



## It's Harvest Time!

Did your tomato season not work out quite as you expected? Read more on page 4. Was your super-abundance of zucchini offset by a greater super-abundance of squash bugs? Read all about it on page 7. Are your flowers going to seed? To say nothing of your lettuce, radishes, and kale? Learn tips for seed saving on page 6.

This image by Thomas Bremer encompasses the topics of a number of the articles Master Gardeners have written for this issue of our newsletter. Read them all here. And, by the way, Bremer has an interesting website ([tsbremer.com](http://tsbremer.com)) where he writes about the national parks and religion, among other topics. Although the link to this specific image is broken, the website itself is quite interesting.



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AAEMG is one of more than a dozen NM county-based Master Gardener programs administered by NMSU’s College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences.  
<https://mastergardeners.nmsu.edu/>

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[www.abqmastergardeners.org](http://www.abqmastergardeners.org)  
 A plethora of information is available on the ‘private’ side of the website, accessible with your assigned id.

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 coming issue of the newsletter.**

**We’re always looking for articles if you en-  
 joy writing. Email us at the same address  
 for submission information.**

Hybrid meetings held by Zoom and at the Garden Center. Movies in-person only.

Upcoming discussions:

- 11 Sep *The Island of Missing Trees*
- 2 Oct *The Book of Difficult Fruit*
- 6 Nov *The Orchid Thief*
- 4 Dec movie & potluck: *Adaptation*



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Master Gardeners



## Coordinator's Corner

### Terry Aselage, Coordinator

Hello fellow Master Gardeners! I hope that you and your gardens have survived the intense heat and drought that we have been experiencing this summer. We finally had about ½” of rain on August 8th in Cedar Crest, and we’re keeping our fingers crossed that more is on the way!

As the calendar turns to September, the State Fair is just around the corner. AAEMG will once again have an educational display at the flower show. There is still an opportunity to help out with the arrangements. Just check out the SignUp Genius page for the Fair, or contact the chairperson, Sarah Pitcher-Werner at sarahpitcherwerner [at] yahoo.com. Whether you help with setting up the display, taking it down, or can help answer questions during the Fair, this is a wonderful opportunity to participate in one of our most extensive outreach efforts for the year. For many people attending the State Fair, our exhibit might well be their first encounter with Master Gardeners and the services we offer.

Thank you to all of the members who responded to our survey to assess your interest in providing a Tuesday morning, in-person viewing of the online NMSU class material. The response was overwhelmingly positive to the idea of using a hybrid approach for NMSU classwork: holding optional Tuesday morning group viewing sessions at the Garden Center, while continuing to accommodate the needs of people who can’t attend the in-person meetings. We believe that this will offer the best of both worlds: helping to strengthen the Master Gardener community through increased in-person interactions, while also allowing those who work or cannot otherwise attend on Tuesday mornings to participate in the program online. So we are going to do it! To be clear, in-person attendance on Tuesday mornings is not mandatory. More information will be forthcoming.

I want to remind you of a few important deadlines and dates that are quickly arriving:

- Interns should have turned in their activity log sheets at the end of August, and veterans by the end of September. We ask that lifetime members who are not obliged to volunteer or complete continuing education (CE), but who continue to participate in these activities, also turn in activity logs. It is important that NMSU have an accurate accounting of all volunteer and CE activities. Please note that any volunteer hours anticipated through December should be included on these log sheets.

- It is also not too early to begin to plan for next year. Volunteer activity chairs are reminded to complete and return their year-end reports to Vice Coordinator Randy Verble at abqmgvicecoord [at] gmail.com by Friday, October 14.

- Randy and I plan to hold a meeting with this year’s chairs the morning of October 25 at the Garden Center to review the past year’s successes and challenges, assess interest in continuing the activity next year, gain commitments for continuing chairpersons, etc. More details will come by email from Randy.

- We will hold an information meeting for potential new interns the afternoon of October 5, 3:00 pm, at the Garden Center. Applications for the new class of interns will be available online shortly thereafter.

