Chastetree (Vitex agnus-castus) is a wonderful non-native plant from the Mediterranean and Southern Europe that grows well in our Mojave Desert landscapes. Many of the common names for this shrub refer to the use of the plant: including, Abraham's Balm, Chaste Lamb-Tree, Safe Tree, and Monk's Pepper-Tree. It has also been called Indian-Spice, and Wild-Pepper, referring to the use of the fruit as a pepper substitute. The small round fruit has a pungent scent and flavor reminiscent of black pepper. This deciduous plant can be grown as a large, multi-stemmed shrub or small, 10 to 20 feet tall tree. To shape into a tree form, prune the lowest branches and any suckers or side shoots each spring, until the crown is as tall as you desire. The sage-scented leaves of Chastetree are shaped liked a hand or palmate. Bright fragrant purple (Continued on page 2)
Desert Favorite (continued from page 1)

flowers with eight-inch spikes make a showy summer display. By removing the first flush of flowers as soon as they fade, a second bloom can appear in the summer. Chastetree is easy to maintain and is not particularly susceptible to pests or diseases. Cold hardy to 15 degrees Fahrenheit, Chastetree prefers a loose, well-drained soil that is moist or on the dry side, and will tolerate drained clay, alkaline, and sandy soils. The tree often suffers from dieback in rich organic soil. Chastetree thrives in the heat and should be planted in full sun or light shade. Attractive to butterflies and bees, this plant is often planted where honey is marketed to promote excellent honey production. Purple is the most common color but cultivars are available which offer flower color variety. ‘Silver Spire’ and ‘Alba’ have white flowers (pictured on page 1), and ’Rosea’ has pink flowers. Accenting your landscapes with Chastetree will produce long blooming color from late spring into summer.

June Reminders

1. Check tomato plants for hornworms.
2. Adjust sprinkler timer for summer.
3. Add flowering plants to attract pollinators to your vegetable garden.
4. Apply ¼ cup of magnesium sulfate to roses.
5. Check shrubs for spider mites.
6. Solarize empty plots.
7. Watch for signs of heat stress in plants.
8. Apply iron to turfgrass monthly.
9. Protect tomatoes from sunburn with shade cloth.

10. Water fruit trees on a 7 to 10 day deep-water cycle for the summer.
11. Fertilize palms in June.
12. Mulch around trees before it gets too hot outside.
13. Protect melons from moist soil.
14. Check squash vines for squash bugs.
15. If necessary, transplant palm trees before it gets too hot.
16. Prune spring-flowering shrubs once they have finished flowering.
17. Sprinkle nitrogen over mulch to hasten decomposition.
18. Install a misting system over garden vegetables to cool area.
Good News for Nevada Entrepreneurs!

Did you know Nevada is one of only 17 states where it was illegal to sell homemade baked goods to a neighbor or even a friend — unless that person’s home happens to have a certified commercial kitchen or if the bake sale is for a charity?

On May 24, 2013, Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval signed job-creating Senate Bill 206 on Cottage Industries into law in Nevada! The Nevada Cottage Industry law clears the way for home cooks to make and sell products such as baked goods, jams, vinegar, dry herbs, and granola without the requirement to invest in an expensive commercial kitchen. Special thanks to co-sponsors Senator Aaron Ford, Senator Ruben Kihuen, Senator Moises Denis, Senator Justin Jones, Senator Debbie Smith, Assemblywoman Ellen Spiegel, Assemblyman Jason Frierson, Assemblyman James Healey and all of the individual farmers, bakers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and local, state, federal and tribal groups who worked so hard to support this bill! The law will be facilitated on July 1, 2013. Woohoo!

This summer UNCE Logandale will be offering a workshop covering the requirements of this new law and how to make it work for you.

https://nelis.leg.state.nv.us/77th2013/App#/77th2013/Bill/Overview/SB206

Herds & Harvest

How to Create a Successful Produce Business

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is joining up with USDA to offer a one-day class on June 21, 2013 via teleconference at the Logandale office. This class offers topics in Production, Harvesting/Logistics, Marketing, Sales to Restaurants, Farmers Markets and Wholesale vendors, and the Top Characteristics of a Successful Farm.

If you are in or considering a produce business, you need to be at this class! To register call UNCE at 702-397-2604.

http://www.unce.unr.edu/programs/sites/bfr/

June Planting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basil</th>
<th>Melons</th>
<th>Potatoes, sweet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-eyed peas</td>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>Pumpkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jicama</td>
<td>Oregano</td>
<td>Radish</td>
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Bacillus thuringiensis is effective against most leaf-feeding caterpillars and is a natural, non-pathogenic bacterium.
Healthy soil is the cornerstone of a healthy, productive garden. Healthy soil is a living ecosystem which includes macro and micro-organisms – from earthworms to beneficial fungi and bacteria. This soil life digests organic material and interacts with plant roots, providing plants with the nutrients they need. Good gardening practices support and enhance the living soil ecosystem. The primary ways to aid soil life are by adding organic material such as compost and decomposed manures, by growing cover crops, and by using organic mulches. Reducing soil compaction and balancing soil minerals are essential for healthy soil too.

