

# Feeding the Elephants

## By Diana Iglesias, Master Gardener

A mid-morning trek to the city zoo was a fun outing for us in the Master Gardener Raised Bed Edible Garden as we delivered a truckload of sugarcane to the elephants.

We planted the sugar cane in our demonstration garden last year and watched the cane grow to over eight feet tall, but didn't know what to do with it. By chance, a visitor to our recent plant sale, who works at the zoo, said that the elephants love it. So off we went with a truckload.



The five members of the herd quickly chewed up their morning treat. Even 14 month old baby, Nandi, joined in the fun and ate her share. Their trainer told us that they rarely get any sugarcane, so it was a nice addition to their regular diet of sumac and mesquite trees. Some of our sugarcane was also given to the bears, giraffes and monkeys.

While at the zoo, we learned that the elephants are fed randomly every 20-40 minutes, with large amounts of leafy vegetation. In addition to mesquite and sumac, they also like acacia, bamboo and banana. They even enjoy chomping on grapevines, roses and umbrella grass.



You can help by donating many types of tree prunings and grass clippings to the zoo. If you can't deliver it, they may be able to make arrangements to pick them up from you. Contact Carlos Lopez at 837-8187 or Sue T.(elephant supervisor) at 631-6053. [Check the list of trees](#) and other vegetation they would like. This is a great way to reduce land fill waste and help out the zoo.

Photos/TMoore and DWindham

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