

# Bulletin of the California Horticultural Society

*Cultivating Friendship, gardens and fun for 75 years*

Monthly meetings are held at the San Francisco County Fair Building and are co-sponsored by the SF Botanical Gardens at Strybing Arboretum, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Lincoln Way in Golden Gate Park. Parking is available behind the SF Co. Fair Building on 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.

4:00 PM Botanical gardens walk with the speaker. Meet at the entrance

5:30 PM NO HOST Dinner will be at Park Chow Restaurant, 1240 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. San Francisco.

7:15 PM Announcements, Plant Forum, and Program Meeting will be held at the SF Botanical Garden in the San Francisco County Fair Building at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Lincoln Way; San Francisco.

\*\*\*Members free

\*\*\*Non-members – A donation of \$5 is requested.

#### The Plant Drawing

each month is an important source of funds for the Grants and Scholarships Program.

For June, Emerisa Gardens in Santa Rosa will be donating plants along with SF Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum courtesy of Don Mahoney.

Our appreciation to:

- **Monterey Bay Nurseries**  
Courtesy of **Luen Miller**
- **SF Botanical Garden**  
courtesy of **Don Mahoney**

for the outstanding selection of plants donated for the May meeting

**Please patronize these  
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June 2008

Volume 75, Issue 6

## DESIGN WITH PALMS

June 16th

Flora Grubb is a noted garden designer and the owner of Flora Grubb Gardens, in San Francisco's Bayview. Jason Dewees is a palm expert on staff at Flora Grubb Gardens who has consulted on palm collections of the Conservatory of Flowers and San Francisco Botanical Garden.

The speakers will convince you that palms belong in our California Gardens. Two centuries after European gardening started on the West Coast, Californians have only begun to explore the many roles palms play in gardens-as durable, architectural foliage; natural vertical elements; animated, acoustically pleasing canopy; informal hedges; food – fiber providing plants; and Mediterranean-style mainstays. See palms anew with the help of Flora Grubb and Jason Dewees' myth-busting ideas. And remember, we are talking about San Francisco Bay Area gardens, where Flora and Jason use palms most.



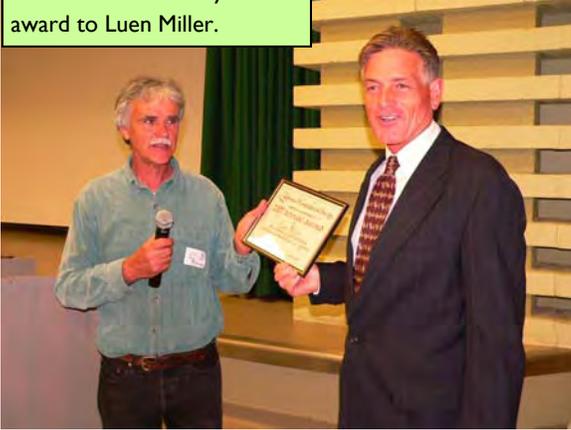
Flora Grubb &  
Jason DeWees

## July's meeting - Growing Begonias

July 21st

Laurie Bounsall has been growing Begonias for over 15 years and has been a volunteer in the begonia department at the Strybing Greenhouse for over two and a half years. She will be presenting a slide show outlining the daily activities involved in bringing a Begonia from cutting to salable plant for the Strybing Botanical Garden Society monthly plant sales. Begonia enthusiasts divide the species and cultivars into a number of classes depending on growth habit and type of rootstock. The classes include: cane stemmed, shrubby, winter-flowering, rhizomatous, Rex, tuberous, winter-flowering and Tuberhybrida group. A wide selection of begonias will be on display and for sale.

Don Mahoney presenting the Horticulturist of the year award to Luen Miller.



Cal Hort is so grateful to the rich horticultural area in which we live and we are especially grateful to all the many people that contribute to this exciting horticultural industry and hobby. May is the month each year in which we honor those that have contributed to that heritage. This year's Annual Awards Pot-Luck Dinner was May 19<sup>th</sup> and it was a fun event for everyone.

