



Garden Notes

"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

www.sustainableclaremont.org

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Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

🐝 Please send us questions about gardening--we will do our best to answer them!



Pruning California Natives

John Anderson sent us this link to a site with excellent info on how to prune native Southern California plants. If you have some in your garden, do give this a look!

[http://www.manhattanbeachbotanicalgarden.org/pdf/Guidelines for Pruning CA Native Plants.pdf](http://www.manhattanbeachbotanicalgarden.org/pdf/Guidelines%20for%20Pruning%20CA%20Native%20Plants.pdf)

I saw the plant at left (*Baccharis pilularis*) at the Bernard Field Station recently and thought how much it looked like a local version of a snow-draped shrub !

Winter Potluck! If you'd like to join us for good conversation and food on December 14, let us know (gardenclub@sustainableclaremont.org).

More than one way to get nectar!



These long, tubular flowers contain plenty of nectar at the bottom, fine for the long tongues of hummingbirds, or the tiny bodies of some native bees, but the base of the flower is too narrow for this honeybee to wriggle into. Instead, she cut a hole in the petals and slurped it up from there.

The bee got what she

wanted but bypassed the anthers with their pollen so the plant spent energy to produce nectar and didn't get the benefit of being pollinated or of having its pollen distributed. This type of behavior is not at all uncommon—find a flower like the one in the photo and look for small slits in the petals at the base. Watch for a while and you may very well see honeybees and bumble bees engaged in this "nectar robbing".

Ornamental of the Month

Caesalpinia pulcherrima



Red Bird of Paradise is a stunning shrub with grayish, fernlike leaves and large, eye-popping groups of flowers followed by fruit like big snow peas (seeds are poisonous). It is heat and drought tolerant but does best with weekly water, and takes full sun to light shade. Frost may cause it to die back, but it will recover. Can grow as tall as 8 ft but takes pruning well. Favorite of hummingbirds and butterflies.

Edible of the Month

Brassica chinensis



Napa cabbage is a cool season plant—sow in late winter/early spring for late spring or early summer crops. Will take light shade; needs regular water and rich soil. Great for stir fry or raw in salads.

<http://allrecipes.com/recipes/16325/fruits-and-vegetables/vegetables/cabbage/napa-cabbage/>



Many thanks to Lynda Dialo and Teresa Wilmott for their help at the Chino Basin Water Conservation District's recent landscape fair. We shared the SC tent and had a lot of visitors!

This CBWCD facility provides a wealth of help and information about waterwise landscaping (www.cbwcd.org). If you haven't yet visited their demonstration garden, do take the opportunity to stop by. The facility is currently

under threat of a hostile takeover which is likely to result in a loss of these benefits.

Favorite Quote (Courtesy of Sharron Neyer)

"You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt." Author Unknown

What is humus? <http://www.gardenmyths.com/humus-does-not-exist-says-new-study/>

Very recent evidence suggests humus is an artifact of the method scientists have used to extract the dark part of the soil and not a natural substance at all. When dead material decomposes, some is broken down into minerals that plants can use, and some is used to make organic molecules like DNA and proteins by soil organisms for their own use. These in turn will eventually die and decompose, releasing minerals and providing material for other organisms to create their own larger molecules which eventually get broken down into smaller and smaller pieces until they release their minerals and carbon dioxide. The addition of new dead stuff to the soil increases the range of molecule sizes and the nutrient content of the soil. We know that this process creates soil that retains moisture and develops good soil structure. It creates conditions that make soil nutrients more available to plants and soil microorganisms, helps maintain air spaces, buffer pH, take heavy metals out of circulation. Whether or not there is a stable end-product of decomposition called "humus", as has been thought, doesn't change the known benefits of replenishing the soil with organic matter, so adding compost is good regardless of how that turns out! (And don't spend extra on amendments labeled "humus".)

Upcoming events and more

Dec 14: Garden Club – Winter Potluck 6:30 pm! Let us know if you will be joining us (gardenclub@sustainableclaremont.org) (No December talk)

Smart Gardening Workshops: 9:30-11 am, free. For dates and locations, see http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/wk_scheds.cfm

Chino Basin Water District: classes on waterwise landscaping, irrigation; mulch giveaways: <http://www.cbwcd.org/150/Workshop-Descriptions>

Armstrong classes: <http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden: www.rsabg.org/upcoming-events

Huntington Library: Free talks, plant sales www.huntington.org/

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "Pulcherrima" means "prettiest"; "chinensis" of course means from China.

Plant miscellanea: "Parthenocarp" is the development of fruit without the need for fertilization, so the fruit is seedless. This happens in navel for example, and these types of plants need to be propagated by grafting or tissue culture.

Things to do in December

General

- ✓ Peruse catalogs!
- ✓ Clean and oil tools
- ✓ Leave seedheads for birds

Pest/disease management

- ✓ Continue to clean up and trash diseased plant material
- ✓ Foil snails and slug: put copper collars on citrus trunks, trap with containers of beer or piles of old lettuce leaves; be vigilant on cymbidium spikes

Edibles

- ✓ Sow/plant broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, spinach
- ✓ Warm beds by covering with plastic sheeting to speed germination
- ✓ Prune grapes
- ✓ Plant low-chill raspberries like "Fallgold", Rosanna, and "Bababerry"
- ✓ Plant herbs in pots for indoor use; good light, occasional fertilizer

Ornamentals

- ✓ Water houseplants less and keep away from heating vents
- ✓ Finish planting spring bulbs
- ✓ Prune long streamers of wisteria
- ✓ Liven beds with calendulas, sweet alyssum, ornamental cabbage, pansies, Iceland poppy, primroses
- ✓ Leave roses alone and investigate new varieties to replace poor performers

Please send photos and info about plants you've grown, gardens to visit, gardening lore, questions. Sue Schenk, editor

The Metropolitan Water District is not currently offering rebates for turf removal. <http://socialwatersmart.com/index.php/>

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