

Gardener's Notebook

Volume 26, No. 3

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

FALL 2012



Clockwise from top left: Bromeliad, Kalanchoe, Hypoestes, Bromeliad, Aphelandra (or Zebra Plant), Dieffenbachia and Dracaena.

Ah, consider the humble houseplant. In our homes and offices they add oxygen to the air, are easy to care for and make living spaces feel vibrant. What's not to like? We invite you to discover the benefits of houseplants and indoor gardening during our **2012 Foliage Fiesta**. From **October 5th** through **October 14th** at all Sloat Garden Center locations, we'll feature houseplant sales & specials, educational information and many foliage varieties that may be new to you. We'll also have new terrariums, tillandsias and mini-gardens that are beautiful and ready to take home. *Bring the green inside!*

In this issue: California native plants, Houseplant care, Sloat Garden Design, Fall color and more...

Fall is for planting California natives



California natives are stunning and offer many benefits to the landscape:

1. Save Water

Native plants are adapted to our dry summer weather. Once established, many need minimal irrigation beyond normal rainfall.

2. Save Time.

While they do best with some attention, in general natives require less water, fertilizer, pruning, less or no pesticide, and less time to maintain than many other plants.

3. Reduce Pesticides.

Native plants have developed their own defenses against many pests and diseases. Since most pesticides kill indiscriminately, beneficial insects become secondary targets in the fight against pests. Reducing or eliminating pesticides allows natural pest control to take over and keeps pesticides out of creeks and watersheds.

4. Invite wildlife to your home.

Native plants, hummingbirds, butterflies and other beneficial insects are "made for each other." Research shows that native wildlife clearly prefer native plants. California's wealth of insect pollinators can improve fruit set in your garden, while a variety of native insects and birds will help keep your landscape free of mosquitoes and plant-eating bugs.

5. Support Local Ecology.

California native plants can help provide an important bridge to nearby wild areas. Support local ecology by providing food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects by planting native plants.

Visit the [California Native Plant Society](http://www.cnps.org) to learn even more about native plants: www.cnps.org
See more native plants at www.sloatgardens.com

California is teeming with 6000+ native plant species that evolved and adapted to each particular region of our state.

Let's take a short tour of this dazzling diversity. Large trees, like oaks, maples and bays, will grow to provide understory habitats for many smaller plants, as they do in the wild. There are native foliage shrubs like Pacific wax myrtle (**Myrica**) and coffeeberries (**Rhamnus**), plus flowering shrubs such as wild lilacs (**Ceanothus**) that create bold and decorative displays. Beautiful **Arctostaphylos manzanitas** are tough, picturesque shrubs and small trees that will create a focal point in any landscape. Around the shrubs and under the trees can go a vast array of beautiful herbaceous perennials and subshrubs. The smaller buckwheats (**Eriogonum**), **Heuchera** and **Pacific Coast Iris** are some of the showiest and most familiar, but there are many more, including our very own beloved orange California poppy (**Eschscholzia californica**).

3 of our favorite California natives (among many)



Ceanothus. Wild lilac. This beautiful flowering shrub is a keeper for any native landscape. So easy to grow and so beautiful! Flowers in March and April; flower colors range from white to deep true-blue, violet and even pink. Needs sun, well drained soil, and little watering once established.



Zauschneria. California fuchsia. This perennial attracts hummingbirds and puts on a dazzling display of clustered scarlet blossoms in late summer and fall. Adapts to clay soil, needs full sun and little or no watering when established.



Arctostaphylos. Manzanita. This lovely shrub will bloom in the winter to early spring and has berries in spring and summer. Manzanita is known for its smooth red bark and twisting branches. Needs sun, well drained soil but very drought tolerant. Most are hardy to 0-10°F.

Bay Area Gardening Guide: Fall



Fall is color.

Plant mums, iceland poppies, snapdragons and ornamental grasses now for waves of autumnal color.

Violas and pansies make perfect ground covers for blooming spring bulbs.

Bulbs have arrived in our stores!

Now is the time to plant next spring's colorful **bulb display** in your garden. This fall you can plant amaryllis, daffodils, iris, tulips, crocus and hyacinth either in beds or containers. Garlic and onion bulbs can be planted now, too. For detailed bulb planting info, visit www.sloatgardens.com



September Food Drive

Please join us in supporting local food banks this September.

Sloat Garden Center will be a drop off site to support our local communities. You can help by bringing an unopened can or box of food to any Sloat Garden Center from September 1st to September 30th. Please, no glass items.

