

The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz Co.nty

January 2015

Writer/Editor: Lise Bixler

Garden Experiences with Australian Plants



A Talk with Melinda Kralj

We are excited to welcome Melinda to share her passion for Australian plant and gardening in general. She has been involved with the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum for 25 years, and is the Curator of the Australian Collection.

The Arboretum website has wonderful photographs, and describes the Australian Collection as follows: The Australian continent stretches northward into the tropics and southward into the path of the rain-bearing westerlies, encompassing habitats as diverse as rainforest, heathland, and desert. An astonishing 20,000 species of vascular plants exist there, the vast majority of which occur nowhere else in the world. Shrubs are the dominant plant feature throughout, and indeed Australia is known as 'the world's great shrubland'. The Arboretum's outstanding Australian collection celebrates the beauty and diversity of these shrubs, and with over 2,000 species, forms, and cultivars is the largest collection of these plants outside of their homeland, impressing even Australians.

A stroll through the Australian Gardens is always a feast for the senses. In the springtime, let yourself be enveloped in a haze of yellow flowers belonging to one of the many acacias (



or wattles), members of the populous Pea Family. After a rain, follow your nose and you will undoubtedly be led to one of the many members of the fragrant Myrtle Family, which contains the well-known genera Eucalyptus, Callistemon, Melaleuca, and Leptospermum. You can't help but notice the spectacular members of the ancient Protea Family: Diving, glittering hummingbirds signal the presence of grevilleas of every form and hue; what might look like furry animals hidden here and there in the shrubbery are actually banksias; and those

spectacular crimson globes are the waratah, whose botanical name, *Telopea speciosissima*, roughly translates as 'most spectacular object seen from afar.' Indeed, every turn of the path reveals a new combination of delights, so take some time to soak it all in and bring a camera!"



We are eager to hear about Melinda's favorites, and her suggestions on how to use these plants, which are particularly well-suited to our Mediterranean climate gardens. Join us!

January 8th, 7:00 pm, Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Drive, Aptos

To Bee or Not to Bee



Mountain Feed

& Farm Supply is excited to announce the first of their yearly beekeeping workshops. The first one is FREE - a Beekeeping Introduction & Overview workshop on Saturday, January 17th, 11-1, Park Hall Ben Lomond. Are you interested in beekeeping but not sure if it's right for you? This workshop explains what it takes to become a successful, responsible beekeeper before you commit to buying equipment and taking a paid class. Topics Include time commitment, cost estimation, equipment options, location (hive placement) and bee varieties & options. RSVP is required by phone at (831) 336-8876 or via email (orders@mountainfeed.com). Please include your phone number if you register by email.

Mountain Feed can also help you recover after all that heavy holiday fare —

you might be interested in eating some healthy, fermented food. You can find great recipes and tips to get you started fermenting at home at their new website, www.mountainfeed.com.



Musings by Gardens by Gabriel

We're happy to say that our rain gauge was overwhelmed by our recent storms! No matter what the amount of rain we get this winter, we don't want a single drop to go to waste. In order to replenish our precious underground aquifers, the rainwater must percolate through the soil rather than running off the surface. And while we cannot make it rain, we can make a difference in the amount of run-off.

Under natural conditions, soil acts like a sponge, soaking up and absorbing much of the rainfall. Vegetation and leaf litter break the momentum of falling raindrops, allowing the water to filter gently through the air spaces between individual bits of soil. When the earth is exposed, parched, and compacted, it's as if the soil sponge has been squeezed dry. The pores and

pockets shrink and close off, and it is more difficult for water to penetrate.

As much as possible, then, we work to direct rainwater into the ground. Mulching in the fall will protect the soil from eroding during our winter rainy period. The mulch slows the velocity and allows the maximum amount of water to collect and soak into the ground. Landscaping with swales and berms also helps intercept run-off and channel water back into the garden instead of into the street. Lengthening the time that the water remains on the land allows it to slowly seep into the ground, rehydrate the soil, and recharge our depleted groundwater basins.

