

The Gardeners' Club

March 2011



Terra cotta Chinese Shar Pei

Does Your Garden Have Wrinkles?

Spring Cleaning: Time to Give Your Garden a Makeover

Does your garden look tired and in need of a facelift? Join Jan Shaw as she discusses the 'wrinkles' that come with age — tired lawns, over-pruned shrubs, small planting beds, escapee plants taking over — you know what we're talking about! Jan will share a PowerPoint presentation identifying common aging garden problems and offer ideas to brighten your landscape. She will discuss her favorite plant groups and creative ways to use them.

Jan is an enthusiastic member of our club, a local landscape designer and passionate plantsperson..

March Meeting

Thursday, March 10th

7:00 p.m.

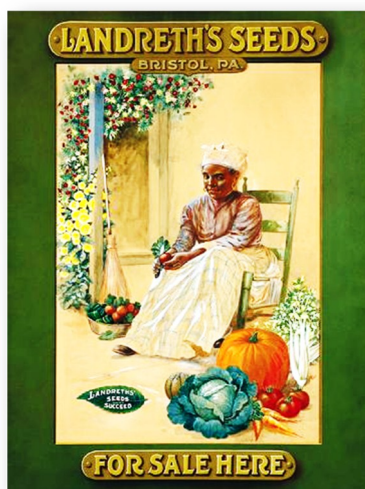
Aptos Grange

2555 Mar Vista Drive

Thanks to Dee Weybright for snack, Ilene Wilson for dessert and Joanna Hall for juice.



D. Landreth Seed Co.

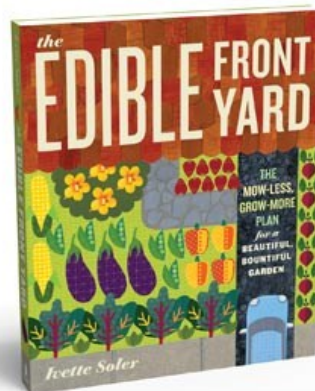


"If we could please presidents Washington and Jefferson, WE CAN PLEASE YOU." This is the motto of Landreth Seeds, founded in 1784 and the oldest continuously operating seed company in the country. In fact, it is the fifth oldest corporation in America. Other of its claims-to-fame are that it was the first seed company to introduce zinnias from Mexico; it developed Bloomsdale Spinach, one of the most popular vegetables ever grown; it introduced to Americans the first truly white potato (prior to this, potatoes had been yellow); it perfected the first variety of yellow tomato. The Landreth company has treasured America's and the world's agricultural and horticultural heritage, and is well-known for its many heirloom varieties.

Many of you in the Club know Gesna Clarke, a long-time Santa Cruz resident who moved to Sacramento a few years ago. A friend of Gesna gave her a gift of seeds from Landreth's new African American Heritage Collection, a unique collection of heirloom seeds that were carried by enslaved peoples from Africa and the Caribbean. The fruits and vegetables harvested from these seeds became the dietary staples of the African American family. Landreth says it is "pleased to offer this collection for all peoples who treasure freedom".

Gesna is so excited by the possibilities that she has had new raised beds built for these vegetable seeds. She promises to report back on their success at the end of the summer. In the meantime, go to http://www.landrethseeds.com/catalog/african_american.php to learn more about traditional African American food culture, and to see which varieties you are tempted to try in your own vegetable garden.

Pretty delicious!



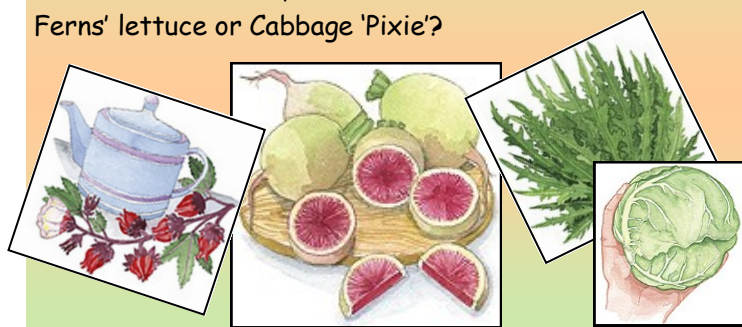
Timber Press has published another winner. Here's their description of The Edible Front Yard: The Mow-Less, Grow-More Plan for a Beautiful, Bountiful Garden by Ivette Soler.

