

# The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz County

March 2015

Writer/Editor: Lise Bixler

## LANDSCAPING WITH SUCCULENTS

Stephen McCabe has been studying and growing succulents for over 30 years. He is the Director of Research for the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and Curator of Succulents .

Stephen will share pictures of designs and landscapes. Succulents can be combined with a variety of hardscapes and plants—poppies, grasses, buckwheats, lewisies, yuccas, groundcovers, leucadendrons, salvias, cordylines and more. Many of you know how passionate Steve is about Dudleya, so expect that he'll include pictures of those in his presentation!

Thurs., March 12th—7:00 p.m

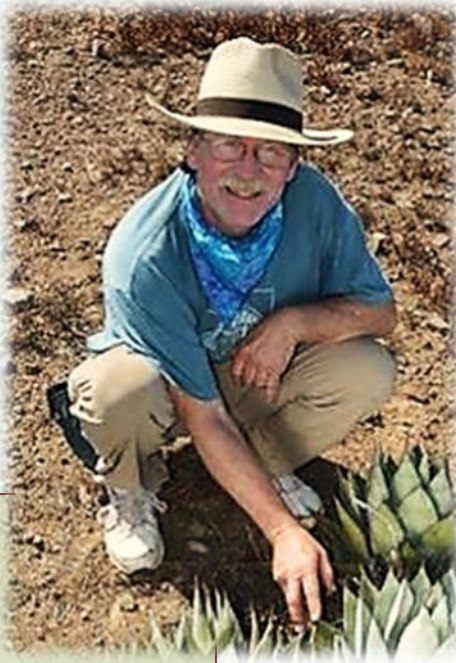
Aptos Grange

2555 Mar Vista Drive

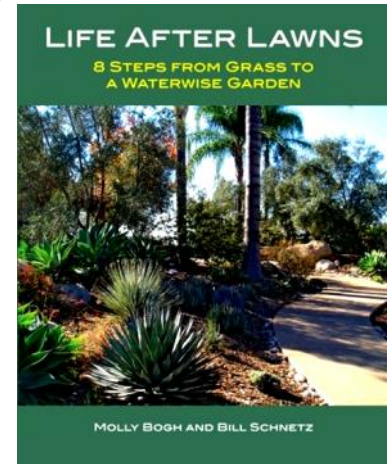
Refreshments will be served.

Thanks to Joanna Hall for snack, Robyn Walters for dessert and Jean Favre for beverages.

I wish I could remember who used that line when reviewing this book, but I can't, so apologizes to who ever I borrowed it from!



## "50 Ways to Leave Your Lawn"



This is a no-nonsense, non-ideological approach to creating a drought-tolerant landscape, and you don't have to do all of the work yourself. *Life After Lawns* by Molly Bogh and Bill Schnetz explains that the ideal approach depends on a combination of factors: the kind of grass you have, your yard's soil type, and the size of the area—to name a few. You may want to do it all on your own, but most people prefer to hire part or all of the work done. This book explains how to find and evaluate a reliable contractor; what to consider when it comes to walls, hardscape, electricity and irrigation; and wise things to do now to minimize work later on.



Founded in 2006 to lessen the sale and spread of invasive plants in California, PlantRight has brought together leaders from the nursery industry, environmental advocates, academics, and professional landscapers to find cost-effective ways to stop the sale of invasive plants. Recognizing that prevention is the most effective way to combat their spread, PlantRight offers an opportunity for the nursery industry to take the lead on this issue, while protecting California's unique biodiversity and curtailing the need for regulation.

PlantRight is conducting its 6th Annual Spring Nursery Survey from **February through June of 2015**. The Spring Nursery Survey is conducted each year in collaboration with the UC Master Gardener

Program and other groups to gather information about the retail market for invasive plants in California. This information allows PlantRight to collaborate effectively with thousands of plant retailers, wholesalers and growers, and to provide gardeners with information about invasive plants, and choosing beautiful non-invasive alternatives for their gardens.

