



Gardener's Notebook

Volume 18, No. 3

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

May/June 2004

Spring Colors Abound



Fabulous Fuchsias • Award-winning Roses • High Performance Color and Much More!

A great set of hand tools is valuable, yet inexpensive

When you get right down to it a big part of gardening is performed on your knees, working your soil with hand tools. It's also clear that this is where the most important gardening work takes place as we manure the soil by removing debris, blend in soil amendments, and dig ideal-sized holes for plants, seeds and bulbs.

Good tools (and a set of knee pads) make gardening easier and more enjoyable. They allow us to perform gardening tasks with the least amount of effort and by doing so encourage us to invest a little more care in preparing our gardens for planting. This extra care really pays off as well-prepared soil helps plants get estab-

lished quickly and thrive.

Here are four terrific Sloat tools to consider that feature durable stainless steel, hardwood handles, leather hanging straps and a price under \$8 each:

Gardening Guide

May & June

Plant

Plant annuals including impatiens, marigolds, calibrachoa, vincas, sanvitalia, coleus and other spring and summer bloomers.

Good time to plant vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, lettuce and cucum-

bers, as well as

parsley, basil, rosemary and other herbs.

Select garden-ready blooming roses. (See pages 5 and 6.)

Great time to add a beautiful hydrangea to your garden.

Fertilize

Feed your lawn with Safer Lawn Fertilizer. See page 3.

Fertilize rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias with E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia & Gardenia Food.

Give vegetables a boost with E.B. Stone Organics Tomato and Vegetable Food.

Use a time-release fertilizer such as Osmocote for your container plants.

Prune/Maintain

Set and adjust sprinkler and drip irrigation systems.

Mulch vegetable and flower beds with Sloat Forest Mulch Plus to control weeds and conserve moisture.

Prune spent flowers (deadheading) from roses and other blooming shrubs.

Release ladybugs and other beneficial insects to help control garden pests.

Plant

Plant vinca, salvias, cosmos, lisianthus, portulaca and other warm season annuals.

Plant herbs in pots for use in the kitchen.

Fertilize

Feed roses and flowers with E.B. Stone Organics Rose &

Flower Food.

Prune/Maintain

Continue to deadhead roses, shrubs and other flowers to encourage new blooms.

Mulch shrubs and beds to conserve moisture.

Make sure vegetables are supported with cages, stakes, or trellises.

Deep water trees and shrubs.

Check early-bearing fruit trees for heavily laden branches. Support or thin trees now to prevent branches from breaking.



FORK

Great for turning soil, prying out weeds, stones and roots, and aerating soil.

GARDEN TROWEL

Good for digging holes in tilled soils, loading/moving soil and amendments, and working with containers.

TRANSPLANTING TROWEL

A sharp point makes digging in firm soils easier. The ruler that is scored into the trowel face aids in measuring hole depth for bulbs and other plants.

CULTIVATOR

Just like the attachment for Farmer John's tractor, this tool is designed to loosen the soil before planting. It can dislodge weeds and break up soil to a depth of about 2-3 inches.

Check out our tool line, gloves and knee pads on your next visit.

High performance color for your Bay Area garden

The expectation for spectacular looking plants during this time of year reaches the stratosphere. We all want color and plenty of it to beautify our homes and gardens.

One sure way to satisfy your color craving is to point your shopping cart to the **Bloom's Nursery** display on your next Sloat visit.

Tony Bloom, one of Northern California's premier growers, has just brought Sloat some of the most exciting, attractive, and yes, colorful plants we've ever offered.

Of special interest in May and June are his collection of calibrachos and salvias.

Superbells, a calibrachoa hybrid introduced last year from **Proven Winners**, and **Million Bells** (Superbells' predecessor), are nothing short of amazing.

Calibrachoa or trailing petunia is a small, compact mounding plant that produces petunia-like flowers in great quantities.

Both of these calibrachos are capable of turning a container or mixed planting into a work

of art and can take your container gardening to a new level. Calibrachoa is perfect for hanging baskets, window boxes and more. When you add together its great colors, lovely



Superbells Trailing Blue

Photo: PROVEN WINNERS

form, non-stop flower production, and excellent disease resistance, it is really hard to beat.

