

April Showers

It has been said that “April showers bring May flowers”. This is especially true in the desert, although it is usually the March showers that bring April flowers. I remember one year in particular. It was the spring of 1998. According to my aging memory, it seemed that there was a light rain almost every day during the month of March that year. Then it happened, the temperatures warmed a little as April began, the sun shone brightly and desert wildflowers literally came to life. For at least three weeks that April the desert boasted a carpet of color. It made news headlines, people went on drives just to see the spectacular display and the pollinating insects thought they had died and gone to heaven. The previous time this had happened in the Mojave Desert was in 1979, although, if you look at the big picture, it usually takes place about once every ten years.



It has also been said that “You can lead a horse to water... but first you have to have a horse”. This is our case this year as far as the spring flower display is concerned. Southern Nevada has had an extremely dry spring. February had only 0.30 inches of rain and it all came on the last day of the month. March had no rainfall and that was followed by only a trace in April. So far in May we have only had a trace of measurable rainfall. It is a good thing that desert flower seeds are tough. They can lie dormant in their hard shells for decades before the conditions are just right. Then they will break through their tough exterior and give us a color display that will burn in our memories for the next ten years until they put on a show again. I’m looking forward to the next show sometime before this decade ends.

“Happiness held is the seed; Happiness shared is the flower.”
— John Harrigan

FAVORITE FLORA: TUHLBAGHIA VIOLACEA - SOCIETY GARLIC



Society Garlic (*Tuhlbaghia violacea*) seems to fall in to the category of a love it or hate it type of plant. But as with every plant, proper planning and placement in a garden can lead to maximizing its potential and limiting its downfalls. This herbaceous perennial is native to South America. It blooms from July to September with pink flowers which can be very showy when planted in mass. The flowers are sweet smelling, similar to Hyacinths. Society Garlic grows in clumps 1-2 feet tall and 1 foot wide. This low maintenance plant has numerous positive qualities one would look for in a plant. But when its leaves become bruised or sometimes even from just the rustling from

the wind, it can release a strong garlic smell. Some find this smell outside a window pleasing while others detest it.

If you are unsure about your reaction but love the plant otherwise, there are typically a number of places in a landscape where this plant can be viewed from a distance away from open windows or sensitive noses. Society Garlic is best planted in full sun but can be planted in partial shade which may reduce the quantity of flowers produced. Both the flowers and leaves are edible and are typically used to add mild flavoring in soups and salads. Pair Society Garlic with other edibles such as a Plum (*Prunus salicina*) or Anna Apple tree (*Malus domestica 'Anna'*), Rosemary (*Rosemarinus officinalis*) and peppermint (*Mentha piperita*).



Photo of the Month

Concrete Sunrise
In the Nevada Desert
Matt Durham