- Our graduation ceremony and luncheon will be held at 11:30 am on Saturday October 21 at the Garden Center. We will celebrate the success of our graduating interns, recognize significant milestones of our veteran members, and provide timely updates on AAEMG programs.

Lastly, the Bylaws Review Committee has recommended, and the AAEMG Board of Directors has approved, a few changes to our Bylaws. The new set of Bylaws will be available on our website prior to the October Graduation ceremony for a vote of the entire membership.

Happy Gardening!  
Terry

## The Tomato Season from Hell

Mary Green, Class of 2020

Okay, I admit it. I am obsessed with growing tomatoes. New tomato releases, heirloom tomatoes, hybrid tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, steakhouse tomatoes, paste tomatoes, red tomatoes, yellow tomatoes, purple tomatoes, orange tomatoes, green tomatoes – I love growing them all! (Is there a 12-step program for tomato growers? No, never mind, I don't want to know.)

This year, I started 47 tomato varieties from seed. I share most of the plants with neighbors, friends, and friends-of-friends. But not so much this year....

**Dec '22 and Jan '23:** As usual, I spend two whole months diligently pouring over seed catalogs, reading and re-reading and comparing every description of every tomato variety. As usual, I place orders with seven or eight of my favorite seed companies.

**Feb '23:** I make all the 6" labels for the 550 individual tomato plants I'm aiming for. I also make all the 12" labels for the 54 trays that will eventually hold the 550 individual tomato plants. Just so you know, I plan to give away about 500 of the plants. Even I can't eat that many tomatoes. Actually I wouldn't have space for that many tomatoes in my garden.

**Early March '23:** I start seeds in trays of little peat cubes and put them under LED grow lights. I also order bags of an organic soil mix for growing vegetables: this is for young plants not ready for the garden yet. My soil out in the garden has already been beefed up with compost and grass clippings, then covered with straw as a mulch. We're revving our engines now!

**Mid-March '23:** All the seeds are coming up beautifully, so I start transplanting seedlings into individual 3" and 4" plastic pots, using the organic soil mix that I ordered. There are a total of 54 trays (10" x 20") to hold all the tomato plantlets in their plastic pots. I now start taking the little plantlets out for an hour of sun every day, but since the filled trays are somewhat heavy and awkward to hold, I can only carry one tray at a time. I gradually work up to 4–6 hours of sun a day for them. (Moving plants outside and then back inside requires almost an hour each day, but tomato plants are worth it!) No wilting, so all is right with the world.

**Early to mid-April '23:** The little tomato plants aren't looking as good as they should be by 5 weeks of age. Most of the plantlets are not over ~6" in height and some of them are still just 3" tall. Hmm.



The first signs of trouble become apparent in the stunted growth of hundreds of tomato plantlets. Image: Mary Green.

**Late-April to early-May '23:** Still worried. Why aren't my little plants happy? I take a tray with a selection of tomato plantlets over to the ABQ Greenhouse to show Dan Humbles, the director. After an examination of the plants' leaves, stems, and roots, as well as asking me a lot of questions about how the plants are being treated and what they have been exposed to, Dan gives me his evaluation of the problem: **PERSISTENT HERBICIDES**. And, judging from when and how things went bad, the only place a persistent herbicide could have been introduced was from the bags of organic soil mix that I had purchased.

Well, poo... ahem, pooh!

**Mid-May '23:** Sulking.

**Late-May to early-June '23:** Fortunately (or unfortunately), I had had personal experience with persistent herbicides three years ago when I used horse manure from a neighbor's horse stalls. Persistent herbicides can easily remain in the manure of an animal that has eaten herbicide-treated hay FOR YEARS. It is quite expensive to test soil or manure for its presence, plus these chemicals can harm plants with concentrations as low as 8 parts per billion in soil! The bottom line here is that tomato plants, along with many other fruits and vegetables, are sensitive to these newer chemical herbicides. Plant growth becomes stunted and their leaves twist. Ultimately, the plant dies long before its time. My only reasonable path forward at this late time is to go ahead and use the tainted plantlets, but first carefully wash off all the infected soil from the roots and then plant into the garden soil, which I do. (This needs to be done in the evening when it is cool. Be sure the plant is well watered.)