Making the best use of any rain that does fall turns that water into a resource — one that we sorely need.

Thanks to Marcia Meyer for sharing this post. For more inspiration and blog posts, go to:



HOMESTEAD AND GARDENS

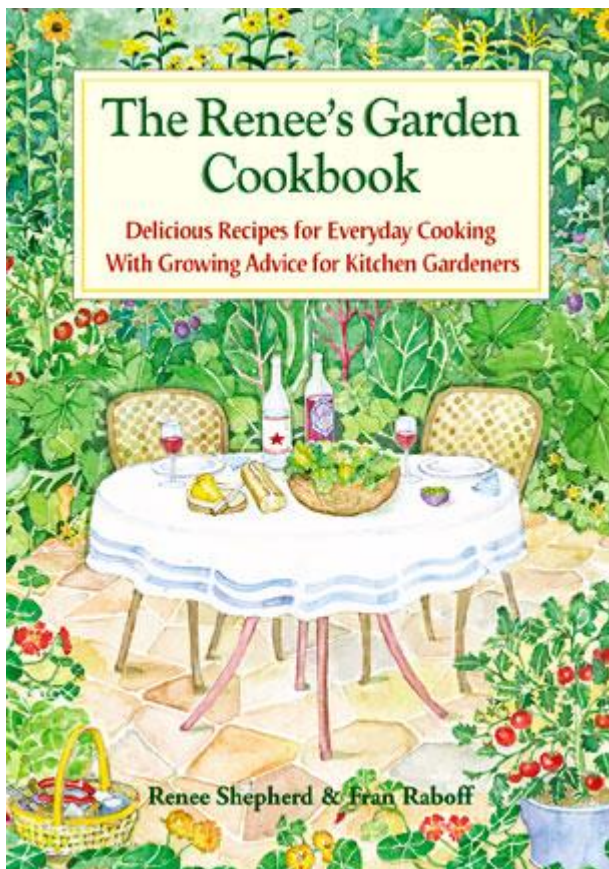
and uses. This article (www.homesteadandgardens.com/mulches-types-uses) considers the pros and cons of pebble mulch/gravel rock mulch (medium to large stones) pumice rock mulch, straw mulch, newspaper and cardboard, grass clipping, compost, landscape fabric, wood chips, shredded bark, sawdust, cocoa hulls and pine straw. Whew! Lots to consider and learn about each type of mulch. I didn't know, for instance, that one of the things you should consider when using cardboard in your garden is if it has been treated with chemicals (for fire retardation). Using pebble or rock mulch helps absorb heat, thus creating microclimates. For vegetable gardens, wood chip mulch is considered the best, although it must only be used on TOP of the soil and not worked into it (or else your plants will be nitrogen-starved).

Coincidentally, Cherry Thompson found a great online article on mulching, too, and a website/blog that is worth checking out. Different mulches have different functions



Gardening & Small-Acreage Farming
Growing for Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

John and Anni Winings, who created Homestead and Gardens, have a second, older website/blog full of resources. Read more <http://thebestgardening.com/>.



NEW - JUST PUBLISHED! THE RENEE'S GARDEN COOKBOOK

The Renee's Garden Cookbook combines expert gardening advice and delicious recipes that showcase the colors and flavors of freshly picked kitchen garden produce. Whether you are a beginning or experienced gardener or shop at a farmers market, Renee's gardening advice will help guide you to growing each vegetable and herb to perfection.

The 300 easy to make recipes offer fresh ideas for enjoying the garden's bounty and are organized alphabetically by vegetable type, making them easy to use for cooking ideas as you harvest from the garden or shop at the market.

These nutritious, colorful, great tasting dishes will be your "go to" favorites for both simple everyday meals and special occasions, illustrating Renee's conviction that the pleasures of growing fresh ingredients is completed in preparing them well and fully enjoying the results.

