

Let's Talk Plants!

Newsletter of the San Diego Horticultural Society

March 2008, Number 162

Going on a Water Diet

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SAN DIEGO
HORTICULTURAL
SOCIETY

On the Cover: Planting Sculpture

FEBRUARY MEETING PHOTOS

Photos: Cheryl Leedom



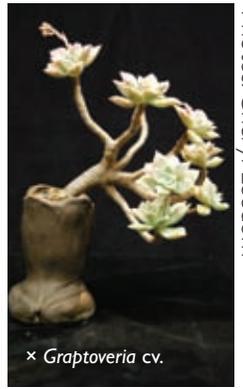
Billbergia nutans



Fuchsia triphylla 'Firecracker'



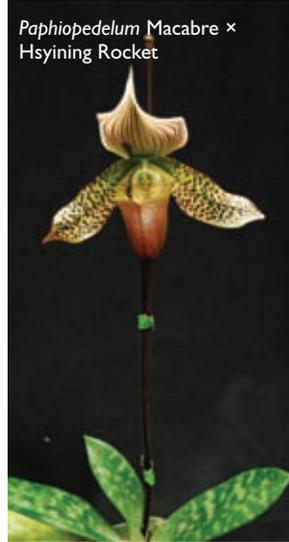
Encephalartos trispinosus



× *Graftoveria* cv.



Lachenalia aloides var. *quadricolor*



Paphiopedelum Macabre ×
Hsyining Rocket



Oxalis megalorrhiza



Paphiopedelum primulinum
× Emerald Sea

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Cover Image: This striking image is of "Turtle Bamboo" made by artist Marcia Donahue, our March speaker (see below). It was photographed by Marcia in her garden in Berkeley, CA.

The San Diego Horticultural Society

MEETINGS

The San Diego Horticultural Society meets the 2nd Monday of every month (except June) from 6:00pm to 9:00pm at the Surfside Race Place, Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd. Admission is free and all are welcome. We encourage you to join the organization to receive the monthly newsletter and numerous other benefits. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

MEETING SCHEDULE

5:00 – 6:00 Meeting room setup
6:00 – 6:45 Vendor sales, opportunity drawing ticket sales, lending library
6:45 – 8:00 Announcements, speaker, drawing for three plants
8:00 – 8:15 Break for vendor sales, opportunity drawing ticket sales, lending library
8:15 – 9:00 Plant forum and opportunity drawing. Vendor sales continue to 9:15.
9:00 – 9:15 Final vendor sales, lending library

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

To join, send your check to: San Diego Horticultural Society, Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 231869, Encinitas, CA 92023-1869. Individual/one year—\$25, two years—\$45, five years—\$100; Family/one year—\$30, two years—\$55, five years—\$120; Group or Business/one year—\$30; Students/\$16 (w/proof of enrollment); Contributing/\$75 or more; Life/\$600. For membership questions contact membership@sdhortsoc.org or Sheldon Lisker at (951) 244-3502.

FUTURE MEETINGS & EVENTS IN 2008

April 14 Developing Bioenergy From Camelina, A "New" Crop for the U.S.

May 12 SPECIAL EVENING – Ken Druse, author of *Making More Plants*

June 2-8 Philadelphia Garden Tour (see page 8 for details)

NO JUNE MEETING

June 14 – July 6 SDHS Display Garden and Horticulturists of the Day at the San Diego County Fair

July 14 Robert Herald, Report on our June Philadelphia Garden Tour

August 11 Pat Welsh, Growing and Harvesting Winter Crops

September 8 Renee Shepherd, Renee's Garden Seeds

October 13 Bob Dimattia, Bamboo

November 10 TBA

December 8 TBA

www.sdhortsoc.org

Website sponsored by **ALL.EA Web Design & Horticultural Photography**, www.alllea.com

Next Meeting: March 10, 2008, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Topic: MARCIA DONAHUE ON "PLANTING SCULPTURE, SCULPTING PLANTS"

Admission and parking are both free and all are welcome.

Meeting Place: Del Mar Fairgrounds, Surfside Race Place, Del Mar

Info: (760) 295-7089

Berkeley area artist and sculptor **Marcia Donahue** has created one of the most original, fascinating and beautiful gardens in the country, and it has appeared in countless books and magazines. She'll share this passion in her talk about the gardener as sculptor. Pruning, placing plants with objects, making objects for the garden, noticing combinations: are all sculptural activities. Marcia has been practicing this kind of sculpture in her garden and others for thirty years, and speaks about her experience.

Marcia Donahue has a Masters of Fine Arts from Lone Mountain College, San Francisco. She works as an artist making sculptures for gardens and gardeners, public and private. She and her garden in Berkeley have been collaborating for the past thirty years. Both are still works-in-progress. Her garden is open to the public on Sunday afternoons and for the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program. Marcia may be best known for granting permission to gardeners to be as playful and adventurous in their gardens as they care or dare to be. ☞



Ken Druse

The Mission of the San Diego Horticultural Society

is to promote the enjoyment, art, knowledge and public awareness of horticulture in the San Diego area, while providing the opportunity for education and research.

ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 1994

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Susi Torre-Bueno – President, Newsletter Editor
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Lucy Warren – Secretary, Liaison to H&G Shows
Liz Youngflesh – Chair-Volunteer Committee

Let's Talk Plants!, the newsletter of the San Diego Horticultural Society, is published the first Monday of every month.

Editor/Advertising: Susi Torre-Bueno; 1941 Vista Grande Dr., Vista, CA 92084; voice (760) 295-7089, fax (760) 295-7119, newsletter@sdhortsoc.org.

Calendar: Send details by the 10th of the month before event to calendar@sdhortsoc.org.

Sponsorship Info: Susi Torre-Bueno (above).

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BECOME A SPONSOR!

Do you own a garden-related business?

SDHS sponsorships have high recognition and valuable benefits, including a link to your website, discounts on memberships for your employees, and free admission to SDHS events. This is a wonderful way to show your support for the SDHS. Sponsors help pay for our free meetings, annual college scholarships, and other important programs. Sponsorships start at just \$100/year; contact info@sdhortsoc.org or (760) 295-7089.

Sponsors are listed on page 9; those with ads in the newsletter have the words **SDHS Sponsor** above their ads.

We thank them for their extra support!

Important Member Information

GET CREATIVE WITH US!

The SDHS needs an enthusiastic and energetic volunteer to lead our marketing efforts; this will be a tremendously fun and creative experience! Have you got some inspired ideas about how we can market our tree book outside San Diego, or resourceful ways to promote SDHS and increase attendance at events? Here's the perfect opportunity to really flex your imagination muscle and put your energy to good use. Please call Susi at (760) 295-7089 and let's talk!

THANKS, VOLUNTEERS!

As we go to press the Feb. 16th garden tour is still in the future – we'll thank all those swell volunteers next month. The Spring Home/Garden Show is also several weeks away, so look for that list of volunteers in the April issue. Until then, a great big THANKS to everyone who helped – we couldn't do these events without you!

ANNUAL SPECIAL SPEAKER



Each spring we bring an exceptional speaker to San Diego for an special evening that replaces our regular meeting. It is usually someone who hasn't spoken here before and/or who is nationally known.

This May 12th we are delighted to present a **Special Evening with Ken Druse**, the award-winning author of 16 garden books and passionate hands-on gardener. Ken will be speaking about "Making More Plants: Adventures in Horticulture," and sharing the latest propagation findings and his own propagation techniques. Tickets are \$15 (members) and \$20 (non-members), and may be ordered on our website, along with copies of Ken's books. This event will take place at the Scottish Rite Event Center in Mission Valley. Details are at www.sdhortsoc.org.



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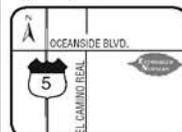
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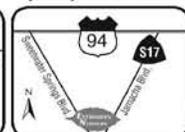


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FALL/WINTER HOURS

Monday-Saturday.. 7:30am-4:30pm
 Sunday..... 9:00am-4:30pm

Please call for Spring hours

THIS SHOW'S FOR YOU!

23rd Annual Spring Home/Garden Show

FEBRUARY 29, MARCH 1 & 2

OWNERSHIP WITH PRIDE

By Lucy Warren

Some of our newer members may not know the what and why of our involvement in the Spring Home/Garden Show. It all goes back to our mission statement: to promote the enjoyment, art, knowledge and public awareness of horticulture in the San Diego area, while providing the opportunity for education and research.