Volunteers are needed. Participation is easy, educational, and fun. Volunteers view an online presentation (webinar), download required survey materials, sign up to survey a store in their area, visit the store and record information about any invasive plants sold there and submit the information to PlantRight. On average, the entire process takes about two and half hours to complete.

To register, go to <http://www.plantright.org/survey-registration>.

# CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETY of SAN JOSE

## 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Show & Sale



**SATURDAY, March 14, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

**SUNDAY, March 15, 2015 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Anybody want to carpool? This Spring SHOW and SALE will feature rare and unusual cacti and succulents, pottery, planting mixes, and other related merchandise for sale. Checks, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover cards accepted. **FREE ADMISSION.** Experienced and knowledgeable society members will be available to answer your questions.

**Peterson Middle School, 1380 Rosalia Avenue, Sunnyvale**

**Questions? Call 408-480-1533**



Altman Plants is the largest producer of cacti and succulents in the United States. The Cactus Collection includes a diverse selection of cacti and succulents in an array of sizes which have been delivered to local garden centers nationally. But now, you can or [shop online](#) for their plants. Free shipping on orders over \$30. Some unusual selections.



How delightful to discover a wonderful, unique one-man nursery on Craigslist—who woulda thunk? Joe, out in the wilds of the Aromas Hills, is having a spring succulent sale (it ends in June) for \$3.00 per gallon plant. He's got a big variety of succulents and other plants (salvias, wild roses, and more). He is so enthusiastic and positive and informative—we so enjoyed meeting him and buying as many plants as we could fit in the car. Sea & Wind Nursery is open on weekends (10:00-3:00), and by appointment on weekdays. Call Joe

831-726-1139 for directions and an appointment. Joe participates in the Aromas Art and Garden Tour every May (more on that later in the year). Here is his Craigslist listing:

<http://sfbay.craigslist.org/scz/grd/4913393699.html>



A tip from Joe: calcium is the key to growing healthy cacti and succulents. He swears by a liquid fertilizer called "Cactus Juice", which he uses every time he waters.



Last month my husband and I went on a bird-and-butterfly tour in Cuba. I could do a whole issue on what we saw growing there, but I'll just share a smattering of images with you. Cuba hosts one of the four richest island floras of the world and supports 7,500 species of flowering plants, more than half all Caribbean flora. Fifty-three per cent of Cuban plant species are endemic to the country.

## The Traveling Gardener by Lise Bixler



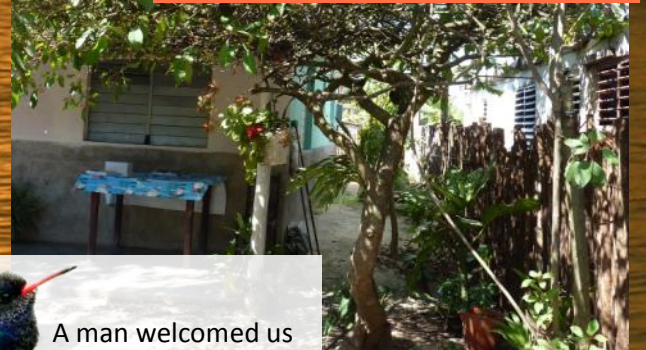
Left: A jewel-colored nectaring day-flying *Urania Moth* (*Urania boisduvalii*), mimicking a swallowtail.

Below: The common milkweed in Cuba is white, and is a host plant for Monarchs, who migrate there.

In cattle country it was common to see living fences, or hedges, of euphorbia. Most resource-poor food crop farmers cannot afford to purchase barbed wire, even if it is available. Dense hedges like this which are thorny and unpalatable to livestock and other animals work well. Live fencing systems are very old and traditional.



This small shrub, 'Solanum havanense' or 'Aji de China' or 'Tomatillo de La Habana' was growing in the Jardín Botánico Nacional. Don't know if it is a tomatillo or pepper—couldn't find out anything else about it.

