

SEPTEMBER 2023 MEETING

September 13th, 7:30pm

The September meeting will be in-person in the Garden House at Shoup Park in Los Altos. *The meeting room officially opens to members and the public at 7pm but if you can arrive by 6:30pm to help with set-up, your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Masks are recommended but optional.* Meetings are free for members, non-member in-person attendees are \$10.00. See page 9 of this newsletter for information about joining Western Horticultural Society.

SPEAKERS: ROB BADGER AND NITA WINTER

TOPIC: A 27 YEAR WILDFLOWER JOURNEY: THE MAKING OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: CALIFORNIA WILDFLOWERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Rob Badger and Nita Winter take you behind the scenes on their 27-year journey photographing wildflowers throughout California and the West. It began in 1992 when they discovered and fell in love with California's spectacular wildflower blooms in the Mojave Desert's Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve. Photographing these beautiful landscapes and individual flowers evolved into their documentary art project, "*Beauty and the Beast: Wildflowers and Climate Change.*"

Gorgeous superbloom scenery isn't the only thing that makes this series so special. The photographers show how they create wildflower portraits in the field, lugging 80 pounds of cameras and their "natural light" studio equipment from below sea level in Death Valley National Park to 13,000-foot-high mountain passes. Rob also shares two innovative field techniques he developed to capture unique floral portraits that go beyond traditional wildflower photography.



Internationally acclaimed conservation photographers Rob Badger and Nita Winter have been life partners and creative collaborators for more than three decades.

Rob's environmental images have won multiple awards, including Best in Photojournalism in international competition. He was one of three American photographers chosen to document Russian nature preserves in Siberia. In 1998, he presented a slideshow documenting the impact of mining on our public lands at the National Press Club in Washington DC for the Sierra Club to support the Clinton administration's efforts to reform the antiquated 1872 Mining Law.

Nita began her photographic career documenting her work fighting wildfires in northern California and later as a National Park Ranger on Alcatraz. In 1986, Nita had her first major exhibit, "The Children of the Tenderloin." The series received extensive media coverage and showed her first-hand the power of photographic storytelling. Over the next 17 years, she produced and created portraits for six major public art projects celebrating the Bay Area's diverse communities.

Their work has been featured in NBC-TV, KQED-TV, Time, Mother Jones, and Sierra magazines, the New York Times, Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times. They are the recent recipients of the Sierra Club's 2020 Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography. Purchase books and learn more at wildflowerbooks.com

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Still in the throes of summer; nevertheless, welcome back to the Western Hort new year of meetings!

We hope you've had a good few months amongst plants - feel free to share your tales on our e-bulletin board. Our splendid winter rains and cool spring have led to many garden surprises such as long-absent blooms reappearing. I've been enjoying late season poppies, showy milkweed, California buckwheat, and golden asters.

And the marvels of Sierra plants! Next summer, keep an eye out for trips like this one to Carson Pass that happened August 14:

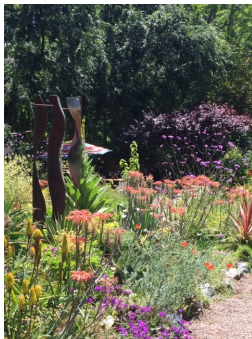
<https://www.tinsweb.org/upcoming-events/carson-pass-field-trip-with-the-nevada-native-plant-society>

WHS 2023 June Picnic

Suzanne Legallet's garden in Atherton was a wonderful setting for the June picnic. Bountiful food and snacks were offered by members, along with a nifty lemonade that Suzanne made from *Mahonia* berries. Alejandro Gomez, the 2023 WHS scholarship recipient, braved a two-hour public-transportation ride from Berkeley to attend as our guest at the picnic. Other notable news was that our good friend and long-time member, Betsy Clebsch, moved from Palo Alto to Baltimore, closer to her family. Her presence at Western Hort is certainly missed.



