



### *April Meeting*

**Wednesday, April 11, 7:30 p.m.**

Dr. Russell Wagner, Publisher and Editor

“The Wonder of Mesembs: Ice Plants, Living Rocks and Flowering Stones”

Mesembryanthemums (aka ice plants, living rocks, and flowering stones) are the largest family of succulent plants. They range from robust ground covers to miniature mimicry plants. Most plants in this genus are native to South Africa, and a great many thrive in California climates. Dr. Wagner will present an overview of the genus, with tips on identification, growing and gardening with the unique seed capsules. He has some spectacular time-lapsed footage of the seed capsules, which open only when wet.

Russell Wagner publishes books with his press, Little Sphaeroid Press, specializing in books on succulent plants. He has edited the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*.

Russell received his Ph.D. in Chemistry from UC Berkeley. He has traveled the globe in search of succulents, from the desert Southwest, to Morocco and the Canaries, from South Africa and Namibia, to Mexico, Peru and Bolivia.

**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 April speaker, Dr. Russell Wagner, for **dinner on April 11** 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.

**Note** For those of you who save your past issues of Pacific Horticulture magazine, (re)read the Summer 1997 issue for a story by Russell Beatty, “Lessons from the Gardens of Alcatraz.” It’s a fascinating story that parallels beautifully with Shelagh Fritz’s presentation. ~Mark McCabe, author of “March Speaker Notes”

### *May Meeting*

**May 9** Renee Shepherd, “It’s a Seedy Business”

### *March Speaker Notes*

Shelagh Fritz, Project Manager, The Garden Conservancy.  
“The Gardens of Alcatraz”

There it is, that infamous speck of 22 ½ acres sitting smack dab in the middle of San Francisco Bay. A major tourist attraction, people from all parts come to visit “The Rock” to see where Al Capone, “Machine Gun” Kelly and “The Birdman” Robert Stroud once called home. The island is also home to over 200 species of plants, as our speaker Shelagh Fritz pointed out in her excellent presentation, “The Gardens of Alcatraz.”

Ms. Fritz began her talk with a brief historical narrative of the island, skillfully weaving in the horticultural endeavors of its inhabitants as it changed from a fort, to a military prison, and finally to a federal penitentiary. The Rock was just that – not much native soil or flora, a challenge to the dedicated gardening residents. Yet the numerous men and women, soldiers, wives, guards, and prisoners all contributed to what is now a little oasis in the Bay, as they moved in soil, seeds, and cuttings to coax life out of this otherwise wind-swept isle of infamy.

After the prison closed in 1963, the gardens slowly deteriorated to an overgrown wilderness. In 1972, Alcatraz became part of the newly created Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A partnership was subsequently formed between the Garden Conservancy, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the National Park Service to revitalize the Alcatraz Historic Gardens. In their twenty-year plan that got underway in 2003, trained volunteers, along with the gardening staff, are working to fully develop, preserve, and maintain the gardens. Tasks include historic interpretation and preservation, replanting, composting, and water catchment and containment. Cohabitation with native bird species, and continued funding, continue to be a challenge.

The importance of this project cannot be ignored. While the main attraction of Alcatraz is the prison, the gardens surrounding it bear testament to the profound meaning a garden can have. Life flourishes here, thanks to the unsung efforts of Alcatraz gardeners, past and present. Their work shows all visitors an island transformed from a stark hill of imprisonment to a place of natural beauty and freedom.  
~Mark McCabe

# Western Hort News

## Open House at Carman's Nursery—May 6

You are cordially invited to attend a 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at Carman's Nursery, 8470 Pharmer Road, Gilroy, CA, on May 6<sup>th</sup>, from 11am to 3pm. Please carpool—we have very limited parking! We will be serving homemade cookies and lemonade. (If you have a few extra lemons—please bring them to the April WHS meeting for me. Thanks!)

