

GROWING PAINS



Newsletter for the MiraCosta Horticulture Club of Oceanside

September 2019

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Announcements

Agenda for the MCHS meeting Saturday, Sept 7, 2019 11 am to 2:30 pm.

11:00 am Workshop: Susan Duey, Potting ideas for small plants as terrific gifts or for self.

12:00 Call to order: Dan Cannou will make a short presentation at noon regarding tree planting at Brengle Terrace.

12:15 pm Business Meeting: Update on Venue.

12:30 Ed Fitzgerald introduces guest speaker.

1:45 pm Cake for Edie Sahlin

1:50 pm Raffle

President's Message for September Newsletter

Ed Lopez

This month will be our last meeting at Mira Costa College. The school policy has changed regarding fees for our meetings, and we can no longer afford to meet there. The new cost of the meetings would deplete our bank account.

We have another venue which is perfect. However, as we wrap up our last meeting at Mira Costa, please note that as part of the new financial charges, there

will be a \$1.00 parking fee at the Kiosk, at the parking lot, so be sure to buy the ticket and display it on your window. The police will be checking. Everybody who had to buy a parking ticket will get 2 raffle tickets from me, for the plant raffle as a consolation.

I visited other venues, including the Lutheran Church in Oceanside, Vista Boys and Girls Club Meeting Room, Gloria McClellan Senior Center and Vista library. However, with the assistance of Ed Fitzgerald, we have secured a new venue at the Alta Vista Botanical Garden, Garden Room, and the meeting date will now be the 2nd Saturday of the month, starting in October, 2019. This is a superior venue at an unbelievable low cost to us. The grounds were lovely this weekend, and the deck area is large enough for our workshops. I have location maps for everyone at the next meeting. Meeting will be from 11:30 to 3 pm.

I can say more about this at the meeting, but the board recommendation is to have our first meeting at Alta Vista Garden room on the 2nd Saturday, October 12, 2019.

MCHC Yearbook 2019-2020: Please be sure your dues are paid for the year to receive the MCHC Yearbook at the October meeting.

Workshops: Ed Fitzgerald compiled the member suggestions for workshops. If you want to add your suggestions, please see me at the meeting.

Sept Workshop – Susan Duey Potting Plants as Gifts Starts at 11 am to 12 noon.

Susan will lead a workshop in potting succulents in various size, shapes, and colors of pots. Let's make up some gift plants for a friend (maybe encourage a friend to come to the MCHS meeting) or as a gift to yourself. If you have a favorite pot, bring it too. Let's make some great small potted plants as gifts. Susan will bring succulents, potting soil, pots and containers, for project ideas.

Guest Speaker: Our guest speaker will be Derrick Platz, pesticide and logistics manager for West Coast tomato growers / Oceanside pole. Derrick will spend about 5 to 10 minutes giving a summary of the Sighn family, followed by a little explanation of his job in the pesticide and logistics area. He will then elaborate on the tomato business and the broccoli business, which is a relatively new vegetable they're growing in the off-season, as well as his progress in developing 40 acres of hemp in the Fallbrook area. Derrick may also bring in a couple cases of tomatoes to show and share with the members.

For the Raffle:

Don't forget to bring in items to add to the raffle table. Suggestions: Plants, produce, gardening books, pots, containers or some plant cuttings.

Brengle Terrace Tree Planting Project and Update:

There will be a special announcement by Dan Cannou regarding the tree planting project at Brengle Terrace Park.

Special thank you to Edie Sahlin

Edie Sahlin, is a past president and special lady we are honoring at the September 7, 2019 MCHS meeting. We will honor her for her invaluable service to MCHS with cake and refreshments. Edie served MCHS as president more than once and encouraged new members to get involved. She will be moving to Oxnard to be closer to family, and we want to thank her for her many years of service to MCHS. As a new member, Ed Fitzgerald remembers when Edie asked him to get involved by calling out raffle tickets, and then doing programs. Ed has been a member of MCHS for 15 years, and is very successful in creating dynamic programs for our group. Thank you Edie and we look forward to honoring you at our September meeting.

Saving the Monarchs: A Horror Story

Kim Cyr

I've always had milkweed growing sporadically in my garden and I occasionally see monarchs flitting around. This spring I decided I wanted to dedicate a part of my garden to milkweeds only. I bought some plants at the Farmer's market and grew the rest from seed. A tip I learned to improve the germination rate of milkweed seeds is to refrigerate the seeds for 2 weeks before planting. This made a huge difference for me. I had so many plants that I was able to donate a lot to my daughter's school for their butterfly garden.

