

DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished this month...

General Meeting:

Gwen Babcock's Home
1500 Park Place
San Marino
Wednesday, Dec 6th
10:30am

Holiday Baskets!

Please bring clippers, scissors, 2-3 small baskets, trimmings and doodads. We'll have fresh greens, ribbons, bows, etc.

And Bake Sale!

Ways & Means Bake Sale (11:45am) followed by sack lunch & meeting. *Cash or check only. Great meeting for guests!

Look ahead...

Jan 10

Feb 7

Feb 27 (Joint Club Mtg)

Mar 7

Apr 4

Auction Prep- Apr 16-17

Auction - Apr 18

(Old Mill)

May 2

June 6

Board Meetings

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

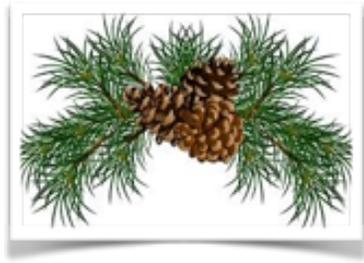


From the President

Down at the end of a winding path
 Is a group of evergreen trees,
 Pine and hemlock, and spruce and fir,
 With their resinous fragrances;
 And truest picture of calm content
 That mortal ever saw...

~Elizabeth Anne Chase Akers Allen,
 "My Air-castle," The Sunset-song and
 other Verses, 1902.

One of the highlights of the Diggers year is our upcoming December 6th meeting, where we create Holiday Greens arrangements, made of fir, pine, cedar, and spruce interwoven with berries, cones and fresh cuttings from our gardens. We annually deliver these beautiful baskets to several charities and organizations in our community, and they are gratefully received. It is wonderful to know that we also deliver "calm content" with each fragrant basket, because just breathing in the



Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming GCA Dates

www.gcamerica.org

NAL Conservation Conference

Washington, DC

February 26

March 1, 2018

Registration is open!

(Deadline Jan. 31st)

GCA 105th Annual Meeting

"How the West is One"

Hosted by the 18

Clubs of Zone XII

San Francisco, CA

Apr 26-29, 2018

The GCA Annual Meeting Volunteer Sign-Ups

See email registration link to sign up! Many opportunities available!

The GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show

"Wonders of the West"

April 26 – April 29, 2018

(Schedule available at gcamerica.org)

scent of these fresh-cut branches is medicine all its own. Studies have shown that certain volatile chemical compounds (the terpenes of pinene and limonene) released from these aromatic cuttings improves ones mood and reduces stress. (The Japanese have even coined a term, "Shinrin-yoku" or "taking in the forest atmosphere", to denote the beneficial and healing effects of visiting a forest for relaxation and recreation while breathing in these volatile wood essential oils.) This December meeting is also a wonderful time to bring a guest or prospective member! Our Holiday Bake Sale and Boutique will be in full swing immediately before and after the business portion of the meeting, so don't forget to bring your checkbook and/or cash. You are sure to find some wonderful surprises for the holidays!

As the weather cools, we are energized to be in our gardens again to plant seeds, bulbs and the 'starts' of tomorrow's healthy veggies, perennials, trees and shrubs. For this, and so many things, we are thankful.

May you have a bountiful Thanksgiving!

❁ See you in the garden ❁

Cathy



Membership

Proposal letters for Prospective Members are due December 15th to the President.



Did you know that, according to the California Native Plant Society, California has more pine species than any other state or foreign nation except Mexico? And yet, we who live in the vast and highly urbanized Los Angeles basin often forget about these wonderful trees, and other conifers, until the winter holidays roll around. Curious about how to tell them apart? Read on!

1. PINE (Genus: *Pinus*)

Pine needles are wrapped in light-brown papery sleeves like bouquets of cut flowers, and present in bunches of 2, 3, or 5 (*except Pinyon Pine, which has one needle). Needles have a sharp tip. Stiff, thick woody cone scales sometimes have a sharp point.