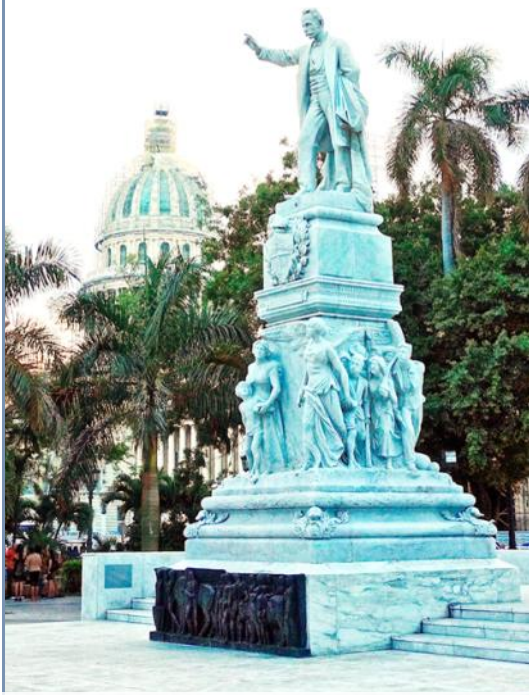


A man welcomed us into his backyard where a tall coral-blossomed tree was abuzz with Bee Hummingbirds. The males of these species are the smallest birds in the world.



Continued next page...





Everywhere there were statues and monuments honoring Jose Marti., poet and a leader of the revolution to free Cuba from Spain. One of the great turn-of-the-century intellectuals of Latin America, he died young, but the scope of his written work is astounding. The heart of his writings embraced the concepts of freedom, liberty and greatness of the human spirit. Here is one of his best-known poems:

**I have a white rose to  
tend  
In July as in January;  
I give it to the true  
friend  
Who offers his frank  
hand to me. And for  
the cruel one whose  
blows  
Break the heart by  
which I live,  
Thistle nor thorn do I  
give:  
For him, too, I have a  
white rose.**



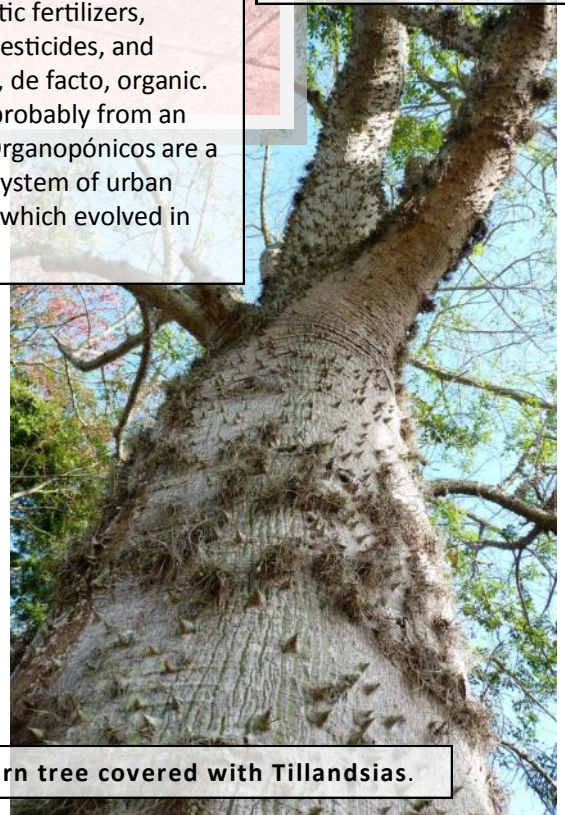
Most of the bouganvellias we saw were pruned into compact bushes,



**Bicycle-powered produce cart.**  
When the USSR collapsed, Cuba lost access to synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, and farming became, de facto, organic. This produce is probably from an organopónico. Organopónicos are a labor-intensive system of urban organic gardens which evolved in Cuba.



