

Ten Locations in San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo and Contra Costa

Richmond District

3rd Avenue between
Geary & Clement
(415) 752-1614

Marina District

3237 Pierce Street
Chestnut & Lombard
(415) 440-1000

San Rafael

1580 Lincoln Ave. just off
Hwy. 101
(415) 453-3977

Kentfield

700 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
at Wolfe Grade
(415) 454-0262

San Bruno

675 El Camino Real
(650) 869-6000
3 blocks south of I-380

Sunset District

2700 Sloat Blvd.
46th & Sloat Blvd.
(415) 566-4415

Novato

2000 Novato Blvd.
at Wilson
(415) 897-2169

Mill Valley

657 E. Blithedale at Lomita
(415) 388-0102
401 Miller Ave. at La Goma
(415) 388-0365

Danville

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro
(925) 743-0288
M-Sat hours: 8 to 5:30pm
Sun hours: 9 to 5

Garden Design Department

401 Miller, Mill Valley
(415) 388-3754

Open 7 days a week 8:30 am to 5:30 pm
Visit Sloat on the Web: www.sloatgardens.com

Summer hours begin March 9th
8:30 am to 6:30 pm



420 Coloma Street
Sausalito, CA 94965-1428



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8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK February/March 2008

February & March Gardening Guide



Plant:

- ☞ Plant an ornamental or fruit tree now before spring. This is the time for **maples, magnolias, dogwoods, flowering cherries, plums and crabapples.**
- ☞ Say yes to summer bulbs! Plant **gladiolus, dahlias & lilies** now for summer color.
- ☞ Start spring vegetable seeds indoors or in a greenhouse. Heirloom varieties, seed trays, soil and everything else you need are available at Sloat.

- ☞ Plant fragrant vines and shrubs: **lilac, wisteria, daphne & pink jasmine.**

- ☞ **Rhododendrons and azaleas** are budding and blooming. Feed them with **E.B. Stone's organic Ultra Bloom.**

- ☞ Plant more spring annuals: **violas, pansies & Iceland poppies.**

Fertilize:

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

- ☞ Apply a lawn fertilizer with **Concern** to control annual weeds.

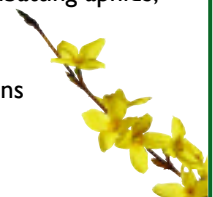
- ☞ Stock up on a season's worth of top quality, plant-specific fertilizers from **E.B. Stone.** The "Naturals" and "Organics" lines are environmentally friendly.

Prune/Maintain:

- ☞ Snails and slugs are hatching in your garden right now. Non-toxic **Sluggo** can help.
- ☞ Clean up and prune plants and trees to enhance their appearance and prepare them for spring growth.
- ☞ Prepare planting beds for spring. Test your soil for pH,

nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and add appropriate fertilizer. We recommend amending your soil with **Sloat Loam Builder, Sloat Forest Mulch Plus & Sloat Planting Mix.** Also, add **E.B. Stone's Agricultural Lime** to soil to provide needed calcium for vegetables & fruit.

- ☞ Aphids are beginning to appear. Stop them early with **Greenlight Rose Defense.** Use it on roses and all your plants! And don't forget lady bugs for combatting aphids; available once the weather begins to warm.



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.



Gardener's Notebook

Volume 22, No. 1

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

February/March 2008

Spring is in the air

Here in the Bay Area, spring arrives in late winter and nature shouts yellow to wake us up from the grey doldrums of rain. Yellow is everywhere, bringing the sun and the **Acacias**. **Daffodils** open their trumpets and the **Euryops daisies** shine. (If you missed planting Daffodils in the fall, mark your calendar now for next fall's bulb planting. Many of our stores currently have 4" and 6" pots of blooming bulbs in stock that are great for table décor or make sweet gifts).

