



# Sandoval Extension Master Gardener Newsletter

<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/>



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

March 2021

Steve M. Lucero,  
County Program Director

Sandoval County Extension  
PO Box 400  
Bernalillo, NM 87004

Physical Address:  
**CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC**  
Due to COVID restrictions  
1500 Idalia Rd, Bldg D  
Administration  
Room 1049  
Bernalillo NM 87004

Ph: 505-867-2582  
Email: [Sandoval@NMSU.edu](mailto:Sandoval@NMSU.edu)

NMSU and the U.S.  
Department of  
Agriculture cooperating.

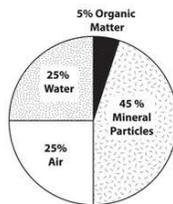
**SEMG Newsletter**  
**Submissions**  
**Deadline: 25<sup>th</sup> each mo.**

Please submit news,  
articles, events and  
photographs to:  
[newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

Editor:  
Kate Shadock

## From Barbara Boyd, Advisory Council Chair

**I hope you have gotten back into the dirt as I have!** I volunteer at the Corrales Family Practice Garden and we had our first session in the garden on March 2. It was great to see everyone again - physically distanced and masked. It was great to be outside, working the land.



Which reminds me, now is a good time to amend your soil. John Zarola, a Master Composter, gave a presentation through Gardening with the Masters about soil amending. He shared how important it is to have 5% organic matter. Please watch John's presentation by going to our website. The Gardening with the Masters Series has three more presentations in March and four in April. Please see additional information about these in this newsletter.

**In this newsletter is a guide to show Veteran Master Gardeners how to access Intern Education classes to receive Education hours credit.** Please consider using these recordings to continue your education.

We use various means of **communicating to the Master Gardener members: the website, the newsletter, and direct email.** We rely on members to use the website as there are many people putting a lot of work into keeping the website up to date and relevant. We also do not want to flood your in-basket with too many emails. Please take the time to look at our website and check out the event calendar to keep up with presentations, educational opportunities, and meetings.

We also have a team working on updating our reporting. There are many reasons we miss our Extension Agent, Lynda Garvin. One reason we miss Lynda is that she pulled together reports to share with NMSU and with the County Commissioners regarding our work. **Sandoval County is interested in knowing how much we are helping the citizens of the county and NMSU needs to fulfill their obligation as a land grant university in reporting to the federal government.** The team is working to simplify our reporting requirements and we hope to have something to share with you soon.

~ *Barbara*

*Photo: Aces.NMSU.edu*

## “We Can Farm in Corrales... It’s Not the Moon, You Know!”

**The history of agriculture in New Mexico dates back 12,000 years.** Based on artifacts discovered, the earliest recorded people, the Mogollon, grew corn, squash and beans. In 1540, while seeking the famed Seven Cities of Gold, Spanish explorer Francisco Vazquez de Coronado entered the area now known as Sandoval County. Instead of gold, he found thriving villages with prosperous farmers. In 1699, San Ysidro was founded as a farming community by King Charles II of Spain.



Unlike much of the country, the number of family-owned farms in Sandoval county has increased 58% since 2007. Many of these are small holdings under 50 acres. The county is also in the top 10% of the state for production of nursery crops, sod, apples and grapes, as well as sheep, goats, horses and ponies.

This long, rich history is replete with stories, although most of the tales have been lost in the sands of time. The [Sandoval County Oral History Project](#) ensures that at least some of our local narratives are remembered and preserved. This 2018 project interviewed first to fourth generation farmers to capture their insights on farming, food practices, and their big ideas about the future of small farms.

From stories of early political activism as demonstrated by a farmer sending a box of celery to President Calvin Coolidge, to engineering innovations for crop irrigation, we are strongly reminded of the influence of past farmers and gardeners.

The [Project](#) contains both video and audio interviews, including one with our own Penny Davis . If you’ve spent time at different farmers’ markets in the county you may also recognize other familiar faces. Gardening on any scale is a challenge in Sandoval county. These gardeners have taken on the task of producing fresh healthy food and additionally educating consumers about the reasons it matters. Helping children learn how fresh, home-grown produce tastes is a calling and mission for many. Bringing people out to the farms to understand where their food comes from is also a driving force for these modern gardeners.



