



SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY

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SPRING 2016

UNSUNG HEROINE

In keeping with efforts to acknowledge our great volunteers (of which there are many), we would like to recognize the many contributions of Susan Carder. In addition to her thoughtful, effective management of the rose garden, Susan is also in charge of the education committee. She is largely responsible for converting the rose garden to 100% organic care and making our monthly seminars more relevant and popular by securing many top speakers known for their knowledge of sustainable gardening practices.

We can't stop there, because for many years Susan has also led the search for gardens for our annual tour. This is no easy task. Susan has been intrepid in her pursuit of diverse and interesting gardens, enabling SMAS to put together successful tours over the past ten+ years.

Susan's constant care and attention to a myriad of details, such as listing our events in Next Door and the SM Parks and Recreation Schedule keeps the community engaged with our organization. She goes about all these tasks so quietly and methodically, we sometimes do not realize how important she is to SMAS.

Susan and the Garden Selection Committee have outdone themselves again this year, so please mark Saturday, May 7 on your calendar for the 2016 Hillsborough-San Mateo Garden Tour!

NOTES FROM THE GREENHOUSE

REWARD YOURSELF! It may be bitter cold or raining outside, but the greenhouses feel like spring! The beginning of a New Year is always a great time to chase away those winter blues by adding a little excitement to your house plant or orchid collection! Stop by, visit and enjoy the plants and warmth, our greenhouses are worth the trip during any season. Spice up your collection from among our many species and hybrids. Our nursery tables are filled with succulents, geraniums, perennials, shrubs, ferns, canna lilies, California natives, rose bushes, salvias, vines and plants from our Butterfly-Hummingbird garden. If you're not sure how to go about it one of our talented and knowledgeable Greenhouse volunteers will be happy to assist you with selections suitable for your needs.

Succulents are a family of plants with thick, fleshy leaves that trap and hold water, making them easy to care for and hard to kill. They're the camel of the plant world, if you will. They're also the botanical star of the social media world, the backdrop to our table-scapes and the greenery accenting landscaping photos. Succulents are not your typical houseplant. Sought after for their unique texture, colors, variety and versatility, they add visual interest to their surroundings. Grouping them together in a container is a great way to bring a slice of summer color inside during the long winter months. It's easy when you follow our tips on how to care for succulents.

Growing Succulents Indoors

If you long for indoor greenery but haven't succeeded with houseplants, consider succulents. They are easy-to-please houseguests and survive indoor conditions with minimal effort. Succulents survive dry indoor environments thanks to special adaptations – fleshy leaves, thick stems or enlarged roots – that allow the plants to hoard water. Most people are familiar with cacti, which are a type of succulent. But succulents also include a host of other plants grown primarily for eye-catching foliage.

How to Care for Succulents

- Provide succulent plants with full sun or direct bright light.
- Ideal temperatures are between 70-85 degrees during the day and no lower than 40 degrees at night.
- Do not over water. A light misting of water with a spray bottle once or twice a week is adequate for most succulents.
- Dry soil is necessary. Succulents should be potted in a fast-draining mixture that's designed for cacti and succulents. Modifying basic potting mix with approximately half potting mix to half Perlite or Vermiculite (both products may be found in gardening supply stores) will increase aeration and drainage and will work fine as a medium for succulents.

Our succulent nursery tables offer a variety of succulent plants in pots and beautiful dish gardens arranged by some of our Greenhouse volunteers.

REMINDER

1-Gallon Black Pots/Containers are always needed:

The Greenhouse always welcomes donations of 1 gallon black containers for replanting. Please drop off your used 1 gallon pots at the Greenhouse (Tuesday, Thursday or Sunday 10a-12p) or leave by the gate if not open. Enter at 9th & Palm Avenues.





PRUNING TREES AND SHRUBS

Here are some tips on how to successfully care for our trees and shrubs. In addition to our flowers, trees and shrubs comprise a large percentage of our gardens and it is important that we give them the best care to enable them to continue to flourish and grow.

