

Gardener's Notebook

Volume 20, No. 1

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

February/March 2006

New summer bulbs: Easy to plant and hard to resist!

For anyone who has not planted summer bulbs or

needs to be reminded of their merits, start with these three compelling characteristics: they are big, bold, and they make beautiful bouquets.

From towering gladiolus and lovely star-shaped lilies, to flashy begonias and dinner-

plate dahlias, these bulbs deliver color to summer gardens in dramatic fashion.

Like their spring-flowering cousins, summer bulbs are very easy to plant and virtually foolproof. Their blooms tend to last longer than spring bulbs and most make superior cut flowers.

This year Sloat is adding to its collection of summer favorites a gorgeous new dahlia, an unusual hybrid gladiola and an exciting new selection of summer bulbs that are ideal for woodland gardens.

Our new dahlia is called 'Mom's Special' and offers a unique white flower with lavender streaks. This dinnerplate-sized dahlia which was a past first place winner at American Dahlia Society shows,



grows best in full sun.

Gladiolus 'Laguna' is part of a new series of gladiolus from Holland that offers some very unique coloration. This gorgeous gladiola has green-yellow flowers edged with reddish purple. Gladiolus prefer full sun and are a cutting garden favorite. Plant them at two-week intervals if you'd like to have plenty of flowers handy for bouquets throughout the summer.

For gardeners with woodland landscapes, our new shade-loving varieties are a must. These bulbs are excellent when planted under trees in cool, moist and shady areas with well-draining soil.



One of the beautiful woodland border

plants we are introducing is **Stylophorum diphyllum** (Wood Poppy). This lovely specimen will light up your garden all summer with 1-inch golden yellow poppies set against large dark green leaves.

Dodecatheon meadia (Shooting Stars) is a second introduction and has the most interesting and beautiful flower forms you'll find on a woodland plant. Each flower has petals pointing backward revealing a ring of pollen at the flower tip. It looks a lot like a badminton birdie (but shooting star sounds better). This fabulous understory plant should be

massed along woodland borders or planted in small clusters. Most are purple although



white and pink varieties are common as well.

Two varieties of **Trillium** (**Wake Robin**) will complete our introduction of woodland summer bulbs.

Trillium erectum 'Red' has three

pointed leaves at the top of each stem with three petaled red flowers at the tip of each stalk. **Trillium gradiflorum** 'Snowy White' has the same flower form however the flower color changes from white to pink after pollination. Trilliums prefer partial shade and like to be well mulched.

There is more to be learned about all



our summer bulbs and we invite you to visit with our team of nursery professionals and/or attend our ongoing gardening seminars.

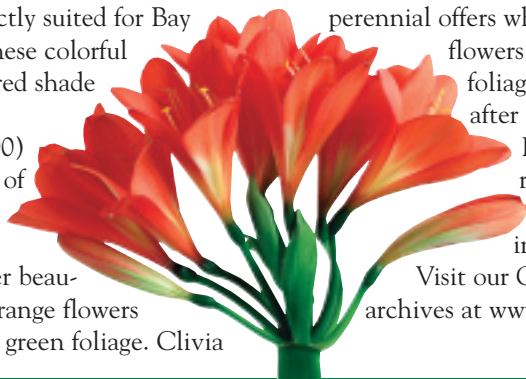
Special Note: The word from our top plant buyer is that this summer's color will be purple. Many of the new bulbs we have ordered for you will fit this spectrum.

Early spring bloomers to plant now

Thank goodness spring is on the way! Here are a few early spring performers that you'll find in our stores in February and March. We encourage you to gather more information on these plants by visiting our website and referencing our "Notebook archives." Our expert staff is also ready to help with planting and care questions.

Start your shopping list with our **rhododendrons**. Perfectly suited for Bay Area gardens, these colorful plants love filtered shade and acidic soil. (Notebook 2/2000)

Our selection of shade-loving **clivia** are easy-to-grow and offer beautiful yellow or orange flowers plus lovely deep green foliage. Clivia



will thrive in the deepest shade in containers or in the ground. (Notebook 2/2004)

Azaleas have a long bloom period and by planting several varieties you can enjoy their colorful flowers through May. (Notebook 2/2001)

An excellent choice for shady areas is **helleborus**. This early blooming perennial offers white, pink or purple flowers and nice looking foliage that will please you after the flowering cycle.

Helleborus are also deer resistant! See our staff for more tips on growing this plant.

Visit our *Gardener's Notebook* archives at www.sloatgardens.com

An Evening with Karen Platt



Karen Platt, author of *Black Magic*, *Purple Passion* will introduce one of the latest gardening trends in the United Kingdom with her newest book *Emeralds*.

Her book and slide show are a descriptive collection of all that is green-flowered

and are guaranteed to inspire gardeners at every level.