Suzanne has been creating her garden since 1983 in her yard, originally of oak trees. She designed it in collaboration with Bruce Chan. She wanted emphasis on entertainment areas, flexibility for new plant material and variety in access, proportions, space and plant choices. Mounds were included to create variation in elevation, depth and focal points. Dry-stone walls were built to provide texture, color and definition of space. Trees were carefully placed for shade, seasonal color and focal points. The garden and paths get "rougher" around the edges and darker green as well. The many curving paths emphasize that this garden is to be enjoyed by walking through it. Delights are found in hidden nooks, decorative surprises, bits of whimsy and sculptural accents. The variety and abundance of plant material was selected for seasonal color, display, texture, cutting, collecting, uniqueness, scent, Filoli favorites and memories of trips.



Acer palmatum is used throughout the garden. In front it offers soft screening under the oaks. *Acer palmatum* 'Butterfly' adds light to the cool-garden room. Front lawns were replaced with planting beds to soften the entrance, and planted with rhododendrons, azaleas, and specimen maple trees. The front entrance has textural interest with the *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', also known as "Harry Lauder's walking stick". The entrance gate features a combination of mahonia, hellebores, hydrangeas and lovely variegated dianella. A grouping of variegated *Buxus* announces the first diversion path into the edges of the garden. A favorite from Filoli is the



bright chartreuse green *Loropetalum chinense* along the stepping stone path. The garden has evolved over the years with the biggest change being the loss of a heritage oak tree in the brick circle. *Ulmus parvifolia* provides shade for the entertainment area. Moving past the "hammock room," there is a multi-stemmed Ginkgo tree developed by Saratoga Horticulture Foundation with a deep split leaf. The path on the left of the gravel circle leads to the "redwood room" a perfect retreat on a hot day and where we all congregated for the picnic.

Suzanne provided a written guide to her garden from which these notes are excerpted. Many thanks to Suzanne for hosting, to board member Jim Salyards for coordinating with Suzanne and to WHS garden aficionados that shared goodies and enjoyed a perfect sunny day in the garden.

-Jen Dungan and Judy Wong

MAY SPEAKER NOTES

Rose Lovell came over from Vacaville along with a large palette of scrumptious looking plants for sale and to share some of her knowledge gained from nearly thirty years with her family running the Morningsun Herb Farm. The nursery is a mile off of route 80, easy to get to for those on longer trips east. Open Tuesday-Sunday, check out their website at <https://morningsunherbfarm.com>. Rose's enthusiasm for plants felt contagious and many eagerly purchased herbs to bring home.

Rose started by describing the term "herb." The more formal, botanical usage of the term refers to a small, seed-bearing plant without a woody stem in which all above-ground parts die back annually. More generally and perhaps democratically, we can understand the word as including plants whose foliage is useful for culinary, medicinal or aromatic qualities and typically does not form persistent woody tissue. Rose discussed many genuses, highlighting those qualities and encouraging us to explore with them.

Many herbs form the basis for flavor in cooking, and Rose touched on many familiar and less familiar examples. There are 62 species of basil (genus *Ocimum*), though only a few are grown in the trade. *O. × citriodorum* 'Pesto Perpetuo' is a variegated sport that doesn't bloom, has a sweet basil flavor and can handle a bit of drought. *O. basilicum* 'Magic Mountain', 'Wild Magic' and 'Ajaka' with its heavy Thai flavor are all sterile hybrids and so can bloom without fuss and even be perennial. Seed-grown basil mentioned included 'Emerald Towers', 'Thai', 'Red Rubin', and 'Napoletano'.

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) can be short-lived, sometimes just a few years. The flowers are edible and crushed dried leaves can be used to replace salt in cooking. Since the stems are bitter, it is good to prune thyme plants. *T.* 'English Wedgewood' and 'French' were highlighted. *Thymbra spicata*, commonly called Mediterranean thyme but in an entirely different family, is a super spicy herb from Turkey. Another name is za'atar, which I'm seeing appear on restaurant menus a lot these days. Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) is of course well known and popular in cooking. *O. vulgare* 'Greek Mountain' has attractive fuzzy leaves and is a strong spicy flavor. Less well known these days are French tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculoides*) and lemon savory (*Satureja montana* var. *citriodora*), a perfect summer herb for applying to fish and chicken.

Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*), dill (*Anethum graveolens*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), chervil (*Anthriscus cerfolium*) and parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) are all critical in some dishes. All need regular water and nitrogen to thrive. Easier to grow in our Mediterranean climate are salvias and rosemary. Rose related a droll folktale that if a garden is dominated by salvia, a man runs the house, and if dominated by rosemary, a woman runs the house (you can check that out in your own experience). Rosemary is native to hilly Mediterranean places, especially Portugal and northwestern Spain. Mike Thompson, the Congressman from Vacaville's district, has a rosemary cultivar named for him that grows upright up to five feet tall. Culinary sages (*Salvia officinalis*) should be watered deeply and infrequently and do best on a mound for drainage. Pineapple sage (*S. elegans* 'Honey Melon') generates edible blooms all summer. There is a new salvia cultivar (*Salvia guaranitica* 'Hummingbird Falls') which Rose does not yet have a full growing season of experience with, but has promise as a hanging-basket ornamental.

Also particularly suited to low water are the lavenders -- 28 species and 500 varieties! Of Rose's very favorites, *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote Blue' is a great twice-a-year bloomer. *L. canariensis* (the species name gives the hint of its origin in the Canary Islands) is super drought-tolerant. While it dies back a bit in the winter, it blooms about nine months and self-sows. Her recommended English/Spanish lavender hybrids include *L. x intermedia* 'Phenomenal', 'La Diva' and 'Big Night'. The Morningsun Herb Farm has participated in the Solano Lavender Trail, but this year the fields are not thriving.

Not quite fitting the formal definition of herbs, but in common culinary use are Grecian Bay (*Laurus nobilis*) and capers (*Capparis spinosa*). The latter grow in very rocky soil with almost no water. In addition to their uses in the kitchen, they bring pollinators into your garden.

Many plants Rose described as good for making tea (aka tisane). The leaves of *Agastache rupestris* ('Apache Sunset', 'Kudos Ambrosia', 'Blue Boa' and 'Kudos Red') can be used for tea and the flowers are edible as well. Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), which is sometimes regarded as a weed, is super high in calcium, magnesium and nutrients and when the leaves are dried it can be used for tea. Lemony tasting infusions can be made with lemon thyme (*Thymus x citriodorus*) or lemon verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*). For some reason lemon verbena is difficult to find this year because of poor performance or crop failure. Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) has bracts which are used to make tea high in vitamin C, calcium and magnesium. Two varieties of *Echinacea purpurea*, 'Pow Wow Wildberry' and 'Pink Double Delight', are long-lived selections which can be used for a healthful infusion.

With Rose Lovell's descriptive and entertaining talk engaging our senses of smell and taste, our society's season of evening programs came to a close. May you enjoy the fruits of fall and spring preparation in the garden to see a beautiful summer garden until we meet again in September.

~ Jen Dungan

MAY PLANT SHARE

Nancy Schramm from Gilroy brought an amazing assortment of wildflowers that are growing on the hillside near her home. Included were:

Delphinium variegatum (Royal Larkspur) Native perennial with a profusion of purple flowers. Grows 15”– 20” tall Nancy said that they had weed whacked a week before and the piece she brought to share was accidentally cut off in bud stage. It then revived once in water and continues to open and bloom, lasting for several weeks. Makes a nice cut flower for floral arrangements. The rain this winter seems to have contributed to the delphiniums being bigger and taller than in previous years. Give it full sun, good drainage and low to moderate water. Bees and hummingbirds love it. Deer resistant but bait for snails. Toxic. USDA Zones 4 – 10



Dipterostemon capitatus (Blue Dicks, Wild Hyacinth, Purplehead and Brodiaea) Occurring in Arizona, California, Oregon, Utah, New Mexico and Northern Mexico, this widespread native herbaceous perennial grows from an underground corm to a height of up to 2’ tall. Blooming from winter into spring the flower cluster is umbel-like and can contain up to 15 flowers. Colors range from Blue to pink-purple or white. Reproducing from seed or cormlets it thrives in open disturbed environments and are a common post-fire succession species in chaparral. Summer dormant (never irrigate once established). Adaptable to all soils, deer resistant, butterfly and White Lined Sphinx moth pollinator plant. Native Americans would roast the corms like potatoes! Full Sun to Part Shade. USDA Zones 7 –10

Leptosiphon ambiguus (serpentine leptosiphon) A member of the phlox family this annual is endemic to California. Listed as a vulnerable species it is on the California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants. Vivid lavender funnel-shaped flowers the bloom period is April to July. Only 6” high it supports butterflies and moths. Full sun, low water, fast drainage preferring sand or sandstone. Grows at elevations up to 3,280 feet.



