

DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished this month...

General Meeting:

La Casita Del Arroyo
177 South Arroyo Blvd
Pasadena, CA
Wednesday, March 7th
10:30am

South African Bulbs with Tom Glavich



Sack lunch & meeting.

Look ahead...

Apr 4

Auction Prep- Apr 16-17

Auction - Apr 18 (Old Mill)

May 2

June 6

Board Meetings

Monday's preceding the General Meeting at 10:30am. Please let Cathy know if you would like to attend.



Freesia caryophyllacea

*"She turned to the sunlight
And shook her yellow head
And whispered to her neighbor:*

"Winter is dead."

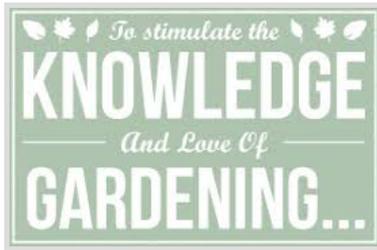
— from "Daffodowndilly"
by A.A. Milne, Author of
Winnie the Pooh books

From the President

Bulbs make us happy. We plant with dreamy anticipation in the fall - little homely brown things tucked into the soil - and then promptly forget them! It is always therefore a thrilling surprise when they push through the bare earth to signal the beginning of spring. A lost treasure transformed.

While winter temperatures in warm Southern California make it challenging for us to grow bulbs requiring a cold dormant period (unless we pre-chill them), there are lots of other beautiful bulbs, corms and rhizomes quite happy to grow and naturalize here. Many of these geophytes (*see note) originated from areas with a Mediterranean climate - a dry summer followed by rainy and mild winter - just like ours.

South Africa is one of these areas. Our speaker for March, Tom Glavich, has been growing and propagating South African and Mediterranean bulbs and



Upcoming GCA Info:

GCA 105th Annual Meeting

"How the West is One"

Hosted by the 18 Clubs of
Zone XII

San Francisco, CA
April 26-29, 2018

The GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show

"Wonders of the West"

April 26-29, 2018

2018 Annual Meeting Logo Needlepoint Canvas

*Checks may be made out to
the Pasadena Garden Club and
Mailed to:

Margaret Williams
Logo Needlepoint
1420 Park Place
San Marino, California 91108
mawilliams712@gmail.com



and related plants that thrive in Southern California for over 30 years, with a special interest in some of the winter growing genera. In his spare time he works at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory as an instrument designer. Come to the March meeting to discover and "unearth" some treasures of your own ~ there may be plants for sale!

✿ See you in the garden ✿

Cathy

(*"Geophyte" is the collective term for bulbs, corms, rhizomes & tubers; from the Greek words for earth and plant.)

California is home to hundreds of native geophytes, many of which are rare and endangered. Natives for gardens: Brodiacea, Calochortus, Dichelostemma, Tritoleia, Cammasia

South African geophytes: Babiana, Freesia, Gladiolus, Homeria, Lachenalia, Romulea, Tritonia, Watsonia.

(Visit <http://www.pacificbulbsociety.org> for pictures and further information.)

2018 ANNUAL MEETING LOGO NEEDLEPOINT CANVAS

THE COLORFUL POPPY LOGO OF THE 2018 GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA ANNUAL MEETING, CREATED BY GRAPHIC DESIGNER GIA RIDEAU WORKING WITH THE PORTLAND GARDEN CLUB, HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED TO NEEDLEPOINT!

INTENDED FOR FINISHING AS A PILLOW INSERT, CLUTCH, ZIPPERED POUCH, OR SHOULDER BAG, KITS ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$110.00. THEY INCLUDE NEEDLEPOINT CANVAS, STITCH GUIDE, AND ALL FIBERS. EACH 5 1/4" x 7" CANVAS IS HAND PAINTED AND WILL TAKE ABOUT 4-6 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY. FINISHING IS AVAILABLE AT AN ADDITIONAL COST THROUGH A STITCH IN TIME IN SAN MARINO OR YOUR FAVORITE FINISHER.

