



Sacramento Perennial Plant Club

NEWSLETTER

Founded 1988

www.sacramentoperennialplantclub.com

Sept / Oct 2012

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SEPTEMBER PROGRAM SPEAKER

Your Soil Is A Living Thing---It Is Not Dirt

Professor Stephen Andrews

Shepard Garden and Arts Center

Thursday, September 27, 2012 at 7:00 PM

Stephen Andrews, also known as 'Dirt Dude', is a soil scientist and professor of environmental earth science at U.C. Berkeley. Professor Andrews exudes excitement about soil and his talks are informative and fun. He will answer questions about your garden soil and as he says 'there are no bad soils; only soil that have had bad things done to them'. Learn about soil testing, saving money on fertilizers, how compost builds soil structure, helps maintain soil temperature, and feeds plants and soil organisms. He will make believers of us on the benefits of mulch, and compost. Stephen Andrews will make this a very enjoyable evening.

OCTOBER PROGRAM SPEAKER

Shelly Berlant

Orchids

Shepard Garden and Arts Center

Thursday, October 25, 2012, 7:00 PM

Shelly and his wife Sally are longtime members of the Perennial plant club and were profiled in the March-April newsletter. They are getting ready for the Begonia Society Plant Sale, this fall. Everyone enjoyed Shelly talk on Begonias last year. This year Shelly is going to talk about Orchids. Shelly's talks are always fun and very informative. Bring any questions you have about orchids and he will answer them. Shelly can also answer your other gardening questions, he is a very knowledgeable gardener. Shelly been retired for 11 years and horticulture in one form or another has occupied a major portion of that time. Just after retiring, he took down and rebuilt a new greenhouse which houses mostly orchids but with a substantial collection of begonias, gesneriads and other assorted plants. Shelly also works a day or two per week most weeks at Bushnell Gardens in Granite Bay which has enabled him (he says "more like encumbered me") to plant unusual plants in their front/back yard (back yard has no grass!)Shelly is a member of the following local gardening groups: 3 orchid societies, Begonia society, Perennial Plant society, Master Gardener group and board member of the Shepard Garden and Art Center. In the past, he has been in several other local clubs at the center but decided it would be better to show up at home to eat and weed and prune etc.

Newsletter

This newsletter is a combination of the September-October and the November-December newsletter. Be sure to put the dates on your calendar. Any changes or addition will be announced at our meetings, by email or phone.



Cattleya percivaliana v.alba
Photo: Gold Country Orchid

Perennial Plant Club



Annual Fall Plant Festival
Shepard Garden and Art Center
Saturday, October 6 and Sunday, October 7, 2012
10AM to 4 PM

The Fall Plant Sale, now called “The Annual Fall Festival”, is the **first weekend in October**. Please donate plants and garden related items. This is a good time to check around the house for garden items you are no longer using, someone else may have a use for your item. **Bring Plants** (labels with pictures of the plants are helpful) **and items to Center on Friday, October 5th between 10AM and 5 PM**. We have a selection of plants ready for fall planting. Many of the flats of perennials have been propagated by club member Emma Ahart. **Volunteers are needed to man our tables. We need volunteers to pick-up plants on Friday morning and transport to the center. We also need volunteers to help with the cleanup and packing up of plants on Sunday afternoon.** This is a good way to get to know other members of the club and have fun working at the sale. **To sign-up or for information call Madeleine Mullins at 455-7815.**



NO NOVEMBER MEETING

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



DECEMBER MEETING

Annual Pot Luck Holiday Gathering

Shepard Garden & Arts Center
Wednesday, December 19, 2012, 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 19th is the date of our thirteenth annual evening **Pot Luck Holiday Gathering**. The Perennial Plant Club invites all our members and families to attend. We will furnish ham, bread and butter, drinks, eating utensils and plates. We would like everyone to bring something to share and are asking those whose last names start with the letters **A thru I** to bring a **hot side dish**; letter **J thru Q** to bring a **desert**; and letters **R thru Z** to bring a **salad**. In order to assure that there is an assortment of dishes we are asking that you RSVP to either Peggy Weseloh (916) 486-8387 or Madeleine Mullins, (916) 455-7815. Gardeners must be good cooks - the food is always wonderful. Please join us for a fun evening and a chance to become better acquainted with members of the club, share good food and perhaps win one of the raffle prizes, which will include garden tools and other garden related items from “The Gifted Gardener” and other nurseries. We have a wonderful time singing carols as Noelle Anderson plays the piano. Hope to see you at the party.