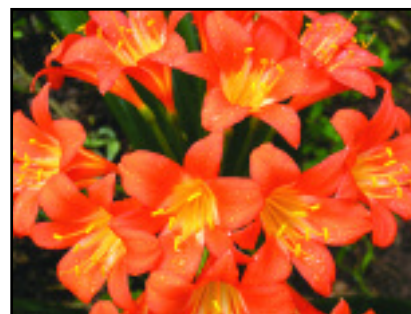
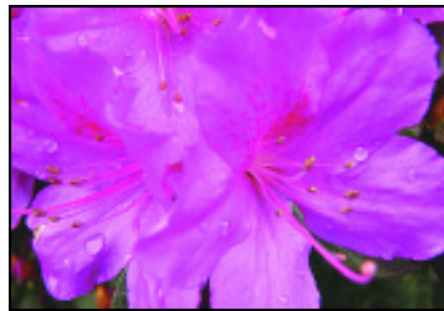
February brings an awakening of the senses and the unnoticed plants of winter dazzle the eyes with forgotten color. **Primroses** (the best of the season in a myriad of colors), **Sweet Alyssum**, **Violas** and **Forget-me-nots** perfume the warmer air. And guess what? The yellow Primrose smells the sweetest! Perennial borders come alive.

In the shade, **Heuchera**, **Clivia** (orange and yellow), **Helleborus**, **Violets** and **Bacopa** make magic. Heucheras, and their cousins the **Heucherellas** and **Tiarellas**, are noted for ease of growth and colorful foliage of mauve, purple, chartreuse, magenta and amber. Even the green-leaved varieties show some speckling of white or pink. Long stems of delicate bell-shaped flowers froth above the foliage in pink, rose and white.

Helleborus are self-maintaining and well adapted to dry shade. So many new varieties are available now, from Ivory Prince with green-white flowers to Lady in Red, which is a very rosy pink. In the sun, gray-foliaged plants shine with their silver leaves - **Artemesia**, **Cerastium**, and **California poppy**. The showy white display of **Iberis** is perfect as an edging for walkways or shady garden beds. **Euphorbia** with their chartreuse flowers look grand! They will seed themselves freely in sun or light shade. Foliage ranges from burnt red to green-blue.

All this orchestrated unfolding of spring seems to happen so quickly. **Clematis armandii**, one of the fastest growing vines (and deer resistant), is lovely for fences and walls, exploding into clouds of fragrant white flowers. Deciduous **Magnolias**, the aristocrats of the garden, open their fuzzy buds, revealing teacup-sized blooms of purple, pink and mauve. The **Lady Banks Rose**, a sprawling, shrubby vine, blossoms only in the early spring. Look for her in white or yellow.

Continued on page 2...



While most of the country is in the coldest part of winter, we can celebrate the rainbows of color starting to bloom in the Bay Area. Clockwise from top: Azalea, Grevillea, Clematis, Magnolia, Clivia, Primrose

Houseplants

50 Years of Sloat

Plant a Tree this Spring

Bonsai Basics

Continued from page 1

low. The monstrous purple blue spikes of **Echium** begin to elongate. Look for these plants later in March. They certainly are showstoppers and the number one plant inquired about by visitors to the Bay Area. A short road trip from Sausalito to San Francisco's Presidio and Golden Gate Park will attest to their stature. Our native **Ceanothus** burst into a haze of blue in every shade. Concha, Dark Star, Julia Phelps, Frosty Blue, Ray Hartman and Yankee Point are just a few of the varieties you will find in our stores.

The flowering **Quince** greets the new year in prestigious orange-red. This plant thrives on neglect and will do fine in an unirrigated shrub border. While nondescript in leaf, having blossoming branches to cut and bring into the house makes it worthy of attention.

The winter-flowering Australian natives offer late winter's first foods to the hummingbirds: **Grevillea** with red or orange spider-like blossoms, **Correa** with bells of ivory, salmon and red, **Metrosideros** and **Leptospermum** in an array of pink, rose and red. They are all low maintenance, deer resistant and drought

tolerant.