## Raffle Table—Bring your checkbook, it's auction time for Hot Plant Picks!

What a great selection of interesting plants were raffled last month! Thanks to the Board and others who brought these great plants for our Raffle Table. Our April meeting will have the plants from Hot Plant Picks, from the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show, for a silent action. It should be lots of fun. ~Roberta Barnes

## Hot Plant Picks Wrap-up—San Francisco Flower & Garden Show, March 21-25

Once again, we had a great Hot Plant Picks exhibit at the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show. My core team (Sherry & John, Jessie, Judy, Donna & Cheryl) did an amazing job of pulling everything together. There were over 120 plants donated by at least 21 nurseries. Booth volunteers came from WHS, Cal Hort, CRFG, Master Gardeners, and along with various friends, totaled forty different individuals. We hope this special display of cool plants inspires the gardening public to get out there and plant something! Be sure to attend the April WHS meeting for a chance to acquire some of these plants for yourself at the Hot Plant Picks Raffle! ~Nancy Schramm

## 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 [gngt.org](http://gngt.org).

## 28 Years Ago

Western Hort met April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1984, to hear Trevor Griffiths of New Zealand talk about "Old Roses."

In 1960, he started a very successful rose nursery and display garden in Timaru, NZ. He brought copies of his book *My World of Old Roses* to sell at the meeting. He is the author of seven other books, including the latest, a memoir entitled *Memory of Old Roses*, published in 2006. This brings back many fond memories for me, since Trevor and his wife Dixie were dear friends of my parents, Ed & Jean Carman, and always stayed with us on their visits to California.

In honor of the speaker, Ed Carman brought *Cotula (Leptinella) atrata ssp. luteola* (wow, I looked up an image of the flower and I'm sorry I don't have that one anymore!) and *Clanthus puniceus* (both from NZ); and Glenna Houle & Barbara Worl brought roses and old roses for plant discussion. There were also eleven *Rhododendron* blossoms from Richard Terrill, Miriam Miloradovitch, Rupert Gurnee, and Alan Reid in colors of white, yellow, pale purple, pink and red.

## Horticultural Calendar—April 2012

**Monterey Bay Master Gardener Smart Gardening Fair** April 14, 9 am-3 pm. Rio Road, Carmel, at Highway One. Details and directions at [smartgardening.org](http://smartgardening.org).

**Gamble Garden Spring Tour** April 27 & 28, 10 am-4 pm. 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto. [gamblegarden.org](http://gamblegarden.org). (\$45)

**Spring in Guadalupe Gardens** April 28, 10 am-3 pm. Guadalupe River Park, between Coleman Avenue and Taylor Street, San Jose. [grpg.org](http://grpg.org).

**Bay-Friendly Garden Tour**, April 29, 10 am-4 pm. Over twenty public and private gardens will be featured in geographic clusters throughout San Jose and Palo Alto. Several of the garden clusters will be walkable and/or bikeable. Register at [bayfriendlycoalition.org](http://bayfriendlycoalition.org). (\$10)

## Excerpt from *The Pacific Horticulture Book of Western Gardening* — *Anthology of Selected Articles from Ten Years of Pacific Horticulture Society magazine, edited by George Waters and Nora Harlow. Published in 1990.*

“The Moor in our Midst: Andalusian Interlude” is one of the forty short articles gathered together in this coffee-table-worthy volume. Originally published in the Winter 1982 issue of Pacific Horticulture magazine, this article piqued my interest with the first paragraph. Instead of a rave book review—consider this book praised to the skies!—here’s a short excerpt. Sentences have been deleted inside the quoted passages, but I didn’t put [...] everywhere that words were deleted.

“The romance of Spain and Latin America threaded itself into the architecture, gardens, and popular music of California during the early years of this century, and blossomed again in postwar years as a renaissance of Mediterranean styles. Under the lacy mantilla of imitated Andalusian charm, there is a sturdy heritage of culture and custom that seems tailor-made for California. Doughty padres who scouted the first trail north from San Diego marveled at the similarity of the country to their native land. Tawny, oak-studded hills, rainless summers, and temperate winters reminded the Franciscan missionaries of southern Spain. (Conversely, today, first-time California visitors remark with amazement at the likeness of Andalusia to their native scenery.)

[The author then gives a short of history of Andalusian invaders and their influence on culture and landscape; the majority of the article describes Andalusian landscaping and gardening, highlighting patio design and water use. Celts, Carthaginians and Romans came to Andalusia, followed by Vandals and Visigoths. From the early 700s to 1400s, Arabs made southern Spain their home, and by the 900s transformed the capitol to a place of learning, culture and fabulous gardens, with courtyard patios, fountains and cisterns, creating “an illusion of cool, leafy luxuriance.”]

“Spanish patios beckon one to enter. Even in neglect, patios have charm. Most appear well tended; they are seldom over-groomed [...] Small pockets of soil may accommodate trained vines or trees at the paving edges. Clusters of potted plants surround the most salient and ubiquitous of all patio features—the water source. [...]

