

The Gardeners' Club

July 2011



July is National Ice Cream Month – It's Time to Social-Ice!

Raise your spoons high! Every month, we come together to celebrate our common love of gardening. This month, we come together to celebrate our love for ice cream. The Club will provide basic ice cream flavors, whipped cream, nuts, chocolate sauce, etc.. YOU are invited to bring your favorite toppings—especially if they are from your garden or a farmers' market. Edible flowers, berries, fruit, herbs, preserves, veggie concoctions, syrups—we encourage your creativity. In fact, this year we are encouraging creativity and the sharing of garden bounty so much that we will be awarding PRIZES. Yes, prizes! Our team of judges (Bill Patterson, April Barclay, Lise Bixler and Marcia Meyer) will award prizes for sundae ingredients you bring. They'll also award prizes for best sundaes created at the event. In what categories, you ask? Well, we're going to leave that to the discretion and whims of the judges—whatever impresses them.


Also we'll have a group activity—we are going to make a Dirt Cake, to eat with our sundaes. If you've never had a dirt cake before, it is a frosted cake covered with crumbled oreo or chocolate wafer crumbs (that's the "dirt") then decorated with candy rocks, gummy worms, tinted coconut "grass", etc. Below is a picture of the practice Dirt Cake created by my grandchildren Riley and Olivia. It turned out

so beautiful we changed it's name to "Garden Cake". When we shared it at a party, the adults ate all of the gummy centipedes off of it before we could even serve it.



On the next page, we've got a few recipes to inspire you for sundae contributions. But don't worry if you can't bring anything—just come with your appetite and enthusiasm!

Prizes ! Ice cream ! Dirt cake !

Here's the scoop. 

Ice Cream Social, Thursday, July 14th, 7-9 p.m.

Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Drive

Monthly meeting & plant table sale will happen before ice cream sundae-building, dirt cake-cultivating and awesome prize-rewarding.

Garden-Inspired Ice cream Toppings

When it comes to using peaches for ice cream toppings (and other stone fruits, like nectarines and plums) some like them hot, some like them cold. The easiest cooked peach topping is grilled. Slice peaches in half, pit them and pop them on the BBQ. Use cooking spray or a bit of oil first; tossing with brown sugar and cinnamon is optional. Grill just 'til tender. Once off the grill, cut into wedges and top with ice cream. But if you want something more sinful, try this:



Caramelized Peaches

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 6 peaches, pitted and cut into slices
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

Heat butter and brown sugar over medium heat in a large skillet until butter has melted. Add in peaches and cook for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until fruit is caramelized. Stir in lemon juice.

Here's an uncooked peach topping for ice cream:

Fresh Peach Dessert Sauce

- 4 peaches, peeled and chopped
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ½ tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 T. water

Combine ingredients in a bowl and stir gently to mix. Refrigerate for at least one hour. For variations, add a cup of fresh blueberries or coarsely diced plums.

"Ice cream is exquisite. 'What a pity it isn't illegal." – Voltaire



Fig Sauce

- 12-15 fresh ripe figs, peeled
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 c. water
- 1 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. cornstarch
- 3 tbsp. lemon juice



Combine figs, sugar, water and butter in a saucepan; bring to a boil, and simmer 5-8 minute, until figs are just tender. Mix cornstarch and lemon juice together until smooth. . Stir into fig mixture; cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened and bubbly. Serve warm over ice cream – the first recipe for this I found suggested making Greek oregano ice cream. No time for that, but I wonder how vanilla ice cream topped with fig sauce would taste with a sprinkling of chopped fresh oregano, or oregano flowers?

Want to add a bit of glam to your sundae? Top it with some crystalized flowers.

Crystalized Flowers

- 2 large egg whites, at room temp.
- 1 teaspoon water
- 1 dozen pesticide-free edible flowers, such as violets, marigolds, and rose petals
- 1 cup superfine sugar
- Combine egg whites and water; beat lightly with a fork. Dip a paint brush in the egg whites and gently paint a flower –



covering the petals thoroughly but not excessively. While still wet, gently sprinkle coated petals with superfine sugar. Put crystallized flowers on a sheet pan lined with waxed paper to dry for 12-24 hours.



Books by author **Jim Long** are fun to read and full of tried and true ideas. Each book is a little gem of herb and flower knowledge gleaned from his many years of experience growing and cooking with herbs and flowers. When you open one you won't want to wait to start trying the recipes. Order from Jim's website,



www.longcreekherbs.com (and read his blogs, too). Or order from Mountain Valley Growers www.mountainvalleygrowers.com/books/jimlong.htm , 1- 559-338-2775. While you are on



their web site, subscribe to their newsletter and check out some of their amazing plants, especially the herbs, like this Variegated Peppermint.



