# The Gardeners Club February 2012—Part I\*

\*Editor's Note: Oh, dear, the newsletter is getting away from me again—need to do a catch-up issue.

Look for Part II of this newsletter in a week or so.—Lise Bixler

Garden Planning for Small Garden Spaces & Raised Beds

With Trish Hildinger
Thursday, Feb. 9th, 7:00 p.m.
Aptos Grange Hall
2555 Mar Vista Drive



Trish Hildinger is an avid organic home gardener with a particular interest in vegetable gardening and home food production. She has a degree in Ornamental Horticulture and has had many jobs in the horticulture industry. Trish loves to share her passion for organic gardening by volunteering and teaching gardening workshops and classes. She teaches Garden-Based Learning Workshops for Life Lab and also coordinates Garden Cruz, an intensive organic gardening course held at the UCSC Farm and Alan Chadwick Garden.

At our meeting, Trish will help us learn some basic garden planning, plus specific rotation and succession vegetable planning specifically for smaller gardens or raised beds. If you'd like, bring a sketch of your garden to plan what, when and where to plant for spring, summer and into fall. This is a shortened version of the workshop she is leading at the UCSC Farm on February 5<sup>th</sup> (see below).

Trish has a website and a blog. Visit www.trishsgarden.com.

Refreshments will be served. Thanks to Ellen Treen for snack, Ilene Wilson for juice and Melissa Peckinpah for dessert.

Sunday, February 5, 2012 10am-1pm Garden Planning Workshop

This workshop is tailored to gardeners with small plots or raised beds. Learn how to plan your garden for maximum production, including succession planting and crop rotation. Bring a sketch of your garden to plan what, when, and where to plant for spring, summer and into fall. Organized by UCSC Farm & Garden Program. \$20 for Friends of the Farm and Alan Chadwick Garden members; \$30 general public, payable day of the workshop-no preregistration necessary.



Our spring plant exchange and sale is in April. Start sowing now!



#### February is National Bird-Feeding Month!



In recognition of this special month, Sharon Hull, Club member, horticulturist AND avid birder, has contributed this article.

#### Feeding the Birds by Sharon Hull

In the winter months, when it becomes a challenge to fill my garden with the hues of flowers, I get my color fix by watching birds. And to get the birds down low and close to my home where I can see them well, I feed them, both by putting out feeders, and by filling the garden with plants that provide food. Native birds don't actually need to be fed but I do it for my own enjoyment. I've done it for years, not only to keep the often dreary wintry weather from becoming boring and depressing, but also because I think birds are among the most fascinating of creatures. I never tire of watching them and can't imagine my garden without them. So what do I feed, and how do I do it?

Creating a welcoming habitat without chemicals that offers birds the essentials - food, water and shelter - is healthiest for the birds but also the most satisfying for the gardener. Some of our native plant species are very beautiful, and they are perfectly adapted to our marine -influenced Mediterranean climate with its damp winters and dry summers. In addition, a well-planted garden attracts insects that the insectivorous birds must have, so you'll get many more species if your garden is designed to be birdfriendly. But entire books have been written on that topic and many web sites offer great advice so I won't go into it here. (One of my favorite sites is http://www.laspilitas.com/bird.htm.) Rather, I want to pass along a few tips on using feeders that I've learned by trial and error.

Which bird species you can attract will depend largely on where you live. If you are in town, surrounded by buildings and pavement with few large trees, you will likely get a few of the most common native species plus a few aliens like European Starlings and Eurasian Collared standard mix: it seems to be most Doves. In the county, if you live in an area with pastures and open spaces, grassland birds will find you. And if you live under trees, you will see mostly forest birds at your feeders. But the type of feeder you use, and what you fill it with will also influence the species that come to your garden. Remember

too that not all birds eat seed. Some are entirely insectivorous but they may be attracted to the activity around the feeders, increasing the numbers of species that you get to watch from vour windows.

