

GROWING PAINS



Newsletter for the MiraCosta Horticulture Club of Oceanside

April 2018

Web-site: www.mchclub.org
President: Tandy Pfost 760-231-1248
e-mail: tandy.denny@gmail.com
Editor: Kim Cyr 760-598-3368
e-mail: ritz4petz@roadrunner.com

Announcements

Club meeting on Saturday, April 7th at 12:30 p.m.,
MiraCosta College, 1 Barnard Dr., Oceanside, CA
92056

The plant sale is May 18-20.

Workshop: Round table discussion about shade plants. Tandy will discuss plant ideas and combos for our many, shady microclimates.

Program: Jaime Garcia is an Agriculture Inspector of San Diego County. His presentation is "Beekeeping in San Diego County". He will briefly review state, county and city laws related to beekeeping. He will discuss beekeeping equipment to get started, best practices and how to inspect a hive safely.

President's Message for April 2018

By Tandy Pfost

Our speaker at the March meeting was Eric Larson, Executive Director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau. His bio was in the March newsletter. He spoke about water and commercial horticulture in SD County and describes himself as the voice of the farmer. I felt it was worth passing along some of the information he shared with us. An important side note is that the Vineyard Management class attended.

He would like to see the county push farming vs beach life (of course!). He is all about water and soil. Since 1971 he has been in the Ag industry and

took the first Horticulture class at MiraCosta in 1967.

Eric started out by giving us an interesting history of what crops were farmed over the years. Currently, of US counties, San Diego is #19 in farming, #1 in nursery production, #2 in the number of small farms (250k gross receipts), #1 in organic farms, and #1 in farmers with off-farm income (part time farmers with other income). Although we are still big in avocado growing, Ventura has taken over the top spot.

We are 71% floral/nursery production – ornamental trees and shrubs, indoor and bedding plants, avocados and cacti. Of the 250,000 production acres, livestock takes 75% and nursery/ floral take only 3% and yet this small percentage carries the bulk of income.

Agriculture offers important values to the community. North County is the most valuable production area. It has a 3 billion annual impact and provides 14,000 jobs. Eric tells us that Ag has environmental benefits such as air quality, fire suppression, open space and wildlife corridors. Character benefits are history, local products and ambience. Ag does well here because of climate, imported water, transportation, labor supply and local markets.

What are the challenges you ask? Yes, there are some – water is not endless, immigration reform has an impact on labor and pest exclusion is increasingly difficult.

In regards to water, precipitation has become uneven in the entire state, there is less snow that melts earlier, there have been court rulings to protect the delta fish, fears of levee failure (resulting in not fully filling reservoirs and insufficient storage in general and over-allocated sources in the state).

The county has done well with water resources in spite of not a lot of aquifers. The Sacramento River Delta, one of our sources, will hopefully be helped by the tunnel the Governor wants to build. It was once an inland sea. When the gold in this area ran out, people were given free land but the land flooded. These people are the ones who created the levees for farm land. However, the land still remains below sea level, so if levees break, sea water will be sucked in. There are also times when pumps are shut off for the delta fish.

A bond was also passed to build backup storage and damming rivers and streams is no longer allowed. The Salton Sea? It is a manmade body of water that broke away from the Colorado River. Ag was started, so the sea did not go away as a result of the farming runoff. But what happened? This sea became an important bird flyway, and better farming practices greatly reduced the runoff that filled the lake. This is interesting – a solution is to build a big island in the lake to reduce the water surface area and yet still be able to maintain the flyway.

Water prices have tripled in 11 years, and sources are still not reliable. The labor force needs to be more reliable. 90% are born in another country and most have improper documents. 1986 was the last time there was a major influx of workers. The traveling public needs to be more careful about transporting plants and foods in order to help reduce the challenge of pests. Retail consolidation, which is “corporate think and not relationships” hurts small farmers. They cannot afford to compete.

Lastly, innovations have been more product branding like Cuties, recycled water, local markets, avocado dense plantings (Dr. Bender), hydroponics, niche markets, urban farmers, certified organic and lower water crops such as olives, wine grapes, dragon fruit.