Papasan Chair Planters

Donald Spencer, my friend in Winnie, Texas, has a magnificent garden. His family named it "The Secret Garden", but it is no longer a secret, since I've written about it before in this newsletter and will again! Looking skyward, large planters made from recycled papasan chairs, dripping with lush plant combinations, dangle from the limbs of mature trees. To look upward and see a profusion of plants swaying from the trees makes you feel like you are in a rain forest. Don has shared with us his directions for creating and safely hanging baskets like his – thank you, Don! If you don't have large trees, these could also be hung from a porch or mounted on a pole. I don't see why you couldn't make a base out of a circle of bricks and even use them at ground level. You can get papasan chairs at garage sales, or you might try Freecycle (<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/SantaCruzCountyFreecycle/>) or Craigslist and ask people if have chairs they'd like to get rid of for free. Each chair will make two baskets: one large using the seat and one small using the base.

Creating a Hanging Basket from a Papasan Chair Frame



Select a tree limb to hang your basket from. It must be very strong to support the weight of the basket when filled with potting soil. Separate the bamboo chair into two parts, providing two baskets.

Four long ropes extending to almost ground level thrown over the large limb provide eight ropes to support the

large basket. These eight ropes must be tied off directly beneath the limb to prevent slippage. All eight ropes must be the same length. Tie all eight ropes together three feet above ground level using a short supplemental rope.



The papasan chair must be turned vertically and slipped between the ropes. After putting the chair back to the horizontal position, you must evenly space the eight ropes around it. All eight ropes must be tied off with wire on the top rung of the chair to keep them evenly spaced.



Line the basket with durable porous material that provides drainage. Fill the inside of the basket with 7 or 8 empty 2-liter plastic bottles. This will reduce the amount of costly potting soil needed. (Editor's

note – If you've got lots of bubble-wrap accumulated at your house, try rolling it up and using it as filler. Or small plastic pots duct-taped together are another possibility to use as spacers.)



Fill the basket to the top rung with potting soil.

Select plants of height for the center surrounded by other plants of varying textures and colors that will cascade from the sides of the basket.

Fill in with some extra potting soil among the plants. Water well.



Stand back and admire your creation!

A Don Spencer Creation
PO Box 108, Winnie, TX 77665
Cell: 409-880-5428

(The handsome young lad in the photos is Matt Bourgeois, Don's French gardening assistant).



Green Thumb Tip Free Book Excerpt

Joe Truskot, Consulting Rosarian and author of the Central Coast Rose Manual, gives advice for powdery mildew on roses.

Fine Gardening magazine offered a free excerpt of vegetable planting in containers from their book Tips for Container Gardening, so I went to http://images.taunton.com/downloads/MU8063_TipsForCG.pdf to see it.



Most of us know that a useful way to plan a container is to use a “thriller”, which is the centerpiece that adds height and architectural structure, a “spiller” for draping over the edges and a “filler” which adds depth and contrast. But have you ever thought of using flowering squash plants as “spillers”? I haven’t. I looked at another preview of the book at Google books, and found much more. Growing in containers is not just for those limited to deck or patio gardening. This book has stunning design and color



combination ideas, and offers 300 great suggestions for growing flowers, vegetables and herbs in just about any container, and in just about any area of your yard, garden or house.



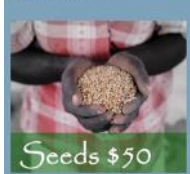
Idea for elevating containers to maximize visual impact (Scott Endress, Minneapolis, Minnesota).

Eat Locally, Give Globally

As I wrote this in very late June, it was cold, it was raining, and like many of us, I thought spring, let alone summer, would never come. But three things encouraged me to stop complaining. One, my flower garden is incredibly lush; it **LIKED** the rain. Two, the evening news featured a story of people fleeing from the severe drought in Somalia to overcrowded refugee camps in Kenya, facing disease and hunger. Drought and famine is worsening in the Horn of Africa, and I’m complaining about too much rain? Three, I received an e-mail from the Lambi Fund of Haiti (www.lambi.fund.org) reminding me of the ongoing need for help there.



Provide Seeds



Seeds \$50

So I gave a donation to provide seeds for Haiti, and upped my monthly contribution to Doctors Without Borders (www.doctorswithoutborders.org).

Ben Franklin said, “Constant complaint is the poorest sort of pay for all of the comforts we enjoy”. Sometimes I forget.

TIP BOOSTERS

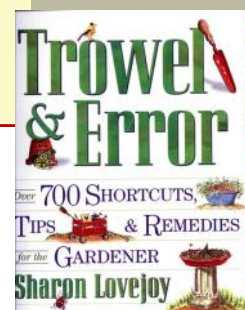
When your tomatoes, eggplants and peppers (finally!) begin to bloom, mix up a batch of this potent potion to encourage prolific, healthy fruiting. Pour into the soil surrounding your plants.

2 TABLESPOONS EPSOM SALTS

1 GALLON WATER

The magnesium and sulfur in the Epsom salts are macronutrients that foster fruiting.

— from Sharon Lovejoy’s *Trowel & Error*



July Board Meeting

All Club members are invited to the next Board meeting at the home of Ilene Wilson, 100 Howell Lane, Watsonville. The date is Monday, July 25th. We’ll meet at 6:00 p.m. to tour Ilene’s garden. If you need directions, call Ilene at 724-4609.

