

*The next monthly general meeting is Monday, July 18, 2016, at 7:15 PM*

Monthly meetings are held at the San Francisco County Fair Building, Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park.

Free parking is available behind the San Francisco County Fair Building on Lincoln Way.

4:00 PM – Botanical gardens walk with the featured speaker. Meet at the entrance to the San Francisco Botanical Garden.

5:30 PM – No-host dinner will take place at Park Chow Restaurant, located at 1240 Ninth Avenue in San Francisco.

7:15 PM – Announcements, Plant Forum, and Program Meeting will be held at the San Francisco County Fair Building.

Cal Hort members may attend for free. Non-members are welcome; Cal Hort requests a donation of \$5.

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**Plant of the Month**  
*Gethyllis*

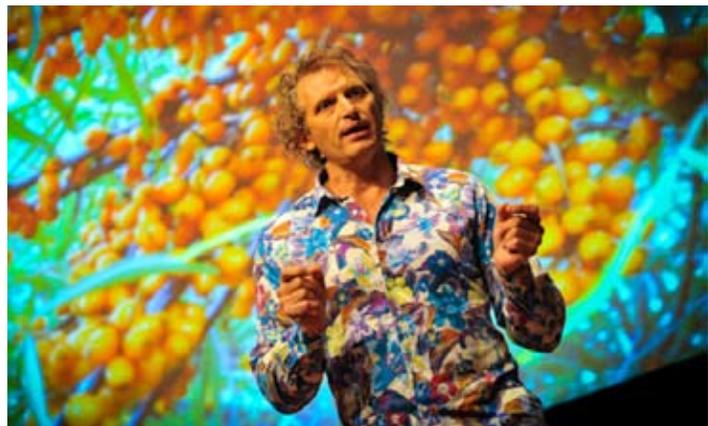


**MONDAY, JULY 18, 2016**

**Extraordinary Botanical Treasures  
from the Andes of Peru and Ecuador  
for Gardeners in the Bay Area**

by Joseph Simcox

The mild coastal climate of the San Francisco Bay has a similar climate to the equatorial cloud forests of Peru and Ecuador. This talk will focus on fascinating and edible plants you can grow in your garden. Joseph Simcox is a Botanical Explorer who travels around the world collecting rare and unusual plants, along with their stories.



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**MONDAY, AUGUST 15, 2016**

**Bromeliads for Bay Area Landscapes**

by Dan Arcos

Dan Arcos will take a look at which bromeliads have proven hardy outdoors in Bay Area Gardens and how they can be used. He will also talk about their general culture and the differences between terrestrial and epiphytic types”

## Plant of the Month

by Arcangelo Wessells

*Gethyllis*

Family: AMARYLLIDACEAE

I like to drink tea, wine, and especially spirits, made from or flavored with unusual plants. I have had homemade huckleberry infused vodka, and enjoyed liqueurs made with gentian, fir and wormwood. I love Retsina, but disliked a sweet liqueur flavored with thyme. Twice, I have grown a Buddha's hand citron into an empty bottle and filled it with vodka. It was a triumph: delicious and beautiful. But I have been most intrigued by Kukumakranka or Koekemakranka, a South African brandy made with *Gethyllis* fruit.

What is a *Gethyllis* fruit? One doesn't always associate fruit with lilies, but *Gethyllis* is a tiny lily-like plant. Along with *Clivia* and *Haemanthus*, *Gethyllis* is in the Haemantheae tribe of the Amaryllidaceae. Like *Amaryllis belladonna*, the infamous Naked Ladies that are just about to bloom, *Gethyllis* also flower without their leaves. But they even bloom without stems, like *Crocus* and *Colchicum*.

The thirty-three species of *Gethyllis* are almost all found in Namibia and South Africa. All but one are from the desert of the Succulent Karoo and Fynbos of the Western Cape, both regions with winter rainfall. Sand and gravel abound. So do succulents and geophytes.

