



Come grow with us...

SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY

101 NINTH AVENUE, SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

94401 (650) 579-0536

www.SanMateoArboretum.org

MEMBER NEWSLETTER

October - December 2021

President's Message

As we head into fall, it's a good time to reflect on where we've been and where we are going. Having completed the pump-house interior upgrade, we have been working on new improvement projects. We want to make the greenhouses more functional for our volunteers and welcoming to our customers. We are working on upgrades to the propagation greenhouse in the near future. Our lovely Victorian gate needs a refresh and that is in the works as well.

None of these projects would be possible without the support of this organization's amazing volunteers, members and donors. At our recent member party, we awarded a collective volunteer of the year award to all the volunteers who worked to keep the nursery, greenhouses and gardens productive and well-maintained during our 2020-2021 fiscal year. There were too many exceptional volunteers to honor just one person. However, we did present a special commendation to Ed Pease, who replanted the Northgate and Butterfly-Hummingbird gardens with California natives. Polly Hoover Taylor, a longtime member and supporter was recognized with a lifetime achievement for her many contributions.

On October 4, SMAS will be presenting to the city council. If you are available, log into the 5:30 p.m. meeting. We should have about 5 minutes to talk about our longtime collaboration with the city parks department and all SMAS has accomplished over the past 46 years.

To name a few major accomplishments;

- Saved the dilapidated pump-house barn and converted it into SMAS headquarters, adding a kitchen, bathrooms, office and space for conducting education seminars and workshops.



The back of pump-house prior to refurbishment

The front of the pump-house today



- The iconic rose garden and gazebo were added to the park in 1990. The garden has been totally organic since 2011, where only compost and mulch are used to feed the roses. In 2017, SMAS added a modified drip irrigation to encircle each rose bush. This reduced both water usage and weeds. Susan Carder has managed and orchestrated the volunteer training program and garden maintenance for many years, resulting in a healthy, beautiful and well-loved destination for our community and visitors.



- As a result of some challenging years plagued by drought, SMAS added the Butterfly-Hummingbird Garden, located directly behind the Rose Garden. The plants are natives and require little water, as well as drawing needed pollinators into the park.
- We recently donated \$17,000 to replant and refurbish and the city park's 2 main entrances on 9th and Palm and Laurel.

9th and Palm project



- What's next for SMAS? We are drafting our future plans. We plan to expand programs to educate children in gardening. Our board also has some exciting ideas to share our knowledge of plants with the community going forward.

Have a wonderful fall season and stay safe!

Carol Callison

president@sanmateoarboretum.org; 650-579-0536

Climate, Pollution, and Your Garden

by Pam Peirce

As it becomes more apparent that global climate change is affecting our day-to-day weather, gardeners are seeing our special interest in preventing rising global temperatures. Winters that are not reliably cold are having two negative effects in our gardens. One is that garden insect pests are becoming dormant later in the season. Several nights in the 40s or lower, which used to be common by mid-October, will force chard leaf miners, cabbage white butterflies, and other pests into dormancy. Recently, these cold nights have been arriving later, so sometimes pests are still active well into November.

The second is that mild winters may not provide enough chilling hours for temperate plants, such as flowering cherries and apples. Two recent winters were mild, especially in February, resulting in a recent spring when some flowering cherries did not bloom at all. The warm spells in winter and the overall mild fall and winter caused my apple tree to bloom in the fall and try to set fruit over winter, then bloom again in spring. And the second blooming didn't happen all at once, as it should have, a sign of insufficient winter chilling hours.

In recent summers and falls, wildfires have been rampant in our state, with their intensity and frequency increased by higher temperatures as well as by the unstable air that has created dry lightning. Last year, smoke and ash brought a deep red sky to San Francisco—a dark day, on which no plants would grow. We humans had trouble breathing in the smoky air for many days, and worried that our food crops might be unhealthy to eat. When we did venture into our gardens, we could see white ash on crop leaves. My research revealed that, outside of blocking sunlight, this poor air quality did not damage plants or their edibility. We can just wash it off and eat the crops. (For extra cleaning, you can swish harvested vegetables in 6 cups of water to a tablespoon of vinegar, then rinse them in plain water, but the difference will be slight.)

Plants are more often damaged by the ordinary smog that may be invisible or create a brownish haze. Smog consists mostly of nitrogen oxides and lower atmospheric ozone (O₃). (Ozone is a good thing high in the atmosphere. But here near the earth's surface, it is not.) Smog chemicals are small enough to enter the pores (stomates) on leaf undersides and interfere with the chemistry of photosynthesis. Food growing in smog is still fine to eat, but the plants will grow more slowly, which will make food gardeners, who are patiently waiting for big heads of broccoli and big sweet tomatoes, very unhappy.

Plants growing in smoggy air may not look different, but if smog pollution is high, some plants develop “stippling” on leaves—little dark dots that represent dead cells. If the smog continues, spots may merge and leaves die. (For photos and videos on ozone damage, see the following link: <https://ncar.ucar.edu/what-we-offer/education-outreach/public/ncar-explorer-series/ozone-gardens.>)

Oxides of nitrogen are generated when petroleum products are burned in autos, gas-driven lawnmowers, generators, industrial processes, etc. The ozone forms from the oxides of nitrogen in the presence of sunlight and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as paint thinner or petroleum fumes.