Riddle



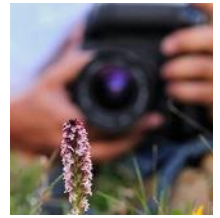
What vegetable can you throw away the outside, cook the inside, eat the outside and throw away the inside?

Answer on next page.



Every garden has a story.

Share yours in pictures!



We hope you are taking lots of pictures in your garden to share with Club members in the fall. Every garden has perfect moments, special places, memories, unexpected surprises, successes and disappointments. Have your camera ready and preserve images for history! Remember, at our November meeting we will have a combined slide show of all of our gardens which we'll show in a PowerPoint presentation. You can share your pictures with Lise Bixler, who is compiling the presentation, in several ways. If you haven't gone digital yet, give her actual photographs and she'll scan them. If you have digital photos, you can save them to a disk or a memory card and

give that to her. Or you can e-mail pictures to her by attachment, or send a link to pictures you've uploaded to Facebook or any photo storage site. Don't have a camera or would rather someone else took pictures of you and your garden? Let Lise or one of the other Board members know and we'll arrange to have someone take photos for you. Contact information: lisebixler@sbcglobal.net or 457-2089, or mail data or pictures to 91 Country Estates Drive, Santa Cruz 95060.

The long days of summer, with their extended hours of light, give us magical opportunities for photography. It is at the extreme ends of the day, first thing in the morning and at dusk, when the available light offers "golden moments". Don't miss out—grab a cup of coffee or lemonade and your camera and wander about your garden in the cooler hours, when the light is at its best for pictures.

Riddle Answer



Corn!

Workshops

UCSC Farm & Garden is giving a workshop on Summer Fruit Tree Pruning at the Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm, on July 30th from 10-1. Summer pruning is one of the best ways to ensure the health and productivity of your fruit trees. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a snack. \$15 for Friends of the Farm & Garden members, \$20 for general public, \$5 for UCSC students, payable the day of the workshop.

Love Apple Farms will show you how to install a drip irrigation system. Class Dates: July 12 (Tuesday) or August 13 (Saturday), 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Cost: \$49. Cynthia Sandberg says, "When I first started out, there were many different configurations and types of equipment I used. After installing and testing thousands of feet of line and hundreds of

emitter heads, I found a system that works for any type of vegetable garden and for all seasons. My system even works for raised beds and container gardens. It's simple; anyone can do it. I show you how to install a system from the spigot out to the garden. You do not need special, dedicated water pipes for this. Bit by bit, fitting by fitting, we install the system as you watch and learn. I even get you involved, hands on, to show that YOU CAN DO IT! I reveal who my commercial-grade parts suppliers are, give you a detailed parts list, as well as discount coupons from one of my sources (available to my workshop students only)." The class is held at Love Apple Farm in Santa Cruz. Advanced registration required. Contact loveapplefarm@gmail.com, <http://irrigationjul12.eventbrite.com/?ref=ecal> or (831) 588-3801.



Who knows? Maybe while you are snapping photos of your brag-worthy garden, you'll take a picture so marvelous you'll think it's worthy of wider recognition. Consider entering the Garden Photo Contest sponsored by Horticulture Magazine and Davesgarden.com. First prize is \$1000 and publication in the magazine. The deadline to enter is Sept. 26th. For details, go to www.hortmag.com/gardenphotos.

July is an EXCELLENT month for starting softwood cuttings from your plants, or plants you've admired in other people's gardens. New plants, for free, for you or to share! You can start cuttings of roses, shrubs, woody herbs or ornamental plants—wisteria, hydrangeas, mock orange, mums, rhodies, passion flower, daphne, and more. Root in a mix of half peat moss or coir and half sand, perlite or vermiculite. Rooting hormone helps. Keep moist, covered and shaded—be patient!

Happy Red, White & Blue

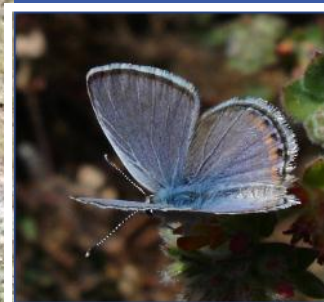


Anna's Hummingbird. Photo by Alan Harmon, Wikipedia Commons.



ERIOGONUM FASCICULATUM (California buckwheat)

Rounded shrub reaches 2-3 ft. tall and wide. Cream colored flowers turn pink and then rust –color as they dry. Excellent erosion control and tolerant of the worst soils. Easy, foolproof plant to grow. Food for a myriad of butterflies including the Blue Copper, Green Hairstreak, and Acmon Blue. Attracts beneficial insects. More buckwheats at www.native revival.com.



Acmon Blue Butterfly



2-for-1 sale
at Native
Revival
Nursery,
2600 Mar
Vista Dr.,

Aptos, on selected plants, including the native Penstemon barbatus 'Jingle Bells'. Also known as Scarlet Bugler, it calls hummingbirds from afar.



Blue Dasher Dragonfly

"...messengers of summer and heralds of the sun". - H. Lons

The Gardeners' Club

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3rd position - vacant

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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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