Let's Talk Plants!

Newsletter of the San Diego Horticultural Society

December 2010, Number 195

The Dangers of Being a Honey Bee

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On the Cover: A busy bee
OCTOBER 30 • PERSIMMON & POMEGRANATE
FRUIT PICKING AT BORDEN RANCH

Photo: Pat Crowl
Barbara & Gary Raub

Photo: Pat Crowl
Borden Ranch

Photo: Pat Crowl
Borden Ranch overview

Photo: Barbara Raub
Borden Ranch Persimmons

Photo: Pat Crowl
Scott Borden

Photo: Pat Crowl
Heavy with persimmons

Photo: Barbara Raub
Borden Ranch pomegranates

Photo: Jim Bishop
Scott Borden
Next Meeting: December 13, 2010, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

**Topic:** JAMES NIEH ON “THE DANGERS OF BEING A HONEY BEE: PREDATORS, PESTICIDES AND COLONY COLLAPSE”

Honey bees have a difficult life these days, and Dr. James Nieh will talk to us about the significant problems they are encountering. These bees face multiple natural and man-made dangers in their environment. Ironically, bees are highly successful because of their use in modern agriculture, yet are suffering because modern agriculture imposes stresses from pesticides, diseases, parasites, and management practices such as mobile beekeeping. The research in Dr. Nieh’s laboratory at UCSD explores natural threats and, recently, the effects of pesticides on honey bee foraging. Learn more about the amazing solutions that bees have evolved to natural perils and how our use of pesticides may be contributing to their decline.

James Nieh was born in Taiwan and grew up in Valencia, California. He earned a B.A. with honors in 1991 from Harvard University and entered the Ph. D. program at Cornell University in the Section of Neurobiology and Behavior, where his advisor was Tom Seeley. In 1997, he received his Ph. D. and was a NSF-NATO postdoctoral fellow in Germany at the University of Wuerzburg with Dr. Juergen Tautz. He then received the prestigious Harvard Junior Fellowship. In 2000, he joined the Biology faculty at UCSD, where he is currently a professor in the Section of Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution.

To learn more visit page 5.
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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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; (760) 295-7089; newsletter@sdhortsoc.org
Calendar: Send details by the 10th of the month before event to calendar@sdhortsoc.org.

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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 monthly meetings, annual college scholarships, and other important programs. Sponsorships start at just $100/year; contact Jim Bishop at sponsor@sdhortsoc.org. 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

Volunteer Needs: Events & Outreach Committee

Share your passion for plants! We are seeking a committee chair and also volunteers to help plan and participate in exciting events. Help us promote horticulture and the society at the San Diego County Fair, Spring Home/Garden Show, and elsewhere. There are rewarding opportunities for gardeners of all skills and interest levels. Please call Susi Torre-Bueno ASAP at (760) 295-7089 and let’s talk!

Membership Committee

Express your outgoing nature, or overcome your shyness, by meeting new people in a very friendly setting! Volunteer about ONE to THREE HOURS A MONTH as a greeter at meetings, visit nurseries and provide membership brochures for their customers, or help with community outreach programs. Please contact Jim Bishop at jimbishopsd@gmail.com or (619) 293-0166.

Program Committee

The Program Committee is looking for members to help with a variety of interesting activities involved in recruiting and organizing our monthly speakers. The committee meets about three times a year. Please contact Judy Bradley at (619) 792-6715.

Thanks So Much!

Thanks to Scott Borden for hosting our October Persimmon & Pomegranate Picking at his family ranch. Despite a rainy morning (which cleared up by lunchtime) about 100 bags of fruit were picked. Some photos are on page 2. Many thanks to Dannie McLaughlin for hosting our Nov. 20 Coffee-in-the-Garden; we hope to have photos in the next newsletter.

See page 13 to order your SDHS nametag
To Learn More...

**Honey Bees And Colony Collapse Disorder**

By Ava Torre-Bueno

This month’s topic, honey bees and colony collapse disorder, is quite disturbing. For a very mellow and informative video on the honey bee life cycle when it’s going well, go to:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSk_ev1eZeC

This month’s speaker is UCSD Professor Dr. James Nieh. Here he is on KPBS radio. You can read the article or listen to it at:


Dr. Nieh’s UCSD page is at:

http://biology.ucsd.edu/faculty/nieh.htm

Here’s a page with lots of information on honey bee health and colony collapse disorder:

http://www.organicconsumers.org/bees.cf

Richard Attenborough, who will go anywhere and do anything in the natural world, takes us up a very big tree in this video of Malaysian honey bees doing “the wave.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vll_2xH_SQY

My favorite beekeeper, bee remover, and purveyor of honey is Pete Holtzen at Honey Bee Rescue. South of Highway 8 he delivers honey to your door like the milkman used to deliver milk!

www.honeybeerescue.com

If you’re thinking of getting into keeping bees, there’s a MeetUp group of beekeepers in San Diego:

http://www.meetup.com/The-San-Diego-Beekeeping-Meetup-Group/

If you DO become a beekeeper, go to City Farmer’s (all organic) Nursery for beekeeping supplies:

http://www.cityfarmersnursery.com/

As always, Wikipedia has lots of information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honey_bee

But it’s complicated:


Member Ava Torre-Bueno is a psychotherapist in private practice and the organizer of Gardeners 4 Peace. This group of volunteers is helping to create a peaceful, organic, permaculture garden at the San Diego Friends Center. To learn more contact Ava at gardeners4peace@hotmail.com and visit http://www.sandiegofriendscenter.org/volunteers.htm.

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**From The Board**

By Susi Torre-Bueno

**NEW MEETING PLACE IN 2011**

I sent an e-mail in early November to say we needed to find a new meeting place as our current room would not be available in 2011. It is with a sigh of relief that I can tell you that we’ll be meeting in the same building, on the same 2nd Monday of the month, just on the first floor instead of the 2nd floor. Thanks to the 22nd Agricultural Association for making this new space available for us at a low cost. We had previously used this space for several years before moving upstairs.

A big thank you to those members who checked into other possibilities for meeting spaces. We appreciate your efforts, and I have compiled a list of places and costs, should we want to try another location, perhaps for a special meeting or workshop.

**NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION**

You can make a difference in 2011 by volunteering for one of the activities listed on page 4. Please consider how you can share your enthusiasm and expertise with SDHS in the coming year, especially if you haven’t volunteered for a while.

**A NEW BOARD MEMBER**

We welcome Neal King, who has just agreed to join the board as a Member-At-Large for 1 year. You may know Neal from one of the many events he has volunteered for; he also is our calendar editor. He writes, “I was born and raised in southern New York State. With an acre set aside for the family garden, I was exposed to gardening at an early age. Without a green thumb, I pursued this passion for mathematics and science by joining the Navy. While working on nuclear prototypes I switched to the advanced electronics field, which took me to Hawaii, where a passion for scuba diving grew. In 1985, after leaving the Navy, I came to San Diego to pursue a career in electronics and to continue to dive. I joined several dive clubs and the San Diego Council of Divers, and could be found at the beach more times than not. It did not take me long to discover I could kill plants even faster in San Diego, and it was not until joining the SDHS that I found out some the reasons why, the first being that late spring plantings will have a hard time. Now I and my wife, Hilda (who does have a green thumb), have a garden where the critters get as much as they do.” Neal brings good problem solving and computer skills to the board, and we look forward to working with him.

