

# Gardener's Notebook

Volume 32, No. 2

News & Advice for Bay Area Gardeners

May / June 2018



Aloe arborescens



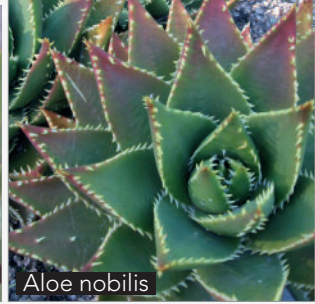
Aloe



Agave 'Variegata'



Agave



Aloe nobilis



Aeonium



Aloe



Aloe plicatilis



Agave

## Let succulents be the star of your landscape

Agaves and Aloes shine in the landscape year-round. They are low-maintenance, Water Wise, and bold, plus they add stunning beauty wherever they're planted.

"I like to use large succulents for their sculptural quality," explains Gloria Sanchez, Sloat Garden Center's Design Department Manager. "They make great focal plants in large pots, or as part of a grouping. Contrasting groundcovers work beautifully as a background to accent a rhythmic row of architectural succulents. I especially love using multiples of big rosettes as a centerpiece in a landscape design, or individually for contrast in pots with mixed perennials."

There are so many succulent sizes, shapes and colors available, and no limit to the combinations you can create. Get planting inspiration this spring by visiting the succulent sections of the **San Francisco Botanical Garden** and **UC Berkeley Botanical Garden** (where some of our cover photos were taken). Stop by these Bay Area jewels to view large landscape succulents from around the world. Then stop in to see the landscape succulents available in our stores!



*Did you know ...*  
**Squash have both male and female flowers. Fruit only forms on the female flowers.**

**Grow your own squash!**

For the squash lovers among us, it's time to get planting! Summer squash (like zucchini) is planted for warm weather harvest and picked when immature. Their skins are soft. Winter squash like acorn, butternut, buttercup, delicata, spaghetti and hubbard are grown for harvest in late summer or fall. The fruits have hard rinds and are harvested when mature. Winter squash will store in a cool, dry location for months. Pumpkins are squash, too, so get them planted this month for October harvest!

## How to grow summer & winter squash

Squashes are large, vining plants that will continue to bear fruit for weeks after initial harvest. Since the vines are so large they'll need ample growing room, but a container (such as a wine barrel) will work. No room for large plants? There are varieties better suited for smaller spaces. Look for the word "bush" in the name. Squash grow best in full sun and planted in fertile, well-drained soils containing high levels of organic matter. We suggest *Loam Builder* or *Sloat Organic Planting Mix*. If growing in containers use *Organic Potting Soil*. Plant squash in hills 3 to 5 feet apart. Bury vines with an inch or two of soil to encourage secondary root growth. As they grow, train vines to go in the direction you want by moving them a little each day. Squash roots will need regular moisture, but leaves and stems should be kept as dry as possible to prevent leaf and fruit diseases.



Increase yield with **Down To Earth Liquid Bone Meal**. Its phosphorus boosts root development so that plants can absorb more water and nutrients. As a result you'll have larger fruits and vegetables, plus more and larger blossoms.



Cherry Tomato

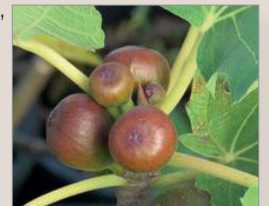


Green Zebra Tomato

*There's still time to get cherry type and other short season tomatoes (like Jetsetter, Siletz, Green Zebra, and Stupice) planted. These varieties need 75 days or less to fruit, and will grow well in containers.*

## Grow a Fig! Introducing dwarf Ficus carica 'Little Miss Figgy'

Figs are a healthy, tasty delight, and they're so easy to grow in our Mediterranean climate. Little Miss Figgy produces fresh figs for salads, baking, drying, or for eating fresh off the tree. We chose this fig



because it's a low maintenance, abundant producer for landscapes and containers. To top it off: Miss Figgy is a gorgeous looking plant - it will dazzle you with its deeply lobed, blue-green leaves and spectacular, dark-purple fruits. Enjoy an abundance of fig fruit from your very own, dwarf fruiting machine. Grows 4 - 6' tall and 3 - 4' wide. **Little Miss Figgy is ideal for small spaces!**

## Meet our family of organic local producers & growers

### Sweetwater

**Nursery** grows thousands of varieties of organic herbs and vegetables, as well as perennials. The Loveday Brown family started the small plant nursery in Point Richmond in 1977, and then moved the nursery to Sebastopol in 1992.



