

GROWING PAINS



Newsletter for the MiraCosta Horticulture Club of Oceanside

December 2017

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Announcements

Club meeting on Saturday, December 2nd at 12:00 p.m., MiraCosta College, 1 Barnard Dr., Oceanside, CA 92056

Club meets at Student Center, Bldg 3400, Azatlan Rooms A and B on 2nd floor above book store.

So far 29 members have sent me a positive RSVP. Please contact me by November 30th if your plans have changed either way. This way we can plan for the proper amount of food and plants.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS !

President's Message

By Tandy Pfof

I always look forward to our December meeting. This is our Holiday Party. It is an opportunity to socialize and get to know each other better. There will be no workshop or speaker, just all of us together.

We start promptly at 12:00 noon. This is pot luck, so come early with your side dishes and help decorate the tables. If you have greens in your garden to spare, bring some for the tables. Sue Getynia is contributing a turkey and gravy and Edie Sahlin will bring sliced ham. Becky Edwards volunteered to bring a choice of beverages.

Salli Blakesley will be picking up and bringing Poinsettias from the college Horticulture Department. They are grown by the Greenhouse Management class as the main learning project and fundraising crop.

And there is more! Let's not forget the Chinese Auction gift exchange.

Chinese Auction Gift Exchange

We will have a Chinese Auction gift exchange at our Holiday party. If you want to participate please bring one plant or a wrapped garden related gift with a value of \$20 or more.

You will be given a raffle ticket. When your number is called, you may choose a gift from the exchange table and open it, or take another member's gift (if it is not frozen).

The member you take it from cannot immediately take it back from you but must take something from the exchange table or someone else before he/she can take back the gift from you. A gift is frozen when it is taken by a 3rd member.

This is a fun game as long as you **don't get too attached** to the gift you draw. Please no peeking, lifting, squeezing, or shaking but HAVE FUN. If you have questions call Dottie at 760 806 6678.



Garden of Lights

After the sun goes down in December, the San Diego Botanic Garden in Encinitas is transformed into a winter wonderland. More than 125,000 sparkling lights illuminate the flora of this 37-acre urban oasis each evening.

100,000 sparkling lights illuminate several garden areas including the Lawn Garden, Tropical Rainforest, Waterfall Deck, Undersea Succulent Garden, Eucalyptus Grove, Seeds of Wonder (children's area), and Bamboo Garden, containing the nation's largest collection of bamboo.

With nightly entertainment, including local blues and jazz bands, as well as food from Red Oven Artisanal Pizza and Pasta and coffee and treats from the Feel Good Coffee Cart. Plus holiday crafts, spin art, visits with Santa (December 2 – 23), and (on selected evenings) horse-drawn wagon rides, snow for sledding, and holiday carolers.

Starting Saturday Dec. 2 to Saturday Dec 30, 5-9 pm

Summer and Winter Squash

grangettosgardenclub.com

Contrary to popular belief – and grocery store shelving – squash is NOT a veggie. Any student of botany will tell you that a plant whose seeds are contained within the edible section is a fruit. This delicious fruit is thought to originate in Mexico and Central America, along with corn and beans and were staples over 7,000 years ago.

The Native Americans grew many types of squash and shared them with European explorers who, in turn, took them back to Europe. Squash and its gourd cousin the pumpkin are grown and eaten all 'round the world today. There are two types of squash, summer and winter. Let's take a look at each type and how to prepare them. We'll look at pumpkins (and other gourds) later.

Succulent Summer Squash

These are the ones that everyone has "too much of" during the growing season. There are four types of summer squash: the crookneck, zucchini (green and yellow), the straightneck, and the scallop or pattypan. Summer squash has thin, edible skin with soft seeds. These yummy wonders are high in niacin and vitamins A and C.

The Chef Says...

