



Placitas Garden Tour Help Desk

## Gardening Questions?

Ask a Master Gardener:  
emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org



Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners

[www.sandovalmastergardeners.org](http://www.sandovalmastergardeners.org)

[www.facebook.com/SCMGGrow](https://www.facebook.com/SCMGGrow)

[www.instagram.com/semggrow/](https://www.instagram.com/semggrow/)

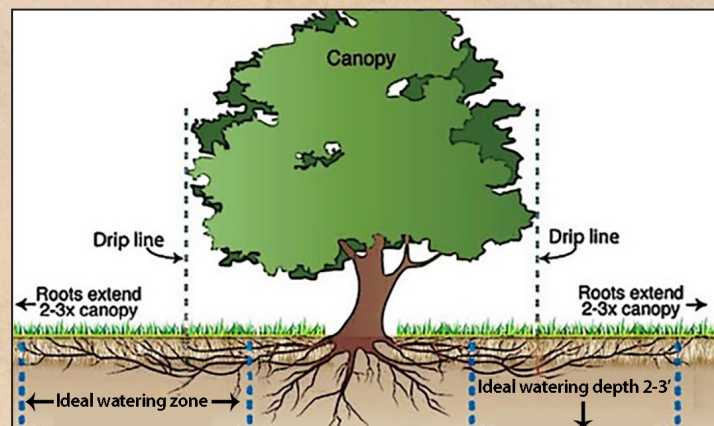


**BE BOLD.** Shape the Future.<sup>®</sup>  
**College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences**

Extension Master Gardener  
Sandoval County

## Water Conservation in Your Garden

- Conserve water long term by purchasing native or native-adapted plants. Ask a Sandoval Extension Master Gardener to advise you on your specific plant choices.
- Plan for a supplemental automatic drip system.
- Frequency of watering is dependent on the type of soil (sandy vs clay and combinations) and its ability to retain water at and below the root depth.
- For established trees and shrubs, water at the drip zone and to a depth below the feeding roots (2-3 ft) at least once per month during the winter and at least twice a month during the summer. Water thoroughly via a slow-flowing hose that is repositioned manually or by a soaker hose assembly snaked around the drip zone of the tree or shrub.



Source: [TreesforMissoula.org](http://TreesforMissoula.org)  
Modified by Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners to include watering depth

## Avoid unnecessary water loss

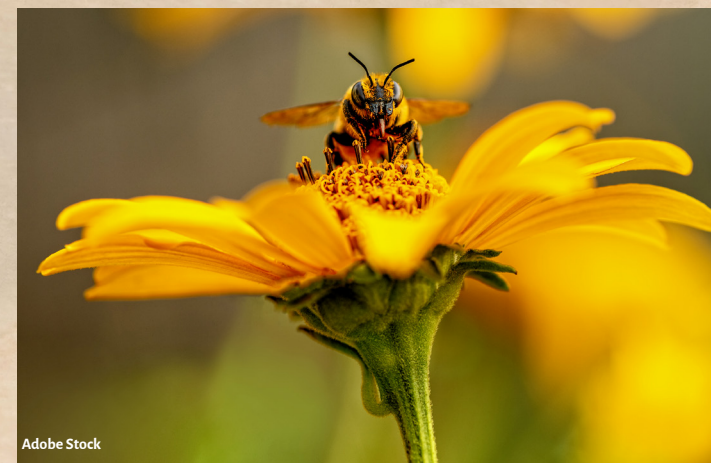
- High-elevation sun and strong winds present challenges in maintaining consistent moisture in the soil for plant roots and encourages water transpiration loss through the leaves.
- Mulch trees and shrubs to prevent evaporation, protect roots from temperature extremes, and to provide a microbial interface at the soil surface. An organic mulch (i.e., wood chips) is the best choice.
- Do not *volcano* mulch (mulch piled high against a tree trunk). Keep mulch at least 5 inches away from the tree trunk to maintain a healthy environment for the tree bark.
- A well-designed emitter irrigation system will help new plants become established. The timing and duration of watering can be adjusted as well as the emitter placements as the plant grows. Ask a Master Gardener for help on this.



Mulched drought-tolerant blanket flowers (*Gallardia*)

## Protect New Mexico Pollinators

- New Mexico has over 300 species of native bees, including some that nest in the ground, and other pollinators.
- Encourage native pollinators by planting pollinator-friendly plants and maintaining free spaces planted with native flowering shrubs and wildflowers. Ask a Master Gardener for recommendations.
- Avoid unnecessary and indiscriminate use of herbicides and pesticides.
- Control pests by observing seasonally for activity and use mechanical means to eliminate pests and weeds whenever practical.
- Ask a Master Gardener about an *Integrated Pest Management* approach to controlling pests in your garden.



Adobe Stock

Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners  
Presents a

## Guide for New Homeowners

*Tips for High Desert Gardening  
in Central New Mexico*



*Welcome Gardeners  
to Sandoval County, New Mexico*



Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners

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# Who Are the Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners (SEMG)?