People everywhere are turning patches of soil into bountiful vegetable gardens, and each spring a new crop of beginners pick up trowels and plant seeds for the first time. They're planting tomatoes in raised beds, runner beans in small plots, and strawberries in containers. But there is one place that has, until now, been woefully neglected — the front yard.

And there's good reason. The typical veggie garden, with its raised beds and plots, is not the most attractive type of garden, and favorite edible plants like tomatoes and cucumbers have a tendency to look a scraggly, even in their prime. But The Edible Front Yard isn't about the typical veggie garden, and author Ivette Soler is passionate about putting edibles up front and creating edible gardens with curb appeal.

Soler offers step-by-step instructions for converting all or part of a lawn into an edible paradise; specific guidelines for selecting and planting the most attractive edible plants; and design advice and plans for the best placement and for combining edibles with ornamentals in pleasing ways. Inspiring and accessible, The Edible Front Yard is a one-stop resource for a front-and-center edible garden that is both beautiful and bountiful year-round.

For further inspiration, go to Renee's Garden (www.reneesgarden.com/seasonal/newfor2011.html) and check out her new selections. How about Hibiscus Herbal Tea 'Zinger', 'Watermelon' radish, 'Garden Ferns' lettuce or Cabbage 'Pixie'?



The word “blue” has many meanings in various cultures. Sometimes we *feel* blue; February brought a wave of gardening magazine articles on how to beat the winter blues. A message

from High Country Gardens emailed suggestions to “plant a blue streak” to provide a sense of cool and balance other colors, using agastaches, veronicas, penstemon ‘Blue Lips’, ‘Big Blue’ sea holly and many others (plants.highcountrygardens.com). But I was too busy to either mope or plant; I was preparing for a two-week birding trip to Southern Morocco. I only had time to leave instructions for the annual cutting down of my blue buddleias, which used to be shrubs and now are trunked like trees. Then we were off in a plane winging our way through blue skies to North Africa.

Before we joined our birding group, we spent a couple of days in the medina, the old square, of Marrakesh. I wanted to visit what people call “blue heaven”, the nearby famous Majorelle Gardens. I could easily fill this whole newsletter with photos, descriptions and exclamations about this public garden, designed by French artist Jacques Majorelle in 1924, during the colonial period when Morocco was a protectorate of France. Majorelle was an obsessive plant hunter; cacti, palms, bamboo, blooming potted plants and aquatic plants from five continents are densely planted, with a tapestry of mixed trees, flowers, and shrubs filling most of the site and forming a lush oasis. In today’s garden, which was purchased and restored by fashion icon Yves Saint Laurent in 1980, each specimen plant is surrounded by space so it can be seen and appreciated as an individual. Plants are not massed together for similarities, but neighbored with those of different color and architectural shapes. The ground is mulched in a pinkish/terracotta gravel, which further highlights each plant.

Moroccan Blues

By Lise Bixler

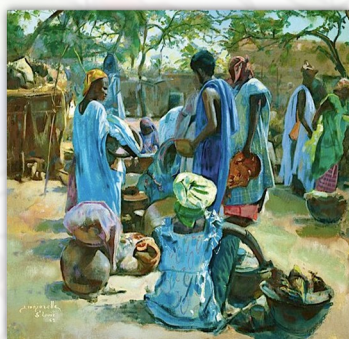
But it is the blueness of this garden for which it famous. Majorelle found a powerful blue everywhere he went in Morocco, in tiles and mosaics, in the

