

Steve M. Lucero, County  
Program Director

Lynda Garvin  
Agriculture/Horticulture Agent

[www.sandovalmastergardeners.org](http://www.sandovalmastergardeners.org)

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

Sept, 2016

## Sandoval County

# Master Gardener Newsletter

### September | Coordinator's Corner

**As we come to the end of our fiscal year, my article this month is all about the Administrative side of the Sandoval County Master Gardeners. Please read this in total and if you have questions you can call me.**

1. Please attend the **Graduation Party for all the 2016 Interns**. It will be held **September 24th** from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Sabana Grande Recreational Center ([4110 Sabana Grande Ave SE, Rio Rancho, NM 87124](http://4110SabanaGrandeAveSE.RioRancho.NM87124)). This is a great time to get together with graduating interns, master gardeners, the board of directors, our friends in the Extension Office, and life-time members of SCMG. Please bring finger foods, fruit or desserts to share. We hope you will join us.

2. In years past the **Graduation Party and the Annual Meeting/election of officers** were held on the same day. This year, however, we have found it necessary to split them into two separate meetings.

\* Here's our rationale: "Total Volunteer Hours" - the deadline for to Lynda Garvin the Extension Agent to submit total hours SCMGs have volunteered to NM State University is the 1st of October. The final count and reporting of the correct type and number of volunteer hours is not complete until October 21st. *(By the way, you can still turn in hours as you have done in the past or watch for the EASY form that we'll be providing this year for submitting hours - total number volunteered in four categories, no details!)*

\*The SCMG Board has made the tough decisions to do a couple of things differently this year. We realize that this may pose an inconvenience for some of you and we find it necessary to make these changes in order

comply with our organizations by laws.

\* You will see in this newsletter, directions for nominating those who are willing to serve over the next two years. We are filling one (1) Treasurer position and three (3) Member at Large positions for 2017.

\* We are accepting nominations through the 30th of September.

\* The **Annual Meeting/Board Election** will be held on Saturday, October 22 from 1-3 p.m. at the Extension Office (711 Camino del Pueblo; Bernalillo, NM). Early Voting (online) will run October 3-15. Invitations to vote will arrive via email on October 3. This is the preferred method for voting, as it provides time for our Membership Committee to tally votes and prepare for our annual meeting. Early voting closes on October 15. Ballots will also be available at the Annual Meeting.

3. If you have not done so already, please also be sure to sign the [NMSU Volunteer Agreement](#). This is a waiver that NMSU is asking all Master Gardeners to sign. We sent out a request in the Spring and I know there are still several Master Gardeners who have overlooked signing it.

In order to vote for this years' Board of Directors, your signed form needs to be on record. If you wonder about the rationale for this form, I suggest you refer to the [Master Gardener Handbook](#), I think it will clarify how we are related to NMSU.

#### Thanks!

**Barbara Dawson**  
**SCMG Coordinator 2015-2017**  
**505-897-3773**  
[SCMGCoordinator2016@gmail.com](mailto:SCMGCoordinator2016@gmail.com)

### Lynda's Corner

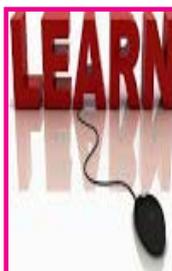
Now that the heat wave has broken, after numerous weeks of 100+ temperatures, and the rain is falling, you'll find your vegetable gardens and landscaping beginning to revive.

Along with the rain came flooding at the extension offices on August 21st and 22nd. The classroom, offices, and kitchen are out of commission until further notice. All furniture has been removed while carpets and drywall are being dried. Temporary workspaces have been set up in the Casita and the copy room. Please call the office at 867-2582 if you need to get supplies from the Casita, to ensure someone is there to let you in. I will be out of the office from August 29th until September 23rd for annual leave and conferences. I will not have access to my work email until September 15.

Congratulations to all of our County Fair exhibitors and ribbon winners. Your contributions make the fair worthwhile. There is nothing sadder than a near empty exhibit hall. Start early for your craft and art submissions. If you've never entered before, think about it. Thank you to all the volunteers who made the fair a success.

