



GARDEN VIEWS

A Master Gardener Newsletter



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September 2004

Seedless Watermelons—How'd They Do That?

By Jose Aguiar, UCCE Farm Advisor,
Riverside County

For more than 5,000 years, watermelons have grown and harvested. The ancient Egyptians were watermelon growers and Thomas Jefferson grew them. There are approximately 2,000 acres of watermelon production in Riverside County. As with so many other fruit and vegetables, consumers can choose from several watermelon varieties—regular seeded or seedless and red, pink, yellow, orange, and white colored flesh. Watermelon size also ranges from large to small.

In our fast paced society, who has time to remove seeds from watermelon? Consumers want the convenience of ready-to-serve and eat products. This may also help explain the popularity of seedless grapes, pineapples, bananas, and precut fruit packages. Various citrus types are currently being developed for seedless fruit production.

How do you get seedless watermelon?

Dr. H. Kihara in Japan first developed the method of producing seedless watermelon in 1951. Dr. Kihara's methods of producing seedless watermelon involved traditional breeding methods and colchicines, a chromosome-altering chemical. He has produces some genetic manipulation although it would not be considered genetically modified by today's standards. The following is a simplification of the process used to develop seedless watermelon.

Step One—Diploids

Regular or normal watermelon has 22 chromosomes. Normal watermelon is also referred to as diploid; each cell has two copies of each chromosome. These diploid plants are selected for desirable fruit

(Watermelons continued on page 3)

Past Chair Shea Says Thanks

Thank you Master Gardeners, for your kind gifts at the graduation ceremony. The birdbath and wired pot are in place in the garden at home and look great. Thanks also to the board for all your hard work during the trainee year. Congratulations to all the trainees who worked hard for volunteer hours and pass the final exam—a job well done. I look forward to seeing you at the veteran's year classes.

Thanks again to all for your contributions to making the Riverside Master Gardeners a great program.

Tom Shea
Outgoing Chair,
Riverside Master Gardener
Program



In This Issue

Page

<i>Seedless Watermelons</i>	1
<i>Understanding the Salton Sea</i>	2
<i>West Nile Virus Tracking</i>	2
<i>Master Gardener Training Classes Online</i>	2
<i>Fabulous Foliage</i>	3
<i>Hort Shorts</i>	4
<i>September Kick-off Potluck</i>	5
<i>MG Speakers' Bureau Seek Recruits</i>	5
<i>MGs Preparing to Mark Their Calendars</i>	6
<i>A Thank you to the Volunteers</i>	7
<i>Fall Clean Up</i>	8
<i>Calendar</i>	9

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Understanding the Salton Sea

Editor's Note: On April 23, thanks to fellow Master Gardener and local activist, Charolette Fox, I was lucky enough to be included on a Metropolitan Water District tour of the Salton Sea. California's largest lake has been largely neglected since it was formed in 1905 when floods breached irrigation dikes along the Colorado River. With no outlet and inflow that consists mostly of agricultural runoff, it has become one of the world's saltiest bodies of water. The fate of the Salton Sea will ultimately affect all of us in Southern California and how we use water. As gardeners, how we use our precious water should be a primary concern. The following is adapted from an article about the tour by Margo Reeg and Marge England entitled, "Seeing the Salton Sea." ¾ Nancy Sappington

The first stop on our tour was at the Salton Sea State Recreation Area along the east shore. Roland Gaebert, the park's head ranger, described many of the recreational opportunities and challenges of the park. Until the 1980s, the Salton Sea had more visitors per year than Yosemite National Park. Publicity about environmental concerns for the sea has since discouraged many visitors. Still, each year sunbathers, fishermen, campers, and birders dot the shoreline.

Fish such as white sea bass, tilapia, croaker, and sargo are relatively abundant, while more than 400 species of birds visit the sea on their way to and from seasonal homes. Gaebert's talk dispelled some of the myths about the safety and attractiveness of this unique recreation area.

