



Come grow with us...

SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY

101 NINTH AVENUE, SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

94401 (650) 579-0536

www.SanMateoArboretum.org

MEMBER NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

President's Message

Spring is a time of renewal and optimism. Hopefully, it is good harbinger of things to come this year. Many of our volunteers have been fully vaccinated, but continue to rely on all the recommended safety protocols while working at the Arboretum. The nursery and greenhouse are a reflection of their hard work.

Leo Tolstoy was quoted as saying "Spring is the time of plans and projects". This is certainly true at SMAS right now. Susan Carder and Archana Singh have been working with the city parks department on adding arbors on the east and west entrances to the rose garden, so we can plant climbing roses. We are diligently working on some improvements to the pump house interior. Over the next few weeks, we hope to paint and add new flooring. When we are able to reopen, the pumphouse will have a fresh new look.

Speaking of upcoming projects, our artist friend John Sutti will be back with new art work incorporating plants starting on Friday, April 16. His works will be outdoors only, until it is safer to allow people inside. To start, he will be open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., weather permitting.

Our seminars on zoom have been immensely popular, so please join us for our next ones. Grasses you'll grow and love will be presented by owner of Muchas Grasses, Bob Hornback and will be on April 11 starting at 1 p.m. Our annual seminar on how to plant, pot and prune Camellias will be hosted by Meg Milani and Gene Fleet on May 2 at 1 p.m.

As it becomes safer to venture out again, please consider volunteering at the arboretum or joining the Board. Thanks for your continued support of SMAS.

Carol Callison

www.sanmateoarboretum.org

650-579-0536

Our Covid Year at the Arboretum

Vice President's Message

February 2020 was a hopeful time at the Arboretum. The new north gate gave park visitors good visibility into the nursery and brought us many new customers. The art exhibit in the Victorian garden also brought in newcomers. We attracted younger, energetic volunteers allowing us to do more. We saw a healthy increase in sales over the previous year and we were looking forward to a fantastic spring

Then Covid-19 came and our world shut down. Looking back, it's hard to recall our state of mind at the time; we now know so much more about the virus. At first, social distancing was a small annoyance, but then it became deadly serious. We ceased operations on March 13.

Government guidelines did permit operations to keep a business viable. We took this to mean we could water the plants. We formed small crews to work every few days. And we sheltered-in-place ... at home mostly.

Over the next few weeks the small "watering" crews grew as more volunteers started showing up to handle the backload of work. It was hard to maintain social distancing. So, the Board issued Covid-19 safety rules to limit the number of volunteers on site. New work areas were created throughout the nursery to separate volunteers. Around the same time, new county guidelines were issued to allow limited retail sales for outdoor businesses. We began planning for a reopening.

It was a long and complicated process that took six weeks but we finally reopened for weekend sales on Saturday June 6. With minor tweaking, we continue to follow our Covid-19 protocols today. Our customers feel safe and very pleased and our sales have, in fact, been fantastic.

Despite the challenges, it was a successful year for SMAS. But it was also a transformational year. Within our gates, we renovated the demonstration garden, created a fern/shade garden and a serenity garden behind the pumphouse. We established a good working relationship with the new San Mateo landscape manager by helping to renovate the park entrance at 9th and Palm and also renovating the garden outside our north gate. And, after many years, the long-awaited refresh of the pumphouse is nearly complete.

The transformations included new technology as well. Of particular note, our education seminars are now conducted over Zoom video-conferencing allowing us to reach a much larger audience. And we have started outreach on many social media platforms to announce sale specials, request donations and seek volunteers.

This success was due to the small core of volunteers, both at the nursery and the rose garden, who continued to work during the pandemic. We know you're exhausted but we thank and salute you. Looking forward, as the pandemic winds down we hope to attract new volunteers and get on with the mission of SMAS.

Kevin Wilkinson

News From The Nursery by Julie Thoman:

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

The term may sound trite but at the moment it seems possible, We have been working with a skeleton crew for a year. Now some of our old timers are coming back as vaccinations and the possibility of schools opening are changing our lives. New volunteers are arriving with new skills and a fresh outlook. We may not be normal but we are getting there.

