



Garden Notes

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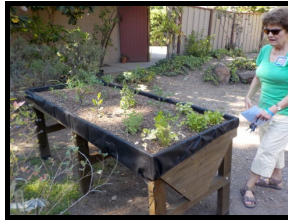
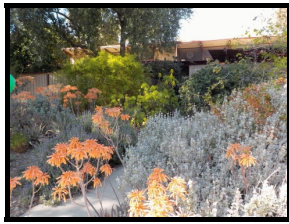
Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

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



The 2014 Garden Tour was a lot of fun!

Let us know if you'd like to volunteer your garden (or suggest someone else's) for next year!



Bees: The April talk on Native Bees by Nancy Hamlett was a lot of fun and full of spectacular photos and fascinating information. Here are a few interesting items: Honeybees are not native to the US but are a single species brought over from Europe and which has naturalized throughout the country. California has over 1600 native bees of its own, ranging from tiny ones that specialize on Phacelia, to metallic green ones, to fuzzy bumblebees, to huge black carpenter bees (which rarely harm healthy wood). A few of these live in small groups, but many are solitary and make their nests in holes in wood, holes in the ground, or even in the dried stalks of plants. To encourage bees to visit your garden, plant a variety of flowers so that there are nectar and pollen available from spring to fall, don't use pesticides, leave some dead stalks on your perennials, and leave some bare ground in an area where you don't need to go often. An excellent site for some info about solitary bees and instructions on making a variety of bee houses is at http://www.foxleas.com/bee_house.htm. In addition, there is a lot of info, including lists of California bee-friendly plants, at <http://www.helpabee.org/>.

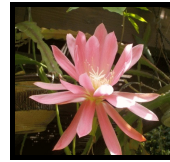
Member questions:

How damaging are ants in the garden?

Our native Harvester ants aren't a problem, but Argentine ants can be a pest. If there are too many nests in an area they may disturb plant roots. Most annoyingly, they protect aphids, scale, and mealybugs from their natural predators like wasps and ladybugs. They do this because the aphids and suchlike feed on sugary plant sap, some of which passes through the aphid

Ornamental of the Month:

Epiphyllum hybrids



Tropical "Orchid cacti" naturally grow in leaf litter on tree branches so they need shade. Grow in fast draining potting mix in hanging pots, water as soon as they dry out, fertilize occasionally and not in winter. Flowers up to 8" across appear in April and May along the flattened, leafless stems. <http://www.epiphyllumsociety.org/>

Edible of the Month:

Persea americana

Avocados, also called "alligator pears" have been a favorite food since 10,000 BC. Need sun, good drainage, damaged by frost and wind. Large tree with greedy roots. Buy grafted varieties (seedlings are variable, take long to fruit). Needs two pollinating types (A and B) to set good crop (can plant two in same hole). Some, like Haas, tend to alternate heavy and light crops. Harvest when mature but ripen off tree. Ripe fruit can be frozen and defrosted for guacamole.



undigested and is excreted as 'honeydew'. Argentine ants love this and so they protect the pests. Large numbers of aphids, etc can weaken plants. In addition, some of the honeydew often drips along the stems and can encourage the growth of sooty mold, also not good for the plants and unsightly. Citrus is especially prone to this problem. A layer of sticky Tanglefoot smeared on a ring of paper tied around the stem of the tree can discourage ants as long as there isn't another way for them to get to the branches. Blasting aphids off with a jet of water, cutting off badly affected plant parts, or dabbing scale with alcohol (test that it doesn't harm your plant first) can help. If the ants make a nest in a potted plant, stick the pot in water for a while to flood them out.

How can you prevent 'bolting'?

"Bolting" occurs when a rosette plant sends up a flowering stalk and starts spending its energy on flowers, fruits and seeds instead of on roots and leaves. Good for the plant but not good if it occurs in your lettuces or cabbages midseason. Triggers for bolting can be day length, temperature, or stress. The best way to prevent it is to plant at the time of year for your particular crop that gives your plants the longest, most stress-free growing season. Keep them well-watered and give them some shade if it gets hot. At some point they will decide

to flower no matter what you do, unless you dig them up. Some of the flowers are quite attractive, so if you aren't planning to sow something else right away, enjoy the blooms!



Patty Lindberg sent in this great photo of a Joshua Tree in bloom. Joshua Trees don't do well in Claremont, but their relative, our native *Yucca whipplei*, is an excellent addition to the drought-

tolerant landscape. The spiky rosettes take several years to flower and then die but the flower stalk is spectacular and the plant produces pups to carry on.

Favorite quote (courtesy of Sharron Neyer)

"What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Upcoming events and more

May 9: National Public Gardens Day - free admission to RSABG

May 14 : Garden Club meeting, 7-9 pm Napier Center at Pilgrim Place, "Sex in our Gardens (gasp!)", Eric Garton

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

May 17 or 18 **Orchids**

May 24 or 25 **Hydrangeas**

May 31 or June 1 **Roses**

All start at 9am and are free, no registration required

May 17-18: Long Beach Cactus Club Show & Sale Rancho Los Alamitos, 6400

Bixby Hill Road, Long Beach 10-5pm

Did you know?

Botanical Latin: "Americana" of course refers to the Americas; "phyll" refers to leaves (epiphyllum stems look like leaves)

Plant miscellanea: Many plants are 'monocarpic', which means that they die after flowering. Some agaves, yuccas, bromeliads and bamboos take years to come into flower and then die, usually leaving offsets (or 'pups') to carry on.

Things to do in May

General

- ✓ Check mulch and replace if needed
- ✓ Remove 'volunteers' as soon as you know they aren't ones you want

Pest/disease management

- ✓ Interplant vegetables with herbs and ornamentals to confuse pests
- ✓ Handpick pests, set out boards to catch slugs and snails
- ✓ Remove diseased leaves, dip clippers in alcohol to disinfect between cuts

Edibles

- ✓ Put pots of herbs near kitchen door
- ✓ Plant peppers at end of month
- ✓ Feed citrus and stone fruits
- ✓ Thin fruit leaving 4-6" gaps
- ✓ Plant summer crops at staggered intervals

Ornamentals

- ✓ Good for shade, in pots or ground: plectranthus, coleus, torenia, begonia, periwinkle
- ✓ Plant lavender in full sun in well-drained soil, shear back 50% after bloom, replace woody plants
- ✓ Plan to substitute buffalo grass in lawn areas. It's waterwise and best established in summer

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/home/?p=res>