



Cover Artwork by Pam Conklin

A word about Minnehaha County Master Gardeners: We are volunteers trained through the South Dakota State University Extension [Master Gardener Program](#). The Minnehaha Master Gardeners mission is to provide current, research-based, consumer horticulture information and education to the citizens of South Dakota through Master Gardener projects and services. For more information on becoming a master gardener, visit [SDSU Extension Master gardener volunteer program](#)

Be sure to stay in touch with all of Minnehaha County Master Gardeners' news: [follow us on FaceBook](#), [visit our website](#), or [email us](#).

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# In the Herb Garden

*By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener*

*The herb section will highlight an herb that can be grown in the South Dakota region.*

**Oregon grape** (*Mahonia repens*) is a medicinal herb from the plant family of *Berberidaceae*. The dwarf variety grows as a perennial in SD zone 4. However, the other varieties (*Mahonia aquifolium* or *Berberis aquifolium*) grow in zones 5-8 as perennials in the Pacific Northwest. The Oregon grape plant has shiny leaves that resemble holly leaves. The yellow flowers bloom in early spring. The berries are blueish-black and are not actually grapes. The berries are edible but unpleasant tasting. The golden yellow roots are used for medicinal purposes.



**Health Benefits:** The primary component berberine is an alkaloid derivative in the root of the Oregon grape. This alkaloid has anti-microbial, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-parasitic action, and immune boosting properties. Native cultures have used the herb to stimulate appetite and most recently is used as a substitute for goldenseal. Oregon grape has been used to treat giardia, eczema, psoriasis, infections of the throat, intestine and the urinary tract. Other claims have been to lower blood sugar and cholesterol.

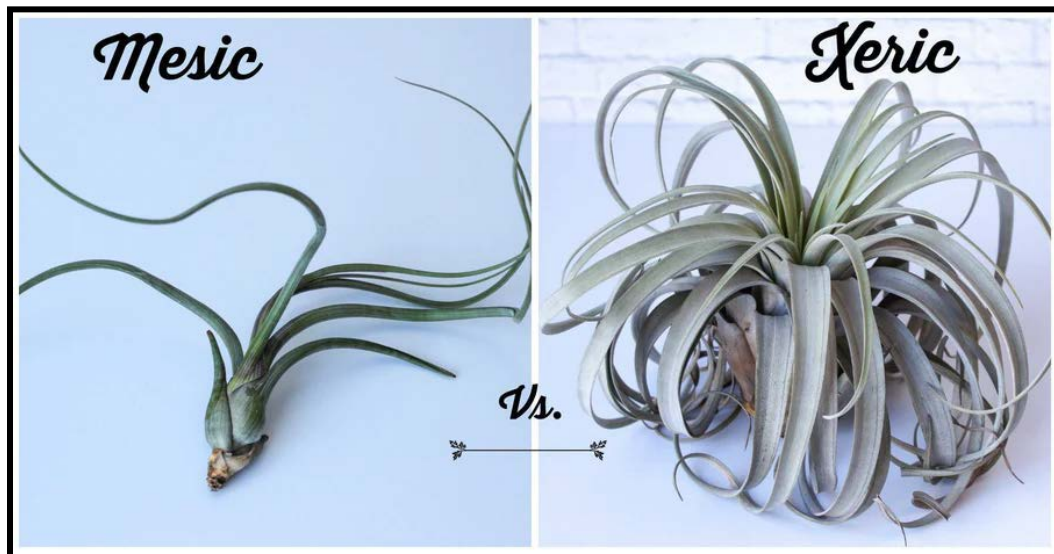
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## Air Plants - Guide and Care

*by Carla Goetsch, Master Gardener*

Air plants are a trendy home décor addition that is frequently seen in popular decorating magazines and social media platforms. They are not as easy to care for as their “air plant” name may imply, but with some basic knowledge, air plants can be an interesting addition to a plant collection. There are two main air plant categories: **xeric**

and **mesic**. Xeric air plants are characterized by muted silver and green color tones with a fuzzy texture. Mesic air plants have a smoother texture and brighter colors.



**Watering:** Keeping these houseplants properly hydrated can be tricky. Air plants do not have roots: they absorb moisture from the air. They use tiny hair-like growths on their leaves, called trichomes to soak up water from humidity. Despite this ability, they do need regular watering as houseplants.

**Soaking Method of watering:** The best way to water air plants is to completely submerge them in bowls of room temperature water for 30 minutes. Shake off the excess moisture and place upside down on a towel for 1-2 hours after removing them from the bowl. This is a CRITICAL step, because any pooling of water in the base of the leaves will cause the base to rot. How often to soak your plant will be determined by how much humidity it lives in. A starting point would be to soak the plant once a week. The edges of the leaf will curl inward along its length as the plant uses up moisture. Although thirsty air plants don't wilt as obviously as other plants, they will become limp.

The best water to use for air plants is rainwater, pond, or aquarium water. Tap water that has sat 24 hours in an open container may also be used. This period of time allows the tap water chlorine to dissipate. Too much chloride causes the leaves to turn brown. Softened water should not be used due to the high salt content. Distilled water doesn't have nutrients, so use it only if an air-plant specific fertilizer is used. This fertilizer should be used once a month, if not using rain, pond, or aquarium water.

**Misting Air Plants:** A spray bottle mister can be used to supplement the once a week soaking, especially in winter months when the humidity level tends to be lower. Misting



on its own does not supply enough moisture to the plant. Air plants tend to do well in a bathroom where the shower is regularly used.