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT ZONE XII SPONSORSHIP OF THE 2018 ANNUAL MEETING.

*SEE INFO BAR TO THE LEFT

Mushroom Talk With Mycologist Florence Nishida



(closed)



(open)

Florence Nishida (holding an "Earth Star" mushroom) with Program Chair Mary B

Our February program featured extraordinary speaker Florence Nishida. Florence is a Master Gardener and Mycologist currently teaching home vegetable gardening classes and a "Beginner Mushroom Identification" course at the Los Angeles Natural History Museum. She is also a founder of "LA Green Grounds", a grassroots organization of volunteers dedicated to working with residents of South Los Angeles to convert their front lawns and parkways into edible landscapes and urban farms.

It goes without saying that Florence fascinated us with fungi!

We learned that the Earth Star (*Astraeus hygrometricus*) is a mushroom with ray-shaped arms that open up in response to water and humidity to expose the puffball spore case. It looks like a star when open - but when dry the arms close up to form a tough brown nugget. They are usually found in disturbed woodland areas in association with trees. In Greek mythology *Astraeus* was the god of dusk (when the stars appear). The specific epithet *hygrometricus* means 'water measurer'. Florence put the one she was holding (see above) in a saucer of water and it opened up to form a star as she talked to us.

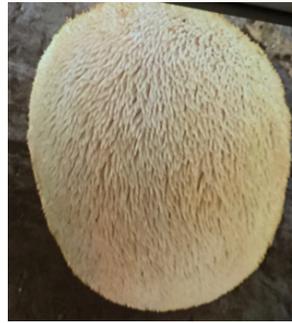
Other interesting mushrooms...



Turkey Tail
(edible; tough)



Hen of the Wood
(tastes like chicken)



Bear's Head
(delicious)



Jack-o-lantern (poisonous; glows in dark)



Agaricus californicus (poisonous) found in Cathy's yard; related to the common "grocery store" mushroom, *Agaricus bisporus*.

We also learned about mycorrhizal fungi and the plant network known as the "Wood Wide Web".

The tiny root tips of most plants are colonized by filaments of fungi, which extends the plants' reach into the surrounding soil. These mycorrhizal fungi (myco=fungus; riza=root) actively break down tightly bound soil nutrients like phosphorus and iron, providing plants more access to these vital nutrients. In return, trees and other plants feed the fungi sugars produced during photosynthesis. Fungal hyphae also increase the absorbing area of roots from 10 to 1000 times, which contributes to better water uptake and storage for the plants. Each fungus can colonize a variety of plant species, and plants may host multiple types of fungi. The mycorrhizal fungi also facilitate nutrient sharing between trees and plants of different species!

The Tale of Diggers Toyon - They Survived!

(Well... a few of them)



Survivors in South Pasadena Nature Park - January 23, 2018

In the recent Winter Issue of Pacific Horticulture Magazine, native plant gardener and horticulturalist Barbara Eisenstein wrote about the challenges of restoring and maintaining a "Habitat" Nature Park in South Pasadena. It's all about the weeds! Non-natives can overwhelm native seedlings, making it difficult for desirable plants to take hold. In the 4-acre Nature Park, Barbara and her volunteers, with support from City maintenance workers, foster the growth of native plants through dedicated weed suppression. (Please see: <http://nativebydesign.blogspot.com>.)

The Diggers learned about the South Pasadena Nature Park when Barbara spoke at our May 2015 meeting. We also learned that she was seeking locally grown native plants to continue the restoration of this pocket of Arroyo Seco land. Luckily, Diggers had the plants. Our fall 2014 propagation workshop had produced 25 one-gallon pots of genuine Arroyo Seco Toyon - ready to go back home!

In the fall of 2014, ripe native Toyon berries were collected in the Arroyo Seco. Diggers planted pre-soaked, cleaned and washed seed into flats in December 2014. The seeds germinated in 10-12 days and were later potted up to 2-inch, 4-inch and 1 gallon pots.



