

Garden Clippings

Orange County Independent Master Gardeners' Newsletter

Volume 22 Number 4

April 2016

April Meeting

Saturday April 2, 2016
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
1421 W. Ball Rd.
Anaheim, CA.

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.	Program
11:00	Clean-up

Members with last names starting with **H-Q**, 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: ID those Weeds with Chuck Schwartz



Mr. Schwartz has a bachelor's degree in entomology. He has 6 years of retail nursery experience and learned from Harry Otsubo of Dana Point Nursery. He owns Esoterica Landscape and has over

30 years of experience designing and maintaining people's gardens. He's been identifying weeds for over 40 years. If you have weeds you'd like identified, bring them in a plastic bag. You never know—some of these weeds may be edible, another area in which Mr. Schwartz is an expert.

Gardening Events

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

Sat. April 16: "Rose Seminar". 9 - 10am Free.

Kim Sterling and Lynn Hillman explain rose care and will answer questions about the current drought and how it affects your roses.

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

Sat. – Sun. April 16-17: "Green Scene". 9am - 4pm. \$8/free to members

The Arboretum's annual gardening event.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens 1500 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711, just off Foothill Blvd. Pre-register for all classes online at <http://www.rsabg.org>.

Sat.- Mon. April 16-18: "Wildflower Show" 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., April 18 offers free admission for those 65 years and better.

Labeled specimens from areas of California document California's flora.

South Coast Plaza: No details yet, but the Spring Garden Show is scheduled April 28 – May 1.

Armstrong Nurseries: Free classes are provided at each location. April classes: Grow Perfect Tomatoes at 10am on the 3rd; vegetables on the 9th at 9am and the 10th at 10am. A free packet of ladybugs will be given to each family the weekend of April 23-24, while supplies last. Saturday at 9am is a class on ladybugs and other beneficial insects; organic gardening basics on the 24th at 10am.; how to grow citrus on the 30th at 9am. Website is:

<http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

Leaves from the President



The Benefits of Bark

Bark has been the main ingredient for container mixes for many years. It adds weight and is cheap. But not all bark mixes are the same. Certain factors have a large impact on bark's physical and chemical characteristics and their interactions with other components like controlled release fertilizers (CRFs). Bark as a component can be purchased as fresh bark or composted bark. Fresh bark can contain phenolic compounds due to lack of proper composting. This may inhibit growth if added to the growing media as rapid decomposition of bark causes nitrogen depletion in the mix. Hammer-milled bark is often coarse and has less available nitrogen compared to composted bark. Bark processed beyond the fresh raw state allow toxic compounds to be broken down and assists in reducing nitrogen immobilization. There are two processing techniques that make bark more stable and consistent as a component: aging or composting.

1. Aging: This process is simple: debarking the tree, hammer-milling to a specific size, and stockpiling it for 6-12 months.
2. Composting: This process begins with debarking and hammer-milling to specific size of chip. It also produces a more stable product. Due to the composting process, nitrogen is added to the bark pile and the water content is monitored and adjusted as needed. It's also turned to introduce oxygen in order to maintain aerobic decomposition.

Processing bark has advantages over fresh bark. Aged bark has a lower nitrogen tie down particle size, high temperatures generated during the composting process will sterilize the material and help eliminate undesirable contaminants, and composted bark is smaller and more uniform.

The specifics of the tree that is used is also taken into consideration. Hardwoods like oak, maple, and cherry typically contain toxic compounds.

The bark will decompose fast due to high cellulose content. One disadvantage is that it needs a lot of nitrogen to decompose. Bark from softwoods like cedar, cypress, and spruce contain fewer toxic compounds and the bark decomposes slowly, using less nitrogen. U.S. softwood pine is more commonly used for nursery mixes.

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Spring Garden Tours

The California Native Plant Society's annual garden tour showcases gardens throughout the county on April 23. Purchase tickets online for \$10 at ocnps.org.

Fullerton Beautiful Open Gardens Tour is on April 24 and includes a giraffe and cat garden. Tickets can be bought at the Fullerton College Horticulture Dept. for \$15: fullertonbeautiful.org.

The annual Mary Lou Heard Memorial Garden Tour is April 30 and May 1. Find directions to the gardens at heardsgardentour.com; donations requested, all proceeds go to The Sheepfold, a charity Mary Lou Heard long supported.

Robinson Gardens

This garden is a hidden jewel and well deserves to be better known. The extensive grounds are lovely and encompass a number of specific gardens. The house was surprisingly small, and when asked about it, the guide shared that back in the early 20th century, people thought it was more important to have a garden than a mansion. Parking is indeed cramped—we traveled up a narrow winding driveway to the small parking area. The tours are scheduled so that the first group has time to leave before the second group arrives, as there is no place to pass on this single lane driveway!

We were enthralled by the stories our guide told us about Virginia Robinson's. They really made the tour a delight. There were some stairs on the main part of the tour and many more for the tour of the Palm Garden, which has the largest concentration of Queen Palms outside of their home country. There are places to sit and rest throughout and individuals can omit the Queen Palms part of the tour.

There are two rose gardens: one is the “viewing” garden and the other, kept toward the back of the property, is the “cutting” garden. The Robinsons also had a citrus orchard and monkeys. Yes, monkeys. The monkey house is now a home for chickens.

You can schedule your own visit to the gardens by calling (310) 550-2087. Tours are by reservation only.



Robinson Gardens.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Danker

June Plant Exchange

This is another reminder that we will have our annual plant exchange in June. This year, the exchange will continue with giveaways to the community during the garden workshops we're providing. 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.

More on the Spring Garden Show

I just received an email from Back to Natives and the two seminars they will have at the show:

Landscaping for Birds and Butterflies.

April 29 at 1pm in Williams-Sonoma

April 30 at 11:30am in west elm

Back to Natives Executive Director Reginald Durant will present two free seminars on native plant landscaping for birds and butterflies. Their focus this year is on habitat gardening for birds and butterflies. Their new partnership with the Monarch Joint Venture has inspired the organization to focus even more on host plants like milkweed that monarch caterpillars depend on, as well as a number of beautiful landscape quality nectar plants.

Fun Facts about African Violets

We know that African violets didn't start out as pampered house plants growing in an ideal environment. When they were growing in the wild, there were advantages to having fuzzy leaves:

- The nap (the direction that the hairs lean) is toward the tip, away from the center of the plant. That way the raindrops tend to run off instead of into the crown where moisture could lead to rot.
- The hairs provide an “air blanket” against changes in air temperature which are common in nature
- Larger chewing pests, like beetles, are held above the actual plant tissue by the hairs. When trying to feed, they get a mouthful of fuzz so they move on.

FYI, did you know that the number of hairs on a leaf will increase when the plant is stressed or affected by cool weather? —from the *Tri-Counties African Violet Society newsletter*