During our visit, the sea was experiencing an algae bloom caused by an excess of nutrients flowing into it from its three tributaries—the Whitewater, Colorado, and New rivers. The growth of algae or eutrophication is caused when excess nitrogen and phosphorus in the water from agricultural runoff and sewage contamination in the rivers combine with sunlight. Blue-green color indicates fresh growth of algae, and brown indicates dying algae. Algae blooms deplete oxygen in the water, which cause fish to die.

The Salton Sea Authority (SSA) is a joint powers authority formed by the Imperial Irrigation District and Riverside and Imperial counties. The Torres Martinez Tribe, federal, state, and regional agencies also are represented in SSA. There have been many proposals for restoring the Salton Sea, and our tour was timely in that the day before the trip, the SSA had voted to pursue a preferred

(Salton Sea continued on page 8)

West Nile Virus Tracking

By Jeri Kuoppamaki, MG

Master Gardener volunteers are working with Dr. Thomas Scott of the California Agricultural Resources and Matthew Stanton, UCR graduate student, to gather and organize information about incidents that are possibly related to the West Nile Virus. The public is reporting events on a hotline, and volunteers are documenting the calls. This information is used by the researchers who locate each incident and are developing a frequency model. This will enable them to determine appropriate treatment and public warnings.

A new office has been set up on the UCR campus for volunteers to train and take calls. Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact Matt Stanton at 951.827.6059, or send him a fax at 951.827.2973. West Nile Virus is a serious threat to public health, and your volunteer time is greatly needed in this effort.



Garden-Related Job Opportunity

The Flower Fields in Carlsbad is seeking people to teach growing to school age children from kindergarten to fifth grade in south and north Riverside County. This opportunity is for a self-motivated person who likes children and job flexibility. Please call Joni Miringoff at 760-930-9123 ext 118 for more information.



Master Gardener Training Classes Online

Videos developed for Master Gardener training are shown on UCTV and can be viewed online. This is the link for the broadcast schedule: <http://www.uctv.tv/schedule3.asp?keyword=california+master>

There is also a Video-on-Demand Web page (<http://www.uctv.tv/gardening/>) where users can view MG sessions. Both of these pages are listed on the UCTV site. California Master Gardener is listed as a Series on UCTV and is available via the quick links or as a keyword search using Master Gardener. 

(Watermelons continued from page 1)

characteristics and are considered male plants because they will contribute pollen in future crosses. These plants produce the fruit with the seeds that we have decided we don't have time to remove and we need to improve on.

Step 2—Tetraploids

Dr. Kihara also treated some of these diploid seeds/seedlings with colchicine, an alkaloid that induces polyploidy or chromosome sets greater than two. In this case, the treated plants were tetraploid. Tetraploids have 44 chromosomes. They generally produce fruit that is usually solid in color or without any stripes on the rind. Tetraploids can produce fruit since they are self-fertile and produce more tetraploids, a necessary condition for seedless watermelon production.

Step 3: Triploids—The New Kid on the Block

Tetraploids are crossed with a diploid resulting in fruit that is triploid. Triploid watermelon fruit has 33 chromosomes. The seeds from this cross are sent to a greenhouse for producing transplants. These seeds can be difficult and expensive to produce.

Step 4—Triploids Are Seedless!

riploid transplants are self-infertile and require a diploid pollinator to produce fruit. Diploid and triploid watermelon plants must be planted in a field to produce seedless watermelon fruit. Growers have experimented with different plant ratios, such as three triploid transplants for every diploid transplant in a row. Bees are also required to transfer the pollen from the diploid to the triploid flowers. These pollinated flowers will produce fruit with soft, clear seeds. These fruit can also have an occasional well-developed hard seed. Bees are important for fruit production.

Step 5—Harvesting the Fruit

Growers market both the seedless fruit and the fruit produced on the diploid transplants. The triploids can be distinguished from the diploids by their round or globe shape. Diploids are generally described as elongated and blocky. Rind coloration can vary, from dark green to light colored stripes, to gray with stripes. Triploids rind can be green with dark green stripes, totally dark green skin, or light green with stripes.

The next time you go to the supermarket and pick up a watermelon, ask the produce manager about seedless watermelons, and ask him for Coachella Valley grown watermelons.