dress of the Berber peoples, in the sky and ocean, around the doorways and windows of everything from casbahs to humble adobe structures. In Morocco, Arabs, Berbers, and even many Jews profoundly believe in the power of the color of blue to ward off evil spirits. The unique blue that Majorelle used extensively in his garden and its buildings is named after him, *bleu Majorelle*. People try to describe this blue – electric blue, cobalt – but no words come close. There is too much life in this color, too complex a relationship with light, too much Morocco in it, to put into words. In the garden it is used on the outsides of the buildings, on the stucco garden walls, on pots, in tilework. In combination



and contrast with the variety of natural greens, it rattles, shocks and, ultimately, soothes. The many large pots, not only blue ones but many in yellow, are not glazed; rather, they are terracotta pots that have painted. This gives them a chalky, flaky texture that echoes the aged crumbling walls of the surrounding villages, homes and ruins.

Leaving Marrakesh, we headed up to the base of the snow-capped Atlas Mountains to start birding. These jagged “Mountains of Mountains” separate the Atlantic Ocean from the Sahara Desert. My fingers blue with cold, I was easily distracted from birding. It was amazing to find, in the cracks of the icy rocks, many interesting succulent plants. Some of them looked familiar—could I have them in my own garden? How miraculous that these plants could grow in such a cold and arid place.



J. Majorelle, Market Space, oil painting, 1950. oil.

(continued)

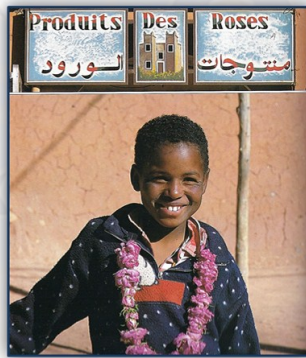
Driving through a small roadside settlement, more blue caught my eye. A jewelry vendor had embellished her stand with a living tree, the trunk painted blue, yellow and orange.

We drove through the heart of the desert to the cold, high-altitude El Kelaa M'Gouna, the "Valley of Roses". There it is way too cold for palm trees,



but when we visited almond trees were already bursting into bloom. One small village of traditional adobe houses follows the other. Behind them, hidden from the road, are troves of Damascus rose bushes. Each year, in April, up to four

thousand tons of petals of *Rosa Damascena*, also known as "the Highland rose" (a highly fragrant rose probably introduced in Morocco by pilgrims returning from Mecca around 1100), are harvested for perfume, rose water, culinary products and other uses. A huge 4-day "Festival of the Roses" follows each May. Rose petals are a classic Middle Eastern spice, and are included in the Moroccan spice mixture called *ras el hanout*, used to flavor rice, couscous, etc.—even ice cream. A recipe for the mix follows this article.



Photograph from Bonechi's [Southern Morocco](#).



Cream-colored Courser

You might think that birdwatchers find birds in pristine places, but, unfortunately, they often find themselves in some pretty trashy environments. Such was the case when we birded in the Hammada Stony Desert Tagdilt Track, a dry riverbed.

It was great finding larks, sandgrouse and Cream-colored Courser, but not-so-great viewing hundreds of plastic bags spread by the wind all over the place. It made me melancholy; in fact, it made me downright blue. Here's how we gave directions for sighting a



bird: "See that blue bag next to the white rock? Go to the orange bag behind it, left to the purplish bag. The bird is behind the green bag diagonal to it." I am not making this up. I felt we should have been picking up bags as we birded, but we would have needed a large truck to hold them all and we wouldn't have even made a dent in the debris. Wherever we went—at the beaches, at a biological preserve—I'd take a photograph of a shrub only to notice at its base the omnipresent plastic water bottles with their blue caps. Tattered plastic bags impaled on dried grass stalks, waving in the wind, seemed to be flags surrendering to environmental indifference.

Our driver in the Sahara was named Barach. As you can tell by his indigo-dyed clothing, he is Berber, one of the "Blue Men of the Desert". Many Berbers prefer to call themselves *Imazighen*, meaning "free and noble people". Baruch invited us into his home where his brother served us traditional Moroccan mint tea, very sweet and strong (they call it Berber whiskey!). Then Barach showed us his garden, with a healthy crop of alfalfa, various cereals, onions and the healthiest carrots I've ever seen.