Don't forget the State Master Gardener Conference in Santa Fe September 16 & 18. Registration is still open <http://sfmga.org/2016-conference>.

Lynda Garvin  
Agricultural Agent Sandoval County  
Cooperative Extension Service



#### Continuing Education Hours

Are you scrambling to make up your 10 continuing education hours (veterans) or simply interested in online classes?

Check out the ACES NMSU online YouTube videos.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/nmsuaces>

Or watch some of the core Master Gardener Training Class sessions at the following link from the MG Website. <http://abqmastergardeners.org/index.php/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/88-classvideos2016sandoval>

Lynda Garvin - Agriculture Agent



#### Gardening with the Masters

**Lecture Schedule 2016 and 2017**  
See the list of topics and dates on our website!



Sandoval County Extension  
P.O. Box 400  
Bernalillo, NM 87004  
Ph: 505-867-2582  
Email: [sandoval@nmsu.edu](mailto:sandoval@nmsu.edu)  
[www.sandovalmastergardeners.org](http://www.sandovalmastergardeners.org)



SCMG Newsletter Submissions  
Deadline: 21st of each month  
Please submit news, articles, events and photographs to: [scmgnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:scmgnewsletter@gmail.com)  
Editor: Jim Dodson

## Friends of Corrales Tree Volunteers Kick-off Meeting

Saturday, September 10th, 9 a.m.

Corrales Rec. Center Gymnasium  
Help us prepare the fruit trees for the fall.  
Bring your hat, gloves and sunscreen and water. Contact us at 505-681-4511 or  
Email: [tsubmit55@hotmail.com](mailto:tsubmit55@hotmail.com)

## Wednesdays at the Corrales Growers' Market

The Corrales Growers' Market is pleased to announce it will be open on Wednesday afternoons from 3 p.m. till 6 p.m. now through the end of September. If you have not accumulated enough volunteer or outreach hours, here's an opportunity to get them. Registration is now available on the SCMG website. September: 7, 14, 21, and 28.

Location: Corner of Corrales and Jones Road (just south of the post office).



Applications for 2016 BernCo. Extension Master Composter Training are now being accepted. For complete information and application visit: [NMSU: Bernalillo County Master Composters: Fall 2016 Master Composter Training](http://NMSU: Bernalillo County Master Composters: Fall 2016 Master Composter Training)

## Corrales Harvest Festival Volunteer Opportunity October 15th and 16th 9-5 each day:

The Corrales Harvest Festival is a two day event that takes place each year throughout the village of Corrales during the fall. The Festival had been held continuously since 1986. We will have an information booth located at the village center along with the rest of the vendors. You may sign up 4 hour increments for either 9am to 1pm or 1 pm to 5pm. You may use these hours towards hotline credit for 2017 or for volunteer hours. Thank you for volunteering for the Corrales Harvest Festival and we look forward to seeing you there!



## Sunflowers Provide Garden Shade by Dave Pojmann

The people who decide to print "Full Sun" on seed packets probably don't spend much time in Sandoval County. Full sun in New Mexico is not the same as full sun in New York or Missouri. The afternoon sun here can be brutal, and can damage the crops that most of us plant in our gardens. There are a number of ways to protect plants from the sun. Sun screens are very effective, but also can be expensive and difficult to erect; and, they are subject to wind damage as well. The pictures below depict tomatoes that were subject to too much sun.

I have elected to use sunflowers to help shade my garden. I also take advantage of a six-foot high wall



along our rear property line. Sunflowers mature about the time that plants need shade the most. They also attract pollinators and birds to your garden, block the wind, improve privacy, and keep the soil cooler, reducing evaporation. There is a down side, however. If the sunflowers are too close to the plants they are

shading, it is difficult to harvest the produce and to tend the plants. When planting the sunflower seeds, it is important to leave sufficient space to get to your plants. You also need to plant the sunflowers where they will do the most good. That is usually south or southwest of the plants they are protecting. This picture shows sunflowers against a wall with squash on the north side. Here we see volunteer sunflowers that grew up in a bed with lettuce and onions. Except for a few onions left for seed, the vegetables have been harvested, and now I have planted pumpkin seeds among the flowers. When the sunflowers are done blooming, they will be chopped up and added to the compost pile. Pulling them out of the ground also breaks up the soil, making "no till" more practical. Lastly, I save the sturdier stalks to prop up fruit tree branches, trumpet vines, and Lady Banks roses.  
- Dave