*Gethyllis* are tiny plants. In autumn, with rain or in anticipation of it, their leaves emerge. They generally grow as a tuft no more than four inches tall. The variety of forms is incredible. The leaves can be straight, wavy or twisted like tiny corkscrews. They can be very thin and wiry, or almost a quarter inch wide. Incredible white hairs are found on some species, while others are smooth. In many species, dried leaves accumulate at the base of the plants over time, vaguely reminiscent of an Elizabethan collar. Some plants have cataphylls, or sheaths, through which the leaves grow.

The bulbs are relatively small. A flowering-size plant can have a bulb smaller than a quarter, but will have a narrow neck about three or four inches long. My plants, grown in a one gallon pot for four or five years, had all found their way to the bottom of the pot. The bulbs



were sitting on the bottom, but the sheaths reached the surface some six inches away. The ovary is inside the neck of the bulb. The sheath surrounds and protects the leaves and flowers, as well as helping the new leaves to find their way to the surface. Some *Calochortus* bulbs also retain an underground tube from the previous year.

The flowers suddenly appear in June or July. Changes in barometric pressure are thought to be the trigger, and whole populations can bloom simultaneously. Each bulb makes one flower per season. *Gethyllis grandiflora* seems to emerge and bloom the same day, with the most delicate translucent white flowers that will wilt by the next day. Another species appears like an aerodynamic Q-tip made of pink wax. It waits like this for two or three days before it opens. The flowers are about two and a half to three inches across, held up on a thin tube about three inches long. These will last for four days before beginning to melt. The flowers have a good supply of pollen, and it is believed that this is the only reward for insect visitors, but their pollinators are not known. Young plants can have no stigma when they bloom for the first time, perhaps to conserve energy.

In mid autumn, several months after pollination of the flower, an odd little fruit will emerge from underground. It looks like a little pink finger and smells like ripe strawberries. This is what is used to flavor brandy and to scent linen drawers. There is a small amount of sweet edible matter surrounding the seeds. Tortoises might eat the fruit and spread the hard seeds. Like many South African amaryllids, the seeds of *Gethyllis* are unorthodox, so they do not enter into dormancy and wait to germinate, but shrivel and die if they dry out.

It is challenging to get seeds from South Africa because they can sprout in the mail if the shipping is slow, and when they arrive here it is no longer the cool of fall. It is May and it is hot! Once the seeds have been planted, they germinate fairly readily. The germination rate is over fifty percent, and the seeds can sprout over the course of a month. In their first year of growth, seedlings will produce one leaf that is about one inch long. The seedlings will usually go dormant before our winter begins. When this happens I have tried to keep them dry later into winter so that their

dormancy is long enough. In this case, I do not water them until their leaves appear.

California rainfall should be enough for them in theory, but occasional watering during the winter is fine as long as they are planted in an extremely well drained mix. One half sand, one quarter pumice and one quarter peat moss is great. I started out putting a lot of sand with a little garden dirt and gravel and that worked fine. There is no exact mix. I plant seeds into one gallon pots, because I will not repot them for at least four years. They can grow well in pots, but their large roots need room to go down and stay cool. I had never fed them before this year, but they can benefit from a dilute feed once or twice a year while they are actively growing. They go dormant from around May until October. I water them thoroughly once in the beginning of September. I usually move the pots to a bit of light shade for their summer rest.

I have moved most of my plants into the ground. It is a gamble, but they seem much happier. They are planted in 12 to 18 inches of sand and gravel mixed with about ten to twenty percent peat and soil. Under this is regular garden soil. They seem to benefit from being in the ground. They can enjoy the heat of summer while enjoying a cool root run.

Buying seeds of *Gethyllis* is like a long term project or even a relationship. SilverhillSeeds.co.za sells *Gethyllis*, but you have to sign up to receive their email announcement of amaryllid seeds. At certain times of the year, they have unorthodox seeds available, though the specific date is unpredictably variable. For the *Gethyllis*, this is usually May. Some specialty nurseries like [rareplants.co.uk](http://rareplants.co.uk) have *Gethyllis* for sale, but they often sell out very quickly.



## Summer HORTICULTURAL EVENTS

### GROW YOUR GARDEN: EASY CACTUS AND SUCCULENT PROPAGATION

Saturday, July 16; 10:00 AM–NOON

Markham Nature Park and Arboretum

1202 La Vista Avenue in Concord

Want to expand your repertoire of easy care low water plants without breaking the bank?

