



March Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 7:30 p.m.

Shelagh Fritz, Project Manager, The Garden Conservancy

“The Gardens of Alcatraz”

For 150 years, a succession of soldiers, families of correction officials and inmates cultivated gardens hewn on the rocky windswept island of Alcatraz. The Garden Conservancy is leading the effort to rehabilitate these gardens in partnership with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy for visitors to enjoy and gain insight into the role these plantings played in the lives of people who inhabited this harsh environment.

Many of the plants selected by these unheralded gardeners proved to be excellent choices for the harsh and barren environment, flourishing through the four decades of neglect that followed the prison's closing. Beginning in 2003, volunteers have worked with staff to clear forty years of overgrowth to bring back the gardens and the stories of those who tended these gardens before us. Alcatraz's current visitors experience an island that is alive with colorful plants gathered decades ago from around the world and complemented by newly introduced plants. These historic gardens not only illustrate the importance of gardens to the human spirit, but also the ecological benefits and aesthetic possibilities of sustainable gardening.

Tour: A free docent tour is available every Friday and Sunday at 9:30 a.m. **Getting there:** Take the 9 a.m. ferry from Pier 33 and meet the tour group at the island's dock area. To volunteer or donate money to the project, call the Garden Conservancy at 415-441-4300. Download the **Self-Guiding Garden Brochure:** alcatrazgardens.org/pdf/AZ_Garden_11_10.pdf

See <http://alcatrazgardens.org/blog> for Shelagh's short posts about Alcatraz Gardens, accompanied with marvelous photos of plants and landscapes.

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 March speaker, Shelagh Fritz, for **dinner on March 14** 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.

April Meeting

April 11 Dr. Russell Wagner, “The Wonder of Mesembs: Ice Plants, Living Rocks and Flowering Stones”

February Speaker Notes

Pat Knight stepped up and delivered a talk on “The Botanical Obsession: Plants and Porcelain.” In the Age of Enlightenment, botany came into being with Great Britain at its center. Yet it took a Swede, Carl Linnaeus, to turn things on their head with his new system of classifying plants including—yes—reproductive parts! Supported by a wealthy benefactor, Linnaeus travelled to England in 1736, first meeting Sir Hans Sloane, a famous collector of natural history and Phillip Miller, keeper of the famed Chelsea Physic Garden. Neither was initially impressed with the young Swede, but Linnaeus won Miller over, and the Chelsea Physic Garden started to become arranged according to Linnaeus' system.

Across the pond, an American Quaker, John Bartram, contributed to the English experience with his shipments of “Bartram's Boxes,” loaded with seedlings of plants he found interesting. Self-taught, the “father of American botany” was one of the first to use Linnaeus' classification system. His contributions to European gardens were immeasurable.

As these vast collections, classifications and gardens came into being, it made sense to illustrate the wonderful new plants and flowers. Talented artists like Georg Ehret, William Curtis and James Sowerby came to the forefront with their beautifully detailed horticultural prints that captivated the public. It made sense to transfer this “print art” to “porcelain art”—and a new industry was born.

True porcelain was first made at Derby in 1748. Led by the great William Quaker Pegg, the industry exploded and carried on into the next century with beautifully illustrated plates, saucers and cups. Capitalizing on England's gardening craze, firms like Spode, Coalport, Pearlware, Wedgwood and Swansea debuted; some still produce porcelain. The rest of Europe caught on and France, Italy, Germany and Russia all produced fine garden china.

Porcelain that displays horticultural drawings continues to be made in the twenty-first century, its predecessors prized as valuable antiques. Our speaker seems to have found the best of both worlds—gardening and pottery—and it showed in an extremely informative and enjoyable presentation. Jolly good show, Pat! ~*Mark McCabe*

Western Hort News

News from the President

Please welcome our new Board of Director members Judy Wong, Liz Calhoon and Clayton Neece, all long time WHS members who have served as officers. A great big THANK YOU to retiring board members Sherry Hall, Steve Staiger and Kerry Barrs for their many years of service. Please join me in congratulating Sairus Patel on his appointment as our new WHS representative on the Pacific Horticulture Society Board of Directors. ~Richard Tiede

New Rosters

Our new rosters are available to members. Please pick up your roster at the meeting. A big thanks goes to Jessie Schilling for putting the roster together!

