



# Sandoval Extension Master Gardener Newsletter

<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/>



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

Steve M. Lucero,  
County Program  
Director

March

## Meg Buerkel Hunn, Advisory Council Chair

Rachel Zweig  
County Extension  
Agent

Sandoval County  
Extension  
PO Box 400  
Bernalillo, NM 87004

Physical Address:  
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

### Lessons Learned

In 2018, when we moved here, I had a spiritual director, an old Dominican nun, who admonished me each time we met to look to my preschool daughter as my teacher. I got pretty frustrated with this advice: I was hoping for more hard and holy things!

As it turns out, she is wise (both the nun and my daughter)!

The schools are teaching amazing things these days - my daughter, who is now in third grade at Corrales Elementary School, came home the other day talking about 'fixed mindset' and 'growth mindset.' Basically, if your mind thinks you cannot do something, you probably are not going to be able to - but if your mind takes chances and risks and is willing to practice and fail and try again - you can learn many new tasks. Dosie's teacher calls her students 'Yetis'. As in, change your thought from 'I can't do this math skill' to 'I can't do this math skill YET'.

That got me thinking. I have a pretty fixed mindset, especially when it comes to gardening. AND, I'm learning to grow. To grow both plants and 'my growth mindset,' by continuing to try, even in the face of failure, to seek help from others, to attempt new things - and to change my self talk to 'I'm not good at growing xyz YET'!

Both my daughter and my garden teach me much...



Image from <https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/cartoon-yeti>

Here are some life lessons I've learned from my garden.

1. Grow down as you're growing up. For me, this means knowing the place where I am, forming deep roots, learning more before *and as* I'm trying something new. Plants with few roots topple easily, well-rooted trees can bend and sway and dance with the wind and the snow.
2. When life gives you lemons, make lemonade! I know that's not original though, as a gardener, we could say, 'make black gold out of refuse!' All that extra plant material all that extra crap in our lives can be turned into a beautiful and rich life-giving soil and / or soul with a bit of time and some TLC.

3. Just as our plants find energy from the sun, we have to find the sources for our own energy. Reading novels, time with our kids and grandkids, hiking with the dog, pruning our roses, needlepointing, playing pickleball. All sorts of things can energize us – we have to feed ourselves before we can nurture plants (and people!).



*Photo: The cottonwood waltz – M. Buerkel Hunn*

4. Nurturing, both of plants and of people, takes time and patience. We're going to mess up; we are going to kill things (just the plants, please!). These pursuits require patience for ourselves and others.
5. Take time to be silly. And beautiful. And still. Have you ever seen the flower of an okra plant? It's gorgeous. And it lasts for about a day. Have you heard the sound of the wind in the cottonwood leaves? It sounds like gentle rain. Why?! Why the beauty? Why that noise? Take time to be beautiful. To be silly. To dance. To take time to notice beauty.

6. We're all connected. Just like those [mycorrhizal networks](#) that connect the roots of trees, each of us is connected to every other living thing in this world. We depend upon one another. We depend on our tomato plants to provide fruit for our salsa. We depend on the truck driver, who drives the chilies up from the farmer in Hatch, NM, for that same batch of salsa, and the grower at the market with fresh cilantro. We depend on birds, bees, bats, wasps, and moths to pollinate the plants of our lives. We depend upon the work of the creepy crawlies in the soil to nurture and give nutrients to plants. And, likewise, our actions affect others 'downstream.'

I wonder what life lessons you've learned from your garden. I wonder how you might also be a 'Yeti' Email me at [admin@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:admin@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

~ Meg

## March Garden Checklist

1. Plant bare root fruit trees
2. Plant bare root roses – bigger selection now. Best to be in ground one month before final frost – 15<sup>th</sup> April.
3. Harden off seedlings before planting outside
4. (Zone 7) Plant cool weather vegetables in the garden after St. Patrick's Day (17<sup>th</sup>)
5. Rejuvenation prune woody plants
6. Start seeds indoors for tomatoes, peppers, herbs – Sow some extra for the **SEMG Plant Sale April 30.**

*Source: Month-By-Month Gardening: Arizona, Nevada & New Mexico*

## Down & Dirty with Rachel-Sandoval County Extension Agent

“Is SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) from too much sun a thing?” That’s a question I recently posed after experiencing a rush of happiness during the cloudy, somewhat rainy days we had in mid-February. Stepping outside felt like I had just used a moisturizing face cleanser. The humidity reminded me of home—Arkansas. On a morning run after it snowed, I marveled at how gorgeous grey can be: the clouds, sky, and trees were lovely contrasting shades of grey.

