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FREE Desert Gardening News

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SUMMER 2011

Birds of a Different Feather The Desert "Birds of Paradise" - Caesalpinia (ses-al-PIN-ee-uh)

If you're looking to add some desert color to your landscape this summer, here's some candidates for you! Their lacy, tropical and ferny leaves are heavily accented by wonderfully colorful flowers. Their common name, "The Bird of Paradise", is quite appropriate.



Red Birds and Vegas Birds of Paradise

Perhaps first, however, we may want to discuss the difference between the "Desert" Bird of Paradise and the "Tropical" Bird of Paradise. Many people get a bit confused between "Mexican Bird", "Yellow Bird", "Tropical" or even "Giant" Bird of Paradise and the "Red" and "Vegas" Birds of Paradise.

Many who have moved here from moderate climates may be more familiar with the Tropical Bird of Paradise, properly known as "Strelitzia reginae", or even the Giant Bird of Paradise, "Strelitzia nicolai". These beautiful large leafed plants are fragile in our desert. The Strelitzia will do well with complete afternoon shade, and rich soil with adequate drainage. These plants are very different from the "Desert" Birds. The Bird of Paradise that excels here is botanically known as the "Caesalpinia", and will tolerate all day sun and the poor soil that is so very common here.

One outstanding feature in desert landscapes during the summer is the beautiful flowers of the Red Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*). Its fiery plumes fit right in with the other sub-tropical non-native transplants such as Bougainvillea and Cat Claw vine, as well as traditional desert landscape plants. The drought tolerant Red Bird of Paradise loves the heat and is nearly everywhere in the Southwest Desert because of its ability to add so much color.

The exotic and very tropical looking Red Bird of Paradise is actually native to the West Indies and sometimes referred to as the "Pride of Barbados". The Red Bird has lush feathery leaves and a fern-like appearance, topped with a blaze of striking red-orange flower clusters. If you want to create your own tropical island affect, this is one plant that can really help.

Striking and massive are the flower clusters of the Red Bird. These 8 to 12 inch flower clusters are a fiery red-orange with gold on the edges. Once the weather begins to turn really warm the incredible blooms begin to emerge.



Each butterfly-like flower is composed of five showy petals. The prominent, 4 to 6 inch long stamens are also red. The Red Bird of Paradise is extremely attractive to hummingbirds, and the combination will make your yard the envy of your friends.

People often mistakenly refer to this red and orange version as the Mexican Bird of Paradise when,

in fact, the Mexican Bird (*Caesalpinia mexicana*) actually has all yellow, smaller flowers and coarser leaves. The mexicana actually more closely resembles the Vegas Bird of Paradise in color.

Pulcherrima means "very pretty" and the *Caesalpinia* definitely lives up to the name. The Red Bird of Paradise would be unparalleled in its beauty when used in the landscape if not for its yellow cultivar known as the 'Vegas' Bird.

Though the Vegas Bird of Paradise (also a pulcherrima variety) does produce all yellow flowers, try to avoid confusing it with the 'red-stamen' Yellow Bird (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*). The Vegas Bird has larger flower clusters and foliage that will generally be denser and more fern-like.

Caesalpinia pulcherrima, Red or Vegas-Yellow are very fast growers and hardy to about 28° F. At low enough temperatures the plant will likely freeze to the ground, but established plants should recover quickly in late spring. New transplants are quite different however! If you intend to plant a Bird of Paradise during late summer or autumn, be prepared to protect the base of the plant should the winter temps get below freezing. Mulching the plants heavily during their first winter is recommended.

Even though the Red Bird is from the tropics, it acclimates very well to our hot, dry conditions. *Caesalpinia* is now even grown in some parts of the Sahara Desert. In colder areas of the desert, treat as an annual or grow in a container.

Another point of interest; *Caesalpinia* are in the legume family, and as such they will actually gather nitrogen from the air and transfer it to their roots. So you won't really need much nitrogen in your fertilizer. A healthy amount of phosphorous, potassium and the essential micro nutrients, such as is in Dr. Q's Desert Plant & Cactus Food, along with a deep infrequent watering schedule will help your Bird of Paradise achieve a beautiful and dense form that will have everyone's eyes take notice.