Hardenbergia, with its clusters of purple flowers resembling miniature sweet peas, seems to appear as if by magic on an arbor or gate. This vine will bloom in sun or light shade. **Nemesia**, lovers of cool weather, shine in white, blue, pink, peach and cranberry. They're great in containers too. **Rosemary** and **Spanish Lavender** are in full bloom. Spanish Lavender blooms in the cool weather months, finishing its bloom just as the English types begin to spike in May. Rosemary comes in all shapes and habits from tall and upright to sprawling. Use them as an informal hedge or for erosion control on a bank.

The **Coleonema** are clothed in hundreds of tiny pink blossoms. Coleonema, which is related to citrus trees, has fragrant lemony foliage. It is at its best when sheared into tight globes. Not only is it available in a green-leaved form, there are also chartreuse-toned varieties such as Danny's Gold Sport and Sunset Gold that will add interest to deer resistant gardens.

By Valentine's Day, all the **Plums** are



The sweet, pink blossoms of flowering plum.

appropriately pink. Fresh **Azaleas** are just starting to bud; **Japanese Maples** are starting to leaf out. There are annual flowers for pots and walkways. **Ranunculus** and **Anemone** are bright in gold, red, pink, orange, yellow, white and blue. Find them in 4" pots or gallon cans.

Though there still may be a frost or a rain-storm, these hardy plants will perk right back up when clouds blow away.

Here at Sloat Garden Center we offer all this and more...come take a look!

CORONA tools



Founded in the early 1920's, **Corona Clipper** began pounding, compressing and flowing hot steel into high quality, classically designed tools. Years later, the same hand tools are often passed on to the next generation. Corona heat-treats the entire tool so you can resharpen blades while retaining hardness and strength. Sloat gardeners love them because their nonslip grips are extremely useful (and comfortable).

We recommend Corona tools for all your garden projects. We stock a number of different Corona shovels and rakes. Stop in and take a look!

Caring for garden tools: Tool safety and maintenance

Before the gardening season really gets going, we urge all gardeners to consider appropriate tool safety and maintenance. Here are some useful tips.

Sharpening: A sharp blade cuts cleanly, a dull blade can slip, so keep those tools sharpened.

Cleaning: All tools should be cleaned with soap and water after you are finished, then dried (and if applicable, sprayed with a lubricant; we carry **Felco Lubricant Spray**). Pruners and loppers can also be sterilized with alcohol between cuts, especially if you are pruning plants with diseases, like rust, cankers or unexplained dieback.

Use the right tool for the job. All cutting tools have the maximum cutting diameter listed on the package. Trying to cut a big branch with a pruner instead of a lopper may result in breaking the branch or the tool, or even a trip to the Emergency Room.

Some other tips: Wearing gloves can prevent a nasty cut and a holster keeps tools close and the cutting edges covered. Changing from constant, repetitive pruning to another task will help reduce arm & wrist fatigue.



**Pottery
Color of
the Month:
February
Galaxy Blue
(left)
March
Sugarcane
(right)**

Bonsai 101 – The basics of bonsai care

Here's a unique plant project for the spring ...bonsai! It's a good activity for older children, and it gets you ready for "full scale" gardening as the weather warms. Here are some plant selection and care tips for beginners:

Most bonsai are grown outdoors in part sun. They can also be grown indoors using evergreen tropical, subtropical, and warm climate plants like sago palm, ficus and schefflera that normally experience little if any dormant period.

Humidity should be fairly high to keep these plants healthy. Placement on a saucer with a layer of pebbles and water will help raise the humidity. Indoors, a kitchen or bathroom location will provide moisture. Adequate indoor light may be found at an east or west window in the fall, winter, or spring. In these locations, summer light is best filtered through a sheer curtain.

Watering frequency depends somewhat on weather and placement. Here are some general guidelines:

- We recommend thorough watering every one to three days in the spring, summer, and fall; less in the winter.
- Do not let the roots dry out completely. If it is very hot, watering more than once a day



may be necessary.

- It is best to water in the early morning or late afternoon.
- Simulate rainfall when watering; use an attachment on the watering can or hose that makes the spray soft enough not to disturb the soil. Water until excess water runs out of drainage holes at the bottom of the pot.

