

DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished this month...

General Meeting:

Tracy Hirrel's Home
1470 Cambridge Road
San Marino
Wednesday, May 2nd
10:30am



Tool Care with Louise Guerin
Manager, Plant Production &
Sales, Huntington Botanic
Gardens



Sack lunch & meeting to follow!

Look ahead...

June 6 - Club
Annual Meeting
SUMMER!



Pelargonium 'Veronica Contreras'

From the President

It is that much anticipated time of year again... the Diggers Annual Auction is upon us. As I write this at the 11th hour, I know you are working diligently - perhaps even feverishly - to perfect your ten Diggers pots! You have grown and collected wonderful plants for months, shopped the world over for interesting containers to accommodate these beauties, and then arranged them all together with an eye for style and design. Last minute trips to nurseries fill your battle plan. Being seasoned and stalwart, you were not fazed by those forty-mile an hour wind gusts yesterday. As debris filled the air, you simply moved your pots to the safety of the garage while instructing your husband to park his car out in the elements. Neither wind

Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming GCA Dates

www.gcamerica.org

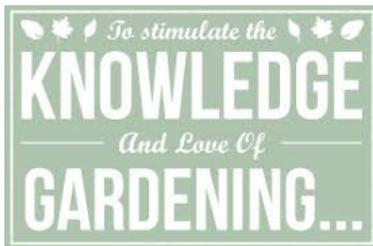
GCA 105th Annual Meeting

“How the West is One”

Hosted by the 18 Clubs of Zone XII
San Francisco, CA
Apr 26-29, 2018

Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conference

September 13-15th, 2018
Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square,
Pennsylvania



Check out the GCA Website for informative insight regarding flower shows, Garden History & Design, horticulture, NAL Conservation, Partners for Plants and GCA digital publications.

nor heat nor gloom of marauding squirrels will deter you. Diggers are made of stern stuff... and somehow on Auction setup day it all comes together in one amazing Floral Show of glory.

So hats off to you brave Diggers! By the time you receive this newsletter you will be basking in the warm glow of funds raised for our Civic Donations and Projects. Job well done and sweet dreams!

❁ See you in the garden ❁

Cathy



Labeling & pricing



Sun protection



Mary's nasturtium cracker bread with pomegranate pesto from Old Mill pomegranates



Set to go...

Prepping the Garden for the Auction - This Year's Venue...El Molino Viejo

Our April 4th meeting day found the Diggers living up to the club name. We weeded and pruned and raked up leaves to make the Old Mill look its very best on Auction Day 2018.



Flowering in the garden now are native Heuchera, Douglas Iris, Ceanothus, Zauschneria, Rosa californica and more. The pomegranate trees around the patio are just beginning to burst into bloom. Pathways refreshed with new DG make wandering through the garden a must!



Page and Cindy bravely tackle a huge agave to rake out the leaves.

Horticulture

Success with Challenge Bulb *Ledebouria cooperi*

Hort Chairman, Athena Wood, distributed tiny South African **Ledebouria cooperi** bulbs to Diggers members as a “challenge” plant at our November meeting. Athena, Debbie H. and Connie all had early success with their plants by April!

The narrow, olive-green, 4" tall leaves with dark purple pin-stripe markings are held upright in what eventually becomes a nice colony (1' spread in 5 years). In early spring, *Ledebouria cooperi* clumps are adorned with miniature, lavender pink, scilla-like racemes. Grassland is the typical habitat of the species. In its native environment it is distributed over most of the eastern half of South Africa, as well as across the borders into some neighboring countries.



Athena found some great zinc plant saucers and shares her source at the below link:
(...perfect for Kokedama...)



<https://www.shopterrain.com/indoor%2Dplanters%2D/habit%2Dform%2Dtart%2Dplant%2Dtray%2Ddark%2Dzincc>

Seeds! Dream up a Garden...

It may be too hot, too cold, too - something - but it is always time to dream up a garden! Please enjoy the following websites to find spring inspiration and joy.