We thin to:

- * increase air and light to the interior leaves for better photosynthesis.
- * improve branching out for fuller growth.
- * maintain the shape - a must for appearance and growth restrictions.
- * decrease breakage in high winds.
- * decrease weight of branches. A heavy branch is more apt to break, causing damage to the tree and possibly any structure if may fall on.

How to make the cut:

- * just above an outward-facing bud.
- * angle the cut slanting it away from the bud - do not leave a stub.
- * remove up to 1/3 of shrub branches; if the shrub has been neglected or it hasn't been pruned for a while, lower removal could help rejuvenate it.

Timing:

- * know when the tree or shrub blooms for best results the following season. Many plants grow on old wood and these can get by with very little pruning.
- * If in doubt, check first. With the exception of roses, many shrubs and trees should not be pruned in fall or early winter as stored food and energy must be protected. There are several good books on the subject or a trip to the library can be a benefit.

A well cared for shrub or tree will not only benefit the health of the plant but the visual appearance will be greatly enhanced.

Keeping notes on your experiences with the various trees and shrubs in your garden will help with future care and will eliminate any possible errors or confusion as it is so easy to forget from year to year.



WINTER ROSE CARE

The illustration on the next page serves two purposes - the first is this is a perfect example of what a new, bareroot should look like and, second, after pruning, this is how a completed bush looks done. While simplified, the illustration shows where to make your cuts. Notice all canes remaining are sturdy and all in-growing growth and spindly growth is removed. Along the canes that are to remain, the black projections are bud eyes and, as you can see, they are growing toward the outside. That is what you want.

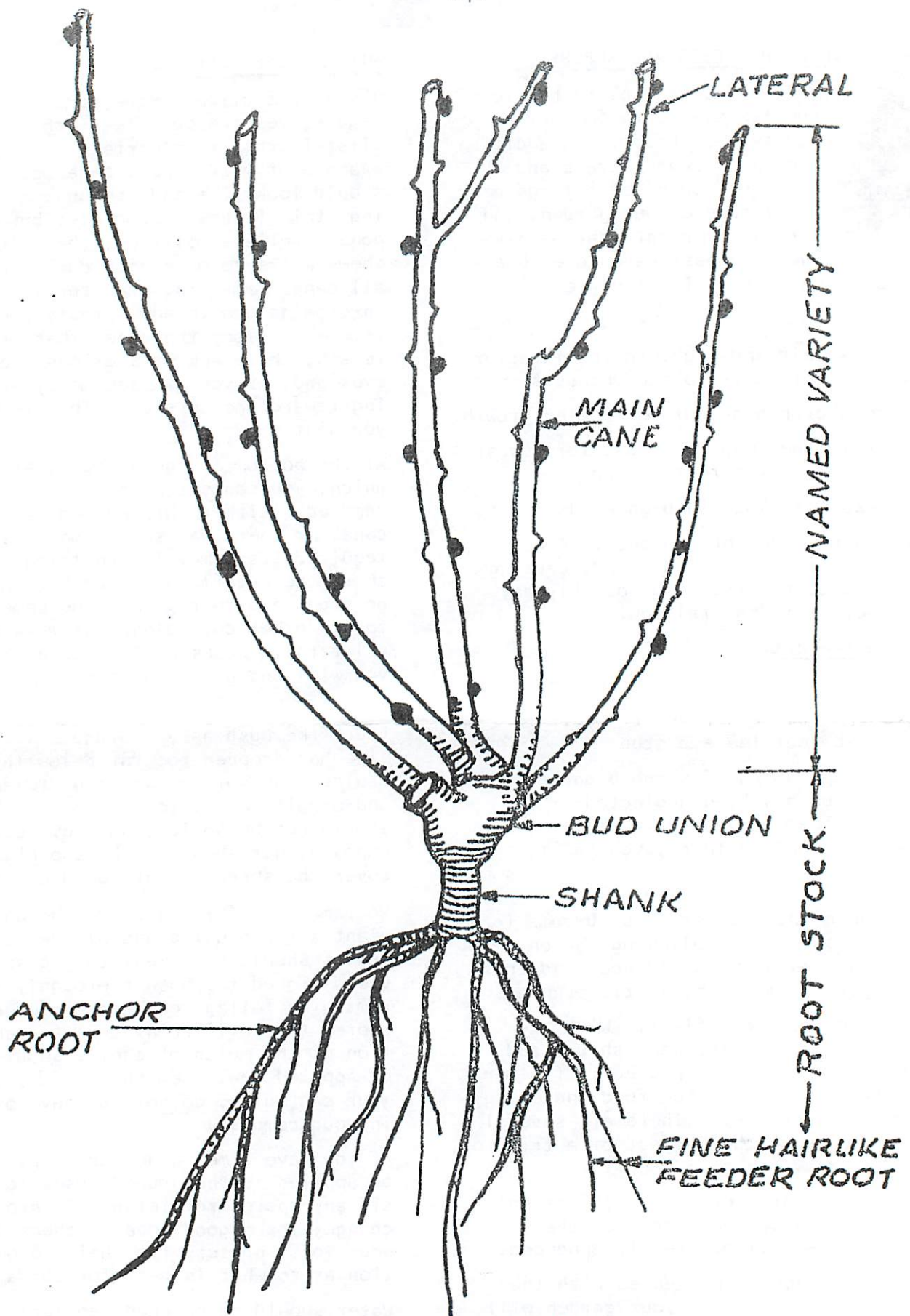
At the bottom of the picture, at the bud union, you can see a large cane has been removed. Either this was not a healthy cane, or there was some other issue that required its removal. Anything large should be cut flush to the bud union - no stubs are to remain. The same applies to all other cuts along the main cane or a lateral. Stubs will cause dieback and you will end up losing that cane, as dieback can continue down.