**Mid-June '23:** Tomato plants in the garden look like they are mostly recovering, but judging by just the size of the plantlets, it is taking them at least two weeks to recover enough to start growing again in the garden soil.

**Late June '23:** Sure has been hot... I put up 30% shade cloth over the entire garden. Some of the smaller tomato plants don't look so good. Upon examination, the stems at the soil line have been chewed or even cut off. This means **CUTWORMS**. I apply diatomaceous earth, which definitely helps. Some of the tomato plantlets actually recovered, despite extensive damage, as in the photo.

**Early- to mid-July'23:** Sure has been hot... I install additional shade cloth across the west side and top of individual tomato plants that receive the most sun in the garden. I'm completely losing a few more of the smaller tomato plants, along with seedlings of squash, beans, and cucumber plants. The diatomaceous earth doesn't help this at all. Later, I see the cutest little **KANGAROO RAT**, give him a stern warning, and stop trying to grow squash, beans, and cucumbers in that part of the garden. I install wire "domes" over younger tomato plants, which helps.



Cutworm damage can maim or kill a plant. Image: Mary Green.



Cute in a picture, perhaps, but the kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys* sp) is a voracious seed-eater and not so cute in the garden. Image: <http://www.fws.org> US Fish & Wildlife photo: Accessed from: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kangaroo-rat.jpg>

**June, July, & Aug '23:** Sure has been hot... I start losing more tomato plants

AGAIN – the leaves curl-up length-wise. Some of these plants are just not getting enough water or enough shade, so I am able to save some of them. But about a dozen of the tomato plants' leaves curl up, become leathery, then turn yellow with purplish veins, and eventually die completely. It doesn't take a lot of research to figure out that this condition is called **CURLY TOP VIRUS** (CTV), a.k.a. the beet curly top virus (BCTV), named after the beet leafhopper that actually transmits this virus. This insect is only about 1/8" long. I understand that this is one of the few diseases that is common in tomato plants in this part of the country. The beet leafhopper happens to like arid regions and to dislike humidity. Fortunately, once a plant catches the BCTV, it cannot give a neighboring plant the virus just because their

leaves touch: a bite by the beet leafhopper is required. The dead plant is also safe to put into the compost pile. One of the preventive measures we can take in the early spring is to make sure to pull up the wild plants that the leafhopper is attracted to, including Russian thistle (*Kali tragus*), wild mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*), and Rocket (*Eruca vesicaria*), a wild aru-

Continued next page

Tomato Season, *continued from p. 5*



Battered by herbicides, cutworms, and heat, my poor tomatoes are now attacked by curly top virus. Alas, there's no hope but a quick death for plants attacked by this disease. Image: Mary Green.



The beet leafhopper (*Circulifer tenellus* aka *Neodeltettus tenellus*) might be small but packs a deadly wallop should it snack on your tomato plant. Image: G. Oldfield, USDA, Bugwood.org: <https://www.ipmimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?img-num=0746029>

*gula. I am also thinking about trying to enclose my tomato plants next year with a fine mesh or netting to keep the beet leafhopper from accessing the tomato plants. Since tomato flowers can pollinate themselves, netting won't interfere with fruit setting. This might help.*

**Aug 15 '23:** *It's just now that I am finally getting*

*a standard-sized tomato here and there. Most of the cherry tomatoes came through in early July – YAY! Late, but they came through!*

Well, I guess this wasn't the best tomato season ever... but at least I was spared **SPIDER MITES!** And the **TOMATO HORNWORMS** were hardly worth mentioning, given my ducks **ADORE** a hornworm snack. As for those 100°+ days, few tomato varieties will set fruit when the temperature is consistently over 90°. Still, a bad tomato season probably beats no tomato season at all, right?