The next Perennial Plant club Board of Directors meetings will be held September 11th at the home of Bruce and Elizabeth Jones 916-488-8465 and October 9th at the home of Barbara Lane Piert 916-362-5337. As always, board meetings are open to all members. These meetings are a great chance to see how the club is run and where you might like to help. We also get a chance to tour the wonderful gardens of our members before dinner. Friends, gardens, food, and club business. Can't beat that! Meetings begin at 5 PM and start with a potluck dinner – informative *and* delicious.

Western Hills Garden is back

The legendary Western Hills Garden in Occidental will re-open to the public for Saturday tours, two years after it was rescued from foreclosure by new owners from the East Bay.

A team of volunteers has collectively devoted hundreds of hours a month to restoring the remarkable three acre botanical garden — part of the Western Hills Rare Plant Nursery — that drew the attention of horticulturists and collectors from around the world.

After installing an irrigation system, clearing away blackberries and other overgrowth, cleaning up the pond and restoring some important plants by drawing on cuttings from people who had purchased their plants at the old Western Hills Nursery, work is moving into a new phase.

More skilled volunteers are now being recruited to help identify plants, properly prune rare plants, propagate, bring in new cultivars, act as docents and collaborate in other ways on efforts to make the garden an educational center and horticultural destination.

The garden will be open for tours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and by appointment. Cost to visit is \$9. It's located 16250 Coleman Valley Road, Occidental. For information visit westernhillsgarden.com.

(Editors note) I hope they will be able to bring back this wonderful garden designed and built by Marshall Olbrich and Lester Hawkins almost 60 years ago. This much photographed and publicized garden was composed of streams and bridges, ponds and many plants they introduced to the public. Western Hills Nursery had been a Mecca and an important source of inspiration for all lovers of unusual plants, garden beauty and design. The garden had been left to their long-time associate, Maggie Wych, in 1991 and she continued the horticultural vision for 24 years. Maggie sold the garden in June of 2005, but the property fell into foreclosure. The new owners are Tim and Chris Szybalski. Chris is co-owner of Westbrae Nursery in Berkeley. The Garden Conservancy, which includes Western Hills in its Preservation Assistance Program, helped inventory the plants, and Maggie Wych identified more. Maggie was quoted as saying "It's back".

It may not be the garden we remember from our past visits (I still fondly remember the tour Maggie gave to the Perennial Plant Club, just days before it changed owners, and all the plants we bought). I hope in the future the club will have tours of the restored Western Hills Garden. If any of you visit the garden, let us know how the restoration is progressing.



Things against "The Rules" Bob Hamm

That things change is a constant, and many of the "rules" of gardening we read or are told are not as iron clad as thought. A few examples are: While the rules say to move or divide Iris in July and August, I've found that as long as you take the roots with them, you can move them successfully in December and early January and still get blooms next spring. However, this applies to fresh dug Iris, not dried out rhizomes left in stores.

Another item that has changed is that many of the small "minor" bulbs (Snow Drops, Grape Hyacinth, Babinia, Sparaxis, Scilla, Tritonia, etc), which by older rules were dug and moved when dormant, have been found to do fine when dug, divided and moved while green. This makes them MUCH easier to find and move than when dormant. Fall Planted Spring blooming bulbs (Daffodils, Tulips, Hyacinth etc) can often be found on clearance in December and you can still plant them; *however, check when buying* them in stores that the bulbs are neither soft and rotten, nor dried out (the exception here are Ranunculus and Anemone, which always look like dried out bits of stone or bark).

It can be interesting to do a nursery run, especially of the smaller nurseries and big box stores in December, seeing what odds and ends are left from the end of season clearances. I've found some real treasures that way over the years, though you often have to recognize names on dormant pots. As an example I recently found some one gallon grasses that had gone dormant (so looked dead) that were being cleared at \$1 each. So if you know what you're looking at, it can be a fun and profitable way to spend an early December day.

