

Garden Clippings

Orange County *Independent* Master Gardeners' Newsletter

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January Meeting

Saturday, January 3, 2009

510 E. Memory Lane/2615 Valencia, Santa Ana

Schedule

8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Setup & Plants 'n Things
9:00 – 10:00 a.m.	General Meeting
10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Holiday Party
11:00 – 11:15 a.m.	Plants 'n Things
11:15 – 11:30 a.m.	Door prize raffle & clean up
11:30 – 11:45 a.m.	Take Down

This is our annual yummy potluck (one month later than usual). EVERYONE is invited to bring edible goodies (especially main dishes) to share. Also, remember to bring along any items you wish to contribute to our Plants 'n Things raffle as well as plant catalogs you'd like to share.

It's that time of the year again! Rita Corpin is collecting cards for the class project she does with her English students. Holiday, birthday, or any other type of greeting card can be used; text inside the card will be covered and can not be seen.

Enrichment Workshop—Vermiculture and Composters

Fran Lebow, vermiculturist at Shipley Nature Center, will lead the discussion. Get the skinny on the best type of composter and the real ROI (return on investment) of vermiculture.

Board Meeting: Second Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm at the home of Cheryl Borden.

Gardening Events

Fullerton Arboretum. Pre-register for all classes by calling 714/278-3407

Sat. Jan. 10: Worm Composting. 10 – 11:30 am, Bleachers.

Patrick McNelly, principal staff analyst, O C Sanitation District will teach how to introduce and maintain worms in your home composting system.

Sat. Jan. 24: Rose Garden Basics. 10 – 11:30 am. Pavilion Classrooms

Jan Brider an ARS Consulting Rosarian, will cover the basics of rose care, including selection, planting, fertilization, pruning and pest and disease controls. Among the other topics are selecting roses for your garden and companion planting.

Jan Brider will also present a class at **Bembridge House** on Saturday, January 31. Check their website for information unavailable at press time: <http://www.lbheritage.org/Bembridge%20Homesite/Bembridge%20Homesite.html>

Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden Pre-register for all classes at 909/ 625-8767 ext. 224.

Sat. Jan. 24: Kill Your Lawn! 2 – 4 pm \$30.00

Learn a multitude of ways to kill your lawn and ready your new space for planting with natives.

Fullerton College's Horticulture Department has several classes beginning January 12, including plant propagation and landscaping for dry climates. More information is at <http://horticulture.fullcoll.edu>

For many other gardening events, check <http://www.orangecountygardeners.org>

New Agricultural Threat in Texas

From the Associated Press

A new threat has surfaced in Houston: The hairy, reddish-brown creatures are known as "crazy raspberry ants" -- crazy, because they wander erratically instead of marching in regimented lines, and "rasberry" after Tom Rasberry, an exterminator who did battle against them early on.

The ants --also known as "paratrechina species near pubens" -- have spread to five Houston-area counties since they were first spotted in Texas in 2002. Scientists are not sure exactly where the ants came from, but their cousins, commonly called crazy ants, are found in the Southeast and the Caribbean.

The good news is that they eat fire ants, the stinging red terrors of Texas summers. The bad news is that the ants also suck the sweet juices from plants, feed on such beneficial insects as ladybugs, and eat the hatchlings of a small, endangered type of grouse known as the Attwater prairie chicken. They also bite humans, though not with a stinger like fire ants.

Worse, they, like some other species of ants, are attracted to electrical equipment, for reasons that are not well understood by scientists. They have ruined pumps at sewage pumping stations, fouled computers and at least one homeowner's gas meter, and caused fire alarms to malfunction. They have been spotted at NASA's Johnson Space Center and close to Hobby Airport, though they haven't caused any major problems there yet.

It's not enough just to kill the queen. Experts say each colony has multiple queens that have to be taken out. At the same time, the ants aren't taking the bait usually left out in traps, according to exterminators, who want the Environmental Protection Agency to loosen restrictions on the use of more powerful pesticides.

EU slices up 'ugly fruit' rules

From Scott Carroll

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7723808.stm>

Marketing standards for 26 types of produce were scrapped in a drive to cut bureaucracy. The rules were introduced to ensure common EU standards, but are regarded by critics as examples of Euro-madness. Some 20% of produce is rejected by shops across the EU because it fails to meet the current requirements of shape and size.

The rules will remain unchanged for another 10 types of produce, which account for 75% of EU fruit and vegetable trade. However, the commission says shops will be allowed to sell these products provided they are labeled appropriately. So an apple which does not meet the standard could still be sold, as long as it were labeled "product intended for processing" or equivalent wording, the commission says. The new rules are expected to come into force on 1 July 2009.

