

Garden Clippings

Orange County Master Gardeners' Newsletter

Volume 11 Number 3

March 2005

March Meeting: Graduation!

Saturday, March 5, 2005

510 E. Memory Lane, Santa Ana

Schedule

8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Setup Plants 'n Things

9:00 a.m. General Meeting

9:30 a.m. Graduation

10:00 a.m. Snacks & Plants 'n Things

10:30 a.m. Enrichment Program

Note that we are meeting ½ hour earlier so that we have time for our speaker!

In honor of the graduates, wonderful refreshments will be provided. Yum!

Please bring along any items you wish to contribute to our Plants 'n Things raffle, seed catalogs you would like to share and holiday cards for Rita.

Enrichment Speaker:--Sempervivums & Sedums

Garden designer Cynthia Covert will demonstrate how to construct and plant a topiary frame with Alpine Succulents and will share plant lore and history. Sempervivum care sheets will be available. Cynthia will have some plants available at discounted cost, including individual plants, a mixture of the easiest varieties, and special arrangements. Individual plants are \$3.00- \$5.00, special arrangements are \$15.00 or \$75.00, and she will have 4-pound boxes of Grow More Soil Conditioner, 5-5-5 for \$5.50. Grow More is also available from Orange County Farm Supply.

Board Meeting: Mar.17 at home of Phil Loew

Gardening Events

Fullerton Arboretum. Pre-register for all classes by calling 714/278-3579 ext. 0.

March 5: Composting, part 2 with Dr. Bill Roley, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Bleachers \$7/person.

Review and advanced information for people who have already begun composting.

March 10-13: Monster Tomato Sale. Potting Shed, free, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Over 125 varieties of tomatoes and 80 varieties of mild, sweet and hot peppers.

March 12: How to Grow the Best Tomatoes 10:00-11:30 a.m., Bleachers \$7/person

Gary Delk, aka Mr. Tomato, will wow you with the fundamentals of selecting planting and growing tomatoes fresh from your own garden, exploring old and new techniques in this class.

Fullerton College Horticulture Dept. Call 714/992-7381, or URL: <http://horticulture.fullcoll.edu>

March 3, 4, 5, 6: Tomato Plant Sale. Hours Thur.-Sat.: 10 a.m. – 3 p.m, Sun. noon-3 p.m.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Register for classes: 909/625-8767 or download registration from <http://www.rsabg.org>:

March 26 & 27: Annual Wildflower Show 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. No further information yet available on website.

If you need more places to go, Burkard Nurseries in Pasadena has a 25% sale on all items (including tomatoes) on March 4, 5, and

6: 690 N. Orange Grove Blvd. URL:
www.burkardnurseries.com.

Leaves from the President



Congratulations, Graduates! You have worked very hard and deserve much praise. At this month's meeting, we will be celebrating both your Graduation and the Orange County Master Gardeners' 10-Year anniversary. It is the continuing quest for learning that brings energy and enthusiasm into our organization, so we welcome and thank you.

In May, we will be having our OCMG Garden Tour. Anyone interested in volunteering their garden should please contact me as soon as possible. We have four members who have already volunteered their gardens: one or two more would make it complete

In June (not that far away) we will be electing a new Board. We need members to be on the nominating committee, i.e. I need volunteers. There are several Board positions open—contact me if you are interested in either running for office or being on the nominating committee.

Our February meeting was held at Theo Smith's amazing Bamboo garden. It was enjoyed by all. We thank you, Cindy, for discovering this garden and arranging the tour.

We sent our scholarship donation of \$500 to the Fullerton College Foundation. The scholarship will be divided between two part-time Horticulture students selected by Diane Komos and Kent Gordon. Diane and Kent will let us know who the lucky recipients are this spring.

--Sharon Neely

Wildflowers

This should be an outstanding year to view wildflowers. The Theodore Payne Foundation's wildflower hotline, maintained March through May is 818/768-3533.

☎ Contacts

Sharon Neely, *President*.....
Cindy Polera Burch, *1st Vice Pres.*....
Helen Elich, *2nd Vice Pres.*...
Phil Loew, *Treasurer*.....
Fred Snyder, *Plant Clinic*.....
Jill Patterson, *Newsletter Editor*
Jackie Brooks, *Vol. Hours*.....

OCMG Website: <http://www.ocmastergardeners.org>

Acorn Naturalists—Natural History Lecture Series

Center for Science and Environmental
Education
155 El Camino Real
Tustin, CA

This specialty science and environmental education company was established fifteen years ago by two teachers. They sponsor these lectures through a joint partnership of Orange County groups and institutions, including *The Orange County Natural History Museum, The Nature Conservancy, OCWild, The Laguna Greenbelt, Inc., The Southern California Nature Society* and *Acorn Naturalists*. Lectures are presented in the Center's classroom facility every second Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm. These lectures cover a variety of natural history topics, are free, and are open to the general public. URL is:

<http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/index.asp>

March 9: Geology of Orange County by Rick Behl.

