

# The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz Co., California

September 2014

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## Bill the Bulb Baron - All About Growing Narcissus



"When to plant? Now!  
It is only getting later; time only moves  
in one direction! DO NOT WAIT!!! They will always  
do better planted now than at any time later in the future,  
you will have a head start! If you are reading this earlier in the  
season (such as August-October), DO NOT POSTPONE  
buying and planting!!! FORGET THAT IDIOTIC ADVICE ABOUT NOT  
PLANTING THESE UNTIL NOVEMBER --these do NOT need  
soil cooling like regular daffodils and other Dutch bulbs do--ERASE  
from your memory EVERYTHING you have been taught by the  
Dutch about bulbs when it comes to planting these--plant them in  
late summer or very early autumn, the earliest varieties will start  
blooming by mid-late autumn and the others will continue  
throughout the winter, with the season more or less  
DONE right about when your calendar starts  
to say "SPRING"!!! "

Bill Welch, a.k.a. "The Bulb Baron", has a lifetime commitment to growing and hybridizing narcissus bulbs and amaryllis. He has successfully made thousands of pollinations of his Tazetta Narcissus, collected the seed, and raised hybrid bulbs. The difference between daffodils and Tazetta Narcissus is that Tazettas are smaller flowered and more fragrant than daffodils. They also have clusters of three to

15 flowers per stem rather than one large flower like daffodils. There can even be up to 30 flowers per stem.

Bill has bred and named several new varieties, including Avalanche of Gold, Sugar Cups, New Glory and Liquid Sun. He grows all of his bulbs organically and you can see it all by visiting his Carmel Ranch, or driving by his Moss Landing growing grounds. But here's an opportunity to learn all about growing these glorious flowers and buy his bulbs without traveling – come to our September meeting!

Narcissus are deer-proof and gopher proof – Bill says they are easy to grow as weeds, and ideal for the worst soils – "plant 'em and forget 'em", he says. No summer water is required for a 5-6 bloom sequence of varieties.

Bill will bring all sorts of his organically-grown bulbs with him to the meeting for us to purchase. He'll bring multiple varieties of fall blooming narcissus, winter blooming narcissus, summer blooming amaryllis and winter blooming freesias. He suggests bringing cash or checks to pay for the bulbs to expedite our purchases, although he'll be able to process credit card transactions for those patient enough to wait until he can get to them.

Visit Bill's website at [www.billthebulbbaron.com](http://www.billthebulbbaron.com) for more information, growing tips and tantalizing photographs.

Amaryllis belladonna—salmon



**Monthly Meeting—Sept. 11th**

**7-9 p.m., Aptos Grange**

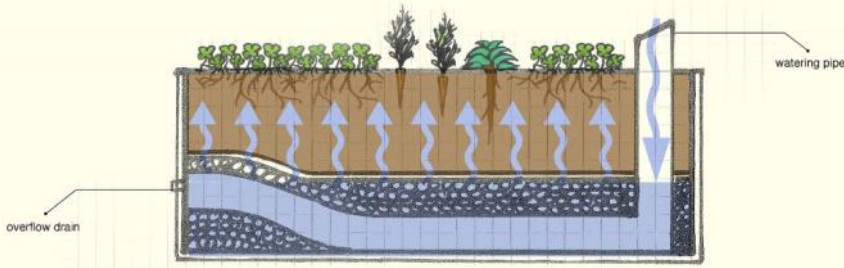
**2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos**

Refreshments will be served. Thank you to Carolyn Dobbins for snack, Kerry Skyles for dessert and Melita Israel for juice.



# WICKING BED

A Wicking Bed is a raised bed garden which contains a water reservoir underneath the growing area. The water reservoir is made up of round rocks and perforated pipe, and is separated from the soil by a layer of landscaping fabric.



Water is automatically wicked upwards towards the top of the soil medium to irrigate the plants, which encourages deeper root growth and more drought resistant plants, while also significantly reducing the maintenance needs of the garden.

evaporation of surface water (which occurs when you water beds from the top). They are self-watering. Wicking beds are an especially great system to use in community gardens because they save people from driving frequently during hot weeks to water their beds. A full wicking bed should irrigate itself for about a week. No evaporation means no salting of soil. If you are watering your soils from the top with hard water, you risk accumulating salts, because the water evaporates and leaves the minerals behind. Eventually your soil will struggle to support plant life. Since they're raised, they will warm up quicker in the spring, and you can easily attach cold frames to them.