"We are a family of gardeners and home cooks, so we have a big passion for planting, growing and harvesting plants for home use," says Jed Loveday Brown. "Most of our edible plant offerings are introduced because we tried an interesting recipe or read an article about a new and exciting use. Growing a diverse variety of edible plants is a driving force behind our business."

### Jed's spring gardening tip

"Save a small space every year for new and interesting plants you haven't tried growing before. Fill the rest of your space with your favorite edible plants." **We agree!** May is the perfect month to plant basil, green beans, squash, tomatoes, and melons. Stop in to our stores!



## Hot & Sweet: Learn to grow peppers



Sweet pepper



Hot pepper

Grow your own peppers this summer! Choose from sweet peppers like Bell and Anaheim that are mild in flavor; to pungent hot peppers like the mildly spicy Italian pepperoncini, to the near incandescent heat of a habanero.

All peppers need a long and warm growing season (they grow best in warmer parts of the Bay Area), and should be planted outdoors as seedlings in order to produce fruit. Space pepper plants 1.5 – 2 feet apart. After plants are established (but before blossoms set), fertilize once or twice. Allow 60 to 95 days from setting out plants to harvest.

Sweet peppers are ready to pick when they have reached a good size. Pick hot peppers when still green or wait until they turn yellow or red for a richer flavor. Learn to grow peppers by attending our *Peppers 101 seminar* (Gardener's Notebook pg 7) in early May.

**Charlie's Chalkboard:**  
How to grow more tasty food!

Visit our website for  
**Charlie's Ghost Pepper  
Jelly Recipe**

*Pleasant Hill location team member Charlie is well known for his Ghost Pepper Jelly recipe. Each spring he plants Ghost and Scorpion hot peppers and turns them into jelly! See his recipe at [sloategardens.com](http://sloategardens.com)*

## Get planting with 5 interesting edibles



This month we have five unique edible plants for your garden. Grow your own hibiscus flowers for tea, plant fresh turmeric root for nutritional and culinary usage, and experiment with savory Italian mint! You might also consider planting a Moringa tree; a fast growing, Water Wise tree with leaves that are considered to be a super food (more vitamin C than oranges!), and edible seeds high in protein. Also, Guyabano (aka pawpaw, soursop, or custard apple) bears fruit that's delicious in smoothies. Stop in and see!

### Strawberry Jars are so versatile for growing food

We like these colorful planters for growing your own groceries like herbs and strawberries. Get them in four awesome colors: Falling blue, Atomic red, Tropical red, and Terracotta.



## Try these rejuvenating plant elixirs by Tappin' Roots



Produced in Santa Rosa, Tappin' Roots makes safe and effective plant fertilizers based on the Berryessa family's longtime Basque recipes. We've worked with Tappin' Roots for years and are sold on their commitment to sustainability. We carry their three formulas: **All Stages** is made of botanical extracts for fine tuning all stages of growth and promoting flowering and fruiting. Acts fast to help plants in decline perk back up. **Essential Grow (8-4-4)** is highly effective and nutrient-dense to provide plants a solid foundation to thrive! Use on flowers, edible plants, trees and more. **Solid Bloom** helps produce an explosion of flowers and fruit.

**Grow your own groceries: now is the best time to plant and grow melons!**



# A Lavender for every season



There's a blooming lavender for just about every Bay Area season. Here's the fragrant progression: Spanish lavenders start flowering in spring, then intermediate French varieties bloom at the beginning of summer, followed by English varieties in late summer into fall. Lucky for you...we carry them all! This extremely aromatic, undemanding, deer-resistant plant is versatile in containers, rock gardens, as a hedge, and even in mass plantings. Prune Lavender back by one-half after flowering for a repeat show of flowers. Tip: French and English lavender varieties produce the best flowers for drying.