Fabulous Foliage

By Cindy McCabe, MG

News Flash! Kaleidoscopic leaves normally associated with the fall season on the east coast are found increasingly in Southern California summer gardens. Numerous supporting roles for leaves include serving as a backdrop, providing texture, setting a mood, and creating shade. We have long used traditional shades of green foliage, but there are a growing (no pun intended) number of plants with colorful leaves available to gardeners.

Compared to the calm of an all-green garden, variegated foliage brightens shade gardens and creates a feeling of depth and movement. Variegation helps to define leaf shape and serves as a focal point. White offers the most striking color contrast followed by yellow, orange, red, and purple. The latter colors recede as they become darker.

An overabundance of color can become confusing when designing a foliage garden. It's helpful to pick out one color on a leaf, and then select other plants that promote that same color. Foliage containers can be effective too, especially when planted with seasonal plants that thrive only in warm weather. I planted several large pots of the new coleus look-alike, *Perilla frutescens* 'Magilla,' which is in the 2 to 3 foot height range. At the front of each pot, I tucked in impatiens that had the same shade of magenta flowers as the *Perilla*'s leaves. I never hold out complete hope that tender warm-weather plants will survive, but keeping coleus, *Perilla*, and impatiens bone dry to prevent root rot and also keeping them sheltered seems to work best. I can always replant the pots with something else.

A few other choices for striking summer foliage include *Amaranthus*, *Ipomoea batatas* (ornamental sweet potato vine), *Caladiums*, *Colocasia* (elephant-ears of many new cultivars with burgundy or black highlights), *Ligularia tussilaginea* (leopard plant), and ornamental grasses. With our mild climate it is often possible to enjoy dazzling foliage long-term. Don't forget to add ornamental kale to your winter flower garden to spice up your landscape. 🍂



Ornamental Kale - Northern Lights Mix

MOVING?

Please let us know when you change your address or phone number. Contact **Buck Hemenway**, Membership Coordinator, at a meeting or call him at (909) 360-8802. He will make sure the information gets changed on the membership roster so you will not miss out on newsletters and phone calls. Thanks!

**UCCE Riverside County MASTER GARDENERS
Advisory Board Members and Coordinators
July 2003 - June 2004**

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J. Michael Henry Environmental Horticulture; Advisor
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Garden Views

The *Garden Views* newsletter is published monthly, September through June, by the U. C. Master Gardeners, Cooperative Extension, University of California, Riverside County. All reporters are Master Gardeners or Master Gardeners-in-training.

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Donna Claypool	Pat Rhomberg

To simplify information, trade names have been used. No endorsements of name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.

Hort Shorts

Compiled by **Nancy Sappington, MG**

Gardening Institute Expands Offerings

In the May issue of *HortIdeas* is an article about the Horticulture Gardening Institute (www.gardeninginstitute.com). Headquartered on the Michigan State University campus, the institute has recently formed partnerships with nine state master gardener programs and several public gardens and arboreta. The partners are hosting regional events along with the Gardening Institute's successful 12-week online program, "The Art and Science of Container Gardening." Gardeners interested in participating in one of the regional programs should visit the calendar page of the Web site. While California is not mentioned as one of the participating regions, the article does mention that several other partnerships are in negotiation. Gardeners also have the option of participating only in the online program. Visit the institute's Web site and select the online program button for sign-up details.

Several other good nuggets came from the same edition of *HortIdeas*. At www.moneygrowsontrees.com you can order customized horticultural assessments. Horticulture Asset Management, Inc., provides replacement costs for all significant landscaping features of a property and shows how the value of those features can be expected to rise over time; also included is a plant guide with care recommendations for the property's plants, based on information from Dr. Michael Dirr. The assessment can be used for insurance purposes.

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) is still making headlines.

The July/August 2004 issue of the *American Gardener* reported on the SOD quarantine in California. In March, after nursery stock infected by SOD was discovered at two major California nurseries, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service issued an amended quarantine requiring that all of the estimated 1,500 nurseries in California be inspected and found free of the SOD fungus before susceptible plants could be shipped over state lines. These include popular ornamental plant genera such as *Rhododendron* and *Camellia*. A fungus-like organism (*Phytophthora ramorum*) is responsible for the disease and is associated with no fewer than 59 host plants.

