



The Gardeners' Club

JANUARY 2010



MONTHLY MEETING
JANUARY 14TH, 7 P.M.
APTOS GRANGE
2555 MAR VISTA DR.

AS THE WORM TURNS...

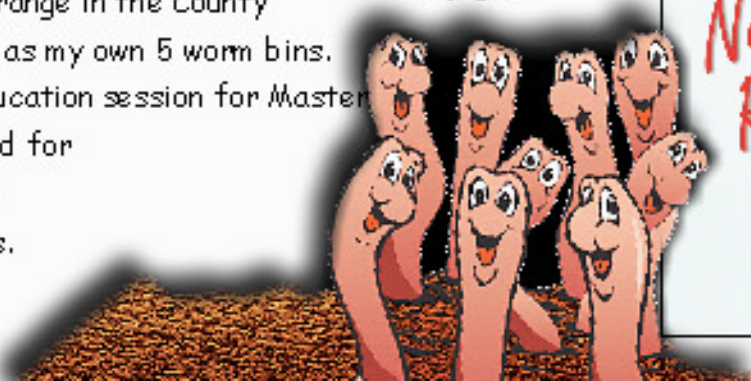
This month Master Composter and Club President Cherry Thompson will speak on Worm Composting. She will provide information on how to set up and maintain different types of worm bins, and how to harvest and use vermicompost in the garden.

Cherry discovered worm power in 2006. She says, "My husband and I went to a Wormshop at Quail Hollow park. We took home an 18 gallon Rubbermaid tub worm bin and worms. Karin Grobe (The Worm Doctor) had mentioned the Master Composter class which was starting later that month (www.compost.santacruzcounty.org) This was a perfect time to take a class, recovering from a knee injury and limiting my gardening time. That 2006 Master Composter class turned me into a worm lover! For over 3 years, I've been feeding the 5 worm bins at Grey Bears and 3 worm bins at the Live Oak Grange in the County demonstration areas, as well as my own 5 worm bins. This year at a Continuing Education session for Master Composters, I was recognized for over 500 hours of volunteer service, counting Wormshops.

The last two years I've also done presentations and worm bin set ups for classes at Soquel and Main Street Elementary schools. Besides using the worm castings to enrich my garden and potting soil, I like using it to brew compost tea to use as a root drench or foliar spray."

Inspiring, isn't it? Besides sharing her experience and knowledge, Cherry will give everyone who attends the meeting a bag of worm castings to take home! Thanks to Ilene Wilson for bringing dessert, Cherry for snack and Melita Israel for juice.

Learn a little bit more about the value of worm castings on the next page.



30th Anniversary *EcoFarm* Conference



Where the Future is Planted

Jan 20 - 23, 2010

For three decades, EcoFarm's flagship event has brought food system stakeholders together for education, networking and celebration. With over 60 workshops featuring prominent speakers on the latest advances in agricultural techniques, marketing strategies, research and other important food system issues, along with organic meals and lively entertainment, the Eco-Farm Conference is the largest sustainable agriculture gathering in the western United States. This year the conference will be January 20-23 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove. For more information or to register, go to www.eco-farm.org or call 763-2111.

Golden Love, who has spoken to our club before and is scheduled to speak to us again this summer on using greywater in the garden, runs Love's Garden Landscaping in Santa Cruz, with an emphasis on sustainable practices (www.lovesgardens.com). He has alerted us to some wonderful workshops on Ecological Landscaping Pre-Conference Day, sponsored by the Ecological Landscaping Association, which seems like a particularly exciting day to attend.

Ecological Landscaping NOW!