## Lovely, easy-to-grow perennial and annual cut flowers

Growing flowers for cutting means you get to enjoy them twice. First plant and appreciate their color and forms as they grow...then enjoy them again in a cut flower arrangement. Cutting back blooming flowers ensures that the plant will repeatedly bloom during summer and into fall. A win for you and for the plant! By the way, growing your own cut flowers can lesson the carbon footprint that purchased cut flowers create.



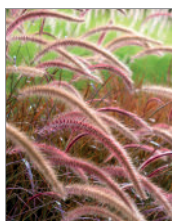
**Leucanthemum (Shasta Daisy) • perennial**  
All Shasta daisy varieties make good cut flowers. This plant thrives with phosphorus, so feed it with liquid bone meal to produce larger and more blossoms.



**Echinacea purpurea and hybrids (Coneflower) • perennial**  
Coneflowers are a wonderful cut flower: The sturdy stems make them a mainstay of arrangements and the bright white, pinks, purples, orange, and yellow are attractive in arrangements.



**Salvia and Coreopsis • perennials**  
Salvia flowers are easy to grow and can be used fresh or dried. And if there were ever a plant that bloomed too much, Coreopsis is it! Produces countless more blossoms every time they're cut.



**Pennisetum rubrum (Red fountain grass) • perennial grass**  
The long arching stems of any ornamental grass add bulk and color to fresh arrangements. Grasses can be used fresh or dried.



**Zinnia elegans • annual**  
Zinnia can easily be grown from seeds or starts. Puffy large blossoms in white, yellow, red, purple, pink, or orange. Start them in May so they bloom with the hot weather. Stunning in arrangements.



**Helianthus annuus (Sunflowers) • annuals**  
Many varieties of sunflowers have side shoots that produce medium to long stemmed flower heads. Plant sunflower seeds monthly, March through July, for a continued supply of flowers.



### Seaside Serenade Hamptons Hydrangea

This new Hydrangea is a winner for cut flower arrangements. It produces huge, intense pink ball-shaped blooms that are long-lasting in cut floral displays. The shrub has a compact shape and dark green foliage. New leaves are maroon in spring and turn fiery cinnamon-red in fall. Bred to resist scorch, even if you miss watering on a hot day. This new exclusive introduction has been grown by Horticultural Craftsman.



## Tranquility with gray & white

Gray and white are ideal chameleons in the garden. Used alone or with other gray foliage plants, they're cool, modern, and fresh. A timeless, elegant combination that works in every garden scheme, from English to Mediterranean to Southwest. In all these landscapes one aspect of this palette stands out: the ability to create a soothing, calm aesthetic.

The silvery leaves and purple-gray flowers of lavender have this effect as well, but so does the tactile gray foliage of Lamb's Ears. Similarly, Dichondra cascading out of a white, gray or silver pot is serene. You can go beyond white and gray plants with gray fences and arbors to contribute to a soothing vignette. These are just some of the great gray and white plants available right now in all our stores. Stop in for inspiration!

## On location with the team at our Danville (Camino Ramon) store

*Our second Danville location has been in service as a garden center for over 60 years. Manager Jane, Assistant Manager Juan, and the rest of the crew love helping gardeners succeed! Jane answers our questions about the store.*

### Can you describe the Camino Ramon store?

**Jane:** It's large with a state-of-the-art greenhouse that contains a diverse selection of indoor plants and pottery. The greenhouse is probably my favorite part of the nursery. Even on cold rainy days it feels tropical, warm, and sunny. Our store brings in a very interesting mix of customers who've lived here for many years, plus younger first time homeowners, and of course, garden club regulars! Our customers know they can find unique, unusual and interesting plants here.

### What favorite plants and tools will you have in stock this spring?

**Jane:** We all look forward to vegetable season. All the varieties of tomatoes are amazing – it's so difficult to choose. I'm a big fan of Salvias, Lavenders and Alstroemerias. Juan likes Phormiums for their various colors, sizes, drought tolerance, and ability to adapt to sun or light shade. Doug loves Carpet Roses. Malaika's favorite tool is her Felco pruners and mine is the Hori Hori digging knife. You'd be



Danville Team: Juan, Jane, Malaika & Doug

surprised how many things you can do with it... from digging into clay soil, fixing sprinkler heads, and dividing perennials. We use it for everything!

