I, your newsletter writer Lise Bixler, joined a tour to see Northern Thailand last December. Although it was a birding trip, I saw and learned so much about the flora, forests and horticultural practices that I am planning on sharing some of my many photographs, impressions, observations and lingering questions with you at our February meeting.

I knew I would see a land of great natural beauty and cultural charm, but when I arrived was quite ignorant about nearly everything about the country. It is a place of rich contrasts, with surprises everywhere. The people are as kind, gentle and giving as you will find anywhere.

We spent a brief time in the Bangkok area, visiting two temples and their gardens (Oh! The mosaics!), parks and a butterfly garden. Then a visit to the Gulf of Thailand, then whank you to est to the upland region, the least developed and least populated. It contains the most forest and protected areas in Thailand, including Kaeng Krachan National Park, which has been a World Heritage Site since 1991.

We then flew north to Chang Rai. The north is mainly mountainous and extends along the border of Myanmar and Laos. We went to the area known as The Golden Triangle, where forestation was greatly reduced in the past by hill-rice cultivation, lumber exports and cash-crop growing of opium. But there is still much to see and marvel at.

We traveled to the northeast, bordered on the north and east by the Mekong River. That plateau has poor soil, low rainfall and surrounding it are spectacular, and three river plains contain lakes, ponds and marshlands rich with wildlife. Here also is Khao Yai, Thailand's first and most famous national park. At the end of visiting this photogenic mix, we flew from Chiang Rai back to Bangkok.

We visited demonstration agricultural projects, including various Royal Projects of the late King Bhumibol’s “New Theory” efforts. The role of religion and royalty was eye-opening. Buddhism is not strictly a religion but a philosophy of life, including goals of sustainable development, natural balance, harmony and restraint. Every wat and garden was stunning.

Some of my observations and questions are serious (how can Thailand balance growth and tourism with ecological concerns) and some are plain silly (I cannot explain the paradox between use of ancient art sculptures in gardens vs. concrete smiling sheep with top hats as garden ornaments in others). See you there so you can help ponder the answers.
What an enjoyable, informative and inspiring talk Martin Quigley, Executive Director of the UCSC Arboretum & Botanical Garden, gave last month on the succulents of the South African Western Cape! Those of you who want to learn more might consider getting this book. It is full of information about Aloes as well as other plants found in Southern Africa, home to 4,674 plant species that can be classified as succulents. Approximately 47% of the succulents in the world grow in Southern Africa.

The book starts off with information about the Aloe-like plants of the New World, including Agave, Furcraea, Hesperaloe and Yucca, contrasting each with the characteristics of the Aloe. The authors point out that Agaves are mostly stemless (unlike the Aloes which tend to develop stems over time) and are exclusively monocarpic (flowering only once before dying). In addition plantlets are often formed on the flowers of the Agave but this is a rare occurrence for the Aloes. From the back cover: “Aloes are the flagship plants of Africa, vividly defining the landscapes in which they occur. In garden settings these stately succulent plants capture the allure of the African savanna and serve as excellent focus plants. Aloes in Southern Africa by Gideon F. Smith and Braam van Wyk explores the character and biology of African aloes, describing their habits, characteristic features and distribution in nature. It also details 58 aloe and related species across several vegetation zones. Aloe cultivation and propagation is discussed too, providing insight into optimum growing conditions, gardening styles and plants that flourish in different regions. A feature on medicinal, cosmetic and culinary uses reveals the special properties of these intriguing plants.”

Debra Lee Baldwin has a great feature, “Midwinter Succulent Show: Big Aloes in Bloom” at https://debraleebaldwin.com/debra-lee-baldwin-news/whats-ultimate-aloe/. She also has a page of photographs of over 80 identified types of aloes in gardens and in bloom at https://debraleebaldwin.com/portfolio-item/succulent-photos-aloes-bloom-identified/.

Rain, Rain, Rain

All of the rain this winter is welcome, but according to Debra, you should give your succulent garden a check-up when it stops. She suggests checking for:

— Succulents with rotted leaves. Remove mushy leaves before rot spreads to the plant’s stem or crown.

— Drainage issues. If soil stays sodden and muddy areas remain long after a storm, roots may drown. Move plants to higher ground; consider installing French drains.

— Slope erosion. Create dams of rocks and diversion channels, and add gravel or mulch to diffuse the rain’s impact.

— Stagnant water. Check pots, bins and barrels. If they’ve filled, dump the water before mosquitos find it and breed.

Debra also has a YouTube video at https://youtu.be/ywpLItyKAIk.
Workshops at Mountain Feed and Farm Supply

FRUIT TREE PRUNING BASICS
Saturday, February 9, 2019
11am-12pm
Bring your questions for a demonstration on pruning young deciduous fruit trees. Timing, basic cuts, expectations of pruning will all be reviewed. Taught by Matthew Sutton Orchard Keepers Inc. RSVP is required. Call (831) 336-8876 or come on in!

FREE BEEKEEPING OVERVIEW: TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE
Sunday, February 10
11am-2pm
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. RSVP is required. Call (831) 336-8876 or come on in!

SOILS PREP AND TROUBLESHOOTING 101
Saturday, February 16, 2019
11am-12:30pm  Cost $30

Learn how to organically enrich your soil and correct existing soil challenges. Bring samples of your challenging soil for discussion! Taught by Kerri Kemp Gardner (BS in Horticulture CalPoly SLO California Association of Garden Professionals Certified.)