Luen Miller, co-owner of Monterey Bay Nurseries, Cal Hort's Annual Horticulturist of the Year gave a very interesting talk on what triggers different species to flower; night length, chill factor, etc. and sometimes a complicated combination of the different triggers which tie into the evolution of the survival of the species by making sure the plant flowers when it is most optimal for pollination. This subject could have been a

whole semester of information; all of us were enthralled with the abbreviated version we had the pleasure to absorb. Luen also brought a WHOLE truck-load of plants for door prizes. Everyone was giddy with the anticipation of getting at least one 1-gallon plant to take home and some folks were lucky enough to win two. These were not just any normal everyday plants either; they were very interesting, cutting edge Monterey Bay Nursery plants. I think everyone really had a good time. See the article on page 4 in this bulletin for the other awardees. Bruce Peters, our past president did a wonderful job of coordinating the dinner/meeting even though he had a class with a test that evening. He came early, set the tables up, had Don Mahoney and Andy Stone go and collect the table decorations (very nice, I might add), then Bruce left, took his test and came back to make sure everything was taken down properly. Thanks, Bruce, it was a lovely event! Also, thank you to the awards committee which was made up of Ted Kipping, Don Mahoney

and Kristin Yanker-Hansen. That evening we also gave out a grant of \$1,000 to the **Hallberg Butterfly Gardens** in Sebastopol. The grant will help fund a project which will establish a 100 x 10 foot border that is to be installed by volunteers. The goal is to test new plants not readily available, both native and ornamental from the Apiaceae, Asteraceae and Malvaceae for food potential for a variety of butterflies and should be planted by this fall. Cal Hort pleased and delighted to be able to grant \$1,000 toward this project. Funds are raised from the monthly drawings each month.

We are planning a plant sale this fall. Thank you, Jonathan Silverman for coordinating and organizing this very important fund raiser for the society. If you would like to help with this event, don't hesitate to let me know and I will get you hooked up with Jonathan. It is time to ponder Palms and learn to breed begonias this summer; Palms this month and begonias next. See you on the 16th!



*"An addiction to gardening is not all bad when you consider the other choices in life."*

*Cora Lea Bell*



California Horticulture History

Aaron Dillon

The program for Cal Hort this month will feature Flora Grubb, of Flora Grubb Gardens. Flora's retail nursery operation is a perfect example of a top notch modern day garden center. Not only is the nursery stocked with tons of fantastic high quality plant material, a large selection of garden accessories including containers, tools and even furniture, but it also features an excellent coffee shop. This way you can sooth two cravings at once; your need for a latte and your need for yet another exciting new plant for your yard! While Flora Grubb's represents the ultimate culmination in the evolution of retail nurseries, the process actually started in the years immediately following WWII right here in the Bay Area.

There are two local nurseries in particular that helped set the stage for the evolution of retail nurseries from places that merely sold plants to garden centers that catered to a customers' every need. They are East Bay Nursery in Berkeley and Orchard Nursery and Florist Inc. in Lafayette. As fate would have it, both of these landmark nurseries are currently owned by members of the same family, the Courtright's.

The story of the Courtright family and the nursery business all started with Gordon Courtright, a third generation Californian born in Larkspur in 1907. After the stock market crash in 1929 Gordon decided to enroll in the ornamental horticulture program at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. He returned

to the Bay Area after graduation where he worked as a landscaper in the Marin area. Gordon would often take the ferry over to the East Bay to purchase plant material from various nurseries for his landscape jobs. On one such trip in 1942, with WWII and the treat of Japanese internment looming, Gordon decided to make one last stop at East Bay Nursery before heading home. He left his wife in the truck and headed in to talk to the nursery owner who happened to be Japanese. He returned a short while later and informed his wife that she should take a look around be-



**Jack Schneider**

cause they had just purchased the nursery. Gordon paid a fair price for the business and agreed to store all of the former owner's possessions while they were forced into an internment camp for the duration of the war.

As the Bay Area's housing market began to boom immediately following the war Gordon realized he would have to improve his nursery operation in order to increase business. Building upon the shift towards containerized production of nursery stock, Gordon reorganized his nursery into a self serve operation, where a customer could take a cart, push it out into the nursery and fill it up with plants all by themselves without the aid of a sales person. As Gordon put it "give people a cart so they can keep their hands free for all of those impulse items". He created a separate dry goods department pushing chemi-

cal companies like Ortho and Best Fertilizers to package their products in smaller containers (perfect for impulse buying) which they eventually did. Gordon encouraged any nursery owner who would listen to "get out of their overalls and quit thinking like farmers and start thinking like businessmen". To say that Gordon's self serve approach to nursery retailing was revolutionary is a bit of an understatement. Most folks in the industry thought he was crazy because at the time, this was not how it was done. But Gordon was undeterred and over the years he continued to refine his self serve approach.

