

The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz County, California

June 2012 — Part I*

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Ernie Wasson Presents

Ernie Wasson, long-time member of our club, will be our June speaker. Gardener, horticulturist and author, his humor, expertise and enthusiasm will entertain and inform us. He is the curator and nursery of the horticultural teaching garden at Cabrillo College. Many of us have special plants in our gardens that Ernie has brought from Cabrillo to our Plant Table sales.

Ernie has eclectic interests—among them apple trees, bold foliage plants, culinary

ethnobotany, horticultural reference books, native plants, permaculture, pruning, salvias, South African Restios, vegetables, and the effect of fog on plants. So it is no wonder his presentation will be a mix of topics—new plants favorites, ethnobotany and Inca food crops.

This will be an enjoyable and informative meeting, one you won't want to miss.

Culinary
ethno-
botany

My new
plant
favorites

Inca
food
crops



eth·no·bot·a·ny *noun* \,eth-nō-'bā-tə-nē, -'bāt-nē\

The scientific study of the relationships between people and plants; the examination of the complex relationships between cultures and plants, focusing primarily on how plants are used, managed and perceived across human societies.

Thursday, June 14th, 7:00 p.m.

Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Drive

Refreshments will be served. Thanks to Melita Israel for snack,
Joanna Hall for dessert and Pat McVeigh for juice.

* Aargh! It's another one of those information overload months—
Part II of the newsletter to arrive in a week or two...



Creating a Mediterranean Mound Workshop Saturday June 2nd 10am -12pm taught by Jeff Rosendale

At Sierra Azul Nursery & Gardens, they are in the process this spring and summer of renovating and replanting many of their 17-year-old mounds in their 2 acre demonstration garden. Old plants are coming out and fresh new ones are going in. June 2nd they will be having a Mediterranean mound gardening workshop led by Sierra Azul owner, Jeff Rosendale. It will follow their guide **"Creating a Mediterranean Mound"** (<http://www.sierraazul.com/mounds.html>) and Jeff will talk about the process and demonstrating in the garden as they create new plantings in one of their renovated mounds. Drip irrigation, soil preparation and mulching will be demonstrated including the ever-important plant selection process. **Admission is free and all workshop participants will receive a 15% discount on plant purchases that day.** Sign up at the kiosk at 9:45am the day of the event. Bring a bag lunch and picnic afterward in the garden if you'd like. Also there is Cafe Ella and several taquerias down the street.

**2660 East Lake Avenue (Highway 152)
Watsonville, CA 95076**

Across from the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds

Open daily: 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Phone: 831-763-0939

sierraazulnursery@yahoo.com

And...there are sales at Sierra Azul, as well, until June 10th. All varieties of ornamental grasses and grevilleas in all sizes are 20% off. The "grasses" include true grasses, as well as sedges and rushes, for sun or shade, with many color variations and growing shapes and sizes. "Grasses" are usually deer resistant and many are drought tolerant as well. They add texture and movement to the garden that other plants can't match, and can be a part of almost all gardens from sun to shade, wet to dry and formal to informal. Grevilleas, which are native to Australia, are tough, deer



and drought resistant, range from ground covers to large shrubs and have flowers that attract hummingbirds and are usually colored in the orange to red



tones, although there are beautiful pink and white cultivars too. All pots are 20% off, too.

There is a supersale on the border aloe Aloe sponaria. It is tough as nails and super drought and deer tolerant and a colorful, easy-to-grow subject for the dry garden. It's great along driveways out in the country or low maintenance areas in any garden. Not a tall grower, as it is clumping and spreading. It is also one of the more frost hardy aloes on the Central Coast and in the Bay Area. Sierra Azul is having a **60% off sale on blooming plants** this month while the supply lasts.



If you don't have time to make it down to Sierra Azul this month, but you want more information on creating a Mediterranean mound, read Jeff's

article. It is detailed, informative and inspiring. No matter what shape or size you want to create, you'll learn how to construct one and suggestions for plants that will thrive. Read it at www.sierraazul.com/mounds.html.

