

# DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished this month...

## General Meetings

10:30 Program  
(Unless otherwise noted)  
12:00 noon Meeting & Brown  
Bag Lunch

### Wednesday, Nov. 7th

#### **Huntington Botanic Center**

Ahmanson Classroom  
1151 Oxford Rd. San Marino  
**Tree People with Yujuan Chen**



Guests Welcome! (Program  
Portion Only)

### .... Look ahead...

### Wednesday, Dec. 5th

#### **Gwen Babcock's Home**

1500 Park Place  
San Marino  
**Holiday Baskets & Diggers  
Boutique**



Guests  
Welcome!  
(Program  
Portion Only)



Do you have a native California oak tree on your property or in your neighborhood? Gather up those local Engelmann and Coast Live Oak acorns (before the squirrels get them), and germinate a baby tree!

We are sure to need many native tree seedlings to replant after the recent destructive fires in our Southern California arroyos and valleys.

## From The President

Autumn comes gently to Southern California. The days are shorter and, even if the weather continues hot, we - and the plants around us - sense a coming change.

Temperatures zigzag from the 80's in the daytime to lows of 50's and maybe 40's at night, and suddenly one day we are aware that there are gold leaves mixed in with green and brown ones on our native Sycamores...Toyon berries ripen to deep red in the Arroyo Seco...and Fall has arrived.

So - time to dig in the dirt, plant natives, seeds, bulbs and divisions! With warm but shorter days, it is amazing how quickly many seeds will sprout. (Don't forget to try your Shirley Meneice seeds!) Everywhere there is a sense of urgency to get things in the soil and putting down roots to take advantage of the first winter rains.

With the hectic holiday season upon us, I too feel a sense of urgency - to tell you all how grateful

**Board Meetings**

Monday before the  
General Meeting  
10:30am.

Please let Cathy know if you  
would like to attend.

**Mark Your Calendar**

**Upcoming Club Meetings**

Jan 9 (\*Note Change)

Feb 6 (Joint Club  
Meeting)

Mar 6

Apr 3 (Auction)

May 8 (\*Note Change)

June 5

**Upcoming GCA Dates**

[www.gcamerica.org](http://www.gcamerica.org)

**NAL Conservation  
Conference**

Washington, DC

Feb 25-28, 2019

**GCA 2019 Annual  
Meeting**

Boston, MA

May 16, -19, 2019

**Shirley Meneice  
Horticulture Conference**

Denver Botanic Gardens

Denver, Colorado

Sep 11-13, 2019

I am to each and every one of you! We may be a small club, but together we accomplish mighty things. I am extremely thankful for your time, wise counsel, cheerfulness, talent and that "can do" attitude in the face of some truly busy days.

Wishing you a safe, bountiful Thanksgiving with family and friends.

✿ See you in the garden ✿

*Cathy*



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**Membership Reminder**

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Proposal letters for Prospective Members, and two accompanying seconding letters, are due to the President by December 15<sup>th</sup>.

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**Member Appreciation**

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On behalf of the Diggers Garden Club, Sally Miller presented Annette Serrurier with a beautiful hand-stitched needlepoint pillow that she lovingly made over the summer. (The pattern of the native California poppies was created by Margaret Williams of the Pasadena Garden Club for the Annual Meeting 2018 in SFO.) We are SO proud of Annette, a Diggers Garden Club member of 24 years, past Club President, past

GCA Zone XII Chairman & Zone XII Director, and Co-Chair of the 2008 Zone XII Meeting. Congratulations to a beloved Digger!

## Floral Design

Diggers “challenge” floral arrangement submissions for November.  
(Member creations using seasonal materials primarily found in their gardens.)



Pelargonium tomentosum & P. graveolens, Vitex, Teuchrium, & a succulent.



Japanese maple, Silver dollar plant & Cotinus.



Olive Sprays, Blue Basil, Rosemary, Lavendar, Oregano & assorted succulents.



Nandina, Iceberg roses, Azalea & Silver Ragwort

*Think about the following...*

### Elements of Design

...The physical components that make up a composition...(The Ingredients")

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Balance   | Rhythm     |
| Dominance | Proportion |
| Contrast  | Scale      |
| Texture   | Light      |

### Principles of Design

...Fundamental “tools” that guide the organization of the Elements of Design... (“The Recipe”)

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Balance   | Rhythm     |
| Dominance | Proportion |
| Contrast  | Scale      |

## Floral Design Tip of the Month

Floral foam contains toxic elements, like formaldehyde, barium sulfates and carbon black; and these elements are carcinogenic! So be safe.

Avoid inhaling dust from foam by ensuring proper ventilation. Wear gloves and wash thoroughly after contact with foam or the water in which it was submerged. And when disposing of your foam, do not burn. The fumes can release harmful chemicals.

We know there are times when you need to use floral foam, but here are some alternatives to consider: chicken wire, rocks, frog, kenzan, grape vine ball, or water proof tape.

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## Ways & Means

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### *Diggers Holiday Boutique!*



Please bring your baked goods, wrapped in cellophane, to Gwen's house promptly on Wednesday December 6th, from 10-10:30 am.