While Gordon Courtright's East Bay Nursery was experimenting with self serve retailing just over the hill another nursery was developing their own strategies to help move the merchandise. Jack Schneider and his partner Stewart Wade opened Orchard Nursery in 1945 on the outskirts of Lafayette. The first operation was small, only about 1,200 sq feet, but they managed to do a decent business none the less. Ten years later they were faced with a real dilemma when the construction of HWY 24 was going to force them to relocate. Jack and Stewart looked at this new challenge as an opportunity to improve their business. Their first step was to hire Ernest Wertheim (long time Cal Hort member) to design the new Orchard. This was going to be Ernest's first attempt at designing a nursery, so he traveled up and down the state studying successful operations for ideas he could integrate into the new design.

When it was completed in 1956 the new Orchard Nursery was a full service retail center that included a florist, a mower shop, an outdoor furniture store, and an extensive gift department. The nursery itself was laid out in a very specific manner in order to encourage customers to move through the space to get to what they wanted. It featured paved walkways, a first of its kind, so that folks returning home from church could shop for plants without getting their cloths dirty. With their new gift shop, the owners of Orchard Nursery were able to solve a chronic problem that had plagued nurserymen for years; what do you

do with your staff in the winter when sales drop off? Their answer, sell Christmas ornaments. It was revolutionary idea that has become a huge tradition at Orchard. As the newly designed Orchard Nursery proved to be a success, Jack Schneider gained considerable attention from the national nursery industry. He used his influence to help start two major industry groups the Garden Centers of America (GCA) and the Master Nursery Group, which both seek to organize independent garden centers to work



**Orchard Nursery, Lafayette, CA**

collectively through joint marketing programs and information sharing.

As I mentioned, today both of these nurseries are owned by members of the Courtright family. Gordon's daughter Bea and her husband Don Davis bought East Bay Nursery in 1976. Gordon continued to remain active in the plant world after selling the nursery until his death in 1997. He authored numerous books aimed at members of the horticultural industry including a book entitled "The Landscape Planting Guide" that is still utilized today. Gordon's son Tom purchased Orchard nursery from Jack Schneider in 1972 and continues to put on quite a show every Christmas, which is no longer considered a slow time of year. Both of Gordon's children are active leaders within the nursery industry serving as officers of the Central Chapter of the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (formerly CAN). Bea and her husband Don have volunteered countless hours in support of CANGCs scholarship program. While Tom has served as CAN president and is currently on the board of directors for the American Association of Nurseries and Landscapers (ANLA).

## Award winners and recap of the Annual Dinner

This evening was highlighted with the presentation of the awards below and the Horticulturist of the year giving the program. Our **Annual Horticulturist of the year Award for 2008** is **Luen Miller**, co-owner of Monterey Bay Nurseries. Luen gave a lively presentation of "Why Plants Flower – The Theory of Everything." This honoree is instrumental in creating an innovative nursery that has an emphasis on new plant introductions. We honor Luen Miller because of his outstanding ongoing & cumulative contributions to horticulture



The **Rixford Award** goes to an individual who is not a board member who has contributed greatly to the Society. **Josh Schechtel** is this year's awardee for his selfless service to the society, including contributing regularly to our newsletter with his column "The Plant of the Month" and for being one of Cal Hort's Pacific Horticulture representatives. He is the treasurer of Pac Hort and has put in countless hours helping oversee & help publish this great magazine.

The **Council Award** goes to **Kristin Yanker-Hansen** for her ongoing, tireless support of Cal Hort. With her organizing the volunteers and procuring donations for our SF Flower and Garden Show exhibit, for organizing our galas for our plant sales and for organizing some very ambitious week-long field trips to other areas of the country & the world. These are particular examples, but Kristin is also honored for her support and contributions that are less specific, but are no less appreciated.

**Kristin Yanker-Hansen** has also been honored with the **Garden Award** this year. Her garden is open regularly on horticultural tours and is an exemplary showcase of appropriate, adventurous and artistic gardening techniques.

**Dr. Mary Gerritson and Ron Parsons** have been awarded the **Writer's Award for Calochortus**, a landmark monographic book on a western genus, a genus which everyone admires but may have found daunting to key out or grow. The writing is comprehensive and accessible and the taxa exceptionally well photographed.