### Please tell us about your team!

**Jane:** I'm very fortunate to have a staff of experienced gardeners -- there's over 150 years of experience between us. Customers know they can come to us with gardening problems and we'll come up with practical solutions. I'm very proud of my team and the hard work and dedication they bring to the job every day. Everyone enjoys their job and it shows.

### What's your best gardening advice?

**Jane:** One of the tips I offer customers is the importance of adding organic matter to the soil every year. I love Sloat Loam Builder and E.B. Stone Earthworm Castings to help our heavy clay soils become rich and loamy. In general we try to take the fear out of gardening. Some people are convinced they have a black thumb. We give them all the tools and explain things step-by-step to demystify the gardening experience.

# Bring the Green inside with Indoor Plants

Growing plants indoors is now officially a trend, but in our minds, they never went out of style! Our adoration for foliage-laden indoor plants continues, whether succulents, ferns, or broad leafed plants grown in low, medium, or high light situations. Bring the green inside your home or office by adding year-round vibrancy and color!

## Spring is the time to repot indoor plants

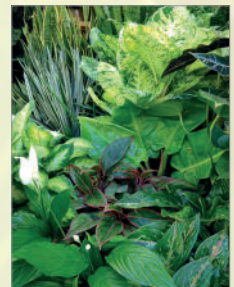
The best time to re-pot plants is in spring when they resume active growth from winter dormancy. Indicators that your plant needs repotting are: A constantly thirsty plant, roots growing from the drainage hole, or if the water runs through the pot too quickly. The new pot should only be 2 to 4 inches wider than the old one. Gravel or rock is not needed at the bottom of the container: (rocks actually inhibit complete drainage). A small screen, such as Keeper Stopper, placed over the drainage hole will hold soil in and keep bugs out. Need a new pot for your plant? Stop by and see our vast and colorful selection of indoor pots!



Choose soil 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. Fill in the sides with soil. Do not plant deeper than the current soil level. Provide enough room to give adequate water by leaving an inch of space from the soil level to the top of the pot.

## How to water indoor plants

Many factors come into play when determining water requirements for plants: Container size, season, rate of growth, light, and temperature. You don't need to follow a strict schedule, but do check plants regularly and learn their preferences. Always water thoroughly, filling the pot completely until water drains out the bottom of the pot. Adding just a cup or so at a time leads to improper wetting, unhealthy roots and dangerous salt build up. An easy-to-use Moisture Meter is just the trick to take the mystery out of when to water. Available at all Sloat Garden Center locations!



## Helpful items

Vinyl saucers, plant pallets, pot feet and Surface Savers can help protect carpeted or wood floors from over-watered plants. For hanging plants, we stock vinyl drip pans and fabric pot hangers.

## Indoor plants are blooming & growing



In fall and winter when lower temperatures and light levels slow plant growth, houseplants should be fed minimally, if at all. In spring when indoor plants are actively growing, they need more feeding.

Liquid fertilizers are the easiest to use and provide the best results. Feed plants frequently (2 to 4 times a month) during the spring and summer depending on how often you're watering. We recommend a new series of 4 organic fertilizers from Espoma: **Cactus, African Violet, Orchid, and Indoor Food**. Use **Leaf**

**Shine** to keep foliage dust-free. If pests have found your indoor plants, use **Insect Spray** to control aphids, mites & scale.



## SPRING gardening seminars

Reward Members attend Seminars for free (\$10 for non-members) and pay a reduced fee for Workshops. Receive a 10% single-use coupon for attending. Attendance is limited so please call the specified location to reserve your seat.

### SEMINAR: Peppers 101

Whether you're a pepper aficionado, or first time pepper planter, this class is for you. Our expert staff will go over the different varieties and how to plant them for a successful crop.

