

# Gardener's Notebook

Volume 24, No. 1

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

March/April 2010



**GROWING FOOD**



**ITOH PEONIES  
RETURN**



**NEW POTTERY  
FOR SPRING**

## **CELEBRATE THE RETURN OF SPRING**

We have new shipments of  
spring plants & flowers arriving  
each week in March & April!

**Stop by...we'll help you grow  
the plants you love!**

## Nine Locations in San Francisco, Marin and Contra Costa

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

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

**Marina District**  
3237 Pierce Street  
Chestnut & Lombard  
(415) 440-1000  
9 to 6:30pm

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

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

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

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

**Danville**  
828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
(925) 743-0288  
M-Sat hours: 8 to 6:30pm  
Sun hours: 9 to 5pm

**Garden Design Department**  
401 Miller, Mill Valley  
(415) 388-3754

**Bulk Soils**  
828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
Danville  
(925) 820-1273  
(East Bay delivery only)  
M-Sat 8-4:30pm

Visit us on the Web: [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)



Locally  
owned since  
1958!

420 Coloma Street  
Sausalito, CA 94965-1428

Open 7 days per week 8:30am to 5:30pm  
Spring/Summer hours begin March 5th:  
8:30am to 6:30pm, 7 days per week  
(or as noted above in Danville & SF Marina)

Pre-Sorted  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
StrahmCom



Printed on 100%  
PCW recycled  
paper using  
vegetable  
based inks!

We'll help you grow the plants you love!

8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK March/April 2010

## March & April Gardening Guide

### Plant:

It's  
Vegetable



**Planting Time!** Organic vegetable starts and seeds are here. Start your edible garden early this year. Add **E.B. Stone's Agricultural Lime** to soil to provide needed calcium for your vegetables & fruit.

Plant your favorite annuals for spring.

**Impatiens, petunias, marigolds, cosmos and lobelia** are all budding and blooming now.



Say yes to summer bulbs! Plant **gladiolus, dahlias & lilies** now for summer color.

**Rhododendrons and azaleas** are budding and blooming. Feed them with **E.B. Stone's** organic **Ultra Bloom**. After the bloom cycle, use Azalea and Camellia food from **E.B. Stone**.

### 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.



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.

Wait to prune spring blooming shrubs until after flowering.

Prepare planting beds for spring. Test your soil for pH, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and add



appropriate fertilizer. We recommend amending soil with **Sloat Loam Builder, Sloat Forest Mulch Plus, Sloat Planting Mix** or our new **E.B. Stone Planting Compost**.

Aphids are beginning to appear. Stop them early with either **Insecticidal Soap, Bonide All Seasons Oil**...or, **Greenlight Rose Defense**. Use on roses and all your plants!

Don't forget lady bugs for combatting aphids; they are available once the weather begins to warm.



**About this Newsletter:** The Gardener's Notebook is published three times a year 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 or via email to [sloat@sloatgardens.com](mailto:sloat@sloatgardens.com)

# Low maintenance, drought tolerant & perfect for dry, shady areas

Planting in areas that are dry or shady can present a dilemma; how do you bring light, color and year-round interest to the garden while also dealing with dry shade?

Read on for solutions...



## Tough shrubs you'll love!



**Variegated Gold Dust Aucuba**  
Striking gold variegated shrub for shade gardens. Beautiful bright green foliage is so heavily speckled with gold it projects an overall yellow-green appearance. We also carry green leaf varieties of Aucuba.



**Evergreen Huckleberry**  
An attractive landscape shrub with intense red-bronze new leaves, maturing to deep green. A profusion of pink and white flowers lead to an abundant crop of tasty dark blue fruit. Use fruit for jams, pies, baking or fresh in cold desserts. CA Native.



**Fragrant Sarcococca**  
Fragrant, compact and deer resistant with beautiful white spring blooms and green foliage. The perfect shrub for shade, looks wonderful in the woodland garden or near an entryway. Fragrant winter blossoms are a bonus! We also carry dwarf Himalayan Sarcococca.