In choosing a feeder, my strong preference is for a tube feeder -a long cylinder with small openings along the sides that are most attractive for the clinging birds like chickadees. I also prefer the kind that comes with a squirrel baffle surrounding the cylinder; the little birds can freely enter but the bigger birds like the starlings and doves cannot. (The baffle may or may not discourage squirrels, which are among the most determined and canny of critters.) I like the baffle also because it gives the small birds a bit of protection from Cooper's or Sharp-shinned Hawks, should one of them decide that "my" birds are on their menu. Tube feeders have an additional advantage: birds that hoard food like Western Scrub or Steller's Jays can only grab a few seeds at one time, rather than carry large quantities away in their mouths to stash for later.

What should you put in a feeder? Cheapest by far is what is called a "bird seed mix". However, I never use it and here's why: much of it is seed that our birds won't eat. As they search for the few kinds of seed in the mix that they do like, they will knock out the undesirable seed, and drop it on the ground below

the feeder where it may attract critters like rats that you'd just as soon not have around your home. At the very least, the spilled seed creates a mess which will decay and must be frequently cleaned up. Another reason I avoid appealing to the non-native birds I don't care to encourage, such as starlings and house sparrows. So what do our birds like? Sunflower seed is always appreciated by many of our most beautiful seed-loving bird species. It is high in nutrients and oils which benefit the birds in colder weather and as they

> prepare for the stresses of the nesting season. Black Oil seed is especially nutritious. The downside however is the constant rain of the hulls that are dropped below the feeder, sometimes molding if not cleaned up, and preventing plant growth beneath. I

buy only "chipped" sunflower seed, which has had the hulls removed. It is more expensive, but the birds waste almost none of it and my money is not being spent on inedible parts. And the little bit that does get dropped is kept cleaned up by the ground species like Towhees and Juncos

Another good winter food is suet. Easy to use commercial suet cakes are sold locally and are specifically intended as bird food. They don't spoil, and readily pop into the inexpensive wire suet feeders available wherever bird supplies are sold. I avoid hanging them over a deck or walkway - inevitably a bit will

> end up falling below the feeder where it can become a slipping hazard. So my suet feeders are hung over garden beds, or with a saucer suspended below them to catch any crumbs. If you want to make your

own suet food, a good recipe, created and tested by Ohio naturalist/writer Julie Zickefoose, and called "Improved Zick Dough", is here: http:// juliezickefoose. blogspot.com/2010/03/ zick-dough-improved.html.



Sunflower seed and suet will attract an amazing variety of species. Regulars at my woodland winter feeders include some truly charming and beautiful birds. Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Pygmy Nuthatches, Purple and House Finches, Lesser and American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and Townsend's Warblers eat directly from the feeders. Spotted and California Towhees, Song Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, White and Golden-crowned Sparrows and occasionally, a Bewick's Wren clean up any dropped seed. Jays,



Chestnut-backed Chickadee scattering Nyjer seed (Lise Bixler's garden )

both Steller's and Western Scrub-jays, use the feeders plus glean below them. Depending on your micro-climate, you may get additional or different species, such as California Valley Quail, but all will be fascinating to watch. Many folks like to put out Nyjer (or Niger) seed for the siskins and goldfinches. However,

it is expensive and "my" birds seem to actually prefer sunflower chips so I have stopped offering seed from this thistle relative.

To prevent cats nabbing birds for their own dinner, try scattering big pine cones with sharp spines under the feeders they can't walk on them. I've also used a 3' tall circle of stiff wire mesh with 1" openings under feeders. The birds can come and go through the openings but cats can't get underneath to hide or pounce on unsuspecting birds.

For bird feeders, seed, and all other supplies mentioned here, several local stores offer a wide selection. The Garden Company on Mission in Santa Cruz, Pro-build Garden Center on River St in Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley Feed in Scotts Valley and Aptos Feed & Pet Supply on Soquel Drive in Aptos carry many styles of seed and suet feeders, as well as a good seed selection. I am sure there are other local stores that also offer many options.

I could go on and on about birds in the garden - I haven't even touched on feeding hummingbirds, or how to attract birds with water in the garden, or other ways to make sure your garden is a bird haven. But for now, I'll leave you with this thought: if you get cabin fever on rainy or blustery days, and wish you could spend more time outdoors, try putting out a feeder or two that you can watch from your windows. I think you'll find, as I do, that watching the everchanging panorama of birdlife will keep you sane until the weather changes and you can be out there with your hands in the soil.