Pre-Conference Day

Wednesday, January 20th

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

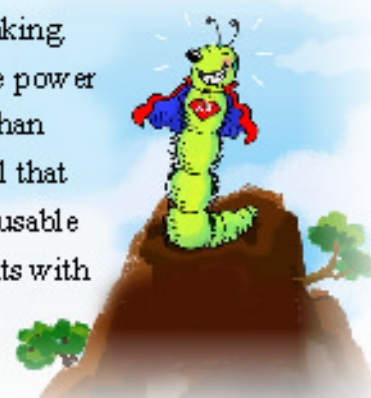
\$75 includes lunch

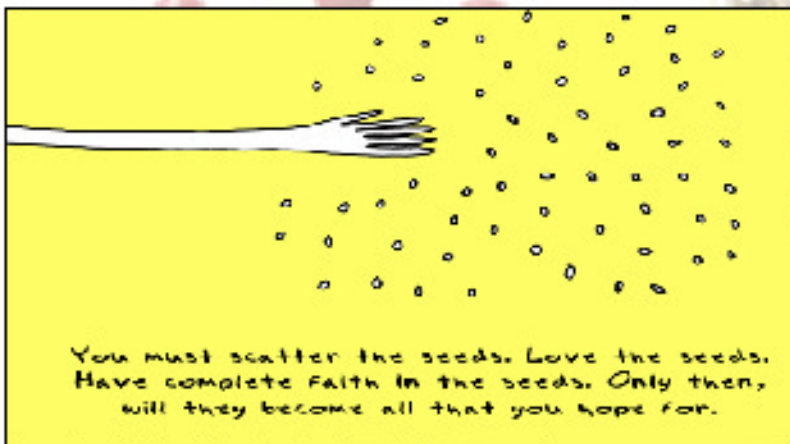


Hear from this field's pioneers as well as the architects, landscapers, water resource managers and farmers who are shaping the future. Nationally recognized authors and activists will be on hand to answer your questions and inspire you. At this pre-conference you will learn from the old guard pioneers who have been "unpaving the way" for the last 25 years, as well as from the brightest new stars with the hottest information about creating and maintaining ecological landscapes.

Topics include the whys and hows of edible landscaping (a talk by Rosalind Creasy, garden and food writer), sustainable landscaping (author Owen Dell), the soil food web and uses of greywater. One of the founders of the Bay Area's Greywater Guerillas, Laura Allen, and ecological designer Raphael Garcia will discuss the latest information about reusing greywater, both in home gardens and in larger scale projects. "From greywater to green gardens", a palette of ecological water solutions, will cover simple practices that conform to California codes. The day will include an inspiring tour of the native landscape on the Asilomar grounds, led by Cabrillo instructor and Gardeners' Club friend Lisa McAndrews. If you want more information about the Pre-Conference greywater workshops, you can call Golden at 471-9100 or e-mail him at goldenlove@lovesgardens.com.

Worm Compost: What's So Great About It? "I use compost," you might be thinking "What's the big deal about worm castings?" Well, here's the scoop: if you are not using the power of worms, you are missing out on a lot of benefits. Vermicastings are more pathogen-free than regular compost. After being digested by worms, castings have 50% more calcium than soil that didn't pass through a worm, 5x the nitrogen, 10x the potash, 7X the phosphate and 3X the usable magnesium. Use them around your plants to create the perfect environment to provide plants with more nutrients and sustain the soil food web.





Doodle by Andre Jordan, <http://awaytogarden.com>

National Seed Swap Day

January 30th is National Seed Swap Day. On this day, gardeners are encouraged to share open-pollinated seeds suited to local conditions, in preparation for spring gardening. This reduces the need to buy commercial seed and empowers us to grow varieties that are best suited to our localities.

Why save seed? It used to be that seeds were passed down from generation to generation. Each year the seed most successfully grown in the local garden was saved (the best, the earliest, the most disease resistant, etc.) Different varieties grown locally conserved genetic diversity. However, to meet the needs of huge agricultural operations, consistency, uniformity and shipping/holding ability have become the criteria for seed breeding. Think back to the potato famine in Ireland – this was caused by a lack of genetic diversity. We can each do our part to keep genetic lines vibrant by growing different varieties in our gardens, saving seed and maybe even crossing and coming up with our own stable hybrids.