The Australian website **Resilience ("Building A World of Resilient Communities")** features articles on building and maintaining wicking beds. A wicking bed is an effective and water-efficient DIY gardening aid that can be created and adjusted according to your budget, materials, space and garden plan. Wicking beds are self-contained raised beds with built-in reservoirs that supply water from the bottom up - changing how, and how much, you water your beds. The bed illustrated above is one of many possible versions.

Here are a few of the advantages of wicking beds. They are water-efficient! Watering from the bottom up prevents

Most of the sites for wicking beds focus on building beds that use media, a layer in between the soil and the water reservoir, as their wick. This is an easy and cheap way of supporting the soil on top of the reservoir. Gravel is the most common medium, but there are a number of materials that do the trick

A great DIY website giving detailed information and tutorials on making wicking beds can be found at <http://permaculturenews.org/2011/06/20/from-the-bottom-up-a-diy-guide-to-wicking-beds/>. To read the original story at Resilience, go to [www.resilience.org/](http://www.resilience.org/).

## Our Board

At our August Board meeting we processed the feedback collected from members about who the Club will make donations to in the upcoming year, and how we will make decisions for use of funds. The decision was made to give two donations next year in the form of scholarships to students of the Cabrillo Horticulture program. There was interest in exploring how we might give a scholarship to a high school student planning to study horticulture, and Member Marcia Meyer is researching this option. There was interest in supporting Life Lab programs at individual school; this will take more research, and we welcome the help of any Club member who might want to contribute time to this. We also discussed other ways we can support the community and build connections, such as helping to sponsor local events and staffing an information table at other events. We also agreed to add information links to our website to make it more of a resource to the community., and Joe Thompson has already started working on that (thanks, Joe!). We thank all of you who gave us ideas and suggestions, and encourage you to keep sharing



your ideas. Talk to us at meetings, or email any of us (our contact information is on the last page of this newsletter). Thank you, too, Board members, for all of the work you do to keep our Club as wonderful as it is, and for preserving the spirits of friendship, connection, learning and sharing which make our Club so special.

The next Board meeting will be at Lise Bixler's house in Bonny Doon. Lise has continued to take sculpture classes with Bonny Doon artist Mattie Leeds, at the expense of keeping up on her garden. She's got a couple of new, not-quite-finished sculptures to share. Non-Board members are invited to join us for our meeting, a tour of her garden and dinner, although Lise warns visitors that her garden is perhaps even more chaotic than usual, and that's saying something! If you need directions, email Lise at [lisebixler@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisebixler@sbcglobal.net). Call Cherry if you'd like to carpool from her house in Soquel (475-0991).

Board Meeting  
Monday, September 23rd, 6 p.m.  
91 Country Estates Drive  
Bonny Doon



Watsonville Wetlands Watch Presents  
"2014 Habitat Festival and Native Plant Sale"

Something for Everyone at Free Sept. 27 Family Event

Watsonville Wetlands Watch, announces the 2014 Habitat Festival and Native Plant Sale on September 27th from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center building, at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School campus in Watsonville. This free, family friendly event will feature talks by expert speakers, hands-on workshops, information booths, guided nature walks, food, music and a kids' area with art, nature, and garden activities. A highlight of the day includes the annual Native Plant Sale which benefits Watsonville Wetlands Watch's activities. This once a year native plant sale allows attendees to purchase native plants grown in the organization's new green house and native plant nursery. Experts will be available for information, advice and questions.



Expert speakers/Presentations include: *Richard Merrill*, founder and former director of the Horticulture Program at Cabrillo College, giving a talk on building a soil ecosystem that promotes plant health and water conservation, titled "On Beyond Compost: A new way to look at soil organic matter." *Sierra Azul Nursery* owner and landscape/garden designer *Jeff Rosendale* will give a talk entitled: "Xeriscape Gardening: Mediterranean mounds with a native touch", which will discuss landscape design and implementation using native and other Mediterranean plants to create naturalistic and water wise gardens. Expert birder and birding instructor *Nanci Adam* will present a class on "Wetlands Birding Basics", and herbalist and teacher *Linda Vaughn* will talk about how to use native plants and herbs for medicine, cooking and health. Workshops will include: "Snakes Alive" with live snakes by *Paul Haskins*, Tool Sharpening where participants can bring their own tools and learn how to sharpen them, City of Watsonville Nature Center providing information on worm compost and water conservation, Growing Native Plants, Rainwater Capture and Use, and much more.