Perennial Plant Club

It's that bulb-planting time of year again

Marie Narlock: Master Gardener Marin County

The easiest way to assure that your next spring garden explodes with flowers is to plant bulbs right now. Daffodils, paperwhites, tulips - these are the blinking lights of spring, whether they're popping up in pots or covering forgotten hillsides.

One autumn I planted a large combo bushel of bulbs under an old pear tree. These were close-outs from various nurseries, a 100 or so laggards that didn't sell because they were misshapen or unfamiliar. I jammed them into the ground with abandon. I didn't know what half of them were, but decided to take a chance. I was floored that spring when masses of spiky, brilliant flowers of all heights and scents poked up for weeks on end, their cheery faces welcoming warmer days. That area has since been tilled and re-tilled, but I am still greeted every spring by a few diehards.

Bulbs are great for lazy gardeners like me. They demand so little, yet give back so much. Take daffodils, for instance. These charmers are popular for many reasons: they thrive in our climate, require no summer water, work in the toughest imaginable spots, multiply over the years, look fabulous in vases and are completely ignored by deer.

Sold everywhere from Costco to online specialty nurseries, daffodils come in a wide variety of bright yellow and white, sizes and prices. Their only absolute requirement is NO summer water, which causes them to rot. In our climate, where reducing water use is revered, this is an undisputed bonus. Other than not watering, the best way to keep them coming back year after year is to wait till the foliage is yellow before cutting it off. This assures that the bulbs have gathered and stored all the energy they need for next season's flowers.

One cautionary note: Daffodils are poisonous. After cutting, they exude a toxic substance that can actually kill other cut flowers with which they are commingling. It is best to let daffodils sit in their own water for an hour or so before adding them to a bouquet. This suits daffodils' botanical name, *Narcissus*, named after the young man of Greek mythology who was so enamored with his own gorgeous reflection that he fell into a pool of water and drowned. Legend tells us that from his remains sprang the first daffodil.

Tulips, or *Tulipa*, present a bit more of a challenge to California gardeners. Though historically the symbols of luck, love and fame, tulips require some work. Ironically, tulips like tougher - colder - winter conditions. They come back year after year on the steppes of eastern Turkey and in the

Himalayan foothills, but in the sublime growing conditions of, say, San Anselmo, they turn their nose up at our mild winters. That's why some tulip fanatics actually go out and throw ice on the areas where tulips are planted in the hope of luring them back out of the ground. For the rest of us, we choose to buy new sacks of tulips bulbs every year.

An alternative is to purchase species tulip bulbs that have a greater chance of naturalizing, or multiplying and coming back every year. Although many of these tulips are not as large-flowering as their flashy hybrid counterparts, their repeat performances are a carefree delight. Some of the best choices of species bulbs include *Tulipa bakeri* and *Tulipa saxatilis*.

If it's fragrance you're after, make freesia your friend. These multicolored gems have naturalized in parts of Northern California, and their fragrance is powerful and plentiful. For gardeners who also love to cook, consider planting some saffron crocus bulbs. Saffron - which is often locked in a grocer's cabinet because of its high cost - is actually the dried stamen of this particular crocus bulb. In addition to adding a unique component to your kitchen garden, the diminutive crocus is often the first bulb to poke up in springtime, its purple petals a welcome contrast to winter's gray days.

Although these foreign-born bulbs often steal the spring-time show, it doesn't mean there aren't equally stunning and easy California native bulbs to try. Of particular beauty and interest are the allium, calochortus and brodiaea. These bulbs send up subtle, delicate flowers in a wide variety of pastels - easy on the eye and reminiscent of a wildflower walk on Mount Tam in early March. Two excellent sources of native bulb information and ordering are Telos Rare Bulbs (telosrarebulbs.com) and Far West Bulb Farm (californianativebulbs.com, closed for this season but worth a click for next year).

This fall, why not plan to bring some of Marin's outdoors into your garden? Nothing could be easier or more satisfying than sinking a few native bulbs into the earth alongside a few daffodils or tulips, only to be reminded a few months later of the secret that's been stirring underground.