In February 2016, 25 gallon-sized pots of Toyon were planted back into their native environment in the South Pasadena Nature Park.



Ruth Pasqualetto



Kathy Miller



Tracy Hirrel

On a recent stroll through the Nature Park, Cathy and Eugenie discovered that weeds and drought had overwhelmed most of the Toyon we planted. The good news is that a few have survived. These, in spite of all odds, seem to have grown their roots deep into the soil. (See top pictures.) With a little 2018 rain, and a bit more time, we hope they will grow tall and strong.

Ralph Cornell, the pioneering early California Landscape Architect noted this about Toyon: *"Any plant that encourages bird life, supplies the bees with an unexcelled source of honey, gives food to man, furnishes tannin from its bark, protects arid slopes from erosion, paints the landscape with vivid colors and carries joy into the home at Christmas time, when no other berries are available to most Californians, surely deserves the protection of man, whom it serves so well."*

The Diggers, too, have a special place in their hearts for Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) because our club submitted it as a Freeman Plant contender in 2003. It received special recognition "for an exceptional plant of limited range." (*Sadly, due to the discovery that Toyon could be a host for *Phytophthora ramorum*, a fungus-like pathogen causing Sudden Oak Death - this tough and beautiful California native could not be recommended for wider propagation.)



Auction Planning = Plants!

This month, Auction Co-Chairs Sally M and Sally H encourage us to focus on planting our 10 beautiful Diggers Pots. Here are some suggestions for places to look for perfect plants and inspiration.

(*Please note: We cannot sell citrus at the Auction! The Citrus Psyllid continues to pose a threat to local citrus trees and a quarantine remains in effect.)

LOCAL NURSERIES

Bellefontaine Nursery
838 South Fair Oaks Avenue, Pasadena
626-796-0747
www.bellefontainenursery.com

California Cactus Center
216 South Rosemead Blvd., Pasadena
626-795-2788
www.cactuscenter.com

La Crescenta Nursery
3654 La Crescenta Ave, Glendale
818-249-2448

Lincoln Avenue Nursery
804 Lincoln Avenue, Pasadena
626-792-2138
www.lincolnavenuenursery.com

Norman's Nursery
8665 Duarte Road, San Gabriel
626-285-9795
www.nngrower.com

Nuccio's
3555 Chaney Trail Road, Altadena
626-794-3383
www.nucciosnurseries.com

Present Perfect
140 S Kinneloa Ave, Pasadena
626-449-6211

San Gabriel Nursery
632 South San Gabriel Blvd., San Gabriel
626-286-3782
www.sgnurserynews.com

FUTHER AWAY...

Calif Nursery Specialties & Cactus Ranch
19420 Saticoy, Reseda
818-894-5694
Note: Open Sat & Sun only – cash or checks
www.california-cactus-succulents.com

Las Pilitas Nursery
8331 Nelson Way, Escondido 92026
760-749-5930
www.laspilitas.com

Marina del Rey Garden Center
13198 Mindanao Way, Marina del Rey 90292
310-823-5956
www.marinagardencentre.com

Rolling Greens Nursery
9528 Jefferson Blvd., Culver City 90232
310-559-8656
www.rollinggreensnursery.com

Roger's Gardens
2301 San Joaquin Hills Road, Corona del Mar
949-640-5800
www.rogersgardens.com

Theodore Payne Society
10459 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley 91352
818-768-1802
www.theodorepayne.org

Worldwide Exotics
11157 Orcas Avenue, Lakeview Terrace
818-890-1915

**A great source for plants are the Plant Sales at:
Descanso Garden, Huntington Garden, LA Arboretum
Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden**

Annual Meeting Volunteer Registration Update

There are still many opportunities to volunteer – any Zone XII club member can spend a long weekend in San Francisco, and be part of the Annual Meeting fun!

Some opportunities include:

Decorations Committee (Flower Arrangers; 30+ openings on Fri., Sat. and Sun.)

