

# GROWING PAINS



## Newsletter for the MiraCosta Horticulture Club of Oceanside

January 2019

### Announcements

**January meeting will be held on Saturday the 12th and not the 5<sup>th</sup>** because the college will be closed on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Meeting starts at 12:30 p.m., and will be held at MiraCosta College, 1 Barnard Dr., Oceanside, CA 92056

**Workshop:** Kim Cyr will be conducting a hands-on workshop making beaded garden spiders. All materials will be provided.

**Program:** "Attracting Butterflies and Hummingbirds" Marcia Van Loy is a member of the Master Gardeners Association and an expert in this field.

**Board elections** will be held at the April meeting when the nominating committee will present a slate. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor prior to the vote. Open positions are – President, VP Membership, Secretary, Treasurer. Carol Fehner VP Publications and Ed Fitzgerald VP Programs have volunteered to remain. Here is your opportunity to run things.

We need one more person for the election committed.

### President's Message for January 2019 Newsletter by Tandy Pfof

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On Monday the 17<sup>th</sup> the staff of the nursery where I work closed for tree work and went on a tour. We visited two growers in north county plus lunch (of course).

The first stop was Palomar Mesa Growers at the base of Palomar Mountain. Craig Childs, who is the son of a docent at the SD Botanic Garden, owns it. The property is 10 acres and was purchased in 1988. It was previously a run-down citrus grove. There are still a couple windmills that were turned on to prevent the citrus from freezing during cold weather. It also took major work to convert it from citrus to a growing-grounds with 10 grow houses. Craig always knew he wanted this kind of business and had been working at Rancho Soledad and others.

In 2007 a fire burned the mountain behind. He managed to have nothing burn, but he runs a fire scanner 24/7 and communicates with the fire watch tower above.

Craig has no water rights, but he is able to rely on the Palomar aquifer which is very stable. Since water run-off from the grounds is not allowed, there are collection basins around the property. Solar panels supply all the electricity needed.

At first, Craig grew Poinsettias but found them to be unprofitable. There are various houses that are for propagation of cuttings and plugs. One was full of Stephanotis and Calylophus. He says that this plant is very hard to get started. Some plants he has to pay as much as 60 cent royalty to grow each one. There is a whole house of Pentas. This plant was a big seller this year.

Abutilon and Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos*) are grown under cover to protect from hot sun and cold. There is one Kangaroo Paw named 'Firehouse' because it was found growing in front of a firehouse. There was a house full of vines. Craig says vines are labor-intensive. Some plants are grown for a small, mail order business in Oceanside.

When visiting a grower, what comes to mind are all the dynamics that have to be managed as well as costs. Grow houses cost about \$125,000, then there is maintenance, maintaining water channels and basins and crop loss. There are few vacations because things can go wrong in an instant with weather. Moveable tops and sides are on timers, but that is a fraction of the whole business.

Our other stop was at Moosa Creek in Valley Center next to Bates Nut Farm. What a beautiful drive out to these nurseries. I was there three years ago when the current growing site opened. Su and her husband Hank bought a 20 acre habitat home site in the area and thought they should use local plants for landscaping. With no horticultural training, Su's husband suggested to start collecting acorns to grow trees to sell. One thing led to another, and a business developed organically with no initial intention. This is definitely a tightly run business. When they ran out of space and water, they moved to this new location. Much time was spent cleaning it up first.

The business is 1/3 habitat restoration, 1/3 commercial and road landscaping and 1/3 retail. The retail part is through a number of retail nurseries that carry their plants. Orders can also be placed on the website and delivered once a week to a specific nursery for purchase and pickup.

450 San Diego native species are grown. In the seed collection room, there are shelves of seeds carefully stored and labeled. Some were collected and some were purchased. Speed of germination is recorded. Different pre-treatments are needed for each species to germinate. Half of what is grown is from seed, and the other half is from cuttings.

Straight species are from seed, and varieties or cultivars are from cuttings. The varieties will not necessarily grow true from seed. To maintain diversity, cuttings are taken from numerous mother plants. Other information is also documented and put on the labels such as which planting medium is required.