Bloom's **salvias**, scheduled to arrive in mid May, represent an extensive variety of plants that are particularly well-suited for Bay Area gardens. Salvia popularity has soared over the last 20 years and it has become a colorful mainstay in California gardens. With whorls of two-lipped flowers, these full sun plants are versatile, carefree, drought tolerant, and attract hummingbirds as well.

Salvia greggii is one of the better known varieties and offers one of the widest color palettes ranging from yellow to red to purple. You'll also want to get to know many other varieties including **Salvia patens** with its long, pure blue flower clusters and **Salvia guaranitica**, a summer-flower specimen with 2-inch flowers on 10-inch spikes.

Bloom's beautiful plants are easy to spot as they are displayed in pink nursery containers and have the Proven Winners plant tags. Enjoy high-performance color with these plants soon!



Salvia greggii Rose Pink

Photo: PROVEN WINNERS

Get your lawn ready for summer

Make sure the grass stays greener on your side of the fence this summer by feeding your lawn today. **Safer Lawn Fertilizer 8-1-1** is formulated for spring and fall lawn feeding and can be used on your flower beds as well.

This modern fertilizer is biologically enhanced to address soil vitality and nutrition. It contains naturally occurring beneficial microorganisms that increase the biological activity in soil and thereby make important nutrients available to plants. **Safer** products are



safer for the environment, too. This product is biodegradable and contains corn gluten. A 25-pound bag covers 2,500 square feet, so if you use a typical spreader set it for 60% open. You'll find a handy spreader guide on the back of the bag to guide you.

Once applied, water it in well, followed by a 2 to 3 day drying period.

For preparing flower beds (not a bad idea for beds adjacent to lawns), sprinkle and work into the soil to a depth of about 2 inches,

then water. Allow to dry for 2 to 3 days.

A second application of Safer Lawn Fertilizer is recommended this fall.



Million Bells Terra Cotta

Photo: PROVEN WINNERS

Fabulous fuchsia varieties right at home in Bay Area gardens

When *Sunset's Western Garden Book* indicates that our Bay Area climate has the best zones in North America to grow a particular plant, it's time to take a few notes . . . and a few plants home to your garden.

Such is the case with *Fuchsia hybrida*, which includes the majority of garden fuchsia varieties. Most gardeners are familiar with the most popular fuchsias, which feature flower forms that look like a ballerina or fancy earring (the plant is also known as "Lady's Ear Drop"), but with some 500 varieties of fuchsias in the West alone, there is certainly more for you to consider.



Fuchsia thymifolia

Fuchsia breeding was big in the Bay Area as George Budgen, founder of Berkeley Horticultural Nursery, claimed to have America's finest fuchsia collection as early as 1932.

Today, local growers offer scores of varieties that include everything from 'Firecracker,' a variegated 'Gartenmeister Bonstadt' known for its iridescent reddish purple foliage, to *F. thymifolia* with its tiny leaves and miniature, rose pink flowers.

Fuchsias are not just for hanging baskets. There are trailing and upright growing plants and others that offer compact or

spreading habits. You'll find that fuchsias work great as small or large shrubs in shady perennial borders, grow well in containers, can be trained to grow on a trellis, or pruned to grow like small trees.

The secret to enjoying fuchsias is to thoroughly understand their needs.

Fuchsias prefer a cool summer environment where consistently high temperatures are rare and moisture is available in both the air and soil. San Francisco, southern Marin, Tiburon and other areas where summer heat is regulated by the proximity to the bay and ocean are ideal. Inland gardens

present more of a challenge (see water



Fuchsia denticulata *Strybing Improved*

info below), but do not be discouraged if you live in Novato, Danville or Sonoma. Fuchsias like light shade and a minimal amount of direct sunlight and wind. The shelter of a porch, an eave, a canopy of trees or larger shrubs is a good location for fuchsias. A semi-shaded city yard where a neighbor's

home provides some daily shade for your plants will work as well.