**Climbing cactus scaling a tree.**



**Thorn tree covered with Tillandsias.**

**Garden art using clay roofing tiles.**





## Growing Tomatoes from Seeds

by Renee Shepherd

If you love succulent tomatoes, mid-March to early April is the time to start your own plants from seed. It's the only way to have the very best tasting and old fashioned heirloom varieties which are not usually available as nursery started plants. It's fun to watch the whole growing cycle and the seed starting process is my favorite way to celebrate the gardening season as I watch baby seedlings grow into sturdy plants bearing wonderfully colored, superb tasting fruits to relish freshly picked.



Generally, the time to start your seeds is about 6- 8 weeks before the last expected spring frost date in your area, planting the seedlings outdoors about 2 weeks after that date. Another way to figure is to plan on setting out sturdy seedlings in the garden when night temperatures stay in the mid-50 degree range both day and night. Count back and sow seeds 6 to 8 weeks before that date normally arrives.

Your planting containers should be at least three inches deep, with small holes for drainage. Use plastic yogurt or cottage cheese containers, 3 or 4 inch plastic plant pots or half-gallon milk cartons cut lengthwise, all with drainage holes punched in the bottoms. I don't recommend reusing egg cartons or old nursery packs as they don't hold enough soil volume and dry out too easily. Buy and use a good quality seed starting mix, available from any good nursery or garden center. (Ordinary garden soil is not a good choice - it often contains weed seeds and fungus organisms and it compacts far too easily.) Seed starting mixes are sterile and blended to be light and porous so your fragile seedlings get both the moisture and oxygen they need to thrive.

In a big bucket, add water slowly to the seed starting mix and combine well. You want it to be thoroughly moistened but not soggy - about the consistency of a wrung-out sponge throughout before you fill your containers. Fill each container to an inch below the top and tap it on the tabletop to settle the mix. Use a plastic or wooden marker with the variety name and sowing date and slide it into the container. With the side of a pencil or chopstick, make a seed furrow about 1/4 inch deep and carefully drop in individual seeds about an inch apart. Sift some more starting mix between your hands to fill the furrows and firm gently to be sure the seeds have good contact. Use a spray bottle to water the seeds in with a fine mist.

Tomatoes need warm 75 to 85 degree conditions to start germinating. Put the containers in a warm place where they'll get bottom heat like on top of the water heater or refrigerator or use a fluorescent shop light suspended just 1 or 2 inches above the container and it will provide warmth. Keep the container moist, but not soggy. You can cover it with plastic wrap or an old piece of rigid clear plastic to conserve moisture if you like, but be sure

to pull it up to check daily to be sure they aren't drying out. Water as necessary with a very gentle spray of water. If container should get too dry, you'll need to set it in a pan of water so it can soak up water again from below. Expect germination to take 5 to 10 days. Don't keep your containers in the windowsill during the germination period; cold air at night will affect germination. Check often!

Just as soon as any baby seedlings begin to emerge above the soil level, it's critical to give them light right away. Remove any covering immediately and provide a strong light source. While a south-facing windowsill is traditional, it's far from ideal, and dimly-lit plants become tall and spindly. I like to start my containers from the beginning under grow lights or a simple fluorescent shop light suspended from chains so I can move the lights up as the plants grow. The fluorescent lights under your kitchen counter will work very well for this. Raise your flats closer to them (4" to 5") with some bricks or fat cookbooks. Tomato seedlings grow best in the 65-75 degree temperature range.

When seedlings are 2 to 3 inches tall and have several sets of true leaves, it's time to move them to deeper containers or individual pots so they have room to grow. Fill the new containers with pre-moistened planter mix. With the help of a fork thrust to the bottom, lift the seedlings gently from your germinating container. Try to get all the roots and disturb them as little as possible. Make a planting hole in the new container and nestle the seedling into its new home a little deeper than it was originally. If your tomato plants are spindly with long stems, you can actually bury the stems right up to the topmost cluster of leaves and new roots will grow along the buried stems. Gently press the mix around the transplanted seedlings and water them gently to settle the soil. Continue to give your rapidly growing seedlings as much light as possible and rotate them regularly so they grow evenly and don't lean in one direction.

