
DIGGERS DIRT

The Dirt being dished out this month...

From the President



Dear Diggers,

Happy Valentine's Day! After a wet December, followed by an unseasonably warm January, I think our gardens are thoroughly confused about when to sprout and bloom. If there's one thing for certain, we can rest assured the various pests will prevail. As we learned at our recent meeting, prepared and presented by our expert Horticulture Chair Cathy Tosetti, there's a whole world of insects living in our yards and they each serve a purpose in the chain of life.



President Connie swinging into spring!

When Cathy said she had a presentation in mind for a Diggers program, I was elated. As we all witnessed, Cathy brings her next level curiosity, commitment and incredible knowledge to everything she does. Not only did she wow us with

her “self-taught” PowerPoint skills, she dazzled us with incredibly stunning photographs taken in her own yard. I think we all learned some valuable insect factoids that will forever elevate our awareness. Bravo Cathy!

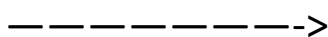
Another highlight of the past couple of weeks was the Digger visit to Topanga Canyon to see the beautiful bucolic property of landscape designer Dryden Helgoe. As you know, Dryden helped us reimagine some of the garden spaces at the Old Mill and recently completed our project. She welcomed us into her home, led us on a hike of the property, showed us her glorious gardens and treated us to a delicious lunch. I think all of us would agree, her plant knowledge is equally matched by her gracious hospitality. I can’t think of a more perfect morning.

We’re getting close to auction season so let the planting begin!

XO,

Connie

Link to February meeting minutes



Board Meetings

9 a.m. at Connie’s home the morning of each General Meeting. Please let Connie know if you would like to attend.

General Meetings:

General meeting begins at 10:30am (Unless otherwise noted). Business meeting at 12:00 noon. Bring sack lunch. Invite guests when appropriate.

Looking ahead...

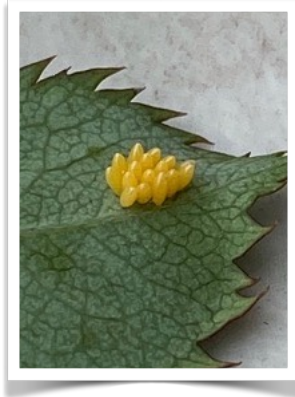
- Mar 4 - Joint meeting with HPGC, PGC, GCSB, & Diggers**
- Apr 1 - Prep for Auction @ Old Mill**
- Apr 12- Plant Drop off @ Old Mill**
- Apr 13-14 -Auction Set-Up**
- Apr 15 -Auction and Plant Sale**
- Apr 18- Kids Native Plant reading & garden tour at Old Mill 10-11am**
- May 6 - The Bland Garden tour/talk**
- June 3 -Annual Meeting & Lunch @ Ruth Pasqualetto’s**

February Meeting-Backyard Bugs and why they matter

At our February meeting, Cathy Tosetti presented a wonderful talk on backyard bugs!
Now, Diggers will stop, look, and think before they squash another bug!
This is what we learned...

A healthy garden has nibbled leaves...

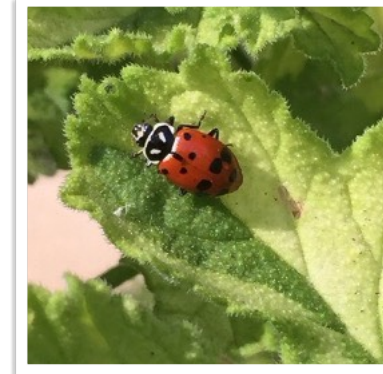
There is so much life in our backyards! Do not use pesticides because you do more harm than good and hurt other members of the food chain. Sanitizing your yard from pests also kills their natural predators. Think before you squash that bug. In any garden there is an amazing diversity of life. Remember that juvenile insects can look vastly different from the adult form. Look under the leaves, pay closer attention and educate yourself to the wonderful balance that nature creates.



Lady Beetle eggs under a rose leaf



Lady Beetle larva



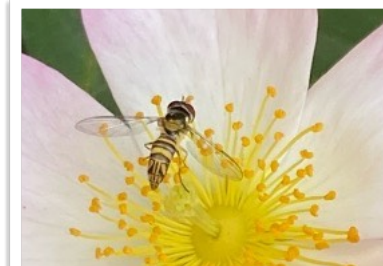
Convergent Lady Beetle (our native). Notice the two "converging" white lines on the thorax area.



Syrphid fly larva. The pointy end is the mouth.