Summer squash has a mild and sweet flavor, a tender flesh, and high water content. Flavor peaks when the squash are small – around four to six ounces. You can keep them for up to five days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. You can leave the seeds in or scoop them out, whichever you prefer. Preparation is easy, as summer squash do not need to be peeled before cooking. Due to the high water content, you should salt summer squash 15 minutes before cooking. This draws out some of the water, which you can then blot off with a towel. Summer squash are best cooked with dry heat methods such as grilling, sautéing, or stir frying. This keeps them from going mushy. You can also steam, bake, deep fry, or simmer summer squash, though

Wonderful Winter Squash

This time of year is bursting with beautiful and vibrant winter squash. Winter squash are actually a warm weather crop. They get their name from the fact that they can be stored through the winter. You'll find four types of winter squash, the curbita pepo (such as acorn and spaghetti), cucurbita moschata (calabaza and others), cucurbita mixta (butternut and others), and cucurbita maxima (hubbard, turban, banana and others). These squash provide an excellent source of carotenes. Typically, squash richer in color provide a greater concentration of vitamins and minerals.

The Chef Says...

Unlike their summer cousins, the skin on winter squash is hard and thick, and completely inedible. These delicious fruits must be peeled before cooking or eating; another option is to scoop the cooked flesh out of the peel after cooking. Winter squash flesh is firmer and requires longer cooking than the summer varieties. It can be roasted, braised, microwaved, steamed, boiled, and simmered. You should choose winter squash that are heavy for their size; they can be stored unrefrigerated for up to a month or more in a cool dark place.

Five quick and easy ways to prepare your squash:

1. *Bake* – If you can bake a potato, you can bake a squash
2. *Seed* – Separate seeds from the pulp, toss with a little oil and salt and toast in a 250°F oven until lightly browned

3. *Ring them* – Cut into rings about 1/3-inch thick (the skin is edible) and sauté over medium heat about 6 minutes. Turn and cook on the second side until tender.
4. *Stuff them* – Smaller squash like acorns make their own little bake-and-serve dishes.
5. *Make Soup* – Roast a butternut squash in the oven and then scoop out the flesh. Puree it in a blender, thin with some stock and season to taste. You will have a tasty squash bisque!

Bring on the Squash Blossoms

Many people don't know that the blossoms for both summer and winter squash are edible. You can get them from late spring to early fall at many markets. Look for blossoms with closed buds. They'll be a bit limp, but don't worry that's normal. They must be refrigerated and can be kept for no longer than one day. These beautiful and delicious flowers can be battered and fried, stuffed and baked, or eaten raw as a garnish or in salads.

Plump Pumpkins

Are you ready for another botany lesson? Pumpkins are actually a member of the gourd family, which includes other favorites such as muskmelon and watermelon. Pumpkin flesh is usually orange and is high in vitamin A; it has a mild, sweet flavor. Look for small pumpkins that are heavy for their size and have no soft spots. You can store pumpkins in a cool, dry place for up to a month. You can also refrigerate them for up to three months.

The Chef Says...

Pumpkins can be cooked following the same directions for winter squash. However, pumpkin seeds are a delicious, nutritious snack when properly prepared. They must be husked and roasted and have a nutty flavor.

Groovy Gourds

Other than pumpkins, gourds cannot be eaten. But, they do have some great uses. Once dried, they are perfect for decoration. Their extremely hard shell makes them excellent vessels for water, as well as storage containers and musical instruments.

The Beauty of Fall and Winter Annuals

Grangetto's

Annuals quickly provide more color in the landscape for longer periods of time than any other garden plants. They are versatile, sturdy and inexpensive. Fall is a great time to plant winter-blooming annuals because the still-warm soil will stimulate faster root growth, helping the plants to get established sooner.

While there aren't quite as many winter blooming varieties as in the summer, there are still plenty of flowers that prefer the cool season to perform their best. Most sun annuals need at least 4 to 6 hours of sun per day, while shade annuals prefer just morning shade and can tolerate full shade as long as there is some filtered light.

Among sun-loving varieties consider alyssum, calendula, dianthus, Iceland poppy, ornamental cabbage and kale, pansies, phlox, snapdragon, stock, sweet pea and violas. For shadier locations, you can count on cyclamen, English primrose, fairy primrose (primula) and primrose to perform their best.

Most annuals will perform better in flower beds that have been turned over and been amended with an organic soil conditioner and a starter fertilizer. This helps ensure not only water retention but also good drainage. Avoid planting in areas where water stands after a heavy rain.

