

The Perennial Post

Newsletter of the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club  Fall 2021



ELLEN ZAGORY

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Sacramento Perennial Plant Club

OFFICERS

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Secretary: Jane Thompson
Treasurer: Marcia Leddy

CONTACTS

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Newsletter: Cheryl McDonald
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SG&AC Rep: Barbara Lane-Piert
Speakers: Vacant
Tour Coordinator: Vacant
Gardener's Market: Lili Ann Metzger
Propagation Advisors: Daisy Mah & LaVille Logan

Send questions or comments to:
pres.sppc@gmail.com

BOARD MEETINGS

All SPPC members are invited to attend monthly board meetings. Begins at 4 p.m. at a board member's home.

October 13

RSVP to Noelle Anderson
(916-731-4648)

NEWSLETTER

The due date to submit a garden-related article for the winter issue is December 10, 2021. Please send your article to Cheryl McDonald: (mcdonald4214@sbcglobal.net).

The Perennial Post is published quarterly. Archived newsletters can be viewed on the club's website.

ON THE COVER

The fall season in Ellen Zagory's front yard. The stunning aster in the foreground is 'Purple Dome.'
Photo credit: Ellen Zagory

Message from the President

ON the evening of September 9, just as my husband and I were settling in for our English murder mystery, suddenly outside there was a roaring sound, a loud clatter! I sprang from my couch to see what was the matter! Rain, glorious rain! I put on a raincoat and ran out to smell the air and bring in the chair pads. I could feel my poor plants lifting their leaves and reaching out for more water. It rained very hard for about half an hour.

According to the BEE, the last measureable rain in Sacramento came on January 26, and it was .24 inches. The city asks us to *reduce* our water use by 15%. What happens to our gardens? In my case, my newest, young plants simply frizzled and became "permanently dormant." The older shrubs and trees, and all the cacti and succulents, are still looking fairly good.

When we get together, we should share ideas for gardening in these new conditions. In fact, we are going to get together! Our board has voted to have the meeting on October 28 at the Shepard Center, 7:00 p.m. as usual. The Shepard Center requires that we wear masks when we are inside, but also, for the good of others we suggest that if you are not fully vaccinated against Covid-19, you stay home. Many of our members are older and could have health issues. Let's be careful, and let's enjoy replacing those frizzled flowers during these cooler months. Don't miss our plant sales on September 25 and October 2-3.

Noelle Anderson

Gardening Grants

The 2022 Grant Application is now on our website!

The purpose of the Saul Wiseman Grants is to promote gardening and horticultural activities with an emphasis on education, service, and enhancement to our community. Non-profit groups, community groups and schools within the County of Sacramento are encouraged to apply. We'd like to reach out as widely as possible to diverse and inclusive groups. Please help us spread the word!

To download the 2022 Grants Application, simply go to the SPPC website (www.sacramentoperennialplantclub.org) and click on the GRANTS Program. Grant Application deadline is January 15, 2022. Funding is awarded in February 2022, just in time for spring planting and gardening activities.

SPPC General Meetings

September Meeting (Zoom)

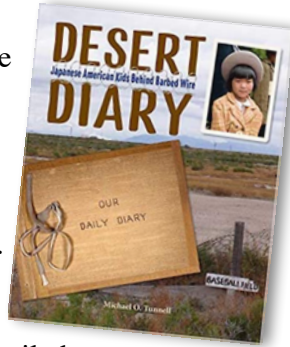
Speaker: Mae Ferral
"Desert Diary"

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 23, 2021 • 7 PM

"Club Chat Time" starts at 6:30 p.m.

The Zoom link will be sent to you prior to the meeting.

The theme for this month's meeting is a departure from the world of gardening. We'll have the unique opportunity and great privilege of learning about long-time SPPC member Mae Ferral's experience as a young Japanese American child imprisoned at Topaz Internment Camp in central Utah. Topaz was one of many such camps during World War II. At Topaz, eight-year-old Mae was a student in Miss Yamauchi's third-grade class where she and her classmates began keeping an illustrated and detailed diary of their experiences. This diary is the focus of the recently published book, "Desert Diary: Japanese American Kids Behind Barbed Wire" by author Michael O. Tunnell. Mae's interview with the author and her recollections, helped bring the book to fruition.