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**DECEMBER MEETING REQUEST**

**Bring a plant or cutting for our Plant Forum - we’d especially like to see which plants the bees love in your garden!**

Photo: Rachel Cobb
JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER

By Joan Herskowitz

Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817 – 1911) was an important British botanist and one of the great plant explorers of the nineteenth century. He was one of Charles Darwin’s closest friends and eventually became director of Britain’s Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

Hooker was born into a family of scientists in Suffolk, England. His grandfather published various works on mosses and ferns of Ireland and England, and his father, William Jackson Hooker, was a professor of botany at Glasgow University before becoming director of Kew. From age seven, Hooker attended his father’s lectures and formed an early interest in plant distribution and voyages of explorers like Captain James Cook. In 1839, he graduated in medicine from Glasgow University, but as his principal interest was botany, he eagerly accepted the appointment of assistant surgeon and naturalist on a four-year expedition to the Antarctic, visiting Tasmania, New Zealand and South America, under the famous explorer James Clark Ross. A large collection of plants was sent home from the trip, and his plant observations resulted in publication of a six-volume flora.

Darwin and Hooker developed a life-long friendship based on their exchange of information and observations on plant distribution, and beginning in 1844 Darwin confided in Hooker regarding his theory of evolution by natural selection. This communication later proved important in establishing Darwin’s precedence when his theory, together with Alfred Russel Wallace’s similar conclusions, was presented by Hooker and George Lyell at the famous Linnaean Society meeting of July 1858.

In 1847, Hooker left England for a three-year Himalayan expedition. He would be the first European to collect plants in the Himalayas. Accounts of the expedition with details of the endemic orchids are recounted in his Himalayan Journals published in 1854. He collected plants from as high as 19,300 feet, the highest that anyone had collected at that time. Because he ignored local authorities, he was imprisoned for several weeks for crossing into Tibet. Hooker collected 7,000 species for Kew on this trip, including brilliant Sikkim rhododendrons, which were introduced into cultivation in the botanic gardens, as were a variety of impatiens, orchids, ferns and mosses. His observations were subsequently published in his Flora of British India and A Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon.

Later collecting trips took him to Syria and Morocco, and in the U.S. to the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Nevadas and California, accompanied by American botanist Asa Gray. In 1865, he succeeded his father as director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew until his retirement in 1885.

Joseph Hooker’s main contributions to botany were his writings, culminating in the co-authorship (with George Bentham) of Genera Plantarum, a world flora describing 7,569 genera and 97,000 species, considered the outstanding botanical work of the 19th century. In his 20 years as head of Kew he made many improvements, adding greenhouses, herbarium capacity, new gardens, laboratories and an art gallery. His efforts established Kew as an international center for botanical research. Hooker’s name is perpetuated in the orchid genera Josephinia and Sirhookeria; as well as the species Oncidium hookeri, Paphiopedelum hookerianum, Vanda hookeri, and many others.

Member Joan Herskowitz worked as a Biologist for many years, including time spent on staff at the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use. Now retired, she is a docent at the San Elijo Lagoon and at San Diego Botanic Garden.

Hi, my name is Bryan Morse and I am the president of Alta Vista Gardens. The Garden is a work in progress situated on the top of a hill with fourteen acres of ocean view property. We are surrounded on all sides by Brengle Terrace Park in the city of Vista. Our mission is “Bringing Together People, Nature and Art.” In so many ways, that defines our vision of how we want our botanical garden to evolve. After starting out slowly, our Garden and our organization has been experiencing a period of accelerated growth. We have begun to reach a critical mass where progress begins to become self-sustaining.

Over the past year we have opened the Jeffrey Stein Children’s Music Garden. It includes a variety of percussion instruments placed around an area nestled under a large tree. In the center; and perhaps the most fun, is a “Pebble Chime” built by artist Robert Rochin. Children, and the child in all of us, just love to push rocks through the holes to experience the different tones of this fine tuned instrument.

In the past weeks we have been bringing our five-ring classic labyrinth closer to completion. The labyrinth is centered on a granite sculpture named the ‘Broken Link’; it is almost fifteen feet tall and was created by Tony Imatto. The paths and the mounds have been completed and soon will be planted with perennials. The day before I wrote this, in mid-November, three women out walking their dogs were the first visitors to experience the serenity of this new addition to our Garden.

As I mentioned above, art is part of our mission and we welcome artists to bring their sculptures to be placed in our landscape. We value our art and strive to find the perfect home for every piece, giving them the proper background and planted accents that will help them shine. Some of the art has been donated to us and is on permanent display. Others are for sale on consignment, with no limit placed on how long they will be shown. Visitors have expressed enthusiasm for the placement of the collection in the Garden. To date, we have thirteen sculptures or other pieces of art at AVG.

Since we are a growing garden we are also growing our plant collection. You can help us educate our community by sharing with us, and donating any rare or unusual plants you can spare.

We also encourage you to come visit us. Our hours are 8:00am to 2:00pm on Monday-Friday and 10:00am to 5:00pm on weekends. We can be found on the web at www.altavistagardens.org. Please visit to find out about upcoming classes and special events, including our first docent class, which begins on January 8.
Is It December Again Already?

By Richard Frost

I’m writing this in early November for you to read in December. So in some sense I have to time-travel a month forward while working on the column. One thing I noticed while looking at the date: this is the 4th December column I’ve written, marking the completion of 3 years writing. Wow, it has been a lot of fun!

It was a year of very mild temperatures here in San Diego. Spring-like weather persisted into July in most places. About nine months into the year we had 2½ weeks of summer temperatures, then a cool spell followed by some Santa Ana winds, and now— it’s December.

If you gave your tomatoes too much nitrogen (e.g., too much compost) and not enough potassium in this quirky weather then you probably had a poor crop. If last fall (2009) you did not feed your deciduous fruit trees a winterizing formula then you might have had lackluster performance there also. Regardless, I’m sure your crop was delayed like mine. Many growers found that near-tropical fruits such as avocado and mango did not get enough warmth to ripen properly this year.

My ‘Frederick’ passion fruit vine is currently loaded with fruit. In a warmer year it bears two crops—one about June and another in August-September, but this year I am thankful for this single late crop. At the moment there are about three bushels of unripe green fruit hiding just under the leaves of the plant. Maybe they will be ripe by the time you read this!

I have an espaliered male-female pair of Kei Apple (Dovyalis caffra) that is also loaded with fruit and presently ripe. Normally

Plants that Produce

Trees on Fire

By Robin Rivet

Autumn is a tree stunner, and sunset colors are breathtaking almost everywhere, EXCEPT in San Diego. Do you yearn for glorious foliar color on your street, but are terrified of our reliably colorful Liquidambar styraciflua? To set the record straight, this species frequently does have aggressive surface roots, especially in San Diego lawns.

Face it folks, planting trees in lawns is a concept best recommended for deep soils and wetter climates. If you read that a tree will do well in a lawn here, it frequently means that it will ‘tolerate’ shallow watering, and thrive by creating masses of shallow roots that drink ill-advised frequent, but traditionally brief sprinkler spurts, maybe even harmfully wetting the trunk. To be fair, wise gardeners should recognize that nearly all tree roots predominate in the top 36” of soil, and the majority are usually in the top 18” to 24”. In case you are measuring, this is not very deep. Any tree you plant should receive deep and infrequent watering to encourage health and the deepest possible root zone.

Be fearless. With wiser watering, scarlet, burgundy, amber and golden hues can still grace your fall landscape. First, consider the aforementioned troublemaker, as it really is a spectacular tree.

