



# Garden Notes


"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

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## Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

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

### LA County Arboretum Cactus and Succulent show



Amazing plants: "living rocks", big storage stems, spines, wavy crests, hemispheres, fleshy leaves, large, small, and almost all the colors of the rainbow. They do well in pots or in the ground, although some are frost-tender so check that before planting. Generally plant irregular groups of the same type rather than one plant of each. Contrast size, shape, and form within the same color, or plant groups that contrast both color and form. Repetition of color and size within an area usually makes a better design.



<http://www.cssainc.com/>  
<http://www.lacactus.com/index.html> for cactus societies.

**Favorite quote** (courtesy of Sharron Neyer)

***"A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books."***

Walt Whitman

**Autumn color:** If you walk around town you can see lots of fall color. Some plants to consider adding to your garden are: ginkgo for pure, brilliant yellow; for red/orange/yellow choose nandina (+ red berries), oakleaf hydrangea, pistasche, liquidambar (plant where you won't have to walk on the hard, round fruit), crape myrtles; for reds and oranges choose Japanese maples. Let us know what other plants you would recommend.

**Kale chips:** Wash curly kale and dry leaves completely. Cut or tear into pieces about 1 ½ inches square, omitting midribs. Toss with olive oil and sea salt, put on parchment-lined tray and bake at 300°, turning once, until crisp (about 15 minutes—watch to prevent burning).

### Ornamental of the Month:

*Hippeastrum* species



This gorgeous plant is commonly called "amaryllis". A favorite for growing indoors in winter, the flower stems grow from a large bulb and are followed by a few long, strap-like leaves which help the bulb store food for next year's flowers, so water and fertilize as needed until they die down. Can be planted in the garden after bloom.

### Edible of the Month:

*Brassica oleracea*



Kale (Tuscan kale above), Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, collard greens and many others are all part of the same species. Kale is popular the world over and is high in calcium and vitamins. It produces throughout the winter here and freezes well. Good for stir frying, chips (see left) and the vegetarian Italian soup, Ribollita <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/ribollita-recipe.html>.



We toured the RSABG container garden display this month. It's full of ideas about how to arrange plants in containers, and how to use found objects in a composition (photo at left courtesy of Patty Lindberg).

### Cold weather damage

Freezing causes water in plant cells to expand and form sharp ice crystals which can puncture the cells. Consequently, affected leaves and branches can die, shrivel and turn black. We do get the

occasional freezing night here, so how should we protect our plants? First, find out which of your plants are likely to be affected by the cold. The Sunset Western Garden Book is great for this, or you can ask at a nursery. Some common tender plants are bougainvillea, avocado, fuschia, citrus, begonia, brugmansia, and many succulents.

Open, exposed areas and low areas where cool air pools tend to be colder so put your hardier plants in those locations. South or west-facing walls are warmer spots and boulders, overhanging trees, nearby shrubs, and fences can all help keep the local temperature up a bit. If frost is predicted, water the soil so it holds heat better (this raises the local air temperature) and also protects the roots. Cover tender plants at night but remove the covers in the morning so the plants can warm up and photosynthesize. You can use large cardboard boxes if the plants are small, or woven fabric (best) or tarps or paper held up off the foliage by stakes. Covers, especially plastic ones, that touch the leaves afford less protection. A straw mulch covering short plants may be enough but remove it after the frost danger is past. Container plants do better if grouped and placed near the house where it is warmer and more sheltered. Succulents generally do best if kept somewhat dry since fully-hydrated cells tend to burst more easily.

If there is some frost damage in spite of your best efforts, don't despair and don't pull up the plant or prune off the dead parts right away. Even if some foliage starts to curl up and die, don't remove it unless it starts to rot since the presence of injured leaves can help protect lower ones. Wait to address the damage until there is warmer weather to see if new growth starts and then you can decide whether to trim or replace the plant.

(Adapted from Marin County Master Gardeners and Cornell University sites)

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

#### Dec 11: No Garden Club meeting

Weekends: **RSABG Luminaria Nights**. Tickets available at Garden or online <http://www.rsabg.org/garden-events/994-luminaria-nights-2>

**Dec 14: Organic Fruit and Vegetable Gardening**, LA Arboretum, noon-4pm, \$30, registration (626) 821-4623

**Jan 15:** (note this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday rather than the 2<sup>nd</sup>) **Garden Club meeting** (7pm, Napier Center, 660 Avery Rd, Pilgrim Place) **"Square Foot Gardening"**

### Did you know?

**Botanical Latin:** "Hippeastrum" comes from 'hippeus' (mounted knight) and 'astrum' (star); 'oleracea' refers to food from the garden.

**Plant miscellanea:** a bulb is a shoot enclosed in many thick, overlapping leafy scales which store food.

### Things to do in December

#### General

- ✓ Remove dead plants; clear dead growth from perennials and mulch frost-sensitive ones
- ✓ Make notes about this year's garden failures and successes
- ✓ Water outdoor plants if rain is sparse

#### Pest/disease management

- ✓ Every so often, dig up the soil around plants a bit to expose overwintering pests and egg cases
- ✓ Treat azaleas and gardenias that have yellow-green foliage with iron

#### Edibles

- ✓ Sow chard, kale, leeks, lettuces, mustards, green and bulb onions, peas, radishes. Sprinkle lightly. Cover with plastic sheet to increase warmth. Bury edges to keep out slugs
- ✓ Prune fruit trees and vines when leaves have fallen
- ✓ Harvest leaves of lettuce and spinach
- ✓ Plant cane berries, grapes

#### Ornamentals

- ✓ Separate (include some of the crown with each) and replant tubers of daylilies, tuberous begonias, dahlias
- ✓ plant pansies and primroses
- ✓ Growth slows on houseplants so cut down watering and fertilizing
- ✓ Sow nasturtiums, sweet peas, honesty, forget-me-nots, poppies
- ✓ Norfolk Island pines make good living Christmas trees and can be kept in a pot outdoors for many years. In the ground they become large trees.

*Thanks to Connie Newport for some of the suggestions in this column*

**Please send photos and info about plants you've grown, gardens you've visited, gardening lore you've learned.**