Application of a 4 month time-release plant food like **Osmocote** in early spring and again in mid summer should last for the season. A general, all-purpose liquid food (such as **Maxsea**) can be applied once a month in the

main growing season to supplement the slow release food. Use fertilizer in moderation on ericaceous plants such as azalea.

For flowering and fruiting trees, feed with a 0-10-10 fertilizer in the fall to winter-harden and improve the next year's production.

After repotting a tree, give it several weeks to adjust to its new soil before feeding.

Sloat Garden Center has bonsai tools, pots and plants to help you get started. Stop in and let us know how we can help you along the bonsai way!

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.)

Orchids 101

Glenn Smith, from the Marin Orchid Society and a Master Gardener, goes over basic orchid care and feeding.

Feb. 6–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 pm
Feb. 9–Danville, Sat., 10 am
Feb. 10–Kentfield, Sun., 10 am

Last Chance to Prune Roses!

Check in with the San Francisco and San Mateo Rose Societies and Dawn Smith, local expert, for your last chance to shape happy, gorgeous rose bushes!

Feb. 9–S.F. (Third Ave.), SFRS, Sat., 10 am
Feb. 10–San Rafael, Smith, Sun., 10 am
Feb. 10–San Bruno, SMRS, Sun., 10 am
Feb. 17–Novato, Smith, Sun., 10 am
Feb. 24–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), SFRS, Sun., 10 am
Feb. 24–Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Smith, Sun., 10 am

Pruning Japanese Maples

Marie Miller, aesthetic pruner, demonstrates how to bring out the natural beauty of these popular plants.

Feb. 10–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Sun., 10 am
Feb. 17–Kentfield, Sun., 10 am

Lawn Makeovers

Mary Te Selle, award-winning designer, shows slides of gorgeous and earth-friendly alternatives to the high maintenance lawn.

Feb. 9–San Rafael, Sat., 10 am
Feb. 16–Kentfield, Sat., 10 am

Shade Gardens in San Francisco

Cindy Bonilla, CCN Pro, shares colorful, easy-care plants for those shady spots.

Feb. 19–S.F. (Pierce St.), Tue., 5:30 pm
Feb. 20–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 pm

Lighting the Way

Tom Bressan from the Urban Farmer Store shares do-it-yourself outdoor lighting tips.

Mar. 1–Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am
Mar. 2–San Bruno, Sun., 11 am

Pruning Azaleas, Camellias, and Rhodies

Marie Miller, aesthetic pruner, discusses pruning and rejuvenating these flowering shrubs.

Mar. 2–Kentfield, Sun., 10 am
Mar. 5–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 5:30 pm
Mar. 16–Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am

Composting!

Master Composter Lynn Adams demonstrates composting for every lifestyle.

Mar. 8–San Bruno, Sat., 10 am

Mar. 18–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Tue., 6:30 pm

Marin Master Gardener Bilingual Sick Plant Clinic

Bring a leaf sample (in a plastic bag) for our bilingual local Master Gardeners to examine and receive advice on how to solve disease and bug problems in the garden.

Mar. 8–Kentfield, Sat., 10 am
Mar. 29–San Bruno, Sat., 10 am

Support the Locals II

Melinda Rose, gardener/designer, discusses more California Native plants and how to use them in your garden.

Mar. 12–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm
Mar. 16–San Bruno, Sun., 11 am

Bees!

Mike Stefanos of "Hometown Honey" discusses the importance of bees and how we can co-exist peacefully with these important pollinators.

Mar. 26–S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm
Mar. 29–Danville, Sat., 10 am

Watch for future seminars featuring

fuchsia care, succulents, what's new for 2008, Mediterranean plants, drip irrigation, and more!

Plant a Tree for California Arbor Day March 7-14

National Arbor Day - a day set aside just for tree planting - is celebrated nationally on the last Friday in April, but many states observe Arbor Day on dates according to their best tree-planting times.

In California, Arbor Day is often celebrated on March 7, which is also the birthdate of pioneering Santa Rosa horticulturalist Luther Burbank.