Commonly available cultivars developed for Southern California include ‘Palo Alto’, my favorite, and often the brightest orange-red; ‘Festival’, which tends to be columnar with a range of yellow, salmon, rust and peach tones; and ‘Burgundy’, which is “wine-colored.” If you insist on growing Liquidambar as a lawn tree, try the fruitless ‘Rotundiloba’. Although, it may lack some of the species natural, strong branching habit, it will not produce spiky seedpods to trip on, or clog your mower.

Quite unusual, the smaller-scaled Smoke Tree, Cotinus coggygria, not only produces fall splendor it has foliar color all year! Check out ‘Royal Purple’ or ‘Golden Spirit’, whose names say it all. Another modest-sized tree with fantastic year-round color is the Eastern Redbud, Cercis canadensis ‘Forest Pansy’, whose heart-shaped leaves range from purplish-red in spring to purplish-green in autumn. Both these trees have incredibly striking flowers!

No discussion about small trees can ignore the overused but tough Crape Myrtles. Lagerstroemia faurei x indica is a hybrid designed to resist mildew. There are too many to cite, but seek out named cultivars, as fall color varies as much as size and flower hue; plus,
Book Review

Ginseng, the Divine Root
The Curious History of the Plant That Captivated the World

By David A. Taylor

Reviewed by Caroline McCullagh

Taylor, in his interesting book, traces the history and contemporary culture built around the gathering, sale, and use of ginseng. Because ginseng is so difficult to find, secret knowledge of locations of patches is handed down from generation to generation. And because of the secrecy around it, gatherers are difficult to interview, but Taylor was tenacious. He finally put together the entire interesting story. He gives us a good description of the subculture arranged around ginseng.

You can go into your local health food store and buy ginseng in a hundred different tonics and other concoctions, some possibly effective, many probably not. Ginseng has a long history in the medical heritage of America and Asia. There are a number of kinds including American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius) and Asian ginseng (Panax ginseng). They all like shady, damp ground in forests. In America, they grow only in the eastern half, from Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico, so it’s not something you’re likely to be growing in your garden. In Asia, they grow in China and Korea. Recently, ginseng cultivation has started in other places, including Australia.

For much of its history as a medicinal herb, ginseng roots have been gathered from the wild. More recently, cultivated ginseng and simulated-wild ginseng have appeared in the markets of the world. Simulated-wild ginseng grows from seeds distributed by ginseng gatherers as they walk through forests. Once abundant, wild ginseng has been gathered in American forests from Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico. You can still buy wild ginseng in some markets of the world. Simulated-ginseng is not hard to find and has a reputation for hiding and even moving to avoid being “captured.” It may lie dormant for up to ten years before putting out a few small stalks, flowers, and, finally, red berries. For that reason, ‘sang gathering is of more interest to hunters and trappers than it is to gardeners and farmers.

This isn’t a scientific monograph. It’s really a travel book. Taylor takes you with him as he meet interesting people who ultimately collect enough that it can be exported to China, among other places. There, American roots are yang. That’s why there’s a market for American ginseng in Asia, and because of that complimentary yin and yang, they are used in different formulations for different medicinal purposes.

Ginseng is not showy. It is notoriously hard to find and has a reputation for hiding and even moving to avoid being “captured.” This isn’t a scientific monograph. It’s really a travel book. Taylor takes you with him as he meet interesting people who help him understand the intricacies of ‘sang gathering.

Ginseng (ISBN 13: 978-1-56512-401-I) is 308 pages long in hardbound. It includes an index and a bibliography. Taylor even includes an appendix with recipes (for food, not medicines), even though he has told us repeatedly that it doesn’t taste very good. Order Ginseng at your local bookstore for $23.95.

Community Outreach

Celebrate the Holidays with Garden Events

By Linda Johnson

Fallbrook Garden Club – Learn to make beautiful Christmas floral arrangements with Leslie Sill at the December 14 meeting, 1:00 p.m. at the Fallbrook Community Center, 341 Heald Lane, Fallbrook. (www.fallbrookgardencarlub.org)

Ikebana International Chapter Meeting – See a demonstration of holiday arrangements by teachers of the various forms of Japanese floral design. Also join in for the Holiday Potluck Luncheon, and for a drawing to win the centerpiece arrangements. December 15 from 10am-2pm in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego. Contact: Keiko Schneider; 858-759-2640. (www.ikebanaasandieg.org)

San Diego Botanic Garden – Enjoy a dazzling winter wonderland in the “Garden of Lights”, featuring over 100,000 sparkling lights! This magical holiday experience is from 5pm-9pm on December 9-23 and December 26-30. Also featured is the “Poinsettia Garden,” festively decorated with many varieties of poinsettias. Plus music, wagon rides, refreshments, and children’s activities/crafts. Enjoy hot mulled wine in the Poinsettia Garden, hot coffee and cocoa in The Coffee Hut, and healthy Mexican fare from El Pollo Loco. Admission: members $6, non-members $12; seniors, military & students $8; children 3-12 $4. San Diego Botanic Garden (SDBG) is located at 230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas. (www.sdgbgarden.org)

San Diego Floral Association – During December Nights in Balboa Park, features the annual “Festival of Trees”. This year’s theme is “Anything Goes” – beautiful Christmas trees showcasing intricate and extravagant decorations. December 3, 5pm-10pm and December 4, Noon–10pm, in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park. (Visit www.balboapark.org/decembernights for full schedule of events). Also visit the Botanical Building for the 24th Annual Poinsettia display. Open 10am–4pm (closed during evening hours of the festival).

South Bay Botanic Garden – Visit the “Holiday of Lights in the Garden” to see the garden decorated with a wonderful display of holiday lights! Also enjoy seasonal music and refreshments; bring the family and support this great community resource. Friday and Saturday, December 10-11, from 6pm-8pm. Admission: $1/person or $5 per family of five or more. South Bay Botanic Garden is located at Southwestern College, 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista. (www.sdbgarden.org)

The Water Conservation Garden – Experience the garden in a different light at “Holiday in the Garden,” the annual Holiday Festival. Enjoy music, children’s activities, fresh tamales and... beautiful lights! Friday December 3, 5:30-8:30pm. Admission: $3 adult, children 12 and under free (some children’s activities are $1). The Water Conservation Garden is located at Cuyamaca College, 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon. (www.thegarden.org)
Welcome New Members!

We now have over 1300 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. A warm hello to the following folks who have joined recently:

Sarah Clayton  Patricia McGinn
Sarah Dahlgren  Debra O’Leary
Nancy Ford  Jeannie Robinson
Brian Kimener  Robert Ullrich
Linda Lueker

NEW ADVERTISERS:
MiraCosta College (insert)

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 2010:

Kimberly Alexander (1)  Gabriel Iwany (1)  Bill Nugert (1)
Ken Blackford (1)  Lorrie Johansen (2)  Susan Oddo (1)
Debbie Boston (1)  Linda Johnson (2)  Barbara Raub (1)
Pat Croll (2)  Tami Joplin (1)  Gayle Sallee (1)
Myra Eastwood (1)  John Keeleer (3)  Diane Scharar (2)
Linda Fiske (1)  Patti Keyes (3)  Jan Spooner (1)
Connie Forest (2)  Simone Mager (2)  Susi Torre-Bueno (2)
Ann Forsyth-Smith (2)  Susan Marchetti (1)  Cathy Tyler (1)
Cheryl Hedgpeth (1)  Susan Morse (1)

Discounts For Members

Get a 15% discount at Briggs Tree Co. (see page 11; tell them to look up the “San Diego Hort Society Member” account).