Ant bait and fungicide are critical to having healthy plants. Only Neem is used on edibles and milkweed. For ants, they make their own bait. Su says they must get a head start on ants in April with boric acid in order to successfully keep them in check the rest of the year. Shore fly and fungus gnats are controlled with predatory insects. As you might guess, sanitation is also critical in keeping plants safe from disease. All inbound cuttings are put in a sanitation bath, and there are shoe baths around the propagation buildings.

An interesting fact about growing salt marsh type plants is that a final part of their growth process is to water with increasingly salty water. In general, irrigation is well water that has gone through reverse osmosis. Another interesting fact is that fertilizer is not applied but rather mycorrhizae is applied to encourage strong roots.

In contract work, in order to have the correct quantity of plants, each species has a specific, calculated germination loss plus a percentage for growing loss. In one house, there were trays of some cuttings that were mostly brown and no good. This is an example of how the weather affects things. These trays were planted up just before Santa Ana winds came and dried them up. In another place there were some trays of cuttings that rotted. The wrong medium was used...

### **Growing Poinsettias Outside**

[gardeningknowhow.com](http://gardeningknowhow.com)

Many Americans only see poinsettia plants when they are wrapped in tinsel on the holiday table. If that's your experience, it's time you learned about growing poinsettia plants outside.

If you live in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 10 through 12, you can begin planting poinsettia outdoors. Just be sure that cold temperatures in your area don't drop below 45 degrees F.

In the right climate and with the right planting location and care, these bright Christmas favorites can shoot up to 10-foot shrubs in rapid order. If it's

your potted holiday plant that makes you ask about planting poinsettia outdoors, you have to start treating the plant well from the moment it arrives. Water your potted poinsettia when the soil starts getting dry and place it in a sunny location in your home, protected from air currents.

When you start planting poinsettia outdoors, you'll have to find a location with similar attributes. Poinsettia plants outdoors must have a sunny corner to call home, somewhere protected from harsh winds that can damage them quickly.

When you are growing poinsettia plants outside, choose a spot with slightly acidic, well-draining soil. Be sure it drains well to avoid root rot. Don't transplant poinsettia plants outdoors right after Christmas. Once all of the leaves have died back, prune the bushes back to two buds and keep it in a bright location.

You can start planting poinsettia outdoors after all chance of frost has passed. Caring for outdoor poinsettia plants is not very time consuming or intricate. Once you see green shoots in spring, start a regular watering and feeding program. If you opt to use water soluble fertilizer, add it to the watering can every other week. Alternatively, use slow release pellets in spring.

Poinsettia plants outdoors tend to grow tall and leggy. Prevent this by regular trimming. Pinching back the tips of new growth creates a bushier plant, but the bracts themselves are smaller.

### **Dormant sprays**

Marcy Sousa

If you have a fruit tree, you know that gardeners are not the only ones who enjoy the bounty of the harvest. There are many pests — such as scales, aphids and mites — that feast on the tender plant parts and these same pests overwinter on fruit trees. Dormant oils help control these annoying pests and are safe for use on fruit trees.

Dormant sprays or delayed dormant sprays are a generic term for an application of pesticides— including fungicides, highly refined horticultural oils and oils in combination with a pesticide— that are applied to leafless deciduous trees during fall, winter, and early spring. All fruit and nut trees and many landscape trees and roses are susceptible to aphids, mites, scale and specific insect and disease problems affecting fruit quality and tree health

Some dormant sprays are applied to control over-wintering insects, while others are used to prevent disease infection. While dormant sprays are commonly used on fruit trees, they can also benefit roses and other ornamental shrubs that might develop insect or fungal disease problems as the warmer weather arrives in the spring. Dormant sprays should only be used in conjunction with good garden sanitation. Be sure to rake up and dispose of all fallen leaves and debris that may harbor fungus spores and overwintering insects.

Dormant oil is a refined petroleum product formulated for fruit tree use. It has been in use for well over a century in commercial orchards, and is still regularly used today. It is classified as an insecticide, and acts by coating over-wintering insects hiding in tree trunk and limb bark with a suffocating layer of oil. Oils used at this time of year include insecticidal oils, narrow range, supreme and superior oils. Dormant disease control applications use materials such as copper, lime sulfur, Bordeaux, and synthetic fungicides.

Dormant sprays provide efficient and economical treatment for a number of over-wintering pests and diseases such as: scale, peach twig borer, aphid eggs, leaf curl, powdery mildew and shot hole.