Wonderful watercolors of vegetables and herbs created by seed packet artist Mimi Osborne are showcased throughout this beautifully designed book. The recipe and sidebar below are samples from the book.



CHARD WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATOES AND POTATOES

The softened, almost creamy potatoes contrast happily with the peppery chard and full-flavored sun-dried tomatoes. Chives, chopped olives and nutty Parmesan tie it all together.

1/2 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes
1/3 cup white wine or chicken broth
2 medium yellow-fleshed potatoes, unpeeled
1 pound Swiss chard
(7 to 8 large leaves), stems removed, leaves coarsely chopped
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 small onion, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon crushed red chile flakes
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
12 Kalamata olives, pitted and coarsely chopped
salt and freshly ground pepper

GARNISH

1/3 cup shaved Parmesan cheese

Cover the sun-dried tomatoes with the wine or chicken broth and rehydrate for 5 to 10 minutes. Cut potatoes into 1/2-inch cubes. Place in a large pot with lightly salted water to cover. Cover pot, bring to a boil and cook for 6 to 7 minutes, until potatoes are almost tender. Add chard, pushing down with the back of a spoon to submerge, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until tender. Drain mixture in a colander.

In a large skillet over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the garlic and onion and sauté just until softened. Add the chile pepper flakes and sauté for 30 seconds. Stir in the drained potatoes and chard, the sun-dried tomatoes and their soaking liquid, lemon juice and chopped olives. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Spoon into a serving dish, top with the shaved cheese, and serve very hot.

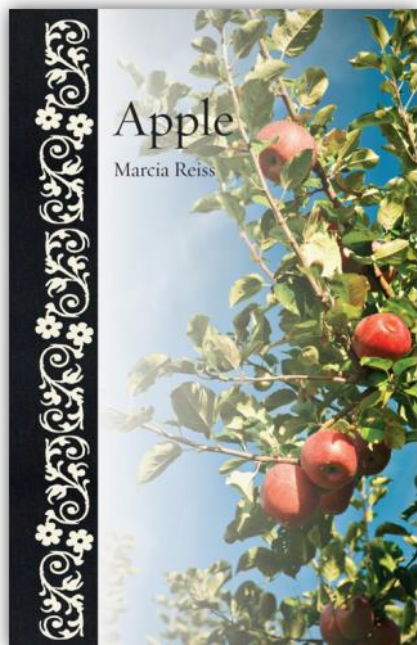
Serves 6



Growing Chard

Big vase-shaped chard plants are easy to grow in any well-drained soil. Sow seed directly in the soil bed. Be sure to thin the young plants properly so they have room to spread. At maturity, plants will be 2 to 2-1/2 feet tall.

Begin harvesting when 7 to 9 inches tall, using the plant's outer leaves when they are still young and tender. Continue to pick leaves from the outside of plants at the base. Both the leaves and crunchy stalks are chopped and eaten. Although chard itself has few pests, do watch for snails and slugs hiding in chard leaf bases.



Gala and Honeycrisp. Pink Lady and Pacific Rose. King Luscious and Winesap. The names of apples are as juicy as the fruit itself. One of the most widely distributed fruits on the planet, apples have always meant something beyond food and drink—their seeds have been planted deep within the myths, religion, and art of nearly every culture. They are symbols of beauty, desire, and sin; signs of hidden poisons and healthy eating; emblems of computers, phones, and music. Exploring the symbolism, art, and literature of the apple, as well as its botanical background, Marcia Reiss follows this iconic fruit from its origins to its now-ubiquitous presence in our world.

