

DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished this month...

Joint Meeting hosted by the PGA

Feb 22 - Huntington Library

Edie Soloway - Nature Photographer

10:30am Coffee, 11:00am Program, 12:00pm Lunch

General Meeting:

10:30 am Program

(Unless otherwise noted)

12:00 noon Meeting

Mar 2 - Old Mill

10:30 Prep for auction

Conservation Program

12:00 noon meeting

and sack lunch

Bring a guest!

Looking ahead...

Mar 4 - Ruth's house

9:30-11:00 am Perfect Pot

Demo



From the President

Dear Diggers,

What a joy to be with you all at the Old Mill for our February meeting (one of our largest turnouts in recent months). We had the absolute pleasure of meeting Nicole Cavender, the new Botanical Director of the Huntington Gardens. She was disarming, yet confident and so very smart - just what the Huntington needs to bring it to the next level. As she admitted to not missing Chicago weather, we were surrounded by the defoliated pomegranate gardens and the budding banksia rose vine with bright blue skies beyond, and were glued to her personal history and vision for the Huntington Gardens. While she reflected on the tremendous and impressive growth of the Huntington Gardens, her task at hand is to work on the strength of what is already there. She plans to continue to build on the success of Jim Folsom with new leadership, by creating structure and implementing processes that will provide stability and efficiencies moving forward. I can't wait to see where the gardens go under her charge.

April 3 - Plant drop off
Old Mill

April 4-5 - Auction Set Up

April 6 - Plant Sale &
Auction

May 4 - Huntington Library
Roses with Tom Carruth

June 1 - Annual Meeting
Judy McDonald's

Board Meetings

10:30 a.m. Monday's
preceding the General
Meetings at Lisa's home.
Please let Lisa know if you
would like to attend.

Old Mill Workdays

(Mondays
9:00am - 10:30am)
February 28



We are all so very fortunate to have the world renowned Huntington Gardens in our backyard, not to mention so many other wonderful botanical gardens such as the Descanso and the Arboretum. According to Nicole, botanical garden visits have grown exponentially over the years. Our small group has taken the challenge, with the help of Nicole, to get The Old Mill accredited as a level one Arboretum. If anyone can do it, our mighty club can.

Speaking of The Old Mill, it is time to get your 10 perfect pots in order! Ruth has offered to host a planting demo at her home, March 4th, 9:30-11:00am. We will have our next meeting at the Mill to spruce things up as our spirited team, Angela and Athena have requested funds from our Endowment to complete some long overdue maintenance issues. The Mill will look spectacular for our annual Auction!

Just for fun - take a look at Jim Folsom's Tiktok, recommended by Nicole. It's great to hear his botanical context in a way only Jim can explain. <https://www.tiktok.com/@botanyincontext>

Off to plant dreams and pick weeds!

Lisa



botanyincontext

Jim Folsom

Follow

1650 Following 4324 Followers 48.2K Likes

A gardener, botanist, and cook who enjoys learning and talking about plants

Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming GCA Dates

www.gcamerica.org

NAL Conference - Virtual

Washington, DC
March 1- 2, 2022

GCA Virtual Photography Study Conference

Mar 31, 2022

GCA 2022 Annual Meeting Hybrid

Parsippany, NJ
Apr 27 - 30, 2022

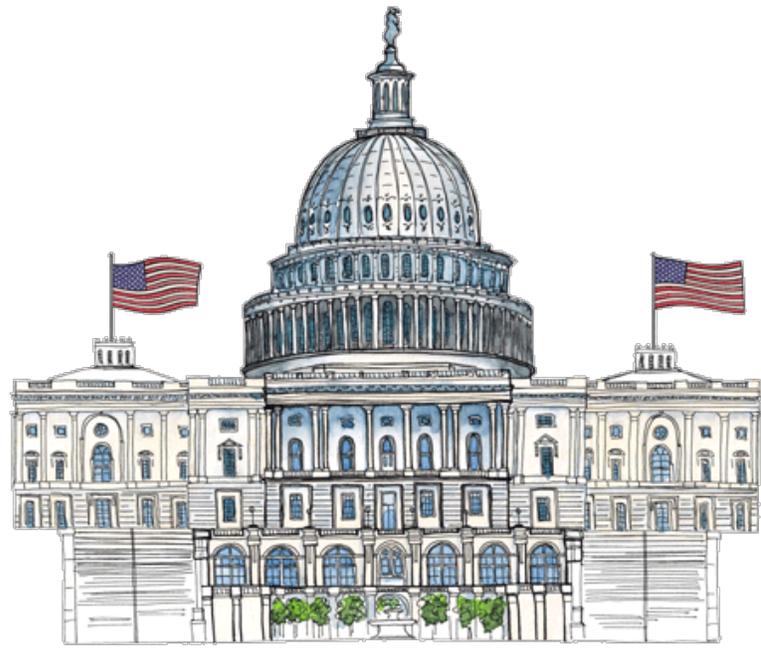


Conservation

National Affairs & Legislation Conference - NAL March 1-2, 2022

GCA invites all club members to take part in the 39th annual National Affairs and Legislation Conference (NAL). The GCA has been a non-partisan voice of informed volunteers working for a beautiful, healthy planet for over one hundred years. NOW is the time to let our elected officials know what is important to us. Join us, virtually, as we prepare to lift our voice in pursuit of the critical changes we need to protect our environment.