2. SPRUCE (Genus: *Picea*)

Needles are prickly, single, stiff and borne on short brown pegs. They are square and can be rolled between the fingers. Cones hang down towards the ground, with papery thin scales. When needles fall off, branch feels rough.

3. FIR (Genus: *Abies*)

Single, slightly notched flat needles with green, cup-like attachment to twig. Leaves are also waxy with two white, prominent white lines on underside (stomata). Needle tip is not sharp. Cones are papery and flexible, grow upward to the sky. When needles fall off, branch feels smooth.

"Spruces are Stiff and Sharp, Firs are Flexible and Friendly."

* The native pines in our area are Sugar (*P. lambertiana*), Jeffrey (*P. jeffreyi*), Coulter (*P. coulteri*), Ponderosa (*P. ponderosa*), Pinyon (*P. monophylla*), Lodgepole (*P. contorta* ssp. *murrayana*), Gray (*P. sabiniana*) and Limber (*P. flexilis*).

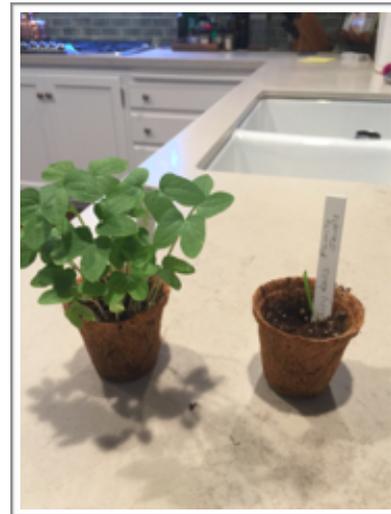
Success with Seeds!



Seeds from the Shirley Menace Conference were passed out at the October 4th meeting. (If you missed out, Cathy still has some great seeds available!



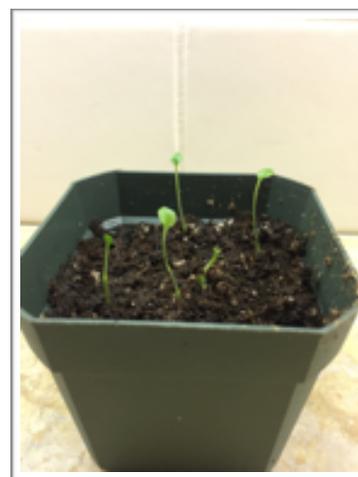
Cathy's *Eryngium planum*



Athena's *Ipomea purpurea* 'Grandpa Ott's' & *Gomphocarpus physocarpus* 'Family Jewels'



Judy's *Ipomea purpurea* 'Grandpa Ott's'



Cathy's Anthurium

*Remember, seeds germinate at their own rate; be patient.
If no luck - try, try again...that's why there are so many seeds!*



*Visit your local Farmer's Markets
for Holiday Produce!*

There are almost two million farms in the USA. Did you know that about 80% of those are small farms, and a large percentage of them are family owned. More and more of these farmers are now selling their products directly to the public. By buying organic produce directly from your local family farmer, you are working to maintain a healthy environment, a vibrant community, and a strong and sustainable local economy. For further information visit:

<https://www.localharvest.org>

The Hollywood Farmers' Market

The Hollywood Farmers' Market offers a variety of fresh produce, flowers, fish & baked goods. **Held every Sunday, rain and shine, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** on Ivar & Selma (between Hollywood & Sunset), just 1 block from Hollywood and Vine. For more information call 323-463-3171.

South Pasadena Farmer's Market

Set in the historic Mission West District of South Pasadena. **Held every Thursday, rain or shine, from 4 to 8 p.m.** on Meridian at Mission Street in South Pasadena.

La Canada Farmer's Market

Held **every Saturday from 9-1:00 pm** at 1300 Foothill Blvd., across from Memorial Park.

Holiday Bake Sale Planning...