If you don't save seed, you can buy seed from people who are committed to saving seeds and preserving diversity.

Seedsavers Exchange is the "granddaddy" of the heirloom seed movement. Their catalog

is to drool over (www.seedsavers.org or 1-563-382-5990). Where else can you order a melon called "Tigger", Mixed Colors Broomcorn or Outhouse Hollyhock? Consider becoming a member – it's only



\$30-35 – and besides the regular catalog you'll receive the seed exchange catalog with thousands of seed varieties being saved and offered by other members. Their work, and our support, is important.

A local seed source you may want to check out is Seedhunt, "Unusual seeds for curious gardeners" (<http://seedhunt.com>). Most of the seed they offer has been collected from plants grown in a Pajaro Valley garden. The site says, "Growing plants is a tale of endless curiosities, names of unfamiliar varieties are always enticing, as are the relations of old favorites. This seedlist is an attempt to offer seeds of plants that have not been commonly available, but might be of interest to plant enthusiasts. California's mild wet winters and rainless summer encourage gardeners to try plants that are adapted to this pattern; emphasis in the seedlist is on plants that are suited to this Mediterranean type of climate and that will thrive with limited water."



Don't forget WinterSown.org, you can get free seed for the price of a self-addressed envelope. (Note from the editor: I went a little crazy again and ordered 30 varieties of tomato seeds from them. Anyone want to help me start tomato seedlings for the Club plant table?)



Two other marvelous other heirloom seed companies are Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (www.southernexposure.com) and Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (www.rareseeds.com).

Prunaphobia?

Joe Lamp'1 coined this word to describe the fear many people have of pruning. It is sometimes hard to understand the concept of cutting something back to help it grow more. Go to the his informative website for more encouragement and understanding about pruning as a process.

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This is the month to clean and sharpen your pruning equipment - it's winter, which means roses, fruit trees, grapevines, hydrangeas, other deciduous plants and evergreen shrubs can all be pruned now. Any plant that loses its leave in the winter is a contender for dormant-season pruning.

Workshops

There is a bounty of Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food System workshops coming up.

"Fruit Trees 101": Basic Fruit Tree Care.

Saturday, January 10, 10 am - 2 pm, Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm. Taught by Chadwick Garden manager Orin Martin, Orchard Keeper founder Matthew Sutton, and a team of fruit tree specialists, this new course will cover the basics of fruit tree care: selection, planting, irrigation, pest management, and basic winter pruning. \$15 for Friends' members; \$20 general public, payable at the workshop. Dress for the outdoors and bring a snack. Heavy rain cancels.

Fruit Tree Q&A Session

Sunday, January 11, 10 am - 12 noon
ProBuild Garden Center, 235 River St., Santa Cruz. Bring your fruit tree questions to this free Q&A session with fruit tree experts from the UCSC Farm & Garden. Learn about varieties that perform well on the Central Coast, along with fruit tree care tips.

"Fruit Trees 101": Basic Fruit Tree Care

Saturday, January 17, 10 am - 2 pm
Sierra Azul Nursery and Gardens, 2660 East Lake Ave.
(Hwy 152), Watsonville 763-0939, www.sierrazul.com.
A repeat of the January 10 workshop, this time at the

Sierra Azul nursery, located across from the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds. A Q&A session with Sierra Azul staff will follow the workshop. Heavy rain cancels.

In-Depth Winter Pruning, Pome Fruits (Apples, Pears)



Saturday, January 24

10 am - 2 pm

UCSC Farm \$15-\$20

(rainout date = January 31)

In-Depth Winter Pruning, Stone Fruits

(Plums, Peaches, Nectarines, etc.)