The time has come to thank our amazing commercial support that has carried us through a difficult year..

- **Edmond's Plaza Florist**, San Mateo - a long time donor of tired plants that need lots of refreshing. www.edmondsfloral.com
- **Every Bloomin' Thing**, beautifying the San Francisco Peninsula - a wide variety of great plants. www.ebtsf.com
- **Blooming Vase**, Burlingame - orchids. www.bloomingvase.com
- **Golden Gate Orchids**, Tom Perlite - lots of orchids. www.goldengateorchids.com
- **Peace Love Plant**, Zana Lugo - succulents, <https://peaceloveplant.com>

Please take a look at their websites. They mean a lot to us.

Now to get back to filling the shelves. We are dependent on you - our individual donors for our exceptional variety of plants. You constantly surprise us. We actually have fun trying to figure out your mystery plant donations but please help us out by giving us names for donated plants.

Most of them are plants that you don't see often in regular nurseries. In another day they would have been the ones you passed along neighbor to neighbor. As you do your spring cleaning don't throw out your old plants and trimmings. We turn them into divisions and cuttings to fill our shelves.

These are some of the new plants that will be arriving on our shelves over the next two months.

- **Dicliptera** - hummingbird plant or Uruguayan firecracker plant
- **Tuberous begonia** - if ours have wintered well we should have lots for summer display. They are great bedding plants and make colorful house plants.
- **Peruvian daffodil** - New to us. It is a mid summer bloomer with spectacular white flowers and a pleasant scent.

Take the time to look these up. You may find a new plant for your garden.

We accept donations from 10:30 to 12:30 Monday through Friday.. They are our workdays so we are not walk in open but if you will call ahead we will make arrangements to meet you. We are now open from 11 to 2 on Saturdays and Sundays but it is more difficult to accept donations with a floor full of customers

Please call or text us at 650-579-0536 or email us at info@sanmateoarboretum.org
Someone will take care of you.

Remember to stop by when you can. Something is always new.

LET'S GARDEN !



HOW TO GET AN ORCHID TO BLOOM AGAIN!

by Carmen Mahood

The most popular orchid we sell at the SMAS is the Phalaenopsis, often called the moth orchid. It grows naturally in jungles in Asia and Australia. This orchid appears exotic but is actually easy to care for. Once a rare plant, producers in Taiwan and the Netherlands have perfected orchid cloning on an industrial scale so Phalaenopsis are now the USA's favorite potted plant. When a customer buys them from SMAS they are in glorious full bloom. Phalaenopsis typically flower once a year. Many of our customers ask how they can keep the plant alive and healthy to bloom another year. Here are some tips:

1. When the orchid is done blooming and the spike has begun to brown, snip it off at the plant base and move the orchid to its permanent location. Provide filtered bright light, humidity, warmth, and no cold drafts.
2. Water weekly, but let the plant dry completely between watering. If the roots are turning brown you are watering too much. You want rich green, firm roots. Make sure your vase has a hole in the bottom so water drains to prevent root rot. Feed your orchid once a month with an orchid fertilizer. Orchids aren't heavy feeders but fertilizer makes a big difference in creating healthy roots and profuse blooms.
3. Phalaenopsis are triggered to bloom by temperature. A few cold nights - around 55 degrees, - are needed to stimulate a flower spike. (You can even place them outside for a few nights when temps fall into the 55-60 degree zone.) Once a bloom spike appears, rising out above the roots, increase fertilizing to every other week and stake the stem as it grows.

4. Inadequate light is the number one reason orchids refuse to rebloom. If your orchid never leaves the dim confines of your home or office a grow light may be needed to achieve flowers. These are easy to purchase online in a number of styles. If you use a grow light make sure you set it on a timer to simulate the cycle of natural daylight and darkness.