We host a beautiful Preview Garden Party and celebrate our Horticulturist of the Year. Our organization is also in charge of the judging of the gardens at the show. We created the rules. We provide the judges and the awards.

One of our most important awards is the "Perfection in Nomenclature" award whereby we ask the Garden Masters to label their plants with the correct botanical names in the proper nomenclature. Sue Fouquette and her assistants spend hours checking and double-checking the plant names for accuracy. Why all this trouble for a little detail? If we don't insist on proper nomenclature, who else in San Diego will?!

The Spring Home/Garden Show is one of our greatest outreach opportunities to the public. When our volunteers are selling plants or books or memberships, they are offering people the opportunity to learn more about plants and good cultural practices appropriate for our community. That's a great charge and responsibility.

We sponsor the educational seminars at the show. They are not just any people who can talk about plants, but are carefully selected as experts in their field who have the right information to share with the public. These people are the best of the best, we encourage you to come and support them, you'll learn a lot.

Whether you're new at gardening or an old hand in the fields, we encourage you to get involved in this fabulous opportunity to help your organization and the public at large. It is the people in our society which make it as wonderful as it is. Just by being a member you have stepped up into a new level of gardening and horticulture. Join a committee, support the activities, show up, come to the pre-view gala, be an active part of this wonderful event. 🌿

SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Friday, Feb 29

12:15 pm – *Mexican Herbal Plants for Beauty and Use*, Phillip Soto Mares, El Duende Tequila, Inc.

1:00 pm – *European Floral Design and Hand Tied Bouquets*, René Van Rems, AIFD. Book signing to follow presentation

1:45 pm – *Living With Wildfire, Nature, and Climate Change*, Dan Eliseuson, Business Ecology & Consulting

2:30 pm – *Garden Treasures from Mexico and the Southwest*, Nan Sterman, Author, Plant Soup, Inc. Book signing to follow presentation.

3:15 pm – *Mysteries of the California Native Landscape*, Greg Rubin, California's Own Native Landscape Design

4:00 pm – *Spring Care for Fruit Trees*, Tom Del Hotal, Fantasia Gardens

Continued on page 13

From The Board

By Susi Torre-Bueno

IMPORTANT CHANGES AND NEW MEMBER BENEFITS

At the January board meeting we discussed ways to keep up with the increasing cost of providing you with outstanding speakers, an exceptional newsletter, and other member benefits. We'll be doing some belt-tightening this year, starting with temporarily suspending most donations except for \$3000 in college scholarships, up to \$200 in science fair awards, \$500 in prize money for the San Diego County Fair, and a few other things. The contents of our two storage spaces have been combined into one space. We will be selling our tree book at more garden events in Southern California. We're looking into ways to reduce costs for the newsletter, too, including making it available in digital format for those members who would like to receive it on-line.

In addition, after much thoughtful consideration we approved a number of changes that will allow SDHS to continue to be the exciting society it has been. Here are the changes we've made:

- Slightly increase ad rates to help offset the rising cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.
- Starting with the July meeting we will begin charging non-members \$5 to attend our regular monthly meetings. This is probably the most noticeable change, and we hope it'll encourage people who attend frequently, including spouses of members, to join the Society.
- Sell select plants at the Spring Home/Garden Show.
- Increase regular dues by the very modest amount of \$5 for a 1-year individual membership and correspondingly for other categories. This will be the first dues increase we've had since our founding in 1994. Student dues will remain at \$16/year. Dues for business and group memberships will increase to \$50/year. This change will go into effect in July.

Here are three new member benefits you'll enjoy in addition to your previous benefits:

- When you renew your membership each year you'll get FREE GUEST PASSES! Renew for 1 year and get 2 passes, renew for 2 years and get 4 passes, renew for 5 years and get 6 passes.
- You'll be able to attend all our regular meetings for FREE.
- You will get a 25% discount for tickets to our annual special speaker. This year our May special speaker will be inspiring author Ken Druse (see insert).

We welcome your input and suggestions on ways we can further improve our financial situation. Contact me at info@sdhortsoc.org with your ideas.

🌿

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Sunset's Dream Garden Awards 2008

Sunset magazine wants to give prizes to great gardens, and we're confident that SDHS members have some of the best around! Share your garden by entering their 2nd biennial *Dream Garden Awards* program, open to both professional designers and home gardeners (the two categories will be judged separately). The program recognizes the best of residential garden design in the 14 Western states and British Columbia, Canada. Winners may be published in a future issue of *Sunset*.

HOME GARDENERS: Enter your home garden for a chance to win the Grand Prize: \$1000 cash plus \$1500 in plants from Monrovia Nursery. Second Place: \$500 cash plus \$750 in plants. Third Place: \$250 cash prize and \$250 in plants. Deadline for home gardeners: Entries must be postmarked by April 16 and received by April. To enter download an entry form at sunset.com/gardencontest and click the "Home Gardeners" link or call 650/324-5632 for an entry form. The garden must be designed by the homeowner without the assistance of a gardening professional but not necessarily installed by the homeowner.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS: Enter in one of four categories: Regional Style, Incredible Makeover, Outdoor Living, Small Space. Deadlines for professionals: apply for entry package by March 12; completed entries must be postmarked by April 1. To enter go to www.sunset.com/gardencontest and click the "Landscape Architects and Designers" link or call 650/324-5632. There is a \$25 entry fee.

Sunset now has a garden blog, too! Visit <http://freshdirt.sunset.com> and see what your president has to say about lasagna composting, plus learn lots of other useful stuff.

SDHS AT THE SCIENCE FAIR:

Can You Judge Projects by Young Horticulturists?

Each year we award \$200 in cash prizes to student projects relating to horticulture at the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair (www.gsdsef.org). This year judging will be Wednesday, April 2, at the Balboa Park Activity Center. If you can help (it takes 3-5 hours) please contact our scholarship coordinator Al Myrick at (619) 286-0561 or djalmyrick@netscape.net.

We award science fair projects that show a learned understanding of objective experimental design, which is at the core of practicing science and conducting research. Projects we select reflect the following criteria:

1. the question was chosen after adequate background reading
2. the question was set forth in hypotheses that can be tested using adequate experimental and control samples
3. objective methods were used to test the effect(s) of the variable(s)
4. the results were quantified
5. the project demonstrated the use of the scientific method
6. the conclusions address the question, based on examination of the data generated by the study

The SDHS wants to encourage students who are really attempting to learn and practice plant sciences investigation. We

Continued on page 13

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Plants That Produce

PITAYA, THE DRAGON FRUIT

By Richard Frost

Imagine a vining cactus like Christmas Cactus, but with stem sections up to 16" long fragrant blossoms that open at night, and sweet fruit the size of a softball. This is what our neighbors to the south call *Pitaya*, and what peoples of the eastern hemisphere have named Dragon Fruit. It is easy to grow and a pleasure to eat.

Cutting the fruit open, one finds a texture and scent similar to a fragrant cantaloupe. The flesh of the fruit contains numerous black poppy-sized seeds that are eaten with the fruit. I recommend it for breakfast, in salads, as an appetizer wrapped in prosciutto, in ice cream or sorbet – any way you might use melon. The fruit exterior color is often green or red, and the interior ranges from white to dark purple. Exotic colors and variegation are also available.

The fruit is sold regularly at produce stores and farmers markets here in San Diego and throughout the state. U.S. vendors typically ask \$5 to \$8 per fruit, perhaps more in upscale locations. In Mexico and Latin America the fruit sells for 50¢ to \$2 alongside many other varieties of cacti fruits. Some growers in those areas are now up to U.S. standards for import, so San Diego consumers will likely see prices drop to the \$2-\$3 range in the next year or so.

About 400 years ago the *Pitaya* was imported from Central America to the Orient. There it was cultivated not only for its taste but for the sepal-covered fruits that are reminiscent of dragon scales. From its appearance grew stories of mystical powers and, ultimately, the name Dragon Fruit.

An important point to note: *Pitaya* is different from *Pitahaya* – a columnar cactus with similar looking fruits native to northern Mexico. Over the last 200 years, writers in the U.S. and Europe have confused the two names to the point of absurdity. In central Mexico, you will find the two fruits being sold in different bins, with the less desirable *Pitahaya* at a cheaper price. In the U.S., you will find *Pitaya* sold under both names!