Saturday, May 5, Concord, 10am (Dustin Strobel)

Sunday, May 6, Pleasant Hill, 10am (Ryan Daugherty)

Sunday, May 6, Miller Ave., 10am (Dan Alexander)

Sunday, May 6, Novato, 10am (Leo Grassman)

Wednesday, May 9, Danville Diablo, noon (Brad Sheehan)

### KIDS CLUB GARDENING SERIES: Make a Planter for Mom

Shhh-don't tell Mom! We'll make her a beautiful planter for Mother's Day. She'll be so surprised! Class fee includes 8" ceramic pot, flowering plants, soil, and moss. Fee: \$25 for Rewards Members, \$35 for Non-Members

Saturday, May 12, Danville Diablo, 10am (Brad Sheehan)

Saturday, May 12, Concord, 10am (Dustin Strobel)

Saturday, May 12, Pleasant Hill, 10am (staff)

Saturday, May 12, Sloat Blvd., SF, 10am (Cindy Bonilla)

Saturday, May 12, Novato, 10am (Leo Grassman)

Saturday, May 12, Miller Ave., 10am (Jen Strobel)

Saturday, May 12, Kentfield, 1pm (Jen Strobel)

### SEMINAR: Berries 101

We're celebrating berries this week as part of Berry Bonanza! Our experts will teach you how to plant and grow strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries in containers, plus care for and prune them.

Wednesday, May 16, Pleasant Hill, noon (Alex Friedman)

Wednesday, May 16, Miller Ave., noon (Dan Alexander)

Wednesday, May 16, Sloat Blvd., noon (Jen Strobel)

Wednesday, May 16, Danville Diablo, noon (Brad Sheehan)

Saturday, May 19, Concord, 10am (Dustin Strobel)

### SEMINAR: Fire Resistant Gardening Tips

With the recent Sonoma County fires, we've received lots of questions about fire resistant plants. In this seminar we will discuss these questions, plus offer fire resistant plant lists and various growing techniques. Please join us.

Saturday, May 19, Pleasant Hill, 10am (Tim Nash)

Sunday, May 20, Miller Ave., 10am (Dan Alexander)

Wednesday, May 23, Kentfield, noon (Jen Strobel)

### MAKE & TAKE WORKSHOP: Create a Perfect Planter

Join us this week as we celebrate planters in all our stores! Our designers will demonstrate and guide participants to create a colorful planter using favorite spring plants. Leave with a lovely arrangement that will bring beauty into your home. Class fee includes: 14" Ceramic pot, plants, soil, fertilizer, & moss. Fee: \$80 for Rewards Members, \$90 for Non-Members (Membership is free)

Saturday, May 26, Pleasant Hill, 10am (Ryan Daugherty)

Sunday, May 27, Concord, 10am (Dustin Strobel)

Sunday, May 27, Miller Ave., 10am (Jen Strobel)

Wednesday, May 30, Sloat Blvd., noon (Jen Strobel)

Wednesday, May 30, Danville Diablo, noon (Brad Sheehan)

Thursday, May 31, Kentfield, noon (Jen Strobel)

Visit [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com) for a full list of spring seminar & workshop descriptions. Also, learn more about our Planting Parties!

## Plant up a Good Bug Tub

Some plants are able to attract, feed, and shelter beneficial insects to enhance biological pest control. One way to encourage visiting beneficial insects is to grow flowers that produce nectar and pollen and plant them together into a Good Bug Tub. Even if your garden is as small as a few pots on a patio, a container of insectary plants can help keep the good bugs around. (In a larger garden, insectary plants can be planted among other plants).

### Make your very own Good Bug Tub combination with these 10 plants

The key is to choose flat or shallow-throated flowers that are rich with nectar and pollen. Plants must flower to be insect food. Carrot relatives like dill, fennel, lovage, and parsley are top nectar producers. Daisy or sunflower relatives bloom longer and their petal landing pads can be insect resting spots. Also, planting a Good Bug Tub is a great kid's activity!