Hopefully your orchid will bloom annually for many years to come! If you have questions about orchid care contact our orchid expert, Sandra Charles at the Arboretum:

Ph. (650) 579-0536 ext 2 or leave a note for her when we are open: Sat/Sun 11 - 2 pm.

Here is an article about what the N, P, K on fertilizers means.

Written by our orchid lady, Sandra Charles.

UP, DOWN, ALL AROUND: Reading the Fertilizer Alphabet.

As winter starts to blow out and spring begin to swoop in, fertilizing your plants brings many questions. You might have seen the letters “N,P, K” on fertilizer labels and wonder what they mean. Here is an explanation of what they mean and why the balances you chose of each of these is important in fertilizing your plants.

Nitrogen (N)

- Responsible for leaf growth and for making plants greener.
- Plants that are almost all leaves need a lot of nitrogen, so look for a fertilizer with a high first number. The higher the number, the more nitrogen the fertilizer provides. This is why most lawn fertilizers are high in nitrogen, with formulations like 24-4-12 or 20-2-6. **(UP GROWTH)**

Phosphorus (P)

- Promotes root development, which helps to anchor and strengthen plants.
- It also **increases bloom** and fruit production. Tomatoes and root crops favor “snacks” of 5-10-10. **(DOWN GROWTH)**
-

Potassium (K)

- Also known as potash helps the plant fight off diseases and keeps it vigorous, enabling it to withstand extreme temperatures and ward off disease.
- Plants deficient in potash may display stunted leaves and fruit and be extra sensitive to drought. Because most soils already contain potassium, the third number in the fertilizer ratio tends to be the smallest. **(ALL AROUND GROWTH)**

Spring Summer 2021

If it weren't for color I would probably have never become a gardener. I've spent most of my career (over 50 years now) trying to understand flowering plants and how to grow them most effectively. What I've learned is that most plants flower and every Genus is different, having different shapes colors and sized flowers. Some flowering plants are easy to grow and some are nearly impossible outside of their natural habitat.

Fragrance is another very important factor in flowering plants. It is important for the plant because it attracts pollinating insects and in some cases people. Often with hybrids, the fragrance is sacrificed in order to genetically develop attractive color or floral show characteristics. Perfumes are made from flower fragrances and the study of scent is vast and old.

In getting to know more plants I learned that the structure and foliage of plants is incredibly various. Just in the categories of annuals, perennials and shrubs there were grass like and round leaves ovate, lanceolate, serrated, there were feathery leaves, some stiff and some easily moved by the slightest breezes. There are also variegations in leaves and different patterns of coloration that complicates and enhances.

Of course care and cultivation technique varies among species and consideration of light and moisture is very important. The pH, acidity and alkalinity of the soil effects plants differently. Many of you know that Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Camellias and Hydrangeas prefer acid soil.

At this time of year color takes priority. Spring and Summer is when the most flowers of the whole year are out and a little information can help enormously in making the most of the season. Here are ten tips for planting and caring for your very own floral show.