Raffle Table

Last month we were able to shop from the Pop Up Plant Stars, a collaboration of four nurseries. Carman's Nursery, Cole Canyon Farm, Gold Rush Nursery and Terra Sole Nurseries all had unique and healthy plants to peruse. This month we will have our regular raffle table, with the Western Hort Board providing interesting plants for the table. Members are also welcome to bring plants and gardening items for the raffle table. ~Roberta Barnes

Hot Plant Picks Needs You! San Francisco Flower & Garden Show, March 21– 25

The excitement is building, the nurseries are searching their fields and greenhouses for cool plants, and the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show is on its way—March 21-25 at the San Mateo Event Center. We've got to be ready! How about volunteering for only two hours and fifteen minutes to watch over the Hot Plant Picks exhibit, and then having the rest of the day to wander around the show for free? Don't be left out—sign up now! Remember—WHS really benefits from this exhibit—we get to have a silent auction of the donated plants from the exhibit, and the show producers also give us a \$500 stipend for our efforts. Volunteer now—let's do this thing right! See sfgardenshow.com for details on this year's show. Contact Nancy Schramm to sign up: greenthumb@carmansnursery.com or 408-847-2313. ~Nancy Schramm

Volunteer at the Pac Hort Booth at San Francisco Flower & Garden Show

Kick off spring with a visit to the San Francisco Flower & Garden show and help out Pacific Horticulture Society at the same time. If you would like to volunteer to help Pacific Horticulture in our booth or in the seminar rooms, you can get into the show for free! The show dates are March 21-25. Contact Leslie Dean for more information: lesliekdean@mindspring.com or 650-966-8364. ~Leslie Dean

Going Native Garden Tour—April 21 (North) and April 22 (South), 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Since 2003, the Bay Area's pioneering native garden tour has showcased gardens featuring California native plants. This community-based tour is free of charge to the public. Each tour features 40-70 gardens, most of them private home gardens, which are open on tour day in a do-it-yourself, open house format. The gardens on the tour demonstrate reduced water use, reduced chemical and pesticide use, improved habitat, and the unique aesthetic appeal of gardens designed with California native plants. On tour day, sponsoring nurseries will conduct native plant sales at select gardens. Register at ngnt.org.

28 Years Ago

Western Hort met March 12, 1984 to hear a surprise speaker, Barrie Coate. Barrie was kind enough to fill in when the announced speaker, Rudy Fecteau, won a contest and escaped to Hawaii on vacation! The talk was titled "Plant Selection for Mid-California Gardens" and the slides were enriched with living plant specimens. The list of nurseries that donated plants for the raffle may bring back some memories: A-Z Nursery, Cambrian Nursery, Cupertino Nursery, Nature's Alley, Sunnyvale Nursery, Yamagami's Nursery, Yamanaka's Bonsai Nursery and Boething Treeland Nursery.

Members were asked to bring in their favorite plant/seed catalogs in order to share the names with other members.

Mary Kaye announced an April 29th field trip to Ruth Bancroft's garden in Walnut Creek. This field trip was to a private garden, because it would be four more years before the Cabots visited and were inspired to form The Garden Conservancy. A bus trip to Sonoma Hort Nursery and Western Hills Nursery was announced for April 11th, sponsored by the Associates of Saratoga Hort Foundation. Charlotte Anderson took over writing the plant notes for March. As she noted "—it was a super plant display..." and she went on to describe twenty-one plants presented by ten members! ~Nancy Schramm



Bromelia pinquin in a sketchbook of George Dionysius Ehret, one of the best botanical artists of his day.

Plant of the Month: *Tropaeolum peregrinum*



Tropaeolum peregrinum (canary creeper, canarybird flower, canarybird vine, or canary nasturtium) is a species of *Tropaeolum* native to western South America in Peru and possibly also Ecuador. Photo: Wikipedia.org

This month's plant is all for the fun of it. I decided to call Elizabeth Garbett to see what plant she might be fond of this week (since like all true plant lovers her affection can be fickle—at least when it comes to choosing a favorite plant) and she told me that quite a few of her grey, gloomy days this winter have been cheered by the flowers of *Tropaeolum peregrinum*, the canary creeper. In September, Kathleen Craig gave Elizabeth a few seeds that her plant set during the summer, and despite being late in the season, Elizabeth, an enthusiastic propagator sowed those very seeds. They germinated very quickly, and once they were growing

well, Elizabeth planted them in a large pot in her small greenhouse. A handy trellis provided support for those little plants to simply swarm up, all the way to the top of the greenhouse. They kept growing for the next few months, then all of a sudden in late December or early January, Elizabeth walked out and discovered that her canary creeper had burst into bloom.