For more information and a full schedule, visit [www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](http://www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org) or contact Kathy at 345-1226 or [Kathy@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](mailto:Kathy@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org).

## Windowsill Art: Creating One-of-a-Kind Natural Arrangements to Celebrate the Seasons

"The windowsill...provides opportunities for **deep looking** celebrating the seasons, and for **playing** with plant material." - Nancy Hugo



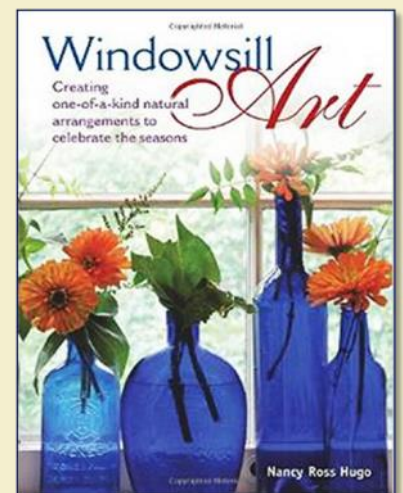
*The simple pleasure of dropping a flower into a vase is multiplied when you drop more than one flower (or leaf, or seed structure) into more than one vase. Plant materials displayed here include a mottled red leaf, tickseed sunflowers, sumac foliage, avocado, Queen Anne's lace seed structures, sweet gum leaves, and grapevine foliage.*

Almost everyone does it: puts a little something on the windowsill to watch it ripen, root, or just sit there looking pretty. But the windowsill can serve as a stage for more intentional arrangements – a personal, free-wheeling kind of art...a catalyst for creativity. Author Nancy Ross Hugo demonstrates how to use the windowsill as a platform for small, simple displays that celebrate the seasons and reflect the personal styles of their creators. Her fresh approach uses bottles, jars and other small vases to showcase arrangements of locally collected leaves, seedpods, flowers, fruits and twigs. In Windowsill Art the reader will learn how to find and display materials, why some containers work better than others, how to combine materials – and simple techniques to enhance creative possibilities. Beautiful full-color photographs throughout.



### Pot 'em Up!

Here's a reminder that our fall plant sale and swap is coming up in October. Start dividing or digging up plants you want to trade. Get a head start on potting up extras, weeding out your tools, garden accoutrements and chotchkes, thinning your bookshelves, etc. Make room for all of the cool plants and gardening stuff you'll find at the sale!





## "over the fence" column

This continuing feature of the newsletter is dedicated to the days when we'd learn from other gardeners "over the fence" rather than Googling.



Member Dian Duchin Reed says, "I love your idea of an Over the Fence column! Here's one suggestion, with photos to show you what I'm talking about."



We replaced our redwood fence a few years ago, and I didn't like the idea of sending the old boards to the dump. Instead, we used them to build a potting shed with deck, and a separate boardwalk, deck, and Adirondack chairs. They've added both fun and functionality to the garden, and all these projects were easy to make."



Have an overabundance of zukes? Member Jan Olafsson brought savory zucchini muffins as a snack to our meeting a while ago, and she was asked to share the recipe. Jan says, "This is the basic recipe I got from a magazine but, I usually jazz it up with whatever I have around that's interesting. Usually, I halve the recipe and that will make about 24 muffins. I play fast and lose with the recipe and it always comes out good... Enjoy!"

### SAVORY ZUCCHINI BAKE

3 cups grated zucchini (they say peeled, but I'm too lazy for that)  
1 cup flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 cup chopped onion  
1/2 tsp each salt and pepper  
1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese or swiss  
2 Tbsp chopped parsley (fresh?)  
1/2 tsp dried oregano (fresh?)  
1/2 cup oil  
4 eggs  
Mix, put into greased 9x13 pan (or small muffin tins if taking to an event). Bake @350 degrees for 30 minutes. This amount will serve about 12.