I can hardly wait for the '24 seed catalogs to come out! 🌱



<https://scientificgardener.blogspot.com/2012/04/seed-to-seed.html>

**Saving the Harvest**  
**Kathy Clough, Class of 2005**

This summer I presented an education session about seed saving. There were a goodly number of attendees, and for that I am happy. Additionally, I thought it might be helpful to provide some information to the rest of the membership to use as you wish. As I write this, it is August, soon to be September, nearing the end of this year's growing season. If you have a garden, either floral or vegetable or both, you are probably getting seeds now, if you have not cut off the spent flower heads. You were perhaps told and/or taught to "deadhead" your flowers to get another bloom period, better production, make the garden look tidier, or keep the plants from spewing seeds all over the place. Those are good reasons to deadhead. However, have you ever thought that by cutting off the dead flowers, or pulling still-green but finished vegetable plants, that you are preventing the formation and availability of seed? Seed is not only a

*Continued p.10*

## Gad Zukes!

Rose Marie Kern, Class of 2006

Like most gardeners I have a love/hate relationship going on with Zucchini.

- Do I like to eat them? Yes.
- Are they a big showy beautiful plant? Yes
- Are the seeds easy to plant and germinate? Yes
- Do they produce lots of fruit? Oh, yes!
- Do you need any special soil? Not really, zukes grow in almost any media including sandy clay.
- Do they need lots of water? Not any more than the tomatoes or other edible veggies.

So, you say, what's the problem?



This little squash bug went to market



This little squash bug stayed home



These little squash bugs ate zuke blossoms



This little squash bug had none



These little squash bugs cried, "oh no, oh no" as their hiding place was found.

There are only two really but these two all by themselves can drive a person to insanity. The first is the dreaded SQUASH BUG!!! Those pernicious critters can find your zucchini faster than the spring wind finds New Mexico. I've read all kinds of advice on prevention from surrounding the core of the plant with smelly distractors like coffee grounds and inter-planting with garlic or marigolds, to scattering diatomaceous earth on the soil and leaves. I choose organic solutions only: I refuse to support the concept of poisons in my garden.

Those deterrents delay discovery by the diabolically fertile mini-monstrosities, but eventually one day you pull aside a huge leaf to find two or more in coital euphoria and clumps of shiny little brown eggs hiding beneath.

However, my biggest dilemma when it comes to zucchini is also the plant's biggest asset – its wonderfully abundant fruit. I love the flavor and flexibility of zucchini. Chunk it up for salads or stir fries. Slice it lengthwise into boats for baking, Shred it for fritters, bread, cakes, or quiche. The list goes on and on. Even when they (the fruit not the squash bugs) successfully hide under the large leaves (which they are famous for) until they are large enough for Mickey Mantle to hit a homer in the World Series, you can cut them into chunks for Green Chili Stew!

The problem is that in a household of only two senior citizens (one of whom hates zucchini) how many zukes should be planted from a standard packet of seeds? If you only plant one, it might be a dud. I usually plant three seeds in a mound figuring that if all three grow I can always remove the smallest two. But then I see those lovely little green baby plants struggling upwards and I cave in and let all three achieve maturity. I coo at the first yellow flowers as they open to the ministrations of the local bees.

Almost overnight the first finger sized fruit pops up. Knowing there will be many more I pick them young and start chowing down. By the next week there are several at least 8 inches long and I am trading them to the neighbor across the street for eggs from her chickens or handing them across the fence

*Continued p. 9*

Image credits from top: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, bugwood.org: <https://www.forestryimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5188009>; Bruce Watt, University of Maine, Bugwood.org: <https://www.insectimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5528801>; Pollinator at English Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Squash\\_bug\\_nymph\\_1736.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Squash_bug_nymph_1736.JPG); Gerald Holmes, Strawberry Center, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Bugwood.org: <https://www.insectimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1573804>; Jennifer Carr, University of Florida, Bugwood.org: <https://www.insectimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5576491>

## Another Successful Year for Garden Guardians Kids Summer Camp! Mary Crawford, Class of 2023



Images: Sat-Darshan Khalsa

The Garden Guardians Camp theme this year was the Magic of Herbs. The staff developed various activities related to herbs - and their magic - that utilized the children’s five senses and made for lots of fun learning!