Take 10% off membership fees at San Diego Botanic Garden.


Sponsor Members
(names in bold have ads)


Life Members
*Horticulturist of the Year


Contributing Members

Alta Vista Gardens  Philip Tackstil & Janet Wanerka  Rene van Rens  Village Garden Club of La Jolla

What’s Up at San Diego Botanic Garden?

A SERENE HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE: GARDEN OF LIGHTS AT SAN DIEGO BOTANIC GARDEN

After the sun goes down, San Diego Botanic Garden is transformed into a dazzling winter wonderland with over 100,000 sparkling lights illuminating the Garden for a magical holiday experience. Leave the hustle and bustle of the malls behind and enjoy a relaxing evening strolling through the lighted Garden. Adding to the sparkle is the “Poinsettia Garden,” festively decorated with many varieties of poinsettias.

Live music fills the air nightly from 6 – 8 pm. One night there will be the Peace on Earth Christmas Carolers, while another night features lively Mariachis.

A team of big Blond Belgian draft horses provides enjoyable wagon rides through the lower area of the Garden, the only way to see the lights in this part of the Garden at night.

Don’t miss the Nutcracker exhibit, displaying a collection of over 100 Nutcrackers.

Children of all ages will be entertained some nights by Holiday Tales and Tunes story time presented by costumed characters including reindeer and Santa’s helpers.

Huddle around the Lawn Garden Campfire to roast marshmallows or to make S’mores.

Of course Santa will greet young and old alike each night before Christmas from 5:30 – 8:30 pm, in the brightly lit Gazebo, providing a terrific photo opportunity.

To keep you warm, there will be hot mulled wine in the Poinsettia Garden, and The Coffee Hut will be open offering hot coffee and cocoa. El Pollo Loco provides healthy Mexican fare each night.

And finally, children can create a variety of special holiday crafts to take home.

Garden of Lights 2010
December 9 – 23 and 26 – 30
5:00 pm to 9:00 pm

ADMISSION:
Members $6.
Non-members: Adults $12; Seniors, Military & Students $8; Children 3-12: $4.

There will be additional fees for some activities.

230 Quail Gardens Dr., Encinitas, CA 92024
760 436-3036 x206
www.SDBGarden.org

Let’s Talk Plants!  December 2010, No. 195
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More Drought-Tolerant Plants

By Marsha Bode

[Editor’s Note: In the November newsletter the Sharing Secrets column question was: What low-water or drought-tolerant plant are you growing now that you think should be more widely grown by other gardeners? Here’s a thoughtful reply that was too long to include last month.]

In answer to the question above, it is not exactly correct to say “now growing” in referring to my garden, as I did not plant anything I currently have. I seem to be strongly attracted to foreclosed properties, mostly because they are in need of rescue. Ten years ago I bought two and one-half acres in Vista, with no house on the property, that had gone three years with the water turned off. Then, just under a year ago, I bought another foreclosed property two blocks from the first that has a ranch house on one and one-half acres. This property went almost a year with no water, since the tenants or the bank weed abatement people broke every single sprinkler off at the risers. I therefore consider myself to be somewhat of an expert on what will survive in our area with no water.

The six main non-native plants that not only survived, but are thriving, are California pepper (Schinus molle), Brazilian pepper (S. terebinthifolius), Cape Plumbago (Plumbago auriculata), Bougainvillea, and lime trees. I do not like Brazilian pepper because it gets too big and throws millions of seeds, all of which seem to grow. Also, I am not fond of Cape Plumbago; its flowers are pretty enough, but the bush is too blobby and every time I trim it I end up with the sticky blossoms on my hair and clothes. The California pepper is getting bad press lately because it burns easily, but it has a beautiful form with its long hanging branches. Last week when it got up to 100 degrees outside and 96 degrees in my non-air conditioned house I was happy to have a giant old pepper tree with a bench under it where I sat and read all afternoon. The lime trees are wonderful and survived where oranges were either in distress or dead.

So, to answer the above question I will have to draw on my experiences in my former house in Laguna Beach and on my time as the manager of the Hortense Miller Garden before I moved to Vista. One of my favorite drought tolerant plants is Coffeeberry (Rhamnus californica), medium sized and shapely after twenty years with no pruning and growing in partial shade. I also like Eriogonum cinereum, Ashy Leaf Buckwheat and E. arborescens, Santa Cruz Island Buckwheat. Both stay neat and low-growing and are not as much of a fire danger as our local Buckwheat.

Camellias are surprisingly drought tolerant after being established and are a great choice for shady spots. The Sasanquas seem to fit in better with current taste in more open, informal looking plants. And lastly, a sentimental favorite is the Naked Lady (Amaryllis belladonna). It needs no water, its area can be mowed in May for weed abatement, and it brings beauty in late August, when we need it most.

California natives in general are popular now as people tear up their front lawns. Magazine articles show lovely examples that are two or three years old, but often maintenance of these gardens becomes somewhat more demanding than people expected. Salvas and grasses need cutting back, the ceanothus unexpectedly dies for no reason, and the coyote bush threatens to take over half the space. All these challenges do not mean we should not plant natives in the front, just that every garden still needs its gardener.
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Two Excellent New Library Books

The SDHS library has recently acquired two exciting new books that we encourage you to check out soon, especially since both authors will be speaking to us in 2011. You can reserve these books by contacting our librarian — see the library page on our website for details. Both authors will be selling copies at the meeting they speak at, and I’m sure many members will want to purchase books for their home libraries.

Jeffrey Bale has gardened since his childhood in Eugene, Oregon, and has a degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Oregon. After a trip to Spain and Portugal, where he was introduced to pebble mosaics, he developed a technique for constructing them. “It is a wonderful medium with unlimited expression, and I have become known for the many beautiful works adventurous clients have commissioned over the years.” Addicted to travel, Jeffrey has spent winters exploring Southeast Asia, India and Central Asia, and much of South America. His gardens and mosaics have appeared in numerous magazines and the New York Times. Bale will be speaking to SDHS on April 11; his website is www.jeffreygardens.com.

The Gardens of Jeffrey Bale is a volume of stunning images of some of the gardens and pebble mosaics he has created. There are mosaics that look like prayer rugs, stepping stone mosaics that create entrancing paths through the garden, and other mosaics swirling with movement. Stone fountains and basins created by the author seem centuries old, and the rock stairways incorporating other materials make anyone want to climb them to explore further. Many of Bale’s designs feature spirals, and the intricacy of his work is sure to slow down all who trod these paved byways. The complexity and variety of his work is marvelous, and this book is a good introduction to the images we’ll be seeing when he lectures in April.

On May 9 we will have Bob Perry as our speaker for our annual Special Evening, and we’re confident it’ll be an exceptional evening. Bob is Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly Pomona. His academic career began in 1972 and he has taught in the UCLA Extension Program in Landscape Architecture, Landscape Architecture Studies at USC, and at Cal Poly University Pomona. His career has been focused on the study of plants and water conservation. Bob has written two previous books on landscape plants and water conservation: Trees and Shrubs for Dry California Landscapes, 1980, and Landscape Plants for Western Regions, 1992.