Fuchsia Machu Picchu

Watering properly is critical. Some fuchsia fans claim it is nearly impossible to overwater a fuchsia and it is a good idea to water daily in hot weather. A better understanding of watering can be found in a couple of great articles on the **American Fuchsia Society's** website (www.americanfuchsiasociety.org). These articles, on the contrary, suggest that a large number of fuchsia fatalities are the result of overwatering.

The articles clarify the watering paradox by explaining that proper drainage has critical importance, especially in warm to hot climates. A soil that is highly permeable allows frequent watering in hot weather but avoids blocking essential oxygen uptake by the roots.

To achieve a great soil mixture, you can add plenty of organic material to your soil and perlite to your potted plants. Allow a Sloat nursery professional to guide you on getting an optimal soil mixture.

To maximize flower production, fertilize regularly with a complete fertilizer such as **E.B. Stone Organics All Purpose Fertilizer** or **Neptune's Harvest Fish Fertilizer** (see page 5).

Fuchsias are easily grown from cuttings, and you can have a new flowering plant in as little as a few months under good conditions.

We invite you to explore our fuchsia collection soon and bring one of these lovely plants to a home where it belongs!

Flower Carpet® Yellow joins popular rose series

The sixth rose in the incredibly popular series of long-flowering, disease-resistant **Flower Carpet** roses is now available at Sloat. The new buttercup-yellow groundcover rose is the latest color in a family of roses that includes pink, white, appleblossom, red, and coral.

Flower Carpet Yellow is a top performing groundcover rose that blooms profusely from late spring through fall. It's an excellent rose for mass plantings, but is equally valuable when used in flower beds, larger containers, and hanging baskets.

When the first Flower Carpet rose was introduced in America back in 1995, it was touted as the "Environmental Rose" because it received the highest score ever recorded for natural disease resistance.

Its low-maintenance and easy-to-grow nature along with beautiful flowers have proved to be irresistible to gardeners as you see members of this rose family beau-

Great fuel for flowers, vegetables, and all your other plants!

Most plants benefit from regular fertilizing during the growing season, but many gardeners worry about overdoing it and burning their plants.

A powerful, yet gentle organic fertilizer containing over 60 naturally occurring nutrients and amino acids is the perfect solution for the heavy feeders in your garden.

Neptune's Harvest Fish Fertilizer, which we introduced to gardeners last year, is highly effective for flowers, trees, vegetables and houseplants. We were excited to learn that it has been proven to outperform the common 20-20-20 chemical fertilizers that are used by many gardeners.

With no harsh chemicals, the fertilizer is gentle on plants and the environment, and you just can't over-fertilize. Simply add 1/8 cup of Neptune's Harvest per gallon of water. There is no offensive odor, only great results from this easy-to-use product.



tifying landscapes all over the Bay Area.

Flower Carpet Yellow has semi-double flowers with dark yellow stamens. The flowers are 2 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter and are arrayed in clusters of 5 to 6 blooms. When the blooms appear, they are quite vibrant before slowly softening. The plant's foliage is a glossy green with medium-sized leaves on a compact habit. It will grow to about 32 inches in height and about the same width.

No fancy pruning is required; you can chop it back like a hedge, which will keep its compact shape by inducing more

branching. Feeding is easy, too. Feed your roses once or twice a season with either

Magnum Grow Rose Food or **E.B. Stone Organics Rose and Flower Food**. Your roses will need regular watering, too. For the best blooms (as many as 2,000 in a season!), plant your roses in full sun. They will grow well in partial shade as long as they get about 4 to 5 hours of sun per day. This setting may be desirable if your garden is



Photo: MONROVIA

MONROVIA
HORTICULTURAL CRAFTSMEN® SINCE 1926

exposed to intense dry heat and sun.

Sloat's Flower Carpet roses were grown by **Monrovia Nursery** so you can expect the best available specimens of these remarkable roses. Look for the distinctive Flower Carpet pink pots on your next visit.

Five easy spring container recipes for Mom . . . and you!

If you haven't come up with a special Mother's Day gift or you're ready to reward yourself with something beautiful, here are several quick and easy spring container ideas to consider.

The following are just a few of the many plants that go great in containers. Choose a combination, then select a pot from our incredible collection of fine garden pottery. What could be easier or better appreciated?

