



Garden Notes

"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

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Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!


 **Spread the word:** Pruning ornamental trees to retain their natural shape saves money and makes for healthier, more beautiful trees!



Exhibit at the Huntington

There is currently a small, but delightful, exhibit about impressionist garden paintings; well worth seeing if you visit the Huntington. This month's favorite quote is from one of the artists:

"An artist's interest in gardening is to produce pictures without brushes."

Anna Lea Merritt

Claremont Eclectic: a tour of six local gardens

Our 2016 tour will be held on Sunday, April 24, from 1-4pm. This is a chance to see some creative Claremont gardens, talk to the owners, and get some inspiration for your own garden. Tickets are \$20 and include free admission to Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. They can be bought online at www.sustainableclaremont.org. Physical tickets will be available soon at several locations. Proceeds of the tour fund the Garden Club activities.

A free ticket will be given to those who help at the garden check-in tables for about 1 ½ hrs on the day. If you are interested, send us an email.

Sustainable lawn care

Many of us still have some areas of turf grass lawn—for children, pets, because it sets off the garden beds, fits with the age of the house, or just because it gives us pleasure. Of course, the first consideration for a sustainable lawn is to make it as small as it can be and still fit the purpose.

- **Light:** For a new lawn, choose a grass that is suited to the light available at the site. If trees start to shade the area, you may need to replace the lawn with a grass more tolerant of the changed conditions. Lots of info on the net; here is one source: <http://www.landscapingnetwork.com/lawns/types.html>
- **Water:** Soaking to a depth of six inches helps to establish a good, deep, root system. About once a week in summer and less often in the winter will usually keep a lawn healthy. If it doesn't spring back within a half hour of being stepped on, it's time to water. Early morning watering reduces evaporation loss and chance of disease. Be sure sprinklers are giving even coverage without runoff.
- **Mowing:** Most lawns should be kept at 2-3 inches—longer blades can produce more food. Don't remove more than 1/4 of the height at a time and be sure mower blades are sharp. Mow when the grass is dry and avoid doing it midday.

Ornamental of the Month

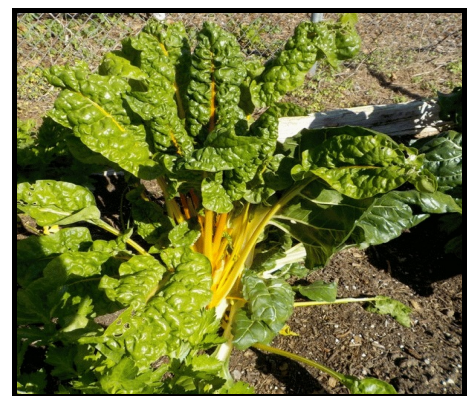
Aloe species and hybrids



A. maculata has spotted, toothed leaves and *A. striata* has plain ones with a smooth reddish edge. Both bloom in late winter to early spring. Rosettes up to 18" tall and 24" wide but often smaller; branched stalks of orange flowers to 2-3 ft. Hummingbirds love them! Leaves get a pinkish cast in full sun and a blue-grey one in partial shade. Slowly form clumps. Low water.

Edible of the Month

Beta vulgaris subsp. *vulgaris*



Swiss chard is a biennial closely related to beets and spinach. Can be sown most of year but does less well in summer. Green stem varieties produce most vigorously, but red, yellow, and orange are pretty! Eat young leaves raw in salads; cook older ones <http://www.marthastewart.com/274967/swiss-chard-recipes>

Fertilizer: Most lawns will be fine without any fertilizer, especially if you leave the clippings to sift down and decompose. If you do fertilize, do so only in the spring so the plants grow more slowly when the weather gets hot and dry.

Weed and Pest Control: It is rare for insects to cause damage to a healthy lawn. Since almost no herbicide, pesticide, or fungicide is completely harmless to humans, the safest choice is to avoid them—if you do use one, try to target it to individual areas rather than blanket the lawn. A healthy lawn will crowd out most weeds, and the best way to deal with the occasional intruder is to pull it out by hand or to embrace it as part of natural biodiversity. You probably won't have a faultless green monoculture, but the lawn will be more interesting!

Neonicotinoids are systemic pesticides (<http://www.xerces.org/blog/rethinking-pesticides/>) safer for humans than some others but that kill beneficial insects as well as troublesome ones. They are long-lived and can move from soil into water. Because they move into pollen and nectar, they can affect pollinators. They have been linked to colony collapse disorder in honeybees and a decline in insect-eating birds. The European Union has restricted three—imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam—but the US has not. Avoid using these chemicals and you might suggest your nursery not sell plants treated with them. Good info at <http://northcoastgardening.com/2015/02/nurseries-neonicotinoid/>
A healthy, sustainable garden usually shows some insect damage--this is a good sign since it means there is food for beneficial insect predators such as ladybugs, praying mantises, and birds, and for caterpillars which become butterflies! Better choices for managing pests are to pick off infested leaves, wash off the pests, use horticultural oil, choose pest-resistant plants. Healthy plants tolerate some munching!



Pruning strap-leaved plants

Many plants put out new leaves only from the base. Leaves eventually get old and die, get damaged by insects or develop brown tips from lack of water or salt buildup. The natural inclination is to tidy the plant but cutting off the leaves midway won't do it. The leaf will not regrow from the cut end. The damaged end will turn brown and the rest of the leaf may slowly die. The best way to clean a plant like this is to remove the dead or damaged leaves right at the base whenever you see them, or do a major cleanout once a year. Some plants, like many grasses, will rejuvenate

if the whole plant is cut down to a few inches when it is really full of dead leaves, allowing the new leaves to hide the stubs (google your plant for pruning info). The new leaves on the fortnight lily in the picture will never be able to camouflage the ones that have been cut.

Upcoming events and more

Feb 10: Garden Club—6:30-8:30 pm, Napier Center, 660 Avery Rd, Claremont.

Talk at 7pm: **"Tips and Tricks for Organic Raised Bed Gardening"**

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: "maculata" means "spotted" and "striata" means "striped".

Plant miscellanea: Leaves arise from places on the stem called "nodes". When the distance between nodes is very short, the leaves form a "rosette" at ground level. Heucharas, primroses form rosettes.

Things to do in February

General

- ✓ Check seed catalogs and plan what you will grow this year
- ✓ Dig in compost and manure
- ✓ Finish heavy pruning of summer/fall bloomers, roses, grapes, berries

Pest/disease management

- ✓ Remove weeds while they are small!
- ✓ Don't compost any weeds with seeds
- ✓ Remove camellia flowers with brown petals and put in trash immediately
- ✓ Wash off citrus leaves to reduce pests

Edibles

- ✓ Sow beets, chard, chives, kale, peas, radishes, cole crops, mustards
- ✓ Start eggplant, peppers, tomatoes indoors
- ✓ Choose short carrot varieties for heavy soil; longer ones for lighter soil
- ✓ Finish planting bareroot fruit and nut trees, berries, grapes, asparagus

Ornamentals

- ✓ Sow nasturtiums (flowers can be eaten if the plant is not sprayed)
- ✓ Sow sweet peas, verbena, hollyhocks, lunaria, coreopsis, columbines
- ✓ Plant calla lilies, canna lilies, agapanthus, Dutch iris, tuberoses
- ✓ Prune a few branches of spring-flowering shrubs and trees to force into bloom indoors
- ✓ Plant azaleas and camellias
- ✓ Cut back Mexican bush sage

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