During the week of July 17-21, the children took daily nature walks and enjoyed the beautiful Albuquerque Garden Center grounds. Using their nature journals, the children observed, listened, sketched, and recorded what they saw and were learning about. Benefiting from the expertise of herbalist Dianne Rand, the children learned about the many benefits of common and native herbs.

On the first day of camp, we traced the outline of each camper’s body on paper. Then throughout the week, the campers were given pictures of appropriate body parts (heart, skin, lungs, etc.) and of the herbs that promote the health and well-being of that body part. These pictures were then attached to each child’s body picture.

***Lemon balm, lemon balm, I love lemon balm.  
It cheers me up when I am sad, and helps me get to sleep. (repeat)***

(Sing to the tune of Jingle Bells)

This was just one original song created to bring the magic of herbs to the 19 children attending our Garden Guardians summer camp this year.

Snacks throughout the week also related to the theme of herbs. The children tasted various herbs, ate edible flowers, made energy bites, and sampled numerous herbal ice teas.

There were many craft activities during the camp. Children used herbs, feathers, and other natural materials to weave into looms. They created sun catchers using dried flower petals and leaves. The children also made dream pillows by filling cloth bags with lavender, rose petals, and other herbs, then sewing the opening of the pillow closed. They were encouraged to put their dream pillow under their bed pillow (or near their nose) at night. Many children reported having wonderful

dreams the next day.

Another favorite activity was making hillside fairy houses. The children used pieces of bark, sticks, rocks and other natural materials to create these fairy houses.

Children decorated flower pots and planted herbs in these, which they took

home. Mary Green taught us about vermiculture and gave each child a cup with soil and worms to take home.

It was a very hot week! Camp would not have been complete without lots of fun, outside games involving getting wet! The children played with squirt bottles, water balloons, buckets and sponges to have fun and cool off. They tried their skills in an obstacle course which also included getting wet. There was lots of laughter and heat relief.

The week concluded on Friday afternoon with a special event for the campers and their families. We mapped out a garden tour so the campers could show their families the fairy gardens they had created and the herbs and other plants they learned about. Along the tour, they searched for hidden garden gnomes and





Images: Sat-Darshan Khalsa

a special gift (a child’s garden trowel) for each camper. Inside, everyone was served delicious herb cookies and snacks and yummy herbal iced teas. After certificates were given out and more songs were sung, camp was over for another year. It was a success!

Camp could not happen without broad support from many sources including special speakers, plant donations, and monetary donations... to name but a few! Of course, a HUGE thank you to the many volunteers that shared their talents and literally their sweat equity to make this a wonderful experience for the children! Thank you one and all! ☺



Images: Sat-Darshan Khalsa

**Gad Zukes!** *continued from p. 7*

to the unsuspecting teenager to give to her Mom. By the next week the neighbors were hiding from me, so I took a grocery sack full down to the Joy Junction homeless shelter kitchen. I also added some tomatoes, garlic and onions so they wouldn’t glare at me too much. By week four of the harvest I’d shredded and frozen enough to last the winter. I’d also baked and frozen anything I enjoyed combining it with – scallion fritters, zucchini bread, and quiche primarily.

