

# Garden Clippings

Orange County Independent Master Gardeners' Newsletter

Volume 20 Number 4

April 2014

## April Meeting

**Saturday April 5, 2014**

Rancho Santiago Community College Rm. 107  
2323 North Broadway, Santa Ana, CA 92706

### Schedule

8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Setup Plants ‘n Things  
9:00 – 9:30 a.m. Business Meeting  
9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Enrichment Program  
10:30 – 10:45 a.m. Plants ‘n Things  
11:00 – 11:30 a.m. Clean up

Members with last names starting with **A - G**, please bring a breakfast snack. Other members are also welcome to bring goodies. Also, please bring along any items you wish to contribute to our Plants ‘n Things raffle and any gardening catalogs or magazines you’d like to share.

## Enrichment Program: Fuchsias with Poonam Sinha



Ms. Sinha has lived with her family in Fountain Valley for 26 years. She became absorbed with gardening after retiring from her professional job about 6 years ago and grows rare and exotic plants, including orchids, plumeria and

fuchsia. Her father was a farmer and has an award-winning garden in India. She used to work in the garden with her father and thus comes by her green thumb naturally. She joined the Fuchsia and Plumeria Societies four years ago and started growing fuchsias three years ago for their annual plant sale.

## Gardening Events

**Fullerton Arboretum.** Pre-register for all classes by calling 657/278-3407.

**Sat. – Sun. April 12-13: “Green Scene”** 10am – 4pm. \$8 non-members/\$6 members.

Garden vendors, speakers, and an art show coalesce for this annual event.

**Armstrong Nurseries:** Free classes are provided at each location. April classes cover organic gardening. A free packet of ladybugs will be given to each family the weekend of April 26-27, while supplies last. Saturday at 9am is a free class on ladybugs and other beneficial insects, with interactive activities for kids. Website is: <http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

**Roger’s Gardens,** 2301 San Joaquin Hills Rd., Corona Del Mar, CA 92625, tel.949/640-5800

One-hour seminars are offered each weekend. April 12 features year-round vegetable growing with Pat Welsh at 9am followed by a workshop on creating a living wall at 2pm. April 19 offers CA Friendly design solutions at 9am and Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 with a free herb or vegetable given out while supplies last. Cristin Fusano teaches kitchen garden techniques on April 26 at 9am and Roger’s Gardens Colorscape expert, Marty Bailen, will explain how to incorporate seasonal color plantings into the garden at 10am on April 27.

## Spring Garden Show at South Coast Plaza

April 24-27. Over 75 specialty vendors, garden seminars, and landscape gardens on display at this annual extravaganza. Check out the schedule at [www.springgardenshow.com](http://www.springgardenshow.com). Held in the Macy’s Home Store wing. Free admission and parking.

# Leaves From the President



## Rain-Saving Ideas

Because of the drought and the onset on our much needed rain in March, I set out every large trash/waste basket I could find (even bought a new trash can) under the eaves on my house. I put them where there would be the most runoff. Luckily, there was a break between the two storms, because they were all just about full after the first round.

I know rainwater is better for our plants than tap water; but I didn't figure on its popularity with critters. My cats now almost demand fresh rainwater (before, it was filtered water over tap water)! And I've tried a couple of experiments with birdbaths and water sources for them. They also prefer the rainwater.

In Australia, they have a huge industry centered on capturing rainwater. It hasn't been a big effort here, but it should be. I figure I have enough water collected to water most of my 11,000 square feet for at least a week or two (most of it is in drought tolerants and natives anyway). My assortment isn't very pretty, and I need the containers in the house! So, I did some research and we have all kinds of local sources for systems that are complete or that you can build. For example:



Sam's has a RainReserve Complete Kit that includes everything but the barrel for \$43.82. Here's a picture of it installed:

They also have a 65 gallon Rain Saver that you can plant in the top (maybe an herb garden) that is really decorative.



Lowes has some collapsible ones: a 200 gallon one with a diverter and spigot for \$180, and a pop-up one for \$86. It has a nozzle too.

They all look like better ideas than my "motley crew".

Anne Porter,  
OCIMG President

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## Volunteer Opportunity

The West Anaheim Neighborhood Development Council (WAND)s is hosting its 18th Annual Anaheim Western BBQ at Twila Reid Park on Saturday, May 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be a gardening section devoted to raising vegetables and flowers in small areas such as apartment patios. It is an opportunity for Master Gardeners to have a sign-up and answer questions. We need volunteers—please sign up at our April 5 meeting.

## May Garden Tour

This is a heads up for our tour of the Chinese garden at the Huntington Library. The tour is scheduled for 10:30 am on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Cost is \$25 per person, which is a \$12 discount! That includes entrance to the gardens which is normally \$18 - \$23 dollars. (There is no reciprocal agreement with Fullerton Arboretum). Set up carpooling at the April meeting. We should be at the Huntington by 10:15am, allow about an hour to drive from Orange County. Full directions and information will appear in the May newsletter.