We are gardening enthusiasts trained and certified by New Mexico State University College of Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences and operate under sponsorship of the Sandoval County Extension Agriculture Agent.

## What Do We Do?

- Assist residential gardeners with their horticulture and landscape questions
- Provide information tables at community events
- Organize and volunteer in demonstration and food-growing gardens in the community
- Educate the community on the latest New Mexico State University research-based gardening methods
- Help gardeners conserve precious resources in an arid climate
- Help gardeners select the *right plant for the right place*
- Inform gardeners on how to build healthy soils for their plants
- With the exception of soil testing, provide all services at no charge
- Staff a year-round Email Helpline:  
[emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org)



The Rio Rancho Waterwise Demonstration Garden, nestled between the Esther Bone Library and the Veterans Memorial Park in Rio Rancho is planted and maintained by SEMG volunteers. Distinct landscapes feature native and native-adapted plants, enhanced by effective irrigation and the use of mulch to avoid heat island effects. Visit the garden to find out what grows best in our county.



Mature Chinese Pistache Tree (*Pistachio chinensiss*) in Placitas

## Central New Mexico High Desert Climate

- Don't let the warm sunny days of New Mexico fool you. High desert nights can dip to the 20s or lower in the winter, and that, combined with arid conditions, can be damaging to plant roots.
- Most of residential Sandoval County, including Algodones, Bernalillo, Corrales, Placitas, and Rio Rancho, lies within the cold hardy zones of 7a (0 deg. to 5 deg. F) to 8b (10 deg to 20 deg F) zones with an average yearly rainfall of just 12 inches or less.
- Property microclimates due to terrain, exposure, and shelter may widen the growing zone range from 6b to 9a.
- The average frost-free date is May 9, and the average first-freeze date is October 15.
- Before purchasing a plant, research its cold hardiness rating by reading the plant label at the nursery, or ask a Sandoval Extension Master Gardener.
- Become familiar with the cold hardiness limits of your property.
- Take advantage of microclimates on your property to provide protection for your plants – shade, warmth, wind screen.
- Strong winds and intense high elevation sun present challenges in establishing new plants and maintaining them.
- **Right Plant, Right Place.** Climate-Ready Trees List for Albuquerque available from The Nature Conservancy: [nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NM\\_ClimateReadyTrees.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NM_ClimateReadyTrees.pdf)

## Planning Your Garden & Landscape

### Know your climate and microclimates

- Pick the best site in your landscape for the plant.
- Observe sun lighting throughout the day, seasonal wind patterns, and sheltered areas.
- Protect against strong winds, harsh sun, and pests by using row cover & other protective screens and barriers.

### Know your soil

- New Mexico soils are naturally alkaline (~pH 8), which inhibits plants from taking up iron and other elements that are in the soil.
- Water deeply to push soil salts below the feeding root depth and to allow plants to absorb key nutrients.
- Soil conditions in the county vary and that will impact water absorption and retention.
- Have your soil tested if you are planning to grow vegetables, fruit trees, or shrubs. Use compost (organic matter) or the recommended amount of fertilizer.
- Mulch soil to protect and conserve water. Organic mulch is the best for trees & shrubs.
- Ask a Master Gardener for more details on soil composition.



Vegetable seedlings in the Corrales Seed2Need greenhouse

### Know your plants

Research plants before purchasing from a nursery, ensure they are rated for your growing zone, and transplant at the right time. Ask a Sandoval Extension Master Gardener if you have questions.

### Know how to transplant

- Plan for space and soil volume requirements for fully grown trees and shrubs.
- Fall and early spring are the best times to plant trees and shrubs. The cooler soils and ambient temperatures will allow for slower root growth and time to get established before summer heat.
- Prepare the root ball of a tree or shrub by shaving the overgrown roots and cutting any circular roots. Backfill the hole with native soil just to the top of the tree/ shrub root flare. Tamp the soil down and top with 3" of mulch. Do not plant too deep!
- Prune and shape as needed prior to planting and on a periodic basis thereafter, ideally in late winter/early spring.
- Water transplants frequently at the root ball circumference and beyond until established, up to 2 years, to encourage root growth. Gradually taper off the frequency. Water deeply at the drip line and beyond. Water again when the soil is dry to 6-8 inches.

### Vegetable, fruit, and ornamental planting

- Most vegetables and smaller ornamentals benefit from growing in raised garden beds that are filled with soil mixes designed for container gardens. Ask a Master Gardener on preparing a good container garden mix for your applications.
- The use of protective structures, such as hoops, support garden shade cloth or row covers that serve to moderate our extreme high elevation sun by reducing transmission of light in rated percentages. Tomatoes, peppers, and other sensitive plants will benefit from this protection in the early growing season with longer days. Shade cloth and grow covers afford protection against garden pests, too. Just remove as needed for pollination later in the season.
- Ask a Master Gardener about having your soil tested to increase production of fruit and vegetable crops. Specific soil amendments and/ or fertilizer may be necessary for effective plant development.



Raised covered beds in Corrales garden