Before then I’d killed a few squash bugs, but I missed my bug patrol for two days and this morning I pulled aside a leaf and ... yep. Armageddon. I figured my only recourse was to quickly and mercilessly destroy them and their favorite habitat. Donning my garden gloves, I grabbed a large heavy duty trash bag (No way were those suckers going into my compost heap!) and squared off against the foe. Bending back the fronds I bent into the center and firmly grasping the base of the plant I HEAVED! I ended up on my ass covered in dirt, plant and very confused squash bugs. As quickly as my old body could twist I slammed the plant into the trash bag then stood up and did the jittery dance before reaching for the second victim.

Growing season is only half done – but I think that if I get a hankering for fresh zucchini, instead of a second planting I’ll just visit the farmer’s market. ☺

**Saving the Harvest**, *continued from p. 6*

source of your next year's crop, but it is also food for birds, other animals, and you, too, possibly. At this time of the year I have American goldfinches, and house finches eating the seed of Korean mint, sunflowers, chocolate flower and three varieties of coreopsis. The birds are fun to watch, and yes, the flowers are a little untidy.

As for next year's edible crop, you will need seed for that, which is especially important if you grow your own garden. If you wait and let the flower heads mature to full seedpods, you will be able to save the seed and use it. Vegetables will produce seed, but for some, you will sacrifice edibility of the vegetable. Blooming for some, e.g. carrots, parsnips, cole crops, and lettuce will produce flowers, and thus seeds, but long after the food part is edible. There are a few things to know that can help you get a better seed crop.

- Plant seeds of heirlooms/heritage and open-pollinated plants, whether floral or vegetable. They are easily available by saving them, or from a nursery, though becoming harder to find. Nurseries may only stock what their growers have available or can get from their seed suppliers. Several mail-order/online companies carry heirloom and organic seed.
- Save seeds from the plants with the characteristics that you want: tall, short, best color, earliest/latest fruiting, best taste, etc.
- Do not plant hybrids for seed crops, as seeds from them will not reliably give the same plants, and even siblings will be different from each other. [Yes, I know everyone likes "Better Boy", "Early Girl," and "Sungold," but there are equally good heirlooms.] If you use only hybrids, there may not be seeds for the birds, and you certainly will need to buy more seed next year. That will cost money, and you may not be able to find the varieties you want, and may have to take only what the stores get from their providing nurseries.
- Do not save seed from plants grown from genetically modified (GMO) seed, which will be hybrids, essentially, and not reproduce true to the parents. It also may be illegal, if the GMO seeds are patented.
- The larger conglomerate organizations like Dow-Dupont (Now Corteva), Bayer-Monsanto, and Syngenta/Chemchina (now SinoChem) control many agricultural seed companies mostly for farmers growing wheat, corn, soy, cotton. However, some major seed companies may sell GMO seeds through some popular catalogues. [See <https://philhoward.net>]
- Know what your plant's growth cycle is, i.e. when it will flower and set seed. If it is annual, biennial, or perennial, seed setting might be this year, next year, or maybe possibly not for a few years.
- Let at least the last part of your vegetable and flower plants go to seed as they start to fade. Resist the urge to pull them.
- Wait for the seed to form fully and for the pod to swell and turn mostly brown and dry. The pod may begin to crack open.

Once you have seeds, you will need to clean them. Wet seeds like tomatoes will need to be fermented first. Fermentation helps discourage some diseases and pathogens of the germinating seedling. Dry seeds are easy to cleaner.

- Put the tomato pulp/gel and seeds into a small cup with a lid or cover. Add a little water if needed to make a liquid slurry. Cover lightly (not tightly or the fermentation will "explode") and let sit in an out-of-the-way warm place for 2-3 days until a grayish slime mold forms on top. Pour the contents into a small tea strainer and smash against the sides under running cold water to remove all the pulp, floating seeds (no good), and slime. Place the remaining clean seeds on glass plate, plastic or foil to dry thoroughly. Package and label immediately (minimum: common name and date. The scientific name is preferred, as well.)
- Treat other "wet" fruits, like melons, pumpkins, cukes, eggplant similarly. Mash the inner pulp, strings, and seeds of the past-ripe fruit. Place in a bowl or bucket. Add water and agitate to separate seed from pulp. Non-viable seeds will float to the top and should be decanted with the water and pulp. Wash several times as needed. As above, spread the cleaned seeds onto newspaper, towel, screen, or foil, etc., to dry where insects and varmints cannot get to them. Label specifically as to variety and date.
- "Dry" seeds are easier to clean. Just open the brown pods, or smash, and separate the seed either by hand picking, or by gently blowing the chaff away by mouth or low-speed fan. Put the cleaned seeds into an envelope and label with variety name and date.