When SOD was first identified in the 1990s, 12 coastal counties were quarantined. This year's amended quarantine restrictions came at the height of California nurseries' spring shipping season and has caused additional losses in a business that has already slowed by the fear of contagion. Before the federal quarantine, 16 U.S. states and Canada had established their own guidelines, restricting shipments of plants, soil, wood products, and greenery from California.

In May, the U.S. Department of Agriculture made \$15.5 million available to finance a study of the pathology of SOD and seek ways to halt the spread of the disease to uninfected parts of the country. To see a list of plants that are known hosts for SOD, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/sod/.

California Agriculture's (July/September 2004) article on SOD dealt with the mapping of the SOD genome. In June, scientists at the Joint Genome Institute announced that the entire DNA blueprint for *Phytophthora ramorum* has been sequenced. The genome sequences are expected to help scientists develop rapid detection systems and methods to control the spread of SOD, which has killed tens of thousands of trees.

The *California Agriculture* article also reported that as of June 2004, *Phytophthora ramorum* had been found in 13 California counties and southern Oregon, as well as 125 nurseries in 17 states nationwide. In April, wood rose (*Rosa gymnocarpa*), a native California flower commonly found in a variety of habitats and a popular ornamental, was added to the list of host plants.

Being Water and Fire Wise

We've mentioned www.bewaterwise.com in previous columns as a way to learn more about California-friendly ornamentals, but it's worth mentioning again. The May/June 2004 issue of the *American Gardener* includes a short item about the site and how fire departments are now endorsing plants that are both drought and fire resistant, such as the genus *Salvia*, which has been entirely approved by the Los Angeles Fire Department.

Salvia nemerosa
'Blue Queen'



September Kick-off Potluck

Who can believe that summer is nearly over? Time flies and before you know it, the weather has cooled down and it's time for Master Gardeners to start digging. It's also time to celebrate with our annual kick-off potluck. On September 11, Master Gardeners are invited to join their fellow gardeners from 4–6 pm at Sims Learning Tree Center, 6111 Appaloosa Avenue in Pedley. Come early to tour the gardens and the palm conservatory. Wear comfortable shoes.

Parking will be available off Appaloosa Avenue just before Sims Tree Learning Center entrance. Watch for the parking sign. To get to Sims, take Van Buren to Limonite, west on Limonite to Bain, **right on Bain to 60th**, right on 60th, and right on Appaloosa Avenue.

Please bring your favorite potluck dish. Plates, cups, and utensils will be provided. You bring the food, and we'll all dig in. Come to renew old friendships, establish new ones, and have a good old time.

Questions? Call John Ernsberger at 781.0987. See you there! 🍄



MG Speakers' Bureau Seek Recruits

Master Gardeners who love to share their passion for gardening can do so by speaking about topics they know and love at garden clubs, fairs, schools, and other public events. Passing on your knowledge to others and sharing your excitement about plants and the environment is a great way for MGs to earn volunteer hours.

Are you interested in becoming a member of the Speakers' Bureau, but hesitant? Call Johanna Grosso, 909.784.1270. She can help you select topics to prepare your talk or find a date for you to accompany a speaker to see how it's done. 🍄

Riverside Master Gardeners Announce Online Newsletter

You can now read the University of California Riverside Master Gardeners newsletter, *Garden Views* online at <http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/counties/ceiverside/newsletterfiles/newsletter120.htm>. Sign up to be notified when a new issue is posted.

Garden Views is a good source of information for all California home gardeners. It is published monthly except January, July, and August. There are many articles featuring the latest news in horticulture, new plant varieties, and handy tips for home gardeners. Each issue lists upcoming gardening events in Southern California.

Sign up now, and pass the word to your neighbors. 

Master Gardeners Preparing to Mark Their Calendars

By Jeri Kuoppamaki, MG

Riverside Master Gardeners have formed a committee to create and publish a calendar for gardeners. Mike Urquhart is the chair of this committee and says that the calendar will feature Master Gardeners' gardens and a monthly journal of gardening tasks. In addition, the calendar will include environmentally friendly horticultural suggestions, and announcements of MG meetings, volunteer activities, local garden club meeting, and other related classes and events.

