



## *March 2013 Speaker*

**Wednesday, March 13, 7:30 p.m.**

Ernesto Sandoval, Director, Botanical Conservatory, UC Davis

Stop torturing your plants! Learn to understand the needs of plants both above and below ground and how that is affected by containerized conditions.

Ernesto is Director of the Botanical Conservatory and Division of Biological Sciences Plant Growth Facilities at the University of California at Davis. He grew up in Los Angeles and earned his degree in Botany in 1996 at UC Davis. His duties include directing, teaching, and supervising activities in the UC Davis Botanical Conservatory, Weier Instructional Greenhouse, DBS Orchard Park and Core Plant Growth Facilities. He also frequently leads botanical field tours.

## *February 2013 Speaker Notes*

In a departure from our usual guest speaker presentation, members and guests at our February meeting were treated to a twosome—our own “living legends,” Dick Dunmire and Barrie Coate. Moderated by Jon Craig, these two horticultural giants answered a series of questions.

### *How did you start your career in horticulture?*

**Dick Dunmire** was always interested in plants, even at a young age, growing up in West Virginia. In 1932, an aunt gave him a nursery catalog, prompting his passion for plant collecting. Aware that horticulture did not possess the allure of a promising career, Dick pursued a degree in English literature, landing him teaching positions at various colleges. Dissatisfied, he moved west, completing graduate work at Stanford. About that time, he started working at Montebello Nursery in Los Altos. Owner Peter Sugawara, a renowned collector of unusual plants, must have whet Dick’s horticultural appetite, for not long after, he began his renowned career at Lane Publishing Co.—a perfect marriage of plants and prose.

**Barrie Coate** began growing cacti and succulents at his parents’ caretaker’s house in Los Gatos. They encouraged and nurtured his budding interest in horticulture, which continued through his days at San Jose State. After an Army hitch, Barrie was offered a job at the newly-formed Saratoga Horticultural Foundation. Barrie learned the art of propagation from the master Gerd Schneider; he later became superintendent. Bitten by the entrepreneurial bug, Barrie, with the help of some financial partners, started Barrie’s Trees and Shrubs in Aptos. After seven years of running a business instead of working in a nursery, Barrie made the decision to sell and go back to what he loved most—working with and introducing new plants. Moving back to Saratoga Hort, Barrie was instrumental in its move to San Martin. After the Foundation closed, Barrie started a horticultural consulting business, which he continues to operate today.

### *What are the significant changes in the nursery industry that you have observed since you have left the business?*

**Dunmire:** The smaller, independent nurseries are disappearing. “Boutique” nurseries are rare, but still around, those being firms that offer newer or more unusual plants.

**Coate:** In 1951, the (only) fall color in the valley was yellow. That year, Liquidambar ‘Palo Alto’ was introduced, which brought red into the spectrum. Barrie mentioned the introduction of purple-foliaged plants that now abound.

**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, Ernesto Sandoval, for **dinner on March 13** at 5:30 p.m. at Chef Chu’s, 1067 N. San Antonio Road, Los Altos. Please contact Rosalie Shepherd to confirm: [shep8283@comcast.net](mailto:shep8283@comcast.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.

He noted the industry as a whole is in financial doldrums, adding a cautionary bit of advice to beware of purchasing root-bound plants, a consequence of stock that didn't sell the previous year.

Among some of the other questions these gentlemen answered were the future of the nursery industry and the importance of new plant discoveries and introductions. Both Dick and Barrie noted the difficulties of plant introductions, both financial and horticultural. Dick thought that the East Coast and Midwest nurseries were the leaders in this area due to residential properties being larger and more inclined to accept different trees and shrubs. Barrie cited some West Coast nurseries still in the forefront to bring us new plant material.

As the evening's discussion ended with a brief question and answer session from the audience, I was struck by similar qualities the two men shared: supportive families from an early age that included learning from family members who were professors, professors at the early years, followed by being tutored in critical skills by respected nurserymen. An abiding faith in our industry, and in their later years, the unflinching desire to mentor, share knowledge and guide us into the future. We are so fortunate to count them as kindred. ~Mark McCabe

**Volunteers Needed for SFFGS** One shift is still open for the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show on Wednesday, March 20 from 2:35 to 5:05 p.m. in the DIY stage room. If you would like to volunteer to help *Pacific Horticulture* in this seminar room, you can get into the show for free on the day you volunteer. If you are interested, please contact Leslie Dean at [lesliekdean@mindspring.com](mailto:lesliekdean@mindspring.com) or 650 966-8364.

