



Newsletter, December 2016—Part 1
The Gardeners' Club
Santa Cruz County, California

INTO THE GARDEN

Editor's Note: Because our newsletter has so much content this month, we're breaking it into two parts. This is Part 1.

White Elephant Silent Auction and Potluck Dinner

It's that time of year when we gather, not to trade plants or hear a speaker, but instead to celebrate our gardening friendships. And, bonus time—December is when the White Elephants visit. What special something will YOU bring that one of us MUST have?

First we'll have sumptuous potluck dinner. Bring a dish to share, labeled for the benefit of our vegetarian/vegan members or those with dietary restrictions. Please bring a serving utensil, and if you have hot dish, have it already heated. We'll provide plates, utensils and beverages.

After good eats and grand conversation, the liveliest part of our meeting will start. We'll browse the silent auction tables and discover items we didn't know we needed, and find perfect gifts for family and friends (and maybe ourselves). In the past, we've had all kinds of marvelous things, including jewelry, special plants, clothing, gardening items, good things to eat, books, chotzkes, antiques, crafty things—every year there is something new! We'll have cards available for you to put with your items with a one-line description and minimum bid.

Brings your friends, especially those who might be interested in joining our club, and family or significant others. We won't have the plant sale or business meeting.



Thursday
Dec. 8th
7 p.m.
Aptos Grange
2555 Mar
Vista Drive





GARDEN HOW-TO UNIVERSITY

One of the reasons gardening is a life-long endeavor is that there is always something new to learn about, be it a new garden style, plant, theory, environment or micro-climate. You can scrap your garden and start anew with all new plants, a new style, even a new garden philosophy. There is that much to explore. But, before you start breaking out of your gardening comfort zone, you need to know the basics. With some solid garden know-how you will have the foundation to start a new garden. It is always exciting to discover new sources for learning more about gardening, especially when you find one that is current, comprehensive and....FREE!

Horticulture Magazine, with PlantersPlace.com, offers a series of free **Independent Study Guides** that identify what's

really crucial to each topic, and provide trusted online resources for information and supplies. These downloadable guides help you avoid wasting time you could be spending in the garden by random Googling and wading through conflicting advice, too.

The topics currently available are Growing Perennials, Shade Gardening, Growing Edibles in Small Spaces and Container Gardening. A sample page from the Growing Perennial guide is at the bottom of this page. You can download the Garden How-To University study guides at <http://www.hortmag.com/ghtu>. Your editor highly recommends them.

Lesson One: Designing With Perennials

Perennials are gifts to gardeners. Their diversity makes it easy to build a pure perennial garden that's interesting from earliest spring to late fall (or even through the winter, in milder climates). Because perennials live for more than one growing season (and usually, for four years or more), that garden can be enjoyed for a long time. Once you know how they perform, what care they ask for and their design possibilities, you may want to create pure perennial gardens or intermingle perennials throughout your vegetable gardens or shrub borders.

Design Flexibility

There are countless species and varieties of perennials, enough that you will never run out of options. If you are looking for a particular texture, shape, growth habit or size, there are fine perennials to fill the need. After evaluating your site's conditions (its sun exposure, moisture level and soil type), you can narrow down your choices. Place plants with the same requirements together for an easy-care garden. For instance, avoid mixing water lovers in with drought-tolerant plants, or else you'll have a lot of spot watering to do.