Welcome New Members

Welcome to the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club; Maura Donovan, Nancy Libonati, Pam Bone and Sheryl Pinto

**GUIDELINES TO GROWING BEAUTIFUL
DAFFODILS IN YOUR GARDEN**

By: Northern California Daffodil Society

(1) Visit the Northern California Daffodil Society's daffodil shows in March and see the many different varieties available. Also during March, visit the display gardens at Ironstone Vineyard in Murphys. Nothing beats seeing the different blooms. Decide what colors and forms you like best.



(2) Write, telephone, or e-mail growers for their catalogs in late March or April. Order and pay for your bulbs in April or May. Growers will ship the bulbs to you in September. Put them in a cool and airy place until planting time - when night-time temperatures have cooled and the soil temperature has dropped.

(3) If you live in a warm-summer, mild-winter climate, refrigerate your new bulbs for several weeks after receiving them to supply some of the winter chill they previously received but won't get in your winter. This will help them adapt to their new climate. Plant bulbs in mid- to late November.

(4) Choose a well-drained, sunny place. Hillsides and raised beds are best. DRAINAGE is the key. Spade at least twelve inches deep. Improve your clay with well-rotted compost, soil amendment, or planting mix and raise the bed. Slightly acidic soil is best, so you might add soil sulfur if you have alkaline soil.

(5) Plant your standard-sized daffodil bulb approximately 6" deep. Plant miniature bulbs about 2" deep. Exactness isn't crucial; they'll adjust. Plant bulbs deeper in sandy soil than in clay. The top of the bulb is the pointed.



(6) If you are to leave them down for years, then work some low-nitrogen fertilizer into the soil. After planting, top-dress with a sprinkling of 5-10-10. Top-dress again with 5-10-10 when the leaf-tips emerge. As they flower,

top-dress with 0-10-10 or 0-0-50. High-nitrogen fertilizer should be avoided.

(7) If you plant your bulbs before the rainy season starts, don't water the bulbs upon planting. Wait until **the rains** come, or at least until when the rain should come. Bulbs send out roots when they detect moisture and they are susceptible to fungal infection at this time. Basal-rot fungus is endemic in the soil but goes dormant at cool soil temperature - that is the reason to wait.

(8) Daffodils need lots of water while they are growing. Continue watering for three weeks or so after blooming time; then stop watering. The bulbs make their next year's bloom after flowering. (Your first-year bloom is largely due to the previous grower of the bulb.)

(9) You may leave daffodils down if your area is DRY during the Summer. If you water, or want to grow other things there, then you must dig them. WARMTH + MOISTURE = BULB ROT. Plant tazettas for naturalizing - most will tolerate Summer water.



(10) Never cut the foliage until it begins to yellow (usually late May or June). Then is the time to dig the bulbs. Wash the bulbs thoroughly and let them dry completely (at least a week, out of the sun). Put them in onion sacks (or panty hose) and hang them until November in the coolest place you can find. Good air circulation keeps storage rot at a minimum.

(11) Join the NCDS www.daffodil.org and get quality bulbs cheaply at our October raffle party. And, have a good time socializing with another group of garden folks. The following spring, bring your prize blooms to one of our events and show your growing skills.



Photos: top left and right Northern Ca. Daffodil Society-bottom right and left Breck's Bulb Company

Perennial Plant Club

Meet the Members: Bruce and Elizabeth Jones By Diana Morris

What could be considered by some as a quiet park, in fact, is Bruce and Elizabeth Jones' home on one acre in the heart of Arden Park. Bought some 30 years ago, the original home of 1200 square feet has blossomed into a stunning 3200 square foot home with surrounding lush gardens. Before the park-like backyard setting was in place, the property was home to one of the Jones' daughter's horse. Elizabeth remembers nostalgically of the horse leaning over the long gone corral fence and looking into what is now the back patio area.

After retiring, Bruce and Elizabeth joined the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club. They began to attend board meeting and became involved in club activities. Elizabeth is a Programs and Tour board member. They enjoy going on our gardens tours and getting ideas for their own garden.

A retired operating room nurse, Elizabeth emigrated with her family from Hungary via Germany after World War II. As she walks through her garden, she speaks fondly of one plant or another, often explaining the special care she gives each plant. From perennials to shrubs to trees, she has an incredible palette of gardening diversity throughout her garden.