US

<https://sustainableseedco.com>

<https://www.seedsavers.org/catalog>

<http://www.growitalian.com>

<http://www.kitazawaseed.com>

<https://www.rareseeds.com>

UK

<http://www.terredesemences.com>

<https://www.chilternseeds.co.uk>

<http://www.thomasetty.co.uk>

<https://www.seedsofitaly.com>

<https://www.simpsonsseeds.co.uk>

Canada

<http://cottagegardener.com>

A New GCA Committee



Effective July 1st, the Floral Design Subcommittee will become a full GCA Committee! The new **Floral Design Committee**, with 12 zone representatives, will provide floral design education and resources for club members across the country. And for the first time, all 18,000

GCA members will have access to the GCA's quarterly publication, By Design. The existing **Flower Show Committee** will focus on resources and support for clubs hosting flower shows.

From its beginnings as the Flower Arranging Study Group (FASG), envisioned by Arabella Dane in 1988 and approved in 1990, this subcommittee has come a long way! Much thanks goes to the strong support for floral design educational workshops and the quarterly magazine, By Design. The purpose of the FASG has always been "to stimulate interest, to inspire, and to educate all GCA members in the art of floral design", and By Design magazine has been an important provider of this education. It has evolved to include information gathered in the US and throughout the world on flower shows and events, the principals and elements of design, and photographs of the latest styles, designers, trends, and materials used in flower arranging.

Similar to other GCA publications, By Design will now be published digitally on the GCA website, available to the entire GCA membership, and delivered directly to your inbox, if you choose, beginning in Fall 2018. Archived back issues of By Design will also be available online. By providing easy access to this wonderful educational content, new floral design enthusiasts will find fertile ground.

For those who would like to continue to pay for a printed magazine, the ability will continue. For ease of processing, future renewals will be one-year only. The renewal form has been revised and is available online on the Floral Design Subcommittee landing page.

Don't miss out! Sign up for the digital delivery of By Design magazine this fall. (Under the "Read, Watch, Shop" area on the members landing page, go to the Publications tab, then click on "Manage My Publications" box.) Check out the archived magazine editions online now by opening the By Design magazine tab.

Pretty Garden Tools

(In advance of our May Meeting...)

Have you heard about bronze-bladed tools? Those on the market today were inspired by Austrian Naturalist Viktor Schauberg (1885 - 1958). His field trials in 1948 and 1949 demonstrated that using copper implements in agriculture resulted in "improved soil quality and crop yield". Tool heads are made of solid bronze (a copper alloy), are rust resistant, have sharp edges, reportedly "deter slugs and snails" and have a lifetime guarantee. Tool handles are made of solid European hardwoods and are guaranteed for three years. Plus, they are just really pretty! For Further reading see this link:



<http://www.permaculture-wales.org.uk/index.php/guest-writers/156-copper-tools-and-the-legacy-of-viktor-schaubergerr>

For pictures and more information, check out Fairview Farms PKS Copper gardening tools at the following link:

<http://www.fairvieworchards.com>

Valley Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa varipuncta*)



In Cathy's
backyard,
San Marino



INaturalist
photo

A few days ago I saw a big golden fuzzy bee in my vegetable garden. This wasn't just a bee covered in pollen, it was really gold and really fuzzy - and it had green eyes! I could see them well because it hovered right in front of me, zipping in and out of an Abutilon, only to come right back and stare at me. It buzzed like a Mack truck and reminded me of a carpenter bee, only gold. So I looked it up.

Guess what? It was a type of carpenter bee, but the male of the species! And so cute it has been called the "teddy bear" bee.

Valley Carpenter bees, measuring about an inch long, are the largest bees in California. Their eggs are about 1/2 an inch long - the largest of all insect eggs according to UC Davis. The females are a metallic black, but males are fuzzy and gold with green eyes. They really stand out!

The males are territorial and can be quite aggressive. They hover and lie in wait for passing females, which is what my bee was probably doing. I'm sure that the Abutilon seemed like a promising spot to meet a foraging female. I learned that "you can pick up the fuzzy males and they won't sting you", because they don't have a stinger like the females, but this I did not do!

I also learned that Valley carpenter bees are able to "thermoregulate", keeping the temperature of their bodies in equilibrium even when it is very hot or very cold. No other bee species has this ability.

Carpenter bees are excellent pollinators, especially for large flowers such as Passiflora, California poppies, and fruits and vegetables (tomatoes!). If a flower is too deep for the bee to access the nectar, it will make a slit in the base of the petals and "rob" the nectar this way. They prefer to nest in dead wood or hollow plant material and are a bit notorious for damaging man-made wooden structures.

It was fun to see this pollinator in my garden! I hope it is nesting in the trees...