The 'pulcherrimas' are both relatively frost sensitive *Caesalpinia*. The new growth seen in April or May is often a bit straggly. Many gardeners will cut the bush to the ground, or within a couple feet of the ground, at the end of November and it will grow back green and compact in late spring. Be patient with the Bird of Paradise in the spring. It likes to "sleep in" and sometimes takes its time waking up! If not trimmed earlier, after a cold winter it's generally better to hard prune it or trim it close to the ground. This keeps it more compact without seeming to delay its growth in the spring. The *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* is a fairly fast grower and can get large, so periodic trimming may be needed if you put it in a high traffic location.

Caesalpinias will do well in any soil, but the better drainage you have the healthier the plant will be.

The *Caesalpinias* provide lovely desert color throughout the hot summer months. And; Yes! You can plant them in full afternoon sun!



Mexican Bird of Paradise
(*Caesalpinia mexicana*)

Yellow Bird of Paradise
(*Caesalpinia gilliesii*)

Tropical Bird of Paradise
(*Strelitzia reginae*)

Summer Highlights

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Summer Mulching Soil Amendments

Each summer the desert keeps its promise to scorch the heck out of our landscape plants. The temperatures in the afternoon will often exceed 110° F, and even late at night we can see temps close to 100° F. One might think that these high nighttime temps aren't really that big of a problem for our plants, but hot nights actually do interfere with respiration.

The root systems of plants need to breathe. They take in air and water to make carbohydrates (sugars) for food. Though plants do perform respiration during daylight hours as well as night, it is during the cooler nights that they can be most efficient in this process. So, in order to help the plants to better respire we need to try to keep the soil cooler. This is where mulch can provide a great benefit. Organic mulch, like compost or bark, is an excellent insulator. Throughout the day the radiant heat from the sun is kept from reaching the soil. Unlike rock, that will radiate the heat it absorbed all day throughout the night, organic mulch quickly ceases to heat the soil following sunset. Cooler soil means much better respiration. Better respiration means stronger, more heat resistant plants.

We have more to consider if we want better respiration; the consistency of the soil itself is critical. In order for the root system to take in air, there needs to be pore spaces within the soil where air exists. Most desert native soil is quite high in clay. Clay is the smallest of particles and does little to provide air pore space for roots. How can we improve this? Once again, by adding organic material to the soil! During initial planting we should mix in a good portion, 20 to 30%, of completely composted material like Dr. Q's Paydirt Planting Mix & Mulch to the soil we are surrounding our plant with. Remember, incomplete compost is too high in carbon and too low in nitrogen and this will put stress on your new plants.

The organics that you mix with your planting dirt will, over time, reduce the pH as the organisms that should thrive as a result of these organics will create acids as part of their normal function. Often, it is a good idea to provide some added assistance for these organisms in the form of sulfur. Sulfur, as it breaks down in the soil, also creates acids and so reduces pH as well.

So, we have made contributions to improve pore space, thus improving respiration and we have lowered pH. There is a wonderful added benefit from this and that is vastly improved nutritional uptake. Critical micro-

nutrients, like iron and manganese, can be bound up by high pH soil and so will not be available to the plant. Some of you may have plants showing nutritional problems where you have been fertilizing, but without visible improvement. Following the addition of appropriate soil pH amendments and the soil cooling effect of mulching, your plants should do much better.

Mulching does much for plant health, making your landscape more beautiful and hardy, but, there is still another important benefit; Water Savings! To achieve significant water savings there are two efforts we want to combine. 1) Deep watering; not a five minute sprinkle that penetrates 4 inches into the soil, but one to two hour drip sessions. 2) Providing a two inch layer of mulch over the root system of plants. The moisture in the surface is thereby protected from rapid evaporation because it's not exposed to high heat, radiation and wind. All of the evaporation is a waste of water and a challenge to plant health.

Help plants breathe, work towards a neutral soil pH for proper nutrition uptake and bacterially active soil and reduce your water bill. Not bad for a few very inexpensive additions to your garden or landscape.