Bruce retired from SMUD after 36 years as a civil engineer. His handy work is seen in the hardscape of the garden. Stone walkways and raked pathways, raised brick-edged flower beds, all plumbed for electrical and water, enough to make any gardener envious.

Together the Jones' set about planning the landscaping with winding pathways leading from one garden room to another and on to another. Archways announce new rooms with each having something different planted with numerous quiet setting areas. Elizabeth has one bench set aside near the back of the garden, among plenty of shade, that she shares enjoyable times with her granddaughter.

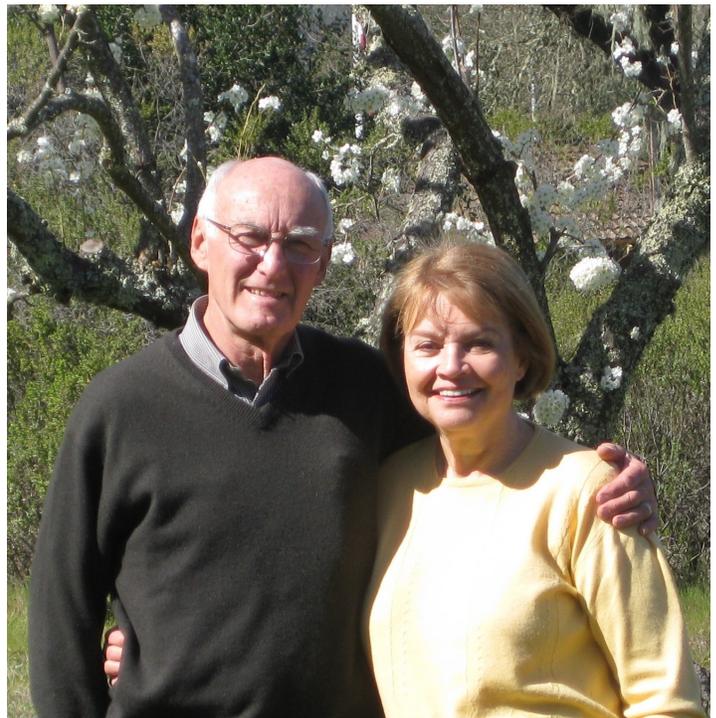
Beautiful, healthy looking roses fill one flower bed interspersed with artemisia. What a striking contrast! Elizabeth points out she likes the way the grey artemisia winds through the base of the rose plants and softens the thorny stems. Along the wall of one garden room is a long row of tall hydrangeas filled with fading blossoms. It is easy to imagine what a colorful sight those lush bushes were just a few months back. She also has large variegated hydrangeas in a shaded area next to the back of the house.

Meandering down one path and another archway appears leading to Bruce's vegetable garden. Raised beds are filled

with a wide variety of heirloom tomatoes. Bruce is partial to seeds from Renee's Seeds. Continuing on through the vegetable garden is a greenhouse, again plumbed with electrical and water. Recently Bruce added a heating mat and says it helps his seeds get a good start in the late winter, early springs days. Around the greenhouse and the vegetable garden are numerous fruit trees. Really we should have started with the short list of what Bruce doesn't grow because what he does grow is a very long list.

In this same area, Bruce has set up a compost system. He saves piles of leaves from the yard, which he shreds, and adds to his circular compost bin. He says he can't make enough compost for his garden so he has other sources. One of his first attempts at using horse manure was a truck load from an acquaintance which turned out to be disaster. The manure proved to be full of Bermuda grass and he had a job ridding the garden of all the Bermuda grass sprouts. He has since found a source free of Bermuda grass with which he is very happy. Elizabeth prefers horse manure for her roses.

As the evening draws to an end, I am hesitant to leave the Jones' tranquil garden and we continue to talk on into the darkness of the night. Eating areas, sitting areas, quiet, calm areas, busy vegetable garden, work areas, greenhouse, this is a gardener's paradise. Elizabeth says they can eat breakfast, lunch and dinner in their garden. How delightful!



**WINTER FLOWERS
BRIGHTEN SHORTER DAYS**

by Carolyn Singer

Under the broken branches of the paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) lying across the border near my front walkway, a foxglove is blooming this week. Gardening friends have been picking beautiful bouquets of roses, aware that winter has arrived and these treasures will not last exposed to the elements.