Fall Clean up TIPS

1. Stake newly-planted trees to support them through their first winter.
2. Spread compost on perennials and vegetable beds to enrich the soil for next spring.
3. Clean garden tools to get them ready for next year. Shovels and pruners can be sprayed with Bahco Clean Spray to keep them from rusting over the winter months. Cleaning your tools now can also help keep diseases from getting into next year's garden.

Plant

- ☞ Plant it Now! Fall is the best time to plant **foxglove, canterbury bells** and other biennials. Look to plant **cyclamen** in October/November. It's also a great time to plant ground covers and sweet peas.
- ☞ Consider planting **ornamental grasses**. Grasses require little upkeep and can create a beautiful screening effect against the house or fence.
- ☞ Fall is for planting! Get shrubs, perennials, vines and trees into the ground this month while the soil is still warm. Winter rains will help establish your plants.
- ☞ Don't forget to chill spring bulbs that need an artificial winter: **Tulips, freesia, crocus & hyacinth** need 4–6 weeks of refrigeration before planting.
- ☞ Decorate for fall! Beginning in October we will have **pumpkins, gourds** and **mums** to set the autumn stage on your doorstep.

Fertilize

- ☞ Apply **E.B. Stone Nature's Green** lawn fertilizer and **Concern Weed Prevention Plus** pre-emergent to green up your lawn and control and prohibit annual bluegrass, crabgrass, and other weeds in your lawn and flower beds.
- ☞ Top-dress perennial beds, azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons with **Sloat Forest Mulch Plus** and feed with 0-10-10 fertilizer monthly until bloom.

Prune/Maintain

- ☞ Prepare planting beds for winter. Clear weeds and rocks. Add soil amendments.
- ☞ Divide the roots and rhizomes of perennials such as agapanthus, yarrow and iris.
- ☞ Lightly prune Japanese maples while still in leaf.
- ☞ Feed the birds! Don't cut back dead flower stalks; allow rudbeckia, sunflowers, and other flowers with seeds and berries to feed the birds in your neighborhood all winter. It's also time to fill your bird feeders for winter. Try a suet feeder.

Did you know?

We have bulk topsoil available at our Danville nursery.

828 Diablo Road
at El Cerro Blvd., Danville
925-820-1273

Delivery available to our East Bay customers. Call for more info!

Dear Garden Guru,

Please help settle a bet. My friend thinks fertilizer does nothing for her garden. I told her that her garden could produce a lot more fruit and flowers if she used fertilizer to replace the nutrients lost from watering.

Who is right? We're betting a bag of soil and I want to collect my winnings!

- Irene in Berkeley



Dear Irene,

That soil is yours! Plants that are fertilized grow taller and can better resist pests and diseases. If you look at a fertilized plant and an un-fertilized plant side by side, the results are quite striking. When plants are given the nutrients Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (N-P-K), it stimulates green growth, strong roots, flowering and overall plant health. And it's not just watering that causes plants to lose nutrients. When plants grow, nutrients are absorbed, so eventually all the healthy soil they started out with has to be replenished.

We talk a lot about E.B. Stone Organics in our newsletters. And no, it's not just because they have beautiful packaging, it's because we love their entire line of organic fertilizers for boosting plant production. E.B. Stone All-Purpose Plant Food is wonderful for putting nutrients back into soil; it can feed soil as well as the plant by adding eight species of fungi and six species of bacteria. This helps create a diverse, healthy environment for plant growth that helps stimulate microbial activity in the soil.

Enjoy your soil...and thanks for gardening with us,
The Garden Guru



All-Purpose Plant Food is a blend of natural organic ingredients formulated for use throughout the garden. It is suitable for use on vegetables, trees, shrubs, lawns and flower gardens. **E. B. Stone**

All-Purpose Plant Food is ideal for use when preparing new planting areas and for feeding existing plants.

This blend features: dried chicken manure, bat guano, alfalfa meal, kelp meal, potassium sulfate, humic acids and soil microbes including mycorrhizal fungi.

FALL gardening seminars

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.*

Pruning Japanese Maples for Form and Beauty

Fall is the time to prepare your maple tree's winter silhouette. If the tree is a focal point in your garden, work on the fine details. Aesthetic Pruner Elizabeth Ruiz explains the nuances of Japanese maple pruning.

Saturday, September 29th, 10am, Miller Ave., Mill Valley

Sunday, September 30th, 12 noon, Danville

Wednesday, October 3rd, 6:30pm, Sloat Blvd. SF

The What, When, and How of Tree and Shrub Care

Join David Hill of Treemasters for an enlightening discussion on tree care, tools, diseases, insects and timing of cures and pruning. Come with questions.