One of my favorite sights was to see men coming home from market at the end of the day with huge piles of carrots, the greens at least a foot-and-a-half long, tied to the back of their bicycles. I'm sharing a recipe for my favorite Moroccan carrot salad following this article. Serve it in a bright blue bowl and you'll have a feast for the eyes as well as your mouth.

There were no avid botanists or gardeners on this trip, no one to get excited with me when I found a lily or orchid or a plant that looked like a cross between a cauliflower and a rock. But several of my birding companions were as interested in bugs as I am, and one of them, John Fraser, was kind enough to share with us his fine photo of a

Common Blue he discovered. This butterfly made me miss my own butterfly garden, and made it a little easier to say goodbye to Morocco.



Photograph by John Fraser



Moroccan Recipes

Ras el Hanout Spice Blend



The name translates to “top of the shop”, meaning the best spices are used. To make a spiced couscous or rice dish, just add ½ a teaspoon per cup. Try adding to oil for a marinade.

Ingredients: 2 tsp. coriander seeds; 2 tsp. cumin seeds; 1 tsp. turmeric; 1 tsp. ground cinnamon; 1 tsp. pink peppercorns; 1 Tablespoon dried rose petals; 1/2 tsp. cardamom seeds; 1/2 tsp. fennel seeds; 1/2 tsp. black peppercorns; 1/2 tsp. ground cloves; 1/2 tsp. cayenne; 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg; 1/4 tsp. ground ginger; 1/4 tsp. salt.

Directions: Heat up the seeds and peppercorns in a frying pan. Dry fry until aromatic, about a minutes. Place all the ingredients into a food processor/mill or coffee grinder and process until smooth. Store in an airtight container.



Moroccan Carrot Salad

What makes this salad unique is the cumin, so if that's a flavor you don't like, this salad isn't for you.

Ingredients:

1 pound carrots, coarsely grated (about 4 cups)
 1/4 cup vegetable oil or extra-virgin olive oil
 3 to 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
 2 to 4 cloves garlic, mashed or minced
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
 Pinch of salt
 Optional: If you want to add some heat to this, add 1/2 teaspoon *harissa* (Northwest African chili paste), or 1 table-spoon minced green chilies or 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cay-
 enne.

Directions:

In a large bowl, mix together all the ingredients. Cover and let marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or up to 2 days to allow the flavors to meld and permeate the carrots. Served chilled or at room temperature.

Adapted from a recipe from Epicurious Magazine.



Australia garden sculpture (photo by Greg Muller)

In an exhibition garden at the royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne in Australia, colored watering cans indicate the comparative water requirements of plants in a water saving garden. Doesn't this picture stimulate many garden décor ideas and possibilities? The Australian Garden is, by the way, a huge expanse of native bushland in the midst of new housing developments, home to thriving bird and animal life, including several rare endangered species. For more information, visit <http://www.rb.gov.au/>.

The Blue Flag

Marcia Meyer shares this poignant poem with us, written by Edna St. Vincent Millay in 1921.

All my soul became a tower,
 Never loved I anything
 As I loved that tall blue flower!
 It was all the little boats
 That had ever sailed to sea,
 It was all the little books
 That had gone to school with me;
 On its roots like iron claws
 Rearing up so blue and tall---
 It was all the gallant Earth
 With its back against the wall!





SAN FRANCISCO FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW

MARCH 23 - 27, 2011
SAN MATEO EVENT CENTER



LIFE IN THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN

Don't miss the show! This is a great learning opportunity and source of inspiration. You'll find cutting-edge garden design, new plants, 200 vendors selling outdoor living products and 75 seminars. New this year are "Garden To Table" cooking demonstrations with famous Bay Area chefs headlined by Alice Waters, 6000 square feet of Edible Garden displays with hands-on advice, an expanded children's section, a wine garden, and a film premiere.

