



The Gardeners' Club Santa Cruz County, California

March 2020

Writer/Editor: Lise Bixler
(lisebixler@sbc_global.net)

Urban garden management, biodiversity and human well-being

Our March meeting will feature Dr. Stacy Philpott, who began her role as Executive Director of the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems last October. She will share results of her research examining low garden management, neighborhood surroundings and sociocultural diversity of gardens and how they can enhance biological pest control, promote crop pollination and enhance well-being for gardeners.



Stacy Philpott looking for parasitized aphids on kale at the Live Oak Grange

Urban agriculture provides between 15-20% of the global food supply and an array of other social and cultural benefits, yet many urban gardeners lack knowledge about how to manage pests, promote pollination and conserve water in gardens.

An example is Stacy's research on bee diversity on the Central Coast, looking at what habitat bees are attracted to and identifying practical ways for gardeners to create spaces that enhance the role of wild pollinators. "Ecology is really complicated," she said recently. For instance, is it better for pollinators for us to use mulch or leave bare ground? While one could create a space that will make bees happy, it could come at the cost of making other important insects unhappy. Having bare ground is incredibly important for bee nesting. When gardeners lay down mulch and woodchips, it makes it hard for bees to excavate their nests. But mulch is beneficial for other insects, like ladybugs. So gardeners can do a mix. And gardeners can promote nesting, including creating artificial nests known as insect hotels. Artificial bee nests offer shelter for bees, which can only travel short distances from their nests to collect pollen, and in the process, pollinate crops.

Stacy says, "We used data collected over 5 years in 25 urban community gardens in the California central coast to

systematically examine how a suite of local features (mulch cover, herbaceous plant richness, floral abundance and garden size) and landscape features (natural cover) influence ecosystem service providers (e.g. natural enemies, pollinators) and services (e.g., pest control, climate mitigation). Overall, these results provide unique insight into how gardeners can manage local and landscape factors to better support biodiversity and maximize synergies."

In addition to directing CASFS, Dr. Philpott holds the Ruth and Alfred Heller Endowed Chair in Agroecology, and is Professor of

Environmental Studies at UCSC. She is an agroecologist interested in community ecology, ecosystem services, urban agroecology, and interactions between agriculture, conservation, and farmer well-being. She has researched internationally for over 20 years, and has written more than 125 research articles and book chapters



Research website <https://www.urbangardenecology.com/>

THURSDAY, MARCH 12TH , 7:00 P.M., APTOS GRANGE, 2555 MAR VISTA DRIVE
Refreshments will be served. Thanks to Marie Beckham for dessert and
Dena Gonsalves for beverages.

Bring Back the Bees — Add Mason Bees to Your Garden

There are over 120 species of mason bees in North America. Unlike honeybees, mason bees are native to North America and well adapted to live here. They are important to gardeners, as they make outstanding pollinators. They are not choosy about pollen, eagerly visiting a wide range of flowers. Because they are messy pollen gatherers, much of what they gather falls off. As a result, they pollinate nearly every flower they visit. One mason bee can pollinate more than 2000 blossoms in a day!



Mason bees are classified as solitary gregarious bees. They have no real social interaction in the sense that a honeybee population would, but mason bees do like to nest near each other. It means that mason bees don't protect their eggs after they lay them. They are absolutely non-aggressive; they actually don't care about you or your children at all so they are the perfect backyard bee. The male has no stinger. The female has one but uses it so seldom that there is a common belief that mason bees can't sting. The females can but rarely do, and it is more like a gnat bite and not dangerous.

Because they are small and black or metallic blue-green, they are sometimes confused with flies, but have longer antennae and four wings vs. only two.

The Orchard Mason Bee or Blue Orchard Bee is our Western native pollinator, which appears each year in late winter and early spring to pollinate all our early blooming fruit trees, shrubs and flowers. Its scientific name, *Osmia Lignaria Propinqua* Cresson, describes the insect order to which it belongs that also includes ants, bees and wasps. They are such generalist feeders that they will very effectively pollinate just about any pollen bearing flower that blooms in the early spring.

Studies done in netted orchards show that 250 female orchard mason bees can pollinate apples as effectively as 50,000 honey bees! They will work in cooler weather and more dampness than

honeybees. They seldom wander very far from home and are easy to raise. This makes them the perfect pollinator for home gardens and fruit trees. Mason bees don't make honey. They make great apples and cherries though!

The life cycle of these bees is fairly simple. Every spring when the day time temperatures start to get over 50 degrees with some regularity and enough days have passed since the egg was laid the previous spring, the mason bees chew through their protective cocoons, through the mud walls that protect their nesting chambers, and emerge into your garden. The actual date varies across the country from mid February in warm winter areas to late May in colder climates and higher elevations.