T. peregrinum flowers are a bright clear yellow with two upward pointing, deeply fringed petals. There are some red markings in the throat, and all the 'business parts' of the flower point downwards and are backed by two greenish-yellow spurs. They are fairly small (less than an inch across) but so plentiful that they stand out like, you guessed it, a flock of canaries. The leaves are fresh and green, a little bit shiny, and deeply lobed, which gives them a very delicate appearance.

Since Elizabeth is growing these nasturtium cousins at a very non-traditional time of year, I checked with Kathleen to see how she grows them. She said she got her first plants from Annie's Annuals, and planted them in some huge (40") terra cotta pots with her blueberries. She said they look spectacular growing all over the blueberry shrubs. They've been very happy in a not-too-hot but sunny spot, in rich soil with regular moisture. Once they started blooming, they really kept at it all summer long. That's what prompted Kathleen to decide to plant a few near some fan trellises to decorate her veggie garden.

Kathleen described the seeds as quite unusual looking, not at all like common nasturtium seeds. They are three-sided, and right from the start were dark gray to black in color. She didn't notice too many seeds (only harvested fifteen during the summer) but that might possibly have been a result of active bird life in the area. Elizabeth was hoping to get some seed, so planned on helping out nature with a little fancy paintbrush work.

Get out there and plant something "just for the fun of it!" ~Nancy Schramm

Western Horticultural Society Officers and Board Members

President: Richard Tiede

Vice President: Christine Bate

Recording Secretary: Mark McCabe

Acting Treasurer: Daxin Liu

Other Board Members: Roberta Barnes, Liz Calhoun, Jon Craig, Abby Garner, Clayton Neece, Rosalie Shepherd, Judy Wong and Katie Wong.

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 April newsletter by March 18 to Marianne Mueller, mrm@sonic.net or 650-326-2029.

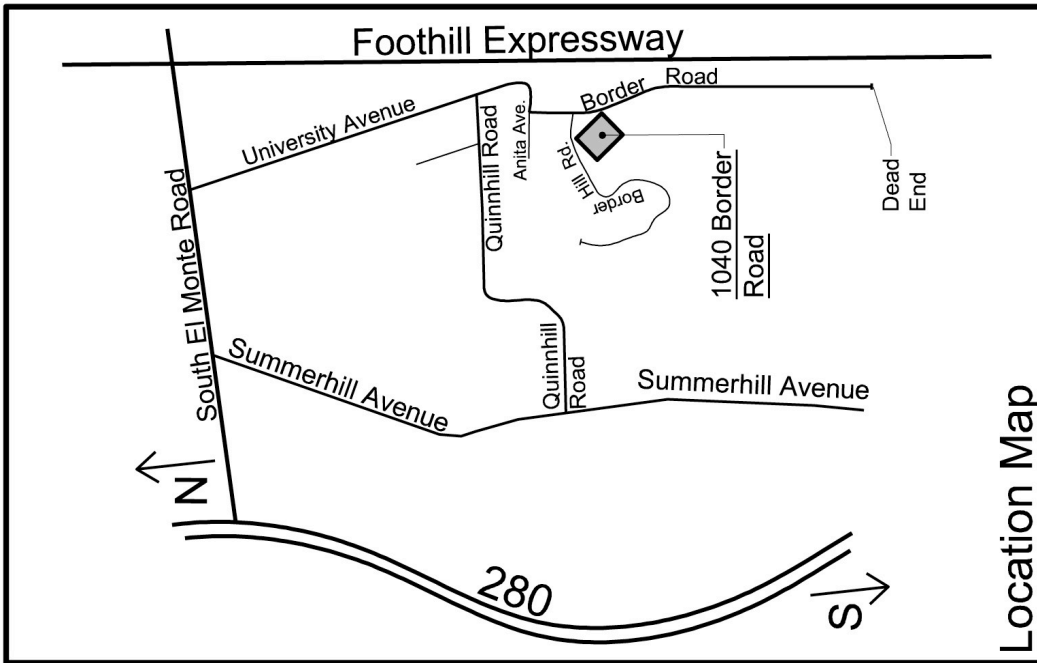
Please send address changes to grew@pacbell.net or 650-851-5162.



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First Class Mail

VISIT US AT WESTERNHORT.ORG



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