- Learn how to create a spectacular cactus and succulent garden by growing it from leaves, cuttings, offsets and bare root plants.
- In this workshop, a variety of small demonstration garden beds will be created, and several kinds of cactus and succulents will be deconstructed to show how to harvest materials for propagation, and how to grow them on successfully.
- The basics of soil for cactus gardens in our area will be discussed, and a few techniques for safely handling spiny cactus will be taught. Participants will leave with plant materials and soil to get started with at home.

Dr. Galen Schauer is an avid gardener who will share quick-and-dirty techniques that have worked well in his home garden. Class fee: \$20.

### THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY OPEN DAY TOUR

Saturday, July 30; 10 AM–4 PM

Various locations noted below.

The Open Day tour features five gardens in Albany, Berkeley, Orinda, Piedmont and Oakland. Visitors may begin their tour at any of the following locations:

- **Garden of Keeyla Meadows** (1137 Stannage Avenue, Albany): This artist and garden designer's personal garden is like walking through a living painting; includes brilliantly colorful plantings, wavy walls, mosaic benches.
- **Camp Shasta** (Berkeley; directions provided day of at other gardens, or in advance by emailing [lwilson@gardenconservancy.org](mailto:lwilson@gardenconservancy.org)): Nature has been tamed and enhanced in this wild, woodland canyon garden on Codornices Creek; includes potager, fruit trees and chickens.
- **The Garden at 520 Miner Road** (520 Miner Road, Orinda): Lower and upper gardens laid out over thirty five years creating a sculptural wonderland featuring a collection from around the world.
- **Mediterranean Delight** (106 Estates Drive, Piedmont): This garden displays the owners' sense of whimsical design with a beautiful variety of plant color and texture in a layout that invites exploration.
- **Casa De Sueños** (11110 Lochard Street, Oakland): A landscape designer's own garden paradise, whose travels have inspired lush and interesting plantings; includes shade house, koi pond and nursery.

Gardens are open from 10am to 4pm. Admission at each garden is \$7 per person (cash or check); children 12 and under are free. Discount tickets are available online in advance, they never expire and can be used at any Open Day nationwide. Open Days take place rain or shine. Visit one garden or all of them. Tours are self-guided and reservations are not required.



**California Horticultural Society**  
 San Francisco County Fair Building  
 Ninth Avenue and Lincoln Way  
 San Francisco, CA 94122

[www.calhortsociety.org](http://www.calhortsociety.org)

**Plant Drawing News**

Each month various nurseries and individual members donate plants for the plant drawing. Please do not hesitate to bring in unusual plants from you garden to share with the members. Also remember the meeting is an excellent place to find plants for your garden that you have never seen before.

**Monthly Plant Display and Discussion**

Each month there is a lively discussion about plants brought in by our members. It may be a well-grown specimen or an unusual discovery, or a plant that has attributes that are not known by the mainstream. If you are interested in participating, bring in a plant to show to the group. You can also donate this plant afterwards to the plant drawing.

To join the California Horticultural Society or to find out about a full range of membership levels, please visit our web site at [www.calhortsociety.org](http://www.calhortsociety.org).

Questions from members about your membership? Please address them to the Cal Hort membership chair: Charlotte Masson, 579 Los Paltos Drive, San Francisco, CA 94127-2209.

The California Horticultural Society has maintained its quality programs because of the dedication of the volunteer officers, chairs and members. The future of the Society depends upon its member volunteers to provide leadership. The Board asks that members volunteer for positions to keep Cal Hort the best organization it can be.

**COUNCIL**

2015-2017 (First Term) Mark Delepine, Steve Morse, Andy Stone  
 2016-2018 (Second Term) Ellen Edelson, Charlotte Masson, Kristin Yanker-Hansen  
 2016-2018 (First Term) Mary Engle, Bart O'Brien, Arcangelo Wessells

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Vice President	Open
Recording Secretary	Open
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Deadline for publication in this Bulletin is the third Monday of each month for the following month's Bulletin; no Bulletin is published in December. Events during the first ten days of the month should be submitted two months ahead.