

The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz County, California

March 2014

Writer/Editor: Lise Bixler

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Vertical G(ART)ens

So many of our members are succulent fanatics, we know the next meeting is one you won't want to miss. Kristel Gramlich, the owner and founder of Plantasy, will introduce us to her unique style and methods of vertical gardening.

Kristel has a from UC Davis in Agriculture and Sustainability, and worked in a commercial propagation greenhouse in Watsonville for seven years. Her thirst for her own creative outlet led her to start Plantasy. She believes that the incredibly diverse world of plants is the most beautiful artistic medium. And she loves vertical plantings that you can hang at eye level because they are "in your face"!

She developed special tile planting systems and frames, and what she calls The Canvas; the soil-less medium that allows for creative inspiration to become masterpieces.

Kristel's palette is not limited to succulents—she uses an eclectic mixture of plants—heucheras, carex, phormiums, salvia. On her web site, she has a list of recommended plants. Check it out at www.plantasy.us/3-grow-it-gorgeous.

Join us for inspiration at our monthly meeting!



Thursday, March 13th

7:00 pm

Aptos Grange

2555 Mar Vista Drive

Aptos

Refreshments will be served.
Thank you to Denise Kennedy
for snack and Kerry Skyles for
dessert.

Kristel's creations will
be on display for the
entire month of
March at the Artisans
Gallery in downtown
Santa Cruz (1368
Pacific Ave).

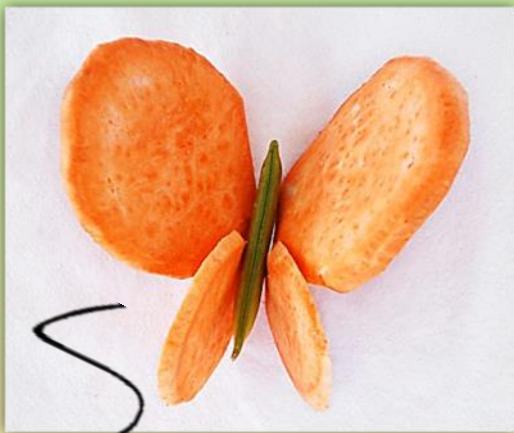
Plantasy: The Living Art of
Kristel Gramlich



ARTISANS GALLERY

March 1st-31st, 2014





Play With Your Food

Go to HGTV (www.hgtvgardens.com/crafts/play-with-your-food-butterfly) where Ruth Meharg gives you step-by-step directions for making this "fly guy" out of a snap pea and sweet potato slices.



Read

Plantiful: Start Small, Grow Big with 150 Plants That Spread, Self-Sow, and Overwinter by Kristin Green

Whoever coined the phrase "money doesn't grow on trees" must not have been a resourceful gardener. While we may not be able to harvest physical money, with the right plants and techniques gardeners can rely on nature to give itself away for free.

Plantiful shows you how to have an easy, gorgeous garden packed with plants by simply making the right choices. Kristin Green highlights plants that help a garden quickly grow by self-sowing and spreading and teaches you how to expand the garden and extend the life of a plant by overwintering. The book features plant profiles for 50 self-sowers (including columbine, milkweed, and foxglove), 50 spreaders (such as clematis, snow poppy, and spearmint), and 50 plants that overwinter (including lemon verbena, begonia, and Chinese hibiscus). Additional gardening tips, design ideas, and inspirational photos will motivate and inspire gardeners of all levels.

CLASS:
EDIBLE & MEDICINAL PLANTS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY:
AN HERB-WALK TOUR OF NATIVE REVIVAL NURSERY

MARCH 8TH
10:30-3PM
COST \$35

TAUGHT BY: TELLUR FENNER
OF BLUE WIND BOTANICAL MEDICINE CLINIC

TELLUR IS A CLINICAL HERBALIST/EDUCATOR
WWW.BLUEWINDBMC.COM

CLASS HOSTED BY: NATIVE REVIVAL NURSERY
2600 MAR VISTA DRIVE, APTOS, CA 95003
WWW.NATIVEREVIVAL.COM (831) 684-1811
R.S. V.P TO SAVE YOUR SPACE!!

