of the farmers, and my bag was packed full of delicious radishes, onions, garden peas, and spring greens. Edible and communal hope.

**Hope in nature:** Every time I hike in the Jemez Mountains, I come back with at least one picture of a tree growing out of rock. This to me is a sign of hope. A hope that nestles into the cracks and fissures of the world, hangs on for dear life, and then grows and thrives.

I wonder, where you are finding hope these days?

*All Photos by M. Buerkle Hunn*

~ Meg



## June Garden Checklist

1. Celebrate Summer Solstice on June 21; start of shorter days
2. Learn to tell the difference between normal heat responses and stress responses in your plants  
Tip: if the leaves uncurl after sunset, it's normal heat response
3. If your annuals are declining replace them with different, more heat tolerant plants such as portulaca or zinnia
4. Remember to cut some of your blooming flowers to take inside and enjoy. Cut early in the day so they are fresh
5. Double check how much water is coming out of your drip system. Use a tuna can; collect and measure

**Source:** *Month-By-Month Gardening: Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico* Jacqueline A. Soule



## Public Training Opportunities

### Ready, Set, Grow

- **June 19, 2024** — "**Growing Strawberries**" with Dr. Russell Wallace, Extension Vegetable Specialist at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Service Center in Lubbock. Topics to include recommended varieties for the southwest region, how to plant and grow them (soil, water, etc.), pests, etc.
- **July 17, 2024** — "**Passive Rainwater Harvesting**" with Kali Bronson & Megan Marcee of the Bernalillo County Water Conservation Program. Passive rainwater harvesting can be as easy as directing your gutter downspout or the overflow from your rain barrel to your landscape. But you can capture even more rainwater (and support more plants) by creating swales that channel rainwater from your roof to shallow, depressed basins.
- **August 21, 2024** — "**Weed Management in Urban Landscapes**" with Dr. Leslie Beck, NMSU Extension Weeds Specialist
- **September 18, 2024** — **TBA** with Dr. Joanie King, NMSU Extension Entomology Specialist. *Topic is undecided, but it's sure to be interesting!*
- **October 16, 2024** — "**Native Bees & Pollinator Habitat**" with Elliott Gordon, Ambassador for the Xerces Society AND ABQ Backyard Refuge Program
- **November 20, 2024** — "**Hydroponics for the Home Gardener: Systems, crops and tips for novice growers**" with the NMSU Plant & Environmental Sciences Department's Rachel Gioannini, Associate Professor, Horticulture

Ornamental Sunflowers - Dr. Calvin Trostle, Texas AgriLife Extension [Video Recording 5-15-24](#)

Growing Chile Peppers in the SW - Dr. Stephanie Walker, NMSU Ext Vegetable Specialist [Video Recording 4-17-24](#)

Earlier 2024 sessions are available on the [Ready Set Grow website](#)

### Gardening with the Masters - Loma Colorado Library

Fourth Monday of the month. The class runs from 6:45 pm to 7:45 pm as the library closes at 8:00 p.m. These classes are not recorded. We encourage you to join us in person, so your individual questions get answered. New Gardening with the Masters classes will be announced here as they are created.

June 24 – **Benefits and Challenges of Creating Raised Bed Gardens** – Sharon Walsh SEMG

July 22 – **Gardening is Different Here! Lessons Learned as a Transplanted Gardener** – Kate Shadock - SEMG

August 26 – **Creating Drip Irrigation for the Home Garden** – Michelle Wittie - SEMG

*Pre-recorded classes* Courtesy of COVID, we adapted some of our in-person classes to Zoom, recorded them and they are available at <https://sandovalmastergardeners.org/gardening-classes/gardening-with-the-masters-online/>

## What's The Buzz About? PEPPER GATE!

### What's hot and what's not: Mislabeled jalapeno seeds reach gardeners nationwide

Many gardeners were surprised last summer (2023) when their jalapeno plants began producing an unidentified yellow pepper.

