

GROWING PAINS



Newsletter for the MiraCosta Horticulture Club of Oceanside

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Announcements

Club meeting on Saturday, January 6th at 12:30 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.

Workshop: Fairy Garden Demonstration
Host: Kim Cyr

This is a hands-on workshop. Members will be able to make their own fairy garden. Materials will be supplied (thanks to Linda Herrill). We only have materials for 30 members to participate. If you are interested in doing this, please e-mail Kim Cyr at ritz4petz@roadrunner.com.

Program: Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids, will provide a presentation on orchids, including lively and entertaining pictures in the making of "FredClarke's After Dark", the blackest orchid ever seen. He will include a review of orchid plant culture. Fred started Sunset Valley Orchids in 1995, a boutique nursery dedicated to providing exceptional customer service and breeding superior orchid hybrids for enthusiasts. He is an accredited American orchid judge and has received hundreds of AOS award including 8 that reached the highest honor first class certificate.

HAPPY★NEW★YEAR

President's Message

I feel I must write about the recent fires that have affected not only residential communities but also the agricultural communities. There is no doubt that the fires will have a big impact on an already fragile agriculture industry that was impacted by the drought. Many who lose out in the fire will not be able to come back. San Diego County has more than 6,000 farms covering over 303,000 acres, more than any other county in the nation. 68% of them are 1-9 acres. The median size is 4 acres. The country's farmers rank number 1 in both CA and the nation in production value of nursery, floriculture and avocados.

As of December 14, the Thomas fire in Ventura-Santa Barbara burned 972 homes and almost 379 square miles or 242,500 acres. It was the eighth most destructive wildfire in the state's history, according to Cal Fire. Now it is the largest fire in CA history and mostly contained. What I know about this fire so far is that San Marcos Growers, a very large grower in that area, has not burned. Recently they posted a photo of the red sun and Sticks on Fire (Euphorbia tirucalli) growing below.

A reporter stated that a palm tree grower along the 5 freeway north of Ventura was there on his way up and completely gone on the way back. Early on, Jo O'Connell and Bryon Cox lost their structures but not most of the Australian plants they grow. I visited

their place along with San Marcos Growers a couple years back. Portions of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden were lost.

The fire swept through hillsides containing thousands of acres of avocado groves between Ventura and Santa Paula. It was estimated that at least several hundred acres had been damaged or destroyed. Some trees will come back, and some may be replanted. It will be at least five years before anything can be harvested from new trees, add to that the expense of replacing the irrigation that was destroyed. Portions of Carpinteria and Ojai were burned by this fire. This is land that is heavily planted with avocado and citrus like those little Cuties mandarins.

When the Lilac fire started, we in north county watched as a huge smoke cloud swooped over and out to sea dropping ash. I was under mandatory evacuation but did not leave. The fire was not that close. The sprinklers were running on the golf course, Mellano and other growers in the Morro Hills area were taking defensive measures. 4,100 acres burned along with 157 structures. There are friends I have still not heard from, and others that made it through. Living in the north county, I feel very close to a major agriculture areas in San Diego and do not want to see it succumb to development.

As I try to take stock, as of December 17 most of the growers I know of are still intact. However, Rainforest Flora in the Bonsall area burnt to the ground This facility was big greenhouse structures. They are a major supplier of Tillandsias, Bromeliads and Staghorns. Waterwise Botanicals is safe amazingly since it is in the area where the fire started.

Tandy Pfost



Grangettos

It's close to January and the possibility of coming frost is very real, even in our milder climate, where many gardeners enjoy having citrus trees in their

landscape.

Here are some tips for keeping your tangy fruit trees frost-free:

- Make sure plants are well-watered.
- Harvest any fruit that is ripe. Un-ripened citrus is not like un-ripened tomatoes; it will not mature after being picked. Just leave un-ripened fruit on the tree.
- For citrus trees under three years old, wrap a thick insulating material around the tree trunk.
- If the citrus plant is in a container, move it to an area that shelters it from the wind. Against a sunny, south- or west-facing brick wall is ideal, as the brick absorbs heat during the day and releases it when the sun goes down.
- Pull aside any existing mulch. The warm soil will send heat back up through the tree.
- Cover plants with burlap, row cover fabric or cloth sheets, but be sure to remove them during the day.