## Want to make a difference? Join the SCMG Board of Directors!

### Do you like playing with numbers??

SCMG is currently seeking members who are interested in serving on the BOD (Board of Directors), one of them being Treasurer.

The Treasurer position, currently held by **Mary Vesely**, is a two-year term and requires attendance at all BOD meetings beginning in November, 2016, until October, 2018; also, Mary will be happy to assist in the transition.

You can preview the [Treasurer Job Description](#) by accessing the SCMG website, selecting "About SCMG", and select "Job Descriptions" under the "Governing Documents" section. Quicken (an extremely easy check register program,

supplied by SCMG) is used to record transactions and excel for the reports. Checks are produced online and the bank mails them out. It is a relatively easy fulfilling position. **Please contact Mary Vesely for questions or if interested: [maryvesely@yahoo.com](mailto:maryvesely@yahoo.com) or (505) 898-0048.**

### Members at Large

SCMG is also seeking three (3) people to fill "Members at Large" positions, who also serve a 2-year term. Members at Large perform the following:  
•Serve as Representatives to the SCMG Membership  
•Attend all SCMG Board meetings and participate in Board discussion and decisions  
•Chair committees at the request of the Board  
•Perform other duties on behalf

of the Board as requested by the Coordinator.

Please contact **SCMG Coordinator, Barbara Dawson**, [balancinglifeandwork@gmail.com](mailto:balancinglifeandwork@gmail.com), or the **Membership Committee Chair, Charlene Spiegel**, [sheenie721@gmail.com](mailto:sheenie721@gmail.com), if interested.

Please note, early voting for these positions begin 10/1/16 and ends 10/15/16 via "Survey Monkey", an online voting method.

If you have an interest to participate in one of these positions, it's urgent that you contact one of the persons listed above as soon as possible to get you on the ballot.

**Thanks so much!**

## Southwest Plant of the Month Agarita (Berberis trifoliolata)

**Agarita is a plant native to New Mexico, Texas and Northern Mexico** Agarita is low maintenance, drought tolerant, evergreen, and hardy to 15 degrees F. It is adaptable to other soils as long as they are well-drained. It forms its best shape in full sun, but will grow in light shade. These shrubs are best planted in the fall, bloom in the spring and offer their berries for making delicious jelly in the fall.

Plant Habit or Use: medium shrub

Exposure: sun and partial sun

Flower Color: yellow

Blooming Period: spring

USDA Hardiness Zone: 6

Fruit Characteristics: red berry

Height: to 6 feet

Width: to 6 feet

Plant Character: evergreen

Heat Tolerance: very high

Water Requirements:

Soil Requirements: alkaline adaptable

## Close Encounters with the Plum Leafcurl Aphid

It was the middle of May this year and the leaves on my toddler Toca Plum tree were looking shriveled and intensely unhappy. Feverish prayers offered at the Google altar earned the following answer by one Robert Cox of the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension: "If you find that the leaves on your plum tree are curled up, some very tightly, it is most likely caused by the Plum Leafcurl Aphid" 1 He appeared to be a man of few words. Fortunately, at the end of his one paragraph of advice, he did offer a hope-inspiring hyperlink "Aphid Control on Trees". But it was soon revealed that it was actually code for "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here" because the very first sentence after clicking on it was "Not very much can be done to control aphids that affect trees..." So much for that.

Aphids suck. Literally. They suck the juice out of the tender new leaves causing them to curl in. If enough leaves are damaged, a young tree can die.

I fretted and moped but the green bugs remained unmoved.

I started taking each leaf and scraping off the aphids with my thumb. After all, there were only 860 leaves. Despite appearing to decimate their ranks as evidenced by my green thumbs (finally!), it didn't make a frog's hair of a difference.

