



May Meeting

Wednesday, May 9, 7:30 p.m.

Renee Shepherd, Seedswoman and Owner of Renee's Garden

“It’s a Seedy Business!”

Green Fingers, Wings and Warts, Endeavor, Garden Oasis, Gulf Wings, Summer Romance—with names like these, one can’t help but be drawn into the wonders of a seed catalog. Welcome to Renee’s Garden, a company providing an amazing array of seeds for everything from Persian cucumbers to Morning Glories, cat treats to watercress. A seedy business indeed!

At Renee’s Garden, the seed varieties are selected for home gardeners based on “great flavor, easy culture, and exceptional garden performance.”

Renee Shepherd will talk about what is involved in a seed business, how the seeds are selected, harvested, stored, germinated, and treated—basically everything you might want to know about a seed business.

Renee Shepherd is widely regarded as an innovator in introducing international specialty vegetables and herbs to home gardeners and gourmet restaurants. She founded two seed businesses, and is a prolific media contributor, appearing frequently in gardening and cooking periodicals and magazines. She has authored two kitchen garden cookbooks, and is currently finishing a third.

MEETING LOCATION Christ Episcopal Church, Parish Hall, 1040 Border Road, Los Altos. Doors open at 7 p.m. and meetings begin at 7:30.

You are invited to join our May speaker, Renee Shepherd, for **dinner on May 9** at 5:30 p.m. at Chef Chu’s, 1067 N. San Antonio Road, Los Altos. Please contact Rosalie Shepherd to confirm: shep8283@earthlink.net or 650-321-8283.

Would you like to **sponsor a lecture** for the WHS that is of particular interest to you? It would be much appreciated! Please call Pat Knight at 650-941-6136.

Annual WHS Picnic

Jean Struthers has kindly volunteered to host the annual Western Hort picnic on June 10 at 12:00 noon. We will have a tour of two gardens, Jean's and Faith Duhring's, who lives down the street. People are welcome to bring a potluck dish to share. Please supply your own plates and utensils. Address: Jean Struthers, 13690 Robleada Road, Los Altos Hills, CA.

April Speaker Notes

It’s often amusing to recollect how we become passionate about certain things, especially when the original intent or circumstance began quite differently. Such was the case of last month’s speaker, Dr. Russell Wagner, who delivered a presentation on “The Wonders of Mesembs: Ice Plants, Living Rocks, and Flowering Stones.”

Dr. Wagner became involved with this fascinating genus of plants innocently enough when he moved to California, thinking they would be easy to care for. With a 20’x40’ greenhouse at his Oakland home, Wagner dived into this group with the mindset of a scientist (PhD in Chemistry) and the zeal of a world-class traveler (southwest U.S., Morocco, South Africa and South America, to name a few places). Clearly, this man is mesmerized by mesembs.



Lithops karasmontana v. bella
Photo: lithops.net

Botanically speaking, mesembs are in the *Aizoacea* family, a subfamily called *Mesembryanthemoideae* (flowers with embryo in the middle), and finally the genus *Mesembryanthemum* (meaning midday flowering). While Dr. Wagner certainly knows his botany, and touched on the scientific classification of his topic, he got to the heart of his presentation quickly with a playful display of specimens and dazzlings slides.

Easily grown from seed, the mesembs family claims about 1,800 species. With vivid flower colors (evident right now), interesting growing habits, and appealing ease of culture, it’s not hard to understand the appeal of this fascinating and ever-popular group of plants that our speaker enthusiastically shared with us. ~Mark McCabe

Western Hort News

Raffle Table and Hot Plant Picks Silent Auction

What a wonderful time we had at the Hot Plant Picks silent auction last month! We raised \$534, and many happy members went home with wonderful plants. Thank you, Nancy Schramm, for organizing the auction. This month's raffle table will include plants from our plant sale. Also, members are welcome to bring plants for the table as well. Plants seeded from Renee's Garden seeds—zinnia, morning glories, alyssum, zucchini, trombochini, cucumber and a few others—will be part of this month's raffle (Renee Shepherd is our May speaker). This will be the last raffle of the year, so look over your collection of unplanted treasures! ~Roberta Barnes