MCHC Plant Sale

As most of you know, every year in May we have a gigantic plant sale. The majority of the plants we sell are donated by local nurseries. Putting on this plant sale is a LOT of work. The more people that help, the easier it is for everyone. The major jobs for the plant sale are:

1) Setting up the site. This job requires many hands. For the last several years we have held our plant sale at Greg Blakesley's house. Because we sell from his house, we have the opportunity to bring in plants for the entire week preceding the plant sale. In the old days, we had to bring in all the donated plants the day before the sale. You can imagine how crazy that was! We also have the luxury of being able to take several days to set up tables and canopies before the plants come in. We are always looking for additional tables, if you have some.

2) Asking for and picking up donations. We are incredibly lucky that we live in an area where there are so many nurseries and that these nurseries are so generous to us. We have a general list of nurseries that donate plants each year but if someone knows of another nursery, let us know. We have a few people who make phone calls to secure donations but then we need many people to pick up these donations. Some nurseries may donate a couple of flats of plants while others have donated over thirty flats at a time! If you can help pick up plants, let us know.

3) Pricing plants. This is a huge job because we get so many plants and because plants are coming onto the site all the time. It's also a relaxing job because all you need to do is put price tags on plants. If you want to donate a few hours doing this and chatting with fellow club members, let us know. Someone will advise you on general plant prices.

4) Selling plants. Customers often need advice on what kind of plants to put in a certain area or the care needed for a certain plant. Often, they just want to chat with other gardeners. This job is always a lot of fun and we can never have too many people helping out in this way.

5) Tearing down. Again, this job requires many hands. If you're selling on Sunday, maybe you could stay to help tear down after.

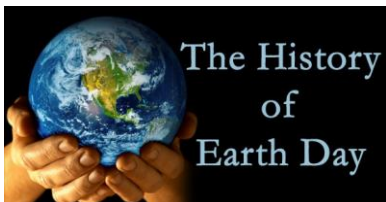


We will have a plant pre-sale on Friday, May 17th. Members can purchase plants before the mad rush on Saturday morning. Pre-sale starts 3 pm.

The plant sale this year will be Saturday, May 18th from 9 am to 3 pm and Sunday, May 19th from 9 am to noon. Fliers will be available at the April meeting. If you can take a few to post in public areas, please do so.

Customers who shop on Saturday will be given a coupon to come back on Sunday and shop for half price. They may also bring a guest. Club members will also be allowed to buy plants at half off on Sunday.

Club members and customers really enjoy when we have other garden-related items for sale. If you have any items that are in really good condition, please think about donating them to the plant sale.



Earth Day is one of two different observances, both held annually during spring in the northern hemisphere, and autumn in the southern hemisphere. These are intended to inspire awareness of and appreciation for the Earth's environment.

Earth Day was founded in 1970 by U.S. politician Gaylord Nelson as an environmental teach-in, and is celebrated in many countries each year on April 22. Senator Nelson first proposed the nationwide environmental protest to thrust the environment onto the national agenda.

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness, and the extinction of wildlife suddenly realized they shared common values.

Each year, the April 22 Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. Earth Day 2007

was one of the largest Earth Days ever, with an estimated billion people participating in activities in more than 140 countries.

Cacti Easy Care and Dramatic Looks Grangetto's

Let's take a trip to an area most consider to be the driest desert in the world—the Atacama Desert in northern Chile. Picture a landscape comprised of salt lakes, sand and lava flows. While not extremely hot (highs in the warm season are around 75 degrees), its lack of water is a killer. Evidence suggests that there was not any significant rainfall in this region from 1570 to 1971. It is 50 times drier than Death Valley in California. The landscape is so desolate that it has been compared to that of Mars. Does this sound like a place that can support plant life? You probably see where we're going with this—with all these obstacles, some members of the Cactus family have managed to survive even here!

All cacti are native to the Americas, from Canada (not all cacti like hot weather) to Argentina. Europeans first encountered them when they arrived in the New World, late in the 15th century. By the early 1800's, enthusiasts had large collections of cacti and other succulents. Rare plants were sought after and sold for extremely high prices. Cacti suppliers employed collectors to bring back plants from the wild in addition to growing their own specimens. This cactus frenzy lasted until the late 1800's, when the affections of plant fanciers turned to collecting orchids.

The Cactus family is a large one. It contains small varieties that grow to only a few inches tall up to gargantuan types that reach fifty feet tall. While most types are extremely drought-tolerant, there are a few that prefer to grow in dripping, tropical rain forests in partial shade. These moisture-loving cacti (Epiphyllum, Rhipsalidopsis and Schlumbergera) grow on trees or rocks and derive their moisture and nutrients primarily from the air and rain.