All true *Pitaya* are members of the genus *Hylocereus*. The species *H. guatemalensis* is very adaptable to our climate. Its cultivar 'American Beauty' is a three-time taste test winner at the annual *Pitaya* Festival held in Southern California. *H. undatus* has been actively grown and bred by the California Rare Fruit Growers (www.crfg.org). Two other species, *H. ocamponis* and *H. polyrhizus*, are grown less for produce but widely used in breeding programs. The hybrid 'Physical Graffiti' has a sweet but complex taste and is repeatedly a runner-up in taste tests.

To grow *Pitaya*: get a single stem section 8" or longer from a friend, put some Rootone® on it, bury it half way up in a pot with filled with citrus soil mix (cactus mix is too low in organics for this native of the Yucatan area), and water it semi-regularly. It flourishes under 30% shade, dislikes the midday sun, and perishes in a hard freeze. It will need a trellis to climb on or be tied to. Some varieties are known to need a cross-cultivar, so either avoid them or get a few of each. If you are friendless in the *Pitaya* category, you will find a huge variety for sale and a beautiful online catalog at www.tropicalfruitnursery.com/dragon.

SDHS member Richard Frost is also member of the California Rare Fruit Growers. For more information, see www.frostconcepts.com/horticulture. 🌱

Garden Gourmet

BEHOLD THE HUMBLE POTATO

By Alice Lowe

Much maligned as long as I can remember, potatoes, we were first told, make you fat! Then we learned that it's not the potatoes themselves, it's what you're putting in them – the butter, cheese, sour cream, etc. – or putting them in, a kettle of fat. But then they became culpable for a much greater sin in the age of Atkins – carbs. In spite of it all, potatoes are still a popular and fundamental part of the American diet, a reliable standby and incomparable comfort food, as well as fat, cholesterol and sodium free, high in fiber, potassium, and other minerals and vitamins.

Let's hear it for potatoes – they're celebrated in various locales at planting or harvest time, most notably August Potato Days in Barnesville, Minnesota, and there's a website for The Potato Underground. We all have our favorite potato dishes and recipes – here are a couple of mine. Note: There are many potato varieties, with specific ones recommended for specific uses (e.g., russets for baking), but I typically use the red ones or Yukon Gold regardless of the preparation – I'll leave it to you to choose your own favorites.

HERBED POTATO PIE

Cut 4 potatoes into thin (1/8") slices

Combine 2 tablespoons each of melted butter & olive oil with 1-2 teaspoons of herbs de province (or other crushed dried herbs).

Brush a pizza pan or shallow baking dish with a little of this mixture, & then arrange the potato slices evenly around the pan, overlapping them in circles.

Garlic Lovers' Option – toss several whole, unpeeled garlic cloves in the remaining butter/oil & scatter on top of the potatoes.

Drizzle the rest of the butter/oil over them.

Bake at 450° about an hour, until browned & crisp on top.

Season with salt & pepper and serve up in quarters.

MONSTER MASH

With a couple of potatoes, cut up into similar sized chunks any or all of an assortment of carrots, rutabagas, turnips, parsnips. Cover with water, add a little salt, and boil until tender. Smash or mash them to your liking – I do them coarsely with a fork, but many prefer smoothly pureed – with a little chicken or veg stock and just a bit of butter or olive oil. Then stir in ground black pepper and a big dollop of horseradish to give them an earthy tang.

Asian Variation – Instead of stock & butter, I'll add a mixture of 2 tablespoons miso paste, 2 tablespoons mirin (or sherry) and 2 teaspoons sesame oil (for 4 servings) and then substitute wasabi paste for the horseradish.

Member Alice Lowe loves to garden, cook and eat, not necessarily in that order. 🌱

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**Price does not include travel to and
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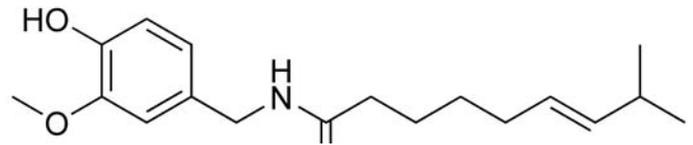
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How Hot is That?



STRUCTURE OF CAPSAICIN

By Ellen Reardon & Carl Price

Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about chile peppers. Actually, the "peppers" part is a misnomer originated by Columbus when he thought he had reached India and the spicy fruits were part of the natives' pepper collection. Chilies originated in Bolivia or Brazil and were spread by birds to other parts of the Americas and by Columbus to Europe. They have been a part of the American diet since at least 7500 BC, and cultivated for over 6000 years. Although there are more than twenty species of chilies, most domesticated forms belong to one of five: *Capsicum annuum*, *C. baccatum*, *C. chinense*, *C. frutescens* and *C. pubescens*.

In 1912, Wilbur Scoville developed a scale for measuring the "heat" produced by varying chilies. Most scientists scoff at his procedure: diluting the capsaicin with sweetened water until a panel of organoleptic taste-testers can no longer feel the burn, but it has stood the test of time for chile buffs. Today, high-pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC) is being used for a more accurate appraisal of capsaicin content of specific varieties of chilies. Starting with the sweet bell pepper as zero, the Habanero has traditionally been rated as the hottest with a Scoville ranking of over 300,000 units. Although the result has yet to be verified, the Naga Jolokia chile from India tested out at 855,000 Scovill units. Now that's a hot chile!

Today, in addition to the variety of salsas, rellanos and other foodstuffs from a number of different cultures worldwide, capsaicin is being used to treat pain from arthritis, cystitis and human-immunodeficiency virus. Chilies are often used as short-acting psychoactive drugs. Our bodies produce endorphins, neurotransmitters that are produced as natural painkillers in response to exposure to capsaicin. Dr. Andrew Weil, a professor of alternative medicine at the University of Arizona, has designed a technique called "mouth-surfing" to maximize the psychoactive experience. One eats small amounts of chilies at a constant rate, maintaining a "steady burn" to maximize the endorphin release.

In the early 1980's, Rod Sharpe and Dave Evans, then of DNA Plant Technology, used somaclonal variation to produce bite-sized red, orange and yellow sweet chilies. This fairly low-tech methodology requires stressing the plant tissue in cell culture, growing out the new plants and testing for sweetness. Most grocery stores now carry these crunchy, tasty tidbits.

We here in the southwest have no dearth of expertise on chilies; Dave DeWitt, Paul Bosland and Mary O'Connell at the University of New Mexico immediately come to mind and are avid publishers. Dave is responsible for the journal *Chile Pepper*.

One of the more pleasant uses of chilies in the southwest is the ristra, the chile wreath on the front door that says "welcome" to passersby. The ristra is truly a warm, not hot, tradition!

Note: The genus *Capsicum* is a member of the Solanaceae. The peppers of southeast Asia are members of the genus *Piper* of the family Piperaceae.

Members Ellen Reardon and Carl Price are retired from Rutgers University, where they conducted research on the molecular biology of plastids and served as editors of journals in their field. ☘



We now have over 1200 members! Hope to see all of you at upcoming meetings. We encourage you to become active participants and share in the fun; to volunteer see page 4 and below. A warm hello to the following folks who have joined recently:

We welcome Aristocrat Landscape Maintenance Company, ArtPlantae, and Christiane Holmquist Landscape Design as our newest Sponsor Members.

- Monique Miller & Barbara Deed
- Sharon Gahman
- Heidi Bishop
- Anne & Danny Wolfe
- Iris Beck
- Carol Landers
- Leigh Krawer
- April Pierce

NEW ADVERTISERS:
ArtPlantae, PAGE 21
Encinitas Garden Festival, INSERT
S.D. County Orchid Society, BACK COVER
Plant Sale & Garden Festival, INSERT
Quail Herb Festival, INSERT
Succulent Gardening, PAGE 16
Weidners' Gardens, PAGE 23

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Contact LizYoungflesh at (858) 449-5342 or gardenglories@hotmail.com. We need talented people in many areas, so put **your** skills to good use on fun projects!

HORT BUCKS ARE GREAT!