Take advantage of the seminars and demonstrations. You'll learn a lot, and time spent sitting will renew your

energy so you can walk around see and learn more. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring a tote bag to carry informational brochures, a notebook and pen and camera and perhaps some of your purchases. We serious buyers bring wheeled shopping bags to save our backs, although there are convenient drop-off holding areas at the show. It is good to dress in layers – the temperature is quite variable.

The San Mateo Event Center is easy to get to. Dates and hours of the show are March 23-27, 2011; Wednesday -

Saturday 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM, and Sunday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Buy Early Bird tickets in advance for \$16 at your local nursery or garden center or online; or for \$20 at the door (\$18 if you are over 65). You can purchase an All Show Pass that will admit you all 5 days for only \$25. Early Bird and General Adult tickets can be upgraded at the door for an All Show Pass. Youth 16 years of age and under are free. Parking is \$10.

For directions or more information, go to www.sfgardenshow.com or call 415-684-7278 or 925-605-2923.



Ooh! Ooh! The Plant Sale is coming!

This is the month to prune your perennials. This is the month to feed your roses. This is the month to start seeds indoors, especially tomatoes and eggplants and such that you'll want to have ready to plant out when the weather and ground warm up. So much to do! Plant extra seedlings, divide plants, get rid of things you don't want anymore, share your garden. Our big plant sale and trade is happening in April—get ready!

Board Meeting

The March meeting will be Monday, March 28th, 6:30 p.m., at the home of Debbie Kindle, 3320 Putter Drive, Soquel. Everyone is welcome—you don't have to be a Board member to attend.

Elkhorn Slough Foundation & Reserve Native Plant Fair

March 19, 10 am - 3 pm - 1700 Elkhorn Road, Watsonville

Join the greenhouse crew and find out what sorts of plants can transform your yard into a haven for local butterflies, bees and birds. The Fair will have events for children, and seminars. Help support the Reserve's greenhouse, meet their friendly and knowledgeable staff and volunteers, and learn a thing or two about the plants that thrive in the slough. They'll be selling more than 15 species of local plants. You'll learn, have fun, and help the Reserve's stewardship. For direction or more information, go to www.elkhornslough.org or call 728-2822.



National Invasive Species Awareness Week is Feb. 28-March 4, 2011.

Gardeners everywhere envy us here in California – our mild climate allows us to landscape with ornamental plants from all over the world. Unfortunately, our garden plants sometimes “jump the fence” and invade wildland areas. They go from a must-have garden plant to an invasive species quickly and invisibly. Invasive species represent a significant threat to native plants, animals, and humans. They cause enormous disruptions in the natural ecological balance, inducing erosion, crowding out food sources and reducing biodiversity.

You may be familiar with many species in our area that have become invasive, and diligently work to keep them out of your garden. Well known invasives are Scotch Broom, English ivy, vinca, thistle, blackberry, etc. But it pays to be informed and diligent— the status of plants is always changing, and what was a “friend” last year might be a “pest” this year. In fact, the California Invasive Plant Council, <http://www.cal-ipc.org> which is an excellent resource for information on our local environment, has a set of geographically specific brochures called “Don’t Plant a Pest”. These brochures are free and offer alternative choices for things to plant.

I was chagrined to find cotoneaster on the list of invasives, a relatively recent addition. I’ve nurtured it in my garden for 20 years as a good food-and-shelter plant for birds. Although birds, like robins and cedar waxwings, do eat large numbers of berries, most are not eaten and fall to the ground, where many of them germinate. Birds facilitate dispersal of seeds away from the parent plant. And then cotoneasters seedlings vigorously compete with native plants. However, the California Invasive Plant Council gives alternative plant choices for invasive garden plants. Here’s the cotoneaster entry as an example:

Don't Plant:

cotoneaster
(*Cotoneaster lacteus*, *C. pannosus*)
Birds have spread the berries and seeds of these specimen shrubs to many different habitats. With their rapid growth and competitive roots, cotoneasters can displace native plants.



