



Bulletin  
of the  
California Horticultural Society

June  
2006

**MEETINGS**

June 19, 2006

4:00 PM

Botanical gardens walk with speaker at Strybing Arboretum. Parking is available behind the San Francisco Co, Fair Building on 9th Ave.

5:30 PM NO HOST Dinner will be at Park Chow Restaurant, 1249 Ninth Ave; San Francisco.

7:15 PM Meeting will be held at the SF Botanical Garden's Hall of Flowers at 9th Avenue and Lincoln Way; San Francisco.

Announcements, Plant Forum, Program.

\$5 Donation requested.

**MOSAIC DESIGNS FOR ENHANCEMENT OF GARDENS**

Monday, June 19, 2006 Presented by Jeffrey Bale

*Co-sponsored with San Francisco Botanical Garden Society at Strybing Arboretum*

A presentation of the finest stonework that he has encountered during his travels in Asia, North, Central and South America, and the work it has inspired him to build for gardens in the Western United States. Specializing in pebble mosaic and artistic stone construction, he has designed and built several gardens with a strong emphasis on the structural component, treating it as a sacred art form. The talk will include images ranging from Vastu puranic temple design in India and Cambodia, Inca stonework, Portuguese and Spanish mosaic, and visionary works by self-trained artists in various countries, in addition to Jeffrey's own work and the processes he uses for construction of walls, patios, paths, steps, and fountains.



The Plant Drawing each month is an important source of funds for the Grants and Scholarships Program. In June, the drawing will include donations from the UC Botanical Garden, courtesy of Anthony Garza and from San Francisco Botanical Garden, courtesy of Dr. Don Mahoney. Our appreciation to the many individuals who contributed the outstanding selection of plants donated for the Silent Auction at the Annual Meeting.

**FERNS FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND FOR BAY AREA GARDENS**

[Including how to grow your own from spores]

Monday, July 17, 2006 Presented by Martin Grantham

*Co-sponsored with San Francisco Botanical Garden Society at Strybing Arboretum*

A noted horticulturist. Martin will show a wide range of ferns encountered on his botanical travels from rock ferns to tree ferns. He'll point out many that grow well in the SF Bay Area. Since some of the best ferns are rarely offered by nurseries, he will include a discussion of home propagation. Unusual ferns will be available to the horticulturally adventurous for purchase.

**DEVELOPING NEW PLANTS**

Monday, August 21, 2006 Presented by Dr. Scott Trees

*Co-sponsored with San Francisco Botanical Garden Society at Strybing Arboretum*

Director of New Crops, BallFlora Plant, Guadalupe, California, Dr. Trees will speak on hybridization of plants, such as the radiating of Salvia, in order to develop new products for the market, as well as other treatments in order to get patents and trademarks.

Unfortunately, I had to miss our last meeting, the Annual Dinner no less, but I heard that it was really fun and that people went all out bringing fantastic food to share. Although I do always enjoy the dinner, and the chance to meet and actually socialize with other members, I was pretty happy taking part in our stupendous field trip to North Carolina, led by the indefatigable Kristin Yanker-Hansen. As usual, Kristin put together a whirlwind of horticultural marvels, all organized down to a 'T.' Be sure to read the synopsis written by two of our members later on in this issue.

We also had an immensely successful drive-yourself field trip to visit special and rarely opened gardens in Santa Cruz. About 40 people made the trek down south and everyone I spoke with had nothing but positive things to say about it.

All in all, May was both a very busy and very enjoyable month for Cal Hort and its members and, I'm happy to say, it was due 100% to our wonderful volunteers, some of whom had little or no experience organizing these types of things before. So, if you're letting a fear of the unknown keep you from helping out tell that fear to beat it and sign yourself up on one of our committees!

## NORTH CAROLINA FIELD TRIP RECAP

Ellen Frank

It is amazing what can happen in less than a week. Within a week, my garden went from a sleepy budded garden waking from the winter to a RIOT of color; clover that CalTrans had planted in the freeway interchange went from a lovely carpet of maroon-purple to a uniform brown-russet and the surrounding green hills turned from green to straw.