Native Revival Nursery Edible & Medicinal Plants of California

Class taught by Tellur Fenner, clinical herbalist, educator & owner of the Blue Wind Botanical Medicine Clinic & Education Center (www.luewindbmc.com).

Space limited, so register quickly – 684-1811. California is home to a diverse array of edible & medicinal plants long valued for their nutritional/therapeutic effects. This talk explores many of the native/non-native plants found growing throughout the state, with a focus on historical as well as modern use. The presentation will include an interactive lecture, a large selection of live/dried plant samples, plus sampling of a number of different edible/medicinal plant preparations, emphasizing a dynamic sensory awareness of the plants via close observation, touching, tasting, and smelling. This in-depth introductory class should prove to be insightful and rewarding for anyone interested in knowing more about the unique flora of our state. 2600 Mar Vista Drive, Aptos, <http://nativerevival.com/>.

The Avocado Tree

by Margie Kern-Marshall*



I remember the avocado tree growing tall in our backyard; my dad, the horticulturalist, sadly lamenting its sterility. He tried everything from female avocados to fellow males. He tried bees and moths. He perused botannica but all his research yielded not one avocado—nor even a bud.

It was the bane of his life. He had no problems with his huge greenhouse in Palos Verdes. No problem with his hydroponics. He was developing a black rose, or so he thought. But no avocados.

He had several books published on his experiments in agricultural chemi-culture. He had awards, guest lectureships, honors, invites to foreign locales. But this one avocado tree haunted him. Why wouldn't it yield fruit? It was tall, it was broad. It was glorious. It was taunting him daily. What was he doing wrong? Was he ignorant of something really important? What was he forgetting?

Then the opossums came. They made their trails through the tree and onto the fence and then our house roof. They

started making their nests in my dad's avocado tree.

Mom started nagging him. We kids enjoyed watching the possums. We had read of possum stews that were eaten in the south. We started hounding dad about using our B.B. guns to kill one and eat it for dinner. We two brave souls could save the family's reputation and be our father's salvation.

I don't know what happened next. But I do remember my shock when I got home from school one day and the avocado tree was gone. My father was sheepish. He said, "The tree has won!"

**Editor's Note: Margie has had many roles in the Santa Cruz community. She is a retired educator (many of you may know her from her years at Cabrillo College). She is a member of the Life Stories group that meets twice a*

month at my home. She wrote this piece for our group, and on her 84th birthday, NPR (KUSP) ran it on air. If you'd like to hear her reading it, go to the Central Coast Public Radio podcast (<http://blogs.kusp.org/firstperson/2014/01/24/avocado-tree/>).

While we are talking
about trees...

Metamorphosis

Always it happens when we are not there--
The tree leaps up alive into the air,
Small open parasols of Chinese green
Wave on each twig. But who has ever seen
The latch sprung, the bud as it burst?
Spring always manages to get there first.

Lovers of wind, who will have been aware
Of a faint stirring in the empty air,
Look up one day through a dissolving screen
To find no star, but this multiplied green,
Shadow on shadow, singing sweet and clear.
Listen, lovers of wind, the leaves are here!

— May Sarton

Free Talk on Growing Citrus

Saturday, March 22
San Lorenzo Garden Center
235 River St., Santa Cruz

Ed Laivo of Four Winds Growers, Northern California's largest wholesale citrus grower, will be joining us to talk citrus. If you've ever wanted to grow your own lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruit and tangerines, you won't want to miss this! From 10-11 a.m. Ed will present a talk on the cultural practices of growing citrus in coastal locales and the best practices for dealing with drought conditions. From 11 to noon there will be a Q & A, with Ed will be taking your specific questions on citrus care.