Perry’s widely-acclaimed newest book, Landscape Plants for California Gardens, published this year, is an outstanding resource. It has 650 pages filled with all the information you need to make well-informed choices about plants to add to your garden. A massive tome (it weighs over seven pounds), it provides over 3000 color photos of over 2000 plants. Bob has generously made it possible for you to download the first 150 pages for FREE — go to www.landdesignpublishing.com/index.html. Don’t let the size of the book scare you off – there are subsections for plants that need reduced summer water and a section on Plant Functions and Aesthetics, for example. Handy detailed charts let you know very easily which plants would work best for you.
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 December was:**
What do you plan to do differently in your garden in 2011, and why?

**John Bagnasco** will try more frost-tender plants, “Like many other San Diego gardeners, I’m always pushing the envelope with marginally hardy plants. I have now been successful with plants that have previously not survived winters for me by spraying once a month, from November to February, with FreezePruf. This product was developed by Dr. David Francko from the University of Alabama. It combines an anti-transpirant with a systemic ‘anti-freeze’ that prevents the interior of cells from freezing. Dr. Francko says that it adds 2 to 9 degrees of extra protection, depending on the species of plants that are sprayed. I was finally able to get the Red Jade Vine, *Mucuna bennettii*, to survive the winter. This year I’m spraying a baobab and am really going to press my luck with *Philodendron giganteum*. I ordered mine online from www.liquidfence.com/FreezePruf.html, but I’m sure that it can be bought locally; it is distributed by Excel Garden Products.”

**Karen Cassimatis** is, “planning now for next year’s garden. With the October rains bringing up all those grass seeds I didn’t get to last year, I’m tackling the grass problem (wild grass that the city requires we cut by July), by getting to it right now while it’s young and tender. Also brought in a pile of chicken manure (next time, horse) that’s sitting by for adding soon to the raised bed vegetable gardens.”

**Nancy Fournier** will tackle three projects: “Remove more grass and plant California natives. Plant more vegetables in my three raised beds. Collect rainwater.”

**Joann Dossett** plans, “to increase my use of bromeliads. As they require very little water as well as no fertilizer, it will save me time and money. Except for the occasional snail, bromeliads are practically pest free... more saving of time and money.”

**Wayne Julien** intends to add native plants: “My plan is to remove part of my garden and plant native plants. Native plants have been planted in parts of my garden and this will be an extension of that. I find native plants exciting since they are drought tolerant, provide a more natural look, tend to look good most of the year, are easy maintenance and food for various butterflies and birds. Planting native plants is doing my part to restore a little bit of the original San Diego landscape. I wonder what the San Diego landscape looked like when Juan Cabrillo saw it for the first time in 1542? It must have been a site to behold with everything in balance for the animals and plants. The resident Indians kept things in balance and took only what they needed.”

**Sylvia Keating** is planting a neighbor’s garden for 2011: “What I plan to do differently this year – I have already started. I’m taking cuttings of as many of my succulents as I can, and planting them in my across the street neighbor’s yard and old concrete fountain and bird baths that leak and are unusable. Why? Because I believe so strongly that succulents are the way to garden in California, and because my house is at the bottom of a big slope and my back yard cannot handle succulents in the ground because of the intense heat in Poway, and the cold during the winter. I’ve lost painstakingly planted succulents because of frost. So, by having my neighbors agree to be the repositories of my largesse, I get to enjoy seeing the succulents thrive at my neighbors where the conditions are really good. And, they are wonderful neighbors. Interestingly, my neighbors have told...”

*Continued on page 14*
me that several of our ‘walk-by’ neighbors have told them, ‘how great the succulents look.’ I’m very pleased.”

**Patti Keyes** will do some cactus wrangling: “In the upcoming year I’m planning to finally remove some mature cactus and succulents from large, rustic terra cotta pots that were here on the property when we bought the place four years ago. I’ll put them in the ground in our succulent gardens and on the hillside, then clean the pots and fill them with fun plants for the outdoor living room. (Any ideas on how to keep the pots from cracking and breaking during the process?) WHY? We are striving to re-use, re-plant and re-purpose what we already have around the property - which is really a lot of pretty cool stuff! - including many found objects like the green bowling ball I discovered half-buried in the Eucalyptus glen - my favorite find!”

**Ellen McGrath-Thorpe** tells us, “Once I get permission from my HOA, I’m adding berms to one part of my garden. As I learn more and gain more confidence, I am refining my garden, one part at a time.”

**Rachele Melious** plans some interesting changes: “I am going to remove the overgrown plants from my too small yard and replace them with only dwarf and low pollen plants. It simply takes too much money, work and waste to keep bigger plants in check and there’s enough pollen out there, I don’t need it coming in my front and back door!”

**Robin Rivet** needs to save time in 2011 due to a new job: “In 2011, I may be opening a lemonade stand, desperately trying to enjoy my neglected garden lemons. Seriously thwarting my free time for home gardening, I’ve assumed a full-time job for the CA Center for Sustainable Energy as their lead Urban Forester. Appropriately, I will be developing and managing an Advice and Technical Assistance Center for sustainable landscape and tree education, and boy, will I ever need time-saving gardening advice. Other than hearty vegetables, the only thing I may grow in 2011 from seed could be opportunistic weeds. I will forfeit any time to dead-head perennials (did I ever do that anyway?), and those weeds will probably grow everywhere that I do not make time to plop down sufficient mulch. However, the National Wildlife Federation will love me for all the happy butterflies. Red Admiral butterflies can soon camp out on fields of stinging nettle that I won’t have time to cut back. Monarchs will adore the assorted milkweeds that self-sow in odd spaces. Flocks of Skippers will descend on the soon-to-be rampant six-foot cheeseweeds. Sadly, invasive non-native fennel will pop up everywhere, and the Native Plant Society will again be looking for my phone number…” Fortunately, Anise Swallowtails love that stuff, and since I do try to grow the bulbing variety, I’ll compete with those beauties to consume it. It is great on the grill.

Spreading along at 50+feet/year, our ‘Frederick’ Passion Vine will irritate two more neighbors’ fences. However, the Gulf Fritillary butterflies will be in heaven as the adjacent Passion Vine ‘Incense’ continues to attack my giant Sapote tree, while humans will wonder about those exotic violet flowers high in the tree where those humungous Rue-loving Giant Swallowtails like to chrysalis, disguised as twigs. Deer weed eruptions will bring swarms of Acmon Blue and Funereal Duskywings, and as the Monkeyflower takes over my raised bed (again), Buckeyes may peer into my kitchen window. Get a job. At least it may improve your wildlife habitat!”

**Diane Scharar** will make her way through the garden more smoothly: “In 2011 I plan to make pathways in the garden that do not require me to do pirouettes to get back out of the space. Loops are what I plan, so you can exit with out turning around and taking a chance on losing your balance. Have to try to garden smarter as I get older.”
Cindy Sparks made changes in 2010 that mean more changes in 2011: “I took out a huge grapefruit tree, which had been threatening to take over the entire back garden and which tried to grab my husband each time he walked to his garage. It pained me to do it, but it was it or us, and us won. As a result, I now have sun in the back. Not just that quadrant is sunny, but it had also blocked sun to the west side of the yard, and also to nearby beds where I regularly grew winter greens all year long. Now I’ll have to totally re-think that half of the back yard. I have already enlarged my square-foot veggie plot to take over some area that the grapefruit’s extensive roots had rendered inhospitable. I need to do a little bit of terracing and re-route sprinkler lines, but then I can actually plant things that need sun. This is so radical, I have to sit down every time I think about it.”