Member Marcia Meyer has met some challenges in her yard, one planned and one in response to a disaster. "I'm stumped!" she joked when she showed me the enormous base of a huge Black Locust tree that used to grow in her front yard, but crashed down during a storm. "A plague of locusts", I answered, looking at the countless locust seedlings that she is now contending with. After trying to deal with this on her own, she's doing the smart thing and having an arborist grind the stump and treat the



core to remedy the problem. That way she can spend more time on her other new project—the new Mediterranean mound she made to replace her lawn after she took a workshop at Native Revival Nursery. The new bed is a stunning addition to her landscape, requiring little water and maintenance. One plant that is already thriving there is Salvia 'Bee's Bliss', a native California shrub which grows low to the ground, never exceeding 2 feet, and can reach a draping 6 to 8 feet wide. This exciting groundcover has an extended bloom period and is great for a bird and butterfly garden. with whorls of lavender-blue flowers. Marcia reports she already has a diversity of new birds visiting her changed habitat.



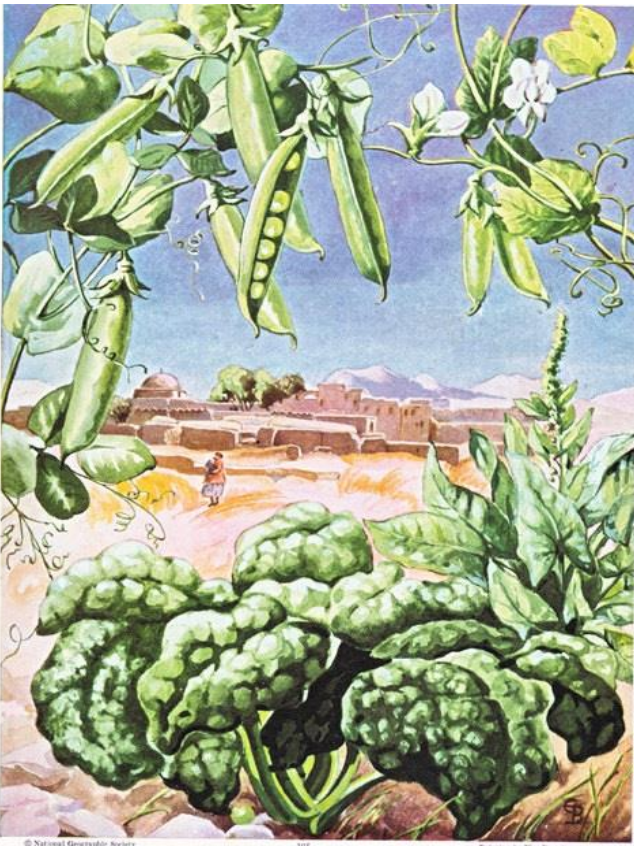
Blue ceramic bird enjoying 'Bee's Bliss' and bark

**Gardeners love to learn from other gardeners. How does you garden grow? Do you have a story, suggestion or a success to share with us? Lean "over the fence" drop us an email—click here!**

[lisebixler@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisebixler@sbcglobal.net)







**Peas Were Introduced into Europe During the Stone Age: Spinach Came Much Later.** Both were native to the Near East. Primitive peas were eaten by Swiss lake dwellers and European cavemen. Spinach was unknown beyond its homeland until 1,500-200 years ago.

illus. by Else Bostelmann—1949 National Geographic page



## Planting Peas

It's not spring yet, but I can't wait anymore. I get the hoe, pull back the snow from the old furrows, expose the rich dark earth. I bare my hand and dole out shriveled peas, one by one. I see my grandmother's hand, doing just this, dropping peas into gray gumbo that clings like clay. This moist earth is rich and dark as chocolate cake. Her hands cradle baby chicks; she finds kittens in the loft and hands them down to me, safe beside the ladder leading up to darkness. I miss her smile, her blue eyes, her biscuits and gravy, but mostly her hands. I push a pea into the earth, feel her hands pushing me back. She'll come in May, she says, in long straight rows, dancing in light green dresses.

—BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE  
(Contributed by Member Barbara Vorlop)



**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, 2555 Mar**

## The Gardeners' Club

P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005

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[www.thegardenersclub.org](http://www.thegardenersclub.org)  
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