My Year of the Nicotiana

I am so happy with the flowering tobacco plants I have in a container in my front garden, flowers of white, chartreuse and a reddish-brown. They die in the winter but come back every year.

In 2009, the National Garden Bureau selected Nicotiana as its Perennial of the Year. You can read the detailed article they wrote, and admire glorious photos, at www.ngb.org/year_of_index.cfm?YOID=27. I've excerpted parts of their article below.

"Their beauty is appealing and their fragrance is alluring. Nicotiana (ni-co-she-AA-nah) or flowering tobacco is a lovely heirloom flower gaining recognition among today's gardeners. This ornamental fills the summer garden with large, brightly colored trumpets of star-shaped flowers that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. Older nicotiana species are valued for their impressive stature and deliciously scented flowers that open in early evening. Newer hybrids offer smaller, more compact plants with abundant flowers that bloom throughout the summer...

...The first of the ornamental nicotianas to gain garden popularity was *Nicotiana glauca*. Introduced in the US and England in the early 1800's it was prized for its white, highly scented flowers that opened at night. In Victorian times, *Nicotiana glauca* (picture at right) was planted along walkways and paths so that those strolling by could enjoy the sweet fragrance of the flowers....Poet Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote 'Where at dusk the dumb white nicotine awakes and utters her fragrance in a garden sleeping.'



Nicotiana fell out of favor because the tall plants often needed to be staked or supported to keep them looking nice in the garden. Today there is renewed interest and appreciation of both the heirloom species and modern hybrids as nicotianas find a home in contemporary gardens...."

Newer hybrids have been developed which are shorter, more compact, hold their flowers better, and longer bloom time.

Unfortunately, many don't have the fragrance of the original species.

Select Seeds specializes in open-pollinated antique seed varieties that originated 50 or more years ago. (Open-pollinated flowers are fertilized by insects, hummingbirds or wind, and the resulting seeds will produce plants that are identical or very similar to the parent plant.) When their catalog arrived in my mailbox, I decided to splurge. I ordered seed for Woodland Tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*). Star Flower, they called it, for its cluster of tubular blooms are like a shower of brilliant white stars.



www.selectseeds.com

It will steal the scene with its broad, light green leaves and fragrant flowers that stay open all day. It self sows. I also ordered another self-sower, a hybrid, Tobacco 'Crimson Bedder' (*Nicotiana x sanderae*). That, along with the free seed packet they promised, would be enough, I thought.

The very next day, though, my "A Way to Garden" newsletter arrived via email. Apparently Margaret Roach, gardener and writer, has decided to have a "Year of the Nicotiana" as well (<http://awaytogarden.com/a-dozen-unusual-nicotiana-from-daggawalla>). She featured an article about Daggawalla Seeds and Herbs (<http://daggawalla.com/>) "No other seed merchant offers this many different species of Nicotiana!" they say. They offer a 16-variety seed sampler pack which includes not only the Woodland Tobacco I had already ordered, but also many others including: *Nicotiana glauca* (to 30 feet tall in its native Argentina yellow flowers, and the leaves are not sticky like other species); *Nicotiana maritime* (from Australia, with small white flowers on 5-foot plants); *Nicotiana rustica* (Ceremonial Hopi tobacco, 3 feet tall and yellow flowers); *Nicotiana knightiana* (green flowers, seven feet high, from the Peruvian coast, and loved in the UK); *Nicotiana langsdorffii* (to 3 feet, chartreuse flowers — pollen is actually blue); *Nicotiana acuminata* (from Chile, 5 feet tall with white flowers and leaves that smell like tomato (which, like Nicotiana, is in the Nightshade family)); and 'Peach Screamer' - *Nicotiana glutinosa* (from the Andes, to 3 feet and from the Andes — flowers are a showy peach-colored).



Of course, because peach is my favorite garden color, I had to order 'Peach Screamer'. I was pleased to receive my seeds promptly, without a shipping charge, with a personal note, a free seed packet because I was a new customer and a 15% off coupon for my next order. I'm in trouble—now I have to order their special deal on 5 new 2014 introductions, some extremely rare.