Hearing from folks who’ve worked the land for generations reminds us that it is both possible and highly desirable to grow at least some of our own food. Treat yourself to an hour of fascinating local history by checking out the [Sandoval County Oral History Project](#)

*Photo: Wagner - NM Digital .unm.edu*

*Photo: Fresh Possibilities – Sandoval CountyNM.gov*

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator.

# Start Early for a Bumper Crop of Tomatoes

Sam Thompson, SMG 2008

Successfully growing tomatoes in Sandoval county requires considerations and prep work before the seed or plant goes in the ground. We have some tough challenges to work around.

## 1. LOW FERTILITY SOIL

### a. Sandy:

No organic matter, doesn't hold water

**Solution:** water frequently with smaller amount

### b. Clay:

Holds water, but can hold water away from plants

**Solution:** Water infrequently but deeply

### c. Loam:

Equal distribution of sand, silt and clay – Plants LOVE this!

**Solutions** for low fertility soil: add compost, use cover crops, plant in raised beds or containers



## 2. HIGH TEMPERATURES

Solutions: Grow smaller tomato varieties, select heat tolerant varieties, start early (be prepared to protect during extreme cold), provide shade for your tomato plants water in the morning and use mulch.

## 3. PESTS & DISEASES

Solutions: Use resistant varieties. Inspect plants frequently and closely, use floating row cover; use companion plants.

### Companion plants for tomatoes:

Onions, carrots, chiles, asparagus, basil, chives, parsley, and garlic

Cosmos, dill, alyssum, buckwheat, Plains Coreopsis and California Bluebell

### Tomato varieties that do well here: Celebrity, Better Boy, and Big Beef

Open pollinators or heirloom – on the large side – Paul Robeson, Berkley Pink Tie Dye, Marglobe, Sioux.

On the small side – Flamenco, Jaune Flamme, Solar Flare, Principe Borghese, Abu Rawan, San Marzano.

Cherry and grape tomato varieties do well.

**Purchasing plants:** Look for vigorous plants; avoid wilted or stressed plants, avoid discolored or malformed plants. **NOTE:** Plants that have set fruit early in the season may not be able to support the fruit, (especially of larger varieties).

*Photo: Pixaby*

## Don't Be Too Quick to Prune

On a beautiful sunny day in March, it's hard to remember that we have had a bit more cold than usual and a few more days of snow on the ground than in the past few years. Per the weather forecasters it's been a decade since we've had winter temperatures so low. Anyone here in February 2011 remembers all too well the devastation the [Groundhog Day](#) storm left in our gardens.

Even though we've enjoyed sunshine and day temperatures in the mid-sixties recently it's still in winter. In Sandoval county the last frost can come as late as mid-April. The higher your elevation the later your frost free date will be. It's tempting to dash out on a sunny March weekend and tidy up the shrubs and grasses so they will be ready to show off their new growth.

To be on the safe side resist spring pruning until mid-March. The later the plant bloomed out, the later it can be pruned. This is when a gardening journal comes in handy. It's helpful to be able to review which shrubs had leaves and blossoms first, and when it happened. Often the "old wood" protects the tender heart of the plant from the cold. Some shrubs bloom on last year's wood – such as lilacs, flowering quince, viburnum and ninebark. Wait until the blooms are done, allow the plant a breather to set new wood for next year and then prune the spent blossoms, dead limbs, and to shape the shrub. Roses are good example of waiting to prune. NMSU has a helpful rose [brochure](#) with pictures to aid pruning. The guideline is prune after the last hard frost. Depending on where you live that could be as early as January or as late as May. In Sandoval county, depending on elevation, it's from late March to mid-April.



The recent ABQ Journal article by Tracey Fitzgibbon; [Cold May Wreak Havoc on Plant Life](#), shared a similar caution. Tracey specifically warned about trimming back crepe myrtle and oleander. At a minimum, resist pulling them out, thinking they are dead from the freezing winter temperatures. More than once I've cut a crepe myrtle almost to the ground because it looked dead in early April. Fortunately, both times we had a mild spring and the shrub rebounded beautifully.

# How to Clean & Sharpen Your Handheld Pruners

Extension.unh.edu

Editor's Note: Rather than rewrite, I am simply sharing the 2018 blog and the link to the very helpful video.