Try It!

Synthetic Turf



Star Nursery now carries the finest Synthetic Turf Product available! We also can provide you with all the up to date product information, tools, accessories and materials necessary to complete a professional-looking installation.

If you have ever thought about adding a section of lawn for a dog run, a play area for the kids, a putting green, or just a nice green island you can look out your window at, now is the time to come down and check out our new Emerald Carpet Synthetic Turf. Just imagine – a durable, realistic looking lawn without the worry of all the extra upkeep and irrigation expense. It's great for those areas that you can never get grass to grow in or areas that are hard to maintain, like terraces or slopes. It also makes a great border or buffer area between landscape rock or pavers and sidewalks or driveways.

We carry 4 different types of the synthetic lawn turf; the Emerald Carpet Premier, Supreme, Plush and Ultra. In addition to these, we also carry the Emerald Carpet Putt for putting greens. These products are made from the highest quality polyethylene material, using the latest technology for the most realistic look possible. They are tough, durable and warranted to retain their color for 8 years!

Next time you're in one of our stores, take a look at our synthetic turf displays to see for yourself how realistic looking this turf is. While you are there, pick up a free installation guide that will give you a list of the materials required and step by step instructions for preparation and installation. If you bring in a diagram and measurements of the area of your project, our stores can work up a complete list of materials that you will need. Check it out! You'll be surprised.



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Palm Trees in the High Desert The Risks & The Rewards

If what you want in your landscape is tropical beauty, it's real difficult to ignore the grace of a Palm Tree, but be very careful with your choice and where you plant it!

Desert climates offer a unique challenge. There is not only the problem of extreme heat, but the intensity of the sun is greater and the winter low temps are much lower than coastal areas. Many Palms that take full coastal sun can't be grown in full sun in the desert. Then again, shady locations in desert climates are a lot more forgiving, and many species not generally recommended for our climate may survive and even thrive in protected locations.

The Southwest Desert areas tend to be extremely dry, but some areas actually get summer moisture and humidity (in Arizona, for example). You really need to get to know the area you live in and not generalize that all desert areas are the same. Las Vegas, Southern Utah and Phoenix each have their own unique climate challenges. So, just because you have heard that a particular type tree will do well in one location is not a good reason to assume that it will do well in one of the others. The most severe heat is generally in Phoenix, though sometimes the humidity can help the plants. The coldest winters, between these three areas will be found in Utah and, here in Las Vegas, we are somewhere in the middle with some of both extremes from time to time. **ALL DESERT AREAS ARE NOT THE SAME.** For example; more delicate palms like Queen Palms and Pygmy Date Palms will do very well in Phoenix, but will not survive in southern Utah. They will grow in Las Vegas, but special care must be taken for their survival. On the other hand, Mexican Fan Palms and Canary Island Date Palms usually do very well in Las Vegas, but do not handle the cold of southern Utah. Just 2 or 3 degrees of temperature change makes all the difference.

This past winter the southwest desert experienced a severe period of cold. Many plants were damaged or killed, and this left a lot of folks wondering what to do next. Those that enjoy the beauty of their Palms were facing the decision to replace them with something else. Often this decision was faced prematurely; their trees were not dead, just damaged! The long, extended periods of freezing temperatures took its toll on plant tissue. As a result, many of the Palms that usually go through the winter without much of a problem were severely burned and damaged. This showed up most noticeably on the Queen Palms and the Mexican Fan Palms in our area. Most Palm trees should grow out of the cold damage but will take some time to completely recover. It can take four to six months, well into the summer to return to normal.



Frosty Palm



Cold Damaged Palm

The most important and the most vulnerable part of the palm tree is the terminal bud, located in the very top center of the tree. The bud is where new leaves emerge. Protection of this bud from severe cold is critical to keep the palm healthy. If the bud tissue of the palm has NOT been severely damaged, the palm should recover and start producing new leaves during the following summer. If the bud tissue has been severely damaged, the palm might not survive.

