



The Perennial Post

Newsletter of the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club  Sept/Oct 2020

Zoom General Meetings

Join us on Zoom to attend our September and October general meetings. An e-mail with the Zoom invitation link will be sent to you prior to the meeting.

We start the evening at 6:30 p.m. with “Club Chat Time” where we share what’s happening in our gardens, must-have tools, or any garden-related information.

The general meeting starts at 7 p.m. with Club announcements, Daisy’s Half-Dozen of currently blooming perennials, then our featured speaker. The meeting ends at 8 p.m.

September Speaker

Guy Galante

Coexisting with Coyotes

Thursday, September 24, 2020

October Speaker

Keith Smith

Carnivorous Plants – Yes, They Are Perennials

Thursday, October 22, 2020

The Sacramento Perennial Plant Club provides educational opportunities for Sacramento area gardeners and horticulturalists to learn about perennials appropriate to our climate and water limitations.

WWW.SACRAMENTOPERENNIALPLANTCLUB.ORG



Sacramento Perennial Plant Club

OFFICERS

President: Lorraine Van Kekerix
Vice-President: Beverly Shilling
Secretary: Bobby Frieze
Treasurer: Pat McKnight

CONTACTS

E-Mail: Kirsten Salomon
Grant Program: Jane Thompson
Membership: Carol Meininger
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Gardener's Market: Lili Ann Metzger
Plant Propagation: Daisy Mah
Send questions or comments to:
pres.sppc@gmail.com



BOARD MEETINGS

Currently, board meetings are held using Zoom on the second Thursday of the month at 2 p.m.
The next two board meetings will be held on:

September 10 & October 8

If you would like to join the meeting, contact Jane Thompson (artjane7850@sbcglobal.net) to receive an invite link.

NEWSLETTER

The due date to submit a garden-related article for the **Nov/Dec 2020** issue is **October 15**. Please send your article to Cheryl McDonald: (mcdonald4214@sbcglobal.net).

The Perennial Post is published bimonthly except for July and August. Archived newsletters can be viewed on the club's website.

President's Message

This is my last President's Message for the Perennial Post. I have enjoyed Perennial Plant Club activities and getting to know fellow garden enthusiasts since the mid-1990's and served as President for four years.

Many people know that I run our monthly programs. But most of my time over the last four years was "behind the scenes" work that leaves the Club in a good position moving forward. Teams of Board Members, including me, worked to: apply to the Internal Revenue Service to reinstate the club as a tax exempt organization; develop streamlined budgeting; develop flexible By-Laws; and create an electronic archive of vital files. Other Board members continued to organize activities and provide information that Club members enjoy. At this point finances are holding steady. Plus, the Board always looks for ways to limit expenses.

The Board continues to work hard as guidance on staying safe and healthy shifts during the pandemic. A few activities can't be done in the short-term and many others have to be "reimagined" during the pandemic. Doing what you've always done takes less time and energy than creating new ways of providing services. It speaks of the Board's dedication to this Club that they have stepped up to create alternative activities to give us our gardening fix and chance to "get together." The Board will need as many, or more, volunteers with the reimagined activities. Additional volunteers will be welcomed—just contact a Board Member (see the top of your roster).

I'm looking forward to a time when I can visit with everyone in person. In the meantime, I hope to "see" you at Zoom meetings.

Lorraine Van Kekerix



Vote on Bylaws Revision and Election of Officers

Two votes will take place at the September 24, 2020 our Zoom General Meeting. The first vote will be to revise the bylaws to add "Emergency Procedures." The second vote will be to elect Officers.

Tool-of-the-Month

The Rake

You say, “What possibly could be said about a rake?”
Well, let’s see what I can come up with.

You must realize that there is a tremendous variety of rake designs. Years ago my favorite was the bamboo rake. It was light weight and the tines nicely flexible. Years later I used a plastic rake to gather piles of leaves in the neighborhood streets for the “claw” to pick up. It served its purpose well until I realized that raking the street ground down the tines until they no longer had hooks at the ends. You may have seen the rake contraption that closes on the leaves so they can be picked up. I haven’t tried that one yet because it looks too heavy to use for long periods of time. As of late I have settled for a light weight metal rake that I actually paid retail for at Davis Ace. It’s one of the few tools that I didn’t get at a garage sale. It seems every time I come across a metal rake at a garage sale, it is in really rugged condition. This is probably because they last so long. The metal rake works well in my yard and also the street. I recently found that large leaves like magnolia leaves can be picked up when they get imbedded among plants by stabbing the tines through the leaves.