Wednesday, October 17th 6:30pm, Sloat Blvd. SF

Saturday, October 20th, 10am at Miller Ave., Mill Valley

Sunday, October 21st, 12:00, Danville

Make and Take Terrarium Workshop

Our All-Star container designer Jen Strobel will guide you in creating your own terrarium. Your creation will make a wonderful gift for a friend or yourself. All materials, including the glass vessel will be supplied. Choose from succulents or foliage as your taste dictates.

FEE: \$25.00. Sign up early. Space is limited to 15 attendees.

Wednesday, November 7th, 12 noon, Danville

Friday, November 9th, 12 noon, Sloat Blvd., SF

Saturday, November 10th, 10am, Miller Ave. and 1pm, Kentfield

Friday November 16th, 12 noon, Sloat Blvd. SF

Wednesday, December 5th, 12 noon, Danville

Friday, December 7th, 12 noon, Sloat Blvd., SF

Saturday, December 8th, 10am, Miller Ave.



White Squill: a miracle bulb for Bay Area gardens

Among the many bulbs to plant this fall, squill should most certainly make it onto your list. They require no irrigation, are pest resistant and will flower in almost any type of soil. Their extensive root system also makes them great erosion control plants. They are virtually indestructible and will produce a spectacular, tall stalk clothed with a profusion of small white flowers. With those attributes they just seem really, well, happy growing here.



In the garden



Exotic cut flowers



Suitable for pots

Unique growing cycle: Soon after fall planting, squill will begin to grow by throwing a green spike into the air. This will eventually open to many individual leaves. By mid-March, each plant will stand approximately 30-36" tall and across. In May, as temperatures increase, leaves will begin to yellow and the plant will go dormant and lay flat. Once leaves have fully dried, they can be cleaned with a rake or mowed.

The squill will lie dormant until the end of summer and then push up a flower stalk around Aug/Sept, depending on weather conditions (heat being the key ingredient). Flower stalks will typically be 4-5' tall and flower for a substantial period (between 21-28 days.) Florets will open starting from the bottom of the stalk through the tip, culminating in a mass of tiny white flowers.



Benefits of gardening with squill bulbs:

1: Drought proof. White Squill grow and flower with profusion in the rainfall of our Mediterranean climate. The bulbs are organically grown in the desert of Murrieta, CA, but they are native to coastal Mediterranean regions. Bulbs weigh 6-8 lbs each!

2: Great for erosion control. Squill roots, in their search for moisture, grow 4 feet deep and wide, making them an excellent plant to retard erosion on slopes.

3: Pest & rodent resistant. Gophers, rabbits, moles, deer and insects usually do not eat, chew or dig the bulbs/plants.

4: Will grow in all soil types. Squill succeed in virtually all soil types (with the exception of heavy clay), including very sandy shoreline, rocky cliffs, desert sand, etc.



Need to brainstorm garden solutions?

We're here to help!

If you're thinking about ways to improve your garden space, call the **Sloat Garden Center Design Department**. We can develop simple, success oriented low maintenance planting plans for gardens, decks, and terraces, as well as provide indoor plant consultations. But most importantly, we can help you brainstorm ideas and solutions.

Problem solving is a large part of what we do. We will come up with a garden design that works with existing plant material and takes into account your available time to garden. Then we put together a planting plan that works for you. 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.

Our planting plans can be easily followed by every level of gardener; whether you prefer to do it yourself or have a professional install your plants.

To schedule an appointment, call us at 415-388-3754 or email us: design@sloatgardens.com.



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 Easy Care
 Houseplants
 that don't
 need much
 to stay
 happy &
 healthy



Dieffenbachia



Sansevieria



Calathea



Croton

How to repot a houseplant



We get so many questions about repotting houseplants that we wanted to demystify the topic. Indications for the need to repot are a constantly thirsty plant, roots growing from

the drainage hole, and when water runs through the pot too quickly.

The new pot should only be 2 to 4 inches wider than the old one. A container that is too large will hold excess moisture in the soil. This can lead to root rot or an infestation of fungus gnats.

Gravel or rock is not needed at the bottom of the container. It has been found that doing so actually inhibits complete drainage. A small screen, such as a **Keeper Stopper**, placed over the drainage hole will hold soil in and keep bugs out...and pot feet will protect your floors!

Choose soil that's rich in organic matter such as **Sloat Organic Potting Soil**. Loosen the root ball and spread roots gently over a small hill of soil placed at the bottom of the container. Apply **Actinovate** around the roots according to directions. We've found that plants treated with Actinovate are hardier, more vigorous, and develop a root system immune to soil fungi that cause root rot.

Continue to fill in the sides with soil. Soil should reach the same height on the plant as it was before repotting. Provide enough room to give adequate water by leaving an inch of space from the soil level to the top of the pot.