It is very important that when you prune damaged palm trees, you remove only the completely dead branches. Don't cut off leaves that have green in them, since palms still extract nutrients for new leaves from dying fronds. Be careful not to over-prune. The more green leaves you remove, the less food the palm can produce. Pruning too many leaves will only add to the stress. Fertilization is also an important issue with Palm tree recovery. Do NOT fertilize your frost damaged palm trees right away. Most people start fertilizing as soon as they see brown leaves. When you start fertilizing your sick palm tree, you are asking it to start growing, which creates even more stress on the poor tree. Wait till the summer (like right now), when it

has had a chance to start its recovery and then apply Dr. Q's Palm Tree Food once a month until the fall.

After this past winter, you'll want to keep cold-hardiness in mind. Some of the more beautiful palms are not too great at handling the cold. Even if you know of a type of palm that has survived here for several years without any problem, it still may be severely damaged if we have an unusually cold winter or temperatures stay below freezing for excessively long periods. If the forecast calls for such conditions, do everything you can to protect your sensitive Palms by tying them up and wrapping them with insulating materials like the Palm Parka. It's better to be safe than sorry!

Gardening with a Purpose

The hot new topic of Gardening with a Purpose is all about growing your own fruits, vegetables, flowers and being energy and water efficient. Making your yard and garden productive as well as a pretty place can be very rewarding.

With phrases like "sustainable" and "eco-friendly" floating about freely, it's not surprising more people are taking in this new trend and planting for the greener good. Whether your garden with a purpose is to grow food for your family, conservation, or creating an urban sanctuary, the common denominator seems to be doing it in an environmentally friendly way.

Planting vegetables and fruit trees is the most popular of activities in this new trend. If you have limited garden space, partner up with friends, neighbors and family members to grow different fruits and vegetables that can be shared and swapped to broaden your harvest. Growing in containers is a fantastic way to garden with small yard spaces.

Create "sustainable container gardens", growing food in containers makes sense in small yards where garden beds will not fit, or for the beginning gardener who just wants to dabble in a new hobby. Start small with a couple of pots on the patio with a few herbs, or a tomato plant. A more advanced option will be to blend containers with herbs and veggies to provide a variety of freshness and convenience, right out the back door.

Edible landscapes can include dual purpose plants. Most fruit trees, except true dwarf varieties make excellent shade trees. Planted on the west or south side of the house, they will provide ample shade in the summer months to help cool the house, and during the winter when deciduous, will let in the warm winter sun. Fall is one of the best times to plant deciduous trees, so start planning what varieties of fruit trees you will enjoy the harvest the most from.

The edible landscape can produce year round here in our southwestern climate. As we move thru summer and head towards fall, now is the time to start thinking about the next growing/planting season. Some varieties of tomatoes do very well in the fall and will produce tomatoes when cooler daytime temperatures are in the 50's and 60's.

Check out StarNote #200, Cool Weather Vegetable Gardening, for more ideas on when and what to plant for fall and winter.

For those who currently have a garden growing, make sure you are harvesting regularly from it, so it will keep producing. Apply Dr. Q's Vegetable and Tomato Food regularly according to package instructions to keep plants healthy and growing vigorously.

Instead of planting dedicated garden spaces just for vegetables, flowers or herbs, mix it up with some flowers for added visual interest. The benefit of the flowers in your garden is that they will attract butterflies, hummingbirds and pollinators to the garden, besides adding beauty.

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Dr. Q's Summer Gardening Calendar

Protect yourself from summer heat and sun. Plan short periods for gardening, and try to finish early in the day. Stay Hydrated, Drink Plenty of Water!

JUNE

- **Plant heat-loving flowers like Star Flower**, Vinca, Moss Rose, Texas Bluebell and Zinnia or Perennials like Coreopsis, Gazania, Salvia, and Verbena. Blend a good planting mix like Dr. Q's Paydirt Planting Mix and Mulch into the soil to add organic material, improve drainage and help the plants establish quickly.

- **Maintain flowers.** Even the toughest, heat-loving flowers need a little help in the summer. Pinch off faded flowers, and fertilize with a low nitrogen fertilizer, like Dr. Q's® Rose (and Flower Food). If you are dealing with pest as well as nutrition issues, try Bayer Advanced "All-In-One" Rose and Flower Care, to deal with insects, disease and safely fertilize your plants all at once.