Join her on February 15 at the Sloat Boulevard store at 5:30 p.m. All her books are available now and can be signed following the seminar. (If planning to purchase the day of the event, please do so before the store closes at 5:30.)

Call 415-332-0657 x 114 to reserve your seat for this very exciting evening.

Flashy foliage for shady gardens

For gardeners whose landscapes include light shade, this new astilbe introduction from the group that developed the famous Flower Carpet Roses is a gold mine.

Color Flash™ Lime is a perennial foliage plant with glossy two-tone gold/lime green leaves edged by a darker lime green. Great for containers or landscape plantings, this astilbe grows 6 to 10-inches tall and about 20-inches wide. Its extraordinary foliage is its primary appeal, but the pleasing fluorescent pink flowers appearing in late spring will please you as well. Stop by to learn more about this 2006 introduction from **Monrovia Nursery**.



Gardening Guide

FEBRUARY & MARCH

PLANT:

Plant an ornamental or fruit tree now before spring. Consider beautiful **maples, magnolias, flowering cherries, birches**, and more.

Summer bulbs are a must. Plant **gladiolus, dahlias, lilies, begonias** and more.

Start spring vegetable seeds indoors or in a greenhouse. Tasty heirloom varieties, seed trays and everything else you need are available at Sloat.

Plant our new **forsythia** varieties for wonderful flowers and foliage. (See December/January *Notebook*.)

Rhododendrons are budding and blooming. Find a place with filtered shade in your garden for these plants.

You can start planting spring and summer annuals soon. Check with your local Sloat to see what's available.

FERTILIZE:

Fertilize your garden and houseplants with time-release **Osmocote** to provide ongoing nutrition for up to six months. Use **Sure Start** fertilizer for new plantings to establish them quickly.

Apply a lawn fertilizer with a pre-emergent to control annual weeds.

Stock up on a season's-worth of top

quality plant-specific fertilizers from **E.B. Stone**. The new "Naturals" line is environmentally friendly!

Offer emerging roses **Sul-Po-Mag** to provide needed magnesium to help them grow.

PRUNE/MAINTAIN:

Bait for snails and slugs which are hatching in your garden now. Try **Sluggo**, snail bait which is both safe and effective.

Clean up and prune plants and trees to enhance their appearance and prepare them for spring growth.

Prepare planting beds for spring by amending soil with **Sloat Loam Builder**, **Sloat Forest Mulch Plus**, and **Sloat Planting Mix**. Also, add **E.B Stone's Agricultural Lime** to your soil, to provide needed calcium to vegetables and fruit.

Protect fruit trees and other deciduous trees from pests and diseases by applying dormant sprays such as **Cooke's Sulf-R-Spray** and **Kop-R-Spray**, **Polysul**, or **Bonide All Seasons Oil** depending on plant variety.

Aphids are beginning to appear. Stop them early with **Greenlight Rose Defense**. Use it on roses and all your plants!

Sloat Has Wonderful Valentine's Day Gifts!

Dwarf pittosporums: a handsome alternative to boxwoods

Many gardeners are familiar with the standard size pittosporum varieties that have made quite a name for themselves by providing fast-growing and attractive hedges,

screens and backdrops for other plantings.

The newer dwarf varieties grown by **Monrovia Nursery** are destined to make quite an impression, too, as their compact, low

growing habit and foliage characteristics present many landscape possibilities.

The dwarf pittosporum when used as a low growing hedge is a fine alternative to typical boxwoods. They also are great foundation and specimen plants, and can easily be grown in containers.

Here are just three dwarf pittosporums that will give you an idea of how these varieties can truly enhance your landscape:

***Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball'** is the first dwarf version of *P. tenuifolium*. This vigorous grower (shown above) has bright mint-green glossy leaves with small inconspicuous purple flowers that appear in late spring-early summer. It makes an ideal foundation plant or it can be used as a hedge in a small formal border. This full sun- part shade plant will stay under three-feet tall and wide plus it can withstand



periodic droughts once established.

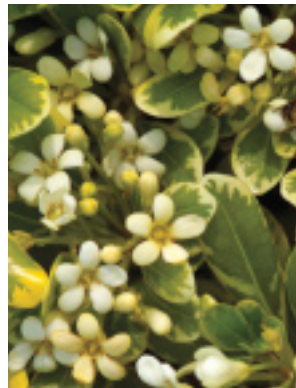
***Pittosporum tobira* 'Turner's Variegated Dwarf'** features pale yellow margins on its glossy green leaves. The evergreen shrub with a low compact habit makes a striking container plant on the patio and nice hedge as well.

***Pittosporum tobira* 'Creme de Mint'** has glossy mint green leaves with creamy-white edges held on a tightly branched mound. A great accent

plant, low hedge or fill-in plant for borders.