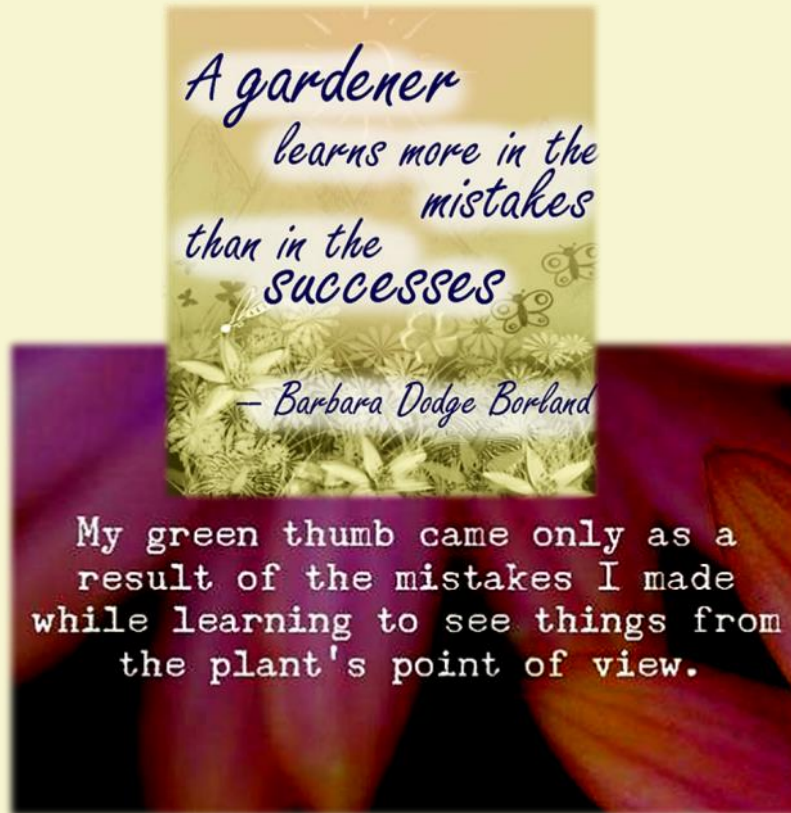
Arrange your perennials to showcase their best design features to create the most visually interesting garden. Follow the Earth, Man and Sky design principle:

- **Sky:** Incorporate height in the garden to draw the eye up, open up the space and create a backdrop and visual border to the garden space. In a sunny garden, tall and slender *Rudbeckia maxima* works beautifully.
- **Man:** These are plants that engage us at eye's height. Select a different shape from your sky plant. If your sky perennials are tall and slender, select a round or pyramidal shape man plant, such as Mexican sage (*Salvia leucantha*).
- **Earth:** Plants under three feet in height draw the eye down and across the expanse of the garden space. When positioned properly, they will direct the eye back to one of the other two design features. To accompany the rudbeckia and Mexican sage, consider a yarrow, like *Achillea millefolium* 'Paprika'.

In sum, just think tall, average and short, and mix up the shapes, sizes, forms and textures for a visually interesting garden. Or, for a stunning and dramatic look, try large bands of a single variety of plant, or a partnering of two plants that are encouraged to fill in large areas of the garden. For example, penstemon and upright verbena look stunning planted together in gently curving ribbons across the landscape. (Upright verbena is an annual that will reseed.)



Question of the Month:



What mistakes made you a better gardener?

Now is the perfect time to reflect on what our gardens taught us this year. Share your thoughts with the rest of the Club and we'll print as many as we can in the January issue. It can be a sentence, a paragraph, a page, an essay—do share with us! You can email your answer to lisebixler@sbcglobal.net, or mail it to Lise Bixler, 91 Country Estates Dr., Santa Cruz CA 95060. Deadline for submissions is December 28th.



This question was posted on the Horticulture Magazine Facebook page, which is full of interesting stuff (<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=horticulture%3A%20the%20art%20%26%20science%20of%20smart%20gardening>).



Cabrillo Horticulture Department Open House & Poinsettia Sale

The Poinsettias are really putting on some color now! Cabrillo's fall holiday plant sale is Wednesday, December 7th from 3 to 6pm in the greenhouse. Celebrate the holidays with and pick out a beautiful Poinsettia grown by student assistant Myrriah.

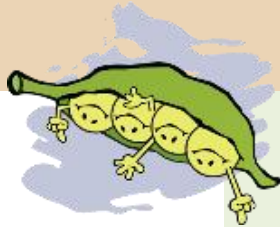


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The Gardeners' Club



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

Our front page logo is graciously shared with us by artist Lisa Zador. Order a print or see more of her work at her Etsy shop www.etsy.com/shop/curiousprintpattern.