- Ensure that all seeds are very dry before packaging, or they will mold and be unusable.
- Keep seeds in a cool dry environment. If using long-term storage, place the seed envelopes in a jar with a lid and put some desiccant into the jar as well to help absorb moisture. (A teaspoon of rice, diatomaceous earth or powdered milk may be used.) Place the jar in a refrigerator or cool garage or utility room and keep above 35-40° F. but below 50° F. ☺

**References:**

<https://www.seedsavers.org/how-to-save-seeds>

<https://rockymountainseeds.org/>

<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/2020/10/how-do-i-save-seeds-next-years>

Ashworth, Suzanne, Seed to Seed, 2 ed. 2002, Seed Savers Exchange

## This 'n That

**Mark Burton, Class of 2021**

**Gardening in the News – Lasers used to kill weeds**

Farmers interested in a fast, accurate way to rid their fields of weeds have a new option in the AI space. Carbon Robotics is now shipping its LaserWeeder to farms around the United States; the machine uses the power of lasers and robotics to rid fields of weeds.

<https://www.foxbusiness.com/lifestyle/aicomes-farm-new-technology-tackles-acres-weeds-quickly-robotics-lasers>

**Food Security – Supply chain disruptions**

FEMA recommends a three-day food and water supply for emergencies. A three-week supply is a much better option. A three-month supply would provide three months to evaluate and respond to a long-term food crisis. Help neighbors prepare and maintain a food reserve. Quite a few occurrences and instances could disrupt the food chain and cause complications down the line. This could lead to people not getting food, prices going up, and more. A disaster need not be local to affect the local food supply. Here are some common disruptions we may be able to see in the food supply chain: health crisis, extreme weather conditions, energy security, geopolitical conflict.

<https://safetyculture.com/topics/food-supply-chain/>

**National Preparedness Month** is an observance each September to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time.

<https://www.ready.gov/september>

**What are local food resources in NM?** NM has over 23,000 family-owned farms and ranches (95% of total agriculture operations in the state). <https://newmexicoagriculture.com>

- <https://www.visitalbuquerque.org/farmers-markets/>
- <https://dairyproducersnm.com/>
- <https://www.localhoneyfinder.org/NM.php>
- <https://www.fifabq.org/currentgardens>

**Food Waste – Conserve and recycle**

Did you know that roughly 40% of food produced in America is thrown away? The APS Garden Coordinator is working on a district-wide project to recycle uneaten cafeteria food. Nothing should go to waste in a garden.

<https://erefdn.org/school-cafeteria-waste>

**Monthly hikes** afford an opportunity to get some exercise and identify wild edibles. Our September hike explores the history of a 19th century smelter in the Sandia Mountains.

<http://nmsciencefoundation.org/sandias/>

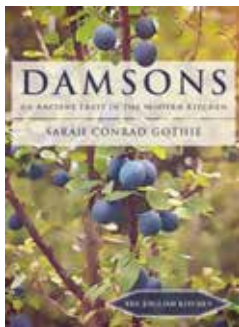
**Are you ready for the next pandemic?** <https://studyfinds.org/more-exercise-mild-covid-symptoms/>

<https://time.com/6278415/covid-19-pandemic-end-next-pandemic/>

## Reading at the Garden Center: a botanical book club

Margaret Ménache, Class of 2016

I started the book club in June 2019 with the approval of the Garden Council Board of Directors' Executive Committee. Our first selection was Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees*. With August 2023, we have just finished our 39th book - *Damsons: an ancient fruit in the modern kitchen*. We have also enjoyed eight movie and potluck nights, although several of those were free movies we could all watch on zoom and then discuss together on zoom during the months of Covid lockdown. The full list of all our titles is on my website under a book club news tab ([http://www.margaretmenache.com/?page\\_id=835](http://www.margaretmenache.com/?page_id=835)).



