



Come grow with us...

SAN MATEO ARBORETUM SOCIETY

101 NINTH AVENUE, SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

94401 (650) 579-0536

www.SanMateoArboretum.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

January - March, 2021

Here at the Arboretum Society, we are all looking forward to a new year. The year 2020 was one for the record books and soon the history books! We have been very fortunate that most of our treasured volunteers and members appear to be safe.

To remain on the safe side, we introduced winter hours December 5. The nursery is open 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday through February, unless there is inclement weather or it's a holiday. On the other days, the volunteers have been busy propagating plants or coming up with creative new ideas. In October and November, they made succulent topped mini-pumpkins to sell. In December, they are making 3-inch wreaths that can be used to adorn wine bottles, candles and napkins. They also introduced hanging, bejeweled air plants to glam up your home. Our thanks to Carmen and Brenda for brightening up the greenhouse with their creations.

Over the past month, the city parks department completely renovated the entrance to Ninth and Palm. They extended the small sundial garden and repainted the entrance sign. Our volunteers will help maintain the new garden and SMAS is providing some donations to help offset the cost.

In January, we will still be hosting the rose pruning workshop by Zoom in order to maintain Covid-19 protocols. Please check the website & page 7 for the details. With pruning and composting, the rose garden will start showing off its' beautiful blooms by late Spring and early Summer.

As always, we are looking for volunteers to help with the nursery, education, administration and maintenance. Please let us know if you are interested. Call 650-579-0536 ext. 3 or go to sanmateoarboretum.org and let us know what you are interested in doing.

Carol Callison

From the Nursery/Greenhouse

Come Grow With Us

Plants don't understand events like pandemics. Nature lives by its own rules. Back on December 21st we had the shortest day of 2000 - winter solstice. We paid little attention, but California plants heard spring. Buds started growing on the magnolias and will burst into flower in mid January. The trimmed back hydrangeas have new green shoots. If you pick a sunny day and look around in your garden you will find lots of plants with new shoots.

Many of our plants are winter bloomers. Natives are at their best at this time of year. Their normal growth is geared for seasonal rain. All of the geraniums bloom in the winter. We have many varieties. Lion's Tail has golden blooms and blooms over a long season. Sage comes into its own in February and just keeps going. Cyclamen seems too delicate to survive a winter, yet it is its show off time. Come check them out.

While we are staying close to home, remember to take breaks and wander around the garden for a bit every day. Think of what plants you would like to add or subtract from your beds. One of the best things about gardening is planning ahead. You can go back to the real world looking forward to tomorrow.

If you are working from home in your condo or apartment, you still need a garden. A comfortable chair and a few plants will make a restful break from work. If you have a south or west facing balcony go for sun plants. North and east almost anything works. Two potted medium size shrubs will feel like trees. Smaller pots can give you color.

By March everything is growing. The plants that have been dormant are reappearing and early bulbs are blooming. It really feels like spring! We are gardening again.

The greenhouses currently have an exceptional collection of houseplants and orchids. In succulents the Jade is starting to bloom. It is the perfect plant for the beginning gardener.

While we have only been open for customers on Saturday and Sunday, there are volunteers working seven days a week to keep the nursery going. We need to keep the tables full and to do it we need your help.

We propagate year round so if you have trimmings or plants that you are going to replace, we would really appreciate them. Someone is here weekday mornings till 12:30. The gates are locked, but one of us will let you in. Off hours, plants and pots can be left by the white gate. We check it daily. One of our fun jobs is figuring out those mystery plants. Thank goodness for cellphone's wonderful identification apps.

With no customers on weekdays, lots of changes are happening. Our first demonstration garden will be a year old in May and it is already providing lots of cuttings for the propagators. It is also a chance for customers to see the full grown plants. The woodland garden is almost finished and should be providing plants in a few months. A brand new garden has gone in at the north gate to show what can be done with natives. The butterfly hummingbird garden has been refreshed and is lovely.

Central Park has also created a beautiful new Ninth Avenue entrance garden.

We are learning to live day to day. Our hours and rules are subject to regulations. Our current hours on Saturday and Sunday are 11 - 1. You can call us at 650-579-0536 for current information. Masks are required for entry.

It's a whole new year! Let's garden!

Central Park's Palm Avenue Entrance Gets a Makeover

Earlier this year, eagle-eyed Arboretum volunteers noticed the small garden surrounding the Central Park sign at Palm Ave and Ninth was quite overgrown. In fact, the overgrowth completely covered the sundial behind the sign (who knew it was there!) and even obscured the sign itself ... just as well since the sign was looking shabby. This garden was originally planted by SMAS volunteers years ago and we assumed ownership. But over time, maintenance became sporadic when those volunteers moved on.

Pandemics create opportunities. Visitors to the Arboretum were down so our volunteers had time for new projects. It was time for a garden make-over. The Board recruited a few volunteers to plan a redesign and approved funds to repaint the sign. The redesign plan along with the offer to repaint the sign was sent for review to Ron Hostick, the manager of City Parks and Landscape for San Mateo.