Check the bush as you prune. If the soil line has dropped too far below the shank, replace the soil to an inch to an inch-and-a-half to the top of the shank. It should not be so low that any roots are exposed, nor should it be too high to cover the shank. That could cause rot.

No remaining foliage should be on the plant after pruning and all dead, fallen leaves should be immediately disposed of. Clean around the bush thoroughly - any remaining foliage can harbor fungal spores that will reinvade. A reapplication of the mulch of choice should also be applied now. Remember! If you make your own mulch, do not put any rose growth in your compost.

If you have time, a dormant spray should be applied to the pruned roses to kill off any spores remaining. As products change, its a good idea to check with your local nursery for their recommendation as to what is best for our area.

Water should be checked regularly as roses need water even after pruning and we can't depend on the rains we get.



TYPICAL GRADE #1 BARE ROOT ROSE

C SHAW

(Picture courtesy of the San Francisco Rose Society.)



While we don't want to encourage invasive and/or destructive residents to our gardens, it is an advantage to bring wildlife to the garden.

Birds are the first we should encourage to take up residence in our gardens. We probably

already have many birds either residing in the garden or passing through. They eat bugs and seeds and are cheerful little visitors.

If you don't have the time or the space to start a whole new garden, expand what you have with containers. Hanging baskets encourage hummingbirds and offer a good source of nectar. These versatile pots and containers are available in many sizes, shapes and colors, fit anywhere and are easily moved about to take advantage of the sun's seasonal changes.

Plant natives wherever you can - most natives are wildlife-friendly. You can find almost everything to suit your particular environment and they feed and shelter most of the creatures we want to come live in our gardens; i.e., birds, butterflies, bees, etc. We all have squirrels and, for the most part, they are relatively garden-friendly; they, too, can benefit from native plants.

Consider a tree. The right tree can offer a lot of benefit, including nectar in the spring, places for birds especially to nest in the heat of summer and berries in later months. A good source of shade eventually for some of those shade-loving plants we'd like to grow.

Add a birdbath. By offering a water source, birds will naturally gravitate toward it and provide them with the much-needed water they require, especially in the heat of summer. A birdbath can be a focal point; an attractive one at that.

With the right plants, pesticides can be greatly eliminated - if not eliminated entirely. The birds and others you want to encourage do not need the danger of pesticides as they forage and explore the garden. Bees especially are harmed more with the use of pesticides than with any other environmental condition. We can all agree that we are seeing a great decrease in our bee population and we need them to pollenate as they fly from plant to plant; bud to bud.