There are so many great resources for learning more about birds. A good place to start is the website of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology "All About Birds" web site snapshot of where birds are across the (www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx? pid=1189&ac=ac ). There are too many resources to list-visit!

There you can learn all about Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey that you can join any time. Anyone can participate: children, families, teachers and students, retirees, coworkers on lunch breaks, nature centers, and more. Participants count birds at their feeders from November to early April on two consecutive days as often as once a week, then send us their data. Join up and they'll send you a kit with everything you need:

- Handbook and instructions with tips for attracting birds to your yard.
- FeederWatch calendar for planning count days, illustrated with participants' photos.
- "Common Feeder Birds" poster with more than 30 illustrations by field-guide artist Larry McQueen, including many of the ones on this page.
- Access to the FeederWatch forums. where participants share, discuss, and

exchange help.

A small annual fee, about the price of half a bag of sunflower seed, provides essential support for staff time, website maintenance, data analysis, and materials. Join or learn more at www.feederwatch.org.



Illustration copyright www.SusanFaye.net

But wait, there's more—it's time for the 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) on February 17-20, 2012. The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time U.S. and Canada. Please visit the official website at www.birdcount.org for more information.

Each checklist submitted by these citizen scientists helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing - and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, participants turned in more than 92,000 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded.

"Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time. Anyone who can identify even a few species can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities."

- Judy Braus, Vice-President of Education & Centers, Audubon



While we are thinking birdy, check out the Klehm's Song Sparrow plant catalog (www.songsparrow.com or 1-800-553-3715). Klehm's specializes in fine, strong mailorder plants for those who don't want to start everything from seed. There are some unusual, tempting varieties to try-check out their "junior conifers" section, and think of the container possibilities.



Picea glauca 'Elf'

First Friday at the Sesnon Gallery UCSC **Katerina Lanfranco: Natural Selection** Clear Cuts—artists cutting through Richard Wohlfeiler Laser Cut Relief-Prints

Friday, Feb. 3, 2-4pm. **Ikebana and Bonsai Demonstrations** 

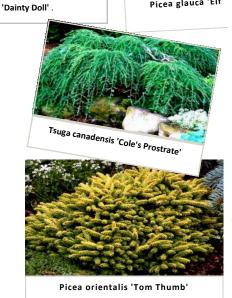
2:00 - 2:15pm Intro by Katerina Lanfranco. Relationship of contemporary arts to ikebana and the influence of Ikebana and Bonsai on her current installation.

2:15-3:00pm Ikebana demonstration and comments by Mitsuyo Tao

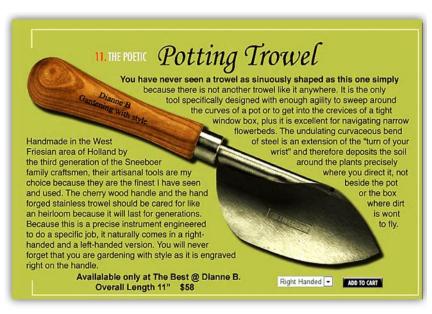
3:00-4:00pm Bonsai talk and demonstration by Don White

RSVP to sesnon@ucsc.edu





Do you want to give your Valentine more poetry than "Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet and so are you"? Try "The Poetic **Potting** Trowel" at www. diannebbest. com/ home.php.



eclectic and witty garden writing.



Corona Tools is hosting the first annual <u>Growers Success Summit</u>, a 2-week series of webinars beginning February 6th. Designed to help you achieve growing success in your garden and landscape and filled with topics ranging from water conservation to proper pruning techniques to the many aspects of vertical gardening, this event promises to educate and entertain gardeners across the nation. The live event is open to the first 1,000 participants so register NOW at <u>www.corona toolsusa.com/resources/growers-success-summit-2012</u>.