By keeping your citrus warm and protected during the winter months, you can ensure they don't go from tart to toast.

January Gardening Tips

Grangettos

January is generally our coldest month and a wet one at that. Days may be very chilly, but they are often bright and clear with a midday sun that calls you into the garden. January is the height of the dormant season; time for bare-root planting and dormant pruning and spraying. Native plants are also best planted during the winter months and in some areas through spring.

What to Plant:

Succulents and cacti – Many bloom in winter and spring; purchase new types now.

Azaleas and camellias – Plant azaleas and camellias this month. January – March are the prime bloom months. Camellias and azaleas are best planted while in bloom not only because you can see what colors you are adding to your garden but also because you can take advantage of the post-bloom growth spurt. Plant them in a location that provides good soil drainage and afternoon shade.

Bare-root ornamental trees – Bare-root ornamental trees should be planted this month. Trees that can be purchased bare-root include birch, Chinese pistache, liquidambar, purple-leaf plum, Chinese flame, Tashkent chitalpa and desert willow (Chilopsis).

Bare-root roses – Bare-root roses should be planted this month. Choose not only for color and fragrance but for growth habit (hybrid teas, florabunda, climbing, or shrub), disease resistance, and climate.

Bare-root fruit trees should be planted this month. Choose varieties suitable for your climate. The most important considerations are the variety's chill hour and pollination requirements

Summer-blooming bulbs – Since it's a good time to plant summer-blooming bulbs this month, nurseries usually have good supplies in stock. Summer-blooming bulbs include baboon flower (Babiana), canna, crocosmia, dahlia, gladiolus, hippeastrum, homeria, laitris, lilies, nerine, tigridia, tuberose, and tuberous begonias.

California native plants - Now is a good time to plant your choice of California native plants.

Cool-season vegetables – Between harvests you can still plant most cool-season vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, kale, kohlrabi, mustard, lettuce and other greens, and root crops like beets, carrots, radishes, and turnips.

Herbs – Plant aloe, parsley, dill, borage, calendula, rosemary and sage. You can also plant native herbs such as white sage, black sage, California poppy and yerba santa.

Plant Care:

Fruit trees and vines– If you live near the coast start fertilizing your citrus this month. If you live inland, wait until March (to avoid frost damage). Mature citrus trees need about one pound of "actual" nitrogen per year. Feed all other fruit trees with a nitrogen fertilizer when new growth begins. Protect young citrus from frost and other subtropical fruit trees. Treat citrus for chlorosis.

Deciduous fruit and ornamentals – Finish pruning dormant deciduous trees & vines before leaf buds start to grow. Spray dormant deciduous

trees & vines with horticultural oil before buds begin to open to control overwinter insect pests.

Roses– Prune hybrid teas and climbers anytime from mid-January to mid-February. Prune floribundas, shrubs, miniatures and mini-floras from the beginning to the end of January. Begin feeding your roses as soon as there is 6 inches of new growth. Protect your plants from powdery mildew (very common when lots of moisture is in the air) as soon as feeding has started.

Herbs– Fertilizer your herb garden. Use compost, earthworm castings, kelp, manure and peat moss to improve the soil. Add gypsum if you have clay soil. Prune and lace your deciduous herbal shrubs and trees. Watch for snails & slugs.

Bromeliads – Water your bromeliads less often during the cooler months. Continue to watch for freezing temperatures. When frost does occur, cover plants with an old sheet. Do not use plastic covering; it won't keep the heat in. Bring your more sensitive plants that are in pots in doors.

Plumeria – Continue to protect your plumeria from frost & freeze. Be sure to place them next to a building or under a covered patio if they are in pots. Bring plants inside in frost areas. Be sure to protect outside plumerias that are in ground with frost cloth when frost or freeze is expected. Do not fertilize and only sparingly water plants that still have leaves. Leaves will eventually all drop off. Do not remove the inflorescences and seed pods.