This year Sloat Garden Center would like to encourage you to do your part to reduce global warming by planting a tree.



deeply, possibly causing crown rot. If the sides and bottom of the hole are glazed (shiny and smooth), roughen them with a shovel so the roots can penetrate into the surrounding soil easily. Prune any dead, broken or twisted roots. Roots matted at the bottom or circling around the root ball should be removed or straightened. Amend the backfill soil with 50% Planting Mix or other organic amendment if your soil is clay-like or sandy.

If wind, hot sun or aesthetics are not factors, position your tree so that the majority

HOW TO PLANT A TREE:

Purchasing a healthy, vigorous tree is the first step to a successful planting. Choose a tree that has branching and foliage on about 2/3 of its total height. This will help distribute stress from wind along its trunk. Large roots should not be exposed above the soil. This usually indicates severely kinked or circling roots that can eventually girdle (strangle) the tree, weakening or killing it in time.

The planting hole should be only as deep as the root ball and twice as wide. A deeper hole might cause the tree to settle too

of the branches are facing away from the afternoon sun. This will help the tree produce more foliage on the "barer side". If hot sun is an issue, position the tree so that the bud union (the crook) on a grafted tree is facing away from the afternoon sun (it can burn!). If wind is a factor, position the tree so that the majority of branches face the oncoming wind. Once the position has been determined, backfill 1/2 of the soil, making sure there is good contact with the roots, and water. Fill the hole with the second 1/2 and water again. Mulch around the tree (leaving the crown uncovered) with fine or micro bark to reduce evaporation and subdue weeds.

We're thrilled about mulch (really).



We think COIR Mulch Block is the greatest thing since sliced bread. All joking aside, it's an ingenious idea.

This compressed little block of mulch expands to 2 cubic feet once water is added. It is made from COIR - coconut husk fiber, a completely renewable resource derived from the husk of the coconut. This second use of the husks also prevents them from being thrown into waterways when coconuts are harvested, providing an additional benefit for the environment.

Mulch Block can be used exactly like peat moss (which is not a renewable resource and is stripmined from peat bogs). It's a truly eco-friendly product!

The benefits to gardeners? It's light and easy to carry and will not make a mess in your trunk.



Directions: Unwrap the block and place it in a container, such as a plastic storage tub or bucket. Add 7 quarts of warm water directly over the block. Wait 10-20 minutes for block to hydrate, then simply pull it apart and it is ready for use. Using warm water will accelerate the hydration process.

Garden Design Corner: Inviting entryways that shout, "Welcome!"

Gloria Sanchez, Garden Design Department Manager at Sloat Garden Center, offers a few ideas to consider if your front doorway is not quite what you would like it to be.

What does the entry to your home say to visitors? Is it easily visible? Does it fit the style and scale of your home? Take a step back and look at your home objectively from across the street.

To make the entry of your home clear and easily visible when the yard is mostly lawn, consider adding a small, planted area at either side of the entry path from the street or sidewalk. An asymmetrical planting with a small tree such as a Japanese Maple or small Magnolia and medium height shrubs along with some seasonal color in the foreground can mark an entry nicely; eventually the tree will create a semi-covered entrance. Add to this a grouping of potted plants close to the front door. Repeating the colors and small plantings from the entry will guide visitors in and further define your entrance.

For a more formal, symmetrical entrance, mirror the same plantings on either side of your entry. A pair of matching Spartan



A welcoming front entryway in San Francisco.

Junipers or topiary Camellias can anchor the groupings. Add a pair of sculptural elements or pots for even more architectural interest. Include a second grouping of plantings or a pair of matching pots closer to the front door to draw and welcome your visitors.

In either scenario the trees will bring a larger scale to the foreground and visually connect the separate parts of your yard.

If you have a fenced yard, think about how the entrance is differentiated from the rest.

Consider adding an iron gate to a wood fence, and/or a vine-covered arbor.

If you have room, add a pair of large shrubs. Phormium or variegated Fatsia

japonica at either side of your gateway will announce and strengthen the entrance.