Journeying back to the apple's germination in the mountains of Central Asia, Reiss travels along the Silk Road to Europe and the New World. She reveals that, from Charlemagne to Johnny Appleseed to the colonization of South Africa, where settlers were required to plant apple orchards that led to the development of new towns, apples have become a global commodity. In addition to delving into the latest debates about chemical sprays, Reiss looks at the rise of heirloom orchards and the hopes and fears of genetic developments. She also tells the parallel tale of apple cider, its decline during the Temperance Movement and its return as an artisanal alternative to wine. Beautifully illustrated with historic and contemporary images and containing a directory of popular and heirloom varieties, *Apple* is a book ripe for devouring. (The University of Chicago Press Books)

Workshops Basics of Fruit Tree Care- Information for Home Gardeners

Are you ready to add fruit trees to your garden or yard? A workshop offered by the Friends of the UCSC Farm & Garden is a good first step. "Fruit Trees 101: Introduction to Fruit Tree Selection, Planting, and Care" will take place on Sunday, January 11, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at Sierra Azul Nursery and Gardens in Watsonville.

Taught by Sky DeMuro of UC Santa Cruz's Alan Chadwick Garden and Kim Mayer of Orchard Keepers, this workshop is designed to take people through the basic decisions and techniques required to successfully grow their own fruit trees.

Topics will include how to choose a quality tree, prepare the planting hole, address fertility and irrigation needs, and control pests and diseases using organic approaches. Instructors will also discuss the seasonal highlights of fruit tree care, including pruning and soil improvement. Sierra Azul Nursery and Gardens is located at 2660 E. Lake Ave., Watsonville (across from the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds). Note that Friends of the Farm & Garden members receive 10% off plant purchases.

Cost of the workshop is \$30 for the general public (pre-registered) or \$40 at the door, and \$20 for members of the Friends of the UCSC Farm and Garden (pre-registered) or \$30 at the door. Limited income participants pay \$15, and UCSC students pay \$5. Pre-register at: <http://tinyurl.com/workshops2015>.

Note: cash or check only at the door. Heavy rain cancels and pre-registered participants receive a full refund in case of cancellation. Other events in the Friends of the Farm & Garden's 2015 fruit tree series include a second "Fruit Tree 101" class on Saturday, January 24 at the UCSC Farm. On Saturday, Jan. 17, 10 a.m.—12 p.m., there will be a free Q&A session at San Lorenzo Garden Center. Bring your questions and get their tried-and-true advice.

See <http://tinyurl.com/workshops2015> for more workshops and more details, or call (831) 459-3240 or email casfs@ucsc.edu. Workshops are cosponsored by the Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems and the Friends of the UCSC Farm & Garden.

Do you need more incentive to plant a fruit tree? Friday, January 23rd, is National Pie Day.





There are some changes to the Board. Pat McVeigh is resigning. Sim Roberts, who has served us diligently as Treasurer the last few years (thank you, Sim!) will become a member at large, and Denise Rossi will assume the position of treasurer for one year with the possibility to continue. Dee Weybright, who has worked so hard as our Refreshment Chair, is stepping down (thank you so much, Dee!) Jean Favre will now take that position. Welcome to the new board members!

Life Lab had a special opportunity in the form of a matching grant from a donor if they met a \$50,000 fundraising goal, and Lise Bixler requested that the Board donate \$200. We did make this donation (see the thank you note on this page).

The next meeting of The Gardeners' Club Board will be an outstanding potluck at the home of President Cherry Thompson, 3315 Putter Drive, Soquel. We know it will be "outstanding" because Chef Extraordinaire Joe Thompson (also our webmaster and Cherry's husband), will be cooking up a special dish for us. The rest of us will bring something to share. You don't have to be a member of the Board; come join us for a feast, conversations and a brief discussion of Club activities and goals. Monday, January 26th, at 6:00 p.m. Need directions? Call 475-0991.



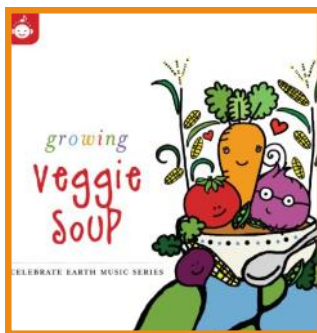
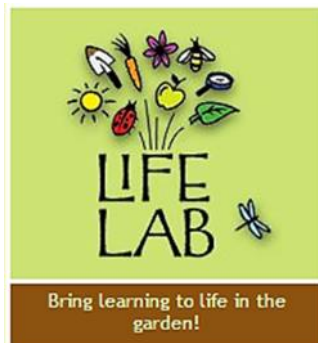
December 5, 2014 Thank You!