I planted in my designated area and waited for the monarchs to show up. Unfortunately, the aphids got the invitation before the monarchs did. Within a week I started seeing the dreaded orange aphids that tried to cover every square inch of the plants. There's not a whole lot you can do to kill the aphids, that won't kill the monarch caterpillars as well. The only safe thing I could do was squish the little suckers between my fingers. I had to do this on a daily basis because if I missed even a day, I'd be back to square one. The aphids don't harm the caterpillars or eggs but can cover the entire underside of a leaf in a day and make it hard for a butterfly to find a good spot to lay an egg on.

Once the monarchs did show up, I started seeing tiny caterpillars greedily munching on the milkweed leaves. I was so excited. I went to check on the caterpillars every day and saw them up to a certain stage, but after that, they just disappeared. This happened enough times that I knew there was a problem. Something was getting them so I decided to start bringing the tiny caterpillars inside.

I got a bucket, put in milkweed stems and leaves, put the caterpillars in and happily watched my little friends grow. The caterpillars grew to a certain size but then some really weird things started to happen. I found a few caterpillars dead at the bottom of the bucket but wasn't overly concerned at first. The first caterpillar that was big enough, crawled up to the rim of the bucket and proceeded to get ready to become a chrysalis. It attached its back end to the rim and hung upside down. I waited and waited for the caterpillar to start turning into a chrysalis but that didn't happen. The caterpillar had started out looking plump and firm but turned squishy and dark. After the second day, I realized it was dead. I felt badly but thought it was a fluke and waited for the next caterpillars to get ready to make a chrysalis.



How Does Climate Change Affect Gardens

Teo Spengler

Later that day I noticed white strings hanging off the body of the dead caterpillar. I did some research and found out that the tachinid fly injects eggs into caterpillars so the eggs can hatch inside the caterpillar and the larvae can eat it from the inside out. When the larvae are ready to leave the caterpillar's body, they eject out of the body by a string of silk. I looked below the dead caterpillar and sure enough, saw a yellowish larva that looked like a fat piece of rice.

I remembered that there were a lot of weird looking flies that kept buzzing around the milkweed plants. I thought it was odd because there was nothing there to attract flies. But I was wrong, the caterpillars were what was attracting the flies. The flies were kind of small and had big red eyes. They were tachinid flies.

The next caterpillar to crawl to the rim of the bucket did not look well either. It left a trail of green juice everywhere it walked and upon close inspection, I realized the caterpillar was vomiting copious amounts of stomach fluids. The caterpillar's antennae were also twitching like crazy and I thought it must be in pain. I didn't want the caterpillar to suffer any more, so I ended its life.

I waited for more caterpillars to crawl to the top of the bucket and every single one died before it could make it up or died shortly after trying to hang upside down. I was devastated. It's one thing to let nature take its course, but when you are personally involved with your caterpillars who have kind of become your pets, it's horrible to see the sad fate of every single caterpillar.

I hung a liquid fly trap by the milkweeds in the hopes of trapping the flies. I only read that tachinid flies inject caterpillars with eggs but didn't know if they could inject the tiny caterpillar eggs. I started gathering all the eggs I could find and brought them inside to hatch so I could feed and monitor the caterpillars in the hopes that they would be parasite free. Time will tell as this article was written before any caterpillars have gotten large enough to tell if they are infected. I'll keep you posted.
Update- one caterpillar made it up and turned into a chrysalis. Yay!
9/1/19- the monarch came out of its chrysalis today!
Happy birthday!

Climate change is very much in the news these days and everyone knows that it is affecting regions like Alaska. But you may also be dealing with changes in the garden of your own home, changes that result from the changing global climate. Read on for information about gardening with climate change. Does Climate Change Affect Gardens? Does climate change affect gardens? It does, and it's important to learn how to spot climate change in the garden so that you can take action to help your plants adjust. It's easy to assume that climate change is happening somewhere far away. But the truth is, it's happening everywhere, even in your garden.

The weather changes brought on by climate change are causing disruptions in nature's norms, even in your backyard. Before you can start dealing with changes in the garden resulting from climate change, you've got to learn to identify the issues. It isn't easy, since climate change looks different in different regions.

