



WHS April Speaker

Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Doors open at 7:00 p.m.; meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

Jim Dixon, Jim Dixon Gardens, Kensington, California
<http://jimdixongardens.wordpress.com>

Transforming the Sense of Place: Redefining Space with Shape, Color and Texture

Over the course of nearly half a century, Jim Dixon has designed and built hundreds of lovely gardens in Northern California. Jim has a profound sense of color and proportion that complements his technical knowledge of botany, architecture and music. As Jim states on his website, “An artistic landscape for me is a beautiful synthesis of all of its elements. The garden, like music, presents an ever-changing, ever-modulating movement of color, texture and form, creating shape through contrast, rhythm and counterpoint.”

One of the ways Jim likes to create dynamic spaces is with the use of sculpting the land by terracing and grading to develop height and interest. Come get new ideas to harmonize your own garden spaces.

Jim has served as a professional consultant to growers and nurseries, architects and engineers, as well as to homeowners, real estate professionals and businesses. His designs have received top honors in the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show and he has taught numerous horticultural courses. See samples of his work at <http://jimdixongardens.wordpress.com>.

MEETING LOCATION Our monthly meetings feature the speakers listed above. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. and meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. The location is the Parish Hall of Christ Episcopal Church, 1040 Border Road, Los Altos, 94024.

You are invited to join our speaker for dinner at 5:30 p.m. at **Bella Vita, 376 First St., Los Altos**. This is a terrific opportunity for our members to get to know each other better, and to get to chat with our speakers. Please contact Pat Knight to confirm: deerproof@yahoo.com or (650) 941-6136.

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 if you are interested.

May 2011 Speaker

Wednesday, May 11, 7:30 p.m. **Kristin Yanker-Hansen**, Year-Round Cut Flowers from the Garden

Plant of the Month: Solomon's Seal

This month's plant is an old-fashioned favorite, *Polygonatum odoratum* 'Variegatum' and was shared by Claire Steede-Butler. Longtime WHS members will remember Claire as a 'once-upon-a-time' WHS member, until she moved to Hollister, expanded her nursery, and renamed it Meadowlark Nursery. (I hope you saw the plants she donated to Hot Plant Picks—the variegated *Eryngium* is to die for!) Claire told me that Solomon's seal is popular in Michigan where she grew up, but is such a wonderful plant it should be more widely grown in the Bay Area, as well. It is an herbaceous perennial, sending up arching stems with paired, bright green leaves each spring. The variegation is a clean white border around each leaf. Fragrant bell-shaped flowers appear after the leaves and hang in pairs all along the stem where the leaves attach. Claire says the flowers “Just make me happy!”

Polygonatum grows in a slowly expanding clump from rhizomes shaped like fingers—reminiscent of ginseng. It will get 18-36" tall, depending on watering and the amount of shade. Another really attractive seasonal feature is the burgundy hue of the emerging stems; they eventually turn green when fully mature. Early spring is the best time to dig and divide. It prefers a loose, humous-y, well drained soil. Claire's plants in Hollister aren't overly greedy for water, just average. Filtered high shade is perfect, which makes Solomon's seal a great companion to Rhododendrons & Azaleas (especially the natives) as well as *Vancouveria* and *Epimedium*. The leaves turn an attractive bright yellow in late summer before disappearing completely for the winter. Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*) would make an attractive, loose groundcover. Or you can grow *Omphalodes cappadocica* for those same flowers in a more restrained groundcover.

~Nancy Schramm



Polygonatum odoratum 'Variegatum', Solomon's Seal
Photo: saundersbrothers.com

Western Hort News and Business

Saturday, April 2 – WHS Plant Sale Updates

The parking situation is not good. History San Jose, the location of the April 2 Spring Garden Market, is not giving any parking vouchers for the parking lots because of the budget cuts so everyone must pay for parking if you park there. If you want to stay all day you can park on-site for no charge but there will be NO moving of these cars until after 2 p.m. Sorry but that is all we can offer this year. ~Abby Garner

Plants can be dropped off at two sites on Wed, Mar 30 & Thu, Apr 1: Elizabeth Garbett, 13906 Page Mill Rd, Palo Alto 94022, (650) 948-4001, or Leslie Dean, 1019 Mountain View Av., Mountain View 94040, (650) 967-5408. I hope to see you all at the Spring Garden Market having a wonderful time!! REMEMBER - Come, See, Help, Acquire, Conquer and Score!!! ~Katie Wong

Silent Auction – not Raffle - at April meeting

I hope everyone had a chance to visit the **Hot Plant Picks** exhibit at this year's SFF&G Show! This is a terrific outreach WHS does for the general gardening public. And it brings in a stipend from the Show producers—money that can go directly towards even more wonderful speakers at our meetings. We hope more of the plant nerds out there will hear about WHS from this exhibit as well. It's truly a team effort. Besides volunteers who watched over the exhibit daily (WHS, Cal Hort and CRFG members) there is a core team I must credit with the extra effort they put in: Sherry H, Jessie S, Judy W, Mary K, Chris E: Thank You!