Syrphid fly larva



Adult Syrphid fly

Auction and Plant Sale

Here we go Diggers – January is behind us and March will come before we know it – no stalling any longer! Time to start assessing your backyard pot inventory and filling in gaps on shopping trips with your teams or as you're out meandering our local hood (inside skinny – Megan Foker discovered Full Branch on Mission in San Marino is teeming with fantastic pots).

We look forward to seeing your creations in April, even with plants potted for inside spaces this year. Please send your checks to Page for lunch as explained in your packets, even if you aren't certain which guests you will be inviting.



And look for a paperless post invite from Lisa Evans, who has graciously agreed to host all of us with our spouses/significant others for an alfresco dinner where we're all aglow after yet another successful fundraising event.

Carlin and Yvonne are having lots of fun with our experienced committee pulling this together.
xoxo

Auction and Plant Sale - continued

Remember, the Diggers Garden Club's claim to fame is the "Perfect Pot". In case you need a refresher on how to create a "Perfect" pot, here it is. You can also find this information in the Diggers Roster.



How to prepare a "Perfect" Diggers Pot

1. Begin with an appropriate pot (no chips or cracks).
 - *Consider overall design properties with respect to specific plants that you plan to use (shape/color/size etc.).*
2. Clean pot with steel wool or wire brush (though some moss may be appropriate).
 - *Sandpaper or Goo Gone® to remove price tag*
 - *Vinegar and water remove mineral marks*
3. Place screen over drainage hole (may be secured by glue first).
4. Fill approximately 2/3 of the container with a potting soil containing perlite. Cover with a soil containing *no* perlite (such as Super Soil®).
5. Add Osmocote or similar slow release fertilizer.
6. Place plant in pot leaving 1" lip at top to avoid overflow when watering.
7. Water and fertilize.
8. Fill out tag in pencil or waterproof ink, including *all* the information that you can get and stake into pot. This is how to fill out a tag:

Labeling Botanical names of plants:

Do NOT use the Family name, which is always in italics.

Always include.....*Genus* (capitalized)

always include..... *species* (lower case)

if listed include..... variety (single quotes)

if listed include..... Common Name

Example: *Hedera angleriensis* 'Gloire de Marengo' Variegated Algerian Ivy

Example container description: hand carved wooden bowl,
circa 1920's Italian *terra cotta*, 18"round, fluted edge.

Don't forget to include prices for plants and pots.

The Old Mill

We want to thank everyone who joined us for our "Sip and Stroll the Garden". The New Old Mill looks incredible and it was so much fun strolling through the gardens together on a beautiful late afternoon and catching up after the holidays.

So now our work days begin...

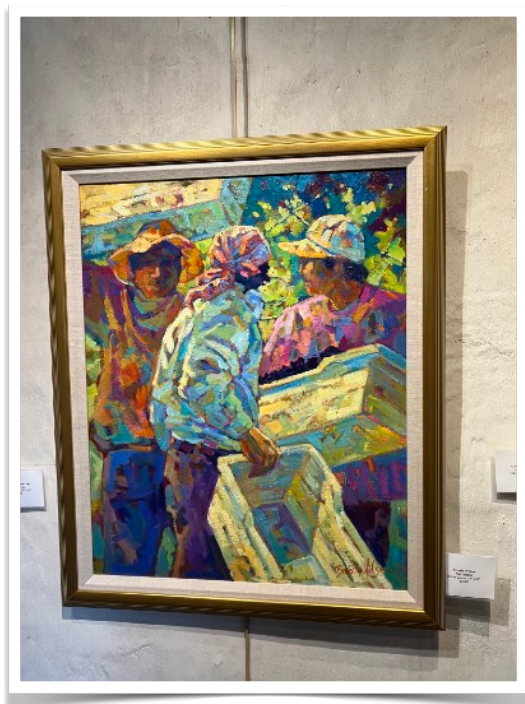
Wed, February 25th, 9-10:30 AM

Tuesday, March 10th, 9-10:30 AM

Wednesday, March 25th, 9-10:30 AM

Please don't forget your clippers, gloves, and trowels.

Kristin & Lisa



Beverly Wilson, 'Tres Amigos', oil on canvas

Also happening at the Old Mill...
Current art exhibit - "Nature's Bounty"

Please don't forget to renew your Old Mill Foundation membership. You should have received a letter in the mail. We want to show 100% Diggers support!! Click link to donate and join:

<https://old-mill.ejoinme.org/MyPages/DonationPage/tabid/689579/Default.aspx>

The Old Mill-Continued

This fabulous, creative, and energetic trio, Carlin, Cathy T, and Marcia, will participate in another California Native Plant Month event at the Old Mill set to take place on April 18th from 10-11am. They will read native plant related books and take young attendees on a garden tour, pointing out the new California natives in the Old Mill Garden. This event is free and all are welcome, however it is designed for children ages 3-10.