- When it comes to pruning, there is nothing better than having a well maintained pair of pruners with a nice sharp blade. Quality pruners should last for years, and replacement parts are available for many brands. It is far easier to prune with sharp tools and it is well worth taking the time to clean and sharpen them. Not only will having sharp pruners reward you with easier cuts, but those cuts will heal better. Dull pruning tools are likely to crush or tear plant tissue, increasing the likelihood of infection from disease organisms. In the video below, Emma Erler, Education Center Coordinator, will show you step by step how to clean and sharpen your pruners.



## Supplies

- Steel wool
- Wrench or multi-purpose tool
- Multi-purpose diamond file(s)
- General purpose oil (3-IN-ONE oil or mineral oil)
- WD-40 for rust removal
- Clean rag

Photo: [extension.unh.edu](http://extension.unh.edu)

## Step by Step Directions

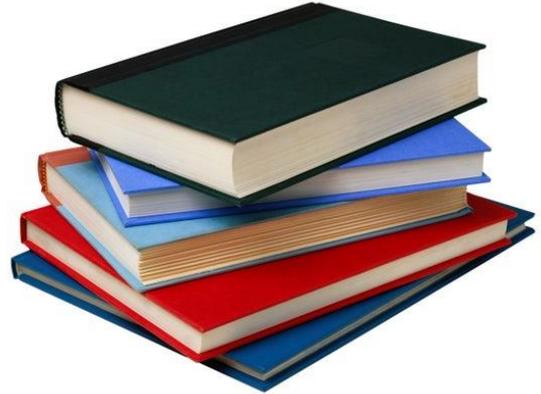
1. If your pruners are easy to disassemble, start there. It is much easier to clean and sharpen a detached blade. Take pictures as you take apart your pruners to help you remember how to put them back together. Skip this step if your pruners do not come apart readily.
2. Next, remove dirt and grime with warm, soapy water and a scrubby sponge.
3. After wiping pruners dry, use coarse steel wool to work off any rust. If pruners are badly rusted apply WD-40 and let soak for 10 minutes. After soaking, remove oil with a clean cloth and use steel wool to get rid of remaining rust.
4. Use a diamond file to sharpen the blade. Draw the file along the cutting edge of the blade, applying medium pressure. Be sure to set the file at the same angle as the factory beveled edge of the blade. Only sharpen in one direction starting at the inside of the blade and working outward.
5. Once you're satisfied the pruners are sharp, run a file with fine grit over the backside of the blade to remove any burrs.
6. Reassemble your pruners, referring to the pictures you took earlier.
7. Try cutting a piece of paper with the sharpened blade. If it makes a clean cut, the blade is adequately sharp.
8. Finish by oiling your pruners to lubricate the moving parts and prevent the steel from rusting. Wipe off excess oil with a clean rag.
9. Store your pruners in a clean and dry location.

Video to watch these steps: <https://extension.unh.edu/blog/how-clean-and-sharpen-your-pruners>

## The FriendShop, a New Used Bookstore in Rio Rancho

Mike Jackovitch, SEMG Intern 2021

Friends of Libraries and Literacy Rio Rancho, Inc. (Friends') opened a used bookstore on January 12. The FriendShop is located at 4300 Ridgecrest Drive #J/K in the Albertson's/Target center on NM Route 528 around the corner from Papa John's Pizza. **Shop hours are 10 AM to 5 PM, Tuesday through Saturday.** If you need a map, search Google Maps for "friendshop rio rancho" to find us.



To keep customers and volunteers safe during the pandemic, there is currently a NM Department of Health limit of six customers in the store at any time. When people are waiting to enter, there is a **30-minute limit on browsing.**

Most of the books are \$3 for hardbacks, \$2 for paperbacks. DVDs are mostly \$2, and most CDs are \$1. The community has donated all the books and other media we sell. If you are looking for a particular book, please call 505-892-7323. **Otherwise, come in and browse; gardening and landscaping books are in the Home/Garden section.**

The **mission of the Friends' is to support and promote literacy programs and to expand community involvement with libraries in Sandoval County, New Mexico.** We are a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. Our website is [folrr.org](http://folrr.org)

*Photo: Scientific America*

## Gardening with the Masters

Gardening in the desert has some challenges, especially if you are new to the area. “Things are different here” certainly applies to our climate, sandy soil, and intense sunshine. Even if you’ve gardened here successfully for years there are still new tips and techniques to learn.