Wow! That is a lot going on in less than a week. Cal Hort and specifically, Kristin Yanker-Hansen and 26 of her, now closest friends, packed a lifetime of viewing beautiful gardens, nurseries and nature in North Carolina in that same snippet of time, May 10-15th.

The Cal Hort trip that Kristin led to North Carolina was a horticulturist's dream come true. We visited 14 gardens, 3 nurseries and the Nature Conservancy's Green Swamp. We spanned the state starting in the North West corner in Asheville, then down to Charlotte, Raleigh and ended up on the coast at Cape Fear. We experienced the cool mountains, the middle coastal plain and the seashore.

I could literally write a tome on the gardens and plants we discovered, the people we met and the group we enjoyed for a little less than a week. The experience was "finer than a frog's hair split 3 ways." This was our bus driver, Brian's favorite response

to how he was doing each day. Our group was a great mix, from novice to, and we were all eagerly absorbing the plant information that the guides and our trip mates relayed. We were inspired by the creative designs and the striking plant combinations.

I will touch on the some of my personal highlights of the rich horticultural resources in North Carolina that we were lucky enough to see.

In Asheville we visited the Biltmore Estate. This garden was much like a big park which is understandable

as it was designed by Central Park designer, Frederick Law Olmstead. The Biltmore staff's philosophy of historic preservation was interesting. Luckily, they had many of the original plans and design intents to help make decisions for the garden that follow Olmstead's original vision. The design intent was important in keeping the feeling of the garden because as time passes, the garden evolves and matures and recycles. The Loblolly pine "ribbon" of trees that was a strong design element from the house in the winter had suffered some hurricane damage and the Biltmore staff had to make decisions about how to replace portions without losing the intent of the evergreens standing out in the barren winter. Also, they had to think about what the different scenarios of replacing the trees would look like over the next 50 years.

The garden was designed so you could take small loops or larger loops depending on your time restraints. The front of the house



*Blooming dogwood at Biltmore Estate*



*American wisteria bonsai*

Photos by Bruce Peters

was French formal and the back of the garden was designed as an English deer park. The garden consisted of intertwining paths with shrubs, trees and grasses. There is also an azalea collection, conservatory, perennial beds and a formal rose garden.

Very close to the Biltmore, was the North Carolina Arboretum. This was a charming garden at 2300 ft. elevation and had great structure and money for “bones.” We visited the promise garden, consisting of plants which promise to be good selections for North Carolina gardens. This was our first glimpse of the native *Wisteria*, which was very showy with its compact lavender booms. One of the highlights of this garden

was the bonsai display garden. The garden was given an extensive bonsai collection for which they built an extensive garden structure to highlight. This was tastefully done with a gradual downhill path meandering to and fro among plantings. The outside loops of the paths were edged by 6' walls with shelves to display the small trees. The plain and simple background allows the trees to fully display their exquisite and often intricate structure of branching and enhances one's focus by removing all distractions. There were other “islands” of display areas as the path came to the end of the garden and joined the promenade and the rest of the garden.

The vibrant quilt garden was planted in repetitive pansy squares to highlight the arts and crafts energy felt throughout North Carolina. You could go up to a viewing platform to get the full effect. The Arboretum was a good balance of naturalistic plantings and contrived clipped and manipulated more formal gardens.

We had a quick stop at the Folk Art Center of the Blue Ridge Mountains that had the opportunity to buy some beautiful hand crafts. They had everything from quilts, leather goods, brooms, pottery and jewelry.