- **Check your Irrigation Clock.** Check your SNWA water guide, or local water company, for allowable watering hours or days.

More water is not always better! Resist the temptation to water everything to death in the heat. Our clay soils hold water a long time. Use organic surface mulches to help retain moisture.

Water wisely. Water lawns during the hours just before sunrise; avoid late afternoon or evening watering. This avoids excess evaporation and possible fungus problems of night watering. Your lawn may be watered daily, but may not need it depending on variety and exposure. Water established shrubs and trees deeply and infrequently – about 3 times a week to build strong roots.

- **Keep your lawn healthy** Use a balanced high iron fertilizer like Dr. Q's Triple Play (7-7-7). Watch for summer weeds like dandelion and spurge. Pull by hand or spot spray with a weed killer like Bayer All-in-One Weed Killer.

- **Watch for Bermudagrass.** If you have a fescue lawn, this aggressive grassy weed can be difficult to control in many landscapes, and it's growing rapidly right now. Removal and control methods vary with your situation...see your Star Plant Specialist for options!

- **Control insect pests** like roaches, ants, black widows, earwigs and sowbugs (roly-poly) with insecticides like Bayer Multi-Insect Killer liquid and granules. Protect against home invasion with Bayer Home Pest Control. It forms an invisible barrier that keeps killing bugs for up to 9 months.

- **Prevent and control Spider Mites** on evergreens like cypress, juniper and pine. Symptoms include a dusty, off color or rust colored appearance and fine webbing on the foliage. Use Bayer Insect, Disease and Mite Control or Green Light brand Spinosad® (a new effective and environmentally safe organic insecticide).

- **Fertilize palms** Palm trees need to be fertilized when it's warm, right now in the summer. Unlike many other plants that do best with spring and fall fertilization, feed your palms now with Dr. Q's Palm Tree Food to provide the special nutrients like continuous feed nitrogen, magnesium and manganese needed for vigorous growth and rich, green color.

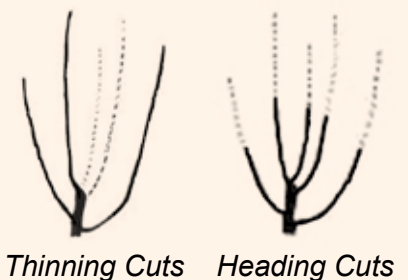
- **Transplant Palms if needed.** Remember these like the warmer temperatures – not the cold.

- **Mulch.** Now is a good time to replenish mulch layers in the garden, to cool the soil and suppress weeds. DR. Q's PAYDIRT™ Planting Mix & Mulch is a premium grade, fully composted garden mulch. A good mulch layer is about two to three inches thick. Keep mulch away from the stems of flowers and woody plants to avoid stem rot.

Cedar mulch can help keep insects away from your herbs and veggies without the use of any pesticide.

- **Weed Control.** If you have been enjoying the benefit of weed control through the use of a pre-emergent like Green Light's Amaze™, it may be time to re-apply and begin the battle against summer weeds. Great for desert (rock) landscapes!

- **Tree pruning?** "Thinning Only". If you are concerned your trees may be damaged by summer winds, you can thin out your trees to lighten the canopy.



JULY

- **Harvest vegetables and fruits.** If you have prolific summer vegetables in your garden, keep on top of the harvest, pick ripened vegetables often. Keep your eye on this month's tree fruits too, to avoid messy fruit drop and get the best harvest. Protect with Bird Block netting as needed. Treat squash bugs with Sevin dust. Always read the label! Avoid top watering of vegetables to reduce the chance for disease.

- **Plant more veggies.** This is one of the traditional times to plant corn, bean seeds and squash plants. It's also a good time to plant tomato seeds for a fall crop. Plant now for luscious garden produce all fall long!

- **Maintain roses.** Roses are going through their roughest time; don't worry, they'll spring back in fall. To help them through it, keep faded flowers cut, provide them with a cooling mulch layer, and give them a mild fertilizer like Dr. Q's® Rose Food. Deep water once every two weeks, to keep salts flushed from the root system.