Yummy Yucca

We've been happily plant-sitting friend Bill Kugler's horticultural treasures while he relocates. A couple of weeks ago his potted yucca plant, apparently thriving on benign neglect, shot up an astounding, blooming spire. Bill was as amazed as we were—it was the first time it bloomed in the many years he's owned the yucca. Bill said, "I remember my mother and grandmother serving yucca blossoms in a salad with oranges".

I wasn't able to find the salad recipe, but yucca blossoms are indeed edible. On the web you can find lots of recipes, most with eggs—omelets, frittatas, battered, fried, etc.



Yucca blossom



Bill Kugler & his yucca

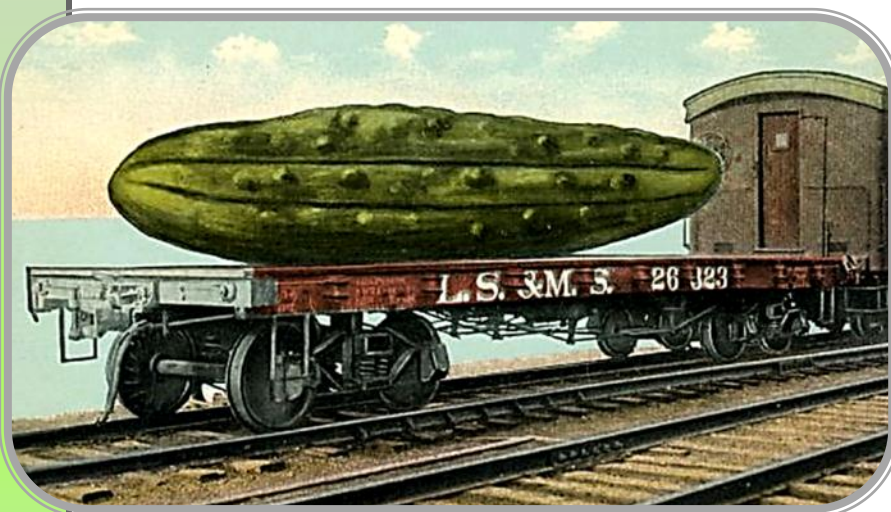
The yucca is a member of the lily family, a symbol of beauty and strength. The upper part of the stalk is edible, too. Of the flowers, eat only the petals, which are firm, slightly crunchy, and are said to taste like a combination of a green bean and the innermost leaves of an artichoke. If eating them raw leaves your throat a little scratchy, you can lightly steam or sauté them.

Success with Cucumbers

If you want success with cucumbers (although we won't promise cukes as impressive as the one on this page), pay attention to pollination. Because cucumbers are not as attractive to bees as some other flowers because of lower sugar content, they are often not sufficiently pollinated. Small cucumbers will form on the female blossom but they will wither and die.

You can try hand pollination by cutting off the male flower and rubbing it on the female (the one with the bulge just below the flower) or, using a small paint brush use the pollen from several male flowers.

Misshapen cucumbers can be caused by irregular irrigation or excess or insufficient fertilizer. They prefer a soil that is slightly acidic with a pH of 5.8 to 6.5.



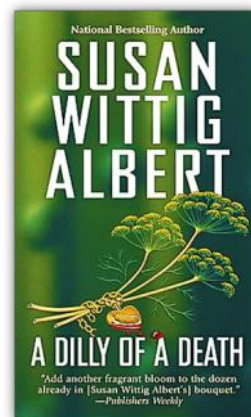
Riddle

What is baby cucumber's favorite toy?



Pickle Me Elmo.

If you need to come in from the summer heat (or summer fog) and put your feet up, how about reading a mystery? Sleuth China Bayles' and her husband, Mike McQuaid become involved in the tangled affairs of Phoebe the Pickle Queen, owner of the largest pickle business in Texas, but things take a dangerous turn when Phoebe mysteriously vanishes just before the local Picklefest.



In the mayhem that was May, somehow we missed **INTERNATIONAL COMPOST AWARENESS WEEK**. Darn! But you can still get a lovely compost poster for only \$5 at the United States Composting Council web site (<http://compostingcouncil.org/publications/>).

