Desert Favorite  By Master Gardener Andrea Meckley

In spring, it is hard to miss the bright yellow mass of flowers on the Palo Verde trees around communities in southern Nevada. Two of the many varieties of Palo Verde trees are pictured here from left to right: Desert Museum Palo Verde (Parkinsonia x ‘Desert Museum’) and Blue Palo Verde (Parkinsonia florid). Palo Verde is a low water use, full sun plant that prefers well drained soil. Desert Museum can reach 25’ high and as wide at maturity, while the Blue gets a little larger at about 30’ x 30’. Pruning in the earlier growing years will encourage more of a crown since they are naturally multi-trunked. Spanish for green wood or stick, semi-evergreen Palo Verde trees maintain a green appearance in winter. Like all Palo Verde trees, they can carry on photosynthesis through the bark when the leaves drop due to drought or cold. Both of these varieties can tolerate a minimum temperature of around 15°. The Blue is an Arizona native with blue-green branches that have small thorns that can catch you as you walk by. Desert Museum is a thornless hybrid with lime green bark.

Palo Verde trees are hardy shade trees providing shade for other plants and wildlife. Bighorn sheep, mule deer, feral burros and jackrabbits, as well as other small mammals, browse Palo Verdes for the seed pods which may require clean-up in some landscapes. Numerous birds forage, perch and/or nest in the abundant branches. Saguaro’s use them as “nurse plants” for shade until established. The brilliant flowers attract pollinators for other plants in the area. The many advantages of these trees make them an excellent choice whether used in streetscapes, parking lots, or residential areas.

Adjust sprinkler timer for summer. Plant squash until July 1.
Some of the most common problems local vegetable gardeners encounter

Why do my tomatoes and peppers have a big, black, rotten spot on the end opposite the stem?
This is called blossom end rot. It is caused by a calcium deficiency that develops when soil moisture fluctuates (drought followed by heavy rains or vice-versa) or too much nitrogen fertilizer has been applied. Avoid over-fertilization, use mulch to help keep soil from losing moisture, and water to make up for rainfall deficits. Some varieties are more susceptible than others.

Why did my tomatoes, peppers and eggplants drop their blossoms and fail to set fruit?
If the plants are otherwise growing well, nighttime temperatures above 70°F are frequently to blame. Blossom-drop is seldom caused by heavy use of nitrogen fertilizer or sprinkler irrigation.

Why are the new leaves on my cucumber plants suddenly wilted?
Leaves may also show dead areas and the fruit may be mottled. The most likely cause is cucumber mosaic virus, a common disease. Bacterial wilt and root rot can also cause wilting. Plants usually recover quickly from wilting caused by a sudden rise in temperature or depleted soil moisture when the temperature falls or moisture is replenished.

Why has my lettuce and spinach "gone to seed?"
This is also called bolting, when plants elongate and start to flower. It is normal for these crops to bolt when the temperatures rise and days get longer. Plant early in spring and choose varieties that resist bolting when possible. If you don't want to save seed, remove the plants and plant another crop for a summer or fall harvest.

Why did my kernels develop irregularly on sweet corn ears?
This is often caused by inadequate pollination. Planting sweet corn in blocks of several short rows rather one long row should help.

Why did my snap bean flowers fail to develop?
Daytime temperatures above 90°F sometimes cause this. Flowering usually resumes after the weather cools down. You can tray and shade the plants to control their microclimate.

Why are my cucumbers off-shaped?
This often occurs because of low soil moisture or cool temperatures at the time of flowering. Another possibility is poor pollination due to a lack of bees or a low number of male flowers.

Why are my older zucchini leaves yellowing?
This indicates a need for nitrogen. Nitrogen moves from the older leaves to the newer ones. Apply nitrogen to correct the problem soon before it affects your yield.

Companion Planting:
I can’t say enough about Achillea millefolium or Yarrow. Yarrow is a dynamic accumulator of nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus and copper. The leaves of this plant can be used to make a liquid feed for plants. Fill a container with the leaves, add some water and let it soak for a week or two. Later, dilute the liquid, about ten to one, with water. Yarrow can be grown as both a cover crop and a ground cover. Yarrow provides wonderful compost material and it will help speed up the composting process when added to piles. Plants provide forage for bees and attract beneficial insects including ladybugs, parasitic wasps, aphids, scales and whiteflies.

Upcoming Opportunities:
• Master Gardener Help-line
• Chain Saw needed! Call 702-397-2604
• Newsletter article or pictures
• Grow Your Own!
So You Want to be a Produce Farmer?

Growers and ranchers learn the latest financial management tools, develop entrepreneurial skills, receive on-the-ground training in production agriculture and get help marketing their products. Every resident in Nevada wins when they can trace the origin of their agriculture products. Having access to Nevada products ensures that our purchasing power stays right here in Nevada.

Herds and Harvest will be holding its third workshop live in Las Vegas, Monday, June 25 and Tuesday, June 26, 2012. This workshop will be *So You Want to be a Produce Farmer?*. I will email out the brochures as soon as I have them available.

Registration form available at:
www.unce.unr.edu/calendar/files/pdf/BFRRegistrationJune252012.pdf

The Tuna Can Test

Conserving water in your turfgrass doesn’t have to be complicated. A simple tuna can is a great start. Scatter a few cans around your grass and turn on the irrigation system. Measure how much water is in the cans after 15 minutes of irrigation and then average them out. Then calculate how long you should irrigate your lawn to apply about ½" of water. Irrigate every third day during the summer to apply about one inch of water per week. However, during the very hot months if 30 to 50 percent of the lawn shows sign of wilt you can add one extra day at this rate for a total of three days per week. Apply about half of this amount during the spring and fall.