Kudos to the members below who brought in new members and therefore received Hort Bucks worth \$5 towards raffle tickets, name-tags, *Plant Forum* CDs or dues. To get **your** Hort Bucks just ask your friends to give your name when they join. The number after the person's name indicates how many members they recruited in 2008:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Linda Bressler (1) | Bobbi Hirschhoff (1) | Taylor Murphy (1) |
| Sharon Graham (1) | Miriam Kirk (1) | Samantha Owen (1) |
| Ginny Hawkins (1) | Shelley Moore (1) | Donna Sullivan (1) |

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DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS!
See Page 22 for Details

What's Up at Quail Botanical Gardens?

HERBS TAKE US ON A TOUR THROUGH TIME

By Sally A. Sandler, Docent

As we prepare the Herb Garden at Quail for the upcoming festival, I am reminded of just how vast is the subject of herbs. They not only nourish the body, mind and spirit, but herbs take us on a journey through time. With a little research, you can discover plants that were used millennia ago, learn the ancient legends associated with them, and gain a sense of other places and other people.

Indeed, herbs were present in the dim recesses of prehistoric times as the first instruments of the gods and as servants of magicians. They were carved on cave walls, concocted into strange brews, and dedicated to deities. They were carried by Crusaders, prized by Chippewa and Cherokees; used as crowns for poets.

Did you know, for example, that Cleopatra made *Aloe vera* gel and tea tree oil part of her personal beauty kit? That Achilles used portions of yarrow (*Achillea*) to treat his soldiers' wounds in the battle of Troy? That Artemisia is named for the queen of Greece in 353 B.C. who was a famous botanist of her time? That the Romans made liberal use of lavender in their baths and named it from the Latin root "lavare," which means "to wash?" Did you know—somewhat comically—that Pilgrims used the leaves of balsamic smelling costmary (Bible Leaf) as bookmarks in the Testaments, both to note their pages and to inhale to avoid falling asleep in church?

I never did care much about history—at least not what I learned from those rote lessons in high school textbooks. But now, 40 years later, my schooling comes from these humble and majestic sages of the past that connect us to our roots. Every herb has a story to tell; we have only to stop and listen.

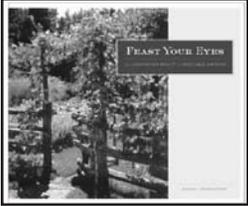
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Book Review

FEAST YOUR EYES: THE UNEXPECTED BEAUTY OF VEGETABLE GARDENS

By Susan J. Pennington

Reviewed by Caroline McCullagh



Sometimes you just get lucky. I ordered *Feast Your Eyes* from a clearance sale catalog on the basis of its name and about a ten word description. It's a beautiful book about a subject you know I love, if you read this column with any regularity.

Susan Pennington wrote it during a fellowship year at the Smithsonian Institution and so had access to their resources. It's short, only 153 pages, but includes 100 color illustrations and 16 black and white photographs from the Archives of American Gardens donated to the Smithsonian by the Garden Clubs of America.

The book is scholarly in format, but not in tone. It has extensive endnotes and a selected bibliography. It's hard to believe that you won't find something in here that you want to follow up on, so you'll be glad of those. Pennington's prose is not scholarly if you equate scholarly with stiff, unreadable text. Her style is relaxed and easy to read.

It's a surprise that she's not a gardener. She writes, "I am an archaeologist and therefore more accustomed to dealing with plants that have been dead for thousands of years. My own gardening skills are nonexistent, and I wreak havoc whenever I venture forth into the living botanical world." This doesn't prevent her from being interested in gardening and gardens, but because of this, she writes from a different perspective than most authors of garden books.

In this book she reviews the historical basis of our current ideas about beauty in the garden and especially in vegetable gardens. She writes that although we've always had vegetable gardens, they've gone in and out of fashion (and are now back in again) as aesthetically valuable.

The book is a collection of essays. It's far ranging geographically. She discusses 15th century French gardens during the reign of the Sun King, Louis XIV, 14th to 17th century Chinese gardens during the Ming dynasty, and 16th century gardens in Mexico during the time of the Aztecs. She also writes about American victory gardens and the gardens of the Japanese-American internees during World War II. Of course, there's a chapter on Thomas Jefferson and his contemporaries.

She includes a chapter on vegetables in art. It seems a little odd at first, but actually does fit with a consideration of the aesthetics of the vegetable garden. Another chapter covers the breeding of vegetables that cross the line to become ornamental plants. I have to admit, it's an unusual collection of ideas, but Pennington manages to tie it all together to make a book well worth reading.

Feast Your Eyes is available from the University of California Press (www.ucpress.edu/) in hard cover (ISBN 978-0-520-23521-2) for \$60 or as a paperback (978-ISBN 0-520-23522-3) for \$29.95. Maybe you'll find it remaindered, as I did, at Dedalus Books (www.salebooks.com).

Community Outreach

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GARDEN

The Ocean Knoll Elementary School PTA, in Encinitas, has requested volunteers to help them set up a school garden – want a wonderful opportunity to get youngsters hooked on gardening! They wrote, "We have many lower income families who attend our school, and whose parents do not have the time to volunteer. The volunteers we do have are stretched by many other projects. All the primary schools in our district recently received grant funds to create gardens, which will be used as resources for teaching science, math and health. We need two or more volunteers who can help either after school or on weekends to create and maintain our garden." Please contact Chrissy Gerber at chrissygerber@gmail.com or (760) 525-4997, or Jody Greenberger at jgreenberger@eusd.net or (760) 476-0593.

WETLAND AVENGERS PROJECT

Aquatic Adventures "educates urban youth about science, the ocean and nature through tuition-free programs, creating the next generation of scientific and environmental leaders." On Saturday, May 3, from 9:00am–1:00pm join volunteers they have organized to save the unique habitat of Swan Canyon. Kids and adults become *avengers* as they take part in the largest volunteer event of its kind. Participate in a tour to learn the importance of wetland habitat; plant native species and remove invasive species and trash; and enjoy activities, music and a free raffle. Register in advance to receive a free t-shirt and lunch. Base Camp is Hamilton Elementary School in City Heights, 2807 Fairmount Ave., San Diego, CA 92105. For details visit www.aquaticadventures.org. On the site you will find a Canyonlands video that highlights last year's event. You can be involved as volunteers and/or financial contributors to this worthy endeavor. To register or more information, contact Elizabeth Horpedahl at elizabethhorpedahl@aquaticadventures.org or tel. 858-488-3849 ext.208.



NORTH COUNTY'S EARTH DAY EVENT

How can each of us personally make a difference in saving the environment? Learn how at North County's Earth Day Celebration at Mission San Luis Rey, Sunday, March 30th, 11AM-4 PM. This year the theme is sustainability...how to personally work toward environmental enhancement. The day celebrates the oldest pepper tree in California, located on Mission grounds, and features interactive and educational events for all ages to enjoy. Vendors and exhibitors teach recycling, explain wastewater treatment and help everyone gain an appreciation of the environment. There will be a ladybug release in the award-winning Mission rose garden, drumming courtesy of the Museum of Making Music, a Farmer's Market with produce and plants, exhibits and horticultural experts. Details at www.sanluisrey.org or call (760) 757-3651, ext 146. ☘

Steve Brigham's Wide World of Plants

GOING ON A WATER DIET – THE 30% SOLUTION (PART 2)

What if you had to cut back your water usage this year by 30%? With everything from big droughts to little fish limiting our water supplies these days, it may soon happen – and it already has for some of us! Would your garden survive on a water diet? In this three-part series, we'll take a look at some serious water-saving techniques, as we explore "The 30% Solution".

WATERING SMART

As an agricultural water customer, I am being required in 2008 to cut my water use by a whopping 30% over last year, with big penalties in store if I don't! And it's not like I was wasting lots of water before! So my garden is definitely on a water diet this year – but that doesn't mean I'm going to let my plants suffer. What I am going to do is pull out every trick I know to save every little bit of water I can!

The best way I know to save water is to "water smart". Quite simply, this means not watering any plant unless it absolutely needs it, and only giving it just what it needs to stay healthy, never more. It also means doing all the right things in the garden to make sure your plants don't need as much water.

DON'T WATER WHEN IT RAINS

Although it doesn't rain much in San Diego, it's a horrible shame not to take full advantage of free water when we do get it. In fact, *not* watering your garden if it's going to rain is the single biggest water-saving technique of all. Unfortunately for us, however, our rainfall is somewhat unpredictable – especially during a dry year, when San Diego "storms" are typically what former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld might call "known unknowns." But you've got to play the odds if you want to save water, so keep a close eye on the latest weather forecasts during the rainy season, and just don't water if there's even a slight chance of rain (if a crucial storm does totally miss us, you can always water later).