Iris macrosiphon (Long Tubed Iris) Endemic to California occurring in sunny grasslands, meadows and open woodlands. Slender, arching, strap-like leaves, the flower can be highly variable from golden yellow to cream or pale lavender to deep blue-purple generally with darker veins. Spring blooming with winter dormancy that can also occur in summer if subjected to heat or dryness. Full sun to part shade with damp loamy soil with plenty of organic matter and soil PH of 6.0 – 8.0.

Propagate by seed, deer resistant Sunset zones 6 – 9 & 14 – 18.

Juncus xiphioides (Iris Leaved Rush) Native Perennial grass up to 3’ tall, bloom color red, green, brown, bloom time May-Oct. Moist areas, ditches, springs, lake and stream shores.

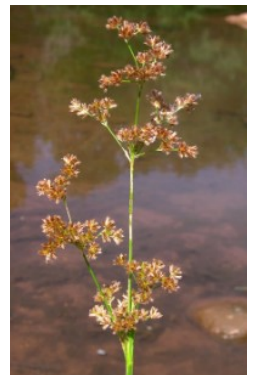


Photo credit: Max Licher



Many thanks to Nancy Schramm, Calscape and Annies Annuals for photos of all these wildflowers on this page and the next. Ed.



Gilia achilleifolia (California Gilia) Annual flowering plant native to California but grows in other areas of North America where it has been introduced. Height up to 2.3 feet tall, blooms winter -spring. Leaves resemble those of yarrow and is a member of the phlox family. Supports the Adela singulella, fairy longhorn moth. Tolerates full sun to shade, used in bee gardens. Sunset zones 1 – 24.

Streptanthus albidus ssp. peramoenus (Jewelflower) Endemic annual belonging to the mustard family growing in serpentine soils in arid regions. There are more than 40 different species but this one is considered the most beautiful. Blooming March – September There are two subspecies, both rare.

The rarer of the two, ssp. *albidus*, is federally listed as an endangered species of the United States. It is endemic to Santa Clara County, where it is known from nine recent occurrences. This subspecies has white or green-tinged sepals. The other subspecies, ssp. *peramoenus*, the most beautiful jewelflower or uncommon jewelflower, is known from several locations in the Bay Area and several near San Luis Obispo. It has pale to dark purple sepals and purplish petals.



Allium unifolium (One Leaf Onion, American garlic) North American species of wild onion, it is native to the coastal mountain ranges of California, Oregon and Baja California. A summer deciduous perennial herb (bulb) it grows on clay soils including serpentine. Bulbs are usually solitary, egg-shaped, up to 2 cm long often formed at the end of rhizomes spreading out from the parent plant. Common uses include butterfly and bee gardens and it is deer resistant. Mature height of 12 – 24 inches blooming in spring. Sunset zones 4 – 9 & 14 – 24.

Madia elegans (Tarweed, Spring Madia) Native annual herb in the sunflower family. Sticky, glandular hairs are why it is commonly called tarweed. Height up to one foot tall. Full sun to part shade, low water. Adaptable to many soils, good in bee gardens. Flowers are red or yellow, April through Nov. The long bloom period makes it important for pollinators. The crushed foliage gives off a pineapple scent. Annies Annuals reports it is deer resistant and good for all zones.



Grace Tsang generously donated a large plant to the plant sale table:



Bulbergia nutans (Queen’s tears) A vigorous growing bromeliad from Brazil and Paraguay, pups easily for propagation making it a great pass-around friendship plant. Named after Johan Billberg (1772-1844) who was a self-trained botanist and authored the *Flora of Sweden*. Spring blooming, 1’ - 2’ tall and wide; give this plant shade, well drained organic rich soil and low water. Arching flower stalks carry pink bracts and pendant flowers that have chartreuse green petals edged with royal blue. Hardy to 25 - 30 degrees. USDA Zones 9 – 10 (some grow it as a houseplant.)