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Grow Your Own!

Grow your own is a series of back-to-basic gardening classes to help you produce great harvests in Nevada.

- **July 9** - Starting plants from seed: growing second-season crops
- **July 16** - Gardening is a contact sport: tool selection
- **July 23** - Eating on the cheap
- **July 30** - Composting in small places
- **August 6** - Insect and critter control: companion planting and other techniques
- **August 13** - Walipini
- **August 20** - Aquaponics
- **August 27** - GMO’s

8 sessions – every Monday from 2 – 4 p.m.

Visit the website!
growyourownnevada.com
Bermudagrass Maintenance

March through May

Mowing: Bermudagrass performs best when mowed between ¾ and 1½ inches. Begin mowing as soon as the lawn turns green in spring. Always leave the clippings on the lawn in a practice called 'grass-cycling.' Grass clippings decompose quickly and do not contribute to thatch.

Fertilizing: Apply ½ to 1 pound of nitrogen (N) per 1,000 square feet several weeks after complete green-up. Submit a soil sample to determine nutrient requirements. In the absence of a soil test, use a slow-release, complete nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) turf fertilizer with a 4-1-2 ratio such as 16-4-8.

To determine the amount of product needed to apply 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet, divide 100 by the first number in the fertilizer ratio. For example, for a 16-4-8 fertilizer, divide 100 by 16. The result is 6.25 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet (100/16 = 6.25 of 16-4-8).

Irrigation: As a general rule, irrigate when 30 to 50 percent of the lawn shows signs of wilt. Probe with a screwdriver to ensure the top 4 to 6 inches of soil are moist following irrigation. Do not irrigate again until the lawn shows signs of wilt. In general, Bermudagrass needs a total weekly application of about 1 to 1¼ inches of water. Sandy soils often require more frequent watering, for example, ¼-inch of water every third or fourth day.

Weed Control: Apply preemergence herbicides to control summer annual weeds. Apply postemergence herbicides in May as needed to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. Be sure that the product is labeled for use on Bermudagrass. Postemergence herbicides are applied when weeds are present, and at least three weeks after the lawn has greened up.

Thatch Removal: Vertically mow in May to remove the thatch after the lawn becomes green, but only if the thatch is more than ½ inch thick. After dethatching, irrigate with ¼ to 1 inch of water. Fertilize with 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet if the lawn has not already been fertilized.

June through August

Mowing: Bermudagrass performs best when mowed between ¾ and 1½ inches.

Fertilizing: Apply ½ to 1 pound of N per 1,000 square feet every 4 to 8 weeks.

Irrigation: As a general rule, irrigate when 30 to 50 percent of the lawn shows signs of wilt. In general, Bermudagrass needs a total weekly application of about 1 to 1¼ inches of water.

Insect Control: August is the best time to control white grubs because they are small and close to the soil surface. Mole crickets will begin to hatch in June. Use a soap flush technique to determine if mole crickets are present.
Weed Control: Apply postemergence herbicides as needed to control summer annual and perennial weeds.

Thatch Removal: Vertically mow to remove the thatch if it is more than ½ inch thick. It normally is best to vertically mow in spring whenever possible.

**September through November**

**Mowing:** Mow the lawn between ¾ and 1½ inches until several weeks before the first expected frost. Raise the mowing height by ½ inch as winter approaches if the lawn will not be over seeded. Mowing height is usually raised in mid to late October.

**Fertilization:** In September, if a soil test reports deficient potassium levels, apply 1 pound of potash per 1,000 square feet, using muriate of potash (0-0-60). Insufficient potassium is usually not a problem in Clark County.

**Irrigation:** Irrigate when 30 to 50 percent of the lawn shows signs of wilt. In general, Bermudagrass needs a weekly application of about 1 to 1¼ inches of water. Dormant Bermudagrass may need to be watered periodically when dry, warm, windy weather prevails.

**Weed Control:** Apply preemergence or postemergence herbicides as needed to control winter annual and perennial broadleaf weeds. Preemergence herbicides are most effective when applied as nighttime temperatures drop into the upper 50s. Preemergence herbicides do not control existing perennial weeds. Apply postemergence herbicides only when weeds are present. Do not apply herbicides designed to control annual bluegrass if the lawn is to be over seeded with ryegrass.

**Insect Control:** Continue to monitor for white grubs and control if necessary.

**December through February**

**Mowing:** Dormant Bermudagrass that has not been over seeded need not be mowed.

**Over seed Fertilization:** Do not fertilize Bermudagrass that has not been over seeded.

**Irrigation:** Dormant Bermudagrass may have to be watered periodically to prevent desiccation, especially when warm, windy weather prevails.

**Weed Control:** Apply broadleaf herbicides as needed to control winter weeds such as chickweed, henbit and hop clover. Selective herbicides can be applied in November or December to lawns that have not been over seeded to control annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) and several winter annual broadleaf weeds.
Thanks to all the Master Gardeners in the Northeast Clark County area for all that you give. You are, without a doubt, the best part of my job! Since you are so valuable, I want to remind you to make certain you are taking care of yourselves while you are outdoors during this increasingly hot time of year. Staying healthy during the summer months requires more than just eating the right foods.

Just like the plants you tend to so well:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Protect yourself from the sun’s burning rays.
- Maintain your energy level by limiting your intake of fat and sugar.
- Take a rest or nap. Don't push yourself beyond your physical limits.
- Be aware of air quality reports.
- Wear sunglasses.
- Stay Cool. Wear light, loose-fitting clothing to help you stay cooler.
- Know your body. If you are feeling ill, see a doctor.