While we want to encourage our little wild birds, we have yet to see a bird feeder that is squirrel-proof. If you don't mind sharing seeds with squirrels, any good bird feeder will do; however, when the squirrels invade the bird feeder, they are usually very sloppy and seeds get thrown about.

This is the perfect set-up for any rats in the area to come to dinner and, once they find a permanent feast, they will be hard to discourage and eliminate. With the proper plants, birds will have a good, reliable source of forage and shelter.

We've touched the value of hummingbirds recently, but not enough can be said of these charming little birds. They are one of the birds we should encourage - and their needs are negligible; provide a feeder, plant red - they love red and plant any plant that is a heavy nectar-bearing plant (those usually with a deep throat). Think columbine, phlox, salvia, fuchsia and verbena, to name a few. These little cuties love nothing better than to fly through a mist, so as you water, either with a hose by hand or a sprinkler, take the time to watch them fly through the mist.

As a down side to the above article, we are faced with the problem of what to do with the ants we attract while trying to encourage our desirable friends to come.

Some solutions (and old wives' tales?) we've heard - place orange peels near the hummingbird feeder; supposedly they don't like the color orange.

Use sidewalk chalk to draw a line around any feeder; they aren't supposed to cross a line of chalk.

Skin-So-Soft works well. Rub along the cord from where it is attached to the base of the feeder. The aroma does not appeal to most ants.

Be sure your feeder isn't dripping or leaking. Ants will flock to the area and perhaps to the feeder as well.

Experiment with household detergents. Some will discourage ants and, rubbed along the cord, will keep the ant away.

Garden Tips Winter 2016

What is the difference between Gardeners and Good Gardeners? We're going to look at some fine details about gardening this month. I don't want to go into what makes a Great Gardener at this point, just the subtle and not so subtle differences between most of us gardeners and the really good ones. One thing is clear to me and may be your experience as well, and that is that length of time gardening doesn't necessarily make a good Gardener.

Another thing to get out of the way is the myth of a "green thumb". Yes some people have better dexterity or memory for latin names of plants. Some can even diagnose problems like too much water, too little water, nutrient deficiencies and infestations of vertebrate and insects without even seeing the culprit. These are learned skills and depending on ones ability to recall names or symptoms most can learn them or learn where to look up the answers, I have and I tend to be a slow learner yet once I know something it usually sticks. Also, if you are reading this column you are most likely a gardener. This simplifies the tips I have to write this month because what it takes to be a gardener is an interest in plants and plant culture and you already have that. Now let's look at what it takes (in my opinion) to be a Good Gardener.