A dormant spray may not be required every year in the backyard orchard. For some insect pests and diseases, one dormant application may be adequate with good spray coverage. For other problems, up to 3 applications may be necessary for good control. Decide if you need to apply by noting the amount of insect and disease pressure during the previous growing season. If you decide to spray always read the label and follow the directions, more is not better. Make sure you dress in protective clothing, including long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, chemical-proof gloves, and safety goggles.

Treat at the beginning of dormancy in late November and again just before the buds begin to open in February or early March. One way to remember when to consider dormant spraying is to do so around Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentine's Day. Once flower buds begin to open you may damage fruit and kill pollinating bees if spraying is done at this time. Therefore, it is important to spray at the proposed times before "bud break". Spraying after pruning allows maximum coverage since there are no leaves to block the spray. A good time to spray is right after a period of rain or foggy weather but not during fog,

rain or right before a freeze. Avoid spraying trees that are showing signs of drought stress.

Sprays can be applied with a pump sprayer or hose-end sprayer that is sized appropriately for the number of plants you need to spray. The sprayer should be clean, in good working order and not been used for any herbicides. Spray the entire dormant plant taking care to saturate every branch, stem or cane as insects and the tiny dust-like spores of fungal diseases hide in the smallest nooks and crevices. Don't use a dormant spray on any plant that has any leaves or is actively growing. Leaves, especially tender new growth, may be damaged by the spray from the impurities in the oils or the reflection of the sun off the oil.

Dormant oils generally won't harm beneficial insects since they are applied at a time when beneficial insects aren't present on fruit trees and have a low toxicity level to humans and mammals. Furthermore, dormant oils won't leave harsh residue behind. It loses its ability to control pests once dried.

### **Winter Vegetable Planting Calendar for San Diego County**

Roy Wilburn of Sunshine Care

DECEMBER- Beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, endive, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, parsnip, peas, potatoes, radish, spinach, swiss chard, turnips

JANUARY- Asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chives, collards, endive, favas, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, parsnip, peas, potatoes, radish, spinach, swiss chard, turnip, winter zucchini, collards

FEBRUARY-Asparagus, beans, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chives, collards, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, parsley, parsnip, peas, potatoes, radish, rutabaga, spinach, swiss chard, turnip

MARCH- Asparagus, beans, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, chives, collards, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, endive, garlic, kohlrabi, lettuce, lima beans, mustard, onion, okra, parsley, parsnip, peas, peppers, potatoes, radish, spinach, squash, swiss chard, tomatoes, turnip.

### **The Science Behind Winter Garden Prep**

Putting the garden to bed for winter isn't simply an exercise in neatness. There really is a scientific reason for the raking, straightening and gathering. And some chores you may reserve for spring—like tilling—can actually do more good when tackled in late fall and early winter.

Winter garden prep basically involves cleaning things up prior to the arrival of winter weather. In regions with mild winters, garden clean up may be a December activity. Cleaning up the garden is usually timed with killing frosts, so that you're removing frosted and spent plants. It's also usually signaled by falling leaves.

The No. 1 reason for prepping the garden for winter is that it's an easy way to disrupt pest and disease cycles. Many common garden insect pests spend winter nestled into leaf litter or buried in soil anywhere from two to 10 inches deep. Other pests, like iris borers, viburnum leaf beetles, bagworms or tent caterpillars, survive winter as eggs. When you tackle winter garden prep, if you focus on eliminating insect hiding places and egg cases, you can beat next year's pests before they get a chance to chew.

Like pests, many diseases can survive winter on infected pieces of plants. Fallen leaves, diseased stems and rotting fruit can all harbor disease particles. To curtail overwintering diseases, clip back leaves of perennials. Many fungal diseases (think powdery mildew, rust, apple scab, tomato blights) enter a resting state known as a spore, which can survive cold temperatures. This is also why it's not a good idea to add diseased plants to home compost piles.

Many weeds act as hosts—sort of like a bus stop—for various plant pests and diseases. The pest or disease develops on the weed and that weed becomes a source of the problems in your garden. At the end of the growing season (and during it, frankly), it's a great idea to pull weeds wherever you see them. Keep them out of the garden—and don't forget to scout nearby growing areas, such as beneath shrubs, along fence edges or in garden paths. Removing weeds can stop many pest and disease problems.