In 3 or 4 weeks, or when the weather outdoors has warmed into the 50 degree range at night, it's time to "harden off" or gradually over 4 to 6 days to acclimate your seedlings to outdoor conditions. Put them outside in a protected shady spot for a half day at first, then 2 or 3 full days, then gradually move them into full sun, starting with mornings then all day long. Plan to transplant into the garden in the late afternoon or on a hazy or cloudy day to minimize stress. Set them about 3 feet apart in the garden into rich well-amended soil in full sun. Tomato plants can be buried several inches deeper than they were planted in



their containers. Firm the soil around the plants and water well. Set in stakes or cages for tall-growing tomatoes at planting time. Keep your young plants moist but not soggy. I like to mulch them with a good thick layer of compost, well-aged manure, straw or other organic material. This will provide the even moisture balance needed for healthy, disease-free growth and early big fruit sets, and will also discourage weeds.

See all of Renee's Garden tomato seed varieties at  
[www.reneesgarden.com/seeds/seeds-hm/vegT.htm#tom](http://www.reneesgarden.com/seeds/seeds-hm/vegT.htm#tom)



Join us for a free talk!

## Orchids Demystified!

**Saturday, March 7th • 10am – 12pm**

Who isn't in awe of exotic orchids and their stunning blooms? Let us take the mystery out of these beauties! We will tell you everything you need to know to confidently select and care for them. Our local expert and grower Vicky Smith will be here with us to offer tips and answer your questions.

**20% OFF**  
**Orchid Sale!**  
March 3 - 15



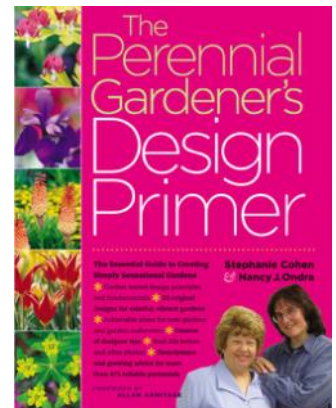

**San Lorenzo**  
GARDEN CENTER

SanLorenzoGardenCenter.com  
235 River Street • Santa Cruz | 831-423-0223 | Fax: 831-426-1260

## How to Keep Motivated to Work in Your Garden

Here is a great tip from author Nancy Ondra: **“Turn your back on your work.** Gardeners tend to be very generous with plants and seeds, but their good advice can be even more valuable than tangible things. One of the most useful tricks in my maintenance arsenal came from an experienced gardener many years ago, when I was just getting started. Her advice was to ‘back into your work’: in other words, orient yourself so you are always looking at what you’ve already accomplished. Instead of looking down the whole length of a border that needs to be dug, mulched, or weeded, turn your back on the unfinished part and enjoy the view of what you’ve already accomplished . Keep backing up as you work, and before you know it, you’ll be done. It’s such a simple thing, but if you give it a try, I think you’ll find it as useful as I have!”

Nancy is a prolific and accomplished garden author. She currently gardens in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and blogs at [www.hayefield.com](http://www.hayefield.com).



## New Gardeners' Club Scholarship

The Santa Cruz County Gardeners' Club in collaboration with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education Regional Occupation Program (ROP) and the Cabrillo College Horticulture Program is soliciting teacher nominations for a \$300 scholarship to a high school senior pursuing a career in horticulture and/or agriculture.

**Nominations should be sent via email to Jim Howes, Assistant Director, Regional Occupation Program at [jhowes@santacruz.k12.ca.us](mailto:jhowes@santacruz.k12.ca.us) no later than Friday, March 20, 2015.** The scholarship will be awarded at the Thursday, April 9, 2015, Gardeners' Club meeting. (The scholarship will be a reimbursement for up to \$300 upon evidence of enrollment in the Cabrillo College Horticulture Program and receipts for required course materials.) For more information contact Marcia Meyer at [marmey26@comcast.net](mailto:marmey26@comcast.net).