- * Surround citrus with a selection of your favorite herbs. Add a few annuals for color.
- * Choose a lovely blooming rose and add perennial trailers such as verbena or calibrachoa.
- * Choose a lush green fern and/or a fuchsia, then finish with a trailing bacopa.
- * Surround a laceleaf maple with impatiens and liriopse or mondo grass.
- * Fill a pot with fragrance such as daphne or gardenia.

Can't decide? Give Mom a copy of this newsletter and Sloat Gift Card!



This easy-to-grow rose is truly a Knock Out

The hottest rose in America today is called Knock Out and for good reason.

This beautiful cherry red floribunda has racked up some impressive awards including an All American Rose Selection, the Euroflora Rose Award, and a Gold Medal in Genova, Italy.

The hybridizer, Conrad-Pyle, is calling it the “no fear rose.”

Perhaps most impressive is the American Rose Society’s Member’s Choice Award, which is given to the rose that achieves the highest rating in each year’s annual Roses in Review.

The hybridizer, Conrad-Pyle, is calling it the “no fear rose.”

What is winning the awards for this rose is its exceptional, continuous bloom and its remarkable disease resistance.

Knock Out offers gardeners continuous bloom production from spring to fall without pause or pruning. A hybrid between ‘Carefree Beauty’ and a seedling of ‘Razzle Dazzle,’ this maintenance-free rose offers unsurpassed resistance to black spot leaf disease and will thrive in the most devastating of dry summers as well as climates with high humidity.

The huge 3 to 4 inch wide single blossoms are iridescent candy apple red, and



MONROVIA
HORTICULTURAL CRAFTSMEN™ SINCE 1926

deepen to burgundy with age. The mildly fragrant blooms stand out in high contrast against its forest green foliage.

An excellent focal point in the garden, use it among perennials, in south facing foundation beds, along fence lines, or as a

hedge. Knock Out prefers full sun, but tolerates some afternoon shade in hot, dry climates. It will grow quickly to 3 to 4 feet tall and as wide.

Follow a regular watering schedule during the first growing season to establish an extensive root system and feed regularly during the growing season with **Magnum Grow** or **E.B. Stone Organics Rose and Flower Food**. Prune Knock Out annually in late winter to promote vigorous new growth.

Knock Out is grown for Sloat by the experts at **Monrovia Nursery**. The roses arrive budding and blooming in 2 gallon containers and are ready to plant.

If you are ready for a Knock Out rose in your garden, hurry down to Sloat soon. Our complete collection of container roses is in now and ready to go!

Soil Products to Supercharge Your Garden

If you’d like to enjoy the most successful (and easiest) year of gardening ever, make a commitment to getting and keeping your soil in tip-top shape with Sloat Planting Mix, Sloat Loam Builder and Sloat Forest Mulch Plus.

Each of these soil products has been custom blended to amend and improve the dominant soil types found in the San Francisco Bay Area. By using these products, you’ll increase plant performance and improve soil structure, moisture retention, aeration and water penetration. These

soil products are especially effective in taming heavy clay soils and holding nutrients in your soil.



**Only at
Sloat
Garden
Centers**

Five Rose Growing Tips

1. Plant roses where they will receive at least four hours of direct sun each day. If possible locate them where they will receive morning sun to help prevent mildew.
2. Roses love rich organic soil. Break down clay soils with **Sloat Loam Builder** and use **E.B. Stone Organics Rose Grow** planting mix.
3. Roses need regular watering, but make sure the water doesn’t pond over in winter when the shrubs are dormant.
4. Pruning time is late winter to early spring. Cut back live canes to an eye about 6-10” above from the bud union. Remove dead and broken canes.
5. Check your roses often for aphids and other pest problems. Treat them early with **Green Light Rose Defense**.

Special coupons for Gardener's Rewards members

Coupon Good May 3rd thru May 16th Only

Mother's Day Special!

Purchase any regularly priced orchid from our colorful, blooming selection and we'll supply the ceramic, specialty **orchid pot free-of-charge**. These pots are regularly priced at \$5.99 to \$9.99 each and are a must for the orchid enthusiast.

Orchid prices start at \$19.99

Sluggo

Sluggo is extremely effective for controlling snails and slugs. When used as directed, there is no harm to humans, pets or the environment. Made with iron phosphate that breaks down in the soil and becomes available for plants to use.