Daggawalla recommend starting their seeds like this: "Press tiny seeds onto surface of already-moistened soil. Keep pots in a water-filled tray in a sunny, warm location. Avoid surface watering until germination, except with a mister. After first set of true leaves have sized up, thin to one plant per pot and transplant out. Give plants full sun."

Okay, will do. As soon as I place one more order to Swallowtail Seeds (www.swallowtailgardenseeds.com). I must have their compact Tinkerbell, with long green trumpets, dusky-rose petals and azure-blue pollen, and Baby Bella Antique Red, another Tinkerbell-type nicotiana which produce hundreds of plum-red flowers from July to October. Enough! Hope to have seedlings for you at the May Plant Sale & Swap.



The mother of Club Member Nikolara Janson, Genesis Lawson, who shared her lemon curd recipe with us last month, lives in Portugal. This month she sent us her recipe for soup, and a story about it.

Dear Gardeners' Club Friends,

Here is my recipe for Portuguese Soup. Please feel free to share the recipe with anyone you wish—I am NOT possessive of kitchen magic.

A few interesting notes on the soup. It comes from a lady friend who used to have a home in Cape Cod, who got the recipe from her favorite restaurant in Province Town at the tip of the Cape. There is a large Portuguese population on the Cape and in Rhode Island. My copy of the recipe is hand written, with 6 stars at the bottom - I am not sure who added the stars - or if they were added one at a time or all at once!

There are MANY different sausages in Portugal, but many resembling a spicy chorizo. I used to use a combination of Linguica or smoked Kielbasa - or even smoky links. Also, we do not have the type of Kale that we used to get in California - or the Russian Kale Nikolara that has just harvested. The kale here is called couve - a generic name for most cabbages (couveflor is cauliflower). It resembles a large fan with a milky green leaf and a white or pale green stalk.

The piri-piri I mentioned is again a broad term for Portuguese hot-sauce. Not vinegary like Tabasco, but could be anything from red chili seeds soaked in olive oil, to a taco sauce sort of concoction. There must be 20 varieties at the grocery store and most restaurants have their own specialty. But they are all VERY hot!

A little warning about the soup, though..... It can be

addictive, and eating this too often may cause an irresistible urge to book immediate flights to Portugal or may cause yearnings for moving here all together!

Enjoy! With Love from Genesis Lawson
Algarve, Portugal

Portuguese Soup

- One Pound of Kale with leaves stripped off and cut in long, thin slices
- One Pound of Potatoes, peeled and cubed
- One Pound of Smoked Sausage
- One large chopped Onion (about 1 cup)
- Three Carrots, peeled and chopped (about 1/2 cup)
- Two Cloves of Garlic
- Two Tablespoons of Olive Oil
- Two Tablespoons of Butter
- Six chopped tomatoes (or two tins of tomatoes)
- One and a half Cups of Beans – pinto or garbanzos



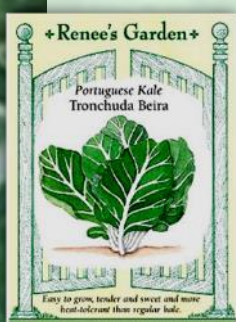
Two quarts of stock, Mais o Menus (+ or -)
Sauté Onions in Olive Oil and Butter, add Carrots, Garlic. Cook Five Minutes and add Potatoes and Stock.

Simmer 15 to 20 Minutes

Stir in Tomatoes and Beans.

Cook 15 Minutes and add Kale and chopped sausage and simmer another 15 Minutes until all is cooked.

Season to taste with Tabasco, Piri-Piri, Salt, Pepper, and Oregano.



Renee's Garden offers Portuguese Kale seed, and you can read another inspiring, lovely article about Portuguese Kale Soup (along with another recipe!) written by Joy Albright-Souz at the Renee's Garden blog, www.reneesgarden.com/articles/Portuguese%20Kale%20Soup.pdf.