These live classes are presented at 2:00 pm, via zoom, on the first, third and fifth Wednesday of the month. Classes run 90 minutes with question and answer time included. The classes are led by Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners and subject matter experts. .

**Gardening with the Masters** is a long standing public education effort of the Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners.



### Some upcoming classes include:

Growing Roses in the Desert	March 17
Home Composting	March 31
Management of Common Garden Pests	April 6
Growing Tomatoes in the Desert	April 13

To register for upcoming classes and to view videos and material from previous classes, visit [Gardening with the Masters Online](#).

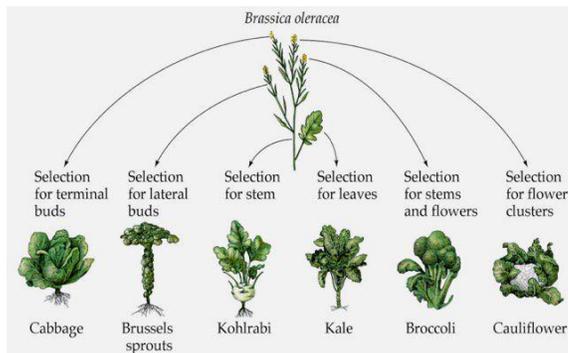
[Check our EVENTS CALENDAR for ALL topics and times.](#)

## Garden2Table Corner

Cassandra D'Antonio SEMG 2019

For months now, I have been wanting to highlight some of our favorite **cruciferous vegetables**, such as cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, kale, and broccoli. I thought I would do that in this column before the weather turns warm and Garden2Table turns its attention to seasonal spring produce and recipes. However, keep in mind that, according to [aces.nmsu.edu](https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/circulars/CR457/) (<https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/circulars/CR457/>), these cool weather crucifers should be planted here in New Mexico as soon as the ground can be worked in the spring, which means now. (Alternatively, they can also be planted later in the summer for your fall garden.) **Factoid:** The name “cruciferous” is an informal classification of members of the mustard family and comes from the Latin *cruciferae*, meaning “cross bearing,” because their four petals resemble a cross.

**Packing a Nutritional Punch.** While cruciferous vegetables are diverse in their tastes, colors, shapes and sizes, they are all rich in fiber, low in calories, and packed with shared nutritional benefits, including vitamins K, A, and C, and minerals, such as folate, potassium, and magnesium. Dark green cruciferous veggies also contain **phytonutrients**, which is a plant-based compound that reduces the risks of cardiovascular disease by lowering inflammation, as well as cancer by stimulating enzymes in the body that detoxify carcinogens before they damage cells (<https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/super-veggies-cruciferous-vegetables>). According to the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, it only takes 2 ½ cups of these nutritious veggies a day to reap their benefits.



**Single Magical Plant Species.** Did you know that cabbage, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, kale, broccoli, and cauliflower all come from the EXACT same plant species: ***Brassica oleracea***. How is it possible you ask? Though they are all the same species, these various crops are **cultivars**—different varieties bred to have desirable qualities for human purposes. Around 2500 years ago, *B. oleracea* was solely a plant that grew wild along the coasts of Britain, France, and the lime outcrops of the Mediterranean coast. The wild form still exists and is known as **wild mustard**.

Later, in Ancient Greece and Rome, around 300 BCE, people started cultivating wild mustard in their gardens and selecting seeds from plants that grew more leaves, which produced a version of wild mustard that looked more like modern-day kale or collard greens.

Over hundreds of years, this one plant continued to be selectively bred to create dozens of wildly different vegetables. Red, green and savoy cabbages were created from a kale cultivar in the 1200s by selecting for a large terminal bud. Brussels sprout, which grow from the buds along the plant’s stem likely, hit the scene in the 1200s as well. Kohlrabi was created by selecting for a thicker stalk in a kale plant around the 1400s. Broccoli was created from a kale predecessor in the 1500s by selecting for the larger flower clusters, which are then harvested before they bloom. Cauliflower was developed from one of hundreds of broccoli varieties. Fascinating!