The **Photography Award** winner is **Ron Parsons**, who is one of the of the finest wildflower and species photographers in the U.S. He has given many wonderful programs to Cal Hort and to other groups. He is published in many books including Calochortus in which he has been honored for the writer's award.

One of the premier publishers of exquisite gardening and botanical books is **Timber Press**. They are the well deserved recipients of the **Publisher's Award**.

We also recognize plants that people bring in for the plant forum portion of our meetings. The cultural award went to **Kathy Echols** for *Adenium obesum* 'Red Ribbons' and awards of merit went to **Kristin Jacob** for *Aristolochia fimbriata*, **Ann DeRosa** for *Macadamia integrifolia*, **Mary TeSelle** for *Piper sanctum* and **John and Barbara Hopper** for *Veltheimia bracteata*

It is a pleasure for the Society to be able to recognize these award winners that enrich our gardening experiences and promote the plant addiction that all of us are afflicted with. Congratulations to the 2008 Cal Hort Honorees and THANK YOU!!!

## Question Lady—What is your best advice to a new gardener?

**David Sarasua says:** I think the best advice I could give someone is not to rush the issue.

We rushed our installation three times and had to redo it. The next best thing I could state and that is work on a small area and then let the area expand. The rest of the area can be covered with a plastic tarp and the result will be that the area would be solarized. The third thing is to do those things that you enjoy and to hire out those things that require a strong back.

"who was Rixford? "  
Hopefully we will find  
out the next  
newsletter...

## What is your best advice to a new gardener? Continued from page 4

**Jill Salmon says:** Green side up!

**Ann Bachelder says:** Advice to a new gardener: these are mainly design ideas.

1. Observe what you have where you intend to garden. Live with it for awhile before imposing your ideas on it; watch it, learn about the parameters of climate, sun, shade, soil (s), weather, microclimates, existing plants and insects and animals. Acceptance of what is makes for success and less struggle.

2. Look beyond your property and respect and work with what exists; that includes UP, DOWN and SIDEWAYS; are there power lines or neighboring trees that might grow to influence what you plant, for example?

3. Learn the ultimate size of things you add to your landscape, and plant accordingly. Allow things the space they need. Know that root growth is at least as large as top growth. If mature growth of a shrub is 6'x8', avoid planting it 18" from the foundation or beneath windows 4' from the ground.

4. There is great joy in allowing things to happen on their own, sometimes. Rejoice in the surprises, relax tight control.

**Ellen Frank says:** When I worked in a retail nursery and found that new gardeners

were always afraid of plants....relax, go to it with abandon...if it doesn't work, try it again in another spot. Read or ask about what the plant likes and take that into consideration, but don't be afraid to test its limits....some plants have broad tolerances and some not so tolerant....someone once said not to give up on a plant until you've tried it at least three times.

**Next month's question: What has been your evolution in your interest in plants?**

What were you passionate about in your early gardening days and what is your latest passion in the plant world? We all go through phases of our latest interest in plants where we thirst for knowledge of a certain type of plant or a certain associations of plants (shade plants, succulents, orchids, etc.) and gobble up any type of information we can get, then we ride along for awhile with that interest and then something happens and you grow into another phase where you find a new interest and slurp up any information on that subject. Gardeners and gardens are ever evolving. How has your gardening interest changed over the years?

Email editor@calhortsociety.org, write it down and bring it to the next meeting - give it to Elsie at the door, or drop it in the mail to: Ellen Frank, 2101 Harbor View Dr., Martinez, CA 94553. Look for answers in the July Bulletin.



*“As the  
garden grows,  
so does the  
gardener”*

*Proverb*

## Salvia Summit 2008 At Cabrillo College—August 1–3

The aim and objective of this symposium is to bring horticultural professionals and enthusiasts from many geographical locations and of widely divergent interests together in order to further their knowledge of the genus Salvia

Topics will include:

Salvias in their wild habitats, botanical identification and nomenclature, histories and traditional uses, and all aspects of cultivation: growing, propagation, seed collecting, and winter strategies. Emphasis will be on the diversity of experiences in different climates, with round table discussions as well as more organized talks. Salvias in their wild habitats, botanical identification and nomenclature, histories and traditional uses, and all aspects of cultivation: growing, propagation, seed collecting,

and winter strategies. Emphasis will be on the diversity of experiences in different climates, with round table discussions as well as more organized talks.