2 1/2 LB. REG. \$17.99

\$9.99

Coupon Good May 17th thru May 30th Only

Rose Defense

A 3 in 1 product! Insecticide, fungicide and miticide. Controls rust, mildew and blackspot, plus aphids, whiteflies, mites and more. Completely organic. Apply to roses, flowers, trees and shrubs. 32 oz. Ready to Use.

REG. \$9.99

\$5.99

Colorful Hanging Baskets

Add a splash of instant, long-lasting color to your garden or entryway. We have blooming baskets for sun or shade! Our experts can assist you on choosing the right basket for your garden.

PRICES START AT \$19.99

\$5.00 Off

Coupon Good May 31st thru June 13th Only

FREE WaterWand

Purchase any Gilmour-Flexogen hose and we'll supply an Alaska Ultimate Soft Rain wand in the color of teal or violet. Wand delivers a gentle spray to the base of the plant where it is needed. Saves water with built-in shut-off valve.

REG. \$14.99

Ivy & Zonal Geraniums

Tried and true, summer garden performers. Use in pots on the deck, patio, windowsill or your favorite bed in the garden. Assorted plants in 4 inch pots.

REG. 3.99 EACH

3 plants for \$7.99

Coupon Good June 14th thru June 27th Only

West County Gardener Gloves

Our most popular gloves are light weight, soft and colorful. You'll also discover the benefits of adjustable wrist straps, a built in "brow wipe" and machine washability. REG. \$19.99

\$12.99

Garden Ferns

Start your own fern grotto with our outstanding selection of garden ferns. Grown in two gallon cans, these lush plants will make an immediate statement in your landscape.

REG. \$19.99 EACH

2 plants for \$29.75

SLOAT SEMINARS

Attendance is limited. Please call ahead to the seminar location to reserve a seat. Seminar fee is \$5. (Gardener's Reward Program members are free.)

Lawn Care

Time to get your lawn in shape for summer. Join Sloat's Richard Avery when he discusses soil conditioning, fertilizing, watering, and lawn repair. If you have a lawn, don't miss this event!

May 1 - Danville, Saturday - 9 a.m.

Seaside Gardens

Learn to create a beautiful seaside garden with Sloat's Gerry O'Donoghue. Discover which plants thrive in a climate characterized by wind, fog, moisture, and salt air.

May 12 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Essential Orchid Care

Orchids are for everyone! Learn to care for one of the most beautiful flowers on the planet with Sloat's Dinah Sims. Here's great information on how to enjoy these long-lasting flowers.

May 15 - San Rafael, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Repotting Cymbidiums

Join Glen Smith, past president of the Marin Orchid Society, when he discusses how to repot cymbidium orchids and offers orchid care tips.

May 16 - Mill Valley (Miller), Sunday - 10 a.m.

May 22 - Larkspur, Saturday - 10 a.m.

June 9 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Healthy Houseplants

Learn the secret to having houseplants that everyone envies. Sloat's Dinah Sims will guide you on plant selection and location, watering, fertilizing and general plant maintenance.

May 26 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Eichler Gardening

If you own a home designed by Eichler you'll want to attend this seminar on designing gardens that fit this style of architecture. Given by local Eichler gardening expert Leslie Patten.

June 5 - San Rafael, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Japanese Maple Pruning

Learn the basics of selective pruning to keep your maples in beautiful shape with help from local arborist and maple expert Julie Gates.

June 12 - Danville, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Container Gardening

Container gardens are an easy way to beautify your home and garden. Learn to create magnificent displays and avoid common mistakes. Given by Sloat's Dinah Sims.

June 12 - Larkspur, Saturday - 10 a.m.

June 26 - Kentfield, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Asian Style Gardens

Gardening expert Leslie Patten discusses the plants, statuary and design ideas to consider when creating an Asian-style garden.

June 13 - Mill Valley (Miller), Sunday - 10 a.m.

Water Gardens

Join Sloat's Dustin Strobel, our water gardening expert, and discover how to add an exciting water feature to your garden.