The males emerge first, anywhere from a few days to a few weeks before the females. They spend their time foraging for nectar to build up their strength. They stay close by the nesting tubes waiting for the females to emerge. These males do a bit of incidental pollinating while feeding but the vast majority of the work will be done later by the female. As soon as the females emerge from the nesting holes, the males mate with them and then move away. When all of the females have been mated with the males die, and the rest of the season is all females.

Female mason bees spend their days gathering pollen and nectar from flowers within about 100 yards of their nests. They use this pollen/nectar mix to make a lump of bee bread and place it in the back of a found hole. When the proper amount of food has been placed in the chamber the female backs in and lays a single egg into the food mass. She works her way down the length of the hole making cell after cell plug is constructed at the hole opening and the bee flies off looking for another hole. Female eggs are laid toward the back of the hole safe from marauders and male eggs are put toward the front of the holes. In this way a hungry invader is likely to eat males only and leave the females safe. In the mason bee world it is

all about protecting the females. Only a few males need to survive to mate the next spring, but every female is important.

By early summer, all the adult females have laid their eggs and they die. The eggs spend the summer developing into new bees, and by fall they are fully mature bees in newly spun cocoons still in the same nesting tubes. They then hibernate all winter and wait for the signs of spring that will have them emerge in your garden. In other words, every year you will see the children of the bees you had the previous year. The colony should continue to grow every year as long as they have holes to lay their eggs into and pollen with which to provision the egg chambers.



There are many resources available to give you detailed information about mason bees. Much of the here information was from Jim Ulrich, owner of Knox Cellars Mason Bees (<https://www.knoxcellarsmasonbees.com/>). At his website you can find more

information and purchase all sorts of supplies (and cocoons).



Canned starter set

And, did you know, if you don't want to commit to year-round bee keeping, you can rent mason bees? It is an amazingly convenient way to try this out! Bee kits are mailed to you on your selected ship date, with instructions on what to do when you receive your bees. At

the end of the season, you will receive email instructions on how to mail back your bee kit. <https://www.rentmasonbees.com/>





Learn more at www.nytimes.com/2018/08/21/science/bees-pollination-farming.html

Growing Medicinal Herbs in the Home Garden

**Saturday, March 7 at
9:30am to 11:30am**

**Alan Chadwick Garden
239 McLaughlin Drive, Santa Cruz**

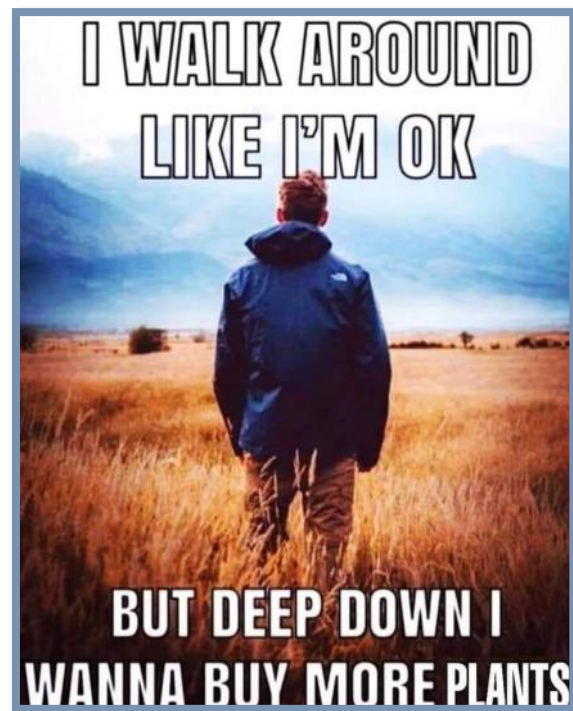
herbs and learn about what they need in order to thrive from your garden to your kitchen. We will look at dried herbs, discuss drying methods and storage of your harvest, and experience the feel of mixing up a bulk batch of herbal tea by hand (you'll get to take some home with you!) We will talk about how growing and using herbs with the seasons can empower each of us to cultivate the healer within for ourselves and our families.

Participants will leave with cuttings and seeds of easy to grow herbs, as well as a 12 oz bag of tea.

Visit <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4469897> for more information.

About the Instructor: Cameron (Cami) Salomon has a passion for plants! She has spent the last 16 years farming, gardening, and studying permaculture and herbalism in New Zealand, Australia, Peru, Chile, and California. She completed 3 years of formal Herbalism programs through the

California School of Herbal Studies in Forestville, CA and at Mount Madonna Institute of Ayurveda in Watsonville. In 2018, Cami broke ground on her farm business, founding Kindred Herbs, a small organic medicinal plant nursery in Santa Cruz. In the first year, Kindred Herbs offered up to 60 different medicinal plants to the home gardener.



