Palo Verde Park Neighborhood Association

<http://paloverdeparkneighborhood.com/>

**Minutes, regular meeting**

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

**Roll Call and introductions, present:**

Norma Coffman, president

Mike Southworth, vice president

Andy Weiss, treasurer

Rhonda Bodfield, secretary

Ariel Gilbert-Knight, Thomas Bengford, Old Pueblo Estates delegate

Gina Gant, Miramonte Terrace delegate

Cathy Cromwell, Glen Heather Estates delegate

**Code of conduct**

The President read the code of conduct and expectations for civility.

**President’s report**

Thanks to Fountain of Life for hosting us!

***ParkFest update:*** Gratitude expressed to Ellen McBride from Arizona Beer House for her work with food trucks and sharing fundraising ideas; thanks to Vonnie Baldwin for her $200 contribution. It takes a village to put on a big event and the president thanked everyone for their contributions. Participants were encouraged to like the event on facebook and share it with their friends, as well as to take some flyers to their close neighbors to encourage attendance.

***Movie Night update:*** Confirmed for Friday, May 24, in partnership with Loft Cinema. Working with Ward 2 to coordinate with splash pad opening.

***PACC microchip event***  Anticipate a June event in advance of the July fireworks …$5 or free, as people can pay.

***Zombie walk***: As part of an effort to host occasional whimsical events, thinking about a walk in October in character along the frontage road on Broadway.

Congratulations too to Gina Gant on winning her 40 Under 40 recognition!

**Treasurer’s report:** Will be transferring our account from Chase to avoid the monthly fee, in favor of BBVA Compass

**Approval of minutes:** Unanimous approval, no discussion

**Featured Speaker: Tony Sarah, horticulturalist, Magic Garden Nursery**

Tony shared he recently patented a new fertilizer. He also took audience questions, with questions and answers paraphrased here.

***What would do well in a backyard?***

Depends on what you want: a garden to attract wildlife, to attract butterflies, just for beautification, edible gardens…

Tucson has two planting seasons: the cool season and warm season. The cool season includes leafy greens, root crops, broccoli, cabbage, kale mustard, turnips. onion, garlic. The summertime crops include tomatoes, peppers, corn, watermelon, squash.

If you have not planted yet, you could still get short season vegetables such as radish, green bunching onions, short season carrots and leaf lettuce.

Otherwise, so summer planting, if you plant mid-late February for tomatoes, grow them in a pot so can move in and out or if you put them in ground, just know you’ll be covering them for another month until risk of frost is over. Normally everything else gets planted mid-to-late March.

***How do you best control insects?***

Different oils can act as repellents- lavender, rosemary, garlic - are used to repel not kill. You should be careful not to kill beneficials like honey bees. Also pay attention to effectiveness and concentration because price is not apples to apples.

One treatment for aphids and grasshoppers (aphids 4 oz per gallon, 8 oz per gallon for grasshoppers) is to mix molasses with water. They don’t have a pancreas and can’t digest sugar so it does kill them.

One important consideration is that healthier plants help avoid insects.

Sometimes synthetic fertilizers can make plants attract insects because they grow so fast they release pheromones that attract insects.

***What do you recommend for someone getting started? Pots vs. ground. Seeds vs little starter plants?***

If you use containers, the larger the better. It allows more root growth and won’t dry out as quickly. In the summertime, you’ll need at least daily watering and sometimes more and the same time every day. There’s no such thing as low water in a pot.

Use quality potting soil. If you are putting plants In the ground, check your soil before you amend it. If have heavy clay soil, you’ll want a compost. If it’s sandy, then you want peat moss because it binds together and retains moisture.

I prefer melon and cucumber from seed. Everything else doesn’t matter except root crops, those are better from seed too. Tomatoes, peppers it doesn’t matter.

Don’t be afraid to fail the first time. Fertilizing is key and following label directions.

Spraying Miracle Grow is a temporary quick fix.

What we want is a living soil - something that supports microbial growth, like probiotics in the gut. Your goal is the bring soil back to life and have beneficial bacteria in there, so organic soil is a good choice. Microbes better support roots in getting nutrients and moisture.

***Can you share more information on composting?***

If you had insect issues or disease, do not use any of those clippings. Just bag it and trash it or you will just perpetuate the problem. Same with weeds, if they have gone to flower and seed. Composting won’t kill the seeds.

Some people really like the bins, but I just have a corner of the yard and it just gets layered, mimicking nature. Do add some organic fertilizer, such as alfalfa meal, bat guano, to get nitrogen source going because it helps to start breaking it down more. Start it with a good pile and then go buy 1-3 bags of compost and dump it on top. Don’t use coffee grounds directly on plant roots without composting, no matter what you’ve heard. Coffee grounds have a damaging effect to plants.

***What can you tell us about manures?***

Chicken manure is good but it’s very hot and can burn plants so it has to be well composted. You can’t make it less hot by mixing it - it just takes time to offset that.

In order, I like:

* Worm castings (and there is a difference in quality depending on what worms fed)
* Bat guano
* Goat/sheep manure
* Chicken
* Horse
* Steer. I put steer at bottom because there is a lot of salt with salt licks and alfalfa they give them. It also is not as well composted as it used to be. Shredded paper in compost heap is ok if you have lots o green and leaves matter going in. It’s a good way to get rid of newspapers. I don’t put cardboard because you don’t know what’s going into that anymore.

***What about drought tolerant plants?***

Depending on the plant, you can reduce watering over time as the plant is established. But when people say they want a drought tolerant yard, that is essentially what it looks like if you drive through the desert a week before the monsoon rains come. You don’t get low water and lush foliage.

For example, you’re never going to overwater citrus in the summer. If citrus could handle your summer heat, they would be here growing wild. A mature citrus tree - 25 feet tall - can take 336 gallons a week in the summer to keep it healthy. Mesquite trees also are not drought tolerant. They are drought avoidant with roots growing deep to search it out.

***How do you win against bermuda grass?***

You either get a shovel or use Roundup. That’s it. Roots can grow 3 feet deep so it can come right back and be tough to get rid of if it is well established. Roundup one time won’t have lasting effects. If it is common bermuda and has ever gone to seed, 7-8-10 years that seed is viable. If you want to get rid of it, take care of it so it is in its growing stage when you spray it with Roundup. If it is stressed and in survival mode already, it won’t work because it won’t take the chemical.

Organic weed killers won’t get the roots, just top growth. Tip: Herbicides are usually just Roundup under a different label. Exact same chemical.

***How best to attract butterflies?***

There are desert wildflowers that act as groundcover, wooly butterfly bush, milkweed, bird of paradise, agastashe, Apache Plume. Magic Garden Nursery has a one-pager on how to attract pollinators to your garden.

Just don’t get mad if the caterpillars are eating the leaves.

**Final announcements:**

After Park Fest, our April meeting will feature Pima Animal Care Center to talk all about pets. In May, the City of Tucson Parks Director will be here, so we’d love for him to hear your vision for the park.

Meeting was gaveled to a close at 7:32 p.m.