Whatever your circumstances, a thoughtful consideration of your home's architecture along with your own personal style can guide you towards a unique and inviting entrance.

If you need more assistance in deciding on plantings and placement, call **Sloat's Garden Design Department** for a one-hour garden evaluation or consultation and let us help you form specific, personalized garden plans.

Sloat Garden Design Department
415-388-3754

Sloat Store Profile: San Rafael is the quintessential community nursery



Sloat Garden Center San Rafael Staff
Back: Adrienne Thurston, Manager Steve
Mauricio, Shelley Mitchell
Front: Naeomi Castellano

The San Rafael Sloat location is one of our most distinctive stores. Set very close to the road on Lincoln Avenue in central San Rafael, the store gets its strength from the community surrounding it. Manager Steve Mauricio came to manage the location in

2004 after working at Sloat Garden Center in Kentfield, and he talked to us about his store.

How is our San Rafael location unique?

It's a community store, the community really feels like it's part of their neighborhood. A lot of our neighbors enjoy coming in for a walk and touring the store, bringing their doggie friends with them. One of the biggest attributes to our store is the way it's set up. All the pathways and individual garden rooms, indoors and out, lend themselves to a cottage-like feel. We're actually situated 3 feet below the street level. The upside is that you're kind of nestled in this cozy little cove. The downside is that it's hard to see the nursery.

Tell us about the history of the location.

The store was built in 1946 and we still have a following of clientele who have been shopping since day 1. We feel this location is truly a community nursery, not a heavy-

paced box store. The advantage is we have the time to spend with customers, so we know people by their names and they like that. We also enjoy helping gardeners with their designs. We have time to work with people on their schematics and to give them suggestions.

What are some gardening trends at your store?

The cottage look; we do a lot of perennials for cut flowers.

What are your personal favorite plants?

Some of the plants that I like to deal with are tropical plants, fall color and ornamental grasses.

What do you like about working for Sloat?

It's a free-flowing environment here. I've established quite a few nurseries from the ground up, and this one is very special.

1958-2008: Helping the Bay Area garden for 50 years



2008 marks 50 years since Sloat Garden Center was established. As a retrospective to five decades in the nursery business, we proudly present our history.

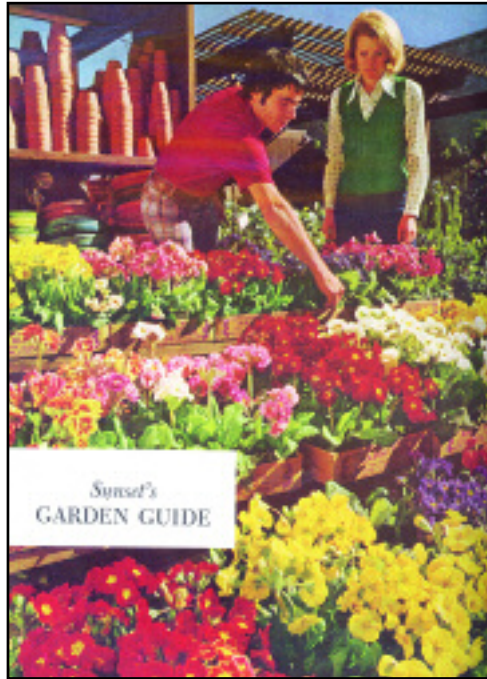
Sloat Garden Center, the Bay Area's largest independent nursery, started in 1958 in the Sunset district of San Francisco. Dave Geller, the original owner, ran the business out of an old building at the corner of 45th Avenue and Sloat Boulevard. Geller wasn't sure what to do with his building, so he thought he'd try a plant nursery.

He turned the garage into a sales area and the backyard into a garden center (at the time the property was shared with a gas station).

Sloat Garden Center soon became a discount nursery under the umbrella of San Francisco's discount department store, GET, in which Geller was a tenant.