Please bring your baked goods, wrapped in cellophane, to Gwen's house promptly on Wednesday December 6th. from 10-10:30 am. We will have a drop-off table set up by the pool house. 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 are always appreciated and welcome. Call Cathy if you have any other interesting ideas. Your participation either as a baker or a shopper is greatly appreciated! Money raised will support sending our members to GCA Conferences and Workshops.

Pots et Fleurs Workshop

January 10, 2018

Eugenie has planned a fun, floral-arranging workshop for our January meeting! There will be a \$20 fee for those wishing to participate, but you will go home with a lovely centerpiece of both rooted and cut flowers that will last a long time. If any of you have Leather leaf Fern and/or Aeonium 'Kiwi' and can share some cuttings for the project, please let Eugenie know.

Also, don't forget to save those small (4 oz., 3 ¼ inch tall x 2 inches wide) caper jars. She will need 30 of them!

US Postal Service - "Protect Pollinator" Stamps

Available now from:

https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/protect-pollinators-S_475204



Conservation Corner

There is sometimes confusion about what constitutes “advocating” a point of view or “lobbying” for specific legal action. When **nonprofit** organizations **advocate** on their own behalf, they seek to affect some aspect of society, whether they appeal to individuals about their behavior, employers about their rules, or the government about its laws. Advocacy can influence public policy by providing a conduit for organizations to voice an opinion. It helps policymakers find specific solutions to persistent problems. **Lobbying** refers to advocacy efforts that attempt to directly influence legislation. Please visit <https://www.gcamerica.org> on the Conservation Committee “Landing Page” for further valuable information on the GCA’s Position Papers and Environmental Focus Areas listed below.

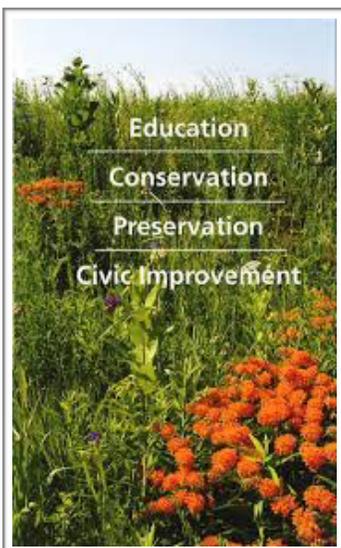


GCA POSITION PAPERS were created in 1989 to summarize those environmental issues that are of top priority to The Garden Club of America. Jointly produced by the GCA’s National Affairs & Legislation and Conservation Committees, and approved by GCA’s Executive Committee, the following seven GCA Position Papers have been created with great care and contain specific core provisions that the GCA wishes to see embodied in any piece of legislation. You may read about them on the Conservation Committee “Landing Page”.

- Clean Water
- Clean Air
- National Parks
- National Public Lands
- Native Plants and Pollinators
- Sustainable Agriculture and Food
- Transportation and Infrastructure

CONSERVATION LANDING PAGE also has 4 focus areas:

- Focus on Plants
- Protect the Pollinators
- The Healthy Home and Backyard
- Educational Outreach



Beet Noodles, Anyone? - By Athena, Hort. Chair

On one of my weekly stops at Trader Joe's I noticed a bag of sunchokes in the refrigerated section. I have seen sunchokes on menus but have never noticed them so readily available in markets. The next day at Pavilions I happened to notice a bag of beet noodles - raw beets cut in a spiral shape to resemble noodles, similar to the zucchini noodles that were so popular last year. The beet noodles were right next to bags of rainbow mini carrots, huge celeriac roots, and...more sunchokes. I decided it was time to get to the ROOT of the matter and share what I learned about these colorful, bulbous, and forgiving vegetables.