When the dreary days of winter get you down, you can count on annuals to cheer you up and make your day!

How to Get Your Poinsettias to Re-bloom Next Year

Grangetto's

The holidays are over and you have an abundance of poinsettias and probably other fun holiday decorative plants just hanging around the house. Don't throw your poinsettia or other plants that can continue to grow away. Here's some tips to help you make your poinsettia last:

1. By March or early April, when the colored bracts begin to turn or fall, cut the plant back, leaving 4 to 6 buds.
2. Re-pot into a slightly larger container (2-3 inches larger in diameter).

PENNY PINES



3. Keep the plant indoors near (not directly in) a sunny window or outdoors in a morning sun-afternoon shade location. Water and fertilize regularly, and by the end of May you should see vigorous new growth.
4. Make sure to turn the plant so that the new growth grows evenly on all sides.
5. If you have been growing them outdoors in the summer, when fall comes bring your poinsettia indoors to a sunny location before night temperatures fall below 55-60°F at night. Check for pests and diseases and place the poinsettia in a south window.
6. Poinsettias begin to set buds and produce flowers as the nights become longer.
7. Beginning October 1, keep your plants in complete darkness for 14 continuous hours each night by moving it into a dark room or placing a large box over it.
8. During the day, allow 6-8 hours of bright sunlight. Flowers should mature in 60-85 days.
9. Continue this for 8-10 weeks, and your poinsettias should develop a colorful display of holiday blooms!

How to Store Fruits and Veggies so they Last Grangetto's

When every penny in the budget counts, there's no room for wasting food. Yet, American families throw away almost 500 pounds per year of produce that's gone bad. That's about 14% of all the food they buy, and costs each family about \$600.00 per year. Added up, that means as a nation, we toss out almost \$43 billion dollars of brown bananas, moldy peaches, wilted spinach, and a soupy substance that used to be lettuce every year. Interestingly, the answer to this problem lies in chemistry. No, not more preservatives; the natural chemistry of plants holds the key to cutting down on food waste.

It's a Gas, Gas, Gas

Like every other living thing on the planet, fruits and vegetables breathe. But, they don't stop when we pick them. Respiration continues long after harvesting; not only that, but certain plants have gas. Ethylene gas, that is. Ethylene gas is a ripening agent. While some fruits and veggies emit ethylene, others are sensitive to it. So sensitive, in fact, that being near a "gas-producer" will cause them to over-ripen, or "go bad". Kale, for instance, is extremely ethylene-sensitive. If you put it in the vegetable drawer with apples or peaches, kale will turn yellow and wilt in a few short days. Put another

way: Grandma was right. One bad apple really does spoil the barrel.

One thing that everyone can do to reduce waste is to take sides; as in, ethylene-releasing produce on this side of the 'fridge, and ethylene-sensitive produce on that side. The key is to keep the two away from each other.

Cold Snap

Temperature plays a big part in respiration, too. The warmer the temperature, the more the fruits and plants breathe and the faster they decay. Too much of a respiration reduction is a bad thing, though. If you keep your produce in air-tight bags, it will suffocate and spoil much faster. Also, some produce is cold-sensitive; refrigeration will ruin it. Potatoes, onions, winter squash, and garlic do much better in a cool (not cold) dark, dry area where they'll easily last up to a month, maybe more.

Putting It All Together and Keeping It All Separate

Bearing in mind ethylene and temperature sensitivities, here's a convenient list of which fruits and veggies to refrigerate, which need to stay at room temperature, and which don't go together, no matter the temperature.

KEEP THESE GASSERS COOL

Apples, apricots, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapes, green onions, honeydew, mushrooms

KEEP THESE GASSERS OUT OF THE COLD

Avocados, bananas, nectarines, peaches, pears, plums, tomatoes

KEEP THESE FRUITS AND VEGGIES AWAY FROM ALL GASSERS

Asparagus, bananas, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, chard, cauliflower, cucumbers, eggplant, kale, kiwi fruit, lettuce, leafy greens, parsley, peas, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, watermelon

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