Judy Wong from Menlo Park shared her success with:

Meconopsis grandis (Himalayan Blue Poppy) – The national flower of Bhutan, this lovely blue flowering perennial is partially deciduous, spring blooming, with erect toothed leaves. Judy couldn’t bear to remove the first buds as our March speaker John Tsutakawa recommended, but further conversations with other members of Cal Hort and Western Hort seem to indicate that this may not be necessary for the vigor of the plant. USDA Zone 5 – 9.

Here is the Flora Grubb link from the April newsletter in case you missed it.

<https://www.floragrubb.com/meconopsis>



Judy Wong plant share continued -

Paeonia lactiflora 'Bartzella' (Peony-Itoh Hybrid) This beautiful award-winning peony from China is a hybrid between the tree and herbaceous types. Shrub form 3' x 4', deciduous, blooming mid-spring it needs regular water in a well-drained soil. Full to part sun, best with some afternoon shade in hottest areas. Judy's had 7 buds this year, it makes a good cut flower and has a lovely lemony fragrance. USDA Zones 4 – 9 Toxic to dogs, cats and horses.



Cantua buxifolia (Sacred flower of the Andes) Judy shared two cultivars of this plant. The red flowering variety is the most common and her tricolor being a peach color. This shrub grows 6' x 6" and is evergreen. Bloom is mid-spring and continues to bloom intermittently throughout the summer. Prefers morning sun and does not do well in hot areas. Frost hardy to 20 degrees, give regular water. Judy grows hers under a redwood tree in thick duff and it is pollinated by hummingbirds. USDA Zones 9b – 11.

Ixia paniculata -Judy loves her bulbs and this one is from the Northwest and Southwest Cape of Africa. A member of the Iridaceae family it is a spring blooming perennial and is summer dormant. Plants can reach heights of 1' - 3'. Give it sun and well-drained soil, winter water and none in the summer. With cream colored flowers and a reddish throat, Judy told us this species has the longest tube in the genus. USDA Zones 8 – 10.



Jen Dungan from Mt. View brought:

Euphorbia 'Miner's Merlot' (Wood Spurge) This perennial is evergreen to semi-evergreen with a mounding, rounded habit. This plant was discovered growing as a spontaneous chance seedling in a garden in Plumas Lake, California in 2015 by Keith and Jen Miner. The speculation is that it is a cross between *E. amygdaloides* "Purpurea" and *E. 'Blackbird'*. Give full to part sun, it is drought tolerant with chartreuse flowers and burgundy foliage that holds its color a long time. Growing 1' - 2' tall and wide, this plant is deer tolerant with winter hardiness down to 10 degrees. USDA Zones 6 - 11



Photo: Bluestone Perennials



Nicotiana langsdorffii (Langsdorff's tobacco) This Brazilian native annual prefers sun, well-drained soil rich in organic matter and was a Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit winner. Multi-branched stems grow 3' - 4' tall and Jen reports that the hummingbirds really like this delicate green flower with a blue stamen. Blooms spring through summer. This plant is a good companion to roses and it self-sows reliably as well as being deer resistant. Annies Annuals reports it is perennial in USDA Zones 9 – 10 and an annual elsewhere.

Abutilon megapotamicum (Flowering Maple, Chinese Lantern) Native to Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay, this semi-evergreen shrub flowers spring-fall with a bright red calyx protecting yellow pendant, bell shaped flowers 2 inches across, sun to part shade, hardy, prefers well drained soil. Hummingbirds and butterflies love this one. Award of Garden Merit winner from the Royal Horticultural Society, it can grow up to 5' - 8' feet tall and wide. USDA Zone 7 – 10



28 YEARS AGO

Western Hort's 1995-1996 season opened with a presentation by Christopher McMahon. He "will speak on *Fall Foliage and Color in the Bay Area*, with emphasis on specific plants, seed pods, etc. He will show slides from his nine-and-a-half years at Filoli, six of them as Assistant Garden Superintendent. Currently he has his own pruning and garden consultant business in the East Bay. Mr. McMahon will also have copies of the book *Gardens at Filoli*, with his photography and text by Timmy Galagher...at the meeting."

New members were welcomed, with one who's last name (how appropriate!) was "Seeds"! The membership renewal announcement included a reference to an increase in dues to \$30 for an individual. 28 years later, our dues have increased by only \$5, a real bargain!

Members were deep into the creation of our *Successful Vines for the Peninsula* book. Editor Elaine Levine asked for input from anyone growing a list of seven different vines.