October Meeting (In Person)

Genelle Treaster

A Journey Through California's Biotic Bounty

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 28, 2021 • 7 PM

Discover why California is a natural wonder, unique in all the world! In both a historic and current perspective, Genelle Treaster, owner of *All Things Wild*, will present an exciting tour through California's bountiful biotic zones. Learn why plants occur where they do and how they've adapted to diverse conditions. Walk away enlightened by the big natural picture of our state, as well as with tangible, personal ways to apply conservation in your own yard and community.

For nearly 30 years, Genelle has worked both professionally and personally for nature. When she's not immersed in growing native foliage, she's usually surrounded by habitat and wildlife at her ranch in Wilton or as a Fish and Wildlife Interpreter for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

No Meeting in November

Happy Thanksgiving!



**Mark your calendars
and invite a friend
to come along to our
SPPC Fall Plant Sales!**

Whether you are looking to add a special new plant in your garden, replace a failing plant, or just start over in an area of your garden, the plant sales come just in time for your new fall plantings—the best time of year to plant!

**Saturday
September 25
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Pop-Up Plant Sale

**4440 G St.
Sacramento 95819**

**Saturday & Sunday
October 2-3
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

Fall Sale

**Shepard Garden & Arts
Center**

**3330 McKinley Blvd.
Sacramento 95816**

Plus, at this sale there will be tool sharpening and container drilling (*Donations accepted*)

SAVE THE DATE

21st Annual
Holiday Potluck

Tuesday

December 14, 2021

10:00 a.m.

CANCELED

SHEPARD GARDEN & ARTS CENTER

All members and families are invited to attend our Annual Holiday Potluck on Tuesday, December 14, 2021.

For this year, we hope this fun event can be continued in person. As the date draws closer, updates will be in the monthly E-News.

Until then—it's never too early to start planning—we're asking those whose last names start with:

A-I to bring a salad

J-Q to bring a hot dish

R-Z to bring a dessert

Gardener's Market

GROW LOCAL | SHOP LOCAL

Saturday

March 12, 2022

9 a.m.–3 p.m.

SHEPARD GARDEN & ARTS CENTER

SPPC's "Gardener's Market" returns! Organizer, **Lili Metzger**, has been busy recruiting new and returning vendors. Contact Lili if you have suggestions for additional vendors. (lmetzer@wavecable.com),

Also, before you purge your old garden books and magazines, consider donating them to the Club's book sale at the "Gardener's Market." Details regarding the collection/drop-off of magazines and books, along with many volunteer opportunities, will be in the monthly E-News.

Building Raised Planter Beds

WITH ALL THE PANDEMIC-CAUSED EMPHASIS ON HOME improvement, this would have been a good article to write a year ago. Better late than never. As usual, wanting to advise others comes as a result of mistakes I have made, some of which are described below.

Size: Length can be whatever you want. Width, however, should be no more than 4 feet. I have 3 beds that are 5 feet by 8 feet and it is difficult to do any work near the center of the beds. The one 4 footer is so much easier. The walls of my beds are made with three 2 × 6's, so they are about 18 inches high. Now that I think of it, 24 inches would have been much better in terms of having to bend over less. But then, I think proportions look better at 18"—you gotta look good even if it's painful. The higher you raise the box, the stronger the support needed to keep boards from bowing out if they are long. People use raised beds to make tending them easier and to create an enclosure for the new improved soil that can be brought in that, hopefully, plants will love. Most people find that a bed 10 or 12 inches high works well for them—not so much for growing tomatoes which are best planted 18 inches down.

Materials: Most people use wood. Redwood is probably the best. When you are picking out your 2-by boards, try to find those that have the most heartwood. The reddish heartwood is far more resistant to rot than the pale sapwood. Cedar is another good choice. Pressure-treated wood is more controversial. No arsenic has been used in this wood since 2003-04.

(Continued on next page)



Currently two different copper compounds are used and although no traces of these chemicals have been found in either soil or vegetables, pressure-treated wood is not recommended for planter boxes in which food is grown. You can alleviate your fears by lining the box with heavy plastic—say 6 mil. You can also seal the box with paint or another kind of sealer. One caution—avoid breathing the dust when cutting pressurized wood. Wear a mask. I know you know how to do that. More expensive, but far more durable is construction with masonry. There are all kinds of attractive alternatives here. The drawback is that you have to lean over farther to work with your plants and the material is not gentle on elbows and knees.