Joy grows her kale in the midst of her flower garden, alongside her Iceberg rose bush with a seasonal mix of scabiosa blossoms.

Ooh! Ooh! The Plant Sale & Swap is Coming!



In May, the most exciting event of the year for our Club will happen—the Spring Plant Sale & Swap. Be prepared! Start saving and potting up plants. Start your seedlings. Divide your perennials. Thin your library and your knick-knack collection! Clean your toolshed, and trade your duplicate or

unnneeded tools! More information to come in the April Newsletter.





FREE TALK! Learn How to Harvest Rain and Install Greywater Systems

March 15th

San Lorenzo Garden Center
235 River St., Santa Cruz

Prepare yourself for the drought! Go for a free talk with the leaders in these fields.

10 a.m.-2 p.m.—Rainwater Catchment with Bruce Hallinan of Bushman Tanks

10 a.m.—noon—Laundry 2L andscape Talk by Central Coast Greywater Alliance

Bring your questions and prepare to be inspired! Learn how to set up your home for edible and ornamental landscape irrigation; fire protection; water features and ponds; and storm water management.



Dry Farming Tomatoes?

With our ongoing drought I'm going to try dry farming tomatoes this year. Have any of you home gardeners tried this method? Dry farmed tomatoes are incredibly sweet and flavorful, although your crop may be smaller. Though I have never tried this method, the basics seem to be these:

When the soil is dry enough to crumble easily, double dig the entire bed to a depth of 18-14 inches. Some people even triple dig. If you've grown a cover crop, dig it in. Add at least 2 inches of finished compost and mix it into the top 6 inches of the bed. The bed will need lots of organic matter to help retain rain water for the plants to grow down to.

The leggier your seedlings are, the better. Early Girls are preferred, but you can try others, like Black Krim. When the soil is warm enough to plant, pinch or cut off all leaves and branches below the top 4-5 inches of the plant.

Space your plants farther apart (at 4-6 feet) than conventionally grown tomatoes. Dig holes deep enough to bury both the roots and most of the stem. Water each planting hole well and let it drain.

Add compost/and or fertilizer to the hole, plant, water deeply, then mulch around the plants with 3-4 inches of leaf mulch, straw, broken terra cotta, etc.

Water deeply again a few days later, then once a week for three weeks. After that, especially when you see fruit begin to develop, stop watering altogether. Do not be tempted to water your tomatoes, because irregular watering can result in blossom end rot. (Although I know someone who does give occasional deep watering but sprays the plants with liquid calcium every other week to fight the blossom end rot.) The tomatoes should be able to find their own water by sending their roots deeply.

In fall, prepare for next year's tomatoes by planting a new bed with a cover crop of legumes or rye, to turn over in spring for tilth.

It's March!

Most plants do their growing in spring, so feed everything that you usually fertilize NOW. Don't forget your roses—this is the time to feed them. This is perhaps the best month of the year to plant perennials and shrubs. If your daffodils have finished blooming, remove the seed pods (but not the leaves) to increase their energy for next year's blooming cycle. Prune spring-blooming plants as they finish blooming. After the danger of frost is past, prune hydranges, fuschias and bougainvilleas. Plant out summer bulbs such as callas, cannas, dahlias, gladiolus, lilies, tigridia, tuberous begonias and watsonias. Apply an acid fertilizer to blueberries, camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons. Make compost!



Sierra Azul Nursery tells us, "We have a number of varieties of Leucospermum (pincushion flower), Leucadendron (cone flower) and Protea available for spring planting. When the frosts are gone it is a good time to plant, especially since we have more than moist soils from the recent

deluges! The protea family is very drought tolerant once established, so a great choice for a water-conserving garden."

More xeriscaping possibilities at Sierra Azul: all of their Spanish lavenders and lithodoras are 20% off.

