



Garden Notes


“Creating edible and ornamental gardens”

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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!



Autumn Colors

A lot of Claremont garden plants stay green year round. These slow down their metabolism during the period when it's colder and there is less sun available for photosynthesis, but keeping each leaf several years reduces the energy and resources needed to make new ones, and means the plant can take immediate advantage of any unusual warm spells.

But sometime in November, parts of the city divest themselves of green and burst into autumn colors--yellows, oranges, reds, and purples. After a burst of glory, these trees drop their leaves and go dormant for the winter, keeping quiet until light, temperature, and water conditions are optimal for renewed growth.

So, why the autumn colors? Leaves contain yellow and orange pigments (xanthophylls and carotenoids) as well as green chlorophyll. All of these capture solar energy to be used in turning carbon dioxide into energy-rich sugars. In autumn, deciduous plants prepare to shut down photosynthesis and break down their chlorophyll which may allow the other pigments to become visible. Plants may also produce non-photosynthetic pigments called anthocyanins which give the leaves red and purple hues.

Some good trees in our area for autumn color are crape myrtle, ginkgo (only plant males!), Chinese pistache, Japanese maples, many fruit trees like peaches, apricots, and the plum at top left, elms, liquidambar, Japanese persimmon, native sycamore and black oak. Pomegranate “Wonderful” is a shrub that turns a gorgeous gold, and California grape “Roger’s Red” is spectacular.

Ornamental of the Month

Aucuba japonica



Aucuba is commonly called “gold dust plant” because of the splashes of yellow on its glossy 6 inch leaves. These evergreen shrubs can grow to 6 ft tall and wide, but are easy to keep pruned to size. They need part or full shade (the leaves burn in too much sun) and moderate water. If you have a male plant along with some females, you may get bright red berries. The plant is poisonous if eaten.

Edible of the Month

Thymus vulgaris



The scent of the tiny leaves of culinary thyme differs with the variety. It is a small, woody, evergreen shrub about 1 ft tall and wide. The species has grey-green leaves, but there are gold and white-variegated cultivars. It needs sun to light shade, good drainage and low water. Short-lived but easy to grow from cuttings. Purple or pink flowers in spring. (Photo by Greenmars at Wikimedia Commons)

Also seen:

- Nandina domestica*
- Oxalis triangularis*
- Camellia japonica*
- Fuchsia “Gartenmeister”*



Favorite quote:

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."

Marcus Tullius Cicero



Chia: The plant at top left was a volunteer in the garden of John and Talin Anderson. Clearly a salvia of some sort, but which? Turned out to be *Salvia hispanica*, most likely a result of tossing the remains of a chia-enriched drink onto the soil. This 2-4 ft annual with long, wide, pointed leaves is a native of Mexico and Central America, and its spikes of white or purple flowers produce masses of small, dark, nutrient-dense seeds. Wet seeds produce a mucilaginous coating which helps prevent them from drying out before seedlings get established. This glue-like quality led to the creation of the famous "Chia pet". Although it is not cultivated commercially like *S. hispanica*, we have our own local native chia, *Salvia columbariae*, ("golden chia") whose seeds were an important energy source for our local Native Americans. This is a short plant, about 1 ft tall with deeply lobed

leaves clustered in a rosette at ground level, with flowers arranged in two to four clusters along the stems (Photo below left taken at the Bernard Field Station).



Cautionary photo: (from Sharron Neyer). Shallow watering can mean shallow roots and a greater likelihood of a tree falling over. Watering less often but deeply over the whole area under the canopy encourages a tree to put roots down several feet, anchoring it better. Constantly soggy soil can result in root rot and loss of stability. A dense canopy can block wind, resulting in stress on even a healthy set of roots. An arborist can tell if it needs a little thinning to allow wind through.



Frost: Well-watered plants are less likely to be frost-damaged, so get out the hose in the morning if freezing temperatures are predicted for that night. Leave damaged parts alone until you see new growth in spring as they may help protect undamaged areas.

Upcoming events and more:

Garden Club – no meeting in December

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 plus plant sales on second Thursdays
www.huntington.org/WebAssets/Templates/content.aspx?id=538

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "Hispanica" means "from or of Spain"; "columbariae" means "dove-like" (how this relates to chia is a mystery!).

Plant miscellanea: The sharp, minty, and oily smells you get when you crush some leaves and stems cost a plant energy to make but the smell and taste often serve to deter herbivores, and can make them sick.

Things to do in December

General

- ✓ Don't dig if the soil is wet enough to form a tight ball if gently squeezed
- ✓ Start pruning deciduous trees and shrubs
- ✓ Plant bare root shrubs and trees
- ✓ Clean and mend tools

Pest/disease management

- ✓ If peach leaf curl was a problem, use lime sulfur after full leaf fall; (on apricots, use copper, not sulfur)
- ✓ After leaf drop, use horticultural oil spray for mites and scale
- ✓ Spray before pruning

Edibles

- ✓ Plant broccoli, kale, brussel sprouts, lettuce, carrots, beets
- ✓ Plant perennials like asparagus and artichokes
- ✓ Prune dormant grapevines (use trimmings for wreaths)

Ornamentals

- ✓ Plant azaleas and camellias
- ✓ Sow wildflowers; cosmos, gaillardia, foxglove, nasturtiums, violas
- ✓ Prune some natives; they evolved for wet winters so water if it stays dry
- ✓ Stop watering roses and don't feed
- ✓ Cut back long branches on wisteria to 2-3 buds
- ✓ Wait til spring to plant tropicals

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/>

Facebook: Claremont Garden Club
Instagram: Claremont_Garden_Club