This international summit will fill up quick if you haven't already registered. July 31st is an evening social, Aug. 1 & 2—programs, Aug. 3rd - self garden tours See the Cabrillo College website for program and registration. [http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture/Salvia\\_summit/SalviaSummit.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture/Salvia_summit/SalviaSummit.html)

**For further information, please contact:**

**Ginny Hunt at [seedhunt@cruzio.com](mailto:seedhunt@cruzio.com) or Ernie Wasson: (831) 477-5671 or [erwasson@cabrillo.edu](mailto:erwasson@cabrillo.edu)**



*The greatest gift  
of the garden is  
the restoration  
of the five  
senses."*

*Hanna Rion*



**June 14, Saturday 9:00AM – 4:00PM**

Digging Dog Nursery Garden Tour—Garden tour at Digging Dog Nursery in Albion to benefit MUSE (Mendocino Unified School Enrichment), a fundraising organization designed to raise funds for enrichment programs (arts, sciences, culinary) for the Mendocino School District. The tour includes demonstrations, guided tours of the garden, delectable refreshments all day, including mimosas in the morning and wine tasting in the afternoon. Tickets are \$40 and are available at the event. 9:00 AM–4:00 PM. For more info contact MUSE at (707) 937-0393, or at [museinfor@mcn.org](mailto:museinfor@mcn.org)

**June 22, Sunday 9:30AM – 4:30PM**

Bloomin' Backyards Garden Tour and Market—Tour the private gardens of six Master Gardeners in the greater Santa Rosa area and visit an outdoor market featuring over 2000 plants propagated by Sonoma County Master Gardeners. The market will also include crafts as well as live demonstrations on reducing use of pesticides, composting, growing California native and habitat plants, and more. Advance ticket sales: \$25; at the event, \$30. 9:30 AM–4:30 PM.

**July 10, Thursday evening, 5:30PM**

The 2008 Garden Design Chats at Flora Grubb Gardens co-sponsored by the Garden Conservancy: Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn—Fritz Haeg is the founder of Edible Estates, an ongoing series of projects to replace the traditional front lawn – a functionless monoculture that devours natural resources, contaminates the environment and eradicates native plants – with edible garden landscapes that are responsive to culture, climate, context, and people. . Flora Grubb Gardens, 1634 Jerrold Ave., San Francisco. Wine and hors d'oeuvres at 5:30 PM, design talk and book signing at 6:15 PM. Tickets \$25, advance registration until July 4, \$30 after July 4 and at door. To register, call (415) 561-7895.

U.C. BOTANICAL GARDEN AT BERKELEY

(510) 643-2755 •

[www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu](http://www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu)

**June 14, Saturday morning, 9AM – Noon**

Gardening Under Oaks—Join Horticulturist

Nathan Smith as he shares his experience working around the Garden's numerous mature specimen trees, including detailed discussions of best cultural practices and suitable plants. A lecture will be followed by a tour of the Garden's oaks and associated plantings. 9 AM–Noon, members \$25, non-members \$30.

**June 14, Saturday morning, 9AM – Noon**

Sick Plant Clinic—Join Dr. Robert Raabe for his monthly clinic and find out which diseases ail your plants. Entomologists are also available to identify the pests living on your plants. Bring cover plants and disease samples in containers or bags before entering garden. 9 AM–Noon, free.

SF BOTANICAL GARDEN SOCIETY

(415) 661-1316 • [www.sfbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org)

water resources grow ever more limited, we need to think about gardens that require little summer water and feature beautiful plants adapted to our own version of a Mediterranean climate. This course will focus on creating a mixture of such plants that look good together, provide beauty, and are easy to maintain. Taught by Glenn Kleator. Five Thursday evening classes and one Saturday field trip to Santa Cruz arboretum. Members \$75, non-members \$85.

Thursdays, July 3, 17, 24, 31 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

And July 19, Saturday, 10:00 AM

U.C. SANTA CRUZ ARBORETUM

(831) 427-2998 • [www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum](http://www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum)

**July 24, Thursday evening, 7:00PM**

Plant Collecting in Chile—Join Curator Tom Saucedo for a slide show on his travels in Chile in January of this year and the plants he collected while there. Potluck supper at 6:00 PM precedes the lecture. 7:00 PM, donations accepted.