Saturday, February 7, 10 am - 2 pm

UCSC Farm \$15; \$20 (rainout date = February 14)

Choosing, Propagating, Planting, and Caring for Roses

Saturday, January 23, 10 am - 1 pm

Roses of Yesterday, 803 Brown's Valley Rd, Watsonville (www.rosesofyesterday.com). Owner Guirivere Wiley along with Friends of the Farm & Garden Board member Daniel Paduano will present this workshop on the various classes of roses, and how to propagate, plant and care for them during their first year. Come enjoy the wonderful Roses of Yesterday garden and nursery while you learn. \$15 for Friends' members; \$20 general public. Dress for the outdoors and bring a snack. Heavy rain cancels. For directions to the Roses of Yesterday nursery call 728-1901.

It's National Mail Order Catalog Month

The gardening catalogs have been arriving and we can devour them with gusto as we plan our gardening for the year. I've discovered a few companies that are new to me.



January Board Meeting

The next Board meeting will be on Monday, January 25th at the home of Debbie Kindle, 3320 Putter Drive, Soquel. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m., and all members are welcome.



Fedco (www.fedcoseeds.com) is a source for cold-hardy offerings, with a large selection of

certified organic cultivars and regional heirloom varieties from all over the world. Fedco has five specialties: Seeds, Moose Tubers, Organic Growers Supply, Trees, and Bulbs, and sends out three catalogs annually.



Vegetable Varieties Website

Gardeners looking for help sorting through seed catalogs this winter can turn to Cornell's Vegetable Varieties for Gardeners website (<http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu>) for help. "It's like an Amazon.com for vegetable varieties, only we don't sell the seeds," says Lori Bushway, of Cornell's Department of Horticulture. Gardeners can rate and review their favorite vegetable varieties, as well as those that didn't work so well for them. The site includes more than 5,600 vegetable variety descriptions with seed sources, more than 3,400 reviews/ ratings and online tools to help you find the best varieties for your garden. "We're calling on passionate vegetable gardeners to help us spread the word about the site and improve it by contributing more ratings and reviews," says Bushway. "The more we get, the more reliable and valuable the site becomes." The site also links to online growing guides for more than 60 vegetable crops, and a new project, Vegetable Varieties Investigation. This intergenerational citizen science project bridges the technology divide, helping youth connect with gardeners in their community, learn survey skills and explore biodiversity through the whimsical world of vegetable varieties.

New Year's Resolutions

I'll recycle my catalogs by passing them along to others; adding them to the compost or recycling bin; or making them into art (decopage, anyone?)
When possible, I'll use online catalogs to reduce paperwaste.



<http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/glossy-paper-flowers-674404/>



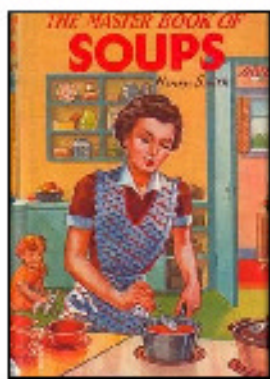
Bulbs and perennials galore at Willow Creek (www.willowcreekgardens.com) or (760) 721-7079.

I thought I could resist temptation until I came across Ranunculus Cafe, an unusual color which is a sultry mix of gold, terracotta and smoke. Just a few bulbs...



National Soup Month

One morning in the garden bed,
The onions and the carrots said
Unto the parsley group
"Oh when shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, hail or rain?"
"Alas", replied in tones of pain
The parsley, "In the Soup!"



The Borscht Garden, with red beets, red cabbage and potatoes.

The Vichyssoise Garden, featuring leeks, Yukon gold potatoes, leeks, chives and parsley.

The Stone Soup Garden.

Here's where you get to plant just about any soup ingredient you can think of. And consider the garden décor possibilities! How about a soup tureen or pot from a thrift shop filled with rocks placed in the center of the bed, or a stone cairn marking the site?

I'm planning a **Gumbo Garden**. It will include various thymes and feature Texas Hills Heirloom Red Okra (from the Seed Exchange). Did you know you can get ride of okra slime before the cooking process? After cutting the okra into small rounds, place them on a napkin-lined plate and microwave for 10 minutes. This takes away stickiness and excess moisture.