Saturday, April 18th, 10-11AM

HEY KIDS!

CELEBRATE

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT MONTH

WITH THE DIGGERS GARDEN CLUB

**STOP BY THE OLD MILL
SATURDAY, APRIL 18TH
FROM 10-11 AM
FOR A BOOK READING AND GARDEN TOUR!**

This event is designed for kids ages 3-10, but all ages are welcome!
There is no fee to join and everyone is welcome! Parents must stay on site during this event.
For more information, contact Kate Sinclair at (626) 441-5458 or oldmill1816@gmail.com

Garden Club of America

Photography Contest to Celebrate America's 250th Anniversary

The schedule for the Winter 2026 *Focus* contest, "America Sings," is now available. This contest offers 12 classes. What a fun and fitting way to start the 250th celebration!

Registration closes March 3rd!



Click this image and follow link for schedule and instructions to register

NAL Conference, Virtual Education Day

March 16th, 2026

8:30AM - 5PM (ET)

All 199 member clubs are invited to send at least one delegate to our nation's capital to hear from conservation leaders and experts, meet with our lawmakers, and speak out to defend our environment. First time attendees are encouraged! Diggers are sending Clare and Yvonne to advocate on our behalf.

Diggers, did you know that all GCA club members have an opportunity to be "in the room" in Washington, D.C., joining our conference delegates for Education Day on Monday, March 16th, live-streamed via Zoom?

Click this image to register to be a virtual attendee for the Education Day!



Mark Your Calendar Upcoming GCA Dates

www.gcamerica.org

Mar 15-18, 2026

National Affairs & Legislation Conference

Mar 16, 2026

NAL Conference Virtual Education Day

Apr 19-21, 2026

GCA Annual Mtg - New York, New York

Apr 26-28, 2026

Zone XII Mtg - Santa Barbara, CA

October 19-22, 2026

Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conference
San Marino, CA

Conservation

Diggers, keep those corks popping and bring them to the April meeting or text for pick-up (yes, I make house calls)! ~ Clare

Did you know the money we raise at our December boutiques helps to send Diggers delegates to GCA conferences? Clare and Yvonne will advocate for our environment on Diggers behalf at the National Affairs & Legislation (NAL) conference in Washington, D.C. in March. Angela and Megan just returned from Florida where they attended the GCA Conservation Conference. They will share what they learned at the April meeting.



Diggers, do you remember the Hummingbird lady?

Hummingbirds of Hollywood

The “Hummingbird Lady”, Terry Masear, spoke to Diggers Garden Club back in 2016 when Cathy Tosetti was Programs chair. A nature documentary has aired documenting her work with hummingbirds...wonderfully captivating.

About the episode:

Amid the glamour of Hollywood, a woman finds herself on a transformative journey as she nurtures wounded hummingbirds, unraveling a visually captivating tale of love, fragility, healing, and the delicate beauty in profound acts of kindness.



Click this image and follow link to watch video

Conservation - Continued

Congratulations to Megan Foker for successfully fostering a happy habitat for native bees in her Bee Hotel. Diggers had lots of fun making native bee hotels back in 2024!



Field Trips

Topanga Canyon hike, lunch, and garden tour - a large group of Diggers made the trek to Topanga Canyon in late January to tour the property of Dryden Helgoe. Dryden is the landscape designer who recently helped the Diggers reimagine the Old Mill Garden. After a short hike and tour of her beautiful garden we were treated to a delicious lunch prepared by Dryden. Thanks to Dryden for her warm hospitality!