Concierge Committee (Bus Gatherers and Loaders; 35 openings)

Flower Show Committee (Computers; 20 openings on Thurs. & Fri.)

To register and explore above the possibilities and others, please visit:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/members:calendar/ereventdetails?id=144>



Founders Fund - Don't Forget



Please re-read and carefully consider the 2018 Founders Fund Proposals, summarized both in the Winter Bulletin and on the Founders Fund landing page. We will be voting at our March meeting. The FF Finalist proposal receiving the majority of our member votes will be the one we vote for as a club. Remember, this is the **only** GCA award that can be voted on by each member of the 200 GCA clubs!

What is the National Affairs & Legislative Committee?

First, some background:

The GCA, founded in 1913, is a volunteer non-profit 501(c)3 organization comprised of 200 member clubs and 18,000 club members throughout the country. One of the GCA's guiding purposes has been to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.



The Conservation Committee was one of the earliest GCA committees established. From battling to save the Redwoods in the 1930's to heightened environmental awareness in the face of growing pollution in the 1960's, the GCA's legislative involvement grew proportionately over the years. So, in 1969 the National Affairs and Legislation Committee was established as a separate entity from the Conservation Committee. The NAL follows specific legislation that affects the above purpose, while Conservation provides education to GCA members on the environmental issues themselves.

The GCA annually hosts the National Affairs and Legislation Meeting in Washington, D.C. every February. The main events are two days worth of compelling speakers (from both sides of the aisle), focusing on important topics from the GCA's Position Papers as they pertain to relevant legislation, federal administrative actions, and pending judicial issues. For information on GCA Position Papers visit: <https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members:publications/details/id/27>

The Diggers GC is pleased to send our Conservation Chair Sara Pelton and delegate Liz Gilfillan to this year's meeting Feb. 26- Mar. 1.

Conservation



We are sad to report that the Cal Tech recycling Center closed this past November. It had been a wonderful recycling resource for our community because it was well-organized drop off facility, permitting the recycling and sorting of nearly every kind of household material waste - from paper, glass, plastics (of all kinds) and cardboard to batteries and e-waste - and with little to no wait time.

Some remaining recycling center options are:

<http://www.glendalerecyclingcenter.com>

<http://allancompany.com/facilities>

<http://www.burbankca.gov/departments/meet-the-recycle-center>

The Garden Club of America Conservation Pledge

To preserve America's beauty and natural heritage for future generations, we pledge to:

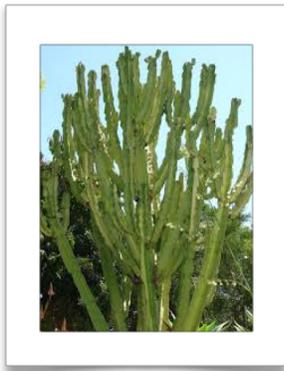
- promote conservation stewardship through environmental education and advocate scientifically-based environmental legislation;
- work to protect endangered species, especially flora, to promote biodiversity and to conserve natural resources;
- encourage the responsible use of our public lands for the benefit of all citizens; and
- work to reduce industrial, municipal, and household waste and advocate the prevention of pollution of soil, air, and water.

From the Horticulture Chair

The wonderfully diverse world of Euphorbia!



You may be wondering what a pointsettia (*Euphorbia pucherrima*) ...

