

Garden Clippings

Orange County Master Gardeners' Newsletter

Volume 12 Number 2

February 2006

February Meeting

Saturday, February 4, 2006

510 E. Memory Lane, Santa Ana

Schedule

8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Setup Plants 'n Things
9:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Snacks and Socializing
9:30 a.m.	General Meeting
10:15 a.m.	Plants 'n Things
10:30 a.m.	Enrichment Program

Members with last names starting with A- G, please bring a breakfast snack to share. Other members are also welcome to bring goodies.

Also, remember to bring along any items you wish to contribute to our Plants 'n Things raffle.

Please save your holiday cards for Rita Corpin and her school project. Also, feel free to bring garden catalogs to share.

Enrichment Workshop—Butterfly Gardens

Reginald Durant is Director of Restoration, Native Plant Landscape and Restoration Consultant, and Butterfly Habitat Specialist at the Newport Environmental Nature Center. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear about the ENC's new butterfly habitat (which several OCMG members help construct) and learn how we can create one in our own yard.

Board Meeting: February 16, 7:00 p.m. at the home of Helen Elich.

Gardening Events

Fullerton Arboretum. Pre-register for all classes by calling 714/278-3579 ext. 0. Classes are \$7/\$5 member.

Feb. 4: Bulb Bonanza. 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. Bleachers. Geri Cibellis will give guidelines on selecting and growing bulbs and tubers.

Feb. 18: Botany 103. 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. Oak Hall. Continuation of fall classes in plant ID.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

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

Feb. 11: Winter Plant ID. 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Hands-on experience with fresh material and a presentation overview of plants often encountered in the valleys, hills, and mountains of Southern California at this time of year. A short afternoon field trip will have participants practicing their winter botany skills in the field.

OCMG TRAINING CLASS

Contact Robert Shaw if you're interested in attending a class to ensure there is space.

Feb 4: Landscaping Design and Maintenance with Don Equitz

Gail Crowe will be checking out the volunteer venues and preparing a list for March publication. If anyone has a favorite volunteer site that has not yet been approved, please let her know.

Leaves from the President



At our last meeting, we reviewed our bylaws. Positive discussion and clear interpretation resulted in good changes. The final format of the bylaws will be voted on at our meeting this month. Thank you Cheryl, Jean and Diane--your efforts are appreciated.

We had a wonderful response to our volunteer hour report contest. Let's all keep up the good work and send our report sheets to Jackie every month.

Volunteer opportunities: would you like to get more involved with the planning and other events that make OCMG the best community-based horticultural organization? Then contact Jeannine Lawrie, Don Grime, Helen Wood, Bob Shaw, or Robin Russell to find out about the Board positions open. Contributing your time and skills help make OCMG the great organization that it is and will continue to be.

--Sharon Neely

Member in the News

Joan Kennedy's letter to the L.A. Times editor was published in the December 31, 2005 issue and is reprinted below:

"As a native Angelena (as was my father), I am thrilled with Bob Sipchen's proposal for an orchard in the new downtown park ("Can we get dazzling done?" Dec.28). Not only is it a nod to our agricultural past and a reminder of the days when orange, pomegranate and sapote trees were common, but citrus trees—with their evergreen foliage and fragrant blossoms—are the perfect choice.

☎ Contacts

Sharon Neely, *President*.....
Gayle Crowe, *1st Vice Pres.*.....
Robert Shaw, *2nd Vice Pres.*.....
Helen Elich, *Treasurer*.....

Fred Snyder, *Plant Clinic*.....
Jill Patterson, *Newsletter*

Submit articles by the 10th of each month via:

Jackie Brooks, *Vol. Hours*

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

Electronically connected

Clifford Meng recommends this site that summarizes the huge family of Euphorbiaiaceae. It 2,360 full color photos of 502 different species, subspecies, varieties and forms of the genera Euphorbia, Cnidoscolus, Monadenium, Jatropha, Pedilanthus, phyllanthus and Synadenium. It has data on habitat, growth form, cyathia, cultivation, rarity, pests and diseases etc. It also recommends soil, water, feeding, light, heat. It has a section of propagating from seeds and cuttings, and the rescue of rotting plants. It is an excellent source of information for anyone that grows these wonderful plants. *Editor's note: this is a German site with translation in English.*

<http://www.euphorbia.de/indexe.htm>

Advance Notice!