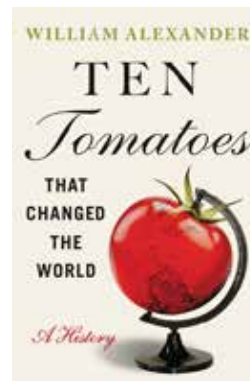
Although you might not think of them in the same sentence, let alone the same recipe, damson plums and tomatoes can be paired together. I learned about this surprising combination as I perused the recipes in *Damsons: an ancient fruit in the modern kitchen*. This short, focused read has about 50 pages of text followed by 60 pages of recipes. I don't know if you remember damson preserves, but I do. There are still a handful of brands that sell them (some small specialty brands, Bonne Maman, Tiptree, and the Trappist monks - and let me just add that the monks have an amazing selection of preserves, jams, and jellies); however, I was unable to find any in Albuquerque. Then again, I must confess that I did not go to EVERY grocery store in town. Fresh damson plums were in equally short supply, as in non-existent!

That damson and tomato recipe? A recipe for Jammy damson-tomato sandwich spread begins on page 95. With equal parts of damson plums and tomatoes, the author writes that "this dynamic spread is excellent with cream cheese or goat's cheese on crackers, or on cheddar sandwiches."

Damsons do remain popular in England, where they have been grown as a hedgerow tree for many years, perhaps hundreds, possibly thousands of years. Apparently, just as one might pick wild blackberries while on a walk in the US, the British do the same with damsons, sloes, and bullaces. A fairly complete (83-page pdf) and free resource for damsons may be downloaded at: <https://damsonplums.files.wordpress.com/2023/02/a-guide-to-damsons-2023.pdf>. *Caveat emptor* — some of the links don't work properly and some of the information isn't necessar-

*Gardening is good,  
more gardening is better,  
reading is best!*

ily correct. Since the author, Daiv Sizer, has been updating the pdf for perhaps a decade now and there are well over 100 links, a few broken or otherwise incorrect links can be easily forgiven. With respect to our book club selection, Sizer writes: "American academic Sarah Conrad-Gothie has produced quite a small, slim paperback that packs a botanical, historical and geographical overview alongside 60 pages of recipes. THE standout book on Damsons, sure to become the definitive work."



The annual Tomato Fiesta has just ended although the harvest might still be going on for many of you. And, perhaps you bought the *Tomato Recipe Book* and have been fixing tasty tomato treats regularly. Or, perhaps you're just a bit nostalgic for all things tomato. *Ten Tomatoes That Changed the World*, our May selection, might be just the tomato fix you're looking for. From its rocky introduction to Europe (Chapter 1: De' Medici's Pomodor) and introduction to the east coast of the US (Chapter 2: Colonel Johnson's Bucket), the adventures of the tomato will entertain you. Who knew that commercially sold ketchup was not successfully made with tomatoes until Henry J. Heinz (yes, *that* Heinz) figured out how to do it (Chapter 5: Anticipation). And, harkening back to our damson book with its recipes, yes, you can make ketchup with damson plums. Who knew!

If you love reading about gardening and all things plant, then you'll love the books we've been reading. Our next hybrid meeting will be on 11 September at 4:00 pm. We'll be discussing the novel, *The Island of Missing Trees*. Check out my website for a list of all the titles. You are always welcome to join us for a discussion. Email me at [botanicalbooksabq \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:botanicalbooksabq[at]gmail.com) to be added to the mailing list. 🌿