## Dry shade perennials



**Helleborus orientalis**  
Virtually problem-free, perennial plants with deep buds that open to bright flowers. Flowers are unusual as they face up and outward from the plant. A surprise every spring for woodland, native or shade gardens. Deer resistant.



**Liriope**  
Varieties with variegated dark green foliage are excellent for edging and borders in sometimes difficult shady areas. Small flowers among the foliage are followed by metallic violet-blue fruit. Evergreen perennial. Deer resistant.

### MORE SHRUBS



CAMELLIA



BOXWOOD



GROUND COVER EUONIMUS



NANDINA

These shrubs do well in dry shade. Available at all Sloat Garden Center locations.

## We have a passion for plants!

California Certified Nursery Pros  
at Sloat Garden Center



Sloat Garden Center team members have a wide range of plant specialties; from orchids, trees and roses, to bonsai and tropicals. But one thing we all have in common is a love for plants.

Over the years, some of our staff have chosen to take their passion further to become a California Certified Nursery Pro through work experience and a multi-level exam.

The California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers created this certification program in 1969 to train staff to help with bug, disease and design problems and make appropriate plant recommendations. In order to stay certified, staff must attend seminars, symposiums, and keep up with plant and product introductions, new theories, concepts and trends...(or lose certification and have to retest again.)

Lora Kellner is the Sloat Training Manager and an Advanced CCN Pro who helps our staff prepare for this difficult test.

"I love the continuing education aspect, both for myself and the staff training I am responsible for," she says. "I also care deeply about environmentally friendly gardening."

Linda Alexander  
Bill Barnett  
Cindy Bonilla  
Kat Catton  
Lee Eckles  
Marianne Gripenburg  
Lora Kellner\*  
Karen Lopez  
Steve Mauricio  
Michael Merz\*  
Gerry O'Donoghue  
Sue Saylor  
Dave Stoner\*  
Katy Thompson\*  
Becky Vandiver  
Helen Winkler\*  
\* = advanced CCN Pro



## Give your plants their very own Nanny

The Plant Nanny is a specially-engineered ceramic stake that is inserted into moist soil near a plant's root system. It stays in the soil and the reservoir provides the water supply.

As soil begins to dry, the "Nanny" slowly releases water. Roots become hardier with consistent moisture available.

The Plant Nanny will tell you when to add water even at a distance – knowing when to add water

is simple – if the reservoir is empty, it's time!

Each ceramic stake comes with a unique drip-free bottle adaptor that makes refilling easy. Plants thrive with consistent watering and the plant roots will grow around the stake, using water more efficiently. The nanny is great for watering plants while you're away on vacation!



## We bid thee farewell, slugs & snails



**Consider this:** A single slug can live up to 15 years laying 400 eggs per year. One individual slug has the potential to lay 40,000 eggs in their lifetime. And, they consume several times their body weight feeding on hostas, vegetables, strawberries, bulbs, root crops, citrus and even young conifers.

Slugs and snails are among the most damaging pests in the garden. These mollusks move by gliding along on a muscular "foot" which secretes mucus, facilitating their movement and leaving a slime trail. They can follow slime trails they left from the night before and other slugs can also pick up on this same trail creating a slug network to the host plant. Ew...

This spring, make Sluggo their last meal. This highly effective slug and snail control uses iron-phosphate, which works as a stomach poison, immediately preventing slugs and snails from feeding on your plants.

Not only is it a great product, Sluggo is OMRI listed for organic gardening and can be used around pets and wildlife, making it a favorite for pet owners. We recommend Sluggo!



# OPEN HOUSE: **Seminars** *spring*

growing ideas!



Each season we select local gardening experts and designers, as well as our knowledgeable senior staff, to speak in our seminar series. The class fee is \$5 (Gardener's Reward Program members attend for free) and all participants receive a 10% off coupon for redemption at any of our locations. Please call ahead to the seminar location to reserve a seat. Attendance is limited.