### Scholarship Eligibility - Student must:

- Be a graduating senior currently enrolled in a Santa Cruz County high school horticulture/agriculture class;
- Demonstrate an interest in a career in horticulture or agriculture;
- Must be currently enrolled in a horticulture/agriculture high school course taught by the nominating teacher; and
- Commit to enrolling in the Cabrillo College Horticulture Program Fall 2015.

In past years, Bill Patterson has worked hard to establish and continue a scholarship program for Cabrillo Horticulture students sponsored by our Club. The Board decided to modify it this year to enable younger people, high school students, to start their studies at Cabrillo. Marcia Meyer did all of the research and leg work on this phase, working closely with the Regional Occupation Program and Cabrillo Horticulture. Thank you, Marcia, for your effort and follow-through, and Bill for inspiring us to give to future horticulturists.



## Remembering Pat



Club Member Pat Williams passed away last month. She had a unique and gorgeous garden, which she loved sharing. Pat was born to gardening—the Vetterle and Reinelt Begonia Gardens

were her family's business. She spent big part of her youth weeding, grading bulbs, watering the hot houses and pollinating plants to develop new hybrids of vibrant and colorful begonias shipped all over the world. Pat put the lessons learned early in her life to use in her glorious garden.

Pat is honored in the "featured garden" photos this month on our website ([www.thegardenersclub.org](http://www.thegardenersclub.org)). These photos were taken on two visits, one in which she hosted a Board meeting. Take a look at the garden of a passionate gardener. We'll miss her.



## Board Meeting

The next Board Meeting will be on Monday, March 23rd, at 6 p.m. We'll meet at the home of Sim Gilbert, 3999 Glen Haven Dr., Soquel, and tour her garden before the meeting. All members are invited to attend.

## SF Flower & Garden Show

March 18-22

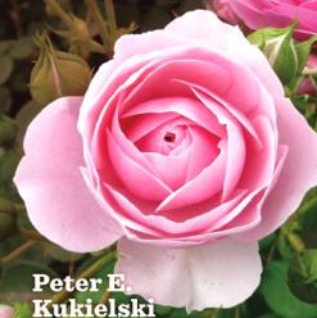


The San Francisco Flower & Garden Show will take over the San Mateo County Event Center to celebrate its 30th anniversary with the theme "Going Wild." The event center will be in full bloom both inside and out with amazing display gardens, how-to seminars with top industry experts, an interactive kids activity area, hundreds of plants for sale and more. From growing your own food and backyard beekeeping to creating the ultimate vertical succulent gardens and iPhone gardening photography, the show will offer more than 100 free how-to seminars and hands-on workshops..There are new owners—it will be interesting to see how the show evolves.

Advance tickets purchased by March 9 are \$17.50 for a one-day adult; an all show pass good for up to five days is \$40; and children 16 and under are admitted free. Advance tickets are available at [www.sfgardenshow.com](http://www.sfgardenshow.com). Tickets purchased after March 9 and on site are \$22 for a one-day adult, or \$20 for a one-day senior admission. Special workshops and the National Wildlife Federation Opening Night Party tickets are also available.

150 disease-free varieties that will change the way you grow roses

## Roses without chemicals



Peter E. Kukielski

"Peter's ratings for fragrance, flowers, and disease resistance make it easy to choose the right rose for your garden. I wish I had this when I planted my rose garden twenty-five years ago. I am now about to plant another garden, full of wonderful rose varieties and I intend to follow Peter's advice wholeheartedly."  
Martha Stewart

**"I wish I had this when I planted my rose garden twenty-five years ago. I am now about to plant another garden, full of wonderful rose varieties and I intend to follow Peter's advice wholeheartedly."**