The arrival of two ladybugs sent my hopes spiraling causing me to clap my hands in childlike delight. Ladybug larvae are supposed to feast on aphids. However, despite their relentless courting over many days, no aphid-munching babies appeared.

"I just spray the aphids with a jet of water," said Gailen, my Master Gardener mentor.

So I sprayed them with a jet of water, trying not to blow off the leaves along with the aphids.

Didn't work. For the darned green bugs, safe inside the tightly curled leaves, it must have been like watching rainfall coming down over the eaves while sitting under the covered porch.

Then I sprayed with a solution of detergent and water. On a cloudy, windless day so that the leaves wouldn't burn. Naturally, the aphids thrived and many leaves turned crispy brown and fell off. You're supposed to use insecticidal soap instead of detergent, which I would have done if I hadn't been lazy.

"Neem oil. Spray the leaves with Neem oil. But you have to get it on the underside, inside the curled leaf", said Lynda, the Extension Agent, looking skeptical.

So on the first subsequent cloudy day, clad in my protective face-

## SCMG Education Opportunities for 2017

The Education Committee has been hard at work developing educational opportunities for our veteran master gardeners and the public. Here is what you can expect in 2017:

**Intern Training Class.** The class will be 18 weeks rather than 16. Classes will meet Tuesdays at 1pm from January 10 – May 9. Classes will feature 3-hour lectures with 40 minutes of hands on activities. We will offer brown bag lunches preceding every class. The class will be held in the auditorium at the Sabana Grande Rec. Center in Rio Rancho. The facility has lots of room for veterans to attend lunches and classes.

The Committee has been exploring ways to help the interns get to know each other and veterans. We will launch a pilot project that offers four special interest areas: *Plant Identification and Selection; Wildlife Gardening; Sustainable Gardening and Food Security; Personal Landscape Design.* Education Committee members will serve as facilitators for these groups that will meet during the brown bag lunches. *Veterans with interest or expertise in these topics are encouraged to contact me to join in the fun!*

**Gardening with the Masters.** Every first Tuesday of the month from 7pm – 8:30pm gardening lectures are held at Meadowlark Senior Center in Rio Rancho. Each month features a different topic taught by SCMG or other experts. These lectures are free and open to the public. Check the SCMG website calendar for

## "How Does Your Garden Grow?"

mask, plastic goggles and rubber gloves, I sprayed the leaves with Neem oil solution, massaging the underside of each leaf as I sprayed so that most of the Neem oil ran down my arm and into my underpants via my armpit.

Since the label said "Repeat after 7-14 days", I repeated the treatment on the 7th day. This time I stood on an A-frame ladder and foiled the Neem oil from running down my arm. And then, because I am programmed to think that more is better (I still have a few food issues because of this belief of my mother's...), again on the next 7th day. More leaves turned crispy brown.

Examining the leaves became an obsession. First thing in the morning, last thing at night and all through the day at 15-minute intervals. Even though I wasn't seeing as many aphids, new leaves would grow and start curling almost immediately. I took to chewing on my hair.

And that is when I was advised to talk to Elizabeth, the SCMG Arborist, who immediately put a stop to all the nonsense. She told me that I had been spraying Neem oil too often and should desist, that aphids get reduced gradually and only some weather event would kill them off completely, that I must not fertilize or over water because that would make the tree "luscious" and invite even more unwanted attention as lusciousness is wont to do, that I had done all I had to do and that now I should wait and watch and "...NOT LOOK AT THAT TREE AGAIN UNTIL FRIDAY" (this was a Monday... her upper case letters).

I did what she said till that Friday. But come Saturday and I was obsessing again, picking at the tree like a baboon in full grooming mode. By an act of colossal self-restraint, I did manage to refrain from spraying with anything more lethal than water.

And slowly, so very treely slowly, through the fraught months of June and July, the plum recovered. The curled leaves never uncurled, eventually turning brown and dropping off, but the new leaves stayed straight and healthy.