Flowering air plants will need more frequent watering while in bloom. However, if water is allowed to set in the base, rot will occur and the flowers will drop sooner. It is best to try to avoid putting the flower into the water.

**Air:** Air plants need good circulation and may not do as well in terrariums, since water can pool to the core causing them to rot.

**Light:** Air plants do not like direct sunlight, but do like plenty of bright, indirect sunlight and/or artificial light.

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## DID YOU KNOW....

*There is a Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Tucson, Arizona?*

*By: Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener*



I recently visited my son and his girlfriend in Tucson and discovered a wonderful garden: The Pima County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, planted and maintained by University of Arizona Extension Master Gardeners.

Free tours are given by the Master gardeners February-May and September-December. The gardens are open to the public during daylight hours. There are 14 demonstration gardens which feature native, non-native and drought tolerant plants that display a variety of planting, irrigation, and composting methods for desert gardening. The 14 gardens are: the All-American Selections, Certified Wildlife Habitat, Butterflies, Birds and Bees, Native Grasses, Edible - Basin Style, Cacti and Other Succulents, Small

Spaces, Roses Galore, Colors, Edibles, Raised Bed Style, Xeriscape Landscape, Contain Yourself, and Propagation Nursery.



Each garden meanders into the next garden with fences, gates, and signage that helps delineate the different gardens. The All-American Selections garden is an official AAS Display garden, displaying award winning flower and vegetable selections. The Pima County Master Gardeners won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in AAS Display Garden contest in 2021 for their “Diversity in the Garden” theme. The Certified Wildlife Habitat showcases a mix of plants as well as landscape elements that provide food and shelter for birds, animals, and insects. I observed lots of lizards, bees, and even a ground squirrel happily running through the landscape.



The Shade Oasis garden is designed to reflect a riparian and meadow environment in the Sky Islands at around 4500 feet. A sky island is an isolated mountain range that rises up out of the surrounding desert “sea”. Sky islands are unique in that as the elevation changes, so do the surrounding ecosystems. Arizona is home to several sky

islands, including the Chiricahua National Monument that is located at a crossroads between four major ecosystems – the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre, Sonoran Desert, and the Chihuahuan Desert. Within this are five world biomes: Desert, Grasslands, Chaparral, Deciduous Forest, and Coniferous Forest. It can be warm and raining at the bottom and cold and snowing at the top. Can you imagine the vast variety of plants and animals, and how they must adjust to this situation?

The Roses Galore garden brought back wonderful memories of all the roses in my California garden that I can't grow in South Dakota. I just walked around and smelled every rose to take in it's amazing fragrance...living in the moment! Sadly, I didn't take any photos. My nose was on the roses, but my eyes were on the cacti and succulents.

Each garden was a showcase of beauty shared with us. We enjoyed all of them, but my favorite by far was the Cacti and Other Succulents garden, as you can see from the multiple photos. I am learning to enjoy and appreciate the desert more each time I visit Tucson, and especially after visiting this amazing Master Gardener Demonstration Garden. Next time you visit the desert, think about the amazing biodiversity in the desert and surrounding mountains.



All photos by Debi Ulrey-Crosby unless noted otherwise

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## Gifts of Nature

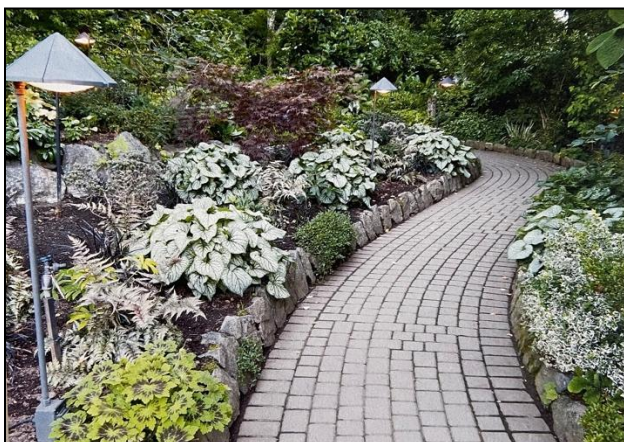
*By JoAnn Christensen, Master Gardener*

The holidays are around the corner and gift giving is on everyone's mind. The economy is challenging this year for many gift givers. Homemade gifts are appreciated by many. Throughout the summer season, I take pictures of my favorite flowers, landscape,




vegetable gardens, and pollinators. When summer activities slow for the season, I take these treasured photos and turn them into holiday gifts, or hostess gifts for the holiday season. Who doesn't like a packet of greeting cards, thank you cards, along with a sleeve of stamps? I generally take advantage of any promotions from businesses that create cards and gifts, to keep the costs down. I use plastic sleeves available from Amazon to keep them protected. Plastic sleeves prevent colors from rubbing off onto adjacent cards.

A tip for photos is to take several in various positions. Watch for your own shadow in your pictures. Cloudy days are your friend when taking photos. Use a tripod for your camera, or phone if you have an unsteady hand. You can also lean against a fence, pole, or friend for increased steadiness. People love pollinators, so don't forget to include them in your photos. In the dead of winter, people love getting a handwritten card with beautiful flowers. Give it a try this fall with beautiful leaves and the last flowers of summer. Start collecting your photos in the coming year.



Your horticultural picture has potential to  
become a gift of nature!

*Interested in a specific topic, or have questions/comments? Email us as*  
[mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mcmgnewsletter@gmail.com)



*Thanks to all master gardeners for your educational contributions! This concludes another great season of knowledge sharing. We will see you again beginning April, 2023!*