Ron was pleased to learn of our efforts. He had also noticed the sad garden but he envisioned a much larger redo, a garden that presented an attractive entrance to the park year-round and that highlighted the sundial and the two large arborvitae. His plan was a true construction project: remove grass and regrade the area, move the very heavy sundial, sprinkler installation, etc. It was a job for the Parks Department. They made quick work of it.

In addition to the sign, the Board paid for the plants (see list below) and provided funds to offset the cost of labor and materials. Twice a year, SMAS will install colorful annuals at the front of the garden and, once the plants are established, will help with maintenance.

We look forward to working with the City next year on other projects in Central Park. And, by the way, we learned that the official name of the Palm Ave. garden is "The Sundial Garden". Now it makes sense. The new garden is finished and open for business. Stop by and take a look and, if you need to know what time it is, check the sundial!



Plant list: CA Fuchsia, Magna Rock Rose, Winifred Gilman Sage, Turkish Sage, Orange Lantana, Karl Foerster feathered grass, and Pincushion flower.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PLANTING

If you are going to repot a rose, be it a mini or full-size, always start with new soil which you have mixed up ahead of time in a wheelbarrow or large bucket, making sure it is well moistened throughout. If the plant comes out of the existing pot freely, look it over to see that the roots are not pot-bound. If the plant seems okay, prune the roots by removing the bottom one-fourth of the soil ball and, at the same time, cut away carefully the top inch or so from the top of the existing soil. If the soil is loose and not compacted, work the soil gently away from the roots and straighten them. A bit of root pruning can be done at this time. Repot the rose in the new soil up to the original soil line at the top. Gently tamp the new soil around the sides and water well.

You can either prune the rose before repotting (which is easier) or after it has been repotted. Be sure the new container will drain properly and the roots have sufficient growing room.

This procedure can be followed for putting a potted rose in the ground except you will want to work more of the soil loose so the roots can be splayed out in the hole you prepare. This operation is very similar to planting bare root roses, except you will have more roots to contend with and a larger amount of foliage and canes overall. Set the plant a bit shallower than it was in the pot, fill in the hole with your mix, water well and then mulch. Give the rose lots of room as it will be in the ground for a long time.

For a plant that has gotten compacted and root-bound, cutting more from the bottom of the root ball and scoring and loosening the sides will have to be done so roots can spread out more. Severely cutting the root ball in half and working the roots free, if done, should not be done after the first of February (when it starts to warm up); doesn't seem to harm the plant at all so don't be timid about working the roots free.

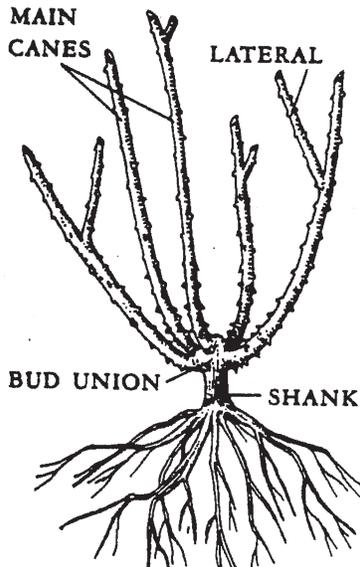
Keep any plant that has been severely shocked more protected - out of the wind and full sun until it has had a chance to recuperate. You will see the new growth along the canes and, before long, the plants can be placed where they were originally or where you now want them.

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TO RECAP:

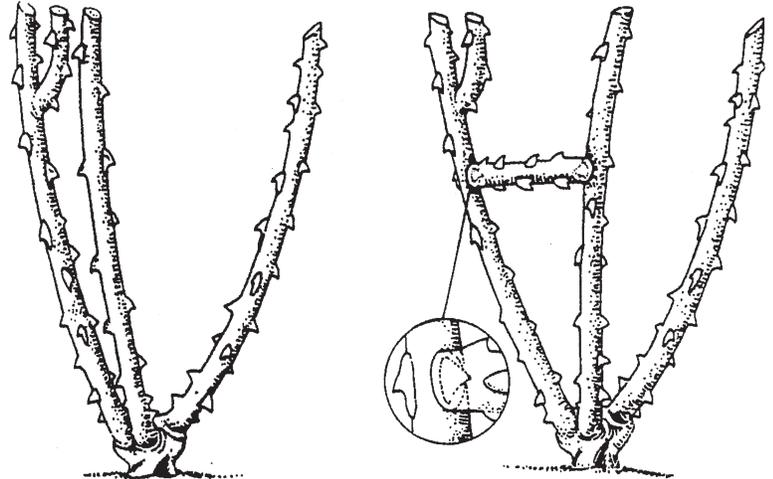
1. ALWAYS keep a newly planted bush well watered (a plant or pot with good drainage will be virtually impossible to take in too much water).
2. Keep close tabs on the new growth since it will be more susceptible to bug infestations.
3. Give the plant a chance to grow - don't cut too deeply the first year.

ROSE PRUNING MADE EASY



BAREROOT ROSEBUSH

Familiarize yourself with the parts of a bareroot rosebush. You must spot the bud union on sight to make sure you plant the bush to the right height. Learn also the difference between main canes and laterals.