The June meeting will feature a *plant* exchange (NOT cuttings). Start potting those plants in the next few months so they'll be ready by June. Tomatoes, flowers, herbs, perennials and annuals—we all have treasures in our garden to share. We're asking for 12 or more plants from each person who would like to participate.

Aloe Vera

by Kathleen Jones

Aloe Vera is a succulent perennial plant belonging to the lily family. The aloe plant is best known for its healing aloe vera gel; a thin, clear jellylike substance that can be squeezed or scraped from the inner part of the fleshy leaf.

My first Aloe Vera (*A. barbadensis*) plant was found in a large pot beside a swimming pool getting tons of sun and not much else.. I knew nothing about this rather unusually looking plant. We moved it to a partial shade and gave it new soil and watched it blossom. That original plant was moved two more times before it got a permanent home. Once in its permanent home, it produced so many babies or pups that I always referred to it as my Mother Plant. Today my yard is full to overflowing with the children of that original plant, and many are being raised by family members, neighbors, friends and a few fellow Master Gardeners.

The Aloe Vera gel works miraculously for burns and cuts. I work for a manufacturing company and we have many machines that get very hot. Occasionally someone gets burned. I planted a dozen Aloe Vera plants in the planter outside the production door, so they can remove a leaf and use it if they get a minor burn, cut or scrape.

Of all the many herbs in my garden today, none is used more than the Aloe Vera plants. "The medicine chest in a plant" only requires that you cut off a small part of one of the larger outside leaves at its base, then cut off the tiny spikes and slit it open. We use the cool jell for burns, sunburns, cuts and bruises, insect bites, poison ivy, etc. Some people even drink it for internal health benefits. mScientists have found that aloe has anesthetic, antibacterial and tissue restoration properties.

For me, growing the plant is the most exciting. There are over 300 to 500 species of aloe (number depends on which book you are reading) growing world wide. I am only lucky

enough to have two different types, Aloe Vera and Aloe Aborescens. The Aloe Vera plant has tall yellow flower spikes and the Aloe Aborescens has long red flower spikes.



Most books talk about Aloe Vera as a house plant, but for us in southern California it is a very decorative as well as useful outdoor succulent. It prefers partial shade, (I know, you think of it as a sun plant). The leaves will turn a light brown when they are in too much direct sun and a soft gray green when they receive less sun and more water. Even though it is not a California Native it is a good plant for our dry climate. Aloe Vera likes well-drained soil and is easily propagated by taking the offsets from the main plant and planting them. Snails like to hide in the leaves

Fun facts and stories

Aloe reaches far back into time. The Greek historian Dioscorides recorded the use of aloe as a healing herb 2000 years ago.

I thought I knew the story of Jesus; after all I have been going to church all my life, so you can imagine my surprise when I found aloe connected to the burial of Jesus Christ:

John 39. "And Nicodemus also came (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight." Can you imagine 100 lbs of Aloe?

One of Cleopatra's secret beauty ingredients was reputed to be fresh Aloe Vera. Josephine, wife of the emperor Napoleon, used a lotion prepared with milk and aloe gel for her complexion. Aloe Vera is still chosen by contemporary cosmetic firms for face and hand creams, suntan lotions and shampoos, but fresh aloe gel produces the best results.

Another claim is the Alexander conquered Madagascar so that his army had a good supply of the herb for healing wounds.

Come walk through my garden and we will stop to visit both the Mother Aloe Vera and her many babies planted here or there. Maybe I can find a potted Aloe Vera for you to take home.

Ann and Steve Summers' Wildlife Habitat – Part II

By Anne Porter

Back to Ann Summers' wildlife landscape: Sitting under the trees, we talked about how she got started. She lived in La Habra Heights and was always around fruit and avocado orchards and all the birds they attracted. Later, she taught at Golden Elementary School in Placentia and used a grant for xeriscaping to start a garden with her students. She and her students raised money to help plant and maintain the garden, and they enjoyed picnics there where they had the unique experience of eating produce they had grown themselves. Because of the rules for school-yard habitats under this grant, they couldn't use any pesticides. Her experience with the school gardens got Ann interested in habitats.

Carbon Canyon

After she retired from the school system, Ann joined Orange County Masters Gardeners and set about developing her own backyard habitat in Carbon Canyon. She first applied in 2004 and was registered with the National Wildlife Federation in the same year. Her backyard is larger than average at one acre and is steeply,

but naturally, sloped which doesn't cause the erosion problems common to some new developments. This environment allows her to experiment with a wide variety of trees and feeding arrangements. She has feeders at different levels to meet the needs of different kinds of birds and trees and plants that also meet their varied needs. For example, she provides for the insect and fruit eaters with suet mixed with fruit and insects – and the blue jays enjoy the peanut feeder.