**Hot Plant Picks—It's that time again!** WHS is once again creating the Hot Plant Picks exhibit at the SF Flower & Garden Show. Help staff the booth in teams of two for two-hour shifts; free admission the day you work. Contact Nancy Schramm at 408-847-2313 or [nancy@carmansnursery.com](mailto:nancy@carmansnursery.com), or sign up at the March 13 WHS meeting.

**Plant Table** Last month was the debut of our new method of running what used to be called our raffle table! Because of changes in California law, we will be giving a ticket to everyone attending meetings. If you want additional tickets, you may make a donation to WHS and receive more. Meanwhile, the Plant Table committee is busy finding great plants for the table in March. Stop by and check them out! ~Roberta Barnes

### **Western Hort Plant Sale at the Spring Garden Market**

The big day is coming up! Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 13th. We have fun selling plants and promoting WHS. If you have time to volunteer and help staff the booth, contact Chris Egan. For all you propagators out there, please let Liz Calhoon what you have been growing. We have two binders full of plant descriptions and we would like to add the plants that are being propagated for this year's sale! Thanks to all who support this event. ~Roberta Barnes

**28 Years Ago** Western Hort met on March 11, 1985 to hear Rudy Fecteau, a professional photographer, talk about "Photographing Flowers." His talk had been originally scheduled for 1984, but was postponed when he won a trip to Hawaii! A field trip to visit Wayne Roderick's garden was announced for March 17<sup>th</sup>. Lucy Tolmach not only supplied the raffle table on behalf of Filoli, she also brought in a wealth of plants for discussion. As a result, the plant notes covered four pages. Filoli plants included *Magnolia dawsoniana* (which takes 25 years to bloom) and *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea.' Chris Andrews brought in *Daphne collina* and *Camellia tsaii*, Gerda Isenberg showed two blooming *Ribes*, and Mabel Crittenden brought a *Bauera rubioides* and *Caltha palustris*. *Ipheion uniflorum* was also included in the plant notes, an example of how taxonomists can completely frustrate the gardening public. It used to be called *Triteleia uniflora*, and before that *Brodiaea uniflora*. The last plant mentioned, *Erysimum kotschyianum* is one that I remembered with fondness as it is one my dad used to grow. I'll have to grow it again as I still have some old labels for it! ~Nancy Schramm



*Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea'  
Photo: wimtimmermans.nl



**Viola odorata.** Photo: oregonlive.com

The leaves and flowers of the violet plant are used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. Fresh, dried or preserved violets garnish salads (add vinaigrette first), pastries and beverages. They can flavor desserts or be added to poultry or fish stuffings. Violet essence is used to perfume cakes, ice cream, confectionery and liqueurs. Properties: expectorant. Violet is said to relieve migraines and fever. Made into a tea, it is said to be a mild sedative.

## Plant of the Month: Violas

It's been a long time since I've had a chance to chat with Barbara Worl, so I decided to call and ask the rose lady what her favorite plant might be. Count on Barbara to come up with a surprise: she said her favorite plant (right now, anyway) is not a rose, but the deliciously fragrant viola. Barbara's love affair with sweet violets began when she was a child, growing up in a small town (2,113 residents) in Indiana. Her home was only two blocks from the edge of town (in a town that size, that might almost be in the middle of downtown!) OK, sorry, no more small town jokes. Not far from Barbara's home was an orchard ringed by homes and carpeted with violas. The "big purple smelly ones" she says. Viola odorata? Barbara remembers picking handfuls of them to take to her mom. There was also a Catholic church in town that had violets growing in a flower bed. Perhaps the Confederate Violet, Barbara picked them too—white with purple markings but not as fragrant—showing her generous love for all