Miscellaneous: Plan ahead and bring irrigation lines up into the box. Cover the bottom with hardware cloth—you know, the substantial ¼" wire mesh, to keep varmints out. A layer of weed cloth will also discourage the invasion of roots from a nearby tree. Trust me—tree roots will love the great soil and water you have provided. If you are using wood, consider installing flat boards on the top edges for ease of sitting. Don't just use screws to hold lumber together. Use lag screws, or better yet, use bolts with washers. If using lag screws, pre-drill to prevent splitting. You can attach a band of copper mesh around the outside to keep snails and slugs out—but it won't work for earwigs. Finally, as you can see below, if you use treated posts, you have to add preservative, sealer, or a cap to cuts that have exposed untreated interior areas.

Why does most of my learning have to come at the expense of mistakes I have made?

Stan, The Blog Man



Rotting post—note the exposed bolt



Post cap



Heads Up!

In October you will receive a survey from the Board to collect your thoughts as we examine rebooting and refreshing club activities after the challenges of COVID. Your opinions will help shape the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club's future.

Volunteers

Fall Plant Sale

October 2-3, 2021

10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Shepard Garden & Arts Center

Volunteers are needed to work two-hour sales and cashier shifts on October 2-3. To sign up, please text Beverly Shilling at 916-452-4762, or email her at:

b_shilling@sbcglobal.net

SPPC Web Site

A volunteer is needed who already possesses some technical background or is interested in learning about web design and maintenance. Would initially work with Linda Hax, our current webmaster, to enhance our website features and appearance. Contact Linda by text at 916-978-1951, or email her at: LHAX@surewest.net

Garden Tour Committee

Volunteers are needed to form a garden tour committee to conceptualize, research, and coordinate garden tours for the club. If interested, please contact Noelle Anderson at 916-731-4648, or email her at:

nandersn@surewest.net

Here Comes Fall—Can Cool Weather Be Far Behind?

By Ellen Zagory



In photo above, *Epilobium canum* and *Calamagrostis x acutiflora*.

IN SEPTEMBER, THE SHORTER DAYS AND ANGLED LIGHT ARE A RELIEF after the intense heat and glare we (and our plants) endured during summer. In addition to me perking up at the mention of a fall plant sale, it seems my plants perk up too. After a few days of cooler weather, I noticed that my practically everblooming *Rosa* ‘Strike it Rich’ has a new flush of gold-polished rosy pink blooms for me to cut for the table and the California fuchsias (*Epilobium canum* ‘Carman’s Gray’ and ‘UBC Hybrid’) are busting out with long tubular, red flowers. This makes for happy humans and happy hummingbirds.

An obsessive pollinator watcher, I note that my asters are starting to bloom. They are doing well with infrequent watering (every 10 to 14 days) so I am hoping to add more varieties. Finding selections that don’t flop in bloom can be challenging. *Aster* ‘Monch’ stays compact and dependably provides purple flowers every fall. In contrast, the white-flowering *Aster* ‘Monte Casino’ flopped a bit last year so this year I gave it the “Chelsea chop” and cut it down by half in June. This technique is working so far and the first tiny white flowers are just starting to open. Trying to add native plants led me to *Aster chilensis* ‘Purple Haze’ but there are tell-tale signs of it roaming from its original spot so it may need to be moved to a hotter and drier location to limit its wandering.

Call me old-fashioned, but I must have *Sedum* ‘Autumn Joy’ (*Hylotelephium* ‘Herbstfreude’) to bloom for the bees and butterflies in fall. ‘Autumn Joy’ is the “been around the block” variety that is dependable and non-flopping. *Sedum* ‘Autumn Fire’ is looking good so far too with dark pink flower heads, but *Sedum* ‘Purple Emperor,’ said to maintain its upright habit, did flop this year perhaps from heat exhaustion, like some gardeners.

The texture and movement of grasses in contrast to succulent foliage and fall flowers, is at its peak in autumn. Dwarf eulalia grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Little Kitten’) has waving wands of gold while feather reed grass, (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’) makes dramatic upright wands of tan. If you want something smaller, try blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*) which looks to me like little eyebrows floating on delicate wires.

No autumn garden would be complete without a couple of hybrid autumn sages and two red-flowering ones. In 2019, the salvias I planted have bloomed all summer and been popular with the big black carpenter bees. *Salvia* Heatwave™ Blaze and *Salvia* Cherry Red is what I call them. Their official names are ‘EGGBEN005’ and ‘Balmircher’ Mirage™ —the result of industry plant naming practices meant to reinforce trademark names and protect product ownership. Besides both being great performers, I can’t tell them apart. If red is not your color there are lots of other new sages to try in bicolors, purple, yellow, cream and orange, although they can vary in brittleness and tolerance to drought.