Cacti and succulents– Aeoniums are starting their growth period so now is a good time to propagate. Also propagate senecios and sedum. Cut off the head; let it callus for about a week and then plant in a well-draining soil. Continue to water all plants in containers, but cut back on the amount by about a 1/3 as days remain short and temperatures cool. Protect from freezing temperatures at night by providing frost cloth or moving potted plants indoors.

Native plants– When planting California natives, dig a hole and fill with water several times, amend soil slightly and plant the root ball so that is an inch or two higher than the existing soil level. Cover with soil to create a little mound. Water again. Hose down your native garden once a week until the rainy season begins.

Orchids– Look for spikes on winter-blooming orchids this month. Train developing spikes on

orchids, especially those left outside until nighttime temperatures drop to 55 degrees to initiate blooming. Watch for rotting plants & rotting mixes. Repot plants when any signs of rot occur and dust the affected areas of the plant with sulfur. Continue to feed orchids that have not yet bloomed with a high-bloom formula. Protect from slugs and snails.

Epiphyllums – Protect plants from frost and strong winds. Use snail and slug bait as needed. Feed mature plants with a 3-12-12 fertilizer to promote blooming in spring.

Trees and shrubs– Prune. Be careful pruning flowering trees and shrubs so not to trim off developing buds. Wait to trim off frost damaged branches until danger of frost has passed. Now is an ideal time to prune evergreens. Evergreen plants susceptible to frost damage should be pruned after there is any danger of frost.

How to Sharpen Your Pruners

Grangettos

For every gardener there is a task that feels more like a chore. A good pair of pruners fits your hand comfortably, and takes care of a wide range of gardening jobs, from snipping off spent stems to cutting roses for an indoor display, to trimming a favorite shrub. But for many of us, it simply seems easier to replace our pruning tools each year rather than sharpen them. How often have you found yourself going from garden center to garden center, or wasting hours on the internet trying to find the exact same tool that you bought last year that was perfect for you? That costly and inefficient habit is easily broken once you've mastered the fine art of sharpening. Simply follow the easy instructions below and that time can be better spent planting something beautiful.

The primary reason for keeping our tools sharp is so that the cuts they make are cleaner, allowing the plant to heal more efficiently, and resulting in a healthier plant that is better able to fight disease, insect infestation, and natural stresses. Most arborists prefer diamond files because of their ease of use, even for a novice. You'll need three levels of coarseness, or grits: coarse, fine, and extra fine. These files, with their long life-spans, will be a part of your gardening arsenal for years to come.

THINGS YOU'LL NEED

1. Tool lubrication oil
2. Steel wool or wire brush

3. Cloths
4. Sharpening files or Corona AC 8300 Sharpening Tool
5. Water
6. Olive Oil

But let's begin with a "bath." First coat your tools with a lubrication oil made for tools such as WD-40 or Corona's Lubrication Oil, leaving it on for 30 seconds. Then put on heavy gloves for the remainder of the project. Take coarse steel wool or a wire brush and apply elbow grease to remove all of the dirt that's accumulated. Be sure to clean the back of the neck as well. After the gunk is gone, switch to finer steel wool for polishing the shine back into your pruners. Take a cloth and wipe down the tool, removing the little bits of dirt and metal that your efforts have created. Now for the files. Prior to using them, pat them with a moist cloth; the water will keep the file from clogging with the tiny bits of metal you'll be removing from the blade. Begin with the coarsest file and progress to the finest for the best edge.

Angle is all-important. You want to angle your coarsest file to the beveled edge, about 10 to 20 degrees. This is where your gloves are particularly handy; with one hand, apply some pressure to ensure that the tool doesn't slip. The gloves will also prevent fine pieces of metal from entering your hands. Starting at the inside of the blade, draw the file away from your body and toward the tip of the blade in a curving motion, always adhering to the shape of the blade. Make anywhere from 20 to 40 passes with the file, depending on the degree of deterioration. Switch to the finer file, making the same number of passes, and finish with the extra fine file, again matching the number of passes made.

Complete the process by wiping your tool with a cloth and a lubricant. Once a year, use a product designed for lubricating bicycle chains, and intermittently throughout the season, apply olive oil to the blades.

"New Year ceremonies are designed to get rid of the past and to welcome the future. January is named after the Etruscan word janua which means door."