When I lived in the Netherlands, I didn’t feel all too differently. It was just a 180° turn, the negative of the picture in New Mexico, an experience of equal and opposite magnitude. A sunny, winter day would bring a surge of joy. Basking in the sun, I could feel the dampness down in my marrow start to dry out. I marveled at the brilliant blue of the sky.

One hot, summer day when I was younger, I was appreciating the shade’s grace and told myself, “The shade is so lovely; I won’t run from it in the winter but appreciate it”. Of course, that didn’t happen. Even in Morocco—where on the first walk I took with a young boy in July, I noticed how he migrated to even the tiniest slivers of shade as second nature—they sit out in the sun on cold, winter days.



*Yearning for glorious grey. Photo: R. Zweig*

The cliché moral here might be we always yearn for what we don’t have, and we should learn to live in the present and appreciate what we do have. But I’ll argue that it is okay to yearn for what we don’t have. Without it, there would be no technological progress. The homegrown tangy-sweet tomatoes wouldn’t delight our palettes so much in the summer after going months without fresh ‘maters. The rainy days in desert climates and sunny days in grey, damp climates wouldn’t feel like breaths of fresh air. Homecomings wouldn’t be so heartwarming. And I wouldn’t have giggled like a kid experiencing snow for the first time when I went for a walk at the end of February and had sixty mile-per-hour gusts of wind hit my face.

What do you want? What do you wish you had? Some things you can control, others you can’t, some you can but choose not to for lack of time, and that is okay. If you’re an active gardener this year, you have probably already started prepping. Starting seeds indoors, adding compost, mending or laying out drip tape. If you’re a lazy gardener this year, you might still be able to delight in unexpected arugula that re-seeded itself or tomatoes from a volunteer plant. They’ll taste all the better because you will be missing your usual bounty this year.

Appreciate the voids, the holes, the dark moments not for what they are but for what they aren’t. For the contrast they provide. For their ability to let you love sun one season and dread it the next. For their capacity to show you different perspectives. For their reminder that life isn’t monotonous but made up of all sorts of red, greens, blues, browns, purples, oranges, yellows, and, yes, greys, too.

**This month’s puzzler:** A son was performing a common household task. He asked his dad, “Is 50 enough?” “No”, his dad replied, “I don’t think so”. The son said, “What about 125?” His dad said, “No, I don’t think that’s enough either. I’d try 90.” It worked. What was the task? (*Adapted from Car Talk.*)

## What is Sustainable Gardening?

Home gardeners can be an important part of the solution to climate change by using sustainable practices. Sustainable practices and landscape techniques can slow further warming by reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon storage in soil and plants. In addition, we can adapt our gardens and green spaces and make them more resilient to climate change by adding native plant diversity, improving soil health, and growing heat tolerant vegetable crops, and using storm water management practices.

Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners will be exploring ways to make our gardens climate resilient. We will share the ideas and actions over the next several months.

If you have not yet watched [KISS THE GROUND](#), it's a great place to start understanding that small well thought out changes can yield big results.

***“The single greatest lesson the garden teaches is that our relationship to the planet need not be zero-sum, and that as long as the sun still shines and people still can plan and plant, think and do, we can, if we bother to try, find ways to provide for ourselves without diminishing the world.”***

Michael Pollan, This Is Your Mind On Plants

## The Science of Picky Eaters

Kate Shaddock, SEMG 2018

*Every family has one, the child who turns their nose up at ice cream, cake, and cookies. Instead they want broccoli and Brussel sprouts any way they can have them, raw, sautéed, roasted or steamed... Wait, is that the opposite of how your picky eater behaves? To this day I am the only member of a large extended family who voluntarily eats broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts without them swimming in cheese sauce. In fact swimming in cheese sauce is the one sure way to stop me from eating my favorite vegetables.*

*Many years ago (July 21, 2009) I watched a short **Nova Science Now** video explaining that children who will do almost anything to avoid broccoli and its cousins have a very real, genetic reason. They aren't being a challenge – those foods simply taste horrible because of their genes. It was such a clear explanation I went hunting for the video to link to this article. Sadly the video is no longer available, though the transcript can still be accessed and is linked above. The following is an excerpt from that transcript. The dialogue not specifically identified to a certain expert is from Neil DeGrasse Tyson, the host of the episode.*

---

**For some people** there are foods that are good for you, and others find it delicious, yet the taste of them is so bitter and vile they will do almost anything to avoid eating it. Why? The answer may just lie in their genes. So why are some people picky and others aren't?