Photo: Vox.com

For those of you who would like to read more about the evolution and diversity of *B. oleracea*, please check out the extremely informative blog post by Jeanne Osnas, a researcher at Purdue University who blogs as *The Botanist in the Kitchen*

(<https://botanistinthekitchen.blog/2012/11/05/the-extraordinary-diversity-of-brassica-oleracea/>)

**New Mexico's Wild Mustard.** Wild mustard has also been found growing in Dona Ana and Bernalillo Counties, but it is not at all like the cool, edible *B. oleracea*. Known as the **Sahara mustard** (*Brassica tournefortii*) or wild turnip, this weed is a short-lived, **nonnative** winter annual mustard that has become a potential new threat to New Mexico. According to NMSU ([https://weeds.nmsu.edu/factsheet.php?weed\\_id=183](https://weeds.nmsu.edu/factsheet.php?weed_id=183)), *B. tournefortii* primarily invades disturbed, arid habitats, favoring sandy soils, though it can readily establish in a variety of habitats. Sahara mustard was first identified in New Mexico in Dona Ana County in 1995 and is currently found near Albuquerque and in Las Cruces in parking lots of shopping malls, residential areas, and along roadsides. (We had it on our land in the North Valley, and it thrived in the sandy mounds of a former horse corral.)

**Sahara mustard also attracts a bug called the leafhopper, which can spread viral infections to your garden. You will need to be careful getting rid of this weed.** NMSU's factsheet cited above provides guidance on how to manage and control an infestation of this harmful weed. If you find yourself with *B. tournefortii*, do not think about cultivating it, get rid of it!

**Cooking with Cruciferous Vegetables.** There are so many ways to get your crucifers on—raw or grilled, sauteed, roasted, etc. Cauliflower is now being introduced into everything from pizza crust to mac & cheese. Because cruciferous vegetables are often found to be naturally bitter, **adding an acidic ingredient, such as lemon or lime juice or balsamic vinegar, will tone down the bitter flavor and make them sweeter and more delicious.** And those chewy, fibrous leaves of the kale and Swiss chard can be massaged to make them softer and more tender.



Garden2Table has demonstrated many recipes using a variety of these healthy veggies. Riced cauliflower or chopped, shredded, sliced, or shaved brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, or kale can make a refreshing slaw or chopped salad. Be creative and mix in some garbanzo beans, fresh or dried fruit, herbs, or additional vegetables like onions, carrots, or celery. Then toss with a tangy vinaigrette or creamy dressing, sprinkle with nuts or seeds, and you have got yourself a nutritious, crunchy, and satisfying meal. On the following page, we have included a variety of easy to prepare dressing recipes that can be used to lightly dress the perfect slaw or chopped salad—some mayonnaise- or yogurt-based, some vinegar-based, and some solely plant-based and oil free.

Until next time, enjoy your veggies to stay healthy and strong, and get planting.

*Photo: Karaidel/Istock/thinkstock*

## Garden2Table Recipes for March

Below are a variety of dressing recipes that can be easily whisked or blended to toss with your favorite cruciferous vegetables, such as cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, or kale. **These dressings lightly dress 5 to 6 cups of shredded, shaved or chopped vegetables. Feel free to substitute a cup or two for crisp fruit, such as apples or pears; fresh herbs; or onion, shallots, sweet peppers, carrots or celery. Throw in some seeds, nuts or dried fruit, or spice it up with sliced jalapeno or serrano chile.** We also included some recipes for those of you following a plant-based, oil-free, or vegan diet.

### EASY TRADITIONAL DRESSING

- ½ cup of mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. white sugar
- 1 ½ Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. white vinegar
- Salt & pepper to taste

### CREAMY, RICH & BRIGHT DRESSING

- ½ cup whole-milk Greek yogurt or mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. apple cider or white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 small garlic, minced
- Salt & pepper to taste

### VINEGAR-BASED DRESSING

- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. grainy mustard
- 1 Tbsp. honey or 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. celery seed
- Salt & pepper to taste

### SUSHI-FLAVORED DRESSING

- ½ cup pear juice or puree
- ¼ cup of rice vinegar
- 1 tsp. grated ginger
- ½ tsp. soy sauce
- 3 Tbsp. nori, finely chopped (1 sheet)
- 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds

### SOUTHERN-STYLE VEGAN DRESSING

- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- ⅓ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 ½ tsp. celery seeds
- 1 tsp. yellow mustard seeds

### SILKY TOFU/MUSTARD DRESSING

- 3 Tbsp. silken tofu
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard

## Southwest Plant of the Month

### Edible fig

*Ficus carica*



#### General Information

**Plant Form** Tree

**Plant Size** 10' x 10'

**Plant Type** Deciduous

**Water Usage** Medium

**Sunlight** Sun, Partial Shade

**Physical Description:** Multi-trunked large shrub or small tree with large rough-textured leaves and sweet edible, egg-shaped fruit.