In 1962, current owner Dave Straus came to work at Sloat as a 14-year old, unloading 40-pound bags of manure for a Washington's Birthday sale. He was soon loading cars, unloading trucks, sweeping, cleaning, watering, working in customer service and eventually becoming a manager. By the time Straus was 21, he was traveling to southeast Asia and making pottery connections for a local import company. Once he returned to Sloat to work full time at age 23, he never left.

In 1968 Dave Straus bought into the company as a minor partner and over time



Clockwise from left: Dave Straus helps a customer in 1976, courtesy Sunset Magazine; the original GET location Garden Shop; Sloat founder Dave Geller and current owner, Dave Straus.



bought out Dave Geller. Additional locations were opened beginning in 1973. In 1985, Vice President and part owner Ted Warshauer joined the team.

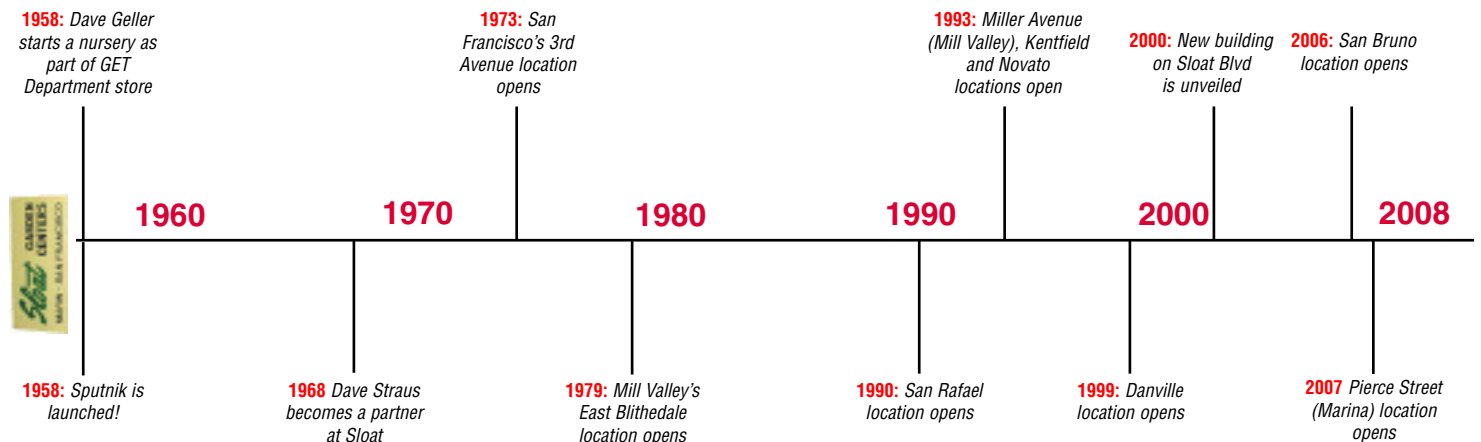
In 1993, Sloat made the decision to focus on the highest quality plant materials and garden products. "What we sell enables us to offer a guarantee of satisfaction that is second to none," explains Dave Straus. "And we have never wavered from that decision."

Now, fifty years later, Sloat is firmly established in the Bay Area. Over time we have become the largest independent pottery importer in the U.S., with strong ties to

many other independent garden chains that purchase their pottery through Sloat.

Looking back on almost five decades with Sloat Garden Center, Dave reflects. "Obviously I love plants and gardening, but over the years, the pottery part is what I've enjoyed the most," he explains. "It gave me the opportunity to travel, design product, pick new glaze colors and work with many different factories in many different countries. Bringing this beautiful pottery to our customers is a joy in itself. At Sloat we love helping Bay Area gardeners do what they do best - and that's garden!"

Timeline



Five Common Gardening Mistakes to avoid this Spring

At the end of each growing season we often forget to take stock of what good and bad happened in the garden so we can plan for next year. Here are some of the most common mistakes that some gardeners make year after year. The good news is that these mistakes are easy to avoid...and the potential reward is a more beautiful and bountiful spring than ever.