Money raised will support sending our members to GCA Conferences and Workshops.

Some ideas are home-baked cookies, quick breads, steamed persimmon pudding, home-made candies, nut mix, jams and jellies, preserved or sugared fruit, cheese crackers, cocktail nibbles, etc. Non-food items such as potted bulbs ready to grow, table topiaries, and ornaments are also appreciated.



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## Add Your Picture To Your GCA Member Profile Page

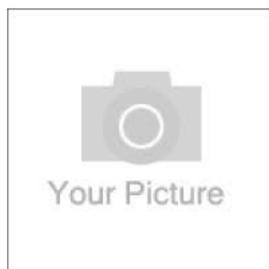
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Membership in the GCA connects us with so much through its website - conferences, workshops, meetings, opportunities to visit gardens around the country, expert information on horticulture, conservation, creative arts, and civic improvement. But - most especially, it connects us to other members who share our same interests all across the country. Wouldn't it be lovely to put a face to the name?

It is super easy to upload a picture of yourself to your member profile page, and easy to change it at any time. Log on to the "members area" of the GCA website and click on "my profile" at the top middle of your screen. Then click on the "edit profile" box at the left. Your personal profile page will pop up. Click ADD under the word "photo" at the bottom of the page. You will be prompted to select a picture from where it is stored on your computer. (It must be in jpeg, gif or png form.) Click OPEN, and your picture will appear on your profile page. Then click "save profile" at the bottom of the page and you are done. (Later, if you want to change the photo, click UPDATE and choose another picture from your files.) So easy!

For other website help and useful information, please visit:

[https://www.gcamerica.org/members/help#33\\_39](https://www.gcamerica.org/members/help#33_39)



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## Old Mill Workdays

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Show your civic pride at our longtime civic project...



Angela and Athena



Alfrida, Ruth and Yvonne

This month we're planting, pruning, weeding - and picking pomegranates! (which would look lovely in your home for Thanksgiving...)



Remaining workdays for November are:  
Tues. Nov. 13 & 27 & Mon. Nov. 19 from 9:00-10:30 am.

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## Art at the Old Mill

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The next time you are at the Old Mill, be sure to step inside to see the current art exhibition displayed upstairs. All are original new works from top tier artist members of the California Art Club, and all are for sale! A portion of the proceeds from sales of these paintings goes to The Old Mill Foundation in support of the Old Mill.

The California Art Club, established in 1909, is the western United States' largest professional art organization with over 2000 members. In 1999, the California Art Club Gallery was established in El Molino Viejo's converted Granary Room. The CAC maintains an on-going exhibit of excellent work for sale by acclaimed artists.

The current exhibition, "Monumental Miniatures 2018", features nearly 70 framed, original paintings - small gems no larger than 9 by 12 inches.



Milly Tai



Simon Lok



These well-priced miniatures are going fast, but many beauties are still available.

The next exhibition, entitled "A California Spring"  
will open Thursday, January 17, 5:30-7:30pm.

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## Fall Fauna

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Do you have this?



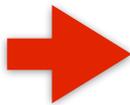
or this?



or this?



Then you probably have this



### **Specifically - *Sciurus niger*, or the Eastern Fox Squirrel.**

With our shorter fall days, these furry non-natives are chowing down on calorie rich acorns, pillaging backyard fruit trees (apples, limes, guavas, persimmons, etc) and stealing that seed you put out for the birds in energetic preparation for cooler winter weather. Garden beds and flower pots look like pitted land mines where squirrels have been digging to cache a winter supply of nuts. And yet - they are kind of cute! While tree squirrels generally rank first as urban wildlife problem makers...ironically they also rank near the very top among preferred urban wildlife species. Rodent pest or adorable creature? Below are some interesting squirrel facts:

- ◆ The two species of tree squirrels in our area are the native Western Gray squirrel, and the Eastern Fox squirrel. The Western Gray is more habitat specific and eats

acorns and other nuts, mushrooms, seeds and berries. The Fox squirrel is a generalist and will eat almost anything. The Grays are retreating to pocket populations as Fox squirrel numbers increase.

- ◆ The Fox Squirrel was introduced to California in 1904, arriving with aging Civil War veterans at the Sawtelle Veterans Home at the edge of what is now Westwood Village. (Some say the squirrels were kept as pets; some say they were kept for the stewpot.) They were released (or escaped) and by 1910 they were in San Pedro. By 1930 they were in Ventura. In 2004 they were in Claremont. The Fox squirrel was deliberately introduced into Balboa Park in San Diego in 1920, onto the UC Berkeley campus in 1926 and to Palos Verdes in the 1990's. In 1933 it became illegal to bring squirrels to California, and it is now illegal to relocate them within California.
- ◆ Squirrels were considered "missionaries of civility" back in the day. Cities introduced them to public parks to bring nature to a metropolitan world. Henry Huntington tried to import eastern squirrels to his new Huntington Gardens, but they did not survive the train trip. (<http://www.socalwild.com/2017/12/a-tale-of-two-squirrels/1640/>)
- ◆ There are over 100 species of tree squirrels, and they currently inhabit all of the world's continents - except for Antarctica.
- ◆ The word "Squirrel" is derived from the Greek skiouros, meaning "shade tail," a reference to their habit of covering their back with their tail. The earliest known squirrel dates back to the Eocene Epoch, 47 to 33 million years ago and was similar to today's flying squirrels.
- ◆ A Fox squirrel can leap 8 feet and run up to 20 miles per hour.
- ◆ In an effort to deceive other animals and protect their real food caches, squirrels will pretend to bury food periodically, digging empty holes and covering them up with leaves.
- ◆ The Fox squirrel is relentless, a quick learner and capable of adapting behavior to gain access to food.
- ◆ Their ankles are double-jointed, which enables them to turn 180 degrees.
- ◆ The squirrel is the Native American symbol for preparation, trust and thriftiness.