April 13: Orange County Vectors in Perspective: A Brief History of West Nile, Hanta Virus and Lyme Disease by Larry Shaw and Mike Hearst.

Manure (part 2) From Garden Gate Magazine

General nutrient analysis and tips for different animal manures are given below. This will vary, depending on the animal's diet, bedding, whether manure has been kept outdoors, and how much urine (which contains nitrogen) is mixed in. Weed seeds are inevitable.

- **Rabbit:** 2-1-1

Good general-purpose manure, hot, especially good on leafy vegetables and foliage ornamentals. Dry, easy to spread, most nutrient-rich IF animal has been fed fresh vegetables.

- **Sheep:** 2-1-2

One of the best manures for nitrogen and potassium, pasture-raised sheep is highest in nutrients and humus as feedlot sheep have less bedding mixed in. Has strong odor, dry and easy to spread when fresh.

- **Zoo Doo:**

Nutrient value varies with material, but is often similar to horse or cow. Elephant dung is great for organic matter. Most are high in humus because they contain bedding matter.

- **Horse:** 7-3-5

Use fresh or composted on all crops and ornamentals, often contains many undigested weed seeds, sawdust bedding breaks down more slowly than straw and bedding often includes a great deal of urine, high in organic matter.

- **Cow:** 7-3-7

Nutrient analysis is for dairy cows; feedlot-raised beef cows have more urine and manure is hotter, least odorous of all manures, contains few seeds due to digestive system.

- **Chicken:** 1.5 –1-1

One of the quickest to break down, odorous when fresh or wet, usually contain less humus than manure from large grass-eating animals, try to use manure from grain-fed chickens as grain is richer in fiber and has fewer chemicals.

Debris From the Editor

What does the volume number 11 mean on our front page? Only that we are starting our eleventh year publishing this newsletter, providing training classes, volunteering throughout Orange County, and sharing our knowledge and gardening passions at our monthly meetings. Virginia Carlson and Janet Meade are two of our original members and former presidents. Along with meeting our new graduates, the March meeting will be a time for us to congratulate ourselves on the many years of service our organization has given, to enjoy the friendships that have developed, and recognize how much we ourselves have been enriched by joining OCMG.

One of our new traditions is the May tour of member gardens. Though two months away, I am having a hard time waiting! My yard is still a long ways from being ready for a public viewing, but I wish you could see my side garden, which is blooming with Watsonia, society garlic, and several succulents, many of which have been either given to me by members or which I have won at Plants 'n Things. This area only requires watering once or twice in the summer and rarely needs weeding due to the bark mulch.

March, however, is tomato month. Sales are everywhere, though our webmaster, Scott Carroll, has already started his tomatoes from seeds he saved from last season.

Fullerton Arboretum and Fullerton College both have massive plant sales—fortunately on different weekends. From previous experience, arrive EARLY for the best selection. Popular varieties can sell out the first day. I don't think the new tomato "sugary", which won an AAAS award this year, will be available at either sale, but watch for it next year.

And I hope you all have an opportunity to enjoy the wildflowers this spring. Sightings have already been reported and this is the month—before it gets too hot—to go out to Joshua Tree, Death Valley, the poppy fields, Theodore Payne Foundation, Lake Elsinore, Anza Borrego, or even our local hills. Enjoy the season!

Plumeria 101

Mike Maertzweiler

It's wintertime for Plumerias in Southern California. During the fall and winter seasons, Plumeria flowers are preparing for a major change in their life cycle. And, although winter in Southern California is not usually harsh, the changes they go through will help them to produce beautiful blooms in the following spring and summer.

Dormancy is a normal cycle in many plants, and especially for most Plumerias (*P. rubra*) with the exception of *Plumeria obtusa* (Singapore). From the onset of cooler weather (November and December) to the time each individual plant begins to initiate new growth, the plant requires no water and will lose their leaves. Shedding the leaves is part of their process of storing energy for the next season.

Weather and climatic conditions such as too much rain or wind may extend or shorten the dormancy period at your site. Actually, Plumeria dormancy can extend to eight weeks or longer. Too much rain is not preferred, and therefore, soil which drains quickly is a must. . If your plumerias continue to grow in a sunny spot, watering is permitted as long as they are producing flowers and leaves.

Cold tolerance has also been a critical consideration in many places throughout the world, but here in Southern California, drastic cold conditions do not normally exist. Once again, each microclimate at your site will dictate how much you protect your plants. If your plants are in pots, moving into warmer sheltered area is recommended. Plants that have naturalized in the soil may be too big to relocate. Use of potassium fertilizers during the growing season may strengthen the plant for the cold during the dormant period.