<https://www.gcamerica.org/members:calendar/ereventdetails/id/386>



Floral

Success with Cut Tulips

Purchase bunches that are not fully open yet. For the freshest, longest lasting tulips, look for ones that have their blooms tightly closed, tucked in among their leaves and just barely showing some color. This is a sign that the tulips are very fresh.



To condition, leave the tulips wrapped in their paper (this helps the flowers maintain straighter stems), and cut about ½ inch from the base of the stems when you first get them home. Place immediately in cool water in a tall container. Leave in a dark place overnight.

Prepare a very clean vase by adding a few inches of cold water. There is no need to fill to the brim since cut flowers only absorb water from the ends of their stems. If using floral preservative to inhibit bacterial growth, dissolve completely. (Tulips work well in tall, straight vases at least half as tall as the flower stems. They can also be arranged cut shorter in a low, wide bowl but you will need to use a florist “frog” to anchor the flowers.)

Remove some of the leaves from the bottom 1/3 of the stems, and those below the water line. Line up the tops of the tulip blooms and recut the stems on a 45-degree angle. By using a sharp pair of scissors, you will ensure a clean cut and not crush the hollow stem. By cutting at an angle you will ensure that the stem does not sit flat against the base of the vase and inhibit water absorption. This also create a larger surface area for water intake. Cut under water (so no air enters the stems to block water uptake), or place into the vase within 10 seconds!

The key to making tulips last as long as possible is keep them cool and keep them topped up with fresh water. Tulips use a lot of water daily!

If your tulips get a bit droopy after a few hours, they may have gotten an airlock in the stem during preparation. In this case, try sticking a pin through the throat (at the very top of the stem) to make a small hole. The hole made by the pin relieves the blockage, allows the air to escape and the water to easily reach the flower. Often this will help revive your blooms.

An interesting fact about tulips is that they continue to grow after being cut, up to one - or several - inches! Choose your vase accordingly, or recut the stems and refresh the water after a couple of days. Tulips are also “phototropic”, bending towards the light, so rotate containers daily to keep stems more upright and do not place in direct sun.

Founders Fund

During the past 2 years the pandemic has restricted community interactions and initiatives, putting many club projects on hold. As a result, we have only one project on the Founders Fund ballot for 2022. Under any circumstances, it is a clear winner!

BEE SUCCESSFUL: THE 4G HONEY TEAM

Proposing Club: The Gertrude Windsor Garden Club, Zone IX

Seconding Club: Monroe Garden Study League, Zone IX

Unwelcome bees on the loading dock of the Ozarka water bottling plant in Hawkins, TX gave four inexperienced high school students the chance to help-and become-the 4G Honey Team in the process. Building hives to relocate the colony, they gained skills that attracted national attention and inquiries from schools in Texas and beyond. The Founders Fund grant will provide equipment and materials to build an observational hive and create beekeeping curriculum to share nationwide.



Horticulture

After visiting Heronswood Gardens virtually during last fall's Shirley Meniece Conference, I took a field trip up to Kingston, WA in October and walked the grounds myself. My biggest takeaway were the enormous Dahlia bushes filled with the vibrant flowers itching to be picked and put in a vase. I finally got the Dahlia bug that has infected many a gardener across the land - if traveling to rural areas during summer months, you might've also seen roadside vases with cash boxes trustingly offering fantastic bouquets for sale - I'm sure I've seen them in the Hamptons, in Maine and on the west coast. Apparently, the more you pick, the more blossoms you get, which explains why those that grow Dahlias become obsessed with them and grow so many different kinds. I'm going to plant a bunch next spring and see what happens...



Dahlia is a genus of bushy, tuberous, herbaceous, perennial plants native to Mexico and Central America. The plant has non-woody stems that reach their full height and produce flower within one year before dying back over the winter and reappearing the next spring for a repeat performance.

-Yvonne

DAHLIA SOURCES resources sales of hard to find specialty tubers and cuttings.

<https://blog.longfield-gardens.com/dahlias-in-hot-weather/>

Tips for growing dahlias in warmer climates

www.dahlias.com

(Swan Island Dahlias; largest dahlia grower in the US; Oregon)

<https://stonehousedahlias.com/>

(Selling dahlia cuttings (one of the few sources for Kristine Albrecht's winning hybrid dahlias);*cuttings will grow into a mature, flowering plant in the first year and produce tubers, which you can save.

<https://shop.triplewrenfarms.com/>

(Family flower farm in NW Washington State, specializing in dahlias and supporting hybridizers)

<https://www.floretflowers.com/>

(Family flower farm in Washington State's Skagit Valley; a "must" to add to your resources...)