While working at an iris garden recently, I was wishing I had brought along one of my old favorites—a hand rake. Mine is 17 inches long with a tine spread of 5 inches. I used to use it a lot when I was more OCD than I am now. (At one point I was sucking up every last hackberry leaf with a vacuum cleaner—sick.) If you have a situation where leaves get amongst your plants, and you tend toward OCD, consider purchasing a hand rake.

Another unusual use for the hand rake is to assist you in removing aphids from plants when using a hose sprayer. By supporting a branch from behind with the rake, the branch won’t bend away from you and practically all the aphids will be blasted away.

Hand rakes are a common item at nurseries and are quite cheap at Amazon.

You know, it’s OK if you are OCD if it makes you happy.

Stan, The Tool Man



Pop-Up Fall Plant Sales

Saturday, September 12

8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Stan and LaVille Logan’s
Backyard**

**4510 La Canada Way
Davis 95618**

Featuring plants grown by SPPC members. Potted irises from the Sacramento Iris Society will also be available.

Stan will offer tool sharpening for a suggested donation to the SPPC.

**Friday & Saturday
September 25 & 26**

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

**Jim and Jane Thompson’s
Driveway**

**1108 3rd Ave.
Sacramento 95818**

Featuring plants grown by SPPC members.

Jim will offer tool sharpening for a suggested donation to the SPPC.

Club members with plants and/or gardening supplies to sell, please contact Jane at sppcgrants@gmail.com by **September 21**. All plants must be clearly and accurately labeled. If there is a nursery sticker on the pots, please remove it. If they cannot be removed, mark out the wording with a permanent marker.

**Possible Plant Sale
in October**

**Location/day/time
to be determined**

Sale will depend on how many plants are available. An e-mail update will be sent.

Safe sales are planned by requiring face masks and setting aside adequate distancing for safe browsing.

Exact cash and check payments only.
Make checks out to Sacramento Perennial Plant Club.

Gardening “Best Practices”

Saving Seeds

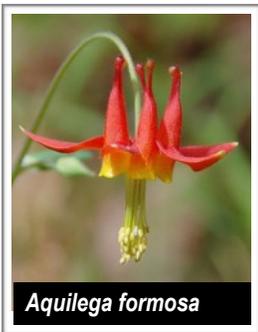
by Daisy Mah

Saving seeds from your garden is rewarding. You have an opportunity to produce many plants at a tremendous savings for your own needs and for sharing. The act of giving and sharing plants builds friendship and community which will always be a part of why we garden.

Too many times I have collected seed material to rediscover a few months later a bag, or worse yet, a pocket with contents of unknown identity. In my excitement, I was sure I would remember. Ah yes, such is wishful thinking. Now crestfallen, I would have to wait a year to figure it out only after planting the seed. Along with a team of propagators producing plants for club sales, we will try to identify plants. Admittedly, a few will be our best guess or guided by LaVille Logan’s plant identification app on her smart phone. Knowing the name is helpful in researching cultural needs, plant characteristics and growing success.

Healthiest Seeds

The plant’s earliest blooming flowers support the healthiest seeds, don’t wait until a plant has gone through a season cranking out flowers or putting up with the summer heat wave. I am now successfully growing the *Aquilegia formosa*, Western Columbine, but instead of saving seed from them all, I select one or two plants with the most desirable traits to collect from and deadhead the rest to keep plant blooming. In my case, I am looking for graceful form, vibrant colors, vigor, and attractive foliage but we all have



Aquilegia formosa

a different vision of what is desirable. In the past, the Western Columbine struggled under my watch but over the years, the offspring have evolved to become more adaptive.

This summer of sheltering and lockdowns, I am growing many varieties of marigolds and zinnias from seed. Members of the aster family, they attract pollinators, hummingbirds and butterflies. In the recent past, annuals offered in six-packs have disappointed me.

Yes, they are colorful but sterile, providing little or no benefit to wildlife. The French marigold, *Tagetes patula* ‘Court Jester,’ was chosen for its whimsical, alternating colored petals in burgundy and lemon yellow while another French marigold, ‘Burning Embers’ is noted for its single, flaming red flowers. I am quite sure there has been a lot of giving and receiving of pollen between the many varieties of marigolds. Their offspring would lose some character but on the other hand, could lead to some happy and beautiful surprises. Limiting the number of varieties to one would limit the gene pool resulting in predictability. But in this case, variety is the spice of life. Instead of collecting, my marigold seeds will come from seed packets sold at the nursery.



Tagetes patula ‘Court Jester’

Seed Collection

Once you know what you would like to save, seeds should be collected only when they reach maturity or fully ripened. Flowers will be faded and well past their glory. Immature seeds are often pale green but darken as they mature. Sometimes determining what is a seed, as in the case of *Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*, is a head scratcher. Out of the haystack of its pink fluffy petals, I finally found what appear to be a few seeds. All the fluff probably protects the seed from predators and the elements. The top portion of a Flanders poppy pod is ringed with small windows.