1. Good Gardeners tend to have a passion for certain elements in gardening be it design, color schemes, textures or types of foliage, flowers, or species of plants. They seem to get excited when you mention something interesting in a garden they are working in that they personally take pride in establishing. This excitement can be subtle because high art is not always obvious to the casual viewer. In other words Good Gardeners know Good Gardeners when they see or meet them.
2. Good Gardeners may seem excentric. I met the head gardener at the Jardine de Plants in Paris when he was being interviewed for an English television show and after the interview was able to talk with him for a few minutes. Note it was quite a short conversation. What I learned about his skills, I could see in the gardens but what I learned about him I had to look at him and notice his character. He wore an apron with pockets, smoked a recurve pipe, had a handlebar mustache and if I recall correctly, had a very interesting hat the likes of which I had never seen before. This may be normal for Parisian head gardeners but to me it appeared a bit out of the ordinary. I considered him a Good Gardener.
3. Good Gardeners have a love of plants and generally know many more genus and species than most people they know. When they gather they could almost carry on in latin.
4. Often when I talk with gardeners I respect they have stories to tell. Stories of other gardens and gardeners from long ago and near and far. We can talk easily for an hour about nurseries we have known and nurseries we recommend to visit often. We talk about estates and small cottages equally exciting because of the gardens that surround them.
5. Good Gardeners have a passion for certain species of plants. Stories are told and sometimes written of the first time this plant was seen. I can remember maybe twenty years ago seeing a *Wigelia variegata* in the San Francisco Arboretum (then it was Strybing Arboretum) and it was in full bloom under a *Magnolis stellata*. I was literally weak in the knees at seeing that plant. Having told that to some other gardeners they just smiled and said "I know".
6. Many really good gardeners have way more books on gardening than is really healthy. Hundreds of them taking up shelf space and cherished like old friends. "Someday I will read it, so I just can't let go of it yet" they say. Personally I think it will probably be a great find for who ever gets them when I am gone but having been the recipient of some of these collections it often is not.
7. Good Gardeners are in demand. There are so many gardens and so many potential great gardens that the Good Gardeners are booked often into old age. Their knowledge is valuable and their passion contagious. Property owners who really know the value of these artists (excentric or not) are wise to hold on to them.
8. Being busy with the gardens of clients and friends makes it somewhat difficult to have time with ones own garden. This is good news and bad news. Good Gardeners dream of their perfect garden. Often from a young age thinking of the orchard, rose arbors, seating in carefully designed meadows with surrounding collections of their favorite flora and fauna. Yet they seldom realize completely these gardens let alone have the time to maintain them. For we all know Gardeners and Good Gardeners alike that gardens take much care.
9. So, how does one become a Good Gardener? I think, if you have read this far, you are probably already one. Keep up the good work.
10. And lastly a little advice to the Good Gardeners out there. Let go of some of your books, somebody else needs them more than you. Be gentle with yourself, buy a hot tub and soak. Keep dreaming and telling your stories for we all need to hear them. And when you are old and cannot easily get down on your knees to cultivate your beds, take a child by the hand into the garden and teach her or him how to pull the weeds. Good Gardening!

Jack McKinnon is a Garden Coach. He can be reached at [650-455-0687](tel:650-455-0687) or by email at: Jack@jackthegardencoach.com. His Website is Jackthegardencoach.com

What to do with Christmas plants now? They don't need to die or be discarded.



Poinsettia - Keep plants in a sunny window and avoid sudden temperature changes. Keep the soil moist but don't let water stand in pot saucer. When the leaves start to fall in late winter or early spring, cut stems back to two buds and reduce watering to a minimum. Store in a cool place until late spring. When danger of frost has past, set pot in sun outdoors. They will survive a winter if kept in a well-protected area that is completely sun-free. They will only rebloom when they can experience long nights - don't keep where artificial light will disturb their dark period, which is usually a period of 14 hours. Can be planted outdoors after adapting to their period of darkness.

Living Christmas trees should be put outdoors shortly after the new year in a protected spot. Keep watered lightly. Remove any decorations or ornamentation. Once adapted to the outdoors, it can be planted in a larger container or in the ground. Depending on the type of tree allow for future growth. Soil should be able to drain well.

Phalaenopsis come in all colors and are a very popular gift over the holidays. These are strictly a house plant (or greenhouse plant) and, contrary to common belief, are not at all hard to bring back into bloom. If kept in a warm, well-lit room, they will eventually bloom again on their own. They should be fed lightly from time to time. Obviously, the best place to keep them if the area lends itself to their growing there, is near a kitchen window if not in direct sunlight. Another way to encourage them to bloom again is to cut the stalk after the last bloom has fallen. Go down the stalk to a node (about three or four inches from soil level) and cut at an angle about 1/4-inch above node. Sometime, new growth will appear and another stalk will start to grow. Patience is key to returning them to bloom, but well worth it. Keep soil moist but not too wet and if they came in a decorative paper sleeve, remove immediately as there is usually no drainage and, if water collects, root rot can occur. If you prefer to leave the decorative sleeve on for appearance, take the pot from the sleeve, cut the bottom of the sleeve off and reposition the orchid. Be sure no water is standing in a saucer and don't put any orchid in another container acting as a decoration or sleeve.

Anthurium is a perennial house plant. These are very handsome plants that are very easy to grow. Keep them on trays of moist gravel and keep where humidity can be kept at a constant. Keep in a window with good, strong light (no direct sunlight) and they will rebloom easily.

There are other plants one can receive (or purchase) and they usually come with growing instructions. With proper care, most, if not all, living plants can be grown again and again with good results.