<https://coseytownflowers.com/>

(Dahlia hybridizer and grower in Pennsylvania; upcoming tuber sale in February.)

The above are great sources for dahlias and other flowers and seeds. Be sure to sign up for their respective newsletters to be notified about the timing of their tuber sales.



Floret Flowers is an amazing site/farm run by Erin Benzakein, with terrific info and resources about all things flowers. Follow her on Instagram. You won't be sorry!

Yvonne, our illustrious Hort Chair, sharing information about Dahlias. Below are photos from her visit to Heronswood Gardens.



Programs

Our February meeting at the Old Mill was a big success with Nicole Cavender, the new Botanical Director for The Huntington Gardens - what a treat it was. (see photos below).

February 22nd in our Joint Meeting at the Huntington Gardens with the infamous photographer, Eddie Soloway. This will be an interesting meeting with a fun lunch afterwards to catch up with our garden club peeps.

March is the month prior to the auction, so we will be back at the Old Mill making sure it is in ship shape. As an added bonus, Sally Miller and Susan Babcock will lead a special conservation program. Get ready to learn some new tips and tricks to reduce, reuse and recycle.

-Connie



Our February meeting at the Old Mill.



Lisa Evans





Nicole Cavender - Botanical Director for the Huntington Gardens



Megan & Ruth sharing field trip ideas



Alfrida sharing our healthy budget numbers



Carlin sharing her cuttings

* visit the Diggers Smugmug page for more photos ...

* <https://diggers.smugmug.com/>

*

Perfect Pot Demo - March 4th

9:30am to 11:00am– Ruth's house
Learn how to pot the perfect
Diggers pot!



Auction Info - Wednesday April 6th

You should have received your packets with all the information for the auction. Revised digital invitations were also sent which may make things easier for your guests. Athena and Angela have been working very hard to get the Old Mill in tip top shape (with the help of many Diggers' hands). Make sure to use your team captains to check your plants/pots or reach out with any questions you may have. Bringing properly groomed plants to the auction saves a lot of time.

I know you are in the process of buying plants and pots and trying to put them together. A couple of thoughts:

Many of the nurseries in our area use the same wholesale growers - so that what one nursery has, the others have too...but I have found that sometimes if you travel a bit further, fun and interesting plants may be found. Just a thought.

Cathy recently visited Terra Söl Nursery in Santa Barbara and found some great plants - if you find yourselves up that way - stop by.

Terra Söl Garden Center
5320 Overpass Road
Santa Barbara, Ca 93111
(805) 964-7811

Planting Tips

Cathy T would like to share her favorite source for organic fertilizers and seeds. Rosarian Dan Bifano's created his "Rose Cocktail" from Island Seed and Feed's terrific Landscape Mix. (***Recipe and info below.**) The Landscape Mix is great for just about everything.



Island Seed and Feed

29 South Fairview Avenue, Goleta, CA 93117. (805) 967-5262

Dan Bifano's famous "Rose Cocktail"

3 cups Landscape Mix
 2 cups chicken manure (Mix all; feed per plant, or per inch of trunk diameter for fruit trees)
 1 cup earthworm castings

To feed 50 roses: (*Cut in half for 25 roses)

1 50 lb bag Landscape Mix
 1 bag chicken manure (Mix all bags together; feed 6 cups per rose.)
 2 bags earthworm castings

Island Seed and Feed Landscape mix (3.75-1.5-1.75)

"The benefits of using meal type fertilizer are not seen over night; instead the nutrients come on slowly, usually over a 2-3 week period, and then remain active in the soil for 3-4 months."

Alfalfa Meal - Contains carbohydrates and proteins, micro-nutrients and triacontanol, an important plant growth regulator. Alfalfa meal becomes available to plants as a fertilizer only once it has been consumed and pooped out by the microbial life in your soil. It is necessary to work this meal into the top few inches of soil under the drip line of the plant that are feeding.

Soybean Meal -An excellent, all-purpose organic fertilizer for your fruit trees, vegetable garden beds and perennial ornamentals that has a similar nutritional composition to that of cottonseed meal, but has a neutral pH.

Fish Meal - A rich supply of all the major elements and trace minerals. In this powdered form, fish meal is slow to break down, and will remain active in your soil for 6-8 months. Plants respond very well after being fed with fish meal, and will typically 'green up' quickly, and experience a flush of growth.

Kelp Meal - One of the richest known sources of trace minerals, plant growth regulators, vitamins, hormones, amino acids, enzymes and chelated nutrients that you can feed to your plants. Adding these important plant building blocks to your garden soil strengthens the cellular structure of your garden plants "to a point where they are able to repel piercing insects such as aphids, leaf hoppers and white flies, and can also build up a resistance to bacterial and fungal infections."

Feather Meal - A high source of nitrogen, which is released slowly into the soil as the material is broken down and decomposed by the soil microbes. This slow release characteristic of feather meal makes it ideal for vegetables, flowers or crops that have a long growing season, or extended nitrogen requirements.