**Cover crops**

These are crops grown specifically to improve the soil. They are the most economical way of adding large amounts of organic matter, especially to larger areas. Other benefits include protection from erosion, improved soil structure, increased water absorption and retention, providing homes for beneficial insects, and smothering weeds. Cover crops can help to break up compaction in the soil and bring deep minerals to the surface where they can be more readily used. When cover crops are mowed and turned into the soil at their highest biomass capacity – at full bloom – they are called “green manures.” Green manure can add a significant amount of nitrogen to the soil as well, especially if legumes are included. Legumes are members of the bean and pea family whose roots can be colonized by beneficial bacteria which take nitrogen out of the air and make it available to the plant. Even if cover crops are taken off and composted, the roots will still have added considerable organic material and many of these other benefits will have been provided. Adding organic material to the soil is sometimes called “carbon farming”, as carbon is the main component of plant material. In addition to all the wonderful things it does for the soil, this carbon is being “sequestered,” or captured by the growing plant from carbon dioxide (CO2) in the air and held in the soil. As root masses increase, they use even more carbon dioxide, creating a “sink” for atmospheric CO2. Many scientists now believe that the fastest and cheapest
way to reduce CO2 levels and slow climate change is by “carbon farming”. By growing cover crops, we can improve our soils, feed ourselves and help the planet in many ways!

Cover crops can be annuals or perennials, warm season or cool season. Here on the West Coast, it is most common and perhaps most important to plant cool season annual cover crops in fall. If the soil is too cool, weeds will get going before the cover crop and there may not be enough plant growth to protect the soil from the first big storms of the season. The greatest benefit from cover crops will be gained if prior to planting them, any deep compaction has been broken up and any needed minerals have been incorporated. Clear the area of large plant material and sow larger seeds in shallow furrows; rake in small seeds and cover lightly with straw or compost. If no rain has fallen by Halloween, irrigate to get seeds started.

**Organic mulches**

These are layers of organic material on the soil surface which provide many of the same benefits as cover crops. Unlike cover crops, they can be laid down on bare soil at any time in the fall and winter and there is no need to mow or turn them under in the spring. However, mulch provides insulation to the soil, so depending on the material, you may need to incorporate or clear it off to allow soil to warm before planting. If a mulch is thick enough it can suppress weeds, it encourages earthworms, keeps adjacent crops cleaner and if used in paths, reduces soil compaction. As a mulch slowly decomposes, it can add organic material and nutrients to the soil. Because mulches hold moisture in the soil, they should not be used closely around plants that need good drainage, like lavender and many natives, and should not be piled up against the trunk of trees or shrubs. It can be hard to obtain and spread enough material to mulch a large area, and gophers, voles, mice, snails, slugs can thrive in and under mulch.

Some mulches provide more nutrients than others. You can layer materials like coffee grounds and kitchen waste under mulches, but beware of attracting rodents, raccoons, or other pests.

**Compost**

Adding compost is one of the best ways of feeding your soil. Rich in decomposed organic material and beneficial microorganisms, compost is a magical way of transforming waste into abundance. When the last tomatoes and peppers are picked, make sure to clean up your old crops by either turning them into the soil or making them into compost.
Here are some choices of organic mulches, starting with those with higher nutrients:

**Manure:** Poultry manure is the highest in nitrogen, while horse manure mixed with a lot of bedding can be very low in nitrogen. Manures are often free and abundant. Do not use fresh manure directly around crop plants; it should be composted or aged first.

**Alfalfa hay:** This is a great mulch as there is no weed seed in it and it will provide a slow release of nitrogen as it breaks down. Good in vegetable gardens and around citrus and other fruit trees.

**Rough compost:** Great all-round soil conditioner and mulch.

**Straw:** Good for protecting the soil surface, keeping soil cool and holding in moisture. Do not mix in with soil. (Do not use hay, which has seeds in it, except for alfalfa hay.)

**Shredded leaves:** Running a lawn mower over leaves helps them stay in place and not mat up.

**Cardboard or newspaper:** These need to be covered by another material such as compost, chips or straw to keep from drying out and blowing away.

**Wood and tree trimming chips:** This should only be used around perennials like fruit trees and shrubs, or in paths.