As bad as it is that smog reduces plant growth, thus reducing the production of food crops, it is worse for our overall environment, since a lowered rate of photosynthesis means a plant removes less carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air, and we know that increasing atmospheric CO₂ is a driver of global climate change, so it's smart to combat air pollution. Ways to do this include reducing our personal dependence on petroleum products or materials that release VOCs (Check product packaging for VOC-free alternatives). Look at my blog, <https://goldengategarden.typepad.com>, for more information and links about air pollution damage to plants and ways to help clear the air.



Photo by David Goldberg.

The author's garden on San Francisco's "red day," last September 9th (caused by smoke from wildfires.)

Pam Peirce is the author of the classic regional food gardening book, *Golden Gate Gardening*, taught horticulture at City College of San Francisco for many years, and writes a monthly column for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

<https://www.pampeirce.com>

NEWS from the NURSERY: An Extra Season

by Julie Thoman:

In California we have the regular four seasons but we can sneak in an extra - the fall planting season. Many perennials prefer fall planting. This is especially true for spring and early summer bloomers. The ground conditions are just right. The soil is warm. The shorter days and lower temperatures make for perfect conditions for root growth. Normally we can count on rain to help but since the last two years have been drought years you should plan on weekly watering.

Some plants prefer fall planting. Bergenia will reward you with great leaves and pretty blue flowers. All ferns appreciate the less intense sun and the cooler fall weather.

Many of the best bloomers can be planted now. Dianthus and penstemon will give you masses of bloom and make attractive cut flowers. Geraniums in California are great winter bloomers especially the Martha Washingtons and the ivy geraniums. Other good fall planting choices are coral bells, dusty miller, rosemary and candytuft.

The rules sometimes seem to change daily but currently both the north and south gate are open. You can browse the Victorian Garden and enjoy the art from the Zoetic Tapestry Project which uses plants in much of their art. You will still need a mask but by now we are used to that. We live in an ever changing world but it is never dull.

A big event for us - the Master Gardeners are back. Master Gardeners are volunteers who go through hours of training to get certified. They can answer questions on soil types, identify plants and identify diseases and their treatment. They also answer general garden questions. One rule - if bringing a sick plant to be checked put it in a sealed plastic bag. We usually bring them a wagon or two of mystery plants. We have missed them. They have solved a lot of problems for us. They will be in the rose arbor in the Victorian Garden on Sunday, October 3 and November 7 from 11 am - 2pm.

The last few months we have received exceptional support from individual donors. We have received some brand new plants for our shelves and lots of much needed pots. Please keep it up. We receive **donations from 10:30 to 12:30 weekdays**. Please call ahead 650-679-0536

NURSERY PLANT SALES - 11 AM to 2 PM on Saturday & Sunday.

HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON

San Mateo Arboretum Society

Seminars, Workshop, Nursery, & More

All Sunday Garden seminars and workshops are web-based using Zoom and will be recorded and viewable by all those registered even if you miss the live presentation.

Questions: education@SanMateoArboretum.org

SUCCULENT TOPPED PUMPKIN WORKSHOP with Zana Lugo. Via Zoom

Sunday, Oct 3, 1 - 2 pm

Fee: SMAS members: \$25/pumpkin; nonmembers: \$35/pumpkin. Register required: www.sanmateoarboretum.org/classes--events.html or call 650-579-0536 x3.

You purchase a 6-8 inch wide pumpkin & we will supply you with a kit containing all the materials you need to decorate your pumpkin at home. You will be emailed dates & times when kits can be picked up at the SMAS.

MASTER GARDENER PLANT CLINIC. FREE!

Sunday, October 3 and November 7.

Come to the Arboretum anytime between 11am - 2pm for this walk-in plant clinic.

<http://smsf-mastergardeners.ucanr.edu/plant-clinics/>

AUTUMN DESIGN for Children. FREE!

Saturday October 9 And Sunday October 10,

Drop in to the Arboretum anytime between 11am - 1:30pm

Decorate one of our small jade plants any way you wish. We will have some supplies but please bring your own too. (Be creative -- ideas include ribbons, other plants, sewing items, decorative items, small pictures, etc.) Your creations will be on display in the arboretum. Each plant will receive an award before you take it home. For children ages 5 and up with accompanying adult.

ABC's OF SETTING UP A DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM with Frank Niccoli. FREE! Via Zoom

Sunday, Nov 7, 1 - 2:30 pm

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

Drip systems can only be sustainable if they save water, irrigate correctly, and are only installed once. Join Frank Niccoli to understand what you need to purchase, how do you install it, and how do you calibrate your new forever drip system. You owe it to your plants to do it right.

WREATH MAKING WORKSHOP via ZOOM.

Sunday, December 5, 11 am - noon

Fee: SMAS members: \$30/wreath; nonmembers: \$40/wreath.

Reservations required: sanmateoarboretum.org/classes--events or call 650-579-0536 x3.

NURSERY PLANT SALES. Open 11 AM to 2 PM on Saturday & Sunday.

Enter the north gate & wear a mask. Payment is by credit or debit card & Apple Pay. No cash. Check our website for our latest news. www.sanmateoarboretum.org or call 579-0536.

THE ZOETIC TAPESTRY PROJECT. Open 10am - 3pm Friday, Saturday & Sunday.

John Sutti is back with new art work incorporating plants.

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



SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY
101 Ninth Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94401

FIRST CLASS

SUCCULENT TOPPED PUMPKIN WORKSHOP
with Zana Lugo, via ZOOM

SUNDAY, October 3, 2021, 1 - 2pm

Registration required:

www.sanmateoarboratum.org/classes--events.html

or call 650-579-0536 x3

While any advice or article in this newsletter is believed to be true and accurate, neither the authors or editor can accept any responsibility for errors or omissions that may have been made.