I think one of everyone's favorite gardens was the Stowe Botanical Gardens. This garden was really nice. It is fairly new with most of the gardens being planted in 1999. Stowe is a series of gardens and designed so that you walk from garden room to garden room. The White Garden is where we first saw the very handsome Silver Willow, *Salix alba* var. *sericea*. There were several large water features and the foun-



**Quilt garden at NC Arboretum**

Photo by Bruce Peters

tain that the group was by turned off at 5 pm. They were nice enough to tour us through the garden after the garden had actually closed, so when the fountains turned off at 5, we assumed they were on a timer. A little later we found out that behind a hedge there was a wind sensor that automatically turned off the fountains once a certain wind velocity was exceeded. A pretty clever way of saving water and making sure no one gets too wet. This garden was so filled with interesting plants and wonderful plant combinations that we were ecstatic.

On our way to Raleigh for the night we stopped at an authentic North Carolina Barbecue. This was my first taste of Hush Puppies, and they were quite tasty, deep fried corn with a hint of onion.

Friday we started the day at the home of Nancy Goodwin. This is a Garden Conservancy garden called ‘Montrose’ with large Oaks in the front yard and an amazing garden in the back. The main house was built in 1820 and has been rebuilt twice since with the present colonial style dating from 1862. Nancy and her husband bought the 61 acre property in 1977 and have been gardening it ever since. The house is surrounded by a natural, unclipped boxwood hedge which gives a very beautiful undulating edge. The garden is bisected by several paths, creating various garden rooms and each one affording dramatic views all the way through to the other side. Each garden room was expertly planted in a variety of palettes, from the tropical garden to the almost too beautiful to eat food garden to the four color garden,

really a large square with different color themes in each corner.

Next, Barbara Wells and her husband, Sam, treated us to a delightful lunch and shared their garden and home. Sam is a collector of Japanese maples and his long driveway was planted with different cultivars on both sides. In fall, it must be even more spectacular. The Wells garden is a woodland garden and they have transformed a drainage area to a dry stream bed



**A garden room at Montrose**

Photo by Bruce Peters

that was really well done. The house was just as fascinating with interesting art pieces, for which it was styled to showcase, along with being very open for ease of entertaining. Barbara is a weaver and let folks down stairs to see her studio. They were very gra-

*Continued on page 4*

cious letting 27 people stroll through the house and Barbara spent all day preparing the meal. We actually had regular plates and linen covered snack trays. Barbara's garden designer, Mary Jane Baker's, had her house as our next stop.

Mary Jane's house was a delight. This was definitely a plant person's garden. The front strip on the boulevard...I'm sure causes accidents...or at least we were lucky we didn't lose anyone to cars while we were checking out all the cool plant combinations. This regular small house had a huge tree in front and this central point had little vignettes all around the tree—surprises in each direction you looked. There were basins for water, art and the coolest of plants in each space. It was very tasteful and you weren't overwhelmed because it was broken up so well. The backyard had this great arbor that was actually 3 arbors connected with sections, creating three sitting areas. She had a nice central decomposed granite courtyard with a rectangular pond with the arbor surrounding it. The back yard was not very big, but it was so nicely broken up that it seemed very spacious. We hated to leave this garden.

Can you believe that after all this we went to Niche Gardens, a nursery that specializes in Natives? And then to the Sarah P. Duke Garden on the Duke University Campus!

Niche Gardens is a great nursery with a wonderful display garden. The Gardens were punctuated with all sorts of imaginative concocted art sculptures.

Duke Gardens were like a big park. There were large lawns and large trees, a rose garden a perennial garden in terraced beds. The Asian garden was lovely with ponds, baby ducks and a good selection of Asian trees and shrubs. Christie and John Hastings told me they really enjoyed the native garden and it was a highlight for them.

Saturday: David Feix will describe the wonderful gardens we saw on Saturday.

On Sunday we drove to the coast and along the way we stopped at Big Bloomers. I had decided that I wasn't going to buy any plants because I am too cheap to pay for shipping and I didn't want to deal with taking the soil off and transporting them. Well, that decision went by the wayside once I saw people of our group walking around with interesting 4" pots of plants you wouldn't find anywhere else. I found myself asking "where did you find that?" and then seeking one to take home for myself. They opened up early especially for us, so we had the entire nursery to ourselves.