Come learn how to get started growing your own medicine cabinet in the home garden! This course will cover a range of basics about starting, growing, harvesting and using medicinal herbs that grow well in our coastal climate. We will go for a garden walk to see, touch, smell, and taste



UCSC ARBORETUM and BOTANIC GARDEN: HUMMINGBIRD DAY

March 21 – 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Bring the whole family and explore the breathtaking gardens of the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Botanic Garden. Meet up with a docent to learn about plants that attract one of the Garden's most celebrated birds, the Hummingbird. You'll likely spot Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds, the two most common species in Northern California. It's a great opportunity to see some pretty amazing hummingbird biology. No early access, gates open at 9:00 am. We will not have children's activities this year. No scheduled tours or lectures. No special pricing, just regular admission.



Meyer Lemon Shaker Pie

If you are lucky enough to have a Meyer lemon tree, or a friend or neighbor who has one, this is the time of year you are probably enjoying a bumper crop. The beauty of this pie is its simplicity. Citrus × meyeri, the Meyer lemon, is a hybrid citrus fruit native to China. It is a cross between a citron and a mandarin/pomelo hybrid distinct from the common or bitter oranges

The Shakers are those folks who made sensible furniture, known for simplicity and quality. The story goes that lemons were a luxury, and not to be wasted, thus a Shaker lemon pie uses the entire lemon, except the seeds.

A Recipe

1 unbaked pie crust, homemade or store-bought

The filling: 4 Meyer lemons, tips cut off. With a very sharp knife or a mandoline, slice 4 Meyer lemons as thin as you can. 1/8 of an inch is not thin enough. Even 1/16th of an inch is too thick. Think paper thin. Get into your zen space and focus on slicing thinly and very carefully. Remove the seeds and turn the lemon slices and juice into a bowl. Mix with 1 3/4 to 2 cups sugar and 1/4 tsp. salt. Let this sit for at least 6 hours, or overnight. Then combine 4 eggs, 4 Tbsp melted butter, and 3 Tbsp flour. Stir in the lemons and all the juices.

Bake at 450 for 15 minutes and then reduce the heat to 375 for about 25 minutes more. (Check at 20 minutes.) The pie is done when an inserted knife comes out clean. Cool completely before cutting. Store in refrigerator.

Integrated Pest Management

By UC Master Gardeners
Delise Weir and Trink Praxel

The weather is lovely and the nurseries are filling with tender, tasty seedlings so tempting to take home and plant. But you're not the only one who finds those seedlings delicious. Do yourself a favor and use an ounce of prevention to eliminate a pound of cure later. Prevention is a key principle of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).



Your foe by land: Gophers. Spring is gopher breeding season so a run, usually inhabited by a solitary, territorial party of 1 may contain a family of 4. The best prevention is to EXCLUDE them by using underwire. Not the kind in ladies undergarments, underwire that creates a barrier around the root zone. This can be done by lining your raised beds with hardware cloth or planting in gopher baskets. Both of these options can be pricey and labor-intensive. If you rent or can't afford or haven't gotten around to one of these preventative solutions, it's time to escalate to traps. Learn all about how to monitor and trap gophers and deal with other vertebrates, such as deer, at our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Vertebrates class (see next page)..

Your foes by air: Birds and flying insects. Sparrows and finches LOVE a newly planted bed of seedlings and can take out a planting in a day. During the warmer months, butterflies, moths, and flies lay eggs on them that hatch into Very Hungry Caterpillars. EXCLUDE them by covering your bed with reemay or agrifabric. Another trick is to use 'tule', the fabric that wedding veils are made of: it's cheap, light as a feather, and lets water and sunshine in while keeping birds and insects out.

Your foes by sea? (perhaps slime): Slugs and snails. Before you lay that agrifabric over the bed, sprinkle a barrier of iron phosphate or "Sluggo" to prevent slugs and snails from getting settled in. Sluggo and Sluggo Plus are organic materials certified by the Organic

Materials Research Institute (OMRI) and work like a charm. Sluggo Plus will also take care of earwigs. If you have raised beds with wooden borders you can try copper tape around the perimeter to EXCLUDE slugs and snails - they won't cross over it. Our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Invertebrates! Saturday March 21 class in Watsonville will cover strategies to address snails and slugs, aphids, and caterpillars. See next page.

Be a smart and proactive gardener by using the core IPM principle of prevention through exclusion via mechanical barriers. You'll have the most exclusive garden in town.

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Lay On Their Last Breakfast. .

Good for us , not so good for them!
Scatter oat bran around your plants and wait for the slugs to eat it for breakfast. Oat bran is a favorite thing for slugs, but once eaten it expands inside them and then the end is nigh—they have been known to literally explode



Serious and Silly Ways to Kill or Outwit the Garden's Number One Enemy by Sarah Ford

Create a Slug Playhouse.

