



Garden Notes

"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

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Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

- Let us know what you'd like to see in the newsletter, and consider sharing interesting information you come across!
- If you have ideas for topics for the meetings, field trips or other activities, or would like to arrange any, we can use the help!

Dorcia Bradley sent in this report on a "Square Foot Gardening" workshop she attended (by Jo Ann Carey at Mt San Antonio College):



Whether on large properties or postage stamp-sized back yards, "square foot gardening" is "a uniquely simplified method that produces 100% of the harvest in 20% of the space without the hard work and drudgery of single row gardening." Based on All New Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew, this method uses a 3'x3'x6" deep wood square (can

be 4'x4') placed on top of a weed barricade, filled with equal parts compost, peat moss & vermiculite, and separated into one foot square grids with twine or plastic line stapled to the edges of the box. The number of seeds or plants put into each 1' square depends on the type of plant; for example, one cabbage to a square, or 16 radishes. Pest-controlling flowers can be grown in a square as well. This method is great for beginners, can be located anywhere, is efficient because it yields twice as much in half the space, is earth friendly (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and because the plants grow close together, weeding is reduced and pests are better controlled naturally.

Sue Schenk recommends this day trip to three gardens:



First, the Hortense Miller Garden (www.hortensemillergarden.org) in Laguna Beach. This hillside garden surrounds a wonderful mid-century house and has lovely views. Docent-led tours of the house and grounds (Tues-Sat at 10 am only) can be arranged by calling the City of Laguna Beach. Free, but a donation of \$10 is suggested and it's well worth it! **Then** drive to Corona del Mar for lunch and to visit the Sherman Library and Gardens (www.slgardens.org). The library is only open TWTh but the garden is open every day (\$3). Spectacularly colorful spring beds and some unusual plants in the greenhouse. **Finish** the day with a trip to nearby Roger's Gardens (www.rogersgardens.com) a beautifully organized nursery with a great selection of herbs, Japanese maples, and succulents, as well as many other plants and garden decorations.

Ornamental of the Month:

Mimulus aurantiacus

Sticky Monkey Flower is Claremont's official flower! It is a small, short-lived shrub with narrow, sticky leaves, growing to about 3' x3'. It tolerates some shade, is not fussy about soil and requires little water. It comes in red, orange, yellow, or white and attracts butterflies, hummingbirds and bees.



Edible of the Month:

Rumex species

Garden sorrel (*R. acetosa*) is larger, with thinner leaves than French sorrel (*R. scutatus*) but both are easy-to-grow perennials. Moderate water and sun/part shade. The acidic leaves make great soup or a sauce for eggs or fish (note: the acid can discolor metal pots)



Favorite Quote (courtesy of Sharron Neyer):

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."Audrey Hepburn

Choosing Seeds by Mia Myers (www.smartseedstore.com)

It's Spring, and you're inundated with glossy catalogs offering radiant blooms and edibles. It's tempting to order three of everything. So many choices--Who to trust? What to buy? How many kinds of tomatoes do you really need to grow? Catalog reviews are all over the Internet. If the pictures look too good to be true, they probably are--catalogs can be photoshopped as easily as supermodels.

- **Keep it simple.** Grow what you love and can't get enough of. You'll be tending every seedling you grow. Maybe endive can wait till next year.
- **Learn What Plants Really Want:** The over-simplified instructions on most seed packets ("Just add water") are misleading. Vegetable seeds are reasonably domesticated, but each has special needs. Get a basic book on growing vegetables or use Google. It's not rocket science, but it's not intuitive either. Next season, it will be.
- **Pick a good seed source (not your kitchen drawer):** Buy fresh seed from a trustworthy online company or a nursery that protects them from sun and changing weather (one is www.davesgarden.com/products/gwd). Box stores that display those tempting packets outside their entrance are subjecting seeds to changes in heat and humidity that can destroy them. Those faded old packets in your kitchen drawer? Toss them. Your time and effort deserve fresh, viable seeds. If you don't have time for seeds, Armstrong's and Mt. Fuji both offer heirloom vegetable starts, and many are available through mail order.
- **What's the deal with heirlooms?** Heirlooms are seeds that have been cultivated for generations and passed from one gardener to another. Besides being tastier and more colorful, they are often adapted to the region they're from. Heirloom tomatoes from the north ripen quickly in a short summer. Varieties from the hot and humid south love the long summer, warm nights, and resist bugs and fungus that show up just when the fruit is getting juicy. Here we need varieties that will tolerate our Mediterranean climate - hot days, cool nights, dry air, a long summer. (Good news: Cherry tomatoes ripen quickly and produce almost anywhere.)
- **Whatever you choose to grow, you can do this. Have fun!**

Upcoming events and more: *(The garden club is free and open to all)*

April 10: Garden Club meeting (7pm, Napier Center, 660 Avery Rd, Pilgrim Place)

"Sustainable landscaping with California native plants" -- Antonio Sanchez

April field trip to Living Waters Farm, date TBA

April 13: Mt. Fuji Garden Center 1:00 pm, free seminar *"Saving Water Landscaping"*-- irrigation, plant selection, proper maintenance.

April 25-28 at South Coast Plaza (www.springgardenshow.com)

Though June 10: RSABG members can visit the Wildflower painting exhibit at the Huntington for free

Garden tours: go to www.latimes.com and type in 'spring garden tours'

Connie says: Groupon has discount coupons available for garden items

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "*aurantiacus*" refers to orange (or gold) color. "*Acetosa*" means "acidic", "*scutatus*" means "with a shield".

Plant Anatomy: one leaf attached at each node on a stem is "alternate"; two is "opposite"; more than two, is "whorled".

Things to do in April

General

- ✓ Change timers to daylight savings
- ✓ Weed!
- ✓ Prune frost damage when new growth can be seen
- ✓ Visit nurseries

Pest management

- ✓ Cultivate around Argentine ant nests; put barriers on trees to prevent ants from "farming" aphids and scale insects (they produce "honeydew" on which sooty mold grows)
- ✓ Put a ring of diatomaceous earth around plants to discourage snails
- ✓ **From Connie Newport:** to repel bad bugs plant basil, garlic, geraniums, marigolds, lavender, nasturtiums, petunias, rosemary, sage and thyme; to attract beneficial ones, use alyssum, bachelor's button and marigolds.

Edibles

- ✓ Plant avocados
- ✓ Plant beets, beans, carrots, cucumber, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, onion, mustard greens, radish, and spinach.
- ✓ At end of April plant corn, eggplant, melons, okra, peppers, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes (need warmer soil)
- ✓ **From Connie:** Yellowing older citrus leaves indicate nitrogen deficiency. A foliar (liquid) spray with nitrogen works quickly to fix this (follow directions on package).

Ornamentals

- ✓ Plant bougainvillea, *Chorisia*, fuchsia, and hibiscus- establish before summer
- ✓ Part shade: begonia, ageratum, coleus, impatiens, lobelia, digitalis
- ✓ Start most perennials from seed, including vines like morning glory, cardinal flower, and thunbergia
- ✓ Plant succulents as ground cover

Volunteers needed for nominating committee (Board election is in June)

—email us if willing to help!