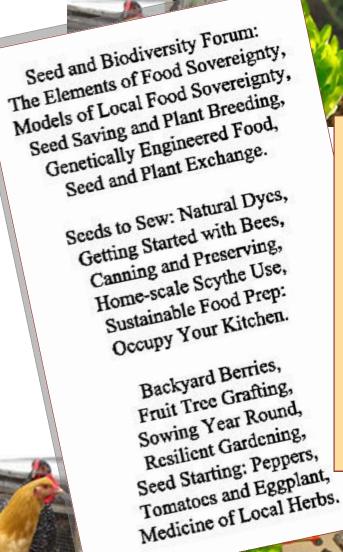
#### Flowers Last Forever

At least these ones do! If you've ever wanted to try your hand at metalwork, here's your chance—make a handmade metal flower for Valentine's Day! The owner of 5 Feet From the Moon (an artisan concrete and metal studio), Dominic Boinich and guest metalsmith Michael Wood will show you some basic welding and metal working techniques in this 2 day workshop. Learn how to shape, cut, heat and form various types of metal into your very own sculptural flower. <a href="https://www.fivefeetfromthemoon.com/workshops/">www.fivefeetfromthemoon.com/workshops/</a>; (831)234-7555.



Feb. 4th & 5th 10-2:30 (bring a lunch) \$275

Westside Santa Cruz, 1296 Fair Avenue



The Winter Reskilling Expo will be February 5 from 10:00 to

will be February 5 from 10:00 to 4:00 at the Museum of Art and History. The theme is Local Food Sovereignty. Check out the Santa Cruz Re-Skilling Expo Page on Facebook for more information about teachers and classes.

There will be a Seed and Plant Exchange that day at 4:00. Please plan to bring seedlings and seeds. They will repackage the seeds into appropriate quantities for you throughout the day.

Admission by Sliding Scale: \$5 to \$25.



Just what Is "Food Sovereignty"? It is the complex notion that represents the human right to sufficient and nutritious food, "Food Security", but goes beyond it to entail the capacity of an individual, a community, a region to determine how this food is going to be

produced. Thus people have the right to define their own food, farm, livestock, aquaculture and agroforestry systems.

Wow! There are a gazillion opportunities to learn about growing fruit trees this month.

If you are interested in a really intensive fruit tree class, the new year-round Follow the Fruit Trees course at UCSC's Chadwick Garden begins February 11-12. This series of six daylong workshops (3 weekends) will take participants from site preparation, tree planting and irrigation setup through pruning, pest control, and other seasonal care considerations to harvesting, fruit preservation, and winter soil preparation. Class size is limited and pre-registration is required. Contact Amy Bolton at 459-3240 casfs@ucsc.edu; cost is \$450-500.

Shorter workshops are listed below.



Sierra Azul Nursery & Garden Fruit Tree 101 February 4 (Heavy rain cancels call 763-0939) \$30 general, \$20 UCSC

F&G members (tuition benefits Friends of UCSC Farm & Garden). Learn the basics of fruit tree planting, irrigation, fertility, pest management and winter pruning. Taught by Orin Martin, Manager of UCSC's Alan Chadwick Garden and Matthew Sutton, owner of Orchard Keepers. Lots of bareroot fruit trees are available now and they are on sale the day of the workshop to participants at a 10% discount. Location is 2660 East Lake Avenue (Highway 152), Watsonville (across from the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds). By the way, if you subscribe to the Sierra Azul newsletter (<u>www.sierra azul.com</u>), you'll get a coupon for 15% off all plant purchases and 10% offmerchandise. All Leucadendrons and Coprosmas are 20% off!

#### DIG Gardens

Heirloom Fruit Trees and Fruit Tree Care, Saturday, February 11, 11 AM Join the guys from Tierra Madre farm to learn about heirloom fruit trees and



general fruit tree care. Tierra Madre Farm is a small farm in the Santa Cruz Mountains dedicated to promoting and preserving the world's fruit tree diversity. They will talk about the many delicious heirloom varieties available as well as general fruit tree care and success from pruning to fertilizing. \$10. Fruit trees will be available for purchase. 420 Water St., Santa Cruz.

Stone Fruit Pruning Workshop Saturday, February 18th, 10:00 a.m.—
1:00 p.m. Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm. Learn how to prune your plum, apricot, cherry and other stone fruit trees. Wear warm clothes and bring a snack; heavy rain cancels. No preregistration necessary. Rainout date is Saturday, February 25.