**Care and Maintenance:** Limb die back in severe winters. Fruit drop and associated discards from birds and insects can be messy. Suckers. Over pruning reduces fruit crop.

**Gardener's Notes:** Many varieties of edible figs available.

*Photo: Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.com*

Plant information from: <https://desertblooms.nmsu.edu/plantadvisor/>

New Mexico State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and educator.

## March Garden Checklist

1. Plant bare root fruit trees
2. Divide perennials – take the excess to Michelle Wittie for plant sales
3. Plant cool loving annuals; petunias, sweet pea, pansy, snapdragon
4. Rejuvenate prune woody plants annuals; petunias, sweet pea, pansy, snapdragon
5. Buy a soil thermometer

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

## Many Hands Make Light Work

### HELP WANTED #1

#### Helpline

Master Gardener Veterans to sign up for  
2 - week **email helpline** shifts  
in April and May

Sign up on our website

**REWARD 2 week shift = 10 outreach hours**

[Register for a shift here](#)

### HELP WANTED #2

#### Zoom scheduler

SEMG purchased a Zoom license to help the chapter continue meeting via Zoom.  
Training will be provided on Zoom and event management on the SEMG calendar.

You'll get to work with the various project chairs and committee chairs.

Interested? Contact: [admin@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:admin@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

## Earn Those SEMG Education Hours

Paget Rose – SEMG 2018

It's Intern training time! And while it's a busy time for interns and mentors, it's also a great time for veteran Master Gardeners to earn their 10 required education hours.

This year it's easier than ever. All the lectures are recorded, and the videos are provided on the SEMG website. Because the interns do not have the opportunity to interact with instructors as they would in a live class, a live Question & Answer (Q&A) has been scheduled for each topic. Though not open to veterans to ask questions, each Q&A session is recorded, again with the video provided on the website.



In addition to the videos, you will find lots of interesting materials, including pdfs of the lecture slides and quizzes, practice helpline questions, supplemental videos, resource lists, and more.

To enjoy all this material, log in to the SEMG Member's side of the website. On the top left side of the page, select "For Interns and Mentors". From the drop-down menu, select "Intern Class Presentations, Videos, and Handouts". Then page down and find the topic that interests you. Or, just follow this link: [Intern Class Presentations, Videos and Handouts](#).

We're adding more material every week, so keep coming back to discover more opportunities to earn those education hours!

*Photo: Ivan Samkov - Pixels*

**Editor's Note:** The layout of this newsletter has been slightly modified to allow content pertinent to only Sandoval County Master Gardeners to be at the end of the publication. As always, your feedback is appreciated. Please contact editor at [newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:newsletter@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

## OUTREACH Committee Update

Co-Chairs: Gilbert Galvin & Sam Thompson

For the few months, we have been working on the concept of a virtual plant clinic, a Zoom presentation series in partnership with the Rio Rancho Public Library - Gardening With the Masters, and on collecting statistics quarterly for the Extension Service's report to Sandoval County and NMSU.

We held two plant clinics with Master Gardeners as the audience to test out two formats and the technical issues presented by doing this type of outreach via Zoom. We have learned a great deal and the committee will be discussing the possibility of doing these clinics quarterly.

SEMG was approached by the Rio Grande Library to present an educational seminar in conjunction with their seed library efforts funding through a grant. We revived the Gardening With the Masters series and have had great success reaching a much wider audience than ever before.

Finally, we are working with the Sandoval Extension Office to collect our many chapter activities and public contacts to help tell our story. Both the county and the university are impressed by the volunteer efforts of our members.



Example of Plant Clinic call - Root Rot (<http://nmsu.life/al>):

<https://www.facebook.com/plantdiagnosticclinic/> (nmsu.edu)