Susi Torre-Bueno plans, “to add even more very low water plants. I learned so much this year and want to be even stricter than I have been in the past few years, adding almost exclusively plants that will get by with winter rain and water only twice a month (or less) in summer. I’m also replacing the water-hungry herbs in my labyrinth with succulents and drought-tolerant bulbs.”

Katrin Ut wrote: “I plan to PLAN better! No more impulse buying. To often I come home from a nursery with plants that I don’t have room for in my small garden. They end up in pots or I give them away. But the nurseries love me!”

Tynan Wyatt shared two things he wants to do: “I plan on using timers for my drip system. There have been one too many times that I turned on the drip and forgot to go back out and turn it off until the next morning. I also want to start recording the bloom time and ripening time for my various fruit trees and berries. This should not only be interesting for its own sake but also help me to figure out what times of the year I don’t have anything ripening so I can find a cultivar that fills that time spot.”

The TWO related questions for next month are: What special plant combination do you find works and why? What plant or combination of two or three plants struck you as particularly beautiful or gave you an idea for your own garden when you saw them in a public garden? (Thanks to Marilyn Guidroz and Marcia Bode for suggesting these questions.)

Send your reply by December 5 to info@sdhortsoc.org.
Thanks from the Editor

By Susi Torre-Bueno

Many members have told me that the monthly newsletter is one of the biggest benefits of their membership, and some folks join just to get the newsletter and never even come to meetings! Our volunteers who help with the newsletter make it possible to bring you such a high quality publication each month, and each December it’s my great pleasure to be able to thank them here. The members below contributed articles, plant descriptions, photos, or monthly columns. Some help with preparing your newsletter for the mail.

I’d like to especially thank the following contributors with on-going columns in 2010: Linda Bresler and Joan Herskowitz (The Real Dirt On…), Richard Frost (Plants that Produce), Linda Johnson (Community Outreach), Neal King (calendar), Caroline McCullagh (book reviews), Robin Rived (Trees, Please), Trudy Thompson (proofreading), and Ava Torre-Bueno (To Learn More…). Special thanks to Janine Free for taking photos at our meetings. Many thanks as well to all the folks who supplied comments for the Sharing Secrets and Plant Forum columns.

On the fourth Tuesday morning of each month six to twelve folks from our faithful mailing crew come to my home to prepare the newsletter for mailing. Catherine and John Swan haul over 700 copies of the newsletter to the post office each month – a hefty feat indeed! We were saddened this year by the death of one long-time mailing crew member, Marianne Light.

I couldn’t do the newsletter without Rachel Cobb, our graphics editor, who takes my raw material and works her magic each month to produce a beautiful issue.

My most sincere thanks and a big hug to each of you. I’ve enjoyed working with you and look forward to your continued participation!

Mailing Crew:
Louise Anderson, Joyce Berry, Pat Crowl, Liliane Dickinson, Susan D’Vincent, Doris Engberg, Linda Freithaler, Gail Greco, Susan Morse, Barbara Raub, Diane Scharar, Catherine & John Swan, Evelyn Torre-Bueno, Cathy Tylka, Tomi Weddleton, Sandy Wiksten

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Plants for Honeybees

The Melissa Garden (www.themelissagarden.com) is a honeybee, native pollinator and habitat garden sanctuary in Healdsburg, California. Four gardens planted with many exuberant flowers for nectar and pollen forage are situated in the center of a pristine 40-acre ranch that is lush with native vegetation. This project began in 2007 with the goal of providing honeybees, native bees and other pollinators with an almost year-round source of floral resources free from pesticides. It is also a center that furthers a wide spectrum of honeybee-centric educational and cultural activities. They have given us permission to include this list of plants for honeybees.

**Annuals**
- Bidens ferulifolia.  Bidens
- Borago officinalis.  Borage
- Cleome hasslerana.  Spider flower
- Cosmos bipinnatus.  Cosmos
- Cosmos sulphureus.  Cosmos, sulphur
- Eschscholzia californica.  California poppy
- Helianthus annuus.  Sunflower
- Hemezonia congesta ssp.  Tarweed
- Madia elegans.  Tarweed
- Phacelia tanacetifolia.  Phacelia
- Phacelia bolanderi.  Phacelia
- Papaver rhoeas.  Shirley poppy
- Papaver ssp.  Greek poppy

**Biennials**
- Angelica stricta purpurea.  Angelica
- Echium wildpretii.  Tower of Jewels

**Perennials**
- Achillea filipendula
- Achillea ‘Sonoma Coast’.  Yarrow
- Agastache aurantiaca ‘Apricot Sunrise’
- Agastache foeniculum.  Licorice mint
- Agastache ‘Tutti Frutti’
- Agastache rupestris
- Angelica hendersonii.  Angelica
- Asclepias fascicularis.  Narrow leaf milkweed
- Aster lateriflorus ‘Prince’
- Aster lateriflorus ‘Lady In Black’
- Aster Little Carlow
- Ballota pseudodictamnus ‘All Hallows Green’
- Calamintha nepetoides
- Caryopteris incana..  Bluebeard
- Centaurea gymnocarpa.  Velvet centaurea
- Echinops bannaticus. ‘Blue Glow’.  Globe Thistle
- Epilobium.  California fuchsia selections and cultivars ‘Catalina,’ ‘Chaparral Silver,’ ‘Schiefelins Choice,’ many other good ones
- Eriogonum fascicularis.  California buckwheat
- Eriogonum grande rubescens.  California buckwheat
- Eriogonum giganteum.  California buckwheat
- Eryngium tripartitum.  Blue sea holly
- Grindelia camporum.  Gum Plant
- Helenthium puberulum.  Helenthium
- Helenthium autumnale.  Sneezeweed
- Helianthus hirsutus.  Hairy sunflower

Continued on page 19
Plants That Produce Continued from page 7

these ripen by October. The apricot-colored fruits are very juicy and have just about every flavor you can imagine packed into them. We are harvesting and eating them as fast as we can.

Bananas will flower when they’ve had enough accumulated warmth to mature. This might be in April, July, or … December! Last year my Dwarf Onioco put out a nice bunch on November 2nd, and we waited until June to bring it inside to finish ripening. In a show of one-upmanship, my Dwarf Brazilian put out a huge bud on Nov. 4th this year, so it will be another year of over-wintering bananas on the plant.

In my yard and all over town there are apple, pear, plum, and other pit fruits which bloomed in October-November heat and are now bearing tiny unripe fruits. With the exception of some multi-cropping varieties like ‘Anna’ and ‘Dorset’ apples, I recommend you remove all the little fruits now so the tree has enough energy to bear a regular crop next year.

For some subtropicals, November-December is the normal time of year to bloom. Loquats and Silverberries (Elaeagnus x ebbingei) are a great example. Don’t get carried away removing fruit from those plants that managed to crop at the right time in this year of unusual weather.

SDHS member Richard Frost is a certified edible gardening nut. For copies of past articles and more information, please see www.PlantsThatProduce.com.

Thank you to these November speakers for donating items for the Opportunity Drawing at the November meeting.

Please visit their websites:

Mary Matava, Agri Service, www.agriserviceinc.com

Mark Collins, Evergreen Nursery, www.evergreennursery.com


John Keeler, California Mycorrhiza, www.californiamycorrhiza.com

Trees Continued from page 7

many sport colorful bark.

If a significant shade tree is your preference, the Chinese Pistache, *Pistacia chinensis*, could be your hands-down choice. Pest-free, it turns a fiery deep orange as weather cools, even in balmy San Diego. Lesser-known species are the rarer Chinese Tallow, *Sapium sebiferum* and *Zelcova serrata 'Autumn Glow*', which is related to the elm. Both have possibility for rusty-red autumn effect. If yellow or gold is your preference, think Gingko, Honey Locust or Cottonwood.