## The Garden Company Fruit Tree Q&A class with Orin Martin and Matthew Sutton. February 25th at 4:00

2218 Mission Street ,Santa Cruz

Sign up in advance for this free class (429-8424)! Topics will include variety selection, pruning techniques, insect control and disease prevention, but bring any other questions you may have. From The Garden Company newsletter:

"Have you ever bitten into a sweet, juicy apple, apricot, nectarine, peach or pear and thought to yourself, "I wish I had one of these trees in my yard?" Now is the time to act on that thought. The "bare root" season represents the absolute best deciduous fruit tree selection and pricing of the entire year. The trees are dormant and the weather is perfect for planting. Check out our full list of varieties and prices (<a href="http://santacruz gardenco.com/news/12/02/">http://santacruz gardenco.com/news/12/02/</a>), then come in and let us guide you through the selection and care of your new trees. But don't wait too long as

### popular varieties sell out quickly." Dormant Spraying

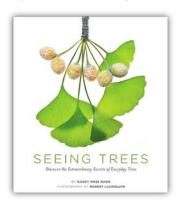
Now is the time to use a dormant spray to prevent peach leaf curl, a fungus that distorts leaves and destroys fruit, when buds are beginning to swell but before they open. Lime sulfur spray used to be recommended, but it has been taken off the market, and the organic alternative is now copper spray combined with an insecticidal oil. Fruit and nut trees can be sprayed now but it must be before the flower or leaf buds show color. Don't forget to clean up old leaves and fallen fruit under trees. If you spray your roses, now is the time (I don't, but I do try and strip all of the leaves off and clean up thoroughly around the bush). If you missed Sharon Hull's very informative and helpful newspaper article in January ("Work now for fantastic fruit trees, roses later"), you can read it at www.santacruzsentinel.com/ ci 19693446.

#### OtherThings to Do in the February Garden

- Direct sow peas (sweet or edible), beets, carrots, chard, lettuce, Chinese cabbage and other greens, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, potatoes, radishes and spinach.
- If plants get frost damage, wait until after spring growth has begun to prune damage away.
- Finish pruning your roses. Prune boxwoods, nadina, hollies, crape myrtles and vitex.
- Cut buddleia (butterfly bush) down to the ground. It will grow back just as tall as it was before—promise!
- Plant gladiolus corms every two weeks now through March for a succession of summer blooms. Add bone meal to the planting hole.
- Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants indoors now.

#### Other Trees

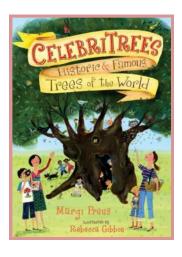
If you look at all of the workshops described this month, you'd think the only important trees are fruit trees, and that the most important thing to know about trees is how to prune them. Oh, but there is so much more! Here are three books to help expand our knowledge.



Have you ever looked at a tree? That may sound like a silly question, but there is so much more to notice about a tree than first meets the eye. Seeing Trees by Nancy Ross Hugo and Robert Llewellyn celebrates seldom-seen but easily observable tree traits and invites you to watch trees with the same care and sensitivity that birdwatchers watch birds. Many people, for example, are surprised to learn that oaks and maples have flowers, much less flowers that are astonishingly beautiful when viewed up close.

Focusing on widely grown trees, this captivating book describes the rewards of careful and regular tree viewing, outlines strategies for improving your observations, and describes some of the most visually interesting tree structures, including leaves, flowers, buds, leaf scars, twigs, and bark. In-depth profiles of ten familiar species — including such beloved trees as white oak, southern magnolia, white pine, and tulip poplar — show you how to recognize and understand many of their most compelling (but usually overlooked) physical features.

Nancy Ross Hugo's delightful text and Robert Llewellyn's breathtaking photographs deliver a steady stream of small astonishments that not only underscore the fascinating physiology of trees but will bring you into a closer, more intimate relationship with these miracles of nature. —Timber Press



We are fascinated by famous people, but how about famous plants? Trees, that is. The fourteen trees in this book, which combines ecology and history and folklore, have earned the title "Celebritrees" for their global fame and significance. The oldest known single living organism on earth is "Methuselah," a 4,800 year old bristlecone pine located in the Inyo National Forest in California. The Chapel Oak in France has two chapels built into it. The Dueling Oaks in Louisiana were the preferred site for gentlemen to shoot it out if they had been offended in the slightest possible way (one duel was over an insult to the Mississippi River). Margi Preus and Rebecca Gibbons' unusual take on unique foliage is great fun and highly informative. Kids' should enjoy this tour of the world's most famous trees, and perhaps find a greater respect for those very large plants that give us shade, shelter, and beauty.