Dear Sim and everyone at The Gardeners' Club,
Thank you so much for your very generous donation to Life Lab. We are honored to have your support! Your gift will directly support local children in having opportunities for inspiring education, lifelong good health, and deep connection with nature.

Please let us know any time you'd like a personal tour of our Life Lab Garden Classroom, we would love to have you for a visit and have a chance to tell you more about our life-changing work.

Thank you again, and we wish you the very best this holiday season!

In gratitude,
Emily Mastellone-Snyder and
All of us at Life Lab



String Band, Dan Crow and Recycleman & The Waste Band, and are mostly performed in folk-rock and roots-music styles. Equally appealing to kids and adults!

January is National soup Month!

There are so many ways to celebrate National Soup Month! You could go to a local thrift shop (Grey Bears comes to mind, since they are recovering from their disastrous fire) and treat yourself to a new soup mug or bowl. You could cook up a pot of soup—an old favorite recipe or try a new one. Invite a friend or family member over to share it. Or enjoy your solitude—slurp your soup whilst reading seed catalogs to plan what new and exciting soup ingredients you'll plant in your garden in the spring.

Soup for supper on a hurried week-night? You can do it in less than 30 minutes, according to Michelle Slatalla and have fun experimenting with ingredients (<https://homes.yahoo.com/news/recipe-irresistible-vegetable-soup-30-minutes-less-170000959.html>). Just remember the magic numbers: 4, 2, 1.

4-2-1 Vegetable soup

- 4 cups of any raw root vegetable (or combination of vegetables, depending on what you have lying around), such as cauliflower, broccoli, carrot, celeriac, potato.
- 2 C. stock (chicken, beef, turkey, and vegetable stock all work equally well)
- 1 cup of dairy, such as heavy cream, whole milk, yogurt, or sour cream
- Salt and pepper and chopped fresh herbs to taste

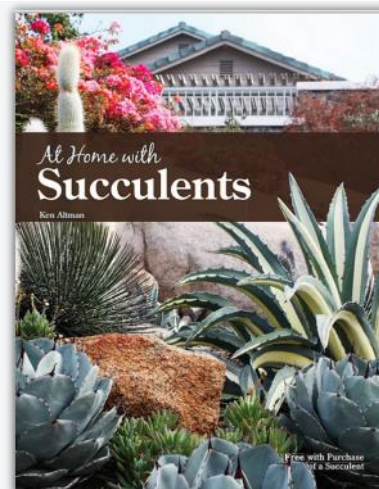
Simmer veggies and herbs in stock until soft (10-12 min.) Puree mixture and return to saucepan. Stir in dairy, warming slowly over low heat. Serves 4.

One more way to celebrate soup: if you have children in your life or want to please your own inner child, sing along or dance to the CD "Growing Veggie Soup". Songs like Dirt Made My Lunch, The Zucchini Song, Farmer's Market, and Seeds for the Garden celebrate gardening, produce and the Earth. The songs are by various artists like the Banana Slug

It's A Rosy Time of Year

Bareroot roses have arrived in the nurseries! Conventional wisdom holds that there is always room for another rose. However, some of us who've run amuck over the years spend much of this month and next, which is prime time for rose care, stripping, pruning, feeding and, sometimes, spraying ours. If you want to see rose pruning demonstrated, members of the Monterey Bay Rose Society hold rose pruning clinics at various locations this month and next. Check their web site for more resources.

www.montereybayrosesociety.



As many of us in The Gardeners' Club know, succulents look great with minimal care, won't wilt if you forget to water them, and are delightful to collect and use in gardens, landscapes and containers. The more you know about these intriguing plants, the more you'll enjoy growing them.