As the world climate changes, plants will try to adapt to the new normal. That may mean that plants in warming areas flower early and fall victim to frosts. Or plants, like apple trees, that require certain chill hours to fruit, may postpone flowering. It also can signal pollinator issues, since the insects and birds that pollinate a plant's flowers may arrive at the wrong time. This can be an even greater problem for species that need to cross-pollinate. The blossoming times of the two species may no longer be simultaneous, and the pollinators may not be around.

You may also notice other garden climate changes. Like the type and amount of precipitation in your area. Some areas are getting more rain than usual, while others are getting less. In the northeastern section of the United States, for example, gardeners are seeing more rain. And it is falling in short, hard downpours with periods of dry weather in between. This weather pattern change results in runoff of topsoil during rains and compacted soil. That may be followed by short periods of drought. In other parts of the country, less rain is falling, leading states to expect increasing drought.

Wherever you are located, you will probably need to start dealing with changes in the garden. You can't stop climate change on your own, but you can



reduce your own carbon footprint and also help your plants survive under the new weather pattern. First, you can reduce water consumption in your garden. This is very important during hot, dry weather. The keywords here are mulch to hold in the moisture, rain barrels to capture water and drip irrigation to get the water exactly where you need it. Another method to start dealing with changes in the garden is to increase your composting efforts. You can put kitchen and garden detritus in the compost heap. Just composting this waste reduces your carbon pollution, especially potent greenhouse gas methane. In addition, compost can be used in place of chemical fertilizers to enrich your soil. Planting trees is another way to help gardening with climate change. Trees absorb carbon pollution (CO₂) from the atmosphere, which is to everyone's benefit. Shade trees help your home cool in the summers without air conditioners.

Do Native Plants Need Fertilizer

Mary H. Dyer

There are many reasons to grow native plants, and one of the greatest benefits to busy gardeners is that robust native plants require very little maintenance and they have no need for toxic chemicals that often find their way into nearby lakes and streams. It's normal for gardeners who are accustomed to fussy, high-maintenance flower beds to wonder how to fertilize native plants, or if feeding native plants is even necessary. It isn't.

Native plants are adapted to the local environment, and most are accustomed to growing in difficult conditions. Feeding native plants isn't necessary because the plants take their nutrients from the soil. In fact, when it comes to feeding native plants, fertilizer can be very harmful. The plants have evolved in low fertility native soil and most are sensitive to chemical fertilizers that can burn the plants or make them weak and floppy.

Although native plants require no fertilizer, you can improve their growing conditions if your soil is poor. If your soil contains a lot of clay or is sandy, improve drainage by digging in a generous amount of organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure. When planting, you can help by adding a layer of organic mulch such as chopped leaves, pine needles, dry grass clippings, or straw. Mulch will keep the soil moist and will moderate soil temperature. Plant native plants in their own area and don't mix them with annuals. This isn't a

healthy environment for native plants

Canopy Soil

Liz Baessler

When you think about soil, your eyes probably drift down. Soil belongs in the ground, underfoot, right? Not necessarily. There's a whole different class of soil that exists high above your head, up in the treetops. They're called canopy soils, and they're an odd but essential part of the forest ecosystem.

What are Canopy Soils? A canopy is the name given to the space made up of the collected treetops in a dense forest. These canopies are home to some of the greatest biodiversity on earth, but they are also some of the least studied. While some elements of these canopies remain a mystery, there is one we're actively learning more about: soil in trees that develops far above the ground. Canopy soil isn't found everywhere, but it has been documented in forests in North, Central, and South America, East Asia, and New Zealand.

Canopy soil isn't something to buy for your own garden – it's an important part of the forest ecosystem that helps regulate temperature and moisture and spread nutrients. But it is a fascinating quirk of nature that's great to admire from afar.

What is in Canopy Soil? Canopy soil comes from epiphytes – non-parasitic plants that grow on trees. When these plants die, they tend to decompose where they grew, breaking down into soil in the nooks and crannies of the tree. This soil, in turn, provides nutrients and water for other epiphytes that grow on the tree. It even feeds the tree itself, as often the tree will put out roots directly into its canopy soil.

Because the environment is different from that on the forest floor, canopy soil makeup isn't quite the same as that of other soils. Canopy soils tend to have higher amounts of nitrogen and fiber, and are subject to more extreme changes in moisture and temperature. They also have distinct kinds of bacteria. They are not completely separate, however, as heavy rainfalls will often wash these nutrients and organisms down to the forest floor, making the composition of the two kinds of soil more similar. They are an important part of the canopy ecosystem, serving an essential role that we are still learning about.