- ◆ January 21 is Squirrel Appreciation Day.
- ◆ Squirrels are one of the most important animals for helping the spread of oak trees. They store acorns in the ground but only recover around 70 per cent of them, allowing the forgotten acorns to grow into healthy trees.
- ◆ The Japanese have Squirrel Gardens (“risu-en”) – zoos that specialize in squirrels. (Google search – Machida Squirrel Garden: Tokyo’s tiny zoo for equally tiny critters)
- ◆ Some say spraying your Halloween pumpkin with vinegar deters hungry squirrels.
- ◆ Finally, for those entirely frustrated with marauding squirrels, check out the humorous way one family fought back. <http://safeshare.tv/w/NOZOjdApvG>

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## Horticulture

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### The Bromeliaceae (Bromeliads) Family - By Athena Wood

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Diggers take on a challenge plant!  
Care for your Bromeliad plant during the Winter,  
then harvest her pups in the Spring.  
“Show and tell” at the June meeting.

Thanks to all those millennials posting Instagram pics of their apartment greenery hanging in macramé, houseplants have grown in popularity. Houseplants, after all, are cheaper than having children and provide instant gratification. But that’s not the only reason we love indoor plants. Houseplants bring the outdoors inside, they fill that vacant corner of the room with lush greenery, they clean the air, and in some cases, they keep us company.

The Bromeliaceae (Bromeliad) Family of plants includes over 3000 species of plants, many of which make excellent houseplants. Their leaves and flowers have unique features and they require very little care. They range in size from small air plants to large terrestrial plants. Their leaves can be needle-like or large green, fleshy, with tiger-like patterns. Bromeliad flowers are colorful and

can last up to three months. Mostly native to tropical America, the family includes both \*epiphytes (grows on the surface of other plants) and \*terrestrial (grows in dirt). Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) is an epiphyte Bromeliad and the pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) is a terrestrial Bromeliad.

\*Plants can grow in soil (terrestrial), on the surface of other plants (epiphyte), in water (aquatic), or on rocks (lithophytic).

### Caring for Bromeliads

Bromeliads take water through their leaves or central tank rather than their roots. This makes it them easy to water. Simply pour the water into their leaf receptacle. Watering once a week is recommended but this will vary depending on the indoor climate. The roots should never sit in water as they will rot. Bromeliads prefer fast draining soil and indirect light. They bloom only once in their lifetime but the bloom can last 3-6 months. To maximize bloom time do not over water and make sure environment is warm enough, ideally 70-80 degrees. Once their blooms are spent, the adult plants grow pups at the base of the plant which can be harvested and propagated. The mother adult Bromeliad will continue to grow pups even after the first pups are harvested. Pups should be left on the mother until they are 1/3 the size of the adult plant. Using a sharp, sterilized knife or scissors, remove pups, cutting close to the mother plant. Dip the ends of pup in rooting hormone and pot in small 4 inch pot with well-draining medium. It's best to keep them under florescent light at the beginning of their growth. They will be top heavy before their root system is developed. Prop them up with small sticks. Pups require light, warmth, and humidity until they are adults and ready to bloom. Here are some helpful links for propagating bromeliad pups and forcing them to bloom.



<http://www.bromeliads.info/beginners-guide-bromeliad-pups/>  
<http://www.bromeliads.info/forcing-bromeliads-to-bloom/>

Hort Chair Athena explains about the Bromeliad Family at our November meeting. Each Digger selected a beautiful terrestrial bromeliad to take home and grow as a challenge plant.

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## Conservation

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Conservation Chair Sara, beautifully explains the GCA “Healthy Yard Pledge” (while modeling the “French Tuck”) to an appreciative audience.

Sara’s Conservation trivia game produced several Diggers winners who each received mysterious packages...

Marcia displays the cotton briefs found in her package - to be used in the GCA “Soil your Undies” challenge in order to learn about the health of our soils.

(\*For further information, please visit the Conservation Committee landing page at [www.gcamerica.org](http://www.gcamerica.org) under “Latest News”.)



### The Healthy Yard Pledge

**“I pledge to take care of my yard without synthetic pesticides, weed killers and fertilizers except on rare occasions to resolve an infestation or to improve habitat for native plants and wildlife. I also pledge not to throw pharmaceuticals or chemicals down my drains or toilets.”**