Altman Plants has a useful and inspiring free e-book which has pages of tips and inspiration. It explains what you need to know about plant care, soil and watering, is full of design ideas and includes an illustrated guide to great succulents in your home and garden. Download it at <http://www.cactuscollection.com/>.

Some of us are overwhelmed by too many ideas and projects. James Clear, in an article featured in The Daily Good (www.dailygood.org/story/919/priorities-and-the-art-of-pruning-james-clear) suggests that when searching for a solution, "It all comes down to treating your life like a rose bush". He says our wonderful ideas, like rose buds, can't all be expected to bloom. "A life left unpruned can become a twisted knot of ideas, tasks, and projects competing for your limited time and resources. If you don't prune some of the branches from your life, the important ones will never flourish."

Ouch!



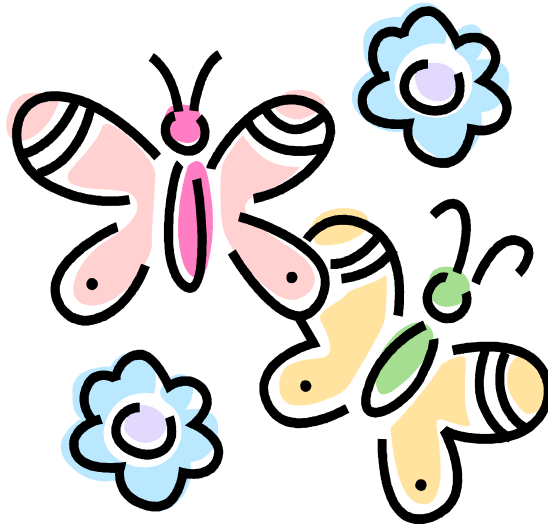
Don't have time to attend a workshop? How about a video to show you the basics? Vanessa of Vee Horticulture demonstrates winter pruning roses in the California Bay Area. Here are 6 easy steps for great roses in the

spring: start with the dead wood; eliminate crossing branches; prune out the tiny stuff; prune to an outward facing bud; strip all remaining leaves and clean up base; feed the heck out of them!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uMbXpDOfno

The Gardeners' Club Membership

The time has come for membership renewal. Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are still only \$12.00, due by is January 1st. The membership year lasts through the end of December, 2015. Dues entitle members to all club educational programs, our special events, plant trades and our awesome monthly newsletter. The "green" option is to receive an electronic PDF **FULL-COLOR** version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option below.



Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. Renew your membership now so you won't miss a thing...you'll be glad you did.

And...with gift-giving season here, consider sharing your passion for gardening, and supporting our club, by giving your favorite gardening enthusiast an opportunity to connect, share and learn with us. A gift membership is a gift nobody will want to return!

Come grow with us!

Your Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

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

Gift Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

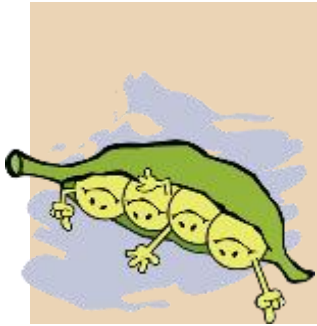
Newsletter Preference (check one): ☐ Full color PDF via e-mail ☐ Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Enclose check for \$12 per member made out to *The Gardeners' Club*. Mail to

The Gardeners' Club c/o Suzanne Mercado, P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005



"Have you ever noticed a tree standing naked against the sky,
How beautiful it is?
All its branches are outlined, and in its nakedness
There is a poem, there is a song.
Every leaf is gone and it is waiting for the spring.
When the spring comes, it again fills the tree with
The music of many leaves,
Which in due season fall and are blown away.
And this is the way of life."
- Krishnamurti



It's easy-peasy to join our club! Dues
are \$12 per calendar year. Make check to
"The Gardeners' Club" and mail to P.O. Box
3025, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Meetings
are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday
of each month at the Aptos Grange, 2555
Mar Vista Dr., Aptos.

The Gardeners' Club

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