In an interview with the BBC's Newshour programme, the agriculture commissioner's spokesman Michael Mann said: "I have spent the last four years dealing with headlines about bendy cucumbers and oversized, undersized kiwi fruits and God knows what. So, yes it has been a cause of much criticism towards the European Union, and let's be

frank, that is also a factor in why we are getting rid of it."

☎ Contacts

Janet Meade, *President*

Sharon Neely, *1st^d Vice Pres*

Bob Shaw, *Treasurer*

Fred Snyder, *Plant Clinic*.....

Jill Patterson, *Newsletter Editor*

Submit articles by the 10th of each month via:

Jean Rice, *Vol. Hours*.....

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

Helen Elich: The Traveling Independent Master Gardener

Water Conservation Gardens at Cuyamaca College: www.thegarden.org

If I could come up with my dream job it would be to take over Huell Howser's job.

A lot of my explorations have been via the internet and as a result I have a huge binder filled with "to do and see" items. A few weekends ago, I pulled one out and did a two hour trek to El Cajon (I began to think it was in another state and I just want to thank my GPS unit for getting me there.). I was determined to visit the water Conservation Gardens at Cuyamaca College and what a treat. It is a 5-acre garden located at the college campus with the Americas Museum adjacent.

I went this month because they had a fall festival with some eco-related vendors and since I am strategizing on going green it seemed to be a good time to take care of a lot of research.

The gardens have some of the best exhibits I have seen: Compost; Soil and Mulch; Native Plant Garden; Vegetable Garden; Touch and Smell Garden; Fire-Wise Landscape Exhibit; Bird and Butterfly; Gazebo; Amphitheater; Water wise back yard; White Garden; Cactus and Succulents; Covered Patio; Container Garden; Ground Cover Exhibit; Turf Exhibit; Irrigation Exhibit; Children's Discovery Trail

The soil exhibit sliced out terrain as it is normally and then next to it had a slice of terrain after builders complete housing construction. In the area they also had containers of the soils we discussed in our training- Loam, Sandy Loam, and Clay and you can feel the difference in the soils, which is a nice learning tool when educating gardeners on soil types.

Another favorite was the water conservation garden. They had two areas the same size, one looked like my backyard, a flat lawn (so to speak) and the other a drought tolerant garden (not necessarily California natives). They explained

that the garden was designed to take the runoff from one area to water the next area. The regular garden used 28,000 gallons of water a year and the drought tolerant used 6800 gallons a year. What a difference!

I enjoyed all the exhibits, but the other great visual was the fire-wise landscape. They had a miniature house and showed the terrain and how it should look at 50 feet and then at 100 feet from the house. It listed things you need to do to make certain your home is prepared. In addition to planting, clearing and the use of building materials, make certain your address has large numbers that are easy to see from the street--something all of us can do.

I would have liked to stay longer, but promised a visit to my aunt. Before I left, I went over to the college nursery which was another great treat.

If I were to plan your day, I would say get up early, head off to the gardens and spend some time there and at the nursery. Then head back north to Leucadia. If you go on a Sunday, they have a wonderful organic farmers' market (follow the signs) with lots of ethnic foods to buy and eat for lunch or you can have lunch at the many charming restaurants downtown.

After lunch and some organic shopping, please go to Anderson's La Costa Nursery, 400 La Costa Ave, Encinitas, 92024, web: www.andersonslacostanursery.com. They also focus on drought tolerant plants. Do not leave the nursery until you have worked your way back to the "Secret Garden". If you still have time and energy, stop at Weidners; they are less than a mile away.

If you are not up for all that running around, pack a lunch, enjoy the gardens, nursery, campus and museum and have a leisurely day.

Check this website:

www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation for water information. And try

www.bewaterwise.com/calculator. Type in your zip code, fill in the blanks and see how much and how often you should water.

Grasshoppers

Information taken from UC Davis Agriculture Department



Grasshoppers are sporadic pests in gardens. However, in some years large populations may build up in foothills and rangelands, especially after a wet spring and then migrate into nearby gardens, often defoliating everything in sight. Over 200 species of grasshoppers occur in California, but only a few of these cause significant problems in gardens. The [devastating grasshopper](#), *Melanoplus devastator*, and the valley grasshopper, *Oedaleonotus enigma*, are the most widespread and destructive.

IDENTIFICATION AND LIFE CYCLE

Grasshoppers are readily distinguished from most other insects. Their hind legs, with greatly enlarged femurs, are well adapted for jumping. Their bodies are robust and their antennae relatively short. In contrast, two other common garden pests in the order Orthoptera, crickets and katydid, have long antennae. Most grasshoppers are winged and many are good flyers, although a few species are flightless.