## Peanuts Are Not Fish

By Don Martin

History tells us that Native Americans used fish fertilizer for their corn, labeling it the first organic supplement. Truth be told, prior to modern agriculture, all fertilizers were organic.

In a magazine I read called “GrowerTalks/Green Profit”, I saw a product called Biosafe Plant Food. This may be the next generation of organic fertilizers and here’s why. It is derived from essential oil extracted from plant seeds and blended into a form that can be sprayed directly on to the plant leaves or by drenching the soil. Seeds are packed with all the energy plants need to begin life’s journey. Biosafe plant food is plant-based. It’s low in salts, unlike fish and synthetic fertilizers, allowing it to be safer for most any plant. Synthetic fertilizers tend to inhibit microbial activity due to high salt content. So, I am sending for a free sample and will let you know how well it works.

*Editor’s note: Online editions of these two magazines are available at <http://www.ballpublishing.com/>*

## A Hit and a Miss

By Don Martin

Conard-Pyle rode high on the success of the Peace rose. But they also had one big flop. It was a climbing strawberry that didn’t. Its name was Sonjana (pronounced son-yana). It came from a breeder in Germany who touted it as a climbing strawberry. And without any in-house trialing, Conard-Pyle rushed it to market. The company took the breeder’s word for this being a revolutionary one-of-a-kind, never-before-seen climbing ever-bearing strawberry. They promptly put the picture on the cover of all their catalogs for fall and spring. The picture looked fake or the equivalent of a poor Photoshop job. According to information available from the American Pomological Society, the plant has vigorous runners that can be espaliered or trained on a support. Hence, it’s termed a climber. But it wasn’t promoted like that. I don’t think they were indicted for mail-order fraud, but they may have come close. As for making it up to dissatisfied

customers, they must have given away a lot of free roses.

P.S. They never put a strawberry in their catalogs again!

*Editor’s note:* I found two different “climbing” strawberries online, both from English nurseries. One is 'Rambling Cascade' from Victoriana Nursery & Gardens. Its botanical name is *Fragaria x ananassa* 'Senga Sengana' and it has the following characteristics:

- Large, bright red strawberries have a real taste of old flavor.
- Runners can be up to 6 feet (1.8 meters) long making this variety perfect for hanging baskets or training to climb.
- Self fertile.

It is supplied as a 7cm potted plant for £1.65 (British pound) each with a minimum order of five plants. Website is:

[http://www.victoriananursery.co.uk/Strawberry Plant Rambling Cascade/](http://www.victoriananursery.co.uk/Strawberry_Plant_Rambling_Cascade/)

Another is from Thompson and Morgan. They sell 'Mount Everest' (Everbearer/ All Season) *Fragaria x ananassa*, a hardy perennial. This fast, strong growing variety will produce runners up to 1m (39”) in length that make a real talking point when trained up a trellis or obelisk climbing frame, or cascading from window boxes and hanging baskets. Better still, Strawberry 'Mount Everest' is an ever-bearing variety that produces a delicious crop of medium sized, sweet, juicy fruits from June right through to September! Height: 1m (39”). Spread: 30cm (12”). Estimated time to cropping once planted: 4-8 months. Individual plants sell 5x7 cm pots for £14.99 **each**. Website is: <http://www.thompson-morgan.com/fruit/fruit-plants/strawberry-plants/strawberry-mount-everest/cww3590TM>

I have not found any U.S. source for either of these strawberries—which, considering the difference in our summer climate from that of mild and wet England, may mean those strawberries would not do well here. But I know that some of our members ache for this type of challenge!

## June Plant Exchange

This is your first reminder that we will have our annual plant exchange in June. All plants need to be labeled with the botanical and common names and include care instructions. Vegetables, perennials, succulents, herbs, trees and annuals are all welcome. I'll bring tillandsias, which are in bloom right now—sorry, they won't look as glamorous in June.

## More Educational Opportunities

The [Replace Your Lawn Series](#) is a three part workshop on Saturday, April 12, 19 and 26 from 9:30-10:30am at Tree of Life Nursery. It includes *Killing the Lawn* on the 12<sup>th</sup>, *Winning Plant Combinations* on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and *Design Elements* with Susan Trindle of A Native Garden, Inc, on the 26th. Susan also works at Tree of Life; her company's website is: <http://anativegarden.com>

Address is: 33201 Ortega Hwy, San Juan Capistrano 92675, tel. 949/728-0685.

## Busting GMO Myths

UC Riverside scientists Norm Ellstrand and Alan McHughen address misconceptions about genetically modified organisms and the processes that create them

By Konrad Nagy and Lilledeshan Bose

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) — are a hot topic all over the world. There are questions about production, safety and regulation. Are they safe? Is the technology our way into food security for the planet? Will they harm the environment? Two UCR scholars — professor of genetics Norm Ellstrand and biotechnology specialist and geneticist Alan Mchughen — clarify common beliefs about GMOs.