Try Instead:

toyon ☀️ 🌿 🐦
(*Heteromeles arbutifolia* and cultivars)
This California native is an evergreen shrub that produces delicate white flowers and large clusters of brilliant red berries that birds love.



strawberry tree ☀️ 🌿 🐦
(*Arbutus unedo*)
A gorgeous evergreen tree available in compact, shrub-like varieties that are easy to grow. It produces masses of beautiful white flowers, and textured, strawberry-like fruits.



sandankwa viburnum ☀️ 🌿 🐦
(*Viburnum suspensum*)
This evergreen shrub produces tight clusters of small, waxy, pinkish-white flowers that give way to bright red berries. Several compact varieties are available.



pineapple guava ☀️ 🌿 🐦
(*Feijoa sellowiana*)
This evergreen shrub has scarlet and white flowers, as delicious as they are beautiful, and waxy blue-green fruits with a minty-pineapple flavor. It is easily shaped into a small tree.



We also must attend to the unfortunate irony of ornamental grasses—despite their enormous popularity in recent years, and their naturalistic appearance, some of them are proving invasive.

Darn! Don’t plant this one, even if you love its look: Green fountain grass,



Pennisetum setaceum, spreads aggressively by seed into natural areas by wind, water, or vehicles. It is a fast

grower; impedes the growth of locally native plant species and eventually takes over natural areas. It also raises fuel loads and fire frequency in natural areas, and is spreading rapidly in California. Existing research indicates that red varieties of fountain grass (*P. setaceum* 'Rubrum') are not invasive.

Concerns have been recently raised about the invasive tendencies of two other ornamental grasses— Mexican Feather Grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) and Chilean Needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*). Both are being phased out of production by the nursery industry.



Feather grass



Needle grass

As a home gardener, you don’t have to be overwhelmed trying to keep up-to-date on invasive plant issues. There are resources to help. A great one is **PlantRight**, a voluntary, proactive program for the horticultural community to prevent invasive plant introductions through horticulture. Their web site is very user-friendly (www.plantright.org), and will

help you actively protect natural landscapes and biodiversity while maintaining a beautiful garden.



Hollyhock Glory



Hollyhock Glory

The hollyhocks!
Note their sway ~
that nonchalant
acknowledgment
of your presence.
Perfect, aren't they?
A simple
yet profound
example of a grand
self-worth.
Follow their lead.

-Susan Sonnen



Sometimes all it takes is a bit of poetry to plant the seed for a new passion. I'm afraid, despite my resolutions to not plant anything ever again in my garden that is prone to any disease, hollyhock lust has won out. Tall and bold, hollyhocks give a garden a nostalgic, old-fashioned country feel. But what seduced me to send away to Swallowtail Seeds www.swallowtailgardenseeds.com for five (yes, five) new varieties is not their stately presence or their attitude, but the color possibilities. How



could I resist a chestnut-brown hollyhock, or the two-tone white-and-yellow 'Halo White'. And 'Happy Lights' Antwerp



Hollyhock is a true perennial that promises less susceptibility to rust.

Ah, hollyhock rust. I hate hollyhock rust. I'm trying to learn to accept it, but, since I'm going to plant hollyhocks this year no matter what, if I can't learn to live with it, I better come up with some strategies to keep it in check.

Strategy #1: Don't water hollyhocks from above. Strategy #2: Don't plant in over-rich soil. Strategy #3: Cornmeal.

Cornmeal? Yes. Horticultural cornmeal, that is, which is whole grain, much superior to the kind you get at the grocery store, which is just the starchy inside of the corn kernel. You can get the horticultural kind at nurseries or feed stores. Cornmeal works as a disease fighter in the soil by stimulating beneficial microorganisms that feed on fungal diseases. Work 2 pounds of cornmeal into the soil for every 100 square feet. Water well, to activate the fungus killing properties. One application per season is usually sufficient, but repeat applications won't hurt and will act as a mild fertilizer. This advice and more can be found at The Dirt Doctor website of Howard Garrett, www.dirtdoctor.com.