DON'T WATER IF THE PLANTS DON'T NEED IT

Especially if they're not avid gardeners, many people in San Diego County way overwater their landscapes – even to the point of watering every day when once a week will do (imagine the total water savings if we could get everyone to "water smart"!). But even water-smart gardeners can find ways to cut back a bit more. Just because the surface of the soil is dry, it doesn't necessarily mean that your plants need watering. Dig down a few inches, and if the soil is moist, just don't water!

Of course, how often you water depends a lot on the season, and the weather. In general, plants can get by with being quite dry in the cool, short days of winter – but watering is essential if the days are long and warm, or if there is low humidity and dry winds. A June or July heat wave, for example, can be particularly damaging because the days are just so long, and Santa Ana Winds in the fall can be devastating without sufficient irrigation.

If plants are somewhat dormant, you can usually let them get quite dry with no ill effect. Mediterranean-climate natives, for example, really don't need or want much water in the summer and early fall, because that is their natural dormant period. On the other hand, late fall through spring is their natural growth and bloom period, so that's when you really need to water them if it doesn't rain.

One very important thing to remember when you do water is to water deeply and thoroughly. Then you won't have to water nearly as often. Getting back to those folks who water every day, I have actually seen their plants die because they dried up! That's because they were keeping the surface soil wet, but they weren't watering long enough to get the water down to where roots should be. Of course, you never want to water so heavily that you get excessive runoff, because that's only wasting more water. But unless you water deeply, you'll never encourage your plants to get their roots deep enough to tolerate even a little bit of drought. By watering thoroughly when you do water, your plants will be able to tolerate longer intervals between watering if you need to save water. In my garden, I normally try to put down ½ inch of water (get those coffee cans out that I talked about in Part 1 of this series) once-a-week when the weather is hot and dry. This year, in order to save water, I'm not going to cut back on that ½ inch, but I am going try to lengthen that interval to once every ten days, which should save 30% all by itself.

WHEN AND HOW TO WATER

We hear this tip all the time, but it's an important water-saving one that bears repeating: don't run your sprinklers during the heat of the day, or when it's windy (otherwise, you'll waste a lot of water getting the air wet, but not the soil!). The best time to water is in the early morning hours, but I like to water in the evening, since I don't like to get up that early in the morning. Speaking of sprinklers, I greatly prefer them to drip-irrigation in a fully planted garden. Why? Well for one thing, plants evolved with rain, and sprinklers wash off the plant's foliage (like rain does), which is so essential for healthy growth and bloom. Also, a sprinkler system gets the spaces between the plants wet (where the roots are, or at least should be) – roots go out folks, not just down, and if the soil is dry all around your plants, those root systems will never be big and healthy, and neither will your plants. If you're worried about weeds coming up between your plants, just mulch (which you need to do anyway to save water) – but more on that in Part 3 of this series.

There are times, however, when sprinklers aren't the best way to water your plants – and that's when the plants are newly planted. Over and over in my own garden, I have proven that hand-watering with the hose is the best way to get newly planted plants off to a good start. What I do when I plant is to make a really big planting basin around the new plant and fill that basin twice whenever the plant needs water for at least the first month or two. Newly planted plants just love being soaked, since this makes their roots grow faster and helps them get established

Continued on page 22

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The Real Dirt On...

OOPS ~ Last month's article by Linda Bresler incorrectly listed another author – I'm so sorry, Linda!

AGNES IBBETSON

By Sharon Corrigan

Agnes Ibbetson grew up in a time where the serious study of botany was thought to be a strictly male pursuit, and in polite society it was only acceptable for a woman to collect, dry and draw plants for her own amusement. Despite the cultural norms of her time, however, Agnes studied plants "for the love of science" and meticulously documented and analyzed her findings.

Mrs. Ibbetson, a widow, pursued serious research into plant physiology in her middle years. Born in London in 1757 into a British merchant family, her early life was devoted to gaiety, frivolity and dissipation," according to a contemporary. Her husband was a barrister, and after his long illness and death she lived on a comfortable pension near the town of Exeter in Devon, England. From her journal entries of the time, it appears she lived a quiet studious life with her sister. Her recreational pursuits included local philanthropy, mineralogy, galvanic electricity and botany.

Agnes' early portfolios contain over 200 drawings of plants with descriptive texts. Her interest at that time focused on grasses, growing some herself and collecting others in her travels or from dried specimens. In her 50s she began submitting research reports to journals in the guise of letters from a correspondent, and originally only used her first initial in these submissions to disguise the fact that she was a woman.

She dissected the same plants repeatedly over many years and made extensive use of microscopes. At that time the use of magnifying instruments in botany was a matter of great controversy and that, along with her gender, elicited criticism of her work, her methods and her conclusions. This negative reception was perhaps not surprising considering her outspoken reputation for disputing the work of many prestigious (male) botanists of the time, and not always in a polite manner.

She made a concerted effort to publish her work as a manuscript and had a prominent botanist and physician encourage her in her efforts. She submitted the manuscript to the newly knighted Sir James Edward Smith whom she had corresponded with after he published a book a few years previously on new discoveries in plant physiology and anatomy. She was rebuffed, and then attempted to publish it on her own, but was unsuccessful.

She was successful, however, in publishing more than fifty essays in general science magazines and in 1810 had a plant named in her honor: *Ibbetsonia genistoides* ("spotted-flowered Ibbetsonia," now known as *Cyclopia Genistoides*). Her treatise contains an address written in the early 1820s (she died in 1823) and thought to be a preface to her manuscript wherein she notes that "Awful as it is, as it must be to a woman to present to the public a work of science: The reflection that it is the result of near 16 years hard study can alone give me courage to offer it. The apparently daring plan of altering a science in all its parts from my own knowledge may revolt. I am truly sensible and make my attempt appear too presumptuous. But with all humility I may declare I never thought or imagined such a scheme, my whole Idea consisted in dissecting plants and by never ceasing attention, care, and

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labour follow all the yearly changes both without and within the plant in order to discover the course of nature thus hidden in her secret paths: this was undertaken for amusement: having no memory for common botany, I chose a study more fitted to my abilities which I knew to be perseverance and power of enduring excessive labour."

Member Sharon Corrigan is the Marketing/Development Director for Goodwill Industries of San Diego County and, "a mad gardener" in Carlsbad. 🌿

Speaker Schedule Continued from page 5

Saturday, March 1

- 11:30 am – *Patio Style and Color*, Pat Welsh, Author. Book signing to follow presentation.
- 12:15 pm – *Green Roofs in San Diego*, Jim Mumford, Good Earth Plants
- 1:00 pm – *European Floral Design and Hand Tied Bouquets*, René Van Rems, AIFD. Book signing to follow presentation
- 1:45 pm – *Living With Wildfire, Nature, and Climate Change*, Dan Eliseuson, Business Ecology & Consulting
- 2:30 pm – *Hot Container and Garden Varieties*, Nicole Jackson, Proven Winners/ EuroAmerican Propagators
- 3:15 pm – *Designing Landscapes for San Diego*, Shellene Mueller, Designs by Shellene

Sunday, March 2

- 11:30 am – *Best Blooming Plants for Your Garden*, Evelyn Weidner, Weidner's Gardens
- 12:15 pm – *Creating Bird and Butterfly Gardens*, Maureen Austin, CHIRP for Garden Wildlife, Inc.
- 1:00 pm – *European Floral Design and Hand Tied Bouquets*, René Van Rems, AIFD. Book signing to follow presentation.
- 1:45 pm – *Living With Wildfire, Nature, and Climate Change*, Dan Eliseuson, Business Ecology & Consulting
- 2:30 pm – *Spring Garden Care*, Tiger Palafox, Moose Creek Nursery
- 3:15 pm – *Aloes and Agaves*, Jeremy Spath, Quail Botanical Gardens

Special Garden Tours

Water Garden expert David Curtright will lead tours of the water features in the display gardens on Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 pm

Science Fair Continued from page 6

want them to find out for themselves that with appropriate techniques, and employing creative and critical thinking, ordinary people with the interest and effort may discover new and exciting information. This kind of discovery is extremely exciting, satisfying, and self-affirming, and has the potential to affect our general knowledge in very important ways. That excitement and potential may transform the student with perhaps only a fleeting interest in botany into a horticultural scientist of the future. Education, confidence building, research training, excitement: that is why the science fair part of our mission is so important. 🌿

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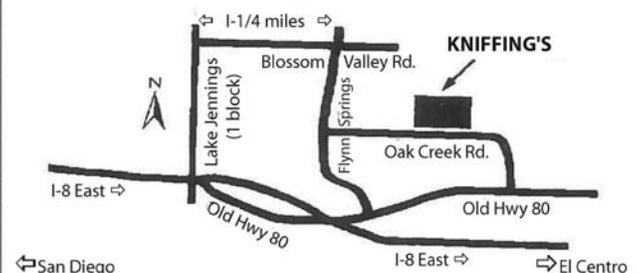
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SHARING SECRETS

This column is written by you, our members! Each month we'll ask a question, and print your responses the following month.