And I finally let out the breath that I'd been holding for all those weeks.

### Sangeeta Kala McCandless SCMG Intern, August 18, 2016

1) <http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4dmg/Pests/plumcurl>.

Submit your contributions to: "How Does Your Garden Grow?"

Jim Dodson | SCMG Newsletter Editor | [scmgnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:scmgnewsletter@gmail.com)

topics and speakers.

**Urban Horticulture.** The third Wednesday of the month in 2016 has featured 2 – 3 hour lectures on a variety of topics with a wide range of speakers at the Sandoval County Extension Office.

Beginning January 2017 this series will move to the second Wednesday of the month. We will continue to offer varied topics and speakers. Registration will be available on our website. These lectures are free and open to the public. Check the SCMG website calendar for topics and speakers.

**4 Seasons Gardening.** Beginning September 2016 we will offer a lecture series at Sabana Grande on the third Tuesday of the month, 7pm – 8:30pm. Our first lecture September 20 is on Winter Gardening, featuring Dr. Curtis Smith.

In summary, SCMG will be offering our veterans and interns 121 – 130 hours education hours annually. In 2017, we will be offering 30 classes to the public. We are selecting topics and speakers at this time. Please contact me if there are topics you would like to see offered and/or if you have expertise you would like to share. We are always looking for new speakers!

### Sam Thompson - Past Coordinator, Education Committee Chair

## important dates

For a full explanation of the what, when and who on these Calendar items, please visit our website

### September

- 2 Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 3 Home Depot Free Plant Clinic 10 am
- 4 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 6 Rio Rancho Tree Stewards: Steering Committee Meeting 4 pm
- 7 Waterwise Garden Work Session 8:30 am
- DeLavy House Garden Work Session 9 am
- Corrales Growers' Market 3 pm
- 8 HOMEscape Solutions: Workshop 6:30 pm
- 9 HOMEscape Solutions: Workshop 6:30 pm
- Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 10 HOMEscape Solutions: Workshop 10 am
- 11 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 14 Corrales Growers' Market 3 pm
- 16 2016 NM Master Gardener Conference
- Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 17 2016 NM Master Gardener Conference
- Santa Ana Garden Center FREE Plant Clinic 10 am
- 18 2016 NM Master Gardener Conference
- Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 20 SCMG Board of Directors Meeting 3:00 pm
- 21 Bring Life to Sandy Soils (Urban Horticulture) 1 pm
- SCMG Newsletter Articles Due by 6 pm
- Corrales Growers' Market 3 pm
- 23 HOMEscape Solutions: Workshop 6:30 pm
- Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 24 HOMEscape Solutions: Workshop 6:30 pm
- 25 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 28 Corrales Growers' Market 3 pm
- 30 Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm

### October

- 2 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 4 Rio Rancho Tree Stewards: Steering Committee Meeting 4 pm
- 5 Waterwise Garden Work Session 8:30 am
- DeLavy House Garden Work Session 9 am
- 7 Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 9 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 14 Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 18 SCMG Board of Directors Meeting 3 pm
- 19 Grasses and Alternative Ground Covers (Urban Horticulture) 1 pm
- 21 SCMG Newsletter Articles Due by 6 pm
- Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 23 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am
- 28 Bernalillo Farmer's Market 4 pm
- 30 Corrales Growers' Market 9 am



## Perfect Weather and Setting for Corrales Garden Party

SCMG Charlene Spiegel hosted a lovely "Garden Party" in her new home on August 12, 2016.

The adobe dwelling in the "heart of Corrales" (Corazon de Corrales), was built 25 years ago, and the grounds designed by landscape architect, Judith Phillips. It's now a lush, private setting with established trees and plants and amazing views of the Sandia Mountains. 50+ guests, SCMGs, their friends and families and friends, enjoyed a potluck of wine and cheese, fruit platters, and a variety of dips and other wonderful appetizers. After dinner, we toured the property, identifying plants. Most impressive were the Mountain Ash, Weeping Mulberry, and walls hugged by Blue Atlas Cedar (see photos). The mysterious "Surprise Lily" was identified by Mike Mauer and a tree that had been decimated by "bagworm". SCMG's interested in hosting a Garden Party of their own should contact Charlene Spiegel or Mary Vesely. As Chair and Co-chair of this project, they will assist you with organization, set up and food. SCMG in attendance earn 1-hour education credit. Many thanks to those who brought food! - **Carol Dimeff**

Find more photos of this event on our SCMG Website!