- **Continue to plant summer bulbs like Dahlias and Cannas.** Dig and separate Bearded Iris rhizomes. Store them in a paper bag, in the house, until re-planting the first of September.

- **Water wisely.** Continue with June's watering tips, remembering more is not always better. Use deep-infrequent watering for trees and shrubs. Don't forget your monthly irrigation check-up!

AUGUST

- **Want some summer color?** Enjoy the last two months of hot weather surrounded by color.

Flowers like Vinca, Star Flowers, or Celosia or perennials like Lantana or Verbena thrive in the summer heat.

- **Watch watering.** Thunderstorms are more numerous this month than any other. Heavy nighttime rains can cause lawn diseases in turf. Turn off sprinkler clocks to conserve water following a heavy night or morning rain.

- **Lawn fungus;** If you suspect your grass may have this, consult our specialists at the nursery. Fungicide like Green Light Fung-Away effectively combats the problem.

- **Start seeds for cool weather flowers.** Late August is a good time to plant seeds for pansies, violas, snapdragons, kale and more. By the time plants reach flowering size, cool weather will be here once again.

- **Kill unwanted Bermuda grass** that has appeared this summer. Use Round-up® or Green Light's Compleet® for effective control. Don't wait too long. Once cooler nights arrive, Bermuda starts to go dormant and herbicides won't work properly.

- **Take a break.** Summer's almost over, and our busiest planting and gardening season, fall, is almost upon us. If you've been a vigilant gardener this summer, rest now...there's work ahead!

Summer Plant and Lawn Care

Drought, rampant growth and waste are stretching our water resources to the breaking point. An efficient, reliable irrigation system is an absolute necessity. Use drip irrigation for shrubs and small trees, bubblers for larger trees. Laser soaker tubing is an excellent choice for watering flowerbeds and vegetable gardens. Check and tune sprinkler heads and drip emitters frequently. Take charge of your irrigation system. Learn how and when to adjust it and avoid a “set it and forget it” mentality.

More than 80% of all plants in our valley are non-native and most are not adapted to our climate. The majority of these plants are very sensitive to the exposure they get in the desert. If you put the wrong plant in the wrong place, you’ll probably see one or more of the following symptoms – burned leaves, discolored or cracked bark often with oozing sap, papery areas in leaves and repeated lanky, soft growth that slowly blackens and dies.

It’s easy to avoid the problems if you learn the needs and tolerances of your plants. Don’t be reliant on plant grower labels that read “Full Sun”. That may not be the case if the plant is slated for a hot area like south or west exposures or near a sunny block wall. Our store plant signs will give you the best advice to help you determine the sun, soil and water requirements.

If using non-desert plants in rockscapes, replace rock around the plant base with a 2 or 3-foot circle of bark mulch. It cools the root area and conserves moisture during hot weather. Grow fruit trees with low branches that shade the trunk. Paint exposed trunks of young trees with white, water-base paint. Don’t prune sunburned foliage from tops of plants in summer. It provides protection for the rest of the leaves. Prune when weather cools. Many plants increase in sun tolerance as they age and become established. It’s worth pampering them while they are young.

Fertilize your plants properly. Pay attention to what time of year a specific fertilizer should be applied. Bag instructions should indicate whether temperature is a consideration. Some fertilizers release their

nutrients much faster in hot weather and increase potential for damage. A mild, balanced fertilizer like Dr. Q’s Triple Play (7-7-7) with extra iron is especially effective during the hot summer months for plants and lawn. Always water plants before and after you fertilize. Apply lawn fertilizer to grass that has dry blades and moist soil to avoid burn.

Watering lawns in summer between the hours of 7 PM and 2 AM creates favorable conditions for fungal diseases like brown patch and fusarium blight—you know, those ugly, spreading, dead patches in the lawn! Generally, lawn diseases favor conditions of darkness, heat and high humidity. Remove one of these conditions, i.e. high humidity caused by evening watering, and the cycle is broken. We frequently get complaints of lawn problems after heavy nighttime thunderstorms—see the comparison? In summer, water between the hours of 3 and 5 AM when temperatures are cooler and winds calmer. This means more soaking and less evaporation.