Now comes the fun part, the **Silent Auction** of the plants! The auction plants will be replacing the raffle this month. You don't buy tickets, but there are auction forms for each plant, stating the minimum bid. Come to the April 13th WHS meeting for your chance to take one or more of these new/cool/especially wonderful plants home. Bring your friends, your neighbors and your checkbook, and be prepared to bid on as many plants as will fit in your car or your garden.

Our March raffle table was full of great plants, thanks to both members and the following nurseries: Carman's Nursery, Roger Reynold's Nursery, Ladera Nursery, and Al's Portola Valley Nursery. ~Nancy Schramm and Roberta Barnes

WHS Annual Picnic, Sunday, June 12 ~ A Hidden Gem in Portola Valley

Everyone is invited to our annual potluck picnic at Niki Muller's place on Sunday, June 12 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Come experience the diverse plantings in a quiet, peaceful setting. Sign up at our next meeting. We hope to see you there! ~Richard Tiede for Rosalie Shepherd

Saratoga Horticultural Research Foundation ~ Grants

In case you thought the SHRF was no more, perhaps you would be pleased to know it is still functioning as an Endowment Fund. With UC Davis acting as administrator, a grant review committee that includes a number of the former trustees of SHRF reviews and funds proposals from throughout the state for their adherence to the goals of the SHRF. This is the third year of the grant activity, with the establishment of the Archives at the Shields Library Special Collections and Endowment Fund in 2006. Call Carol Coate if you need more info: (408) 353-3394. See SHRF website, <http://ucanr.org/sites/SaratogaHort>, for past recipients and information about the goals. ~Carol Coate

28 Years Ago

April 11, 1983 WHS met to hear Doug Rhymes' talk "Roses in the Landscape." He planned on covering "such aspects as rose selection, care and display, and he will include old roses, miniatures, climbers and modern roses." At that time, Rhymes had been the consulting rosarian for Filoli for five years.

I'm guessing that the table for plant discussion was covered by spring blooms including *Azara serrata*, *Brachycome diversifolia*, *Comarostaphylis diversifolia*, *Grevillea lavandulacea* 'Tanunda', *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Helene Strybing' and *Viburnum plicatum tomentosum*. The raffle table was provided by the Saratoga Hort Foundation. ~Nancy Schramm

Welcome to Anne Charlotte Bosch!

Welcome to Michelle & Derek Bosch's new little lady bug, Anne Charlotte, born March 17th. She's perfect and has Mom and Dad as her absolute, delighted slaves.



Website and Internet News

Western Hort is about to get its own Facebook page. Daxin Liu is setting this up and it should be running within a few weeks with up to date Western Hort news. It will link into the website and give our society even more exposure especially with young gardeners. Now you will have even more internet and wireless access for gardening news. Meanwhile does anyone know how to set up a Twitter page? ~Pat Knight



Commentary on March's Speaker: Cliff Low

There's a lot of ground to cover when one focuses on such a broad yet extremely important topic as soil, its health and its relationship to growing plants. Our guest speaker did his noble best, giving us the "low-down" – Cliff Low, that is – on soil fertility and growing healthy plants.

"Analytical Testing for Horticulture" was the topic of this month's presentation. Mr. Low, owner of Perry Laboratory in Watsonville, has over thirty years of practical experience in nearly all aspects of horticulture and floriculture. Founded in 1938, his company serves the landscape, turf, nursery and viticulture industries with increasing involvement with the local strawberry farms in the Salinas and Watsonville areas. Our speaker touched briefly on the demise of the local flower-growing industry, another competitive victim of cheaper imports.

Mr. Low listed and explained the five objectives of horticultural testing: pre-planting fertilizer amendments; monitoring of maintenance situations; diagnosis of problem sites; recording of scientific data of current conditions for future comparisons; and avoidance of potential plant growth problems. To accomplish these objectives, Perry Laboratory provides fertility analysis of soil, water and plant tissue. Our speaker noted that simply asking questions can solve many problems.