Board President Ed Carman announced plans for a book sale in early 1996, with a request that members consider donating from their personal libraries. By looking at the minutes from the March 22nd board meeting, I discovered that this resulted from "the receipt of a long-time member's library of gardening books."

A lovely selection of vines in bloom were brought for discussion by Dick Dunmire. *Stigmaphyllon littorale*, from southern Brazil and Paraguay, has yellow flowers with five clawed petals; *Semele androgyna* was compared to asparagus (in the same family) but with strange stems that look like leaves, having small white flowers growing around the margins; *Lapageria rosea*, said to be "one of the most beautiful of all flowering vines"; "Almost anyone on the peninsula could grow *Clematis viticella* 'Mme. Julia Correvon', one of the best red-colored clematis"; *Ampelopsis aconitifolia* has compound leaves and yellow or orange fruit; *Plumbago auriculata* 'Royal Cape' (a shrub) a selection introduced by Monrovia Nurseries has brighter blue flowers than the species; and finally, the lemon tea tree, *Leptospermum petersonii*. Plant note author Elizabeth Garbett noted "I learned from Dick that the tea tree got its name from the fact that Captain Cook, the English navigator, made a tea from leptospermum leaves to combat scurvy in his crew."

Elizabeth Garbett brought in the rose 'Happenstance', and told the "true story of its genesis." Garbett told the tale of how Mabel Crittenden's mother discovered and named a chance seedling growing underneath her 'Mermaid' rose plant. (Mabel was a past WHS member and author of several wildflower books as well as books on ferns and trees.)

"Bob Young showed a dwarf cultivar of fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Moudry'."

Keith Bickford brought in a blooming shoot of *Zingiber mioga*. Known as Japanese ginger, the rhizome is not edible, but the flower buds and young shoots are used in cooking.

Steve Colson shared a "useful ground cover under trees where it is tough enough to thrive in rooty shade", *Neomarica northiana*, the walking iris.

Bill Kurtz brought *Adenium obesum* 'Mombasa', an unusual African plant with lovely flowers and poisonous sap.

~ Nancy Schramm

Speaker Dinners are resuming! Come join our speakers for dinner at Chef Chu's before the meeting. This is an opportunity to talk more intimately with our speakers and ask any questions you might like about their field of expertise. If you would like to join us, please email Western Hort member Carol Dahout at caroldahout@yahoo.com by the Monday before the meeting so we can make a reservation for the appropriate attendance. Dinner for **this month only** will start at 5:00pm. Chef Chu's is located at 1067 N. San Antonio Road, Los Altos.

PLANT SALE TABLE

The September meeting is your **first chance** to participate in the Plant Sale Table! Remember: Fall is for Planting! Be sure to bring all the plants you have been propagating, any cuttings, books or tools that members may want to add to their collections. All money collected goes to support WHS programs and the scholarship fund. Be sure to say hi to Carol Dahout the manager of the table! If you would like to get involved and help out with the plant sales table this season contact Carol or any board member for information.

HORTICULTURAL HAPPENINGS

Mountain View Library, Tuesday, September 5th, 6:30—7:30 pm. Grow a successful Winter Vegetable Garden. Free. Registration recommended. <https://mountainview.libcal.com/event/10918529> Master Gardener Ann Burrell will present the program. Mountain View Public Library, 585 Franklin St. Mountain View, Ca.

UC Master Gardeners, September 9th, 10 am—12 pm, McClellan Ranch Open House : Starting Cool Season Vegetables Demo and Tour. Free 22221 McClellan Road, Cupertino, 95014.
<https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/?calitem=565274&g=91925>

Midori Bonsai Show, Saturday, September 30th, 10 am to 5pm. Quinlan Community Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd. Cupertino, CA95014. Bonsai demo at 1pm and a Beginners Workshop at 10 am. Free admission midoribonsai.org

STROLLING AROUND THE INTERNET

Gardening with Hair? National Geographic article about recycling hair. Written by Sandy Ong June 28, 2023

A helping hand for plants. Recycled hair is also useful as fertilizer and mulch material. “Hair contains a lot of protein, which has a relatively high nitrogen content,” explains Stuart Weiss, a conservation ecologist at Creekside Science, an independent laboratory in California.

