



# Garden Notes

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## Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

- 🐝 **No meeting in August**, but they will start up again in September
- 🐝 **We are planning next year now**—send ideas for meetings, field trips, demos, fund-raisers, or other activities! Let us know if you would like to help with anything or contribute to the newsletter.



**Bromeliads** are mostly tropical, but are found from deserts to mountains. The best known is probably the pineapple. Epiphytic ones, such as Spanish moss, have only hard, wiry roots which attach themselves to trees or rocks; terrestrial ones can have substantial underground root systems. Leaves are most commonly arranged in a rosette and can be highly colored and patterned. Some leaves have scales or hairs that help reflect sunlight in desert climates. Some use water that condenses from the air on their leaf hairs. Some catch, store, and absorb rainwater in 'tanks' formed of leaf bases. Tanks form habitat for many organisms, from tiny crustaceans to tree frogs—even other bromeliads! Individual flowers are usually small, held on inflorescences from less than 1/4" to more than 30ft tall, depending on species. Many have tall stalks topped with brightly colored leaves with the flowers nestled in their bases. Parent plants in many species die after flowering, but produce 'pups'.

## From Connie Newport, Master Gardener: Fertilize!

At this time of year our edible summer plants are getting a bit stressed or just worn out from giving us their bounty. You might try adding some of these nutrients to get that last bit out of your veggies. (These also can be used throughout the growing season.)

- If you notice yellow leaves---could be nitrogen deficiency---add blood meal, fish meal or compost/compost tea
- If the leaves are burnt and black looking---could be lack of phosphorus---add bone meal, kelp meal or fish bone meal
- If the leaves look scorched---could be lack of potassium----add some wood ash or banana skins around the plant
- If new leaves look hook shaped or distorted----could be calcium deficiency----Epsom Salts are great for this (either sprinkle a little around the plant or make a foliar spray of 1 TBS Epsom Salts to 1 gal water)

## Ornamental of the Month:

### *Duranta erecta variegata*

The drooping clusters of purple flowers on this tropical shrub known as "Skyflower" or "Golden dewdrop" are a hummingbird (and butterfly) magnets! To 20 ft tall and wide but can be kept smaller or grown in pots. Bright orange-gold berries. Full sun or part shade, moderate water. In shadier spots, flowers are fewer, but the white or yellow and green leaves liven things up! Leaves and berries poisonous.



## Edible of the Month:

### *Ficus carica*

The edible fig is a common sight in local gardens and it was one of the earliest cultivated crops. If unpruned will grow to 20 ft wide and tall. The large, lobed leaves are deciduous. The root system is wide and deep. Needs full sun, moderate water, and tolerates poor soil. "Brown turkey" and "Black mission" don't require wasps to pollinate them. Small crop in late spring, main crop in mid to late summer.



## Using pool water for irrigation:

A member asked if swimming pool water could be used on garden plants. You may get conflicting info about any particular plant so the safest method is to avoid using it on any plant listed as sensitive, and use it sparingly on others. Add a bit of tap water to the soil to help dilute the pool water. Here is some information mostly from the City of Tuscon:

- **Sensitive:** Fruit trees, star jasmine, roses, Algerian ivy, photinia, hibiscus, willow, hophbush, jojoba, Japanese maple
- **Moderately tolerant:** privet, pyracantha, lantana, xylosma, juniper, bottlebrush, most acacias, palo verde, yucca
- **Tolerant:** Oleander, evergreen euonymus, rosemary, bougainvillea, natal plum, Texas ranger, olive, native mesquite, desert broom, satlbush, aloe, deer grass, bear grass, ice plant, Japanese honeysuckle

From Sharron Neyer:

***"Gardens are a form of autobiography."*** Sydney Eddison



### The Amazing Fig!

What looks like a fruit is actually the enlarged end of a stem that has hundreds of tiny flowers attached inside it. In most fig species, tiny wasps mate inside and lay eggs in some of the flowers. The ripe "multiple fruit" includes seeds produced by long flowers fertilized by pollen that the female wasps brought in, and probably some new wasps from short flowers in which they were able to lay eggs.

Never fear, tho--commercial varieties like Brown Turkey and Black Mission produce fruit without needing to be fertilized, so no wasps are eaten! Wait til figs are ripe before picking them as they don't ripen off the tree. Lots of growing info at <http://figs4fun.com/basics.htm>

### Saving heirloom tomato seeds

Squeeze tomato pulp into a jar and leave it for a few days until you see mold. Add water, stir vigorously and then let it rest a little--viable seeds will sink. Pour out the water, leaving the good seeds behind. Repeat this several times until you have clean seeds and then spread them out to dry. Put the seeds in a labeled airtight jar or plastic bag and store in the freezer (adapted from Sunset).

**Member observation: Sherry Best** has found that if she leaves bird-damaged tomatoes on the vine, birds seem to go back to those and target fewer of the undamaged fruits. Anyone else noticed this?

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

**August: no garden club meeting scheduled**

**Free:** jade plant cuttings and plastic pots--if interested, let us know

**Classes** at Armstrong Nursery: <http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

**South Coast Botanic Garden:** Dahlia show Aug 17 (12-4pm), 18 (9am-4pm); Begonia show and sale Aug 24, 9am-4pm. Shows are free but must pay garden admission [www.southcoastbotanicgarden.org](http://www.southcoastbotanicgarden.org)

## Did you know?

**Botanical Latin:** "*erecta*" means upright, and "*variegata*" means having areas of two or more colors. "*Carica*" refers to Caria in Asia minor, now Turkey, where many figs are grown.

**Plant miscellanea:** Many plants produce eggs that require pollen from a different individual in order to set seed and develop fruits. Some are self-fertile and can pollinate themselves. A few produce fruit without fertilization although these don't produce viable seeds ("parthenocarpic" fruits).

## Things to do in August

### General

- ✓ After harvest, remove bird netting
- ✓ Paint tool handles a bright color, or use colorful duct tape
- ✓ Take reference photos of gardens you like to help plan next year

### Pest/disease management

- ✓ Remove fallen fruit and veggies, as well as diseased leaves on ground
- ✓ Hose off red spider mites--both sides of the leaves
- ✓ Attack mildew with 1/4 oz baking soda/gallon. Spray on leaves.
- ✓ Prevent root mold in drought tolerant plants--water deeply at night only once or twice a month

### Edibles

- ✓ Sow a dozen or so seeds of carrots, lettuce, spinach every 2-3 weeks for fall/winter harvest
- ✓ Order seeds for fall/winter veggies
- ✓ When vine crops reach the top of their support, pinch the top to encourage side shoots
- ✓ Stop feeding fruit trees end of Aug

### Ornamentals

- ✓ Collect seed from non-hybrids
- ✓ Cut globe amaranth, baby's breath cockscomb, statice, strawflower stems just before fully open; hang to dry for arrangements