**Myth #1: The technology behind the creation of GMOs makes it unsafe.**

**False. The technology that creates GMOs is a tool of science. In the 1980s, the National Academy of Sciences declared that the process of genetic engineering is not inherently hazardous.** “Harms are always caused by things, not by processes,” Alan McHughen says. “It’s the

final product that has to be assessed [for safety]. It’s possible to use genetic engineering to introduce toxins into a food crop that doesn’t traditionally carry those toxins. But if the technology is used instead to, say, increase vitamin A in the food, then that’s probably a beneficial product.”

**Myth #2: It’s no big deal that crop genes get into wild populations.**

**False. Crop genes in the wild can cause trouble — not all the time — but on occasion.** Ellstrand maintains there’s no fundamental difference between genes transferred from genetic engineering and genes that are transferred by other means, such as traditional breeding. Europe’s “weed beet” that has cost its sugar industry over a billion dollars in lost product is the result of natural hybridization between a wild beet species and (non-GMO) sugarbeet.

**Myth #3: We need to regulate GMOs for food safety.**

**False. Food safety with approved GMOs is not an issue.** “We have a huge issue in food safety with lots of other things: contaminants, E. coli, salmonella, listeria, arsenic. But if genetic engineers were to develop a rice plant or a potato with, say, an increased vitamin A content that was so high it would cause a problem, it would never get on the market. There’s a very strong regulatory structure in place in the United States and that’s what they check for. We’ve been eating GMOs since the mid-‘90s — almost 20 years now — and there’s still not a single documented case of harm to humans.” McHughen says.

**Myth #4: All GMO crops have been wonderful successes.**

**False. Ellstrand cites the flavr savr tomato and the low-nicotine tobacco as examples.** Both these products were developed commercially but were marketing failures due to a variety of reasons. They — and many other similar products — are no longer on the market. “Some advocates of biotech crops say they’re all wonderful, they’re all perfect, but they’re not,” Ellstrand says.

**Myth #5: GMOs will ruin our existing food systems**

**False. McHughen believes the production of GMOs is best way to provide food security for the planet, particularly in poorer countries.** “If Europe and the United States banned GMOs outright, it probably would not cause a huge impact, apart from an increase in the price of food. (A lot of U.S. farmers would also get pretty annoyed, since 90 percent of them who can grow GMO crops do so.) Poorer countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, won’t get by without GMO technology,” McHughen says. Products such as drought-resistant seeds would provide a huge benefit to these countries.

**Myth #6: All GMO crops create some kind of problem.**

**False. Ellstrand gives the example of the genetically modified, virus-resistant Hawaiian papaya:** “It not only saved the Hawaiian papaya industry but also saved the non-GMO Hawaiian organic industry by reducing the incidence of the viral disease.”

**Myth #7: You need a label on a food product to tell you whether it contains genetically engineered products.**

**False. “You just look at the label of ingredients,” Norm Ellstrand says.** “If it’s not labelled organic and one or more of the ingredients include U.S.-grown corn, soybeans, canola, cottonseed oil, papaya, beet sugar, or alfalfa, there’s a 90 percent or better chance that it’s genetically engineered.”

“Harms are always caused by things, not by processes.” Alan McHughen

**Myth #8: Gene transfer via genetic engineering is unnatural**

**False. Genes naturally move between kingdoms of organisms due to viruses or bacteria, and while it’s rare, it does happen.**

**Myth #9: In Europe, GMOs aren’t allowed into the food supply**

**False. It’s true that very few GMOs are cultivated by farmers in Europe.** “In fact, they really only grow genetically engineered corn — and only in a few countries,” McHughen says. “However, Europeans have plenty of food in the markets that are from genetically modified plants, which are imported from abroad.”



**Myth #10: Above all else, the controversy involving GMOs is about technology.**

**True. Most anti-GMO activists won’t admit it, but their**

**real concern is that the technology seems to be controlled by a handful of multinational corporations, McHughen says.** “They don’t like the idea of something as visceral and basic as the food supply being controlled by companies. That’s a fair issue, and it’s a very good question for society to discuss,” he adds.

“Is it appropriate in our multicultural, democratic society to have the food supply controlled by a handful of companies? That it’s an opportunity for discussion that gets sidetracked by the safety issues because people are much more concerned about safety than they are about these socioeconomic issues.”

Ellstrand adds, “We’ve got a lot of problems in the world; we shouldn’t just arbitrarily lock away certain tools such as genetic engineering. We just have to be mindful of how we use those tools.”

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Website: smagazine.ucr.edu*

*Editor’s note: This article would make a good topic of discussion. Where do you stand on the issue of GMOs? Do you agree with the conclusions reached by these scientists? A recent ballot initiative that failed was to require labeling of GMO foods. Do you think it’s unnecessary? And did you know that 90% of all U.S. grown corn, soybeans, canola cottonseed oil, papaya, beet sugar, and alfalfa are GMOs?*