



Garden Notes

www.sustainableclaremont.org

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March 2015

Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

Save the date: Claremont Garden Tour is April 19!

Info at www.rsabg.org/upcoming-events

Two to visit!



Menlo Park : This is the current home of Sunset Publishing where the test gardens are. Alas, Time Warner bought the company and the magazine will need to move to a new location in June or July. If you are in the neighborhood before then, it's worth a visit to see the Cliff May-designed building, the test plots, and the areas designed for different California zones.

<http://www.sunset.com/garden/flow-ers-plants/sunset-garden-tour>)



Descanso Gardens (www.descansogardens.org): About 45 minutes away in La Canada, this wonderful garden has vast areas of camellias that are coming into full bloom now (center photo), along with azaleas, a rose garden that will be stunning in May, a Japanese garden currently pink with cherry blossom, a California natives garden, and some gorgeous deciduous magnolias (left photo). (The rare yellow camellia, bought at Nuccio's Nursery, is in my home garden.)

Native bee habitat: I used some reed fencing last year, propped the leftover against the garage, and forgot about it. I was delighted to see that some of our native bees had made good use of it during the year!

Eggs were laid in the stems and protected with mud. You can see an exit hole in one of the plugs.

I've also found nests of ground-nesting bees in some bare areas. The entry hole is about the size of the dichondra leaves in the photo. Have any of you found similar nests?



Ornamental of the Month

Billbergia nutans



"Queen's Tears" is a shade and drought-tolerant bromeliad forming rosettes of 2 ft leaves with small, sharp teeth. Plants slowly form large clumps and are easily divided (wear gloves!) to share. Blooms in February.

Edible of the Month

Malus domestica



Apple trees can not only provide food but beauty as shown in this photo taken at Descanso Gardens of pink and white apple blossom overhanging a small brook. Our mild climate prevents us from growing most varieties, but some that do well in our area are Beverly Hills, Gordon, Tropical Beauty, Anna, Dorsett Golden, Ein Shemer and Gala. For info about planting, see <http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/8048.pdf>

Reader Question: Flies in my houseplants (from Susan Brunasso)

Fungus gnats (*Bradysia* species) are common pests. The adults live about a week and don't bite people or eat the plants, but are definitely annoying. Yellow sticky traps placed nearby will catch many of them. The larvae thrive in decaying plant matter and can damage plant roots. Their numbers can be reduced by cleaning up any dead leaves and by always letting the soil in the pots dry out to a depth of 1 to 2 inches before watering—dryness kills the eggs and larvae. It may take a couple of months of proper watering to eliminate the populations so be patient. Repotting the plants in new soil every year or so will also help to keep infestations down.

Favorite Quote: (courtesy of Sharron Neyer)

"Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul." Luther Burbank

Safeguarding Birds:

Most of us enjoy watching birds in our gardens and make efforts to attract them by growing plants that give food and shelter, and providing water, and we want our gardens to be safe for them. Every year, tho, large numbers of birds are killed when they fly into windows. If you can see reflections of trees, shrubs, and the sky in your windows, or houseplants through them, the birds will too and they may think the area is clear for flying. Territorial birds such as robins and towhees may see their reflections in the window and fly into it to attack what they think is an intruder. Here are some ways to reduce the danger:

- Locate bird feeders within 5 ft of a window—birds won't have picked up much speed if they do fly from the feeder into the glass.
- Put screens up 2-3 in from the glass—this will break up reflections and cushion the impact if a bird hits it.
- Cover the outside of the glass with a one-way film that allows you to see outside but makes the glass look opaque when viewed from the outside.
- Put up a grill, or use tape or soap to make vertical lines no more than 4 inches apart on the outside of the glass.
- Put up indoor shutters and open them only when you are there to look out.
- Put up awnings or sunshades on the outside to reduce reflections.
- Keep Venetian blinds only half open.
- Note: Decals and stickers aren't useful unless they cover most of the area.

For more information, including what to do if a bird hits the window, go to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology site: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1184>

Upcoming events and more:

March 11: Garden Club--6:30-8:30 pm, Napier Center, 660 Avery Rd, Claremont. Talk at 7pm by Steven Williams: "Titillating Tomato Talk!"

March 21: Trip to Sherman Library and Gardens in Corona del Mar. Email the garden club to reserve a spot (gardenclub@sustainableclaremont.org) Details are in the email to which this newsletter is attached.

April 19: Claremont Eclectic: A tour of Six Local Gardens. Tickets available on RSABG website, at Rio de Ojas, Vom Fass, Claremont Heritage. More info on RSABG website and at www.sustainableclaremont.org

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

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

Huntington Library: Free talks plus plant sales on second Thursdays www.huntington.org/WebAssets/Templates/content.aspx?id=538

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "Billbergia" references Swedish lawyer and botanist Johan Billberg; "nutans" refers to "nodding", like the flowers of Queen's Tears.

Plant miscellanea: A "caudex" is the thickened, woody base found in some otherwise herbaceous stems.



Things to do in March

General

- ✓ Trim frost damage when plants resume growth
- ✓ Root softwood cuttings

Pest/disease management

- ✓ Choose mildew-resistant varieties of cucumber, melon, squash
- ✓ Cover bean and corn seeds with netting or berry baskets to foil birds
- ✓ Reduce snail and slug damage by ringing raised beds or pots with self-stick copper tape

Edibles

- ✓ Sow beans, corn, radishes, squash
- ✓ Dust legume seeds (peas, beans) with inoculant of nitrogen-fixing bacteria before planting
- ✓ Plant cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs
- ✓ Plant avocados, citrus; fertilize existing citrus; wait to plant tropicals
- ✓ Plant basil near tomatoes and dill near cucumbers or create a herb bed

Ornamentals

- ✓ Prune camellias, leaving some of last year's growth to produce flowers
- ✓ Plant California natives

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

The Metropolitan Water District is offering rebates for turf removal, rain barrels, soil moisture sensor systems. Info at: <http://socalwatersmart.com/index.php/>

Facebook: Claremont Garden Club
Instagram: Claremont_Garden_Club