flowers at an early age. Fast forward a few years to California, and we find Barbara and her college roommate, still friends after graduation, traveling to the Happy Valley Violet Farm on Old San Jose Road in the 1950's for more violets, this time for plants so they could grow their own. Barbara remembers this small nursery as several acres of violets, open mostly in the spring when the most violets were in bloom. They even had a small catalog, about 3x5", folded and stapled in the middle. One year Barbara purchased some V. odorata 'Royal Robe' and grew enough that in future years they were planted all along her driveway. They were so wonderfully fragrant that Barbara discovered she could smell them when she was up on the roof, cleaning out her gutters. The last year she visited the Violet Farm she bought a very expensive, choice yellow viola, planted it out front along a sidewalk, and after only a day discovered it had gone missing. Barbara has grown many different violas including Parmas, pink ones and a white one that she told her professor she had to have; he shared it reluctantly, and she has regretted it ever since. It was wildly invasive and had no redeeming fragrance to make amends. One last note about violets—I'm sure you've all heard about tulip mania, but what about violet mania? According to a fascinating website leslieland.com, the town of Rhinebeck (in the Hudson Valley area) used to be "The Violet Capital of the World." The website goes on to say, "When violet mania was at its height in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were over four hundred violet houses in the area." Wow. Just imagine the wonderful scent that must have pervaded that town. Barbara knew what she was doing when she fell in love with violets. ~Nancy Schramm



### Western Horticultural Society Officers and Board Members

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To contact us, please send email to [info@westernhort.org](mailto: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](http://westernhort.org) for a membership form.

### Newsletter Submissions and Address Changes

Send submissions for the April 2013 newsletter by March 18 to Marianne Mueller: [mrm@sonic.net](mailto:mrm@sonic.net), 650-326-2029, or 333 Kingsley Ave., Palo Alto 94301.

Send address changes to [grew@pacbell.net](mailto:grew@pacbell.net) or 650-851-5162.



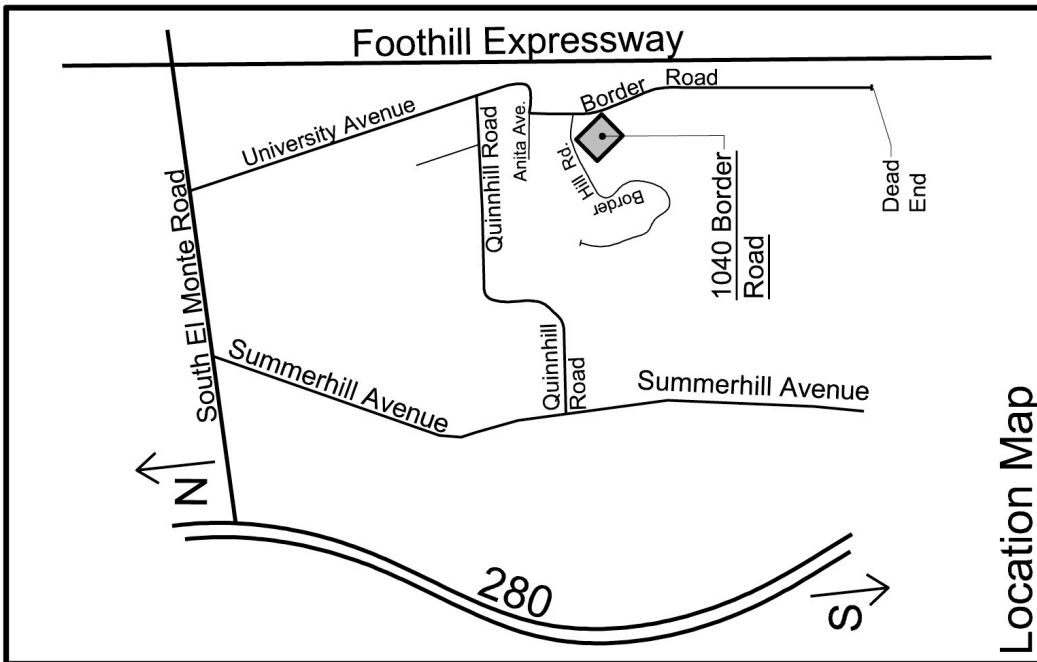
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Location Map

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