Rose Workshop at Alladin Nursery
FEBRUARY 23
10:00 AM - 11:30 AM
If you missed the first seminar at Alladin, here’s your second chance. Taught by ARS Certified Consulting Rosarians, come learn about rose pruning practices and procedures, pruners and tools, safety, IPM (Integrated Pest Management), fertilizers, and more. Attendees are welcome to bring in their own rose plants for pruning and additional tips on proper care. Alladin Nursery & Gift Shop, 2905 Freedom Blvd., Watsonville. Phone: (831) 724-7517.

UCSC Workshop: Organic Blueberries for the Home Garden and Small Farm
SAT., FEB 16, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Join CASFS/UCSC Farm & Garden manager Christof Bernau to learn about varietal selection, site selection, planting, pruning, and general care of blueberries in the home garden and on the small farm. This is a lecture and demonstration workshop. The workshop will take place at the Hay Barn, adjacent to the UCSC Farm. Please pre-register using this link. Register at https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3910213, or if you prefer to pre-register by check, please send a check made payable to UC Regents to: Vanessa Ackermann/CASFS, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064, attn: Blueberries. Online registration costs: $30 for general public; $20 for Friends of the Farm & Garden members, and certified UC Master Gardeners; $15 for limited income, and beginning farmers; $5 for current UCSC students. Free for lifetime members of the Friends of the UCSC Farm & Garden, and current Farm & Garden docents. Or pay at the door (cash or check only): $40 for general public, $30 for Friends of the Farm & Garden members, UC Master Gardeners, $20 for limited income and beginning farmers, $5 for current UCSC students. For more information call 831.459-3240 or email casfs@ucsc.edu.

Get immersed in one of the Mountain Feed r video workshops. Stay updated when new videos are released by signing up for their monthly journal. https://www.mountainfeed.com/blogs/learn/tagged/videos
The almond bars that Kate Riley brought for dessert to our last Club meeting were a big hit—so many people asked for the recipe that Kate shares it here. Thanks, Kate!

Almond Bars

1 cup sugar
½ cup soft butter
2 eggs, separated
1 tea. Almond Extract
1 ½ cups flour
1 tea. Baking Powder
1 cup brown sugar
Sliced almonds

Cream sugar, butter almond extract, and egg yolks. Mix flour with baking powder, add to creamed mixture. In separate bowl; beat eggs whites to fluffy than add brown sugar.

Pat first mixture into greased 9x13 pan. Top with egg white sugar mix. Finish with sliced almonds.

Bake 350° over for 25-30 min. Cool and cut.

An accessible and compelling story of a scientist’s discovery of plant communication and how it influenced her research and changed her life, this “phytobiography,” a collection of stories written in partnership with plant—research scientist Monica Gagliano, reveals the dynamic role plants play in genuine first-hand accounts from her research into plant communication and cognition. By transcending the view of plants as the objects of scientific materialism, Gagliano encourages us to rethink plants as beings with subjectivity, consciousness and volition, and hence having the capacity for their own perspectives and voices. The book draws on up-close-and-personal encounters with the plants themselves, as well as plant shamans, indigenous elders, and mystics from around the world, integrating these experiences with an incredible research journey and the groundbreaking scientific discoveries that emerged from it. Gagliano has published numerous peer-reviewed scientific papers on how plants have a Pavlov-like response to stimuli and can learn, remember, and communicate to neighboring plants. She has pioneered the brand-new research field of plant bioacoustics, for the first time experimentally demonstrating that plants emit their own voices” and, moreover, detect and respond to the sounds of their environments. Gagliano has re-ignited the discourse on plant subjectivity and ethical and legal standing. This is the story of how she made those discoveries and how the plants helped her along the way.

Our Board meetings are wonderful opportunities to connect not only about the business of operating our club, but for connecting about what enthuses us in our gardening lives! The last potluck meeting at Cherry’s was a great success, as you can see by the photograph of our happy attendees. Not only was the food spectacular, but we gave each other much-needed advice and encouragement about winter pruning.

One of the ideas we discussed was going as a group to the Annie’s Annuals Mother’s Day Party in Richmond on May 12th. If you are interested in joining us at this soiree, talk to Lise or Lupe.

Pat McVeigh is acting as Treasurer on an interim basis, but we are still looking for someone to fill the position long term.

Our next Board meeting will be graciously hosted by Marge Gregory, on February 25th at 6:00 PM. The address of Marge’s home and garden is . 129 Ramada Lane, Aptos. It will be another grand potluck. Come and join us for an evening of planning, sharing and conversation—you don’t have to be a Board member to attend.
The time has come for membership renewal. Annual membership dues, are only $15.00, due now. The membership year lasts through the end of December. 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.

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!

Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. We have a history of giving to the community, and have focused this giving in the last few years on scholarships for high school and Cabrillo College students who are working towards careers in horticulture. Because our dues are so low and we’d like to be able to continue to give at least one additional scholarship, we are giving you the option of making an additional gift with your membership. Thank you! Renew now so you don’t miss anything - you’ll be glad you did.

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**Your 2019 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:_________________________
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**Newsletter Preference (Check One):**

☐ Full color PDF via e-mail ☐ Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Enclose check for $15 per member, plus any additional contribution to our scholarship fund, made out to The Gardeners’ Club. Mail to:

**The Gardeners’ Club % Suzanne Caron**

P.O. Box 3025

Ben Lomond CA 95005

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**Membership amount** $ _________

I would like to make an additional gift $ _________

**Total** $ _________
Our front page logo is graciously shared with us by artist Lisa Za.

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It’s easy-peasy to join our club! Dues are $15 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 pm, on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos.

Join our Facebook group! www.facebook.com/groups/theGardenersClubAptos

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.