How have cacti been able to adapt so well to adverse conditions? Over time, their stems have evolved into cylinders, pads or joints that store water in times of drought. Their thick, tough skin reduces evaporation. Why do most cacti have so many spines? These are actually modified leaves that protect the plant against browsing animals and help prevent water loss by reducing air flow close to the plant and providing some shade. The properties of the spines (number, color, size, shape and

hardness) are often used as a means of identifying one cactus from another.

Cactus flowers are usually very showy and come in a wide range of colors. The flowers are produced from areoles, which are around the areas where the spines emerge from the plant. Many cacti also have delicious, edible fruit—and the flesh of a few other types (especially *Opuntia*) is also used for food.

Most cacti are extremely easy to care for. Most types require full sun and well-drained soil. Newly planted cacti should be watered very little, as their roots are subject to rot before they begin actively growing. In about six weeks, when the new roots become active, water thoroughly, then let the soil dry completely before watering again. Reduce (or even discontinue) watering in the fall to allow them to enter their dormant stage. To promote growth and flowers, fertilize monthly in spring and summer; no fertilizer should be given in the fall and winter.

Smaller types of cacti are suitable for growing in containers or as additions to rock gardens; it is in this type of setting that their interesting forms and brightly-colored flowers can be best appreciated. Larger types make striking additions to the garden—some of these get very large, however, so make sure to take their eventual size into consideration when placing them in the garden.

A Brief History of the Tomato

Grangetto's

Few of us can conceive of cooking (or eating) without the presence of tomatoes in our diet. In the US, the tomato is the summer vegetable (or fruit?) most often grown at home—and there are plenty of cultivars to grow. The U.S. Department of Agriculture claims there are 25,000 tomato varieties.

But this delicious food didn't always have it so easy. Up until the 1800's, most people viewed the tomato with caution—and many with outright fear. Originally grown by the Aztecs and Incas as early as 700 A.D., it is thought that the first seeds made their way across the Atlantic sometime in the 1500's.

Early Europeans categorized it with a group of well-known poisonous plants of the era: henbane, mandrake and nightshade. Because of its association with nightshade (whose hallucinogenic effects include visions and the sense of flying), it quickly became associated with witchcraft. In

German folklore, witches would use plants such as mandrake and nightshade to summon werewolves (in fact, the common German name for "tomato" translates to "wolf peach"); because of this, the tomato was widely avoided.

Legend has it that one of the main turning points in the popularity of the tomato in the US is largely due to one Colonel Robert Gibbon Johnson. On September 26, 1830, standing on the courthouse steps in Salem, Massachusetts before a crowd of interested onlookers, he proclaimed his intention to eat a whole basket of the red fruit and survive. One member of the audience was his doctor, who loudly stated, "The foolish colonel will froth and foam at the mouth and double over with appendicitis. All that oxalic acid – one dose and he is dead! Should he, by some unlikely chance, survive, his skin will stick to his stomach and cause cancer!" Colonel Johnson proceeded to eat the basket of tomatoes and survive with no ill effects.

Even with all its detractors, the tomato had a few fans. Some people once believed that placing a ripe tomato on a mantel of a new dwelling would ward off evil spirits and guarantee future prosperity. Since ripe tomatoes tended to go bad quickly, it became popular to make stuffed fabric tomatoes to put on the mantel. Invariably, people sewing began to use them as handy pin holders. To this day, pincushions are very commonly covered with red fabric—and many still look like tomatoes.

Today, are much more likely to put a ripe tomato on our plates than on our mantels. We can enjoy all the different shapes, colors and flavors of tomatoes available. Here's wishing you a bumper crop this summer!

Q: What do you call a grumpy and short-tempered gardener? A Snap Dragon.

Q: What do you call a country where the people drive only pink cars? A pink ca-ration.

Q: What do you get if you cross a four-leaf clover with poison ivy? A rash of good luck.

*Q: Why don't you ever iron a four-leaf clover?
A: You might press your luck.*

*Q: What do you call a mushroom who buys everyone drinks and is the life of the party?
A: A fun-gi.*

*Q: What do you call it when worms take over the world?
Global Worming.*