In late summer and fall, adult female grasshoppers [deposit their eggs in soil](#) in undisturbed areas such as grassy foothills, ditchbanks, roadsides, fence rows, pasture areas, and alfalfa fields. Cultivated

gardens do not seem to be a common site for egg laying. Eggs are laid in the upper 2 inches of soil in elongate egg pods that contain 20 to more than 100 eggs. When soil temperatures warm in spring, the eggs hatch and the young nymphs begin to feed on nearby plants. [Nymphs](#) readily move to new locations when food supplies disappear. Most species molt five to six times before becoming adults and usually have only one generation a year. Adult grasshoppers can live 2 to 3 months; they die out when food becomes scarce or when the weather becomes too cold. Many grasshoppers are consumed by predators such as birds, blister beetles (which feed on eggs), and robber flies. Fungal and bacterial diseases and parasites also kill grasshoppers.

Grasshopper population size varies from year to year and severe outbreaks normally occur only every 8 to 10 years. Some outbreaks last 2 or 3 years. If favorable conditions such as warm, moist springs that produce a lot of food in the foothills and uncultivated areas persist for several years, populations may build to high levels. Major migrations, which cause the most damage, occur when populations are high and forage becomes depleted. Nymphs typically move downhill toward green vegetation. Adults may fly 15 or more miles a day in large swarms during migrations.

DAMAGE

Most grasshoppers are general feeders, but they prefer young, green plants, especially lettuce, beans, corn, carrots, onions, and some annual flowers. Squash and tomatoes are among the vegetables least favored by grasshoppers. Grasshoppers have chewing mouthparts and [remove large sections of leaves](#) and flowers, sometimes devouring entire plants. Garden damage is usually limited to a few weeks in early summer immediately after range weeds dry up. However, during major outbreaks, grasshoppers will feed on almost any green plant and damage may occur over a considerably longer period.

MANAGEMENT

Grasshoppers are among the most difficult insect pests to manage in the garden. When numbers are low, they can be hand-picked and squashed. Cones, screened boxes, floating row covers, and other protective covers provide some protection if numbers are not high. However, grasshoppers will eat through cloth or plastic row covers if they are hungry enough. Try using metal window screening. Poultry, including chickens and guinea hens, are excellent predators, but can also cause damage to some garden plants.

One strategy that can be used in gardens where migration of grasshoppers frequently occurs is to keep an attractive green border of tall grass or lush green plants around the perimeter of your garden to trap insects and divert them from your vegetables or flowers. Don't mow this trap crop or let it dry out, or you will send the grasshoppers straight into your garden.

During years when huge numbers of grasshoppers are migrating, there is almost nothing you can do to protect your plants once the invasion has reached your garden. The best strategy in agricultural and rangeland areas during major migrations is to treat the grasshoppers with an insecticide early in the season when they are still young nymphs residing in uncultivated areas. Usually gardeners do not have control over these areas, however, so their management options are few. Gardeners can apply a bait containing carbaryl around the borders of their garden before grasshoppers arrive. If a grasshopper trap crop is being grown around the border of your garden, these plants can be baited or sprayed with carbaryl or other products to kill grasshoppers. These insecticides have only a few days of residual activity against grasshoppers, and baits lose their effectiveness after rain or irrigation, so they will need to be reapplied if migrations continue. Small grasshopper nymphs are easier to control with insecticides than adults and large nymphs.

Once grasshoppers have invaded the garden, insecticides will not be very effective. Reserve the use of insecticides for serious situations where

they may provide a significant level of control. Carbaryl, especially in its spray form, is very toxic to bees, to natural enemies of grasshoppers, and to aquatic life.

Asian Citrus Psyllid and Greening Disease Threaten Backyard Citrus Trees

Are you ready for the latest agricultural threat? This one comes from a small insect about 1/7 an inch long called the Asian citrus psyllid and the disease-causing bacteria that it carries. The disease is called 'citrus greening' in the United States and 'Huanglongbing' in parts of Asia and it kills every tree that it infects. Early symptoms of the disease on citrus include asymmetrical yellowing of leaves and small misshapen fruit.

The Asian citrus psyllid and greening disease have been devastating the Florida citrus industry since 2005 with a total tree removal now in excess of 60,000 acres.

The Asian citrus psyllid's life cycle progresses from egg through 5 nymphal instars to the adult stage. Detailed descriptions and pictures of this pest, their feeding activities on leaves, and pictures of greening disease are available on the web at www.californiacitrusthreat.com and <http://citrusent.uckac.edu/psyllid/8205.pdf>.

Greening disease is thought not to currently exist in California, but widespread plant testing has not yet been conducted. It was discovered that entry of the disease into Florida, probably illegally in citrus budwood brought into the country by a few backyard citrus growers, preceded arrival of the psyllid. Without something like the psyllid to vector the disease, greening disease is not a problem. Greening disease can lay dormant in some host material for years. Ornamental citrus, orange jasmine and mock orange provide habitat for the Asian citrus psyllid and may be infected by citrus greening disease and not show disease symptoms.

Currently, homeowners do not have effective chemicals to control psyllids. .