Ann's Process

"Look at what you have and what you're doing right", is her first advice. Then there are a couple of don'ts. Don't rake yourself to death. Ann needs to meet the concerns of the county and fire prevention; but, instead of raking up all the litter, she maintains the canopy and clears out specific plants such as wild mustard. By leaving the litter, she provides for insects and ground feeding birds as well as leaving excellent nutrients for the root systems.

Secondly, don't think you can find plants that are critter friendly only at specialty nurseries like Tree of Life. There are many local nurseries that carry native plants and plants that do well in a Mediterranean type of environment. The Fullerton Arboretum is a good source for both ideas and plants. Ann suggested visits to the Channel Islands exhibit and the Chaparral Hill for ideas and the weekend plant sales for native, Mediterranean, and Australian plants.

As for the application and certification process, Ann applied to the National Wildlife Federation by answering their questions regarding the four requirements: food, water, shelter, and breeding habitat. She also provided a simple drawing of her property describing what she had to offer the local wildlife. Once the group certificated her habitat, they contacted her local newspaper. The result was a very nice write-up in the Brea Star-Progress.

My Progress

I went to the Federation's website and started the process of filling out their forms in December. As Ann said, it is very simple and they really do encourage you to complete the process. As I wanted to officially start with the New Year, I paused halfway through the questionnaire, which saved automatically. Within a day, I had received an email from the group encouraging me to continue the application. I have done that now and submitted the form. It was really fast because all the information I had entered last month really was saved! You can check out their site at:

www.nwf.org/backyardhabitat/createhabitat.cfm.



SUGARCANE – Saccharum officinarum – Poaceae

Donated by: CRFG/

Sven Mirten and planted in 1999 (r.f.-09)
Common names: Sugarcane, Caña de azucar,
Caña dulce, Tubo, Tiwu, Noble cane, Kaneh,
Tebu.

Sugarcane originated in the South Pacific Islands and New Guinea, and nowadays it is found throughout the tropics and subtropics. Sugarcane is cultivated as far north as Spain and as far south as South Africa. In the Americas, the sugarcane is cultivated from Florida to Texas and California in the north and as far south as Perú and Brazil.

The sugarcane stem or stalk varies from 9 to 15 feet tall and 1 to 2 inches thick. It is fibrous and juicy. The internodes are short and swollen. The sheaths (blades), overlap with their lower portions falling from the sheath. The blades are elongated with a very thick midrib.

Sugarcane plants are planted in zones that are warm with high tropical humidity, from the rain

forests of North and Central America to the very dry coastal zones in Perú and Ecuador. Sugarcane grows in sunny areas on soils that are unsuitable to trees, preferring soils that are sandy but not loam. The plant requires a hot humid climate with alternating dry periods and thrives best on low elevations on flat or slightly sloping land. However, it flourishes in any ordinary good soil.

Standing stalks of sugarcane freeze at 25 to 22°F, but the plant can endure a maximum of 130°F and a minimum of 10°F. Lower temperatures will reduce the sugarcane stem length, which happens to grow at nighttime. The plant will tolerate occasional flooding.

Sugarcane harvesting starts 12-16 months from the time of planting when the canes become tough and start to turn pale yellow. The cutting of the canes should be as close to the ground as possible. The root end of the cane is the part that is the richest in sugar. The rhizomes left in the ground will continue to give crops for 3-4 years, sometimes up to 10 or more years.

Sugarcane plants are propagated by cutting sections from the stalks and placing them in shallow ditches made in the soil. The young plants will grow from the internodes of the cuttings. In some tropical areas there are sugarcanes that produce seeds, but they are primarily used to develop new hybrids to produce better cultivars that are stronger and resistant to pests and soil viruses.

Cane sugar, cane syrup, wax, molasses, and rum are some of the products obtained from the sugarcane plants. Molasses is used as a sweetener and supplement for cattle feeds. Other uses of the derivatives of the sugar cane are: industrial alcohol, explosives, synthetic rubber, preservative for fruits and meat, and the production fuel for combustion engines.

—Alfredo Chiri, OC Calif. Rare Fruit Growers
liaison to the Fullerton Arboretum.