## Prune Away! Spring Seminar Series



### Fruit Tree Pruning: Peaches, Apricots, Nectarines and Cherries

Elizabeth Ruiz, aesthetic pruner, shows how to correctly prune your fruit trees.  
Mar.10—S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Mar.21—Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am  
Mar.27—San Rafael, Sat., 10 am

### Pruning Hydrangeas, Camellias and Rhodies

Marie Miller, aesthetic pruner, will teach gardeners how to recognize where and when to prune shrubs for better flowering.  
Mar.13—San Rafael, Sat., 10 am  
Mar.14—Kentfield, Sun., 10 am  
Mar.21—S.F. (Pierce), Sun., 10 am  
Mar.28—Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am

### Pruning Flowering Shrubs

Are you afraid to prune and lose the blossoms? Is your shrub overgrown or misshapen? Marie Miller demonstrates how to prune correctly for abundant blooms.  
Apr.7—S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Apr.11—Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am  
Apr.24—San Rafael, Sat., 10 am

### Pruning Native Plants

Elizabeth Ruiz, demonstrates when and how to prune plant natives.  
Apr.14—S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

### Pruning 101

Elizabeth Ruiz, pruning instructor, discusses how to make basic cuts, how cuts influence growth, the best tools to prune with, and when to stop cutting.  
Apr.17—San Rafael, Sat., 10 am  
Apr.25—Mill Valley, Sun., 10 am

## 101 Beginning Gardener Spring Seminar Series

### Using Fertilizers 101

Dave Phelps, garden expert, discusses the differences, benefits, and how to use fertilizers for optimum effect in your garden.  
Mar.7—San Rafael, Sun., 10 am

### Repotting Houseplants 101

Clare Cangioli, from the SF Conservatory of Flowers, discusses what is needed to repot, how to do it and when.  
Mar.14—S.F. (Pierce), Sun., 10 am

### Gardening Basics 101

Cindy Bonilla, Terri Hiatt and Dave Phelps will help any beginning gardener get started.  
Mar.31—S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., Bonilla 6:30 pm  
Apr.3—Mill Valley (Miller.), Sat., Phelps, 10 am  
Apr.3—Danville (Hiatt.), Sat., 10 am  
Apr.11—S.F. (Pierce), Sun., Bonilla, 10 am  
Apr.18—San Rafael, Sun., Phelps, 10 am

### Worm Composting 101

Brad Sheehan shows how the humble worm turns garbage into gardening gold.  
Apr.18—Danville, Sun., 10 am



## Garden Design Spring Seminar Series

### Using Color in the Garden

Terri Hiatt shares how to use plant combinations for sunny and shady gardens.  
Mar.20—Danville, Sat., 10 am

### Learn how to repot orchids

Clare Cangioli, from the SF Conservatory of Flowers, shares which bark/medium is best for each orchid and when they should be repotted.  
Apr.25—S.F.(Pierce), Sun., 10 am



## Grow your Own Food Spring Seminar Series

### Growing Vegetables: the basics

Dave Phelps and Brad Sheehan, local garden experts, discuss how to start a vegetable garden and pick the right plants for your space.  
Mar.13—Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am  
Mar.20—San Rafael, Sat., 10 am  
Mar.14—Danville, Sun., 10 am  
Mar.21—Novato, Sun., 10 am

### Make your own homemade jams!

Leslie Pizzino shows how easy it is to make jam, preserves, and marmalade from your garden. Sample delicious homemade preserves!  
Apr.11—Novato, Sun., 10 am  
Apr.18—Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am  
Apr.21—S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