However, winter now brings a new season of flowers to the garden. You just have to look a little closer. And be satisfied with less floral abundance. I have positioned almost all my winter bloomers near walkways to the house. Others, especially those with strong foliage and form, are viewed from windows. I don't want to miss any of the nuances of my winter garden.

When my winter-blooming iris (*Iris unguicularis*) began opening blue-violet flowers just two weeks ago, I paused from carrying groceries to appreciate their delicate beauty. The blossoms are fragrant, though this is lost on a cold winter day. Arching evergreen foliage protects the flowers which are formed just a few inches above the base of the clump, but still each one rarely lasts more than a day. New flowers open continually through January.



My original iris clump came from an old garden in Grass Valley many years ago. This is not an easy plant to find in the nursery trade, but well worth the search. It is a deer-resistant perennial that never seems to need any attention, and even survives without summer irrigation.

Also deer-resistant, hellebores will soon begin their show, continuing from December well into late spring. Always



first to open my garden is the Lenten rose, *Helleborus orientalis*. Slender stalks develop quickly above robust, almost tropical-looking foliage. The flowers are intricate, and are offered by local nurseries in a range of color from deep rose to pale green.

If the foliage of the Lenten rose looks ragged toward the end of winter, cut it off to the base. New foliage will soon form. This evergreen perennial self-sows easily, providing many more plants for your garden.

However, there is a trick to bringing these seedling hellebores into the world successfully. Early winter is the time to spread compost as a mulch around your hellebore, before it blooms. As the flowers fade, seed pods begin to develop. The fading flowers are still attractive, so there should be no compulsion to deadhead. When the seeds are mature, the pods open and scatter their precious offering on the compost you spread. There they lie, sometimes for months, germinating when conditions are perfect. Young plants may be lifted and moved to a new location.

Violets open next, usually beginning with the small purple *Viola odorata* in December. This is another perennial that self-sows in the garden, increasing the numbers each year. When my grandchildren were very young they delighted in searching the warmest microclimates on my property for the first violets of winter. They knew these blossoms were edible!



There's something very special about taking an otherwise neglected corner of the landscape and introducing winter-blooming perennials that become a dependable part of the winter season, even when severe storms damage trees and shrubs in the garden. This bit of color delights the senses each year no matter what the weather.



**Saffron Crocus
*Crocus sativus***

Consider planting some saffron crocus bulbs. In addition to providing you with fresh saffron, the diminutive crocus is a late fall bloomer. Its purple petals a welcome contrast to winter's gray days.

Perennial Plant Club

President's Message Saul Wiseman

On Saturday, August 4, the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club (SPPC) hosted our annual educational table at the Harvest Festival at Fair Oaks Horticultural Center. I want to thank Marty Langley, Bev Shilling, Cheryl McDonald, Marcia Leddy, and Julie Wiseman for helping. Based on distributing 50 membership brochures to prospective members, I think the day was a success.

I also want to thank Scott Paris, owner of High Hand Nursery in Loomis, for lending us 15 plants for our display. I pickup the plants on Friday and return the plants on Saturday. The plants, selected by me, attract people to our table. This gives us an opportunity to chat..

I talked to Scott Paris about his new project. He recently purchased Maple Rock Garden. Many of you have visited the garden, formerly owned by Frank and Ruby Andrews, in Newcastle. He is interested in having the club tour his new garden in October and also in the spring. This would need to be in the late afternoon or early evening. We need to set a date. I think you will be in for a big surprise. Also, Scott is planning a big event in the spring at his Newcastle property. This would be an all day event with many guest speakers. Probably, emphasizing perennial plants. I told him we would like to have our name attached with the event. We need to get the date from him.

Also, the SPPC, founded in 1988, is having a 25th anniversary in 2013. I think we need to plan a special celebration sometime in the spring. We do have some of the original charter members still in the club.

Along with our general meetings, the spring and fall plant sales at the Shepard Garden & Art Center, the bus trip to the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, the Vendor Sale with guest speaker, and especially the garden tours, I hope we all will have another successful gardening year.



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