From Michigan to Oklahoma, Facebook gardening groups flooded with hundreds of posts about unidentified peppers that vary in flavor and heat level. It's become known nationwide as Peppergate or Jalapenogate.

Workers at the Oklahoma State University Student Farm discovered they had planted some of the mystery seeds after their jalapeno plants began producing what resembles a type of banana pepper. Now, farm manager Lynda Carrier said some of them look more like chili peppers.

"I contacted the seed company, and they responded with an explanation that the packets are filled on semi-automatic equipment, and on very rare occasions, the wrong seed is dropped into the packet," Carrier said.

#### **Transparency at Sedan Floral**

Wholesale plant suppliers also fielded questions about the unknown seeds.

"I got a couple of calls about it in early June, and then it just blew up," said Ali Cude, office manager of Sedan Floral in Sedan, Kansas. "We immediately went through our seed inventory, looked at what we ordered, what we sowed and what we have on hand."

"Jalapenos are such a big item for us, and banana peppers just aren't," Cude said. "We didn't have enough seed to mix that up in the seed machine. It wasn't mathematically possible."

A call to Sedan Floral's seed vendor indicated the seeds were sourced from a producer in California and that the problem was widespread. Cude sent an email to all of Sedan Floral's customers that provided the vendor's explanation, which was that some jalapeno seed packets had been mislabeled. Beyond acknowledgment of the mix-up, vendors have said little about how it could have happened.

"There are about four companies that sell seed to greenhouses our size, and two different brokers got jalapeno seed from the same source," she said. "But different seed companies that repackage their own seed packets also fell victim to this."

Seeds produced by a breeder are marketed by a broker to greenhouses like Sedan Floral. Mass distribution makes it difficult to identify the problem's origin.

"All pepper seeds look the same, and when you're buying them in packages of 25,000 seeds, you go off the label and don't know if there's something different in it," Cude said.

## Tracking the supply chain

In Wichita Falls, Texas, Smith's Gardentown Farm got lucky. None of their jalapeno plants were affected. That didn't stop general manager Michael Fiore from doing his own research. "They traced it back to a huge, nationwide distributor," Fiore said. "They provide seeds to multiple large brokers, and they import seeds from all over." His sources indicated the mislabeled jalapeno seeds came from a farm overseas.

"It's highly probable they originated in China and were repackaged and distributed in California," he said. "There are ways to get around trade embargoes by giving the seeds to a different company to receive them, and they label them as their own."



*(Photo by Mitchell Alcalá, OSU Agriculture)*

Fiore's research revealed about five companies control most of the small seeds in the world. Seeds are purchased through a broker working under a larger broker or distributor who is often owned by a larger company. Tracing back seed lineage becomes impossible, he said.

"Aside from harvesting and growing your own seeds, I've lost confidence in seed production. I can't look at a seed packet on any U.S. shelf now and confidently tell you this didn't come from overseas. These things switch hands, get relabeled, redistributed and cut up so many times."

Fiore said this summer's Jalapenogate has also uncovered another, more serious concern: food safety. Mislabeled pepper seeds have reached almost every corner of the U.S. in a matter of months, demonstrating how fast a product can move across the country.

"Seeing how easily the seeds were distributed across all 50 states is a little scary from a security standpoint," he said.

"We're dependent on large corporations and foreign entities," he said. "This unravels a deeper issue of these major companies that control the entire world of seeds."

## The mystery of the season

"The good news with seed production is that it can ramp up quickly," he said. "If you have one viable, true-to-type jalapeno, you can get 50-60 seeds out of it. You've got a huge multiplier effect when it comes to re-establishing the supply chain because it's a fast turnaround time of a couple of months from seed to harvest. It takes decades to get avocado trees up to size to where they're producing."

"People have said they're really good peppers," Cude said. "In the grand scheme of the world, it is what it is, and a lot of people are taking it lighthearted."