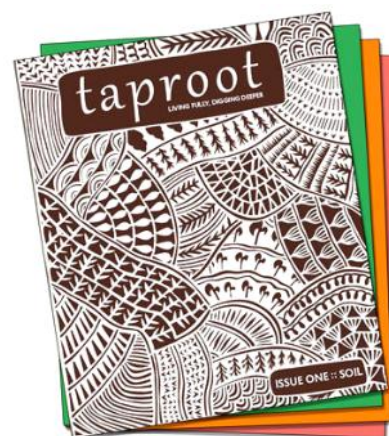
There are many other resources at this site, too, fact sheets and articles and more.



Taproot Living Fully, Digging Deeper

The mission of this terrific, ad-free new magazine (published quarterly) is to search for "authentic and meaningful connections to the earth, each other, and ourselves...to live with less of the excess, waste, and noise that surround us in our modern world." The inaugural issue features artwork and articles on soil, spring herbs, and raising chickens, and future issues will focus on paths, retreats, and wood. Don't miss this beautiful publication.

- Reviewed by, and available at, Bookshop Santa Cruz



Deliciously Addictive Dahlias

by Sally Ferguson



weeks,” Hans says. “Plus, you can cut them for the vase all you want without depleting your garden. With dahlias, the more you cut them, the more they bloom.”



Dahlias grow best in warm soil, says Langeveld. Plant them out once garden soil warms to 70° F and threat of frost is long gone. To get a jump on the

season, plant them earlier in containers or indoor start-up pots, where soil is more readily warmed.

Before planting the bulbs (technically tubers), take a moment to admire them. Some will be plump, looking like smallish sweet potatoes. Others will be loosely-dangling clusters of elongated tuberous-digits. All are marvelously silly looking. Can these high-kicking drama queens really hail from such homely beginnings?

Dahlias prefer full sun but can handle partial shade. In planting, position the bulbs approximately three to six inches deep, with the short neck positioned an inch or two beneath the soil surface. In the more arid parts of the country, watering in when planting is advisable. In the rest of the country, there’s usually water enough in early summer soil to get the tubers growing. In these areas, start to water once growth begins. Once growing, water regularly whenever summer rainfall is sparse.

For a bushier plant and more abundant blooms, nip off the center bud once a plant reaches a foot or so in height. Add support for taller varieties early in the season as, by fall, the plants will be large and heavy. Simple metal supports, plant rings, wooden stakes or tomato cages are all excellent solutions for managing the sprawl of tall dahlias.

Hot weather typically won’t slow down these plants native to Mexico and South America. They take summer in stride, barreling full steam ahead on their path to late season garden domination, pumping out waves of blooms until hard frosts finally bow them down.

At season’s end, in warmer areas (USDA zones 8-10) dahlias can overwinter where planted. In colder areas, once hard frosts nip the plants, you can bid them adieu or lift them to be stored indoors for replanting the next summer.



There’s something empowering about dahlias. Once considered overly-flamboyant by the “prim and proper,” dahlias have roared back into favor, capturing an entire season of the garden as their own. They are the exuberant color anchor of many a stylish late season garden. As tulips own the spring, dahlias own the late summer and fall bloom seasons. And as much as people love them, *deer* don’t seem to!

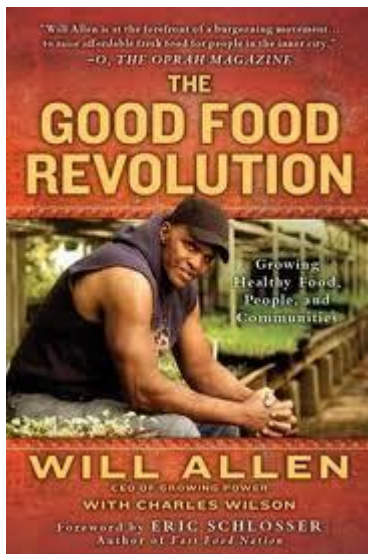
For those wishing to indulge in dahlias now is the time to plant them. Choosing is half the fun. The assortment is luscious, with so many styles and shapes, heights from compact to towering, and colors of all hues under the sun, including vibrant to pale to multi-colored.

“Dahlias are robust plants that deliver big color in all shades,” says Hans Langeveld of www.longfield-gardens.com, a new online retail garden plant resource offering top quality bulbs and perennials. Longfield’s dahlia offering includes 43 different varieties and 15 mixed color combinations, including flower types ranging from cactus to dinnerplate, ball, mignon, decorative, anemone, and waterlily.