## PAST DUE!

### Have you signed your NMSU Volunteer Agreement yet?

The deadline for receiving your signed NMSU Volunteer Agreement has come and gone! However, the deadline has been extended this year until September 15, 2016. Therefore, some of you will be receiving a letter requesting your signature and initials on (11) points stating the terms of this agreement.

Please read this document carefully and initial each of the eleven statements. The letter also contains a document addressing any concerns you may have regarding this agreement.

Please note, that if the NMSU Volunteer Agreement is not signed and returned to the Extension Office by September 15, 2016, you will no longer be a member of Sandoval County Master Gardeners nor continue your volunteer service. Also please note that this Volunteer Agreement is not unique to NMSU; almost all volunteer organizations are now requiring this type of form before a person can become a volunteer - some organizations even require a "background check"!

A self-addressed, stamped, return envelope is also included for your convenience. If you have any questions, you may contact **Membership Committee Chair, Charlene Spiegel at (505) 891-4408/sheenie721@gmail.com**

## MAKING HYPERTUFA POTS

The hypertufa pots are planters that are simple to make. Gardeners created hypertufa pots as an inexpensive and fun substitute to use in the garden. To make in a wheelbarrow mix: **1 part Portland Cement**  
**1 part sand**  
**1 part sifted peat moss or sphagnummoss**  
**1 part vermiculite or perlite**  
You can color the mixture with concert color and or a handful of fiberglass mesh to make it even stronger.



## Sandoval County Seed Library

A project of the Sandoval County Master Gardeners

**Seed Saving Workshops**  
September 7, 2016 10:00 am-noon  
Judy Jacobs, Sandoval Count Master Gardener  
Life Member

OR  
**October 11, 2016 6:30 -7:30pm**  
Lynda Garvin, Sandoval County Extension Service  
Agriculture/ Horticulture Agent  
sandovalcountyseedlibrary.org

The Sandoval County Seed Library teaches seed saving to ensure a successful, regionally-adapted, and genetically diverse seed collection that is self-sustaining. The workshops will cover pollination, varietal purity, isolation techniques, criteria for plant seed selection, seed saving methods and storage.

Esther Bone Memorial Library  
950 Pinetree Rd., SE  
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87124 505-891-5012

## County Fair Results Sandoval County Master Gardeners



### AGRICULTURE Best of Show - Agriculture

- Red Canary Onions  
**Mike Maurer 1st Place**
- Yellow Candy Yellow Onions  
**Mike Maurer 2nd Place**
- Bull Nose Bell Pepper  
**Mike Maurer 1st Place**
- Golden Bells Bell Pepper  
Jalamundo Fat Jalapeno  
**Mike Maurer 1st Place**
- Tomatoes  
Green Tomato  
Eggplant  
Apples  
**David Pojmann 1st Place**
- Green Eggs  
**John Millard**

### ANTIQUES

- 1st Place**  
Seed Spreader  
**Steve Lucero**

### ARTS & CRAFTS

- 1st Place**  
Recipe; Apple Brown Betty  
**Martha Mann 1st Place**
- Card Armoire Book  
Calendar Book  
Hand-made Greeting Cards  
**Julia Runyan 1st Place**
- Hummingbird Feeding  
**Martha Mann 1st Place**
- Photography  
Close Up Lily  
Arctic Panorama  
Costas Hummingbird  
**Martha Mann 2nd Place**
- Scenic on Canvas  
**JoAnn Beuerle**

### HOME ECONOMICS

- 1st Place**  
Key Lime Cupcakes  
**JoAnn Beuerle**
- Pomegranate Jelly  
Bread n Butter Pickles  
Mustard  
Applesauce  
Granberry Sauce  
Onion Garlic Mustard  
**Martha Mann 2nd Place**
- Shell Wool Afghan  
**John Millard**



## MORE XERIC LANDSCAPING in SANDOVAL COUNTY

Sandoval I think we have a problem- I think we are seriously letting down our customers, the people who come to us for advice, as well as the communities they live in.