1. Make planting beds, borders, boxes and pots ready for new plants. Add amendments like compost, manure, peat moss and fresh soil wherever you plan new plantings. Dig them in well and smooth over the surface so it looks tidy.
2. Visit several nurseries and take notes and photos of their inventory. Choose colors and sizes of plants that you like. For every different type of plant that appeals to you also photograph the name tag and any growing instructions that you can find. If there is no name tag ask someone there to tell you what the plant is and how to grow it.
3. Make notes of sun /shade requirements, size at maturity, flowering season (you want Spring/Summer), spacing and anything else you can find out while at the nursery. I do not recommend buying any plants on this first visit.
4. When you get home after taking yourself out to a nice lunch which you deserve after all that research, organize your notes and photos. Look up the different plants you liked in your Sunset Western Garden Book. This is still the first book I recommend to my garden coaching clients. Start thinking about what you will buy, how many of each kind and color of plant and where exactly you will plant them.
5. Make a drawing (if you can draw) of your plant placement plan. This you will need when speaking to your gardener or when you are getting down and dirty planting yourself. Realize that without a plan the results may not be anywhere near your original idea. They may be better but probably not.
6. Now is the time to shop for your plants. You've done your research, made a list, know how much you are going to spend and have a vehicle big enough to carry it all.
7. If you choose to have your gardener pick up the plants for you (they usually have a truck) be sure your instructions are clear and that he /she knows exactly what you want. If you don't communicate clearly (with a list and photos) you may be shocked at what shows up in your garden.
8. Plant correctly making sure your spacing is accurate and that you use all the plants you planned. Leftover plants often die somewhere unused or get planted randomly causing a messy look over all. Besides that, plants cost quite a bit and you don't want to waste money.
9. Plant high, preventing rot. Whatever you do don't plant too deep. A big mistake many gardeners do is to think if they plant deeply that new roots will come out of buried stems. On some plants like geraniums and tomatoes this can be true sometimes but more often it's not. Plant your plants at the exact depth or a little higher than what they were in the pot or six pack you bought them in. This way they will settle to the correct depth for the longest growing potential.
10. Learn to fertilize. This is as important for a good show of color throughout the season as anything else. If you only use organic fertilizers great. Know that you will need more to get the same results. For all fertilizer use the more you study the better. Don't just read the labels on fertilizers in the nursery. Do homework on your specific plants. Different plants require different fertilizer plans.

Good gardening. Jack McKinnon is a Garden Coach and worked for Sunset magazine for 12 years. He can be reached at 650-455-0687 or at jack.mckinnon.hmb@gmail.com

San Mateo Arboretum Society

Seminars, Nursery, & More

NOTE: Due to social distancing requirements and space constraints in the pumphouse, the seminars will be web-based using Zoom. **The pumphouse will not be open.** A day before the presentation you will be emailed a link and meeting ID. To attend via Zoom you will need to preregister. You will be able to sign in 15 minutes early to confirm that the audio and video connection is working.

Questions: education@sanmateoarboratum.org or call 650-579-0536 x3.

GRASSES YOU'LL LOVE TO GROW via ZOOM. FREE!

Sunday, April 11, 1 - 2 or 2:30 pm.

Registration Required: www.sanmateoarboratum.org/classes--events.html or call 650-579-0536 x3.

Bob Hornback, owner of Muchas Grasses, will be presenting a truly dazzling range of his favorite varieties of grasses. He'll tell you where and how to grow them.

CAMELLIAS: PRUNING, POTTING, and PLANTING via Zoom. FREE!

Sunday, May 2, 1 - 2:30 pm

Registration Required: www.sanmateoarboratum.org/classes--events.html or call 650-579-0536 x3.

Gene Fleet & Meg Milani's presentation will be informative for experts and novices alike. They will discuss how camellias can be part of your garden, either large or small, and will give you tips to successfully grow them in your garden. www.camelliaspcs.org

SEEDING DEMYSTIFIED - How to be Successful in Starting New Plants From Seed via Zoom. FREE!

Sunday, June 6, 1 - 2 pm

Registration Required: www.sanmateoarboratum.org/classes--events.html or call 650-579-0536 x3.

Master Gardeners, Judith Dean & Virginia Martin will teach us the basics of growing from seed along with some tips and hacks that make it cheaper and easier to be successful.

NURSERY PLANT SALES: OPEN from 11 AM to 2 PM on Saturday & Sunday -- WEATHER PERMITTING. We may be under new shelter in place restrictions, so before coming call 579-0536 x2 or check our website: www.SanMateoArboretum.org.

THE ZOETIC TAPESTRY PROJECT

Reopening April 16, 10am - 3pm Friday, Saturday & Sunday. Weather permitting

John Sutti will be back with new art work incorporating plants.

Location: outdoors in the San Mateo Arboretum Society garden.

**San Mateo Central Park, Kohl Pumphouse,
101 Ninth Ave, San Mateo. Enter at Ninth Ave. & Palm Ave.
www.SanMateoArboretum.org; (650) 579-0536**