The question for this month was: *What staking techniques have worked best for you and why?*

Melody Huelsebusch tells us, "I recycle cut up pieces of my old nylon knee-highs or panty hose to use as plant ties. They stretch as the plant grows and offer plenty of breathing space. I can customize the length/width/thickness of the tie to the plant needs."

Lorie Johansen says, "For small plants, I go to the kindling pile and find a strong straight branch. I love recycling and the resultant natural look. Regarding trees, we dig the holes, place the lodge poles in the hole, braced with a large rock to hold the windward lodgepole in place, fill in the hole and water in."

Sue Martin has two good suggestions: "Branches from winter tree pruning serve as stakes all around my garden. Long water sprouts and differentiated branches placed close together support the winter snow pea crop. Thrifty New England gardeners call it pea brush (reference Robert Frost's poem *Pea Brush*). Delicate redbud branches placed among the freesia and ixia keep them upright. I put them in place as the foliage emerges. They are soon disguised and quietly do their job while providing a natural look. Bamboo stakes made good trusses for broccoli, cabbage, peppers and eggplant when the largess might be their undoing. Smaller broken bamboo segments steady transplants against Santa Ana winds and support crooked or weak stems."

Sharon May writes, "I used to use specialty stakes to compensate for a plant's natural form, such as a grid that plants grow through to provide a higher, more vertical plant. When I realized that what was really needed is to work with the natural shape of a plant and let that be an integral part of the design rather than force an unnatural form, I discovered that the only staking I needed was for trees and tomatoes. For tomatoes I like cages made of hog fencing ... very sturdy and very big!"

David Richmond had two great ideas, plus more on page 15. "I have more than a few 8' tall x 1.5"+ diameter wooden tree stakes, which I re-use over and over. Rather than pounding them into the ground, I pound 18"-24" pieces of 2" schedule 40 PVC into the ground, and slip the stakes into the PVC. Leave PVC sticking up enough so that it can be pulled out without having to dig. I prefer ABS (plumbing PVC) because it's black and inconspicuous. If you want UV resistant PVC, get the gray PVC from the electrical department. When driving the PVC stake holder into the ground, in order to keep it from getting filled with soil you have to keep pulling the PVC out and shake the soil out by tapping on the tube. If you drive the PVC in as far as you want without emptying the soil out, the soil will get so packed in the tube that it's almost impossible to get it out. In heavy clay soil this technique probably won't work, as you may not be able to get the soil out of the tube."

David also has a great idea for fruit trees: "I have a Clementine mandarin which bears like crazy, so I installed an interior lattice-work to support the limbs: three tree stakes in a triangle. Pieces of recycled grape stake fencing are screwed from post to post. The arrangement is essentially a 3-dimensional tic-tac-toe. Since the support is interior to the foliage it's not very noticeable and I leave it there year round."

Cindy Sparks says, "I like rebar for stakes. It doesn't ever rot, is readily available, won't break under stress, and gets a nice honey-brown patina. It is textured enough so you can tie the stretchy green plant tape on it and not have the tape slip around. I buy 3¢ lengths at Home Depot. Shorter lengths will do for tent peg-type duty if you want to train a young tree. You can pound them into the ground without worry they will break. One time I tried to upgrade using three 12 diameter pipes, about 5¢ long, drilled and tied together form a teepee for my beans. It looks nice, but it is very heavy, and you don't want to be under it when it falls over. Better to stick with rebar."

The question for next month is:

Do you keep track of what plants are in your garden and if so, how?

Please send your e-mail reply by March 10 to info@sdhortsoc.org.

Staking System for Grapes

By David Richmond

When we asked for members to share their staking secrets, David Richmond responded with his suggestions for single stakes and fruit trees (see above). His excellent and detailed instructions for staking grapes was detailed enough to merit a column of it's own. I think you could probably adapt this system for other fruits such as raspberries or espaliered apple, etc. Thanks, David!

My 50' long support system for grapes is industrial, so many may not like it, but it's strong and inexpensive and I don't think it looks half-bad. You can purchase 7' heavy duty steel t-posts (to be used 10' on center) for less than \$4 each at Home Depot. They have chintzy t-posts too, but I want ones that are going to last, like forever, longer than me anyway.

Get a post pounder to install posts with so you don't have to stand on a stool or ladder and mangle yourself when the sledge hammer misses the post. A post pounder is about 2' in length, with handles on the sides, and slips over a post (hint: slip pounder on post *before* you stand the post up, unless you're 6'5" whatever). The pounder at Home Depot costs \$20, and it's red, which helps you find it when you leave it laying in the weeds. If you want to pull your t-posts out to use elsewhere get a t-post lifter. Right now you can get this puppy at www.harborfreight.com, part number 38444, on sale for \$18.99; it works great.

Back to my grape support: Install the t-posts so that the notched edge of all the posts faces the same side. Top rail is 1" EMT thin-wall conduit (from the electrical department), comes in 10' lengths. [Now I already had a bunch of this stuff, which

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I salvaged from the same place I salvaged scads of bamboo stakes. Rather than being new and shiny, yuk, my recycled EMT is oxidized and looks organic, even if it's not. But even the new stuff will look old in a year or so.]

To splice the sections of EMT together, use pieces of 1" 200psi PVC. The EMT fits perfectly inside this PVC. Schedule 40 PVC (480psi) won't work, even though it has the same outside dimension it is thicker and has a smaller inside diameter. If you have any doubts take a stick of PVC from the plumbing department and see if it fits over the EMT in the electrical department.

I used 11" pieces of PVC; 12" or whatever would work just as well. Slip the PVC about half way onto the EMT. I fastened it securely in place with a small self-tapping hex-headed screw. I installed the t-posts so that the EMT joints will be at the posts, but a few inches off from dead nuts don't make no diff.

Working alone, I put up a rail and temporarily tie it in place between 2 posts. Now each rail already has PVC fastened at one end. Slip the other end into the female end of the rail already in place. You may have to tap on free end (PVC), that's where the set screw comes in; you don't want the PVC end you're tapping on to move.

With the top rail in place, on the side of a joint that does not have a set screw I drill a hole through the PVC and the EMT, through which is threaded a piece of black sheathed 12 gage electrical wire which is wrapped around the top of the t-post and the wire ends twisted together. This is not elegant, but it's secure and hardly noticeable. As well as tying the rail to the post, this wire ties the PVC to the EMT so that there's no way for the joint to slip apart; that's why I drill the hole on the opposite end from where the set screw is.

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Lastly, spray the PVC and the yellow top of the t-post with black or dark green paint. [Except for top few inches, the t-post comes dark green.]

For intermediate wire(s) from post to post I use chain-link tension wire. Wrap wire end around end-post 2 or 3 times; it's sufficiently stiff that twisting the wire end is not necessary. Uncoil the wire and stretch it all the way to the post at the other end of the line; cut off and wrap around last post 2 or 3 times, just like at first post. Secure wire to the intermediate posts with 12 gauge electric wire, or whatever suits you. Notches on t-posts will hold chain-link tension wire in place. It's best to run the chain-link tension wire on the notched edge side of the posts.

☞

February Plant Forum

By Steve Brigham and Susi Torre-Bueno

What is the Plant Forum?

Each month members bring in plants, cuttings or flowers and one of our horticulturists talks about them. What a great way to learn how these plants perform. All plants are welcome – EVERYONE is invited to participate. We encourage you to write descriptions similar to those below, and put them with the plant on the Plant Forum tables. Any questions, call Susi at (760) 295-7089.