Let me explain. We do, in most of our outreach work, such as plant clinics or tables at fairs and farmer's markets, strongly promote xeric landscaping. We have plenty of literature and pamphlets, we have the water wise garden, and probably most of us have a very strong inclination to steer people in the direction of xeric gardening or landscaping. And it seems to me that many of our customers listen attentively and agreeably and often take the literature we have and head for home. But as I travel through my community of Rio Rancho I feel that almost no one follows through with the advice we give. As I take lots of walks, and drive around, I see nothing more than a few attempts at little bits and patches of xeric landscaping. But what is very evident is that most of the properties are rock-scaped. That is, front and back yards are more and more being covered by crushed rock or stream bottom gravel and boulders. Exactly why, in every case, the property owners have elected to go rock-scape rather than xeriscape, we can only speculate. But I think it's likely they're doing it because it's easier and cheaper and quicker.

I think, for most, covering the land in rock and bricks and decorative pots is a lot faster, easier, cheaper, requires almost no irrigation or maintenance, and so that's where they go. That's okay. That's their choice. It works for them. But what I see, generally, ends up something that we had no idea they would be doing and so gave them no input. We gave them no advice or help, and provided them no protection against some very common adverse effects.

And therein is the problem that we face.

They either do it themselves, or hire someone who is mostly interested in just getting the rock laid down because that company is making profit off the labor and the sale/ resale of some decorative rock. And if you look closely, you see it's very common for the homeowner, or hired contractor, to first lay down either heavy plastic or weed fabric. Maybe they really think that will keep the yard free of weeds while making it easier to use less rock whilst keeping any design clean and nice looking. But, and this is something we all pretty much know, if that plastic or fabric is laid up close to the base of trees or previous landscaping, we're going to see some trees dying along with other parts of the landscape, because overhead sprinkling and the little rain we get cannot get through the barrier to keep the plants alive. Neither is any old irrigation system or newly installed drip system likely to benefit or preserve mature trees or shrubbery, etc.

I see many of the older trees planted years ago in Rio Rancho, and other neighboring communities, are now dying. Eventually the homeowner will have the trees pruned or eventually cut down. Rarely do they bother to replace them. And so I see, in Rio Rancho particularly a sad disappearance of what was once a very pretty and shady and comfortable urban forest, as well as junipers,

hedges, and other landscaped shrubbery. I think we need to consider including in our counseling and recommendations some warnings and advice about how to do xeric landscape rather than have their yard rock-scaped. Teaching those who come to us the importance of proper xeric landscaping, minimizing plastic or weed fabrics and especially about leaving sufficiently large open spaces so that the trees and other landscaping gain the benefit of rains and appropriate watering by the homeowner, such as using soaker hoses.

I don't know if it's appropriate or feasible for us to be more proactive by going to the neighborhoods or contacting contractors and advising them of what the problem is and to use much less plastic or fabric. It might be a hard sell to get the homeowners to do more hand-weeding instead of weed block fabrics and plastics. It might be, however, possible to point out that the weeds still do come back as New Mexico's famous dust fills in on top of the rock and fabric, and especially the plastic. And let them know it's only a few years before the rock slides off or gets buried by the dirt, and that then the plastic curls up, shows through and deteriorates.

I know it's a constant temptation, to me, to revisit some properties and at least leave a note pointing out that the trees are dying for lack of water, and make a recommendation to remove the plastic for some 20 or 30 feet around the base of that tree. I hope that some of you will notice what I'm noticing and be dismayed as I'm dismayed and we come up with some sort of effective, or at least more effective, program and counseling that might still rescue a rather pretty urban forest and landscaping that began at least 30 years ago here in Sandoval County.

Russ Husted



Peaches n Rock Art not a good mix



One of six was not what she expected



Destruction construction under way