**NOTE: This is a great reminder of the benefit of saving seeds from plants we grow to replant next year. Seed Saving How To in July issue.**

***"Every garden is an exploration of what might be, a hope of what could be."***

*- Anonymous*

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## Bees Buzz & Birds Fly

Kate Shadock – SEMG 2018

June is a noisy month in my garden. I can set my watch by the [3:00 am bird chorus](#). Different birds join in as the day progresses and the sun starts to peek over the mountain. There are multiple phone apps that can identify a bird species by its song. By using one of them I've been surprised at the number and variety of different birds in my new, almost treeless, housing development. Even though they blend in well with the limited vegetation, their songs are as distinctive as a thumbprint. By the time we are back from our dawn walk, the day begins to warm, and the bees start to forage and add their buzz to the morning chorus. Hummingbirds and Roadrunners both enhance the depth of the music.

As a gardener, bees have always been protected on my property. I select plants to provide them with food as early as possible in the spring with varieties that continue to feed through late fall.

Spring: Trees and shrubs – Red Bud, Crab Apple, native willows (e.g., *Salix lasiolepis* and *S. irrorata*), skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*), American plum (*Prunus americana*), New Mexico olive (*Forestiera pubescens*), and chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*).

Moving into summer they find Trumpet Vine, crepe myrtle, Lemon Queen and Dwarf Yellow Spray sunflowers, milkweed, chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) and Russian Sage.

For late in the season feeding we grow zinnias, globemallows (*Sphaeralcea* species), and native goldenrods (*Solidago nemoralis*, *S. petiolaris*, and *S. speciosa*).

An advantage of planting for the bees, many of these same plants also attract other pollinators such as butterflies and hummingbirds.

One of my happier surprises about moving to New Mexico was learning about the wide variety of native bees the state hosts. There are 4000 species of bees in the United States. Because of its diverse climate New Mexico counts 1000 species as native bees. Many of these bees are ground dwellers.

Free downloadable book about our native bees [The Pocket Guide to the Native Bees of New Mexico](#).

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## Tree Stewards Program Applications Are Now Open!

The Tree Steward Program is an expansive educational opportunity designed for people who love trees, love their community, and want to support the healthy growth of both.

To learn more about the program and apply, visit our website: <https://treenm.org/education/tree-stewards/>.

**Applications will be received until July 1, 2024. The cost is \$125.**

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## HELP WANTED #1

### **SEMG volunteers and Project Manager for the 2024 Placitas Elementary Garden project reboot.**

Contact SEMG Outreach Committee co-chairs Penny Lundgren and Sandy Liakus for more information and to express your interest in educating and guiding children in gardening. SEMG volunteers will be working with Placitas PTO on this project.

## HELP WANTED #2

**Help Line Coverage** We still have need of volunteers to cover the Helpline. This is online, from the comfort of your own home. Each week of coverage earns 10 hours of Outreach credit. For more information, contact Sandra Liakus via email or phone number in the member roster. Helpline support is needed for late August and on into the fall.

## Reminder to Members & Interns

SEMG provides several opportunities for interns and members to visit public gardens with a guide, labs where garden research is undertaken and commercial locations that are not accessible to the public. Sometimes we even get to tour private gardens with the designer and/or homeowner to see and hear why they made the design decisions. These opportunities are most numerous in the early spring when both gardens and gardeners are resting.

To be current on these openings – keep an eye on our website, in the MEMBERS ONLY section called [PROJECTS AND VOLUNTEERS](#). Some of these sessions are initially available only to Interns; and will be open to members, if there are spaces left towards the end of the sign up period. Some are only available to members as part of their advanced training.

When you sign up to attend a session, we do expect you to be there. Since these sessions are not accessible to others, have limited space, and are customized to SEMG. We want to respect our hosts' time and commitment to our organization by attending the sessions we've signed up for.

On this same link is an ever changing list of volunteer opportunities where we can give hours to in order to both fulfill our requirements for the year and to learn more about SEMG's support of Sandoval County residents.

**NOTE: It's never too early to start recording your [volunteer/education hours](#).**