Roberta Barnes with customer at the March plant sale

Photo: Marianne Mueller

Plant Sale at the Master Gardener Spring Garden Market

A big thanks to everyone who helped with the success of this event. We raised \$730 for Western Hort. And, it's not too soon to start thinking about next year. Really! The most popular plants were succulents, natives and anything blooming! Pelargoniums, Heucheras, Campanulas, Sparaxis. Look around your garden and see what is blooming. Propagate those plants. If you want to learn how to propagate your plants, contact me and I'll connect you with a propagation mentor. Call 650-949-0377 or send email to robertabarnes2011@yahoo.com. ~Roberta Barnes

Open House at Carman's Nursery—May 6

You are cordially invited to attend a 75th Anniversary Celebration at Carman's Nursery, 8470 Pharmed Road, Gilroy, CA, on May 6th, from 11 am to 3 pm. Please carpool—we have very limited parking! We will be serving homemade cookies and lemonade. ~Nancy Schramm



Catalina Ironwood in blossom

Photo: flickr.com/photos/mechanoid_dolly

Using Native Trees in a Home Garden—A Talk by Barrie Coate

Wednesday, June 20, 7-8:30 pm. Campbell Library, 77 Harrison Ave., Campbell. Free and open to all. While some of our trees, such as Redwoods, are too large to fit well in a typical home landscape, other trees, such as Catalina Ironwood, cohabitate and enhance residential gardens extremely well. Learn about the variety of local native trees from an expert arborist, so you can select the best choice for your garden. Barrie Coate is an ISA Certified Arborester, a Registered Arborist with the American Society of Consulting Arborists, and honorary life member of the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, and winner of two merit Awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects (and a member of Western Hort, of course!) He is the author of several booklets regarding California native plants and water conserving plants, as well as more than thirty articles in professional publications.

28 Years Ago On Monday, May 14th, 1984, Western Hort met to hear Robert J. Mitchell's talk "Plant collecting in the Tali Range, West Yunnan." Mr. Mitchell was curator of St. Andrew's University Botanical Garden in Scotland at that time, and in 1981 "led the British contingent of a Sino-British botanical expedition to Northwest Yunnan. This was the first expedition to include Western botanists since 1947. The area covered is of great interest, for it is one made famous to plantsmen by the great plant hunters, Pere Delavay, George Forrest, and Kingdon-Ward. A report of this trip appeared in the winter (1982-83) issue of Pacific Horticulture." (I'd love to see a list of plants that have come from that area in the last thirty years!) Mr. Mitchell also gave a talk at the Hall of Flowers entitled "The Rock Garden and Scree" while he was in California. The June newsletter announced plans for the WHS picnic on June 3rd. There was a tour of members' gardens (Dick & Helaine Dunmire, Keith & Fran Bickford, and Barbara Worl) followed by the picnic at the home of Allan Reid. ~Nancy Schramm

The Easy Track to Fern Spore Propagation

The following method of fern spore propagation is designed to provide for relatively rapid production of young sporelings without the need to sterilize spores or medium. Use a new, clean plastic saucer (the type sold at garden centers to place under potted plants). A four- or five-inch size is rigid enough to keep the medium stable, and fits neatly into a recloseable plastic sandwich bag when sown. Although small, it can produce hundreds of sporophytes.

The saucer may be filled to approximately 2/3 its depth with a medium made of five parts perlite to one part milled sphagnum, and moistened with one part of hydroponic fertilizer. The medium should be pressed firmly into the bottom of the saucer with a clean spoon, so that the perlite and sphagnum lock together to form a stable surface. Test by holding the pan on edge at a right angle to the table. The medium should not shift.

Next use a new small plastic cup to moisten two rounded teaspoonfuls of fine vermiculite with the same hydroponic fertilizer. Add a light sprinkling of spores over the vermiculite and mix thoroughly. Spread the vermiculite with spores evenly over the surface of the medium in the saucer and press it down firmly. The two layers should make good contact.

Enclose the finished pan in a new recloseable plastic sandwich bag, and place it under subdued continuous fluorescent light. Cool white tubes or those commonly used for ordinary residential lighting are good. Low intensity is best, so keep pans about two feet under the tubes or cover them with white paper toweling to diffuse the light. A stable environment with an ambient temperature of 70° F is excellent. Bags should be opened every few days, especially right after sowing to check moisture content. Remove the pan briefly, and wipe condensed moisture from the bag with a new paper towel.

