



Garden Notes

"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

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Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

- 🐞 There will be no meetings in July or August, but they will start up again in September
- 🐞 We are planning next year now, so if you have ideas for topics for the meetings, field trips, demos, fund-raisers or other activities, or would like to help arrange any, be sure to let us know



Three to see in Santa Barbara! You can visit all of these gardens in a single day. The first is the Alice Keck Park Memorial Garden (1500 Santa Barbara St) which has a sensory plant tour, a lake, and a waterwise demonstration garden (start there in the southwest corner to get a guide for the garden).



The second garden is at Santa Barbara City College: the Lifescape Garden/Chumash Point Ethnobotanic Preserve at 721 Cliff Drive. A delightful, narrow, meandering garden of intermingled flowers and vegetables with a great view of the harbor. The red-flowered "tree" is a bouganvillea!



The third location is at the end of a pleasantly winding drive up into the hills to the Firescape Garden across from Fire Station #7 at 2411 Stanwood Drive/Route 192 (corner of Mission Ridge Road, the numbering is a bit odd so look for the station). This looks great and illustrates the types of plantings that are appropriate for different distances from the house in areas prone to fires.

Favorite quote (courtesy of Sharron Neyer)



"The greatest gift of the garden is the restoration of the five senses." Hanna Rion

Our June field trip was to the GSW demonstration garden in San Dimas. We came away with some ideas and a lot of goodies, including low flow shower heads and drip irrigation kits.

Ornamental of the Month: *Phormium tenax*

New Zealand flax makes a statement in the garden with its sword-shaped leaves. Varieties range from 2 to 10 ft tall so be sure to know the eventual size before buying. Many colors from brown to purple to red and orange. Full sun to part shade, moderate water, tall flower stalks that hummingbirds like but grown for evergreen leaves.



Edible of the Month: *Phaseolus coccineus*

Scarlet runner beans are tasty and the flowers are pretty. Looks great on a trellis or teepee. Grows to 6ft in sun, moderate water. Cook fresh shelled beans or whole young pods, or dry the beans and cook later.



Companion Planting: What is it and is there any basis for it?

Companion planting is based on the idea that certain combinations of plants benefit each other in terms of better growth or reduction in pests. All plants leak substances into the soil from their roots, and some release substances into the air. These chemicals may harm nearby plants, a form of competition called "allelopathy". Black walnuts are notorious for soil contamination and there is also evidence from studies on sagebrush that airborne chemicals can stunt the growth of some nearby species. But will growing marigolds next to tomatoes reduce tomato worms? Will tansy repel Cabbage whites? There is very little scientific evidence about this subject but some recent work is quite interesting.

Stan Finch and Rosemary Collier grew cabbages in bare soil, in soil covered in clover and in soil covered in model plants made out of green paper. They found that there was significantly less damage due to 8 different pest species in the plots covered with clover or plant models. Tests using 24 other plant species, including aromatic ones, as ground cover showed no difference from using clover or the models. It looks like the simple fact of camouflaging the cabbage plants with other green stuff is enough to deter pests. Finch and Collier suggest that the pests detect their target plant odor, fly there and then land on something green. The insects test several leaves, and if not enough of them are cabbage, they fly to another green area before laying eggs. They also seem to spend more time on the non-host plant leaves. So it looks like anything else green will help deter pests (a later study suggested gray-leaved plants or ones with lots of flowers that hide the leaves are less effective).

Another experiment tested the effect of companion plants or bags of aromatic substances on Japanese beetle attack on roses. None were better than the control plants and geraniums actually increased beetle numbers, as did sachets of a number of aromatics such as fennel seeds, cedar and red pepper. Similar results occurred in a study evaluating companion planting and plant-based sprays on infestation of potatoes by Colorado potato beetles (neem spray was effective).

So, the take-home lesson: there isn't a lot of scientific evidence for particular combinations. However, there is no reason not to try them out anyway and see what happens--it can make the vegetable garden prettier! Record your observations and let us know (note: clover and many other legumes have root bacteria that fix nitrogen and improve the soil if tilled in--a natural way to fertilize). Some possible combinations which might improve growth or deter pests can be found at this site hosted by Cornell: <http://counties.cce.cornell.edu/chemung/agriculture/publications/companion-planting.pdf>.

Note from the Pomona College Organic Farm: They are hosting Open Volunteer Hours every Saturday from 10am to 12pm, from July 6th to August 31st, 2013. Volunteers may weed, spread mulch, water, clean up, landscape, harvest, and more, and get produce in exchange for their help. Visit www.facebook.com/pomonafarm for updates (including cancellations) FMI: adam.long@pomona.edu or (512) 656-7138.

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

July/August: no garden club meetings scheduled

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

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

Bromeliad Show and Sale: Saturday, Aug 3 10:00a to 4:30p, Rainforest Floral Nursery 19121 Hawthorne Blvd., Redondo Beach

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "*tenax*" means persistent or obstinate, here referring to the fibrous leaves; "*coccineus*" means scarlet or bright deep pink

Plant Structures: Vegetable vs fruit

"Fruit" is a botanical term. A fruit develops from the ovary of a flower (where the seeds develop). The surrounding tissue can be fleshy as in peaches or dry as in walnuts. "Vegetable" is a culinary term and can refer to any part of a plant: fruits (cucumber), seeds (shelled peas) flowers (broccoli), leaves (lettuce), roots (carrot), buds (brussel sprouts), or stems (potato--yes, really!)

Things to do in July

General

- ✓ Continue to deadhead ornamentals and pick vegetables to encourage continued production
- ✓ Compost garden and kitchen plant waste, omitting diseased parts and seeds, and woody stems.

Pest/disease management

- ✓ Still trouble with snails and slugs? Spread pine needles or shredded bark around plant; water in morning only
- ✓ To prevent splitting in tomatoes, make sure they stay consistently moist with mulch and regular watering
- ✓ If some plants are getting leaf scorch in spite of regular watering, consider moving them to a shadier spot.
- ✓ Fertilize plants showing iron deficiency (yellow leaves with green veins)

Edibles

- ✓ Plant scarlet runner beans!
- ✓ Plant citrus; Net fruit trees
- ✓ Fertilize tomatoes, pepper, eggplant
- ✓ Pinch back herbs to encourage bushiness; pick in morning

Ornamentals

- ✓ For something different in shade, plant Torenia which has white or lavender bell-shaped flowers into fall
- ✓ Plant colorful succulents in pots to cheer up patio tables
- ✓ Fertilize acid-lovers like camellias, azaleas and gardenias
- ✓ Rip suckers off roses being sure to remove basal part or they will return!