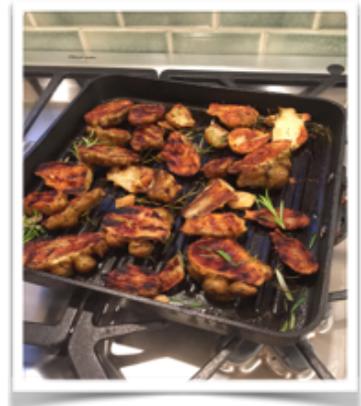
Not all root vegetables are roots. There are the true root vegetables such as sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, and radish. Then there are the non-root vegetables that fall into three categories: tubers (potatoes, sunchokes), rhizomes (ginger, turmeric), and bulbs (onions, garlic, shallots). The main difference between root vegetables (carrots, parsnips) and tubers (potatoes) is that a root vegetable plant will only grow one vegetable per plant because the vegetable is the taproot. A tuber will grow several vegetables per plant because each vegetable is actually an enlarged stem called a tuber. In the culinary world, root vegetables, tubers, rhizomes, and bulbs are all referred to as root vegetables. That makes sense because they have a lot in common. They are all grown underground and absorb nutrients from the soil, such as vitamin A, B, C, iron and antioxidants. They are filled with slow burning carbohydrates and fiber. This makes you feel full and helps to regulate blood sugar and the digestive system. Root vegetables are available year round, but their peak is fall through spring. Beets are an exception having their peak season from summer through fall. They are best stored in a dark humid room or in the refrigerator. If storing in the fridge, keep in paper or plastic bag.

Roasted Sunchokes

Serves 4 (1/2 cup serving)
 1 1/4 pounds sunchokes,
 (scrubbed and halved lengthwise,
 (at TJ's, Bristol, Pavilions)
 2 T. Olive oil, divided
 1/2 t. Kosher salt
 1/4 t. Ground pepper
 8 garlic cloves
 4 rosemary sprigs

I passed on buying the beet noodles but I tried my hand at roasting some sunchokes.

They were DELICIOUS!



Preheat oven to 375. Combine sun chokes, 1 T. Olive oil, salt, and pepper in large bowl and toss to coat. Heat large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add remaining oil to pan, swirl to coat. Arrange sun chokes, cut side down in pan. Cook 5 minutes until beginning to brown. Arrange garlic and rosemary around sunchokes. Place pan in oven to roast for 40-45 minutes until tender.

Do You Have A Special Plant That Is At Least 1 Year Old?

Wouldn't you love to see it entered in a Flower Show~
seated on the bench and looking its best?
Share your love of this plant!!!

The deadline is not until February 15, 2018
for entering a "Par" (Section E: Best of the West) plant in the
GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show
"How the West is One"



(There are unlimited entries for this class, which means that you have a bit of time to decide. Registration is now open.)

As the weather begins to cool, take a good look at your plant. You may want to repot it with fresh potting soil into a pot (no larger than 12" in any direction) and feed it judiciously as it starts to put on growth in the winter and spring. Keep its leaves clean and free from insects. Turn it weekly and pay attention. This plant could be a winner! **Why not enter?**

Download the entry card from: <https://www.gcamerica.org> (find Schedule by searching Calendar, select Flower Show, Annual Meeting, April 16, 2018) Entry deadline is February 15. Contact Cathy Tosetti (ptclt@aol.com) for help.

The qualifications are:

"An exhibit of exceptional horticultural merit, which does not qualify for entry elsewhere in the Horticulture Division. To be exhibited in a container and saucer of the exhibitor's choice, not to exceed 12" in any direction. Entries in the Par class must have been owned and grown by the exhibitor for a minimum of one year. To be judged against perfection. Hanging plants and true bonsai are not permitted. Stakes and ties/clips are permitted but must be inconspicuous."

For further questions in this class contact:
Consultant (Section E): Joyce Nelson
bobandjoycenelson@comcast.net

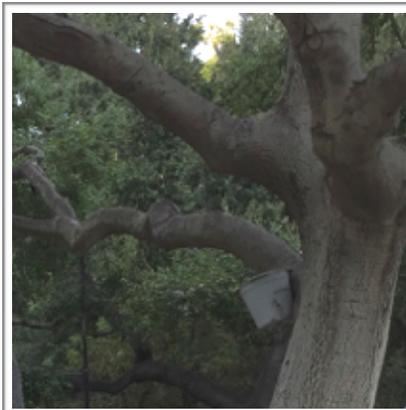
Bees Please!