Mistake #1: Waiting too long to get started. It's a great temptation to wait for a bright, sunny spring day before running to the nursery for seeds, plants and tools. Don't wait for the sun this year. Spend February weeding while the ground is moist, planting seeds and seedlings inside to protect them from late frost, and stockpiling supplies like soil amendments, pots and tools in preparation for planting.



Mistake #2: Poor or no garden plan. There is plenty to be said for spontaneous decisions in the garden, but some inspired thinking now to map out the simplest of garden plans will pay huge dividends. At a minimum, make a list of plants you'd like to grow and look up the growing conditions they require. You'll be ready to scout your garden for ideal planting locations and spend little or no time studying plant tags when it comes time to purchase them.



Mistake #3: Lack of good soil preparation before planting. Most professional farmers wouldn't think of sowing a single seed without getting their soil in tip-top condition...yet many home gardeners miss this crucial step. Before the ground in your garden dries out is the perfect time to work and condition your soil. And a little effort goes a long way.



Mistake #4: Not scheduling plant care. It's not hard to kill your plants with too much care (read: watering) or too little care, especially when you haven't established a garden routine. Early in the season is the time to put in a little extra effort in caring for your plants. They'll become very well established and you'll enjoy your time in the garden even more.



Mistake #5: Letting garden pests get established. Pests don't just go away...unless they've devoured everything worth eating in your garden and laid eggs for next spring. Garden pests are best dealt with early and fast.

It's the season for houseplants!

Houseplants not only bring the outdoors inside when it's cool, they also purify and renew the air indoors, replacing the carbon dioxide we exhale with fresh oxygen. Some can even filter out toxins and pollutants*. Most houseplants have simple requirements to keep them healthy and happy. Check with our staff for recommendations on low-light or special situations.

LIGHT: Most houseplants need bright, indirect light. Eastern or southern exposures are best. Placing your plant directly on a windowsill is not recommended. The sun coming in through a window can be strong enough to burn the leaves. Indirect morning and mid-day sun are fine, but hot afternoon sun can burn leaves too. Generally if you can read a newspaper by the natural light in the room it is bright enough for most houseplants.

WATER: Check the soil in several places with a moisture meter or check several inches below the surface with your finger to see when your plant needs water. Then water thoroughly until water drains out the bottom of the pot. NEVER allow plants to sit in

water; this can cause the roots to suffocate and rot. You should apply enough water to thoroughly drain the roots and soil. Not doing so allows salts to build up in the soil, which will lead to sick roots. Water can run out of the pot rapidly if a plant is potbound or overly dry. When this occurs, soak the plant in a tub of water for a few minutes.

FERTILIZING: Always water your plant before fertilizing. Light but frequent applications of fertilizer are recommended March through October when plants are actively growing. We recommend **Maxsea, Fish Emulsion**, or worm/compost tea. Blooming houseplants may require more feeding and/or specialized fertilizers, such as African Violet Food or Orchid Food.

REPOTTING: The best time to repot is in the spring when plants resume active growth. The new pot should be only 2 to 4 inches larger in diameter than the old pot. A container that is too large can hold excess moisture in the soil and root rot can occur.

It is time to repot if you notice roots circling the top of the soil or coming out of the

drainage hole.

Gently remove the soil ball from the old pot, loosen the roots, and place it on fresh soil in the new pot. Fill in the sides with potting soil and gently press it in to make good contact with the soil ball. Keep the same soil level at the crown of the plant to avoid stem rot. Remember to leave at least an inch of space at the top to act as a water reservoir. Water thoroughly to settle the soil. After a few weeks you can begin to fertilize as usual.



*AIR-CLEANING PLANTS (partial list):

- Aglaonema (Chinese Evergreen)
- Dracaena fragrans, marginata, 'Janet Craig'
- Chlorophytum (Spider Plant)
- Epipremnum (Golden Pothos)
- Ficus elastica (Rubber Plant)
- Ficus benjamina (Weeping Fig)
- Nephrolepis (Boston Fern)
- Philodendron scandens (Heart-shaped Philodendron)
- Sansaveria (Snake Plant)
- Phoenix roebelinii (Pygmy Date Palm)