Supplied by hidden cisterns, fountains create a humidified microclimate in each protected courtyard. Water spatters, dribbles, and spits on the leaves of nearby plants, keeping greenery fresh. Glazed tiles—or *azulejos*—line the fountain basin, where their sheen and color give even greater liveliness to the sparkle of moving water.

Parsimony is the key to water use in a thirsty land. Centuries of refinement allow Andalusians to have their cake and eat it too. [...] Clever underground channels deploy it first to the patio fountain, then into a catch basin, finally down through drains and tiles to the vegetable garden, or *huerta*, and perhaps to a nearby orchard. In the rainy season, well-placed water spouts spurt runoff from roofs into basins and runnels, which fill out-of-the-way wells for future use. The sound of water is good company. Its music creates a serene atmosphere for contemplation. Indeed, the musical quality of Spanish gardens has inspired compositions such as Manuel de Falla’s *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* and Francisco Tarrega’s *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*.

Choice of plants reflects Moslem heritage. Tall dark cypresses spike the skies from the corners of path crossings, just as suggested in early Arab horticulture manuals. An affection for scented flowers and aromatic herbs endures in today’s patios. The Moslems introduced citrus plants, via Persia, from southeast Asia, and today the very name Valencia conjures images of oranges and marmalade. [...] The ventures of Columbus and his followers yielded to the Spanish great botanical riches from the New World, and many of our own American plants now grow in the Mediterranean region like natives. [...]

You can borrow my copy of this fabulous book, or find it in book stores or online (Amazon: \$50 new, and thirty used copies starting from \$0.87—!!!!) I came across it at our recent book sale at Yamagami’s, and snapped it up! Thank you to whoever donated it. ~Marianne Mueller

### 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 Calhoon, Jon Craig, Abby Garner, Clayton Neece, Rosalie Shepherd, Judy Wong and Katie Wong.

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

Please send info for the May newsletter by April 18 to Marianne Mueller, [mrm@sonic.net](mailto:mrm@sonic.net) or 650-326-2029.

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



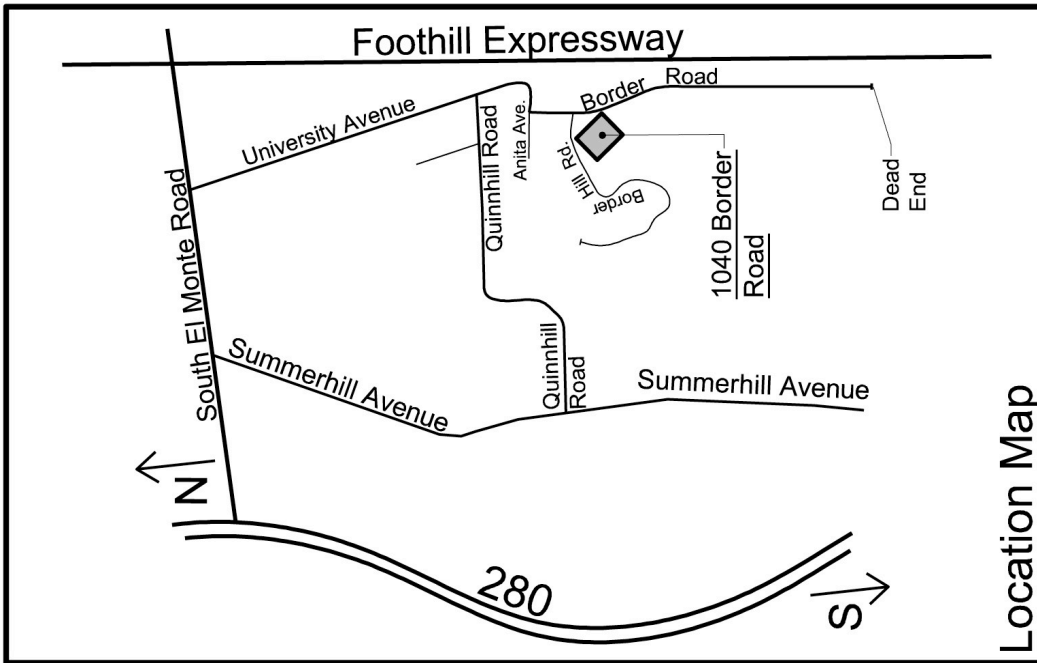
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