June 23 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Nine Locations in San Francisco, Marin & Contra Costa

Richmond District
3rd Avenue between
Geary & Clement
752-1614

Sunset District
2700 Sloat Blvd.
46th & Sloat Blvd.
566-4415

Novato
2000 Novato Blvd. at
Wilson
897-2169

San Rafael
1580 Lincoln Ave.
just off Hwy. 101
453-3977

Larkspur
279 Doherty Drive between
Redwood High &
Downtown
924-7390

Kentfield
700 Sir Francis Drake at
Wolfe Grade
454-0262

Mill Valley
657 E. Blithedale at Lomita
388-0102

401 Miller at La Goma
388-0365

Danville
828 Diablo Road
(925) 743-0288

Open 7 days a week
8:30 am to 6:30 pm

**Garden Design
Department**
401 Miller, Mill Valley
388-3754

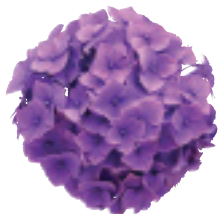
SOON IN SONOMA!

Visit Sloat on the Web: www.sloatgardens.com



420 Coloma Street
Sausalito, CA 94965-9971

Printed on
recycled paper



Great plants and great advice to help them grow!

Pre-Sorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
Paid
Intrec

8 Sloat Notebook May/June 2004

Your first water garden is child's play

Here's a great project for kids and adults

If you've ever considered adding a water garden or pond to your landscape you may want to test the water with a simple, yet beautiful water bowl. It's a good introduction to the beauty and ease that this form of gardening has to offer.

For children, it's an easy gardening project that Sloat will help make even more interesting by offering a free mosquito fish for your bowl!

To create your first water garden, start by selecting a low

bowl from Sloat's great collection of garden pottery. There are small bowls for a single plant, medium bowls that will hold several plants, and even 1/2 wine barrels for larger displays. (Some pottery may need hole plugs.)

Next, choose a few plants from our water gardening plant displays.

You might try a cape rush or papyrus as a centerpiece, then surround it with carex, acorus, or another medium sized plant. You might then add water hyacinth,

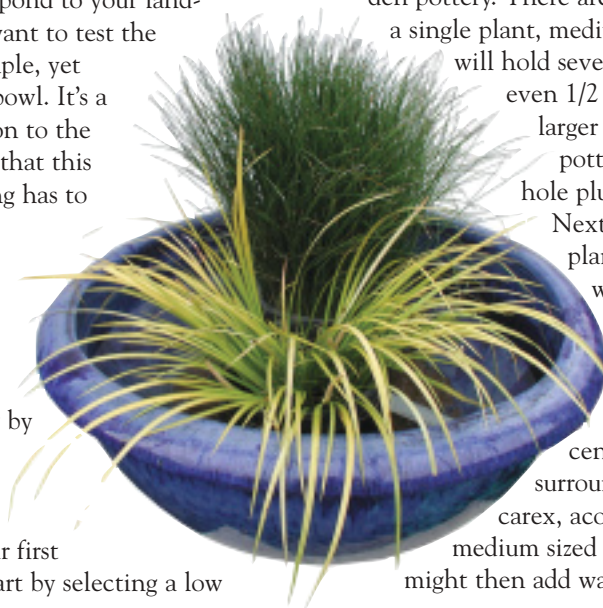
which will help add oxygen to the water for your free mosquito fish.

You can leave all of these plants in their nursery containers or remove them and plant them in the bottom of your bowl. In either case, by using pea gravel or decorative gravel on top of the soil, you will keep the water clear.

Finally, place your bowl in a part sun - part shade location and slowly fill it with water. Add your fish, and you're done!

To learn more about water gardening including plant selection and design, please attend our seminar on Water Gardening on June 23. See our seminar listing on page 7.

Note: The beauty of trying a simple water garden is that if you decide it's not for you, you can use the plants and container in your garden without the water!



About this Newsletter: The Gardener's Notebook is published bimonthly by Sloat Garden Center for the education and enjoyment of Bay Area gardeners. Information is collected from Sloat's expert staff, current horticultural publications and Sunset's Western Garden Book. Send address corrections to: 420 Coloma Street, Sausalito, CA 94965.