* * * * *

As this is being written, the prospect of a rainy winter look good but after four years of drought, we may still have to be cautious next year with our water use.

The Cistus (or Rockrose) comes to mind as a great plant to consider. It grows on neglect once established and, when not in bloom, is a fairly attractive plant with small, delicate leaves. Can get bushy but is easy to control.

The crepy flowers are much like single roses, coming in mostly white or pink. Blooms only last a day but the plant produces well throughout warm weather so blooms keep coming. There is even a miniature white variety to consider.

These do well in poor or sandy soil and are ideal for banks and slopes. They don't seem susceptible to fungal infestations and bugs don't seem to affect them.

Any of the succulents and cacti are always good additions requiring less water and are adaptable to the ground or in a container. Groupings are very effective. The various shapes and colors lend to a diverse garden grouping. There are so many different varieties, it is hard to decide. Our greenhouse has a wonderful selection to choose from.

Gaillardia are always in favor. They are colorful and sun-loving romping through heat and drought with ease. Last from early summer to winter.

Lastly, the Pelargonium can't be beat. While it appreciates a bit of water, it doesn't require a lot and can thrive anywhere in the garden, preferring sun. A popular plant.

Non-Toxic Cleaners

We are the first generation to experience, and embrace without question, man-made solutions as part of the natural order. Rather than using traditional home products derived from simple mineral or organic sources to keep our bodies and living spaces clean & tidy, we regularly expose our bodies to products advertising 'better' cleaners using synthetic chemicals which are required to be listed on the packaging. As one example, if 'chlor' is part of the name, it contains chlorine for dissolving organic materials like fats and greases. Industrial exposure to chlorinated solvents is monitored for dizziness, fatigue, headaches, and/or skin rashes and may result in damage to the nervous system, kidneys, or liver through inhalation or skin contact. Chlorine laundry bleach is considered a pesticide. An ending of 'eve' or 'ol' indicates a petroleum-based solvent like toluene or benzol. 'Phenol' means it comes from coal tar. Only in extreme cases are manufacturers required to put warnings on the labels of the lower concentration household products. Besides our personal exposure, the products rinsed off also eventually reach a collectible water source in the environment.

Similar products that were used very successfully before our 'modern' alternatives are still available. Baking soda, vinegar, soap and hydrogen peroxide may be all that is needed, besides water, to keep your home & family clean. None are toxic to curious toddlers or harmful to the environment.

Baking Soda

Sprinkle on dirty stove, wet to a paste, allow to set and wipe for cleaning spills and heat scorches

Add to hot/boiling water in a pot with burnt-on food. Let set & burn will release, no scrubbing needed

Scrub stainless steel sink with ½ lemon or just a soft cloth. Rinse with hot water.

Wipe/scrub sinks and tubs. No abrasive particles means no scratching of the finish.

½ C in toilet at night. Then, brush & flush the loosened stain in the morning

½ C in slow drain, moisten lightly & let it work for ½ hour. Then, pour in 2-3 C boiling water.

Vinegar – (mild acid & disinfectant)

Wipe shower curtain with 1 tsp per cup water to prevent mold.

Soak hard water scale for 30 minutes & wipe dry.

Kills E.coli, Listeria, & Salmonella bacteria if heated to 150° and used at >130°

Wipe cutting board & leave in the sun to kill bacteria.

Add to rinse container in dishwasher to protect glassware from water spots.

Hydrogen peroxide – (oxidizer, bleaching agent & disinfectant - reverts to water & oxygen)

Antibacterial for E coli & salmonella after 10 minutes contact.

Disinfects granite & marble surfaces (instead of using vinegar which will etch the limestone rock)

Also, is a good mouthwash and cold sore remedy and may whiten teeth

Soap – (Castile is mildest & is vegetable based. Good for shampoo & body wash)

Spray light solution on stainless steel and dry with microfiber cloth

Wipe off granite & marble.

Use with washing soda & borax for laundry

Water – the prime dissolver

First strike cleaner to keep surfaces neat.

Wipe wood floor, then dry.

