

# Garden Clippings

Orange County Independent Master Gardeners' Newsletter

Volume 20 Number 9

October 2014

## October Meeting

**Saturday, October 4, 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 – 9:45 a.m. Business Meeting  
9:45 - 10:00 a.m. Plants 'n Things  
10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Enrichment Program  
11:00 – 11:30 a.m. Clean up

Members with last names starting with **R - Z**, 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.

### Enrichment Program: Native Gardens: Plant Community Garden Design with Laura Camp

Using the philosophy of natural plant communities as a basis for garden design, this talk includes examples of beautiful, natural California plant communities, and great gardens and interesting garden styles from throughout the world. It provides examples of native plants that can be adapted to many styles, and inspires you to bring our incomparable California heritage into our gardens

Laura is the President of the California Native Plant Society. She is an avid hiker, photographer and native plant enthusiast, and works at Tree of Life Nursery, the renowned specialty nursery in San Juan Capistrano.

### New Class Starting?

Anne has identified 4-5 potential class attendees. Please contact Glenn or Anne right away with other potential candidates as we will put on an

OCIMG class starting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of October if we have 10 attendees.

### Upcoming Program

Nov. 2: Planting Bamboo Is Not a Crime with Ralph Evans

### Gardening Events

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

**Sat. – Sun. Oct. 25-26: "Orange County Rose Show"**, Sat. 1:30 – 5:00pm; Sun. 9am – 4pm.

The Orange County Rose Society presents its annual Bounty of Roses show. The show is free and open to the general public for exhibiting. For more details, please visit [rogersgardens.com](http://rogersgardens.com). To view the schedule, visit [www.orangecountyrs.org](http://www.orangecountyrs.org).

**Armstrong Nurseries:** Free classes are provided at each location. October includes classes on lawn substitutes, container gardening (including using a pumpkin), cool season vegetables, and more. See <http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

**Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens** 1500 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711, just off Foothill Blvd. and east of Indian Hill. <http://www.rsabg.org>. Pre-register for all classes by calling (909) 625-8767 x224.

**Sat. Oct. 4: "Fall Plant Sale"**. 9am – 4pm Free!

One month early this year! Native and drought-tolerant plants, lectures, live music, and gourmet food trucks.

**Sat. Oct. 11: "Introduction to Native Plant Gardening"**, 10 a.m. – noon

Learn how to select the right plant for the right place, use proper planting technique, and maintain plants. Limited to 30 participants. RSABG members \$25; Public \$32

# Debris from the Editor



October and November are the months to evaluate what native plants would fit into our landscape, find a source, and plant as Southern California's cool season begins. With our anticipated hopes for a rainy El Niño evaporating with every new forecast, it's even more important to consider water requirements before selecting anything new. We all already know to group our plants by watering needs. With rural cities running out of water completely, how soon will it be before we turn on a tap and have nothing drip out? Last year, Cambria's city council prohibited using any city water for landscaping, forcing home owners to truck in water for that purpose. Native plant sales at the Fullerton Arboretum, Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, the Theodore Payne Foundation, and Tree of Life Nursery are excellent resources for additions or replacements to your garden.

Along with water requirements, invasive plant species should be recognized. How many of us have made the mistake of adding Mexican evening primrose to our gardens, beguiled by its hardiness and continuous blooms, only to find it taking over every inch of space? A San Francisco-based organization, Sustainable Conservation, has created a website listing plants to avoid. Some of the invasive plants listed for our area are Mexican feather grass (*Nasella tenuissima*), green feather grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*), and periwinkle (*Vinca major*).



Alternatives for Mexican feather grass include: *Muhlenbergia dubia*, common name: Pine Muhly, Mexican Deer Grass

This species is similar in appearance but about half the size of the more commonly used California Deer Grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) and is a good choice for mass planting. Little supplemental irrigation is

required but it can handle more regular irrigation if soil drains well.