Mike says the committee hopes to do as much as possible in-house, including photography, formatting, and publishing. Riverside MGs have a digital camera, used primarily by the *Garden Views* committee, access to big Xerox copiers, and are researching the purchase of a simple binding machine. The committee hopes that sales performance will provide good return to cover costs and that proceeds from sales will provide funds for many more worthy Master Gardener projects.

At this time, the target is to produce a calendar for 2006. The name for the calendar will be *Riverside County Master Gardeners' Gardens*. Mike intends to make an announcement at the Fall Pot Luck asking for nominations of Master Gardeners' gardens to be photographed. **So, bring your ideas and be ready for a discussion at the pot luck.**

The committee is divided into five different subcommittees. The following lists those who have indicated an interest in each of the subcommittees. If your name isn't included, there is still time to sign up. Please contact Mike (UrquhartMike@aol.com), and let him know which subcommittee you'd like to join.

Photography Subcommittee

Andrea Merrill, Karen Fletcher, Siriwat Jinsiriwanit, and Trina Gonzales

Editorial Subcommittee

Lynn Bailey, Sue Hill, Pat Robertson, and Nancy Sappington

Events Subcommittee:

Deborah Rusk, Enda Morris, and the MG Phone Squad

Finances, Marketing, and Sales Subcommittee

Nancy Fry

Production Subcommittee

Angelia Kerry, Barbara Lauck, Bruce Reynolds, and Nancy Hengera 

A Thank You to the Volunteers

By Sally Peerbolt, MG

As Master Gardeners, we know that we are required to volunteer certain hours every year to remain in good standing in the program. We plant trees, work information tables, help at plant sales, and so much more. There is one special volunteer event that is close to my heart and that is the Riverside County Regional Medical Center "Spring Garden Tour." With the help of volunteers from the hospital, community and the Master Gardeners, more than \$27,000 was raised to benefit the abused children of Riverside County. This money is used for new equipment, toys, videos, and other essential items to help these kids heal physically, mentally, and emotionally.

A large part of the success of the tour is the drawing for the trip to Butchart Gardens in Victoria, British Columbia. This year's winner was our own Master Gardener, Kelly Sepulveda. The tour has become the second largest fundraiser for the hospital, and Master Gardeners are an important part of that success. We thank you all for your support. 



Two New Master Gardener Grads!

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A Native Garden Glistener
(aka guest speaker Dan Bernstein,
Columnist, Press Enterprise)



Toots Bier, Tom Shea and Dr. Bill Bitters
compare notes at the 2004 Master Gardener Class
graduation night at Benedict Castle, Riverside



UC Master Gardeners, Riverside County, Advisory Board and Member Coordinators (L to R): Mike Henry, Tom Shea, Natalie Gomez, Shelly Wardrop, Nancy Sappington, Gail Hernandez, John Ernsberger, Bernie Tank, Jeremy Schlaman, Danielle Milligan, Buck Hemenway, Phyllis McOsker, Carole Harris, Yvonne Hemenway

(Salton Sea continued from page 2)

alternative to build a causeway that would divide the sea at its narrowest point. The north portion would be used for fishing, recreation, and economic development, while the south end would have heavier concentrations of stored salt and constructed wetlands for birds and wildlife.

The New and Alamo rivers would be diverted into open channels for desalination and after that would flow into the north portion. Geothermal powered steam energy is abundant in the area, and would be used for the desalination process. The SSA hopes that this proposal will win approval as it promises to be beneficial to the economy and the environment. The SSA will attempt to form a coalition of as many agencies as possible for the effort. The cost of this restoration plan is estimated at \$700 million.

Ultimately, the SSA plan would have to be embraced by the state advisory board, which was formed when the California legislature mandated that the state was responsible for restoring the Salton Sea ecosystem and protecting its fish and wildlife.