Harvest or buy a grapefruit. This is a double investment—you can enjoy it for breakfast and then use it as an organic trap or playhouse for slugs—they just love grapefruit! Halve the fruit and eat it. Make a small hole for slugs to enter the grapefruit skin. Place the skin upside down in the garden and wait a couple of days. Your plants will be left alone as the slugs huddle together under the skin and celebrate their delicious find. Collect up the slugs and dispose of them.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Integrated Pest Management:

Invertebrates (Aphids, Caterpillars & Snails)

10:00 am - noon

Cost: \$5

UCCE Extension Office Auditorium
1430 Freedom Blvd., Suite E
Watsonville, CA 95076



This class will focus on a handful of common invertebrate pests - aphids, thrips, caterpillars and snails – all of which can do significant damage in a short period of time in your spring garden. Learn how IPM strategies can be used to control these specific pests. The class will cover the basic steps of IPM which help you identify the pest and its impact, learn various control options available and find the least toxic approach that will work. This class will include classroom time and hands-on activity in the UC Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden to find and identify insect and snail damage. Please arrive 15 min early to check-in or register, walk-ins are always welcome!



SUNDAY, MARCH 8

Integrated Pest Management: Vertebrates (Gophers, Deer & Birds)

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Cost: \$5

Quail Hollow Ranch County Park
800 Quail Hollow Road, Felton, CA 95018

This class will focus on gophers, deer and birds, and the processes you can use to solve pest problems in your garden while minimizing risks to people and the environment. Join UC Master Gardeners Delise Weir and Trink Praxel to learn strategies to control these specific pests. We will cover the basic steps of IPM which help you identify the pest and its impact, learn various control options available, and find the least toxic approach that will work. This class will include a power point presentation and a stroll around the ranch looking for signs of vertebrate activity including hands-on activity to find gopher runs and set gopher traps.

A portion of the class will be outside. A hat, sunscreen and layered clothing are advised. Please arrive 15 minutes early for check-in or registration.

March Board Meeting

We'll be meeting at the home of Janine Canada on March 23rd. We'll start at 6:00 p.m. with a garden tour. Janine's address is 2655 Brommer St., #43, Santa Cruz. You don't have to be a Board member to attend—join us!

A Few March Gardening Tips

(from The 3 Growbags Blog, <https://the3growbags.com/>)

Did you leave the seedheads and brown foliage on many of your perennials over the winter, for the wildlife? Well done! But now it's time to cut all of that away to make room for the new shoots. If you leave it on any later, you run a distressingly high risk of damaging those new green stems or having to take at least twice as long doing the job while you 'tiptoe' around them.

This also applies to perennial ornamental grasses like *Miscanthus*, *Calamagrostis* and *Deschampsia*. It helps to tie up the stems with a bit of twine first before chopping the lot very close to the ground. Don't do this with *Stipa*, *Cortaderia* or *Anemone* though – for these, don gloves and rake your fingers through the stems, you'll find that the dead bits will come away at the base, leaving all the newer growth. A little tip here – bend each hank of grass sharply at the base, before pulling – the dead bits will break, leaving the new leaves unharmed.



**MARCH 8TH
DAYLIGHT
SAVING TIME**

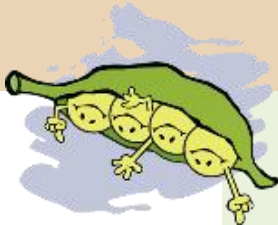


HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES YET?
Don't make this your last newsletter-that would be a shame! Renew your membership by the end of the month.

www.etsy.com/shop/curiousprintpattern.

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

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 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos



The Gardeners' Club
P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005

President
Cherry Thompson, 475-0991
cherrylea@comcast.net
Vice President & Publicity
Ilene Wilson, 724-4609
mygardensup@aol.com
Secretary
April Barclay, 688-7656
AABarclay@aol.com
Treasurer (Interim)
Pat McVeigh
566-4553
pmcveigh@baymoon.com
Membership
Suzanne Caron 609-6230
Suzanne.bottomline@gmail.com
Hospitality
Janine Canada359-5949
jcanada26@gmail.com
Newsletter Writer/Editor
Lise Bixler, 457-2089
lisebixler@sbcglobal.net
www.thegardenersclub.org

Members-at-Large
Debbie Kindie, 462-6296
poppy-54@live.com
Plant Table
Lupe Allen, 247-2705
lupeda@ucsc.edu
aneymark@hotmail.com
Jan Olafsson, 464-0554
humnusme@aol.com
Refreshments
Marge Gregory
684-1529
regoriapaptos@att.net
Webmaster
Joe Thompson
joe@joehometech.com