Resist the temptation to water everything to death in the heat. Watering established shrubs and trees deeply and infrequently – about 3 times a week – and using surface mulches will keep your plants healthy through this stressful time.



Summer Lawn Stress



Summer Scorch

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Growing Sedum in the Desert Southwest



Sedum comes in a wide-range of sizes and colors. Star Nursery has expanded their selection of succulents and Sedums and we are always looking for new and interesting plants for our customers to choose from. There are varieties that are low-growing like Dragon's Blood, Tricolor and Angelina that are 8 to 10 inches tall at maturity. If you are looking for something a little taller to be a focal point of your planter try Autumn Joy or Vera Jameson. These varieties can grow to be 30 inches tall. The ability to add color to any area without a plant having to be in bloom is another aspect of sedum that makes it a great choice for any yard or garden area. There are shades of green, gray, light and dark green, variegated leaf tones and purples and reds. However, the flowers are also striking. Opening mid-to-late summer, the color show can be yellows and oranges, pinks and purples, deep reds or creamy whites. This is a welcomed sight when most early-bloomers are beginning to fade. Feed them throughout the summer, every 4- 6 weeks, with Dr. Q's® Triple Play 7-7-7 fertilizer to keep them healthy and flowering.

Sedum performs best in well-drained soil. This plant does not like to be over-watered and the root system will quickly rot in those conditions. Sandy soil with adequate drainage is a requirement for this family. If you are planting in a container Black Gold Cactus Mix and Dr Q's Filthy Rich Potting Soil is the best choice. Star Nursery has a large selection of pottery to choose from as well. Terra cotta pots or low cactus dishes work perfectly for Sedum.

A little maintenance and an occasional overhead shower will keep your Sedum looking fresh and healthy. They are ideal for small-space gardening, like that challenging "inches-wide" bed that runs the length of your driveway or across the front of your house. They also work well between pavers, flagstone and in containers. Sedum is easy to care for and they thrive in diverse conditions. The unusual leaf color and interesting flowers make them a great selection for almost any situation. Choose your location and determine how much sun the area receives - then come to Star Nursery and let one of our experts introduce you to this unique group of plants.

Looking for a new and interesting plant to add to your landscape or to grow in a container? How about a water-wise, easy-to-care for, low-maintenance plant that tolerates dry and alkaline soil? The plants known as Sedums are sure to please and once you try them out they will become some of your favorites - guaranteed.

Sedum is the genus name given to a group of succulents. Another common name is Stonecrop. Sedums store water in thick leaves and have a waxy coating on their leaves and stems. This allows them to survive in arid environments as low water-use plants. There are 100's of varieties and many of them perform well in our arid climate. If chosen properly, determining the growth habit and drainage requirement, anyone can grow and enjoy the interesting leaf and flower shades of this unusual plant group.

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Dive Into a Simple Water Feature

The presence of water is always refreshing and relaxing in a dry, desert climate. Just because you don't have a large yard with room for a good-sized pond or water feature, doesn't mean the addition of water isn't possible. With a little creativity and some assistance from one of Star Nursery's experts, a water feature can be made out of any type of container. It can be the simplest of projects, like a birdbath or a pot water garden that can instantly add this element to your yard.



A birdbath is a worry-free addition to any yard. They can be purchased ready-to-go or built to fit any space. Star Nursery carries terra cotta birdbaths that are available in a few different styles. All you need to do is add water and enjoy. It is recommended to clean them and add fresh water often. Standard terra cotta pots and saucers can also be used to construct a birdbath. Simply stack large and medium sized pots to create a pillar of the desired height. Then, use a strong adhesive to glue a large, deep saucer that holds plenty

of water to act as the basin. Inexpensive paint or decals can be used to decorate the terra cotta pots to give your birdbath a personal touch. Attracting birds to your yard is enjoyable. Once the summer heat sets in, the birds will definitely appreciate it.