### How to grow vegetables in small spaces

Cindy Bonilla and Jen Strobel demonstrate how to get the most from the space you have. Good for new gardeners who want to start small!  
Mar.7—S.F. (Pierce), Sun., Bonilla, 10 am  
Mar.14—San Rafael, Sun., Strobel, 10 am  
Mar.14—Mill Valley (Miller), Strobel, 12 noon  
Mar.17—S.F. (Sloat Blv.), Wed., Bonilla, 6:30 pm  
Mar.28—Novato, Sun., Strobel, 10 am

*Keep an eye out for additional **Grow your Own** food seminars in in May & June!*

### Book signing — Golden Gate Gardening

Local author Pam Peirce will sign the latest edition of her book *Golden Gate Gardening* (a veggie growing Bible) which includes the newest varieties of vegetables and fruit that are best for SF, Marin and the East Bay.  
Mar. 28 — S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Sun., 11 am

# ARE YOU SIGNED UP TO RECEIVE SLOAT ENEWSLETTERS?



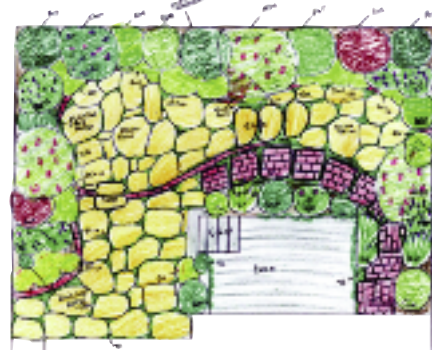
**HOT DEALS:** arrives in your inbox each Friday with sale information that's announced via email only.



**The Kitchen Gardener:** arrives in your inbox in the middle of each month and features monthly growing tips and recipes for your favorite garden fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs.



**The Gardener's Notebook Online:** arrives in your inbox at the beginning of each month and features growing tips, sales and specials information, seminars & events announcements, as well as our plant pick of the month and Garden Guru feature.



## Custom Garden Design by Sloat Garden Center

Since 1995, Bay Area gardeners have been inviting us to their homes to assist them in designing their gardens.

Whether you are a do-it-yourselfer or prefer to have a professional install your plants, our designs can be easily followed. We develop a loose "bubble diagram" and a complete plant list with the quantities and sizes of plant material, soil requirements, and pruning, feeding, and care information.

When you need help with short on-site consultations or a full planting plan, contact our Garden Design Department.

**415-388-3754**

**design@sloatgardens.com**

We invite you to sign up for our 3 newsletters online at: [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)

## grow your own food inspiration...



★ **Pomegranates** provide a bounty of gourmet fruit on gracefully branching trees. They have brilliant orange flowers (which attract hummingbirds) that will yield a crop of big red fruit. Pomegranates are extremely high in antioxidants.

★ **Figs** produce a fabulous summer harvest of fruit; perfect for desserts or appetizers.



★ Try growing hedges of **parsley** or plant **colorful chard** and **red kale** in flower beds.

★ Grow your own **popcorn** from seed (*Botanical Interests* seeds). We like to grow strawberry popcorn!

★ Train **fruit trees** and **citrus** along fences (espalier).



articles on:

Read more about growing your own food at [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)

artichokes  
blueberries  
edible hanging baskets  
fall vegetables

grapes  
herbs  
melons  
piquant greens

planting seeds with kids  
rosemary  
salad greens  
squash

strawberries  
tomatoes  
vegetables in containers  
potatoes

# Our 10 favorite gardening products for spring

We polled our staff about their favorite gardening tools for spring...here are their answers!

1. Maybe it goes without saying – but we swear by **E.B. STONE'S SURE START!** We don't plant anything without this planting-time fertilizer. It's made from a blend of organic ingredients formulated to help newly transplanted plants develop strong roots and sturdy growth.



2. **FISH EMULSION** Can you say LOVE? We use Fish Emulsion on everything in the garden. This fast acting organic plant food with kelp helps plants grow, flower, fruit and stay deep green.

3. **MICRO BARK** We like the neat and tidy look of Micro Bark and also, its effectiveness with inhibiting weed growth as well as soil moisture conservation. Ideal for walkways, gardens and play areas; it also protects roots from summer heat or winter cold.