**Martha Stewart**

Have you given up on roses because of diseases and other problems? Don't despair—choosing the right roses is half of the battle, and there ARE truly sustainable roses that are genetically diseases- and fungus-resistant, and don't need chemical intervention. In Roses Without : 150 Disease-Free Roses That Will Change the Way You Grow Roses, Peter Kukielski, former curator of the award-winning rose garden at New York Botanic Garden, highlights 150 of these tough, new varieties, tells which perform best in each region of the country, and teaches simple cultivation techniques that will result in gorgeous, easy-care gardens packed with healthy roses. With this guide in hand, you can finally choose the right roses from the start and successfully grow them in an organic and sustainable way.



## HUMMINGBIRD DAYS – MARCH 7 & 8, 2015



Go to the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum on Saturday and Sunday, March 7 and 8, for the central coast's premier family-oriented educational experience and learn about these amazing birds and the gardens that host and support hummingbirds. Visitors can participate in a variety of nature and outdoor activities focused on these amazing creatures including: Guided tours along the Hummingbird Trail; Presentations of Hummingbirds of Ecuador (and more); Crafts and interactive activities for kids.

Unique souvenirs, plants, books, birdfeeders, gifts and more for sale celebrating the return of one of nature's vibrant aerial acrobats, the Allen's Hummingbird. The Allen's Hummingbird was voted Audubon California's Bird of the Year for 2014!

## SUPER-SIZE YOUR BASIL

Tired of waiting until midsummer to harvest basil fresh from your garden? While waiting for your seedlings to develop into plants, root some basil cuttings from bundles purchased at your local market. Place a few cuttings in a bottle of fresh water. In a few weeks you'll have rooted basil plants ready to be grown in your garden or in containers. For more unusual varieties purchase a few plants from a garden center. Once established in your garden, take cuttings and root them as well. Cuttings rooted from already rooted and thriving plants have a higher success rate.



-Tip from You Grow Girl (<http://yougrowgirl.com/tips/>)

## 2015 Perennial Plant of the Year™



### *Geranium xcantabrigiense* 'Biokovo'

The Perennial Plant Association membership has voted and the 2015 Perennial Plant of the Year™ is *Geranium xcantabrigiense* 'Biokovo'. Yes, that is a big name for this excellent groundcover type perennial that only reaches 6-10" high.

Blooming in late spring 'Biokovo' has delightful masses of 5-petaled white flowers, about ¾" diameter, that are tinged pink at the base of each petal and have darker pink center stamens. The overall effect is that of a blushing pink geranium. An interesting attraction is the flower 'bud' that is somewhat inflated – actually made up of the sepals which are redder than the petals. When the flower opens the lightly tinged pink flowers provide a handsome contrast to the sepals and stamens. The aromatic foliage has rounded leaf edges, is a medium green color and is semi-evergreen in most climates. This geranium is a spreading, rhizomatous plant, meaning it spreads by sending out runners. However, not being a deeply rooted perennial, removal is not strenuous. Best garden placement is as a ground cover or in the front of the border. It also



Ceramic artist Peter Vandenberg, "Saturday Night at the Movies"

does well in rock gardens. 'Biokovo' does well in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. It is easy to grow and only requires dead-heading (removing old flowers) to keep it looking good. It forms an attractive mound that offers scarlet and orange fall colors to your garden. Cut away any dead foliage in the spring and 'Biokovo' is ready for the garden season.



# The Gardeners' Club Membership

If you haven't paid for your membership yet, this is your last chance before your newsletter subscription expires. Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are still only \$12.00. The membership year lasts through the end of December, 2015. 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.

*Come grow with us!*



## Your Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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



## Gift Membership

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's time...last chance to renew your membership!

Will this be your last issue of the newsletter? If you haven't already done so, please pay your dues for 2015.

Daylight savings time begins on Sunday, March 8th. Move your clocks ahead one hour.

Time to Spring Ahead

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 Vista Dr., Aptos. Printed on 100% recycled paper

The Gardeners' Club

P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005

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