Eventually the surface of the medium may need light misting with water from a sprayer. Gametophytes should make a green mat across the pan in several weeks, and little sporophytes may appear in a few months, occasionally as early as two months after sowing, but generally in four to six.

When large enough to be moved, sporophytes may be pricked out singly or in clumps, and replanted in pots of small fern mix: three parts coarse vermiculite, two parts sphagnum peat and one part sand. Moisten with hydroponic fertilizer. A brief outline for sowing fern spores this way is available online at Botanical Electronic News, Archives, No. 246, March 2000,

<http://www.ou.edu/cas/botany-micro/ben>. ~Margery Edgren, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Nursery Unit for Plant Sales



Photo: hardyferns.org

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To contact us, please send email to info@westernhort.org, or contact Chris Egan at 650-948-4614, or send mail to Western Horticulture Society, PO Box 60507, Palo Alto, CA, 94306.

About membership in Western Hort:

To join or renew, send your name, address, phone number and a check made out to "Western Horticultural Society" to PO Box 620673, Woodside, CA 94062-0673.

Membership Rates: A one-year membership (Sep-Aug) includes four issues of Pacific Horticulture magazine. Regular membership is \$35, Sustaining is \$45, Contributing is \$60 and Plant Lover is \$100+. We have also added a Family membership of \$50 for two or more members at the same address, and a Student rate of \$20.

Please visit our website at westernhort.org for a membership form.

Newsletter Submissions and Address Changes

Please send info for the September 2012 newsletter by August 18 to Marianne Mueller, mrm@sonic.net or 650-326-2029.

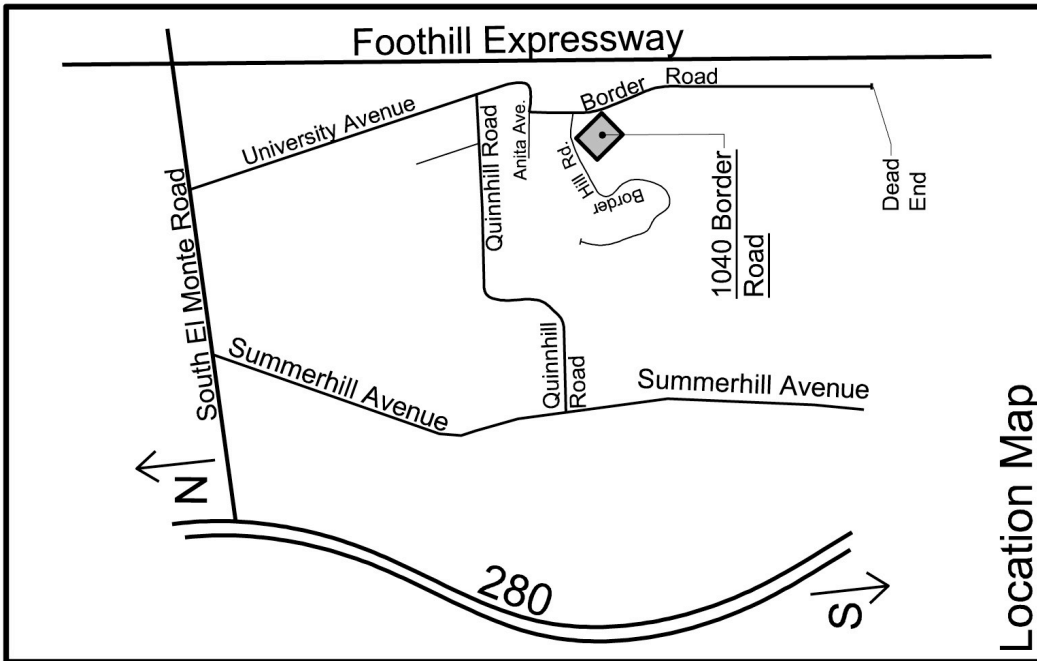
Please send address changes to grew@pacbell.net or 650-851-5162.



PO Box 60507
Palo Alto, CA 94306

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Western Horticultural Society
Monthly Meetings
Christ Episcopal Church
Parish Hall
1040 Border Road, Los Altos