Artemisia 'Powis Castle' SILVER WORMWOOD (Asteraceae) Horticultural Hybrid

This drought-tolerant shrub is easily one of the finest silver-leaved plants for San Diego gardens, and it is one of the most adaptable and easiest to grow as well. It grows quickly to 2-3' tall and 4-5' wide in full sun or partial shade, and needs only average or less watering (plants that get less water will be less vigorous and stay smaller than those that receive regular watering). Finely divided, extremely silvery foliage is useful in a variety of garden situations, including dry shade, and can be stunning in full sun when combined with other plants. Adaptable to nearly any soil and hardy to cold, this is a plant no garden should be without. Of hybrid origin, it is thought to perhaps be a cross of the taller *Artemisia arborescens* and the herbaceous *Artemisia pontica*. (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08) – S.B.

Artemisia tridentata var. vaseyana SILVER SAGEBRUSH (Asteraceae) Western United States

From eastern California all the way to the Rocky Mountains, the Great Basin Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) is practically emblematic of the western U.S.A., and is famous for its very silvery, aromatic foliage. But it has always been considered a bit straggly for the garden. Now, this newly-released and very handsome compact form from Nevin Smith of Suncrest Nurseries finally gives us a native sagebrush that performs wonderfully in the garden, and is every bit as aromatic as the species. It grows easily in full sun to around 3' by 3', tolerates most any soil, and is extremely hardy to drought and cold. Finely cut, silvery foliage is densely packed on this compact selection. This is one of the best silver-foliaged natives of all! (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08) – S.B.

Boronia megastigma 'Jack Maguire's Red' RED BORONIA (Rutaceae) Western Australia

The species *Boronia megastigma* is a 2' by 2' evergreen heather-like shrub with small but powerfully fragrant bell-shaped flowers in winter and spring, and is highly prized because it produces one of the most fragrant flowers of any plant in the world. This newly released form has beautiful scarlet-red flowers (not dark brown as in the typical form), and is considered the best form of the species

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February Plant Forum

in cultivation. Culture is much like a sun azalea – acid soil, full sun to partial shade, regular watering, and excellent drainage. A good mulch is important to keep the roots cool in summer; the plant grows well in containers, and it is cold-hardy to around 25°F. If you grow it well, you will be rewarded with the most amazing citrusy flower fragrance imaginable, which is at its best on a sunny day and can travel long distances on the slightest breeze. (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08) – S.B.

Epilobium canum (*Zauschneria californica*) 'Catalina'

CALIFORNIA FUCHSIA (Onagraceae) Catalina Island, California

This is one of the finest garden forms of a fantastic group of drought-tolerant natives that are prized for attracting hummingbirds with their bright red tubular flowers. It is also prized for its intense silvery foliage, which is showy all year. 'Catalina' grows easily to around 18" tall in full sun, spreading quickly to make a ground-cover patch 5-8' wide (it is more vigorous with average watering, and more compact in drought). It tolerates nearly any soil or watering regime, and is fully hardy to cold. Flowering occurs in the fall, with many showy clusters of orange-red flowers topping the silver foliage. Plants may be cut back to the ground in winter, which will force new growth and produce a better display in the year to come. (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08) – S.B.

Furcraea foetida (*F. gigantea*) MAURITIUS HEMP, SISAL,
MAGUEY Agavaceae Central America

This splendid evergreen plant forms a rosette that can grow to 5' tall by 8' wide, making a bold architectural statement in the garden. The sword-shaped leaves are stiff, but lack any spines. About six years ago a friend gave me two 1-gallon pots of *Furcraea foetida*, which I have pretty much ignored over the ensuing years except for potting them up in to larger containers. They are now in pots about 24" wide and tall. One of the containers rolled down our backyard hillside to a lower part of the property last year and before it could be rescued the leaves were damaged in the freezing weather last winter. The other one remained next to our concrete block home, and I'm sure that the heat coming off the concrete in the evening prevented it from having any frost damage. In any case, the non-frosted one sent up a flower stalk for the first time this fall. The cutting displayed is one of the stems taken from that 25' tall stalk; it grew to that height in just three weeks in November! The things that look like buds are actually new baby plants (bulbils) that develop on the flower stalk. One source says that thousands of these bulbils form on a single plant, and are easily rooted in a moist potting mix. The greenish-white flowers are said to be scented (I didn't notice this) and attractive to bees; plants die about one year after flowering. Grow this handsome succulent in full sun to light shade; it is reported to be hardy to 20°F. A very handsome variegated form ('Mediopicta') is also available. The species was once widely cultivated for fiber. (Susi Torre-Bueno, Vista, 2/08) – S.T-B.

Grevillea lavandulacea 'Billywing' SILVER GREVILLEA
(Proteaceae) Western Victoria, Australia

This small, drought-tolerant shrub created a sensation when it was first introduced into California some 30 years ago. Growing to around 3' by 3' in full sun, it has a dense foliage of small, narrow leaves of a wonderfully silvery color which is stunningly covered in winter and spring with a profuse show of clusters of spidery, bright magenta-red flowers that attract hummingbirds. Good drainage is preferred, with sandy or decomposed granite soils ideal, and plants are hardy to around 18°F. (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08) – S.B.

February Plant Forum

Thanks to everyone who brought plants to the meeting; they were discussed by **Steve Brigham**. In addition to those described above, the plants listed below were also displayed. Can you spot the phony plant this month?

What's that in front of the plant name? Plants marked 3 are fully described in the *Plant Forum Compilation* (see page 20). Plants marked O were part of the Opportunity Drawing. Can you spot the phony plant this month? The phony plant in the January newsletter was *Brighamia gundersonii*, MATRIMONY TREE.

Acorus sp. (bonsai form) (Phil Tackill & Janet Wanerka, Solana Beach, 2/08)

Aeonium pseudotabuliforme (Michael & Joyce Buckner, San Diego, 2/08)

Aeonium smithii (Michael & Joyce Buckner, San Diego, 2/08)

O *Arctotis* 'Magenta' MAGENTA AFRICAN DAISY (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

3 *Billbergia nutans* QUEEN'S TEARS (Sue Martin, Pt. Loma, 2/08)

3 O *Buddleja asiatica* WINTER BUTTERFLY BUSH (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

3 O *Buddleja* 'Lochinch' SILVER BUTTERFLY BUSH (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

O *Buddleja salviifolia* (winter-blooming form) SAGE-LEAVED BUTTERFLY BUSH (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

3 *Camellia* sp. or cv. (? , 2/08)

3 *Chasmanthe* sp. or cv. (Darlene Villanueva, El Cajon, 2/08)

O *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* 'Flambe Yellow' SILVER HELICHRYSUM (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

O *Corokia cotoneaster* 'Silver Ghost' SILVER GHOST COROKIA (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

O *Crassula capitella* 'Campfire' CAMPFIRE CRASSULA (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

O *Echium* Verity Hybrid HYBRID ECHIUM (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

3 O *Echium handiense* DWARF BLUE ECHIUM (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

Encephalartos trispinosus (bonsai form) (Michael & Joyce Buckner, San Diego, 2/08)

O *Euphorbia myrsinites* SILVER EUPHORBIA (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

Fuchsia triphylla 'Firecracker' (Arlene Palmer, Crest, 2/08)

3 O *Glaucium flavum* SILVER POPPY (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

× *Graptoveria* cv. (*Graptopetalum* × *Echeveria*) (Michael & Joyce Buckner, San Diego, 2/08)

Hyacinthus orientalis HYACINTH (Sue Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)

Iris cv. (Louise Anderson, San Marcos, 2/08)

Iris cv. (Sue Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)

3 *Lachenalia aloides* var. *quadricolor* (Phil Tackill & Janet Wanerka, Solana Beach, 2/08)

Leucojum sp. or cv. SNOWFLAKE (Sue Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)

3 O *Leucophyta brownii* (formerly *Calocephalus brownii*) SILVER CUSHION BUSH (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

O *Lobelia fulgens* BURGUNDY LOBELIA (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