“Planted in clusters, dahlias produce hundreds of flowers over a bloom season that can span eight to ten

Ed. Note: Locally, check out the dahlia offerings of Elkhorn Gardens in Watsonville (<http://elkhorgarden.com> or 1-831-763-9251). Owner Colleen Goff did a presentation on dahlias at one of our meetings. She and husband Jim Goff mail order an impressive 550 varieties of tubers! They also sell an array of hydrangeas and daylilies. From July through September, they open their display gardens and offer a “Summer for Peace” acoustic concert series. For more information, go to <http://www.thegardensong.com/>.





Capitola Book Café
Tuesday, June 5 at 7:30pm
WILL ALLEN
The Good Food Revolution

Pioneering urban farmer and MacArthur "Genius Award" winner Will Allen had no intention of ever becoming a farmer. But after years in professional basketball and as an executive for Kentucky Fried Chicken, Allen cashed in his retirement fund for a two-acre plot a half mile away from Milwaukee's largest public housing project. The area was a food desert with only fast-food restaurants to serve the needs of local residents. In the face of daunting odds, Allen built the country's preeminent urban farm -- a food and educational center that produces enough vegetables and fish to feed thousands of people. Employing young people from the local community, Growing Power has sought to prove that local food systems can help troubled youths, dismantle racism, create jobs, bring urban and rural communities closer together, and improve public health. Hear Will's story and become a part of a grassroots movement that is changing the way our nation eats.



Live Earth Farm is an organic Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm located in the Pajaro Valley (172 Litchfield Lane, Watsonville). They also have a non-profit education organization for hands-on educational programs. They teach about local, organic, and sustainable food systems using the farm itself as the classroom, reaching out to all segments of the community with an emphasis on low-income, diverse and underserved populations.

On Saturday, June 16th, they will have their annual Summer Solstice Celebration. As they describe it, "Summer Solstice is big and happy, a romp in the sun! There's music and plenty of kid-friendly farm activities during the day, and a potluck dinner, bonfire and dancing in the evening". To learn more, go to <http://www.liveearthfarm.net> or phone (831) 763-2448.

They also offer Art at the Farm Summer Day Camp. There are four sessions (the first one begins June 18th) of this adventure day camp, with an optional Thursday night camp-out. Their description is below:

Campers can expect to get their hands dirty while exploring pieces of Live

Earth's 80 acres in both organic vegetable row crop production and fruit orchards. In addition to learning about life as an organic vegetable farmer, campers will spend time getting to know our herd of goats and visit with chickens. Campers will assist in daily chores of our animals while learning about the benefits of humane livestock management.

Throughout the week campers can also expect to explore the wonders of the farm while creatively expressing their interpretation of the natural world through the visual arts. Activities will include printing from natural materials, fort making, working in the education demonstration garden, animal spirit mask-making and so much more! Each day we will harvest something from the

*garden to contribute to our sustainable lunch picnics! **We are limiting participation to 20 kids each week between the ages of 6 and 12, so sign up today!***

*Although this summer camp will be a day-camp affair, we are also offering an **optional Thursday night pizza-making camp-out and sleepover!***

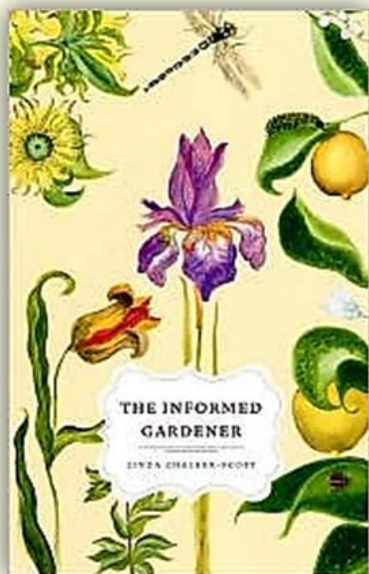
*Part of the Art at the Farm Camp program is a **leadership training program for youth aged 13 and up** looking to build their skills as*

*educators, leaders, mentors, and farmers. We still have spaces open for Leaders in Training, **please contact us if you or your child are interested becoming an LIT!***

*Please also note that we offer **before and after care** for camp.*



The Informed Gardener by Linda Chalker-Scott



This book is recommended by member Marcia Meyer, who gave it to me as a gift. "It has completely turned around my thinking" said Marcia. "Read it and you'll see what I mean." The book is organized into chapters on common horticultural myths contrasted with scientific or research evidence which either supports or, more commonly, does not support each "myth".