Nitrogen is crucial for plant growth, and each strand of hair is made of roughly 16 percent of this essential nutrient. By contrast, a pile of cow manure typically has between 0.6 to three percent nitrogen.

Hair also releases nutrients more slowly than the equivalent amount of commercial fertilizer, which is important for preventing excess nitrogen from leaching into waterways, says Weiss.

A series of experiments conducted in the early 2000s demonstrated that uncomposted hair was useful for growing herbs such as basil, sage, and peppermint; horticultural crops like lettuce; as well as marigold, foxglove, and other ornamental plants.

More recently, entrepreneur David Denis has found success with his startup, CutOff Recycle, which sold more than 560 gallons of liquid fertilizer made from human hair to farmers northern Tanzania last year.

The feedback from the farmers, who mainly grow tomatoes and leafy vegetables like spinach and amaranth, has been very encouraging, says Denis, who cofounded the firm in 2020.

“The weight of their tomatoes has increased by 25 percent, and the increased yield is very visible from the larger leaves of the leafy vegetables,” he says.

Agriculture experiments halfway across the world—in Chile’s Atacama Desert, the driest place on the planet—have yielded similarly promising results. Last year, MoT worked with local farmers to see if hair could help reduce water lost as it evaporates from olive, avocado, and lemon trees.

“If you use our hair mats on top of the soil, you use 48 percent less water,” says MoT’s Chile head Mattia Carenini of the study findings.

The hair mulch also helped increase nitrogen, improve soil health, and boosted fruit yield by 32 percent.

Sowing seeds of hope

Recycled hair is also playing a role in restoring degraded land and seascapes. The Scottish-based charity Seawilding, for instance, is currently trialing hair as a medium for sowing seagrass. The U.K. is estimated to have lost 44 percent of its seagrass meadows—a vital marine habitat and massive carbon sink—since 1936.

On land, recycled hair is being applied in the grasslands of the Presidio, a national park overlooking San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge. In the past year, Weiss has helped MoT seed purple needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*) and meadow barley (*Hordeum brachyantherum*) under felted hair balls on compacted soil that was once a parking lot.

Although currently only midway through the experiment, the results “are just spectacular,” he says. “You look at it and can totally tell which box had the hair treatment.” On average, native grass cover in plots with hair was 75 percent full versus under 10 percent in the control plots containing straw.

“It’s just a great way to use hair in a productive way,” says Weiss. But he cautions that further testing is needed to figure out how to scale experiments.

Invasive shothole borers: While currently in Southern California only, it is worth knowing about what may be coming our way. <https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=57577>

GET INVOLVED

WHEN YOU'RE NERVOUS ABOUT STEPPING OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE, REMIND YOURSELF; "IT FEELS SCARY BECAUSE IT'S UNFAMILIAR, NOT BECAUSE I'M INCAPABLE." ~MICHELLE C. CLARK

Vice president & Board members : These positions are still open. Get to know your fellow WHS members and help keep the society vibrant and well rounded. If you have an interest in helping in any one of these capacities, or feel you can help in any other way, feel free to e-mail us at info@westernhort.org or speak to any of the current board members

UPCOMING MEETINGS

October 11th: Andy Mariani, Growing Stone Fruits in the Home Garden
November 8th: Leonel Morales-Bajarano, Plant Propagation Tips from A-Z
December 13th: Ken Litchfield, All Mushrooms are Magical—Experiencing the Phantasmagorical Realm of Fungi

Some of the Speakers scheduled for 2024

January 10th, Fergus Garrett, Plant Combinations for a Long-lasting and Resilient Garden
February 14th: Jennifer Dungan, Memories of an Extraordinary Garden
March 13th: Lori Palmquist, Water in Your Garden—Taking Control

Hello WHS members,

Our new year is just starting. WHS has a great list of speakers for the year. Don't miss any updates. Please submit your renewal and payment using the Membership form found on our Membership page and mail to **WHS PO Box 166, Mountain View, CA 94042**. Membership forms were also mailed out in August to those who have not renewed. You can also pay online. Please go to our membership page on our website <https://www.westernhort.org/membership> and complete the information in Part 1 and 2 in the Pay by Credit Card section. Thank you in advance to everyone who has renewed their membership. Any questions, please contact membership@westernhort.org