Mop tile floor (may also add a bit of baking soda or vinegar)

Glass cleaner solution – in a squirt bottle (if you need more than just hot water)

2 C water

1 C vinegar

½ t. soap

(Taken in part from an article written by Douglas W. Tallamy entitled "The Chickadee's Guide to Gardening")

San Mateo Arboretum Society

Plant Clinic & Sunday Garden Seminars

MASTER GARDENER PLANT CLINICS: Sunday, February 14, March 6, April 3. **FREE.** Come anytime between 11:30am - 1pm. The Master Gardeners are available to answer your questions from general information to advice about specific problems. You may bring samples of your plants for better diagnosis. Use a Ziploc or similar bag to carry your sample. If you suspect insect damage, try to include some of the insects so they can be correctly identified. <http://ucanr.org/sites/MGsSMSF/>

RE-THINKING IRRIGATION: USING RAIN WATER, GRAY WATER and THOUGHTFUL LANDSCAPE DESIGN to MINIMIZE POTABLE WATER USE in YOUR LANDSCAPE: Sunday, February 14. 1 - 2:30pm. **FREE.** Rain is a precious thing--don't let it get away! There are many ways to keep rain water on site and available to your plants. In this class we'll talk about how you can shape your land to hold water, the design of dry creeks to pull water into your garden, and some of the options for capturing and storing rain water. **Reservations are NOT required.**

SPRING FAIRY GARDEN WORKSHOP: Sunday, March 6, 1-3 pm. **FEE: SMAS members \$30/garden; nonmembers \$35/garden. Children ages 5-12 welcome with accompanying adult. Reservations are required, so call 650-787-1558 or 650-579-0536 x3.**

Let's celebrate springtime by creating a fairy container garden. We provide basic clay container, 3 small live plants, pathways and naturals to build clothes lines, fairy beds or chairs. If you have a favorite 8 inch container or even a basket, bring it. Fairy dust a must to attract the wee folks. Extras can be purchased.

FULL ORCHID WATER CULTURE = GROWING ORCHIDS IN WATER: Sunday, April 3, 1 - 2:30pm. **FREE.** Ever wanted to grow your plants in a decorative glass container but you thought you couldn't? One of the basic rules of growing orchids is to not over water them or they will surely die. In the mid-1990s some daring orchid enthusiasts began the practice of growing orchids in no media except for water. It became the growing method for many who wanted to keep their precious plants in water all the time without the demanding schedules of weekly watering. Sandra Charles, San Mateo Arboretum Society Orchid Greenhouse Coordinator, has used this method on several orchids in the Arboretum Society's Orchid Greenhouse and at home with much success. For those interested in wanting to experiment she will be presenting a short "how to" demo to help you followed by a visit to the greenhouse. **Reservations are NOT required.**

Additional Events

HILLSBOROUGH/SAN MATEO GARDEN TOUR: SAVE SATURDAY, MAY 7, 10 am - 4 pm for our 39th Garden Tour. Proceeds from this event helps fund the gardens in San Mateo Central Park and the free monthly garden seminars.

NURSERY/GREENHOUSE PLANT SALES: open Tuesday, Thursday, 10am - 2pm & Sunday, 10am - noon. **Effective December 1 thru February, the winter greenhouse hours will be 10am - noon Tuesdays, Thursdays & Sundays.** Our greenhouse & nursery stocks a variety of unique plants at very reasonable prices. We try to maintain the above hours, but since we are staffed by volunteers, we may occasionally be closed, so call 579-0536 before coming. **Become a SMAS member and receive a 10% discount in addition to supporting San Mateo Central Park!**

FACILITY RENTAL INFORMATION: The Victorian Garden and Pumphouse are available to rent. The facility can be used for small indoor and outdoor business & social functions. Indoor functions maximum 50 guests, indoor combined with outdoor space maximum 125 guests. For more information call, (650) 579-0536 x4.

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

SAVE THE DATE!
The 39th
HILLSBOROUGH - SAN MATEO
GARDEN TOUR

Saturday, May 7, 2016

10 am - 4 pm

Volunteers needed: call 650-5790536 x5

San Mateo Arboretum Society

Come grow with us...



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.



SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY

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F I R S T C L A S S

