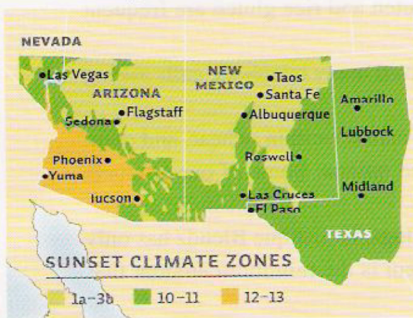


What to do in your garden July



Idea shopping

Santa Fe Greenhouses Join local garden experts for free guided tours of Santa Fe Greenhouses' 1/2-acre water-conserving garden featuring award-winning plants. See firsthand the art of creating beautiful high-desert gardens using water-wise plants. 10 a.m. Wed, 10 and 11 Sat through Aug 29; free, 2904 Rufina St., Santa Fe; www.santafegreenhouses.com or 505/473-2700.

Planting

Baja vines Sunset climate zones 12-13: For hot south and west exposures, try queen's wreath (*Antigonon leptopus*) or yellow morning glory. Queen's wreath provides rapid shade for trellises and ramadas. From late summer through fall, the 30- to 40-foot-tall vine produces sprays of light pink, reddish, or white blossoms. For a vivid magenta color, look for 'Baja Red'. Yellow morning glory (*Merremia aurea*) produces bright yellow funnel-shaped flowers on a vine that can climb up to 25 feet.

Warm-season veggies Zones 1a-3b: Sow bush beans, collards, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, okra, and snap beans. Zones 10-11: Sow corn, cucumbers, gourds, melons, pumpkins, summer squash, and tepary beans. Zones 12-13: Sow black-eyed peas, corn, gourds, melons, pumpkins, summer squash, and tepary beans. Purchase black-eyed peas and tepary beans from Native Seeds/SEARCH (www.nativeseeds.org or 866/622-5561).

Maintenance

Collect rainwater With summer monsoons on the way, dig catch basins and form mounds to direct water from your downspouts to shrubs, trees, and other plantings. *Rainwater Harvesting for Dry Lands* by Brad Lancaster (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006; \$25) is an excellent guide for assessing your site and constructing workable rainwater irrigation systems (www.harvestingrainwater.com or 800/639-4099). You can also install rain barrels to collect water for later use. Clean Air Gardening (www.cleanairgardening.com or 214/363-5170) sells barrels ranging in size from 50 to 108 gallons.

Harvest prickly pear fruit Zones 10-13: Mid-July to mid-September is harvest time for the prickly pear, one of the desert's most ubiquitous fruits. Using steel tongs, gently grasp the top-shaped magenta fruits from the cactus pads; the fruit will separate easily when ripe. For processing tips and recipes, including muffins and margaritas, look for *The Prickly Pear Cookbook* by Carolyn Niethammer (Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2004; \$15), available at local nurseries or from Amazon.com.

Irrigate with ollas Watering plants with unglazed clay jars called *ollas* (pronounced "oy-yas") is an ancient practice that was brought to the Southwest by Spanish settlers. The urn-shaped jars are buried up to their necks and filled with water. The roots of surrounding plants then absorb whatever wicks out through capillary action, resulting in nearly 100 percent irrigation efficiency. Ollas are available from High Country Gardens (www.highcountrygardens.com or 800/925-9387).

Zap weeds Ordinary household white vinegar (5 percent acetic acid) is an effective herbicide for dandelions and many other common weeds when they're young. On days when the air is still, spray undiluted vinegar on newly sprouted weeds, taking care not to hit desirable plants.

—SCOTT CALHOUN

Tip from the test garden

MAINTAIN LAWNS For bluegrass and fescue, mow when the grass is 3 to 4 inches tall; set your mower at 2 to 3 inches. Cut Bermuda grass when it's not quite 2 inches tall; set the mower at 1 inch. Then follow these steps to keep lawns looking neat.



STEP 1 After mowing a row, slightly overlap that row when starting the next one (so the grass beneath the mower wheel gets cut).



STEP 2 To give the lawn a tidy edge near gravel paths and adjacent flower beds, use a half-moon edger. Plunge the tool into the lawn's edge as shown to cut off errant shoots.