Time’s up but don’t forget that in a good year we can have fall foliage colors as well. My dwarf plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*) leaves are just starting to show some red—a topic for a future article!

Gardening by the Book

By Diana Morris

Gardening with a Wild Heart: Restoring California's Native Landscapes at Home

by Judith Larner Lowry

One of author Judith Larner Lowry's gardening clients referred to her as a "fanatic." Granted, she feels strongly about "restoring California's native landscape at home," she's really more of a benevolent fanatic. Not a slash and burn type of garden designer, she is willing to go full steam ahead in redesigning gardens with native plantings but she also can approach a major garden overhaul in small increments.

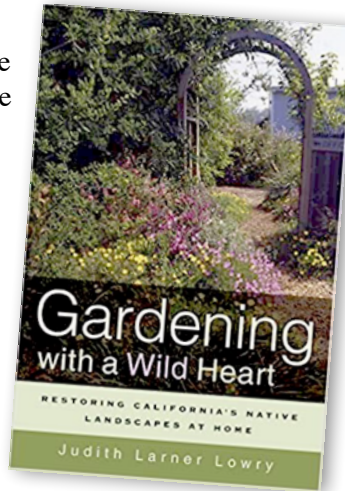
Lowry encourages all gardeners to take time to consider the backyard home garden in the "many plant/animal relationships" one encounters. She spends time observing interactions of plant and animals, catches the wafting smells of natives, enjoys the rustle of native grasses, takes naps in wildflower fields, and in general, wants to delight in exciting all the five major senses. The importance of heavy duty thought before planting is always evident. "Every site has its own tricks to be learned through attention." She goes much deeper explaining why getting back to using more native plants is so important.

Starting out as a seed collector, Lowry has gone on to broaden her depth and breath of knowledge on everything native. Her coverage of seed collecting is extensive, but she also covers many design aspects of natives, presents numerous examples of natives and why they are good choices for specific areas, addresses possible problems, also gives examples of poor planning and poor choices of plants. Living on the coast of Northern California, her references are heavy on coastal natives but she also explores our Central Valley prairie (she sites Dixon's Jepson Prairie by the Nature Conservancy as prime learning ground), and foothill chaparral.

Resources are plentiful from native nurseries, organizations, publications, botanic and demonstration gardens along with botanic gardens. She offers an extensive list of reading references. The book is packed full of interesting guidelines and insightful stories from Indigenous natives, quotes from past and current native enthusiasts. Quotes and references to earlier 20th century nature writer Mary Hunter Austin caught my attention as I have just begun to read Austin's *The Land of Little Rain*.

In the end, Lowry states, "More people eat Mexican food or Thai food than acorn mush, chia seed cookies, or lemonade from the lemonade bush."

She values all things native. There is so much more to that statement. Read the book and see why!



FALL RECIPE

Roasted Butternut Squash and Pears

4–6 servings

Ingredients

2 tsp. kosher salt
2 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper
1 medium butternut squash
3 tbsp. unsalted butter
1 medium onion
2 medium ripe but firm Bosc pears

Instructions

Heat oven to 475°. Place a baking sheet in the oven as it heats.

Mix the salt, rosemary and pepper; set aside.

Prepare squash: Peel off the skin and trim the top and bottom. Cut the neck from the bulb. Halve each piece lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Cut the squash into 3/4 inch cubes and place in a large bowl.

Melt 1 tbsp. of the butter and add it to the squash. Add half of the reserved salt mixture and toss to combine. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and spread the squash evenly on it. Roast until the squash is golden brown on the bottom, about 25 minutes. Using a flat spatula, stir and continue roasting until knife tender, about 10 minutes more. Meanwhile, prepare the onion and pears.

Cut the onion into medium dice; set aside. Peel, core and cut the pears into large dice; set aside. Melt the remaining 2 tbsp. butter in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 10 minutes. Add the pears and remaining half of the salt mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pears are knife tender, about 5-6 minutes more. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the roasted squash to the pan with the onions and pears, toss to combine, serve.

This delicious recipe was found on [Chowhound](https://www.chowhound.com).



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2743 San Luis Court
Sacramento, CA 95818

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Fall blooming Japanese anemone and lavender

CHERYL MCDONALD