Sierra Azul Nursery & Gardens; 2660 East Lake Ave., Watsonville; <http://sierraazul.com/>.



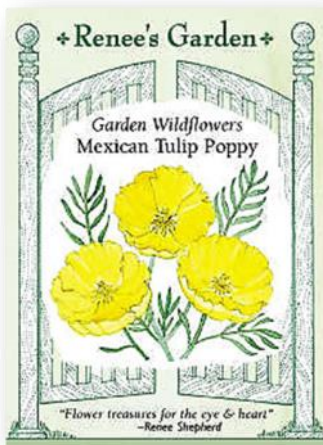
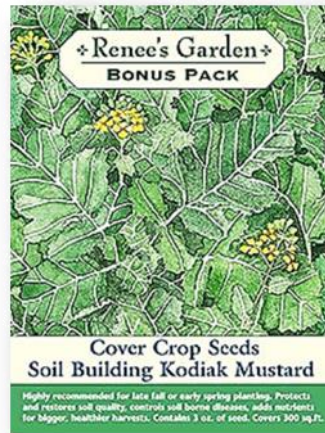
Try something new

Lots of new introductions this year from Renee's Garden, (<http://www.reneesgarden.com/>) including more organic varieties. Here are a few you might want to try.



Baby "Honeynut" Winter Squash (Exclusive)

Terrific 'personal size' 4 to 5 inch butternuts, mature about one pound each with exceptionally rich, nutty, sweet flavor. Space saving, mildew resistant vines twine easily on fence or trellis.



Baby Bush Beans "Nickel Filet".

Gourmet beans originally developed for upscale restaurants, with tender -sweet, 3 to 4 inch pods borne in abundance on compact plants. Extra fancy beans need only brief cooking and little adornment.

Last Call for Membership Renewal

Don't miss out on our newsletter and meetings! Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are still only \$12.00. The membership year lasts through the end of December, 2014. Dues entitle members to all club educational programs , our special events, plant trades and our awesome monthly newsletter. The "green" option is to receive an electronic PDF FULL-COLOR version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option below. Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. Renew your membership now so you won't miss a thing...you'll be glad you did.

The Gardeners' Club Membership Form

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

Newsletter Preference (check one): ☐ Full color PDF via e-mail ☐ Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Enclose check for \$12 per member made out to *The Gardeners' Club* . Mail to

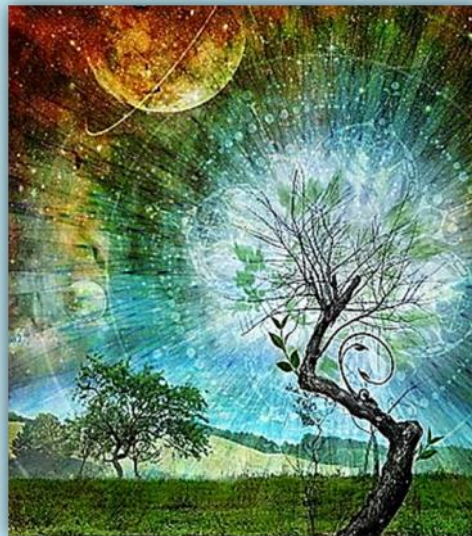
The Gardeners' Club c/o Suzanne Mercado, P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005.



It might FEEL like winter, but at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 9th, daylight savings time ushers in the bloom of spring. We lose an hour of sleep, but we'll get many months ahead with an extra hour of evening sunlight. Make sure to turn the clock ahead one hour—spring forward—before heading to bed Saturday night.

Spring Arrives!

On the Vernal Equinox, around March 20th, in California, Northern Hemisphere, Earth, we have around 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of nighttime. The equinox is a time of hope and optimism, bringing us a balance of day and night because the sun is sitting on the earth's equator. Many people celebrate this as a time of fertility, regeneration and renewed energy.



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www.thegardenersclub.org

The Gardeners' Club

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 are \$12 per calendar
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