Restoring the sea is complicated by many factors including the immense size of the sea, its remote location, increasing salinity levels, and the need for economic development to restore a favorable perception about the Salton Sea to the public. There is also the looming repercussion of the Quantification Settlement Agreement, which deals with the division of Colorado River water among seven western states.

The SSA is already actively working to improve conditions at the Salton Sea. U.S. Department of Fish and Game is conducting a study to find the cause of decreasing fish populations. Air quality and odors are being monitored as well as bird counts. SSA is testing polyacrylamide for its ability to absorb phosphorus, nitrogen, and silt to keep the water clear. This could help farmers meet Regional Water Quality Control Board standards.

At the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge on the south end of the sea, our group learned about the Wildlife Disease Program. In this proactive program, birds are monitored for disease, with cholera and botulism being the main problems. When an outbreak occurs, scientists at the refuge send samples from the birds to a lab in Wisconsin to identify the disease, and then they isolate the affected birds to prevent further spread of the disease. Sadly, funding for this important program as not been renewed.

The final stop along the tour was to the Kent Sea Tech facility at Mecca Beach, which supplies striped sea bass for markets in the United States and Europe. The

facility also conducts experiments in aquaculture in conjunction with Clemson University and the University of California, Riverside. The Clemson study involves controlled eutrophication where nutrients are removed from inflows from the sea and algae biomass is cultivated. Ingestion of algae by tilapia cleans the water. The tilapia wastes are then collected on a conveyor belt to be used as fertilizer. In the UCR study, concentrations of sediment and pH of the Whitewater River are monitored.

It was a long day with too much time spent on an overheated bus, but it was worth it. Kudos to Charolette Fox for arranging this enlightening tour. 🐼

Fall Clean Up

By **Cindy McCabe, MG**

As summer blooms fade a gardener's thoughts turn to pruning and sprucing up perennial beds. Plants like lamb's ears and rhizomatous iris should be divided every three to four years from July through October. Some perennials die back to the ground in the winter only to sprout from the roots in the spring. In general, don't cut back anything unless it looks unsightly if you are at all worried about losing the plant due to hard pruning.

Sharp, clean clippers are a must for pruning many perennials. Plant pathologists say that if you leave a ragged edge due to dull shears, spores will invade the split wood and travel deep into the xylem tissue causing dieback. Some viruses are not transferred on pruning tools, so a sharp blade is the principal requirement.

Buddleia, Zauschneria, Physostegia, Lisianthus, Helenium, Matilija poppy, 'Lion's Tail,' and both *Verbena bonariensis* and *Verbena rigida* should be pruned hard in the fall to control their shape and size.

Artemisias, Helichrysum, Lavandula, Senecio, and *Santolina* are a group of plants usually labeled as perennials. However, they are all fast growing and, after a few years, will flop open and look shabby. Some people take this as a sign they need water and these plants die, since they are highly susceptible to root rot. This Mediterranean climate-based group of sub-shrubs also resent hard pruning old wood. Some gardeners trim these plants very lightly, but do so several times a year including late fall to keep their shape more round and bushy.

The positive side of replacing some specimens after having enjoyed them for a few years in the garden lies in the seemingly endless choice of new plants awaiting selection at the nursery. 🐼

 **MASTER GARDENER CALENDAR** 

GARDEN VIEWS IS BACK! We hope you enjoyed your summer. Here are some upcoming activities for the fall.

CLASSES

Wednesday, October 6, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at EPS, 3117 Durahart
California Natives Speaker: Alison Shilling

Wednesday, October 20, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at EPS, 3117 Durahart
Vermicomposting Speaker: Joe Milligan

MEETINGS

Garden Views Staff Meetings --

TBA -- Please contact Nancy Sappington, 909-793-2853, for date, time and location of the September meeting.

Wednesday, September 8, 6:30 pm -- Advisory Board Meeting at Cooperative Extension Office

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Phone Squad: Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. Call Phone Squad Coordinator Shelley Wardrop to volunteer, 909-788-8197.

TOURS AND EVENTS

September 11, 4:00 to 6:00 pm -- MG KICKOFF POTLUCK

At Sims Tree Learning Center, 6111 Appaloosa Avenue, Pedley. Come early to tour the gardens. For details see page 5.