*Muhlenbergia capillaris* / *M. capillaris* 'White Cloud', common names: Pink Muhlygrass / White Awn Grass



*Muhlenbergia capillaris*, commonly called pink muhlygrass, is a clump-forming, warm season, perennial grass that is noted for its attractive summer foliage and spectacular clouds of fall flowers. The average plant size is three feet high by six feet wide. The foliage is narrow-leaved and evergreen in mild winter areas.

*Muhlenbergia capillaris* 'White Cloud' (White Awn Muhly) is a medium-sized grass forming a clump of narrow blue-green foliage 2 to 3 feet tall. In fall, the flower stems rise another foot or more above the foliage holding an airy mass of delicate ivory-white flowers. It is a little larger and stiffer with a more upright habit than the familiar Pink Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) and it also blooms a little later.



*Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition' (Calif. Native), common name: Blue grama grass

Blue grama grass grows to the same size as Mexican feather grass. It is drought

tolerant, has attractive flower heads, can be planted in mass, and is cold hardy. This species also grows in a wide range of soil types and is low maintenance. Cutting back in winter will improve its look in the spring.

*Sporobolus airoides* (Calif. Native), common name: Prairie Dropseed

Prairie dropseed is a graceful, fine-textured, clumping grass that is both tough and good-looking. It contains deep-roots and is drought-tolerant. This species is excellent for massing in hot, dry areas and can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions.



Check out the website <http://www.plantright.org> for more information on invasive plants and recommended alternatives. The <http://www.calflora.org> website is another good source for information on native plants.

## Another Native Plant Workshop

### Living with Native Plants: Native Plant Teas

Back to Natives is offering this workshop on Saturday, October 25, 2014, from 1 – 3pm. Craig Torres, a Tongva descendent, will talk about the uses of different native plant teas, including White Sage (and other sages), Wild Rose (Petals, Blossoms, Hips), Elderberry (Blossoms, Berries), Yerba Buena, and California Juniper. Come prepared to sample (bring your own cup). Craig will discuss proper protocol and etiquette for harvesting as well as growing. Native plants will be available for sale! Fee: \$15/person: must prepay. Proceeds go directly to habitat restoration projects. RSVP at [backtonatives.org](http://backtonatives.org)

## Don Martin's Corner

### Fertilizers Are Not Plant Food

In May, at my bonsai club, our speaker said that in Southern California we have two seasons: summer and “sprautum”. Southern California has temperature fluctuations that can stress plants. We need a good understanding of horticulture as everyone gives different answers to the same questions, even if they are talking about the same tree.

Principles and practices: The principles of horticulture don't change, but practices change to adapt to conditions. A principle: “plants need water to grow”. In practice: the amount and timing of water is determined by many factors. We all know that plants need water, light, nutrients, and CO<sup>2</sup> to live. This process is called photosynthesis: plants convert light into chemical energy, that is to say, food. This makes plants autotrophic (self-feeding) and phototrophic (feeding through light). Fertilizers are not plant food, they are more like vitamins. They supply the minerals plants need to feed themselves through light.

Plants need a lot of light to grow. They use different wavelengths (colors) of light to different degrees. Green light is not used; plants use blue, violet, orange and red light. The best light for plants is morning light, which has the highest amount of blue. Afternoon light has more red, which causes stress to plants. Plants record the day length and changes in day light, which triggers flowering, also play a role in leaf size and color. Leaves acclimate to light. Leaf size and color are also affected by genetics and hormones as well as light. A plant exposed to less light will put out larger leaves; one placed in high light levels will put out smaller leaves because the plant needs less surface area to function well.

Light can also harm plants. By moving them from shade to full sun, an increase in temperature can harm them. Temperature determines metabolic activity in the plant and microbial activity in the soil. Although warmer temperatures increase plant growth to a point, high heat and light can be a disaster.

Our speaker, Ryan, then went on to talk about soil types and textures—the macro nutrients of plants—organic versus chemical fertilizers, and watering trees in bonsai soil.

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