### Our Favorite Good Bug Tub Plants



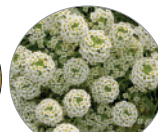
Sunflower



Aster



Coreopsis



Allysum



Cosmos



Erigeron



Rudbeckia



Verbena



Achillea



Zinnia

## Buy a pollinator plant, donate a pollinator plant

Later this spring and early summer, we're again partnering with Soquel Nursery Growers on a new and innovative program designed to increase habitat for bees and other pollinators. For each plant sold from this program, Soquel Nursery will donate one pollinator-friendly perennial to a Bay Area farm or school. The plant you purchase will not only provide beauty and value in your garden, it will also increase pollinator habitat. Look for plants in our stores this June and July.

Last year when we partnered with Soquel Nursery we helped them donate 1,000 pollinator plants, which works out to just over 2 acres. Together we can once again make a positive impact for pollinators!



## Visit our stores: Thirteen Locations in San Francisco, Marin and Contra Costa

### San Francisco

327 3rd Ave between Geary & Clement  
(415) 752-1614

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

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

Hours: 9-6:30

### Novato

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

### San Rafael

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

### Kentfield

M-F: 8-6:30  
Sat & Sun: 8:30-6:30  
700 Sir Francis Drake Bl.  
(415) 454-0262

### Mill Valley

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

### Pleasant Hill

2895 Contra Costa Blvd.  
(925) 939-9000

### Martinez

6740 Alhambra Ave  
(925) 935-9125

### E. Blithedale:

M-F 8-6:30  
Sat/Sun  
8:30-6:30

### Danville

800 Camino Ramon (in the Rose Garden Center)  
(925) 837-9144

### 828 Diablo Road

at El Cerro  
(925) 743-0288  
M-Sat hours: 8am-6:30pm  
Sun hours: 9am-5pm

### Concord

1555 Kirker Pass Rd.  
(925) 681-0550

### Garden Design Department

401 Miller Ave.,  
Mill Valley (415) 388-3754

### Bulk Soils

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
(925) 820-1273  
(East Bay delivery only)  
M-Sat hours: 8am-4pm

Currently available in Marin & SF only

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

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

(or as noted above)

Don't forget Mother's Day (May 13th)  
& Father's Day (June 17th)

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8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK May / June 2018

## Bay Area Gardening Guide:

## May & June

### MAY

#### Plant

- Plant Petunias, Marigolds, Begonias, Lobelia, Salvia, Zinnia and Coleus. Re-seed radishes, carrots and beets.
- Time to plant pumpkins, sunflowers, peppers, basil, tomatoes & melons.
- Select garden-ready Dahlias, perennials, Hydrangeas and hanging baskets.

#### Fertilize

- Fertilize Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias with **E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia & Gardenia Food**.
- Boost vegetables with **E.B. Stone Organics Tomato and Vegetable Food**.
- Use a time-release fertilizer such as **Osmocote** for your container plants.

#### Prune/Maintain

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs after their bloom is past.

- Mulch vegetable and flower beds with **Sloat Forest Mulch Plus** to control weeds and conserve moisture.
- Freshen up containers and replace spent annuals with colorful 4-inch perennials such as Verbena, Calibrachoa, Bacopa and Ipomoea.
- Release ladybugs and other beneficial insects to help control aphids, mites, whiteflies, and other garden pests.

### JUNE

#### Plant

- Warm season annuals are here! Plant Zinnia, Salvias, Cosmos & Portulaca.
- Plant herbs for use in the kitchen. Re-seed or transplant salad greens, green beans and kales.



- Your spring plantings are getting hungry. Feed them with all-purpose fertilizers such as **E.B. Stone Organics** and **Maxsea**.
- Feed your lawn with **Nature's Green Lawn Food** or **Down to Earth Bio-Turf**.

#### Prune/Maintain

- Continue to deadhead roses, shrubs and other flowers with Felco pruners to encourage new blooms; for smaller jobs, such as grooming your container creations, use a **needle-nose snip**.
- Mulch shrubs and beds to conserve moisture. Try **Sloat Mini Bark** for its beauty and utility.
- Make sure vegetables are supported with cages, stakes, or trellises.
- Check early-bearing fruit trees for heavily laden branches. Thin fruits now to increase their size and prevent branches from breaking. Harvest vegetables as they ripen so plants continue producing.