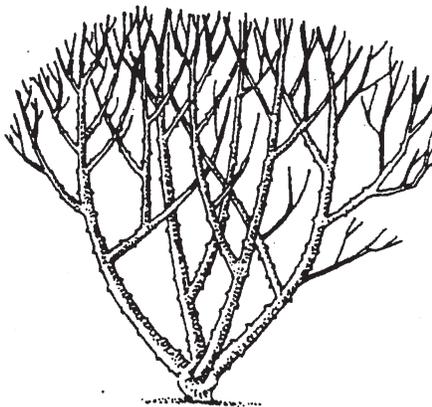
SPREADING CANES

The best canes on a rosebush are sometimes too close to each other. Rather than taking out one of them, **spread them apart** with a length of rose wood from a cane that you've already cut off some bush. Thorns on the canes you want to spread will help to secure the temporary stretcher.



HOW TO PRUNE A ROSE

Strip the bush of all foliage, preferably two weeks before you approach it with shears. Bushes that are stripped of growth are given a signal to start over, resulting in swollen eyes where new growth will appear. These landmarks help eliminate pruning dilemmas.



Remove all dead and twiggy growth. Wood that has lived past its time won't rejuvenate, nor can growth develop that is thicker than the wood from which it grows. Since the goal of pruning is an urn-shaped rosebush with a free interior, **remove canes that cross over the center** of the bush.



Cut remaining canes to the desired height, depending on how severely you decide to prune. Make sure that each 45-degree cut is made one-quarter inch above a swelling bud that points away from the center of the bush.

Gardening tips December 2020 by Jack McKinnon

I finally found a strawberry that tastes like those of my childhood. I was just finishing up a garden coaching job in Los Altos when I looked down and said to my client “is that a strawberry”? I knew it was a strawberry but had never seen one that grew up right, had light leaves and with small dark fruit. He said “taste one”. I reach down, plucked a ripe looking berry about the size of a dime and popped it in my mouth. Before I even had a word for it (and I am not one short of words) my eyes opened wide, my nostrils flared, my ears twitched, and a huge smile came to my face. My client knowingly smiled and said “they’re from the Himalayas” (*Fragaria nubicola*). The strawberry-ness of this fruit was/is amazing. It is so small four of them would fit on half of a standard strawberry.

My client said “pick another one and cut it into six pieces, plant each one and you’ll have at least six plants”. I did as he said and not one to follow exact instructions, I dried that berry and when completely dry, removed about 30 seeds from the outside of it. I carefully placed them in a small ceramic bowl on my desk. It’s December, so why am I talking about strawberry seeds in December? The story above took place in December and the following March I planted those seeds into planters on the half wall outside of my small studio apartment. I’ve been harvesting and giving away plants from those strawberry seeds all summer. I divided the seedlings when they came up, transplanted 12 of them into planters approximately 8” x 16” with good rich bagged soil and gave the rest away to neighbors clients and family. A find like that comes about once every three years. And the happiness quotient is very high. There’s the flavor, the growing experience, the sharing and the story. I love this kind of stuff. I will always keep some of these berries in my garden and I’m happy to share seeds with clients and friends along the way.

This is what’s special for me about gardening. Sometimes there is frustration and heartache. Other times there’s insight and great memories. What is sure, is that if I didn’t try it I would’ve missed out on a lot of life’s most satisfying natural and very old experiences. The opportunity to combine mind and hand with sun and soil bringing joy and meaning.

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, Workshop, 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 for seminars.** Zoom is a free, easy-to-use, video conferencing system. 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@sanmateoarboretum.org or call 650-579-0536 x3.

ROSE PRUNING SEMINAR via ZOOM. FREE!

Sunday, January 10, 1 - 2 pm.

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

Rose expert, Stuart Dalton, will teach you how to shape your rose bushes to encourage beautiful profuse flowering with winter pruning and winter proper care. He will cover equipment, safety in the garden and principles of pruning as well as demonstrating rose care techniques.

HOW to IMPROVE YOUR SOIL with TERRY LYNGSO via ZOOM. FREE!

Sunday, February 14, 1 - 2 pm.

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

Soil is alive! Plants and soil interact together in very interesting ways. Learn about the relationship between plants and the soil and what you can do in your garden to ensure that the relationship is thriving.. www.lyngsogarden.com

CALIFORNIA NATIVE GARDEN FOUNDATION via ZOOM. FREE!

Sunday, March 7, 1 - 2 pm.

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

CNGF was established with the mission to inform and educate the public, particularly youth, about gardening with native plants. <https://cngf.org>

NURSERY PLANT SALES:

CLOSED December 26 & 27 and January 2 & 3. OPEN all other weekends in December and January from 11 AM to 1 PM on both Saturday and Sunday -- WEATHER PERMITTING. And we may be under new shelter in place restrictions, so call 579-0536 x2 or check our website: www.SanMateoArboretum.org. We have a good selection of jade, abutilon, geraniums, and mini potted succulent gardens perfect for patio, balcony, or bright indoor spot.

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