I must say when I read about "The Myth of Adding Bone Meal When Planting", I realized that I hold on to some of my gardening beliefs with an almost religious zeal. I have ALWAYS been told "Add a handful of bone meal to the planting hole before installing shrubs, trees and perennials". Not to mention my irises—how can I possibly plant irises without bone meal? But Dr. Chalker-Scott, as the result of scientific studies she has conducted (she an Associate Professor of Puyallup Research and Extension Center at Washington State University), tells us the following: 1. Bonemeal mostly contains high levels of calcium and phosphorus which are usually never deficient in non-agricultural soils; 2. Phosphorus is a mineral and minerals do not stimulate plant growth, and 3. high levels of phosphorus inhibit growth of mycorrhizal fungi which are necessary in healthy root growth. Well! This means, I suppose, that when planting I should probably add mycorrhizal fungi instead of bonemeal. Old habits and beliefs are hard to change, I must say.



There is a sequel to this book, The Informed Gardener Blooms Again. You can also listen to and/or subscribe to Dr. Chalker-Scott's current podcasts on science-based gardening at <http://mynorthwest.com/?nid=574&p=1042&n=The%20Informed%20Gardener> (or listen to her past-season podcasts at <http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~linda%20chalker-scott/Podcasts.html>).

Web Resources for the Critical-Thinker Gardener

Read or subscribe to the Question and Planter news-letter at <http://www.questionandplanter.com/>.



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progressive sale

Norrie's Gift Shop at the Arboretum is having it's annual inventory reduction sale on June 14th through the 17th. This year is a

progressive sale. Selected items will start at a 30% discount with the discount increasing every day, ending with a 75% discount on Sunday, the 17th. Or more, who knows? Selected books will also be marked at a discount. Plants, excluding cacti and succulent items, will be on sale at 20% off. Don't miss this sale! Hours are 10:00-4:00 every day. Support the Arboretum.



The GARDEN FAIRE

*Come to the Garden Faire
9:00 to 5:00, June 23, 2012, in Skypark, Scotts Valley*

7th Annual Faire

Theme: "Growing Your Change"

www.thegardenfaire.org

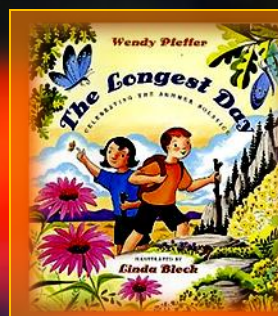
Free admission

Come enjoy a full day of wandering amid organic gardening and sustainable living workshops, demos and booths stuffed with goodies like tools and seedlings will inspire the gardener in anyone. Featured experts sharing their wealth of knowledge will include [Dr. Ed Bauman](#), founder and president of Bauman College Holistic Nutrition and Culinary Arts, and [Emmet Brady](#), creator of the Insect News Network and innovative cultural Entomologist and more.

More information and articles in Part 2 of the Newsletter, coming soon!

No price is set
on the lavish
summer;
June may
be had by
the poorest
comer. -James Russell Lowell

Celebrate the first day of summer!
June 20th is the
summer
solstice.



If you have
children in
your life, they
may enjoy the
activities in
The Longest
Day by Wendy
Pleffer. Buy
locally!

The Gardeners' Club

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Plant Table

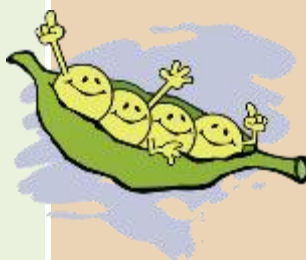
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pattyconnolerltr@aol.com
2nd position—vacant
3rd position - vacant

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 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 Hall,
2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos.

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www.thegardenersclub.org