Can you imagine showy fall inflorescence or ruby-colored fruit? What Easterner would not be envious of our *Koelreuteria* species? These bold trees hold their colorful fruit capsules well into autumn, and almost look like a giant coral bougainvillea dropped on top. Better yet, consider consuming your dramatic landscape.

Hearty, conspicuous, red and orange fall bearing Pomegranates, Persimmons and Apple trees will decorate your property and your table, contributing to beautiful and sustainable fall landscapes.

Some useful websites include the following:

www.beachcalifornia.com/california/fall-foliage-california.htm

Member Robin Rivet is an ISA Certified Arborist, California Rare Fruit Grower, UCCE Master Gardener. She serves on the San Diego Community Forest Advisory Board, La Mesa Environmental/ Sustainability Commission, and the San Diego Regional Urban Forests Council. She welcomes public inquiries or rebuttals.

Pistacia chinensis
Honeybee Plant List Continued from page 17

Helianthus giganteus. Giant Sunflower
Gaillardia ‘Oranges and Lemons’. Blanket flower
Gaura lindheimeri. Gaura
Lantana camara ‘Radiation’
Lavandula ‘Goodwin Creek Gray’, ‘Grosso’. Lavender
Lavandula stoechas. Spanish lavender
Linaria purpurea
Marrubium vulgare. Horehound
Melissa officinalis. Lemon balm
Mimulus hybrids. Sticky monkey flower
Monardella villosa ‘Russian River’. Coyote Mint
Nepeta faassini. Catmint
Origanum heracliticum. Greek oregano
Pentsemon heterophyllus ‘Margaret BOP’
Papaver atlanticum. Morocco poppy
Perovskia atriplicifolia. Russian sage
Rosemarinus officinalis. Rosemary
Rudbeckia ‘Goldstrum’. Rudbeckia
Salvia apiana. White Sage
Salvia branisii. Brandegee Sage
Salvia clevelandi ‘Alani Chickering’
Salvia clevelandi ‘Winifred Gilman’
Salvia ‘Indigo Spires’
Salvia mohis. Black sage
Salvia mellifera. Grape scented sage
Salvia ‘Purple Rain’
Salvia sonomensis. Sonoma Sage
Salvia uliginosa. Bog sage
Scabiosa ochroleuca
Sedum telephium ‘Autumn Joy’. Sedum
Solidago californica. California goldenrod
Solidago rugosa ‘Fireworks’. Eastern goldenrod
Scutellaria suffrutescens. Pink Texas skullcap
Teucrium chamaedrys. Germander
Teucrium cussoni ‘Majoricum’
Thymus vulgaris ‘Dot Wells’. Common thyme
Thymus serpyllum ‘Red Creeping’. Red thyme
Verbena bonariensis
Verbascum

Shrubs
Arbutus unedo. Strawberry tree
Arctostaphylos. Manzanita
Ceanothus arboreus
Ceanothus ‘Glorie de Versailles’
Ceanothus gloriosus ‘Anchor Bay’
Ceanothus hearstiorum.
Hearst ceanothus
Cercis occidentalis. Western redbud
Euonymus fortunei. Euonymus
Heteromeles arbutifolia. Toyon
Mahonia aquifolium ‘Compacta’
Rhamnus californica. Coffeeberry
Rhus ovata. Sugar bush
Philadelphus lewesi. Mock orange
Vitex agnus-castus. Chaste tree

Let’s Talk Plants! December 2010, No. 195
**Let’s Talk Plants!**

December 2010, No. 195

San Diego Horticultural Society

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**The Melissa Garden**

**Honey Oat Bars**

This recipe is adapted from the Farm Journal Country Cookbook, where it is called Favorite Honey Bars.

Makes: 36 small squares or bars

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

1. Cream together until light and fluffy in a large bowl:
   - 1/2 cup butter
   - 1/2 cup sugar
   - 1/2 cup honey

2. Add egg and blend:
   - 1 egg, well beaten

3. Add these dry ingredients and mix well:
   - 2/3 cup whole wheat pastry flour
   - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
   - 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
   - 1/4 teaspoon salt

4. Stir in:
   - 1 cup quick cooking rolled oats
   - 1 cup flaked coconut
   - 1 teaspoon vanilla
   - 1 cup chopped walnuts
   - 1 cup chocolate chips

Spread in large oiled baking pan, such as a 9” x 13” rectangle, or 10-1/2” x 15” pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Cool, and then cut into bars or small squares.
For several years we’ve had a special meeting in the Fall where five experts talk about one topic from different perspectives. This year, our November meeting featured an excellent group of presenters about a topic important to every gardener: Improving Your Soil. In addition to their excellent brief presentations, each speaker also brought some handouts and/or samples, and was on hand both before and after their talk to answer questions from an eager crowd of members.

Mary Matava, an agronomist and agricultural research specialist, and founder of Agri Service, Inc. (see page 16) was the first to address our group. Her topic was “Building healthy soils: a step-by-step approach to identifying the nutritional status of your soil and amending it for optimal plant growth.” She told us that, “the lack of organic matter in soil is the biggest single factor in limiting plant production in San Diego,” and stressed the importance of soil testing, especially in new gardens. A soil test will tell you what kind of soil you have; the amendments you need to use will depend on your plant palette. Three places that Mary recommends for soil testing are Fruit Growers Lab (www.fglinc.com), Wallace Labs (www.bettersoils.com), and Soil and Plant Lab (www.soilandplantlaboratory.com).

When adding organic amendments it is important to simulate rainfall, and in some situations you can simply add amendments on top of the soil rather than digging it in. It is important to identify problems with soil drainage because we don’t have a “well-developed soil profile here,” unlike in parts of the country with plenty of topsoil, so drainage problems can be much worse here. “Soil building takes time,” Mary reminded us, and it is important to use amendments that have been processed with heat to kill weed seeds. More information is available on the Agri Service website, www.agriserviceinc.com.

Tiger Palafox grew up in the Mission Hills Nursery owned by his family, and is now the nursery manager and marketing director. He spoke about the benefits of vermiculure (worm composting). Tiger said his dad told him to, “plant a $20 plant in a $100 hole,” meaning that it was important to prepare the planting area to get a plant off to a good start. One vermiculure system he showed was the Worm Café, a multi-tiered plastic structure that you can set up indoors or outside in a shady location that doesn’t get too hot or too cold. Feed your worms with garden waste, food scraps (not meat or dairy), and shredded paper. The benefits of using earthworm casts (= worm poop) include boosting plant immunity. Castings also add micronutrients and nutrients to the soil. Earthworms are like “a vitamixer for soil,” breaking nutrients down and concentrating them. He urged us to use organic fertilizers and also less harsh pesticides in order to avoid dead soil. Noting that worms need moisture to thrive, Tiger said that in a very low-water garden earthworms will not thrive, but they’ll do very well outdoors in shady, well-mulched areas. Using worm castings is not an instant fix in the garden, but they will make for long-term improvements in soil and plant health.