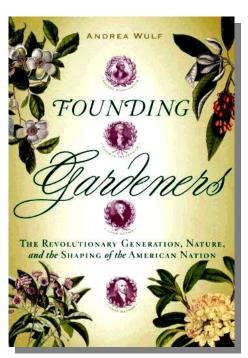


Presidents' Day is February 20th. There is no real evidence that George Washington ever cut down a cherry tree and uttered his famous words, "I cannot tell a lie". But read Andrea Wulf's fascinating book Founding

Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nature to move beyond this myth to more fascinating information about not only the character and history of Washington, but a unique view of how the United States was formed. Wulf examines the creation of the American nation and the lives of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison and others through the lens of gardens, landscapes, nature and agriculture.

In 1776, while preparing to defend Manhattan from the British, Washington wrote a long letter to his estate manager at Mount Vernon. Wulf writes, "As the city braced itself, Washington pondered the voluptuous blossom of rhododendron, the sculptured flowers of mountain laurel and the perfect pink of crab apple. These 'clever kinds[s] of Trees' (especially flowering ones), he instructed, should be planted in two groves by either side of his house...Only American natives should be used, he instructed, and all could be transplanted from the forests of Mount Vernon. As the young nation faced its first military confrontation in the name of liberty, Washington decided that Mount Vernon was to be an American garden where English trees were not allowed".

For George Washington, trees were expressions of America's glorious beauty and liberty. Jefferson declared the cutting of any tree "a crime little short of murder." Read more!



## Santa Cruz Chamber Players



#### The Garden at Night:

Symbolism and Psychology in Music
Saturday, February 25, 8 PM &
Sunday, February 26 at 3 PM
Venue: Christ Lutheran Church, 10107 Soquel Dr., Aptos
\$25 General • \$20 Senior • \$10 Youth
Advanced tickets: <a href="mailto:santacruztickets.com">santacruztickets.com</a> or 420-5260

The Garden has many symbolic meanings: a place of order, an earthly paradise; a place where the soul meets nature, fertility, birth and death. It is an image of the soul and innocence, of consciousness itself. In this concert we set a stage for these ideas to be experienced through music. Tann's *Gardens of Anna Maria Luisa De' Medici* depicts the beauty of the garden: a place to delight the senses; nature under cultivation: the garden as an orderly, earthly paradise. Gubaidulina's *The Garden of Joys and Sorrows* allows the listener to reflect and meditate upon the flow between a garden's fruition and dying. As much an ornithologist as a composer, Messiaen based *Le Merle Noir (The Blackbird)* on actual birdsong. Because of its enclosed nature, the garden is also a symbol of consciousness. Gorecki's text for his *Requiem*, taken from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "Good night . . . flights of angels sing thee to thy rest," symbolizes death and the loss of consciousness.

### The Gardeners' Club

1633 Quail Hollow Road, 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**

Sim Gilbert, 475-8162 simgilbert@baymoon.com

#### Membership

Suzanne Mercado, 609-6230 Suzanne.bottomline@gmail.com

#### Hospitality

Debbie Kindle, 462-6296 poppy-54@live.com

#### **Newsletter Writer/Editor**

Lise Bixler, 457-2089 lisebixler@sbcglobal.net

#### Members-at-Large

Bill Patterson, 479-3729 wilderwill@comcast.net Pat McVeigh, 475-9357 pmcveigh@baymoon.com Joanna Hall, 662-8821 jhavelock@sbcglobal.net

#### **Plant Table**

Patty Connole, 335-4134 pattyconnolerItr@aol.com 2nd position—vacant 3rd position - vacant

#### Refreshments

Dey Weybright, 426-3028 DEENART@aol.com

#### Website

Joe Thompson



#### It's easy-peasy to join our club!

Dues are \$12 per calendar year. Make check to "The Gardeners' Club" and mail to 1633 Quail Hollow Rd., Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos.

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