**Danielle R. Reed** ([Monell Chemical Sense Center](#)) (DRR) Just like we differ in our ability to see and hear, people differ in their ability to taste.



Photo: Pexels

**Stuart Firestein** (Columbia University)(SF) Flavor consists of several different sensory modalities. It's not just the taste in your mouth...Also the way food smells in your nose, the way it looks on the plate and the way it feels in your mouth.

So why, can't I taste certain foods if my nose is pinched shut? Why should my nose have anything to do with taste?

**SF:** Evolution has seen fit to devote as much of our sensory apparatus as possible to what we eat.

Our caveman ancestors had to use all their senses to find the nutrients they needed to survive a hostile environment. Just like us they probably loved sweets. There's an evolutionary reason for that: Sugar in sweet foods provides a lot of energy.

**Robert F. Margolskee** (Monell Chemical Sense Center) (RFM) Sweet is very important, and most people strongly prefer sweets. This is a direct measure of the nutritive value of a food.

In other words we have a very different relationship with that bitter taste in many vegetables. Bitter is a warning.

**RFM:** Bitter is a protective sense. It's a signal for something potentially poisonous. A plant puts out a toxic compound, so people won't eat it.

So the bitter flavor in a plant prevents people from eating it. Our bitter taste buds honor and respect that fact in a plant? That still doesn't explain why some of us love broccoli and others think it's got a nasty bitter flavor.



Photo: Pexels

**RFM & SF:** The answer is at the tip of your tongue. Those are tastebuds. These cells enable us to detect five basic flavors: sweet, salty, bitter, sour and umami, the Japanese word for the savory taste in meat and cheese. On the outside of each taste cell are finger-like projections, covered with hundreds of tiny taste receptors. When those receptors bind with the foods we eat, they open the chemical pathway into the cell that leads all the way to the brain; that's what we call taste.

Why do some people hate the bitter taste found in green plants like broccoli and Brussel sprouts and others enjoy it?

**RFM & SF:** It's because those little taste receptors on your tongue are actually proteins, made by your genes. They're subunits of your DNA. That long chain of four chemicals best known by their initials, A, C, T and G and Biologists have discovered that out of the thousands of genes in your DNA there is one that determines if you like the taste of healthy greens or if you cannot stand them. That single gene was discovered by geneticist Dennis Drayna.

**DRR:** We are running an experiment with middle school students. We are having the students rub their cheeks with a sterile swab, giving researchers easy access to sample their DNA. Those four letters in the DNA - they are packed into 23 pairs of chromosomes. On one of those pairs is the gene they're looking for. You get one chromosome from your mother and one from your father. This chromosome has a gene that's the non-taster gene and this chromosome, from your dad might also be a non-taster gene.

Non-tasters don't taste the bitterness in many vegetables because they have the letters G-T-A in that order in a certain spot on the gene. If you get G-T-A from your mom and dad, those taste receptors on your tongue cannot bind to the bitterness in broccoli. Instead, if you get the letters C-C-G from both your mom and dad, you can taste the bitterness in broccoli, and you are a "taster."

**DRR:** That makes you very sensitive to bitter.

So next time you get frustrated with your picky eater, take a moment to relax and remember their genes may be influencing their food choices.

*"It was such a pleasure to sink one's hands into the warm earth,  
to feel at one's fingertips the possibilities of the new season."*

~ Kate Morton, [The Forgotten Garden](#)

## Public Training Opportunities

### **Ready, Set, Grow**

March presentation is Mar. 15, 2023 Seed Propagation, Transplanting, & Seed Storage with Danise Coon, Senior Research Specialist, NMSU Chile Pepper Institute

John Zarola, our MG / Compost Guru passed along info about a free online conference called **Soil Regen Summit: Collaborating with Nature** which takes place **3/14-16**. There are many speakers and experts in the fields of regenerative ag, permaculture, eco restoration, etc. If this interests you, here is the link to register: <https://www.srs2023.com>

March 24      10am - noon Classroom and hands on rose pruning training at the Corrales Public Library  
Kate Shaddock, Master Gardener  
Public is welcome to this free training  
Bring gloves and pruners

### **Gardening With The Masters – Meadowlark Senior Center**

Upcoming, in-person, classes, held at Meadowlark Senior Center at 7pm the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. These classes are live and not recorded. We encourage you to join us in person, so your individual questions get answered.