UC DAVIS ARBORETUM

(530)752-4880 • <http://arboretum.ucdavis>

**June 14, Saturday morning, 11AM**

Guided Tour: June in the White Flower Garden—White flowers and silvery foliage look cool in the summer heat.

Meet at the Gazebo. 11 AM, free.

**75th Anniversary Design T-Shirts and Tote Bags for Sale**

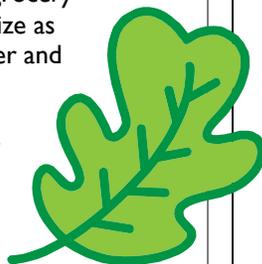


**T-shirts – short sleeved / white w/ dk. green design-**  
\$12 each or 2/\$20 (save \$4)

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\$14 each or 2/\$24 (save \$4)

**Totes** - \$12.00 each or 2 for \$20.00  
The canvas totes are ideal for grocery shopping. They are the same size as paper grocery bags, but stronger and with handles.

Call 1-800-884-0009 to order or email [editor@calhortsociety.org](mailto:editor@calhortsociety.org)



## Start collecting seeds for the Seed Exchange

Don't forget the seed exchange as you are deadheading any of your spring flowering treasures. Seeds are donated throughout the year before Thanksgiving and then organized and cataloged into a numbered list which is printed in our January *Bulletin* along with the official order form. Completed forms must be received by March 1. All seeds are then distributed at the March meeting or by mail for those who can't attend. Send your donations, and any hard-copy photos of the seed plants, to:



Dave Tivol  
130 Locksunart Way #4  
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

Digital images can be sent to [bruce@calhortsociety.org](mailto:bruce@calhortsociety.org)

Or bring them to any Cal Hort meeting.

## Plant of the Month

**Josh Schechtel**

Plant of the Month- *Brahea armata*, the Mexican Blue Palm  
Family Arecaceae

Many of us want a tropical or exotic look in our gardens, but are also mindful of the amount of water we use to keep our gardens healthy. How can we maintain a tropical look and conserve water at the same time? By choosing our plants very carefully! One of the most useful, and underutilized, palms in most of California is the Mexican blue palm, or hesper palm, *Brahea armata*. With its silvery-blue, fan-shaped leaves, it provides a wonderful exclamation mark in the planting bed when young, and an amazing focal point once it matures.

Although it is originally from warmer areas of Mexico, including Baja California and the Sonora Desert, this palm can take temperatures down to 15 degrees, and has weathered the major northern California frosts in the last twenty years. Having evolved in a dry climate, the Mexican blue palm does not do well in humid areas, which makes it one of the

palms that will grow better in California than in Florida. Full sun and good drainage will keep this plant happy, and once established it needs very little irrigation. It is important to remember that the Mexican blue palm can tolerate cold, but it can't tolerate remaining wet for too

long, so excellent drainage is needed in areas that get a lot of winter rains.



Although this is a plant from the New World, the name *Brahea* refers to Tycho Brahe, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Danish astronomer who was taken from his parents and raised by his nobleman uncle and his wife. He went on to be an accomplished astronomer and astrologer. His colorful life included losing a piece of his nose in a duel; becoming a wealthy nobleman complete with castle, a dwarf for entertainment, and a pet elk; and dying of mercury poisoning, possibly at the hands of his assistant. However, his association with Mexican palm trees remains a mystery.

To join, or for full range of membership levels, please visit our web site at [www.calhortsociety.org](http://www.calhortsociety.org), or contact Elsie Mueller at 800-884-0009.

Deadline for publication is the third Monday of each month for the following month's Bulletin, with the exception of December. Events during the first ten days of the month should be submitted two months ahead

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**FALL PLANT SALE**

Get ready for the Cal Hort specialty plant sale. Start propagating because it will be here before you know it. Many of you collect very unusual and interesting plants and you can help fundraise for the society by dividing, propagating, or seeding some your fun plants that many people would love to buy. Share the love!

Also we are looking for interested specialty nurseries to participate. If you know of any, please give Ellen a call at 415-385-9862 or email at [president@calhortsociety.org](mailto:president@calhortsociety.org)



**The California Horticultural Society**

San Francisco County Fair Building

9TH Avenue & Lincoln Way

San Francisco, CA 94122

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

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