Strategy #4: Spray if necessary. The Dirt Doctor recommends removing leaves that already have rust on them and then spraying lightly with a Baking Power Fungicide on

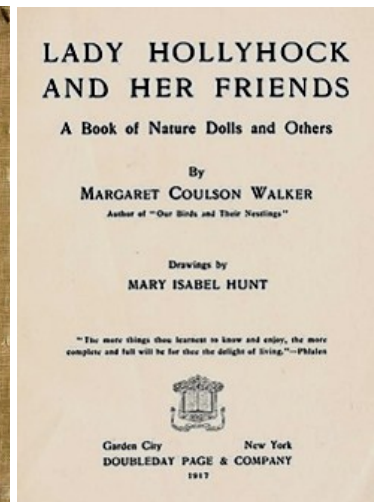
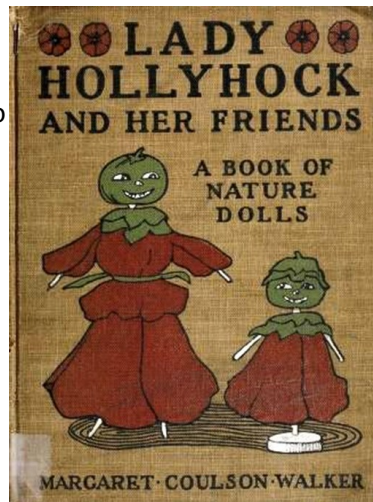
the rest of the foliage (4 teaspoons of baking soda and 1 tablespoon of horticultural oil to one gallon of water). Or, try this:

HEALTHY HOLLYHOCK SPRAY

1 ½ t baking soda
1 T canola or other light oil
½ t liquid soap (like Dr. Bronner's)
½ cup white vinegar
1 gallon water

This can be sprayed on any rust-prone plant, including roses. Blend the ingredients and decant into a sprayer. Shake thoroughly before and during applications, applying weekly to the whole leaf on susceptible plants. If you have diseased foliage, remove it and send it away – do not compost.

I didn't grow up making hollyhock dolls, but it is never too late to have a happy (happier) childhood. Thanks to the magic of digitalized books, you can read all about this, in a 1917 charming tome, cover-to-cover, at [http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7123204M/Lady Hollyhock and her friends](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7123204M/Lady_Hollyhock_and_her_friends).



You can also learn how to make radish babies and pansy ladies and some songs and poetry. I must warn you, though, as aged a book as it is, it isn't very politically correct.

For a more contemporary way of learning how to make hollyhock dolls, take the excellent tutorial at Mary Ellen D'Aurizio's blog Yours 'til Niagara Falls (http://yourstilniagarafalls.typepad.com/yours_til_niagarafalls/2008/06/hollyhock-doll-tutorial.html). You can make