Eriogonum grande var. *rubescens*

(Continued on next page)

Once the windows open, the seeds ready to be collected, can be shook like a saltshaker. Collect when weather is dry and dew free.

Seeds need to be cleaned and completely dried before sealing in a bag, or left to dry in open containers away from the hot sun and wind. It is best to separate the seed from the debris (petals, stems and whatnot), relatively easy in the case of nasturtiums, beans, columbines, and poppies. Debris can inhibit germination and harbor disease and pests. I try to limit myself to a handful of the most coveted seed. Be realistic about your needs.

In June and August, I sowed freshly collected seed of love-in-a-mist, *Nigella hispanica* 'African Bride,' a cool season annual that can turn weedy, outgrowing its welcome. Not once, but twice, it had no intention of germinating. Though I was disappointed, I learned that sowing its seed in summer was totally wrong. Because I saved seeds, they can be sown at the optimum time later this fall or the next in a year or two.



Seed Longevity and Viability

Many of the seed packets offered on the racks are being produced in countries with less labor costs. Knowing the work involved in cleaning and separating seed, the inspiring and informative packaging, I do not balk at the prices. Whether seeds are collected or purchased, storing them in a cool, dry location helps to keep the seed viable. Heat and moisture will shorten the life of the seed. Storing seeds in a dry, air tight, cool conditions, even refrigerated will extend the life and seed viability. Stamp collecting envelopes are great for storing seed and again, make sure you identify the contents.

An example of extreme seed longevity is lotus seeds found in a dry lakebed in China which were successfully germinated at 1,300 years of age. The protective, thick seed coat and dry conditions were factors to its viability. At the other end of the spectrum are the short-lived, English elm seeds produced in great abundance lasting only but a day.

Miss Willmott's Ghost

For the first time, *Eryngium giganteum* commonly known as Miss Willmott's Ghost has bloomed in my garden. I was thrilled with its silvery sculpted flowers and leaves and, better yet, for about a month its popularity with pollinators.

Though regarded as short-lived with a proclivity to seeding, as a backup, I am saving seeds. The plant was named in honor of Ms. Ellen Willmott, an English heiress born in the mid-nineteenth century who once maintained a staff of 40 gardeners. She traveled extensively to study plants and was a distinguished scholar and author. Long after her garden visits, Miss Willmott's Ghost, (the plant) would make its surprise appearance. As tempting as it is to follow Willmott's lead, I will refrain from sowing the seeds on garden visits and for the time being, limit her to my backyard "nursery."



One can avoid the time and trouble of cleaning and storing seed by simply spreading dead flowers onto the prepared ground that is fairly weed free and protected from birds, squirrels and snails. But easier yet, come to the Perennial Plant Club sales which supports our grants program.

Tips for Saving Seeds

- Earliest blooming flowers support the healthiest seeds.
- Collect seeds only when they reach maturity.
- Collect seeds when weather is dry and dew free.
- Clean and completely dry seeds before sealing.
- Separate the seeds from the debris.
- Stamp collecting envelopes are great for storing seed. Make sure you identify the contents.
- Store seeds in a dry, air tight, and cool condition.
- Sow saved seeds at the optimum time for germination.

Shady Characters and Tough Guys That Thrive

A Tough Combination

By Ellen Zagory



Cerastostigma plumbaginoides



Geranium X 'Biokovo'



Beschorneria albiflora

PHOTOS: ELLEN ZAGORY

Shade is welcome in my yard but a commitment to limiting irrigation can make it hard to find plants that thrive there. I love spring bulbs and found that under deciduous trees summer-dormant spring bulbs make for great partners with winter-deciduous perennials. Narcissus and freesias in winter and spring bring joy, and a surge in flower arranging, though the payment comes when looking at unattractive leaves as they go dormant.

Two ground-covering, easy care shade perennials that are compatible with bulbs are the ubiquitous, winter deciduous, dwarf plumbago (*Cerastostigma plumbaginoides*) and the evergreen, cast-iron *Geranium X 'Biokovo.'* Plumbago leafs out after the narcissus begin to fade helping to disguise the foliage and has sparkling little dark-blue flowers in summer. *Geranium 'Biokovo'* is more evergreen and has palest pink blooms in spring and shining green foliage. The upright deciduous Chinese ground orchid (*Bletilla striata*) added to this combo has surprised me by tolerating infrequent watering and still producing its delicate blooms in spring on interesting pleated foliage.