Water-gardening is one of the easiest ways to grow nice ornamentals in the desert. A pot that holds water and a water plant is all you need to get started and to be successful – it's that easy. You can grow aquatic plants that float, like water lettuce and water hyacinth, in a shallow container. Water hyacinth bloom the best during the hottest part of the year and they love to be crowded. If you want to grow water lilies or add small fish, a container that is at least 18" deep is best. A pump isn't necessary for a successful water garden but if you like the sound of moving water Star Nursery carries small pumps that are perfect for a container water garden. Choose a shady location or an area that

receives morning or filtered sun. Flowering plants will need a few hours of sun in order to bloom but will be burned by the hot afternoon sun.

Living in a mild, desert climate allows for year-round water features. It's nice to create a little haven in your yard or on your patio with the presence of water, butterflies, birds and plants. Remember to protect plants from freezing temperatures, occasionally prune plants or trim spent blooms and add water when necessary. Most importantly, get creative and use the space you have by making it an enjoyable extension of your home.

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Visit this page and be sure to "LIKE" us and get the sale ads as soon as they are posted, gardening trivia or handy gardening hints! We'll also let you know when we will be out in the community at special events or hosting our own special promotions.

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We tweet monthly gardening calendar reminders, introduce new products, our weekly ads, trivia, and more! Check us out!

Don't forget to check the www.starnursery.com website as well. In addition to having over 2700 products available for purchase on-line, we also post the weekly ads, updated on Fridays, when the new ads are released. In addition, we have a Current Events & Seminars page, our version of What's Happening at Star Nursery, where we post our special events, seminars and workshops or other community related events. You can also find all of our Star Notes, gardening tips and info for our desert climate.

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Dr. Q's Corner



Helping homeowners to become better gardeners is a big part of our business.

We know that if you can learn more about the difficulties of gardening in the desert and what it takes to overcome them, the less frustrated and more comfortable you will be when working in your yard. That is why we offer services like these Green Pages, Star Notes, and Information Booths in our stores.

We get many questions about gardening - in our stores, from phone calls, from house calls, and from our website. Here are a few of the most commonly asked questions in the last couple of months:

Q - Why do my palm trees still have brown leaves?

A - We had a severely harsh winter this year and many palm trees were badly frost damaged. Some less damaged trees recovered rather quickly, but most have been recovering much slower. The fact that it has new growth coming out is a sure sign that it is still growing. In some cases, it may take several months for them to fully recover. Just be patient.

Q - My Bougainvilleas are all dead and there's just a little green coming up from the bottom. Should I replace them?

A - It's entirely up to you, but if there is growth at the bottom, they will re-grow from the roots. Bougainvilleas are very cold sensitive in our area, and need plenty of protection to get them to survive. In some locations you just have to treat them as annual color.

Q - Why is my Star Jasmine all yellow with brown tips?

A - It is probably getting too much water. If your soil does not drain well, it may be staying too wet. If this is the case, then the roots are not able to get enough oxygen and are restricted from taking up the proper nutrients that the plant needs. Dig down and check the moisture around the roots and if it is too wet, reduce the frequency of watering. It is better to reduce the frequency than to reduce the amount of water because deep irrigation is better for the plant. Also, to help get the color back more quickly, use a chelated iron product every 2 to 3 weeks.

Q - My lawn is starting to get random patches that start turning a bluish-gray color, then turn yellow and brown. Is this a fungus?

A - Most likely not. This is a classic example of improper sprinkler coverage. Now that the weather is getting much warmer, lawns are showing this reaction if they are not getting enough water in certain areas. Check your sprinkler coverage often to make sure that each of the sprinkler heads are spraying all the way to the adjacent heads. This will insure the proper overlap and eliminate dry spots around the heads themselves and in the middle of the lawn. Also be sure to check the coverage along the edges adjacent to rock or concrete, as these areas will heat up and dry out more quickly.

If you have questions that you're having a hard time getting answers to, give us a call or send us a email at starnursery.com.

Utah Star Nursery 1145 W. Sunset Blvd. St. George, UT (1/4 mile west of Bluff St.) (435) 688-STAR (7827)

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