3 O *Melaleuca incana* SILVER MELALEUCA (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

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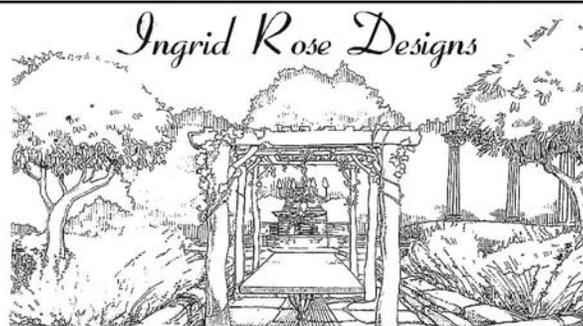
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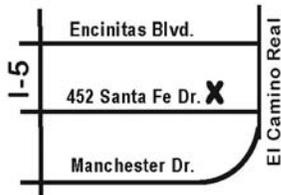
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February Plant Forum

- 3 *O Melianthus major* HONEY BUSH (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- *Myoporum parvifolium* 'Burgundy Carpet' BURGUNDY CARPET (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- 3 *Narcissus* sp. or cv. DAFFODIL (Sue Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Oxalis megalorrhiza*, syn. *O. carnosa* (bonsai form) (Phil Tackill & Janet Wanerka, Solana Beach, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum* Chocolate Eagle 'Big Red' SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum* Chocolate Eagle 'Frisbee' SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum* Macabre × Hsyining Rocket SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum primulinum* × Emerald Sea SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum* Scott Ware 'Sue' SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Paphiopedelum* White Queen SLIPPER ORCHID (Charley Fouquette, El Cajon, 2/08)
- Pedilanthus macrocarpus* (crested form) (Michael & Joyce Buckner, San Diego, 2/08)
- Philodendron canifolium* (Bob Dimattia, Pura Vida Tropicals, Vista, 2/08)
- 3 *O Plectranthus argentatus* 'Silver Anniversary' SILVER PLECTRANTHUS (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- 3 *O Salvia apiana* SILVER SAGE (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina' GREEN CARPET SEDUM (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- *Sedum rupestre* 'Brangelina' PAPPARAZZI SEDUM (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)
- *Senecio mandralicæ* BLUE CHALKSTICKS (Buena Creek Gardens, San Marcos, 2/08)

How to read the entries above.

- ① *Pastryus dulcis*. ② 'Cheerio' ③ DONUT PLANT ④ Pastryaceae ⑤ 7-Eleven to Vons
- ⑥ This fast-growing annual produces copious quantities of distinctive edible fruit that is circular in shape with a central hole. The fruit resembles a donut, from which the common name derives. Provide ample moisture. ⑦ Betty Crocker, San Diego, 5/96—⑧ K.M.
- ① Latin name [*Pastryus dulcis*]; bold names indicate plants with full descriptions.
- ② Cultivar ['Cheerio']
- ③ Common Name [DONUT PLANT]
- ④ Family [Pastryaceae]
- ⑤ Distribution [7-Eleven to Vons]
- ⑥ Description, comments, cultural directions [This fast-growing...]
- ⑦ Name & city of member; date plant displayed [Betty Crocker, San Diego, 5/96]
- ⑧ Initials of person who wrote description [K.M.]

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February Meeting Report

When February speaker Karen Bussolini talks about silver plants her voice assumes a special tone, and her passion for these plants, which she aptly describes as “the essence of light,” is infectious. By the end of the evening I was thinking about how to add more of these plants to my garden and the next day, seeing other gardeners, they were talking about the same thing. Karen is so correct when she notes that “silver plants transform the rest of the space,” and the dozens of marvelous slides she showed proved her point time and again.

Many silver plants are softly downy, and Karen says that “the hairier the plant the more drainage it needs,” as these plants are native to very dry regions where their hairs protect them from the sun and help prevent the leaves from drying out. “Silver is a survival strategy,” she told us, “and waxy silver plants have a protective coating.” An award-winning photographer, Karen added that “the color of silver changes with how the light bounces off the leaves,” and reminded us that all these silver leaves are still green underneath, as you can see when they get wet. Other adaptations to dry climates she showed us were curled leaves that help hold onto water; very small leaves which aid in drought-resistance, and plants whose leaves were virtually nonexistent.

Much of Karen’s detailed presentation was about designing with silver plants, and she had a lot of interesting things to say about that. The renowned English garden designer Gertrude Jekyll was one of the first to recognize how silvers harmonize with other colors in the garden, using them to good effect among pastel flowering plants starting in the late 1800s. As Karen said, “Silver keeps the peace in the garden,” and compliments white, pastel and dark flowers.

Karen’s slides were arranged so as to cover all aspects of silver plants: different kinds of silvers (downy, waxy, variegated, etc.); hardy perennials for sun, and silvers for the shade; silver herbs; using silvers; and form and texture. We saw every kind of juxtaposition – grasses with succulents; soft-leaved plants with spiky ones, and silver plants in containers galore.

Some silver plants that grow particularly well here, and which need very little water, are *Artemisia* ‘Powis Castle’, *Senecio*, *Stachys byzantina* ‘Helene von Stein’, *Santolina*, *Dianthus carophyllus*, and any number of succulent *Echiums* and *Sedums*. My favorite image from the evening was a verbal one – Karen told us how she used silvery plants along the path from her garden to her house so when she worked past twilight it helped guide her home again.

Steve Brigham from Buena Creek Gardens presided over the second part of the evening, providing an enticing selection of mostly silvery plants for the Opportunity Drawing and also discussing the plants members brought in to display for our Plant Forum. Great job, Steve, as always! 🌿

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Going on a Water Diet Continued from page 11

quicker. You know where the roots are on a new plant, and that's where the water should go.

One final thing about any irrigation system, and that is that there will always be some inefficiencies, for whatever reasons. In the old days of wasting water, you might have just run the sprinklers a little longer so that poor little plant in the corner could get wet (while the rest of the garden was practically floating away). This is known as "irrigating to the weakest point in the system," and we will absolutely not allow it now that we are on a water diet! The new rule is that you must only run your sprinklers for the minimum of time necessary, and you'll just have to get the hose out and water those dry spots by hand (or with a small hose end sprinkler). This measure alone will save lots and lots of water, and maybe even make your garden look better, not worse!

THE BEST TIME TO PLANT

Big, healthy plants with big, deep root systems need less watering, and look better, too. For so many of our garden plants, the time when their roots are growing actively is in the cool of winter and early spring. This is also the time of year when we (at least sometimes) get free water from the sky – and nothing makes a new plant grow better than rain! The water-saving lesson here is that if you plant early in the season, your plants will be big enough by summer to tolerate our heat and drought without a lot of extra watering on your part. Conversely, if you wait until May or June to plant, your new plants might never get big enough to handle our summer and fall without a heck of a lot of summer watering. I know it's tempting to wait until "all the flowers are blooming" to buy and plant new plants in your garden – but don't. Buy and plant now, in March! Just about everything I have ever planted in winter and early spring has always succeeded, but if I wait until late spring to plant, I know I'll have disappointing failures when the heat comes in summer.

GARDENING TIPS TO SAVE MORE WATER

If you've ever had to go on a diet, you know that you've got to cut calories every which way you can – but you've also got to exercise more. In the case of our garden "water diet," "watering smart" is probably the biggest way to save water.

But are there other things you can do in your garden to save more water? Absolutely! (Uh-oh, here comes Mr. Rumsfeld again!) Could a heavy mulch help? Yes indeed! Would better garden design help conserve even more? Heavens to Betsy, yes! All this and more next month, when we continue with Part 3 of The 30% Solution!

Member Steve Brigham is a founding board member of SDHS and owner of Buena Creek Gardens (see ads pages 17 and 20). He's also the author of our book, *Ornamental Trees for Mediterranean Climates*. ☞

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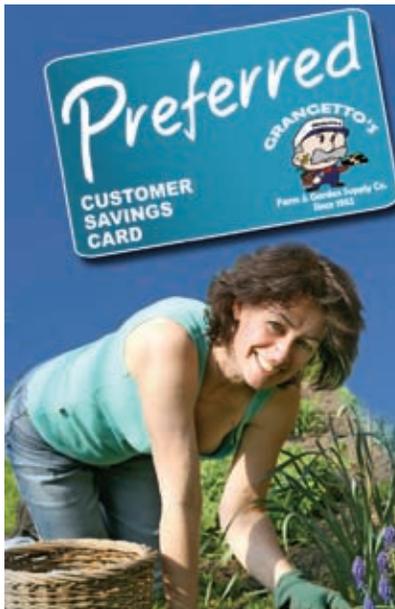
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