Mr. Low emphasized the importance of soil amendments, of particular interest to us gardeners, be they compost, redwood sawdust (his preference) or others. He mentioned that amending native soil, even at a rototiller's depth of six to eight inches, helps in the gradual transition for plant growth.

Low warned against bringing in imported soils or sand to improve our heavy clay soil's structure. He found that gypsum doesn't help, nor does simply adding mulch on top.

Addressing the nursery folks in the audience, Low noted that most nurseries still use 70-80% pure, un-aged redwood sawdust in their mixes for containers. Our speaker stressed the importance of consistency in different batch mixes because nursery managers rely on this for watering and fertilizing schedules.

Based on the extensive question and answer session that followed, President Richard Tiede suggested a return appearance by our esteemed speaker in the foreseeable future. I concur. There is a lot of information to learn and digest, and with practical knowledge, we can come to understand our soil and its "dirty" secrets. ~Mark McCabe

April Garden Tours

Sunday, April 17, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Going Native Garden Tour, Santa Clara County. Registration required: gngt.org or 650-260-3450.

Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Spring in Guadalupe Gardens, between Coleman Ave. and Taylor St., San Jose. Come see the Heritage Rose Garden in bloom. More info: grpg.org/SGG.shtml.

Fri/Sat April 29/30, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Gamble Garden Spring Tour, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. Tour of five private gardens in Palo Alto. \$30 members/\$35 non-members/\$45 day of tour. Register at gamblegarden.org or (650) 329-1356.

See pacifichorticulture.org for an extensive calendar of horticultural events.

Western Horticultural Society Officers and Board Members

President: Richard Tiede

Vice President: Christine Bate

Recording Secretary: Mark McCabe

Treasurer: Steve Staiger

Other Board Members: Kerry Barrs, Roberta Barnes, Jon Craig, Abby Garner, Ann Griese, Sherry Hall, Rosalie Shepherd 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 1-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 & Address Changes:

Please send submissions for the May newsletter by April 18 to mrm@sonic.net or (650) 326-2029.

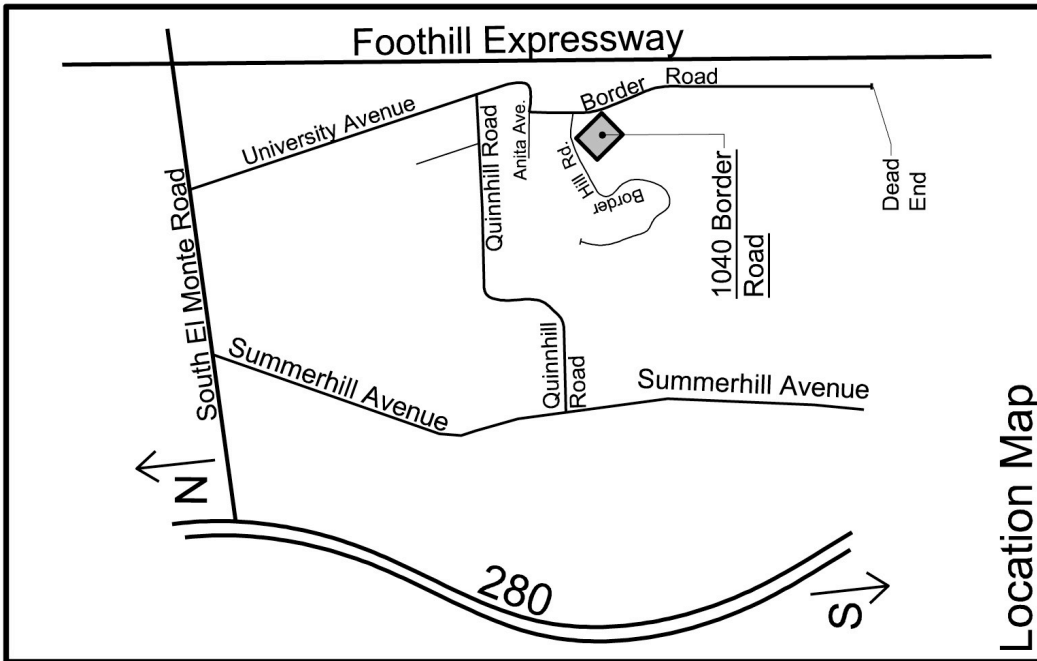
Please send address changes to grew@pacbell.net or (650) 851-5162.



PO Box 60507
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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 94024