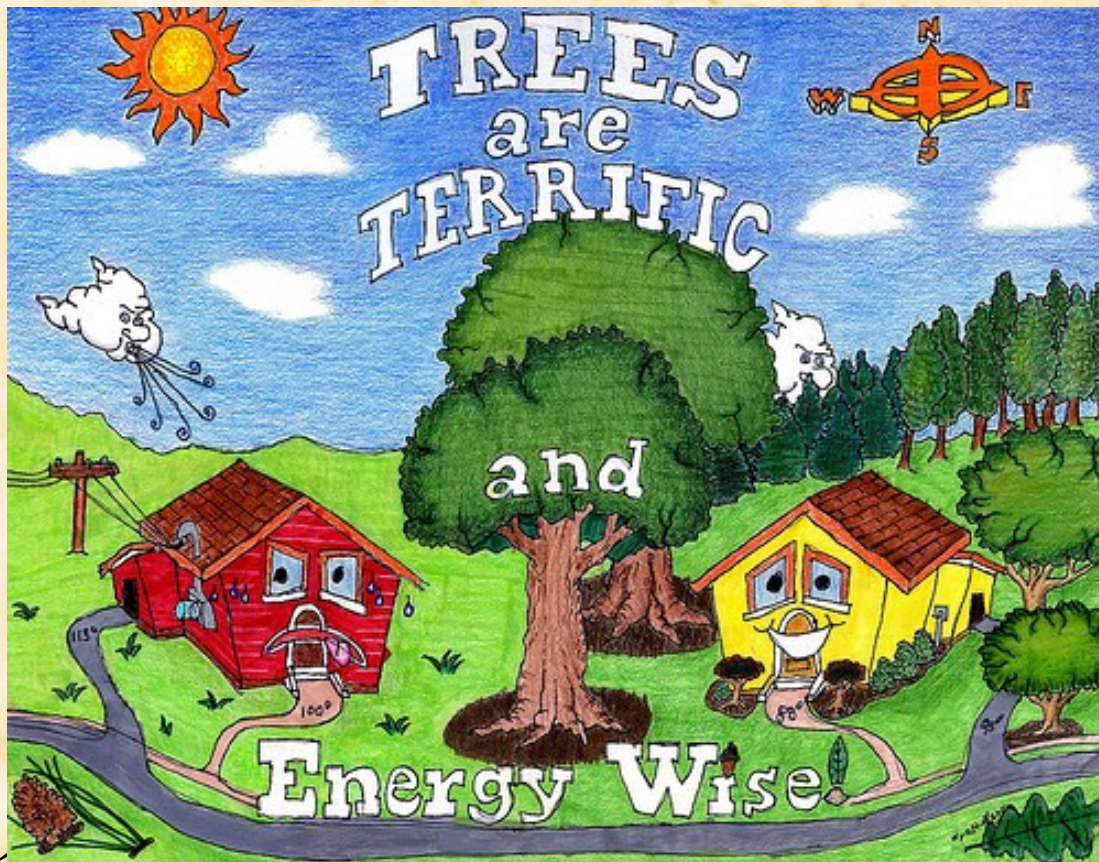


Photo credit Mary Ellen D'Aurizio

your hollyhock dolls float on water, too, gently down a stream (after you've finished spraying your hollyhocks, of course).

Celebrate Arbor Day

Lots of people lump Arbor Day with Earth Day, but it's a shame, because trees deserve their own day. In California our official Arbor Day is in March, because it is such a good month to plant trees—March 7th, to be specific, the birthday of Luther Burbank. So go plant a tree, mulch a tree, feed a tree, give a tree, teach a child about a tree or just go sit under one.



Poster by Wyatt Dunn



Have You Renewed Your Club Membership?

Don't dally...write a check for \$12 to "The Gardeners' Club" and mail it to Membership Chair Suzanne Mercado, 1633 Quail Hollow Rd., Ben Lomond, CA 95005.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Newsletter preference (check one)

_____ E-mail newsletter—PDF in full color (the green option)

_____ Paper newsletter (black-and-white, snail mail)



"A light exists in Spring
Not present in the year
at any other period
When March is scarcely
here."

-Emily Dickinson

Daylight Savings time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday March 13th. Turn clocks ahead by one hour on the Saturday night before. Then get a good night's rest; the first day of Spring is just a week away, and you'll want to take advantage of that extra hour of daylight right away.

The Gardeners' Club

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2nd position—vacant
3rd position - vacant

Refreshments

Dey Weybright, 426-3028
DEENART@aol.com

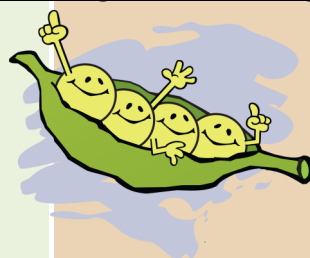
PSAs/Glenwood

Monica Pielage, 460-0215
mpielage@yahoo.com

Website

Kerry Skyles, 728-5076
KerrySkyblue@cruzio.com

www.thegardenersclub.org



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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