Okra being a summer crop, I'll have to wait until I grow enough before I can use it in my usual gumbo. In the meantime, I came across this recipe, which can be made now:



Gumbo des Herbes

This is a perfect dish for utilizing all greens. Never heard of using radish greens in a meal? Gumbo des Herbes uses beet greens, radish tops, spinach and almost every other healthy leafy green vegetable you can think of.

Ingredients:

1 small cabbage, cut into small wedges
1 small bunch spinach
Greens of 2-3 beets & 2-3 turnips
1 small bunch mustard greens
1 bunch radish greens
1½ lb. slab bacon cut into 1" cubes (optional)
2 tablespoons all purpose flour
1 cup green onions, chopped
½ cup green bell pepper, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced, salt & pepper to taste
1 tsp gumbo filé (powdered sassafras leaves)
Freshly cooked long grain white rice


Instructions:


Thoroughly clean and wash greens. Place in large stock pot with 2 C. water, cover. Simmer greens until wilted but not cooked through. Reserve the steaming liquid, but drain off the greens and chop very finely. Set aside. In a large heavy skillet brown the pork in its own fat just until it has rendered a few tablespoons of fat. (*Vegetarians can skip this step and just put a few tablespoons of vegetable oil in a skillet.*) Add the flour to the skillet, stirring continuously, until it has taken on some color and is smooth and bubbly. Stir in all of the chopped greens, green onions, bell pepper and garlic in the skillet, cooking and stirring until well combined. Add salt and pepper to taste. Place the entire contents of the skillet back into the stock pot, adding the reserved liquid plus enough water to measure 1½ quarts of liquid. Bring the stock pot up to a simmer and allow it to continue to cook in this manner until a thick purée has been achieved. *Patience in this is a virtue.* Remove gumbo from heat and stir in the filé. Taste, adjust seasonings if needed. Serve hot, in a soup bowl over freshly cooked long grain white rice.


Rose Care

The Monterey Bay Rose Society hosts its annual Pruning Clinics beginning this month. Clinics are

scheduled to teach rose pruning and rose care for all those interested in attending. The classes are free. No reservations are needed. For details, contact Janey Leonardich at 722-7958. The scheduled clinics are:

 Jan. 9-10, from 10 a.m. to noon at Monterey Bay Rose Society Rose Garden located at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, 2601 E. Lake Ave, Watsonville. Use Horse Show entrance at the second driveway. You're invited to bring your gloves and pruners and do some hand-on pruning.

 Jan. 16 from 10 a.m. to noon at Alladin Nursery, 2905 Freedom Blvd., Watsonville, 724-5785.

 Feb. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon, ProBuild Nursery, 235 River St., Santa Cruz, 426-1020.

It is also a good idea to strip or de-foliate rose bushes in January. Leave the strong canes intact, but pull off all the leaves. This helps prevent diseases from wintering over, and encourages deeper dormancy in our mild winters so roses can rest up for riotous blooming later in the year.



...must prune...

Must Renew

Last Call for Membership Renewal

If you haven't already renewed your membership, do so this month so you don't miss a newsletter or a meeting. Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are \$12.00. The membership year is January 1 - December 31, 2010. Dues admit members to all club educational programs, our special events and plant trades and our monthly newsletter. The "green" option is to receive an electronic PDF **full-color** version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option box below. Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Newsletter preference (check one): Full color PDF via e-mail Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Mail this form and check for \$12 per member to: The Gardeners' Club,
c/o Sykes, 270 Hames Rd. #50, Corralitos, CA 95075

New Year Resolutions



I resolve to renew my membership this month so I don't miss the February newsletter!

Deadline for membership renewal is January 30th



The Gardeners' Club

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It's easy-peasy to join our club. Send check for dues (\$12.00/year) to The Gardeners' Club, 270 Hames Rd., #50, Corralitos, CA 95076. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Drive, Aptos. Printed on 100% Recycled Paper