Officers and Board Members:

Co-Presidents: Grace Tsang & Meri-Beth Bird
Vice President: Open Position
Secretary : Leslie Dean
Corresponding Secretary: Jennifer Dungan

Treasurer: Jennifer Doniach
Other Board Members: Jim Salyards, Carol Dahout,
Jennifer Dungan and Eva Huala (Open Positions here)

Volunteer Committees and Responsibilities:

Plant Sale Table: Carol Dahout
Email and website maintenance: Ursula Haschke
Publicity and Outreach: Grace Tsang
Membership: Ursula Haschke
Meeting Tech: Grace Tsang, Jennifer Doniach,
Janet Hoffmann & John Hammerschmidt
Welcome Table: Meri-Beth Bird & Eva Huala

Speaker Program Committee: Leslie Dean (chair),
Nancy Schramm, Judy Wong, Glenda Jones, Eva Huala &
Meri-Beth Bird
Newsletter Editor: Kathy Anberg
Newsletter Contributors: Jennifer Dungan & Nancy
Schramm
Scholarships: Grace Tsang, Jennifer Doniach,
Meri-Beth Bird, Janet Hoffmann & Nancy Schramm

About Membership in Western Hort:

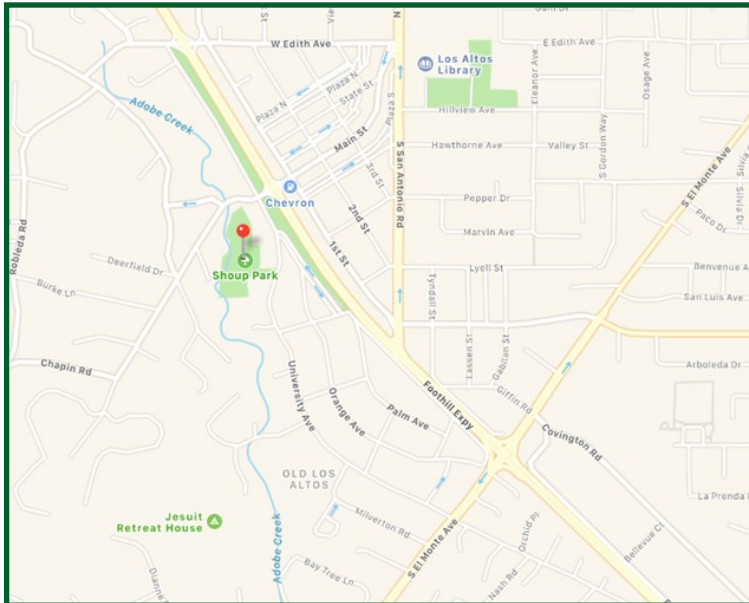
Membership Rates: A one-year membership (Sep-Aug) includes an e-mail copy of this newsletter and admittance to all of our monthly meetings. Regular membership is \$35, Family membership for two or more members at the same address is \$50, and a discounted rate for students is \$20. To receive a print copy of this newsletter by mail add \$10 to the membership fee listed above. Please visit the Pac Hort page for more information or to join Pacific Horticulture Society, for whom we are now a sponsoring organization, go to: pacifichorticulture.org.

To join or renew visit our website at: <https://www.westernhort.org/membership> You may pay online with a credit card or print form and mail with your check to the contact us address below.

To contact us: Please send email to: info@westernhort.org or snail mail to: PO Box 166, Mountain View, CA 94042



PO Box 166
Mountain View, CA 94042
First Class Mail
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Meeting date & location : September 13th
In Person at Shoup Park Garden House, 400 University Ave., Los Altos
(Masks optional)
Meeting starts at 7:30 pm.
Would you like to **sponsor a lecture** or suggest a speaker for the WHS that is of particular interest to you?
It would be much appreciated!
Please call Leslie Dean at 650-966-8364.

Newsletter Submissions
The newsletter publishes on the first of the month. **Note: deadline for submission for the next newsletter is the 20th of September.** Submissions after this date will likely appear in the next month's newsletter. Send submissions to: Kjanberg@gmail.com or snail mail to Kathy Anberg, 1332 Peggy Ct. Campbell, CA 95008-6342