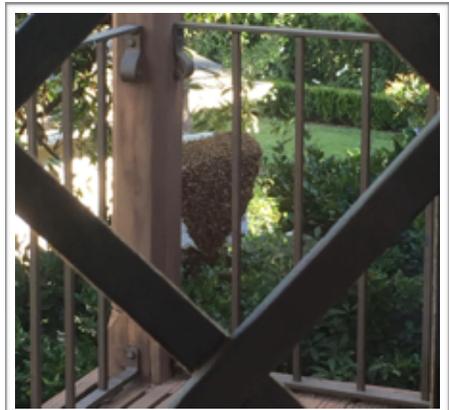
Many thanks to Programs Chair Mary Blodgett for arranging for Urban Beekeeper extraordinaire - Susan Rudnicki - to speak to us at our Nov 1st meeting. It was both educational and fascinating! Susan brought bees that she had rescued just hours earlier from a feral hive, displayed in a viewing box with clear sides. We were able to see both workers and drones and learned about bee genetics, bee behavior and bee development (from egg through larva to fully developed insect). A long-time former volunteer at the Huntington Botanical Gardens and Annual Plant Sale, Susan's love of gardening led her ultimately to bee keeping. She currently lives in Manhattan Beach, and is a moderator and educator with the non-profit group Honeylove. (For more information, visit <https://honeylove.org>)



Susan Rudnicki with Bees



Liz's Bee Trap in Oak Tree



Liz's Bee Swarm

Bees have a complex communication system based on pheromones, which are chemical compounds that elicit behavioral responses. We learned that the queen bee's special pheromone smells like a bit like lemons, and that the defensive 'high alert' pheromone smells like bananas. (Susan did not recommend eating a banana around a hive!) When the hive population becomes too big for all the worker bees to be able to smell their queen's pheromone, the queen leaves - taking 50-60% of the workers with her - to look for a new home. (The original colony generates new queens by feeding select larva copious and continuous amounts of 'royal jelly'.) The queen rests on this journey, with all her workers clumping close around her, while 'scout' bees look for a new home. The resulting "swarm" of bees (see above picture from Liz's

backyard) looks impressive and a bit scary to the uninitiated. But Susan noted that bees without a hive are docile, because they do not yet have a home, larva 'babies' or honey stores to defend. It is fairly easy for beekeepers to scoop up the bees, with queen, and install them safely in a prepared hive. We also learned that when looking for a new residence, scout bees prefer something about 40 liters in volume with a small, easily defensible entry hole. Thus, cardboard "bee traps" (see the gray one pictured above) placed in trees serve to attract scout bees and thus prevent the formation of a new hive in and unwanted spot. (Urban bee populations make do with their surroundings, often ending up in spaces like underground water meter vaults, attic eaves, wall spaces, etc.)

Why keep backyard bees? Urban (feral) bees are not "commercial", nor are their queens artificially inseminated for genetic selection. As Susan said, genetically selecting for certain traits also means that certain other traits become "deselected". She likened this to getting a dog from a breeder versus a mutt from the pound. Feral honey bees are often more resistant to disease and are strongly adapted to local environmental conditions.

Some interesting bee facts:

Bees can collect up to 4-5 pounds of nectar each day

4 pounds of nectar = 1 pound of honey

8 pounds of nectar = 1 pound of beeswax

1 lb of honey = visiting 2 million flowers and flying 55,000 miles

The average worker bee produces about 1/12th tsp of honey in her lifetime.

The 6-sided hex shape of honeycomb is the strongest shaper per material weight.



The Challenge Plant is Here!

Ledebouria cooperi (Cooper's False Scilla)

Did you get yours?



Contact Hort Chair, Athena Wood, if you missed the November meeting.
(She still has some available.)