"Turner' and 'Creme de Mint' are also known as **Mock Orange** (shown here) as their blooms have a citrus smell when they appear during spring.

You can set your sights lower with these dwarf varieties, but keep your expectations high as these pittosporum really perform!



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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.



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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.)

ROSE PRUNING

Local experts from the Marin and San Francisco Rose Societies will show you how to shape and correct hybrid teas, floribundas and other roses for spring growth.

Feb. 12 - Kentfield, MRS Sun., 10 a.m.
Feb. 22 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), SFRS Wed., 5:30 p.m.
Feb. 25 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), MRS Sat., 10 a.m.

JAPANESE MAPLE PRUNING

Learn to enhance the beauty of maples with pruning techniques demonstrated by Certified Arborist Julie Gates and aesthetic pruner Marie Miller.

Feb. 11 - San Rafael, Gates Sat., 10 a.m.
Feb. 18 - Kentfield, Gates Sat., 10 a.m.
Feb. 26 - Sonoma, Miller Sun., 11 a.m.

FRUIT TREE PRUNING

Horticulturist Marie Miller will discuss pruning for fruit production, correct shape, and more.

Feb. 19 - Novato, Sun., 10 a.m.

EMERALDS!

Garden writer Karen Platt will introduce one of the latest garden trends in the United Kingdom. See article on page 2, then please call

415-332-0657 x 114 to reserve a seat.
Feb. 15 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 p.m.

PRUNING FLOWERING PERENNIALS

Rejuvenate your perennials and encourage flower production for spring and summer. Aesthetic pruner Marie Miller will demonstrate the how, when and why of pruning lavenders, salvias, and more.

Mar. 1 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 p.m.
Mar. 8 - Novato, Wed., 5:30 p.m.
Mar. 12 - San Rafael, Sun., 10 a.m.
Mar. 19 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun. 10 a.m.

DEER-RESISTANT PLANTING

Bob Tanem, the Happy Gardener, will share tips and techniques for protecting tender new plants.

Mar. 4 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat. 10 a.m.
Mar. 22 - Novato, Wed., 5:30 p.m.

PLANTING DAHLIAS

Lou Paradise, from the SF Chapter of the American Dahlia Society, will explain the finer points of planting the "official flower of San Francisco."

Mar. 15 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 p.m.

MOSS BASKET WORKSHOP

Mary Teselle and Dawn Smith will demonstrate how easy it is to create your own hanging baskets. Take your creation home the same day!

Materials fee: \$45, Gardener's Reward Members \$35
Mar. 18 - San Rafael, Teselle, Sat. 10 a.m.
Mar. 19 - Sonoma, Smith, 10 a.m.
Mar. 29 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Teselle, Wed., 5:30 p.m.

SUCCESS WITH NATIVES

Mill Valley's own Joan Pont will show slides of native plants growing in her garden and share her success stories. Learn how to collect seeds and grow your own native garden.

Mar. 26 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 a.m.

Ten Locations in San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma & 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

Mill Valley
657 E. Blithedale at Lomita
388-0102
401 Miller Ave. at La Goma
388-0365

Kentfield
700 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
at Wolfe Grade
454-0262

Sonoma
23566 Arnold Drive
(707) 939-9400

Danville
828 Diablo Road
(925) 743-0288

**Garden Design
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Great plants and great advice to help them grow!

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You'll brake for 'Stop Light's arresting foliage!



The recent efforts of hybridizers and growers to focus on foliage instead of flowers is a real boon to gardeners. As we all know, foliage outlasts flowers and therefore plants with interesting foliage can offer us long-lasting garden color.

A great example of this is a Monrovia introduction that will bring garden

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visitors to a standstill as they are arrested by its bright yellow foliage with blood-red centers.

× *Heucherella* 'Stop Light' is related to the heucheras we discussed just a year ago in the *Gardener's Notebook*. Heucherellas are intergeneric hybrids between heuchera and tiarella. The plants are sterile and therefore are profuse and repeat bloomers.

To stop traffic in your Bay Area garden,

plant 'Stop Light' in sunny borders and in mixed containers. The plants will also thrive in partial sun. Your soil should be well-draining and have a neutral pH.

'Stop Light' will produce small white flowers in summer, but the real attractions of this plant is the year-round brilliant foliage!

We challenge you to drive your shopping cart by without stopping!

Outdoor furniture in time for spring

Our 2006 shipment of fine outdoor furniture has just arrived. We've added some new styles to expand on our popular collection of chairs, tables, benches and bistro sets.

Sloat makes its furniture purchase directly from the factory so not only are the styles appealing, but the prices are exceptional.

Now is the time to insure you've got a great seat in the garden to enjoy the spring and summer seasons!



SF Flower & Garden Show Tickets On Sale Now! Show Dates: March 15-19.

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.