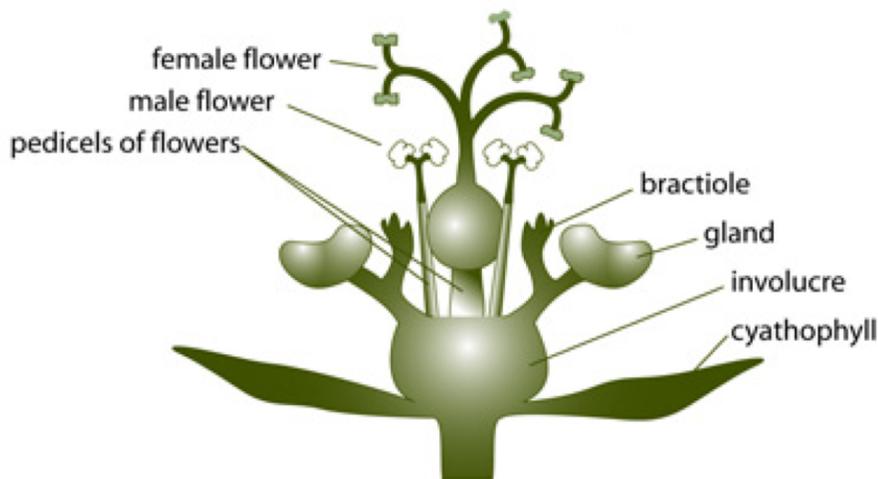


...and a cowboy cactus (*Euphorbia ingens*) have in common. It turns out quite a lot. They are both members of one of most diverse groups of flowering plants on earth – the genus Euphorbia in the Euphorbiaceae family.

With more than 2100 species, including over 1200 succulents, Euphorbias were first officially named when Carolus Linnaeus used the word to describe this plant in the first addition of Species Plantarum in 1753. However, the origin of the name Euphorbia can be traced even further back to Ancient Roman history. After King Juba II of Numidia was sent to Mauretania to rule what is present day Morocco, he was treated with a plant having powerful medicinal properties. He was so impressed with the effects of this plant that he named it after his doctor, Euphorbus. The original plant was probably the Resin Spurge from the Mt. Atlas area of present day Morocco. At this point, King Juba also commissioned an expedition to the Canary Islands where other species of Euphorbia were found. Since the sap of many herbaceous Euphorbia species have been used as a purgative, or laxative, many of the species are commonly called "spurges". (From the Old French word espurgier - "to purge".)

All Euphorbia flowers are unisexual, either male or female, and usually very small in size. The flowers are reduced to create the most interesting and unique characteristic of Euphorbias - a specialized type of miniature cup-like inflorescence called a cyathium (plural cyathia). Each cyathium is actually a flower cluster containing naked (no petals) male and female flowers with nectar glands at the rim to attract pollinators. **This feature is present in every species of the genus but nowhere else in the plant kingdom!!**

That's pretty amazing! Specialized leaves often surround the cyathium, giving a larger flower-like appearance to the whole structure, as is seen in the Poinsettia above.



Parts of a stylized *Euphorbia* cyathium

In addition to being appreciated for their unique and diverse growth forms, some Euphorbias are used for their medicinal qualities. In parts of China, Africa, and Australia certain species of Euphorbia are used in folk medicine. The most common use is for digestive system disorders, skin ailments, and infection. In Australia, a topical application of latex of *Euphorbia peplus* L. has been known to be used as a home treatment for skin cancer. There are very specific species of Euphorbia used for medicinal use. Please Do Not try this at home! The milky sap of most Euphorbias is an irritant and can cause severe rash. Overall, about 5% of the species is used for medicinal purposes.

Interesting facts about *Euphorbias*:

- ⊞ Most have a sap that is very irritating to skin and extremely toxic if ingested
- ⊞ Pest resistant due to milky sap and thorns on some species
- ⊞ Most prefer full sun and good drainage
- ⊞ Euphorbias are NOT cactus but many are described as succulents
- ⊞ Best when propagated through cuttings
- ⊞ Flowers do not attract pollinators but nectar glands do
- ⊞ Genus found all over the world but mainly in tropic and sub-tropic regions
- ⊞ Most hardy down to zone 6
- ⊞ Common name is "spurge"

This genus is extremely varied in its plant forms and habitats, ranging from large, succulent trees and tiny, compact succulents to herbaceous perennials and semi- or evergreen, herbaceous shrubs.



Euphorbia inermis var. *huttonae*



Euphorbia 'Silver Fog'



Euphorbia 'Blackbird'



Euphorbia tirucalli 'Sticks on Fire'

Sources:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26485050>
http://www.euphorbiaceae.org/pages/about_euphorbia.html