Mixed with this under the shade of an old ornamental plum is *Beschorneria albiflora*, purchased on a whim years ago (I didn't think it would be cold hardy), that has now grown into a four-foot-tall burst of arching foliage. I was surprised to learn from the Annie's Annual's website, that it may get even bigger. Happy for the fountain shape and mass of its leaves, without thorns or spines to stab me, I added its cousin *Beschorneria yuccoides* nearby hoping to repeat my success with blue-grey foliage.

As incongruous as it sounds I find that the native *Heuchera 'Rosada'* is compatible in the shade with this motley crew. A neat grower and a good bloomer this cultivar can take punishment from drought but pop back when water returns. The cloud of pink it forms in spring is a lovely sight to see. It blooms more with some direct sun although in summer any hot sun burns the leaves. Its neighbor *Anemone X hybrida 'Pamina'* is not as polite and constantly creeping toward nearby space.

Fortunately, it is slowed if not controlled by infrequent watering and the pink-purple, semi-double blooms are most welcome with the cooler air of October.

I decided recently on some foliage color I want to add. I love the deep maroon-purple leaves of *Oxalis triangularis* which have persisted in my planting without spreading. What if I pair them with a maroon polka-dotted *Manfreda 'Jaguar'* to bring out the color? Will they be compatible with my infrequent irrigation? Let's find out!



Oxalis triangularis

FIGS

During “Club Chat Time” at the August general meeting, we had a lively discussion about figs. Fig recipes, dehydrating figs, solar cooking figs, fig memories—a popular topic given we have another month or so for purchasing or harvesting fresh figs.

Fig Bars

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Fig Filling

In sauce pan, combine 2 cups dried figs, cut into pieces if whole, 1½ cups water, ½ cup sugar, and 2 to 3 tablespoons of lemon juice. Simmer over low heat until thickened, stirring occasionally. If desired, stir in ½ chopped nuts. *Note:* To make with fresh figs, leave the water out.



Crumble

In mixing bowl, cream ½ cup butter and ¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar. Blend in until crumbly 1 cup whole wheat flour, 1 cup rolled oats, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon nutmeg.

Directions

Pat two-thirds of crumble into lightly greased 9-inch square pan. Spread fig filling over base. Sprinkle with remaining crumble. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and cut into squares.

Carol Meininger

(The Meininger's grow Black Mission, Brown Turkey, Delta King and Tiger Stripe figs.)

Do You Have Fig Fear?

My Mission Fig tree usually has two crops; the early crop arriving in June or July and the late crop coming in fall. The late crop is not a big crop. This year my early crop was late but quite plentiful. I have been harvesting a couple of pounds a day from late July or early August. (I didn't record the date.) I propagated my fig tree from cuttings from my aunt and uncle in November 1993. Their tree (Spring Valley, CA) was huge. They had propagated their tree in the early 1930s from my grandparents' tree in Lemon Grove, CA. I just stuck my cuttings in a jar and after they had roots transferred them to a pot, then a bigger pot, and then in the ground.

I've found people either love figs and appreciate getting them as they are pricey in the stores or they react with “fig fear.” I think fig fear is common and derives from someone once having bitten a fig with insects in it or were teased that the fibers of fig resemble little worms. I've not had an insect problem with my figs, but before I pick them off the tree, I pick the fallen off the ground otherwise I'm tracking fig pulp around.

Linda Hax

Delicate Violette

If you hanker for growing a fig tree, but have limited space, then *Violette de Bordeaux* fig may be for you! It is a great small variety that can be kept 6-12 feet tall with pruning. *Violette* has an abundance of sweet, rich fruit with a lovely deep red center that begs comparison to a ripe strawberry. Mine is in its 4th year growing in a very large clay pot, but it also would be a good choice for a small space in the ground. Only care is pinching early on in the spring when its young to shape and increase fruiting, plus a monthly shot of 5-5-5 during the growing months. The squirrels and I compete to see who can grab these delectable morsels first!

Karen Martin



BAKED FIGS with GOAT CHEESE and HERBS

Ingredients

- 1 8-ounce goat cheese log
- 4 fresh fig leaves, optional
- 10 ripe figs, stems on, halved lengthwise
- Salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Honey, optional

Preparation

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Cut goat cheese into 6 thick slices. Line an 8 x 12-inch earthenware baking dish with fig leaves (if using). Arrange goat cheese in center of dish and surround with fig halves. Season lightly with salt and pepper, then sprinkle with thyme. Drizzle with olive oil and honey (if using). *Note:* A nice version is to use HONEY goat cheese.

Bake uncovered for 15 minutes, until both cheese and figs are softened. Run under broiler for 1 minute to brown. Let cool slightly before serving.

Risë Ryan





The Perennial Post

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Figs



Blooming lotus in the Peace Pond at William Land Park

CHERYL McDONALD