4. **SLOAT LOAM BUILDER** We're not just patting ourselves on the back here. This rich amendment makes gardens thrive – ornamentals and edibles do exceptionally well with Sloat Loam Builder.



5. **FOX FARM FERTILIZERS** Over the last 12 months we've received rave reviews from customers about Fox Farm fertilizers. But our staff and managers love them, too! Ideal for all flowering and fruiting plants ---easy to use.



6. **CAN-O-WORMS WORM COMPOSTER** Talk about fun for kids... and eco-friendly too! This is an odorless, user-friendly worm composting system that allows anyone to participate in recycling and gardening via composting. We love this product!



7. **BAHCO PRUNING SNIPS** are incredibly lightweight yet have strong blades. They can cut a wide variety of plants, from flower stems to smaller rose canes. Also great for small jobs, deadheading, tight spots and bonsai. These are terrific general use pruners!



8. **SERENADE DISEASE CONTROL** provides protection against the most common fungal and bacterial garden diseases yet is non-toxic to bees and beneficial insects. Safe to use around kids and pets. We recommend Serenade!



9. **WEST COUNTY GARDENER GLOVES** Quality gloves for every type of gardening job.

10. **EARTHBOX** Right in the middle of the grow-your-own food trend comes the Earthbox planter. Maintenance-free, eliminates guesswork and more than doubles your garden's yield. These were extremely popular in our stores last year.



Ok...we said 10, but here's one more for good luck!



11. **KEEPER STOPPERS** – keeps soil in and insects out of pots. We use these religiously and cannot recommend them enough!

We'll unveil our favorite plants for Spring 2010 in the May/June print edition of the *Sloat Gardener's Notebook*. **STAY TUNED!**

## Hydrangea spring planting tip



It's time to get these beauties into the ground! Though they won't be in blooming color until June, if you plant **hydrangeas** early (meaning, before they flower), they will be able to root and then leaf out before temperatures increase. More established roots means better water absorption, which results in transplanting success. Visit our stores in March for a buy one, get one free Penny Mac Hydrangea coupon to use in April!



UPDATE! **Adopt a Garden** project grants are now awarded monthly. We will pick 12 schools throughout the year to receive \$250 in Sloat Garden Center gift cards. For more information and to apply, visit [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)



**Pink Double Dandy**

## Spring Itoh Peony Collection

Back by popular demand! Our Itoh Peony collection was a big hit last year, so we're bringing back **Bartzella, Cora Louise and Kopper Kettle** for spring. We'd also like to welcome the newest introduction for 2010: **Pink Double Dandy**.

**Pink Double Dandy** is a large flower that measures up to six inches across and is held on strong stems above a compact mound of dark green foliage. As the flower matures, the dark lavender pink petals slowly fade to a soft pink, revealing a cluster of yellow stamens in its center. Lightly fragrant. Prefers full sun to dappled shade. Limited supply...hurry while they are still in stock!



Just in time for spring: You'll love this new **Planting Compost**

E.B.'s Stone's new Planting Compost is a genuine compost. Blended for use in all soil types and for all types of outdoor gardening and mulching. The special blend of ingredients were combined to make it a truly all-purpose outdoor planting mix.

*Ingredients:* composted wood shavings, redwood compost, composted chicken manure, mushroom compost, fir bark, bat guano, kelp meal and alfalfa meal. We are excited about this **Planting Compost!**



Give your plants a strong foundation for future growth with **E.B. Stone Sure Start**.

Rich in natural sources of phosphorous, Sure Start is formulated to help newly transplanted plants develop strong roots.

# THE COLORS OF SPRING!

## New pottery for 2010

Contact your local Sloat Garden Center location to see our full range of colors & styles



**Michelle Green**



**Cover Girl**



**Stripe Orange**



**Yellow**



**Purple**