Plants that grow
 in **high** light

*High Light = As much light as possible.
 Within 3 feet of a sunny window.*

- Yucca
- Fiddleleaf Fig
- Croton
- Most Palms
- Weeping Fig
- Succulents
- Calathea

Plants that grow
 in **medium** light

*Medium Light = Moderately lit area.
 Within 8 feet of a sunny window.*

- Anthurium
- Dieffenbachia
- Sago Palm
- Hoya
- Schefflera
- Spider Plant
- China Doll
- Dracaena marginata
- Lucky Bamboo
- Orchid

Plants that grow
 in **low** light

*Low Light = Poorly lit area/no direct sun.
 Bright enough to allow daylight reading.*

- Cast Iron Plant (Aspidistra)
- Chinese Evergreen (Aglaonema)
- Peace Lily (Spathiphyllum)
- Corn Plant (Dracaena massangeana)
- Philodendron, Croton and Pothos
- Sansevieria



Philodendron



Dieffenbachia



Lucky Bamboo



African Violet



Orchid



Aglaeonema

Houseplant Care & Tips

LIGHT. Most houseplants need bright indirect light. A west-facing window is too bright and hot and may burn the leaves, yet a dim corner away from a window will cause the leaves to become pale and spindly. If you can read by the natural light in a room, it's probably bright enough for most houseplants.

WATER. Don't follow a strict watering schedule, but do check your plants regularly and learn their preferences. Always water your plant thoroughly (until water drains out the bottom of the pot). There should be an inch or two of space from the soil line to the lip of the

pot. Use a saucer large enough to hold drainage water. Do not let the pot stand in drainage water more than a day.

FEED. Liquid fertilizers are the easiest to use and offer the best results. Feed foliage plants with frequent (2 to 4 times a month), half strength applications during the spring and summer depending on how often you are watering. Feed less (or not at all) in fall and winter when lower temperatures and light levels slow plant growth. Blooming houseplants usually require more feeding. There are specific fertilizers for them such as African Violet food and

Orchid food. Light but frequent applications of a liquid fertilizer such as **Maxsea All Purpose** during the spring and summer is advisable. Remember to dust your houseplants seasonally; dusty leaves provide a haven for harmful insects like mites (see our favorite products for dealing with insects below).

PROTECT. Vinyl saucers, plant pallets, pot feet and Protecto Mats help protect carpeted and wood floors. Hide soil with decorative moss, rock, gravel or small bark. For hanging plants, we have vinyl drip pans and fabric pot hangers

Houseplant help on the way

Our line of Bonide products are in economical, smaller sizes for indoor use. We really like Bonide Mite-X and Insecticidal Soap to combat insect issues. Houseplants thrive with Bonide's liquid plant food.



Mite-X is made from plant extracts; it produces safe, effective results from botanical sources. Mite-X kills all life stages of mites, as well as aphids, thrips, and most other soft bodied insects. Remains effective for up to 4 weeks and is easy on beneficials.



Insecticidal Soap Made from plants and plant extracts, this Insecticidal Soap kills insects on contact. Preferred by organic gardeners. Contains no flammable solvents or animal fatty acids.



Liquid Plant food is a balanced 10-10-10 fertilizer ideally formulated for houseplants. Add just 7 drops per quart of water for lush, healthy houseplants!

Visit our stores: 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 6:30

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: 8am to 5pm

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

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

Visit us on the web: www.sloatgardens.com

Sloat



Locally
owned since
1958!

420 Coloma Street
Sausalito, CA 94965-1428



We'll help you grow the plants you love!

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New & Improved

What's new about our Gardener's Reward Program?
It's simple: **quick rewards**. This popular reward program is now even easier to use because we're giving out rewards right at check-out. We've had overwhelmingly positive feedback about this change; our customers love receiving their coupon right away and we love rewarding them!

Open 7 days per week 8:30am to 6:30pm
(or as noted above in Danville & SF Marina)

Fall/Winter hours begin Sunday, October 28th
8:30am to 5:30pm, 7 days a week

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vegetable
based inks!

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our homepage for details.

Don't delay, sign up today!

Present your Gardener's Reward card
each time you visit, and you'll enjoy:

New Quick Rewards!

Receive a \$5.00 Coupon for every 200 points you earn.
Each dollar spent earns one(1) point. Coupons redeemable
toward your next purchase.

Members Only Sale Days

Special members only pricing prior to our biggest sale events!
Plus, receive advance special invitations to gardening events
and sales by postal mail or email.

Gardening Seminars

Free admission to our popular gardening seminars
(\$5 value each).

Gardener's Notebook

FREE subscription to our Gardener's Notebook newsletter
for active Gardener's Reward members.

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