March 28      7pm Meadowlark Senior Center "Growing Tomatoes in Sandoval County"  
The talk will focus on mitigating the challenges of growing tomatoes in Sandoval County. In addition, tomato varieties will be identified that are most likely to be successful in our high heat and windy conditions.  
Sam Thompson, Master Gardener

### **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/>

# Planning Ahead to Support 2023 SEMG Plant Sales

Beginning in 2021, SEMG used a format of multiple plant sales throughout the season. It was far more successful as a fund raiser. The 2022 sales broke all SEMG plant sale records, thanks to the generous donations of plants by our members. It also extended the opportunity for the public to buy starts beyond the first weekend of the Corrales Grower’s Market.

**For 2023 we will continue to have multiple plant sales throughout the year. We are asking all Master Gardeners and Interns to plant extra and donate them to the sales.**

Sales are based on what Veterans and Intern Master Gardener’s donate to market. Plants offered will include vegetables, herbs, perennials, houseplants, and bulbs (such as lilies). **Anything we can grow – we can sell!**

Plant extra of what you are going to grow in your gardens and donate the surplus to these sales. Surplus plants will be delivered to Michelle Wittie (SEMG 2020) for marketing to her FB group (Gardening in Rio Rancho) with links to SEMG FB and Instagram. Plants are sold NO CONTACT from Michelle’s driveway with an honor system payment jar. Michelle has been successfully conducting her own plant sales this way for several years.

Because these plant sales are fundraising for SEMG we will be pricing the plants higher than big box store pricing. It’s important to remember that most of us are growing plants we know thrive here and they are getting a healthier start than is typical for big box plants. To help your creativity and improve the likelihood of success we polled some of our Veteran Master Gardeners to find out where they prefer to buy seeds. In alphabetical order their suggestions included:

Houseplant starts are also very popular!

We learned that selling individual plants was more successful than selling 6 or 12 packs.



Photo: Pixaby

- [Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Co](#)
- [Diane’s Flower Seeds](#)
- [Native Seed Search](#)
- [Rare Roots](#)
- [Select Seeds](#)
- [Swallowtail Garden Seeds](#)

Michelle surveyed her clients recently to get ideas for what is most in demand when they come to her sales. She shared ideas of what her clients want. High demand plants are **bolded**.

Aloe	<b>Chile</b>	Lettuces	Peppers - hot	Squash - esp. yellow
Beets	Cucumbers	Melons	Perennials	Sunchokes
Berries	Grasses	Milkweed	<b>Pollinator Plants</b>	Strawberries
Chamomile	<b>Herbs - Esp. Basil</b>	Native Plants	Salsa Kits	<b>Tomatoes - Esp. Heirloom and Paste</b>
Chard	Iris	<b>Peppers - Bell</b>	Spider Plants	Walking Onions

Thank you for supporting our fundraising to support SEMG projects in Sandoval County.



## HELP WANTED #1

**Loma Colorado Garden Event**, 755 Loma Colorado, Rio Rancho. **Saturday, April 8<sup>th</sup> 9am-12pm**  
Volunteers needed to meet and greet area gardeners, and help with seed give away. Three hours of Outreach credits. **Contact Ginger Golden or Michelle Wittie for more information, or sign up**

## HELP WANTED #2

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. Interns will do this with their mentor team after course work is complete. For more information contact Penny Lindgren or Sandra Liakus via their email or phone numbers in the member roster.

## HELP WANTED #3

### Education Committee – Videographer/Film Editor

For the 2022/2023 SEMG business year we will be filming guest lectures on advanced training topics. To record these sessions we are seeking members with experience and/or interest in videography and film editing. For more information please contact John Thompson, via his contact information in the member directory.

## HELP WANTED #4 Co-Chair Needed

Project is Sandoval County Administrative Building Plant Watering/Maintenance  
Backup for watering schedule  
Assistance analyzing plant problems  
Help resolve plant issues in the building  
Annual repotting coordination

## HELP WANTED #5 Co-Chair Needed

SANDOVAL SEED SHARE PROJECT  
Seek seed donations from large companies.  
Analyze seeds for viability in Sandoval County  
Assist in packaging and distributing seeds