Some cultivars are known to be less tolerant than others, but yours may do just fine depending on where they are sited. *Plumeria obtusa* (Singapore) does not like cooler weather

and requires a warmer environment to sustain a continuous bloom.

Over-wintering in Southern California is much different than for mid-west states where the plants require removal from pots and/or taking the soil off the roots and subsequent storage in a dry area. Windy conditions can lower the temperature that the plumerias will experience, so over-wintering in a warmer storage area could be important to your specimens. In no case should your plants be unprotected if the temperature is 40 degrees F. or lower.

In dormancy, protect your Plumerias, don't water or feed, and they will come back in the spring to grow once again and produce beautiful, fragrant blossoms. For more information regarding care of your plumeria, please contact me at mikem11@earthlink.net.

Bob Anspach's favorite place to mail order plumerias is: <http://www.floridacolors.com/>.

They sell cuttings and grafted plants and their site includes pictures. Per their site:

"Plumerias are native plants of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. They require very little water. Too much water will induce growth and prevent the flowering process. They require a fertilizer high in phosphorus and rather low in nitrogen and potassium.



Nebel's Gold

A rust fungus lives in symbiosis with the Plumeria plants. Under wet conditions the fungus that lives throughout the plant will "bloom" and produce an abundant crop of orange spores on the underside of the leaves. They are very similar to the spores of fern plants visible on the underside of the fronds. The rust that is living on all Plumerias of the world will induce defoliation of the plant. It is a natural process that allows the plant to enter dormancy during the dry season of the year."

Fruit Facts

ROSE APPLE – *Syzygium jambos* – Myrtaceae

Donated by: Fullerton Arboretum and planted in 1978 (r.f.-08)

Common names: Poma rosa, Manzana rosa, Jambeiro, Jaman, Yambo

The rose apple may be a shrub but generally is a tree, reaching 25 to 40 feet in height. It has a crown of spreading branches with an overall spreading that exceeds the height. The plant is native to India and was very popular as a dooryard tree during the Victorian era.

The evergreen leaves are opposite lanceolate, tapering to a point, somewhat leathery, glossy pink when new, fading first to pale green, then dark green. The flowers are creamy or greenish-white. There are usually 4 or 5 flowers together in terminal clusters at the ends of the newer twigs. They are creamy white and fragrant.



The fruits are almost round, 1 to 2 inches wide. When ripe they may be greenish or dull yellow flushed with pink. The skin is dull, the flesh whitish and firm and scented like roses. They taste almost like rose petals. The fruit is crisp and crunchy, and the seed rattles around inside the fruit. In the hollow center there are 1 to 4 brown, rough-coated, more or less round seeds.

The Rose apple flourishes in the tropical or near tropical climates and has become naturalized in the Caribbean Islands where it grows from sea level to an altitude of 3,000 feet. In the Hawaiian Islands it grows from sea level to 4,000 feet. In India, it ranges up to 5,000 feet. In Ecuador, it will grow up to 8,000 feet. In California at the high altitudes the tree grows vigorously but will not bear fruit.

The tree prefers a loamy soil, but it will grow on sand and limestone with very little organic matter. Most rose apples are grown from seeds, which are polyembrionic (producing 1 to 3

sprouts), but the seedlings are not uniform in character or behavior. They do not respond easily to layering, budding, or veneer grafting.

Rose apple trees bloom in Southern California in April and May, and fruit sets almost immediately, reaching



ripening stage by August. Rose apples bruise easily and are highly perishable. They must be freshly picked to be crisp. A tree might yield up to 7 lbs. of fruit each season. The fruits are very light because they are hollow, which is considered a very small return for a tree that occupies so much space.

The seeds are said to be poisonous. Small amounts of hydrocyanic acid have been found in the roots, stems and leaves. Jambosine, an alkaloid, also has been found in the bark and roots. The roots are considered poisonous.

Speaking of Tomatoes!

2005 AAAS Winner:

Tomato F1 'Sugary' Vegetable Winner

'Sugary.' The name says it all. Judges raved about the sweet tomato flavor. The half-ounce dark pink fruit has a sugar content of 9.5%, higher than most others. The fruit is produced in clusters like grapes and can be eaten like them. 'Sugary' tomatoes have a distinct shape; they are oval with a pointed blossom end. In addition to the flavor, 'Sugary' plants produced a high yield with a noticeable lack of cracked fruit. Look for ripe fruit on the strong semi-indeterminate vines within 60 days from transplanting into warm, prepared garden soil or large containers. Plants are vigorous and may need pruning to contain growth. 'Sugary' should set a new standard for "cherry" size tomatoes with sweet flavor. From the AAAS website: <http://www.all-americanselections.org/>