Dryden Helgoe

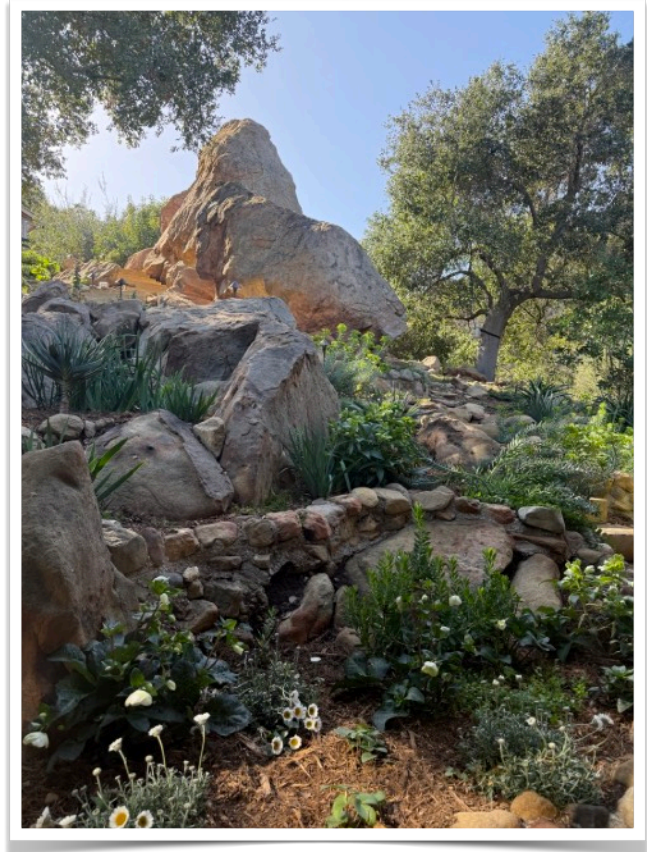




Judy, Sara, and Kristin enjoying a delicious lunch



Carlín, Mary Anne, Debbie, Tracy, Connie, Kristin, and Ruth



Kristin, Connie, and Lisa rest outside Dryden's
screened veggie garden

Membership ~ Ruth

You are encouraged to bring guests and potential future Diggers to our workshops and speakers. It is always great to introduce our friends to our amazing and unique group. Contact Ruth if you have questions regarding membership.

Endowment ~ Debbe

Diggers Endowment...watering your favorite projects!

Endowment donation request letters were sent in November. Many of you have already contributed. If you haven't, please consider doing so.



Scrip

Lisa Evans will be selling Bristol Farms Scrip at our general meetings. The money we earn helps us send Diggers to conferences! Email Lisa for more information!

*Bristol
Farms*

"Dig in" with Diggers - seasonal recipes

"Blood Orange Salad with Burrata, Hazelnuts, & Mint"

By Jessica Kostka, January 29, 2026

<https://www.cookinginmygenes.com/blood-orange-salad-with-burrata-hazelnuts-mint/>

Ingredients for the dressing

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 tbsp honey
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
1/4 tsp chili flakes
1/4 tsp kosher salt plus more to taste
1 small shallot, thinly sliced

For the salad

4 blood oranges, peeled
125 grams (4.5-5oz) ball of burrata cheese
1/4 cup chopped toasted hazelnuts
ground pepper
handful of fresh mint leaves



Instructions

Add the olive oil, honey, red wine vinegar, chili flakes and kosher salt to a small bowl and whisk to combine to make a quick homemade vinaigrette. Add the thinly sliced shallots to the bowl and stir a few times. Set aside the bowl as you prepare the rest of the salad.

Prepare the blood oranges by slicing the top and bottom off the orange so it's flat on both sides and place the orange flat-side down. Then use a knife to cut off the peel around the oranges. Once all of the peel is cut off, slice the oranges into rounds.

Arrange the orange rounds on a plate or serving platter. Place the burrata ball in the centre and use a knife to cut the burrata and sort of spread it out the middle of orange slices. Then, sprinkle the toasted & chopped hazelnuts all over the salad.

Drizzle the dressing and thinly sliced shallots over top of everything and then season with a bit of extra salt and ground pepper and sprinkle the fresh mint leaves over top of everything.

Monthly Mulch - a layer of garden goodness



Altadena Poppy Project

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/DhxJme54iGM>

Keep an eye out for the expected poppy super bloom due this spring. The **Great Altadena Poppy Project** is a massive grassroots effort to restore beauty and hope to Altadena following the devastating Eaton Fire. Founded by local resident and community activist **René Amy**, who lost his own home in the blaze, the project aims to sow roughly **250 million California poppy seeds** across the burn scars.

Key Highlights of the Project:

- **The Mission:** René Amy launched the project to "poppify" the community, aiming for a massive spring bloom that serves as a symbol of resilience and ensures Altadena is not forgotten during its recovery.
- **Scope & Progress:** Over **700 homeowners** have signed up to have their properties seeded for free. As of early January 2026, over 80 million seeds had already been planted across roughly 115 properties.
- **Community Involvement:** The initiative has distributed over 8,000 poppy seed packets globally so people can bloom in solidarity. Partners like the Altadena Rotary and [ArtCenter College of Design](#) have hosted events to help with the sowing.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Beyond aesthetics, poppies help with erosion control, suppress invasive species, and support local pollinators on fire-scarred land.