Our third speaker was SDHS board member Mark Collins, who owns Evergreen Nursery (see page 4). Mark explained that mushroom compost is one of nature’s keys that can open the door to garden success. Reinforcing what Mary Matava had said, he noted that we have terrible soil here in large part because modern construction techniques have moved the good topsoil elsewhere, and also in part because most of the region is “ocean uplift with salty soil.” The total dissolved solids in our soil (a measure of saltiness) is 650-850 parts per million (ppm), which didn’t sound too bad until we heard that the water in Portland, OR has only 40 ppm. These dissolved minerals in our water make it hard for native plants in summer; but, fortunately, our winter rains flush these salts out of the soil.

Mark said that while “lots of plants can tough it out,” it is important to put plants in the right microclimate on your property. Using organic material is an excellent way to add air and nutrients to the soil, and mushrooms are able to “fix” nitrogen and make it available to plants. Most mushrooms in Southern California are grown on stable hay that is high in salts. However, the mushroom compost he uses comes from a San Marcos facility where they use distilled water and all-organic growth medium. Evergreen will start selling this mushroom compost in bags in the spring; in the meantime, if you won of the four bags of mushroom compost that Mark provided for the Opportunity Drawing, please let him have your feedback on how it works.

You can leave a message for him at one of his three nurseries (see page 4).

Irv McDaniel, from Kellogg Garden Products (see page 14), spoke next about the proper use of fertilizers to improve plant health and soils. Kellogg has manufactured a wide range of products for 85 years, and Irv reminded us of the importance of good soils: “Don’t fertilize your plants, fertilize your soil!” In organic products the numbers are not as important, in general, as in chemical fertilizers, which are much stronger. There are “many ways to take dirt and turn it into soil,” but the long-term use of chemical fertilizers causes problems in the garden and the environment. One important note: organic fertilizers have use-by dates of about two years from date of manufacture; they’ll be less effective after that date, but will still work well for a long time.

Our last speaker was member John Keeeler, who operates California Mycorrhiza, a Vista-based family-owned business. John shared lots of information about the importance of mycorrhiza, a soil organism that is a natural partner for gardening and crop production. Mycorrhiza is a beneficial fungus found in nature that establishes symbiotic relationships with plants. He showed slides of microscopic hyphae (the branching growth structures of mycorrhiza) growing on roots and in soil. The mycelium is a mass of the branching, thread-like hyphae, and it “freees soil nutrients for plants and also stores water and helps the plants to store water.” Mycorrhiza helps hold the soil together and prevents soil erosion – it is used in hydroseeding for slopes, along with plant seeds. There are different strains of mycorrhiza, and only a tiny bit is needed to beneficially “colonize” a plant.

Mycorrhiza help plants to get more water and nutrients, help them withstand stress, and make healthier plants better able to defend themselves against pests. In time, mycorrhiza will form a vast underground network that communicates and shares nutrients. Once a plant is inoculated with mycorrhiza it is “set for life,” and the mycorrhiza will remain in the soil even after the plant is removed. These benefits develop over time, and are not a quick fix for problems. You can add mycorrhiza to your existing garden by poking holes near the plant roots and sprinkling in a small amount (details are on the package).

We extend many thanks to all these fine speakers for a fascinating evening about a crucial topic. See page 18 for the names of those who generously donated products to our Opportunity Drawing and also for their websites, which have more information...
Happy Holidays

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For more information contact the nursery staff at hortmail@miracosta.edu or 760.757.2121, ext. 6994

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*Application pending for Continuing Education for California DPR Pesticide Licenses and Certificates.
Hello to all and welcome to our December garden tips and update:

December marks the beginning of winter here in Southern California. The days grow cooler and shorter. Normally December fulfills its winter role with cold and rain although it can sometimes bring a heat wave that makes you swear that August has returned. So if the weather brings hot drying winds, be prepared to hand-water your plants.

New at the Nursery:

- As our gift to you - come by and get a free 4" Poinsettia with any purchase - while stock lasts. Also check out our monthly newsletter for different specials every couple of weeks – you can sign on online at andersonslacostanursery.com.

- Some great gifts and décor ideas throughout the nursery and of course in our gift shop:
  - Lots of holiday themed gifts and some gifts just plain elegant.
  - Plenty of gift ideas…Patrick has done a fantastic job this holiday season.
  - Consider a perfect indoor plant in the perfect pot as a gift from the sweetest 2" African Violet to a fabulous Star Pine.
  - Fresh Garland and Wreaths are arriving weekly. Create an elegant, fragrant statement on your door, fireplace, table or stairway with fresh greens.
  - We have some fabulous succulent wreaths and of course in our gift shop:

New Year’s Eve Wreath.

- We're on Facebook now! “Like” us for info and news as it happens. You’ll find us under Andersons La Costa Nursery.

Continued on other side
For that shady spot the Cyclamen are unbeatable & a great holiday color addition. They will bloom through April, go dormant through the summer and reblom in Fall.

Outdoor Bonsai trees: We have starters, *plant your own* and ready planted (in ceramic Bonsai pots including mini-statuary). Many to choose from.

Lots of Azaleas and Camellias: Great time now to select and plant as many as are in bloom or about to bloom. When in bloom these plants roots are fully dormant so it is the least stressful time to transplant.

Looking for a quick (i.e., time saver) small gift idea? Try planted Paperwhites. We have many planted that are soon to bloom.

The Orchids are simply outstanding. The Cymbidiums are here in *full spike* and in many colors yellows, pinks, creams and many more.

Christmas Cactus (always a favorite) in 2, 4, 6, and 8” sizes AND sporting some new color choices this year.

December in the Garden:

For those of us in *frost prone areas* (like Valley Center – and even semi-coastal valleys, like the Elfin Forest) you can consider using strings of Christmas lighting strung around sensitive plantings (even your in-ground succulents) to provide a source of warmth. It can also give a festive look to lower growing plants

If you’re not busy to give the garden much attention this month, you’re in luck: most plants will do quite well with little help from you. However if you can find the time, working in the garden this month is wonderful.

Cool-Season Vegetables: Between harvests you can still plant most cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, lettuce and other greens, and root crops like beets, carrots, radishes, and turnips.

Some cymbidiums start to bloom in December although most bloom between February and March. Continue to feed the plants for bloom (low nitrogen fertilizer) until the buds open.

Native Plants: This is the growing season for California Natives so if the weather is really dry – *water these plants*. Native plants can also be pruned now.

Peaches: If your peach or nectarine had leaf curl (puckerred, yellow and red leaves) this year spray it with lime sulfur at full leaf fall (do not use this spray on apricot trees – select copper instead).

Start pruning now: The plants are as dormant as they will get here in California. Most all deciduous plants (those that lose their leaves in winter) get pruned in the winter.

Fruit Trees: Dormant spray deciduous fruit trees. Dormant sprays such as horticultural oils or lime-sulfur are applied after a deciduous plant has gone dormant and dropped its leaves.

Don’t fertilize or water roses this month, as they need to harden off for winter.

Stimulate wisteria by cutting it back now.

If you’ve over-seeded your lawn and there are bare spots feel free to scatter a bit more seed to fill.

Feed shrubs and trees that will bloom in January and February.

Prune conifers and broad-leaved evergreens to shape them and provide trimmings for holiday decorations.

Living plants for indoor color include African violets, azaleas, begonias, Christmas cactus, cyclamen, and kalanchoe, as well as the ever-dependable chrysanthemum and poinsettia.

Don’t worry that your houseplants don’t seem too perky now-- they’re going dormant just like plants outdoors. Plants need this rest so stop feeding them and water them less frequently.

Continue to water your over-wintering outdoor plants unless the rains keep the soil moist. Irrigation should be reduced - not stopped, as plant photosynthesis slows down and cold weather dries plants out.