In Wilmington, near Cape Fear, we visited Airlie Gardens.



Photo by Bruce Peters

*Sarracenia flava*

Big beautiful Spanish moss laced oaks and a big lake were some of the natural highlights, but one of the man-made highlights was a sculpture garden with a bottle house as the central feature. This was very colorful and quite a showpiece.

Next stop was Orton Rice Plantation. On our drive in...we saw alligators! Yikes, luckily no casualties. The plantation house was on higher ground than the rice and in the center of the garden. There were lookouts, or belvederes, that viewed over the rice area and a scroll garden that was designed to look down upon. There were again huge oaks with fringes of Spanish moss and large strolling gardens.

We took the ferry across the Fear River to the cape and we stayed in this great hotel with all rooms overlooking the Fear River. That night brought a wonderful southern dinner along the river at Roy's.

Our last day was a great highlight for me. We visited The Green Swamp, which is a Nature Conservancy property. Frank Galloway toured us through this area... and thank goodness because once you're in there, it would be really easy to get lost. The Green Swamp is a high swamp, which means it has higher "islands" where *Pinus palustris* create a high branched open savannah or Allee surrounded by pocosin, which are the wetter areas. These wetter areas have denser and taller brush.

The Green Swamp ecology is fire dependent to keep the areas clear and the plants are adapted to the lightning susceptible landscape. The soil pH can be as low as 3.5, so there is little threat of escaped exotics taking over. The plants that live here are very specialized to take these conditions. The plant highlights included several species of pitcher plants in bloom, venus fly traps, sun dews, a butterwort with a lavender bloom, very fragrant white *Rhododendron atlantica*, rabbit eye blueberries, a creeping blueberry, *Magnolia virginiana*, *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Gordonia*, *Leucothoe*, and a little pink orchid. It was a very fascinating area.

Can you believe we saw all this in less than a week? We owe a big gratitude of thanks to Kristin for doing a great job in putting this all together. There was a lot of prep work to scout out all these great places to visit and make all the arrangements. Every afternoon we had wine with cheese and crackers on the bus either between the last two gardens or on the way to the hotel. Dick did a great job keeping the snacks and water flowing.

It is great going on a trip with people that get excited by seeing a new plant and great gardens. That shared focus, interest and enthusiasm made this a thoroughly enjoyable and plant packed "less than a week."

Kristin had put together another great trip which was apparent to all by the time that Saturday rolled around. I had anticipated that Saturday's itinerary would be the high point of the trip, but can't really say that what went before wasn't special as well. For those who may not have heard of J. C. Raulston, you are missing out, as he was a plantsman extraordinaire who has inspired a whole generation of plant fanatics, students of his at NC State University, where he was a professor of horticultural sciences and landscape design, and also an inveterate plant collector.

The J. C. Raulston Arboretum was named for the professor after an untimely automobile accident cut his life short in his early 50's, and contains over 6000 different kinds of woody plants from around the world, beautifully displayed over 8 acres. The mixed perennial border is probably the most well known and photographed section of the gardens, and much has been written about them. For those who are interested in more details about the gardens, Raulston's writings and essays are still available on-line at the Arboretum Web Site, and make highly entertaining reading. If I lived closer, this would certainly be a monthly visit for me, and I would equate the planting combinations with the Entry Garden at Strybing/SF Botanical Garden. If I had to pick just one plant from the gardens, it would be the first sighting of *Manfreda x Agave* 'Macha Mocha', which captivated several of us on the trip. (see photo)

The next botanic garden, simply named North Carolina Botanical Garden was a lesson for the native plant enthusiast, and was stunning in its beauty featuring the local natives. The woodland setting featured the second growth Loblolly Pines with understory plantings, and had shaded woodland shrubs and ferns, examples of the sand hills with their fire adapted ecology, and lush fern gardens, (my personal favorite section, as they were beautifully planted in mass which most effectively contrasted the different textures, colors and heights, set against an old historic log cabin). The carnivorous plants in the bog garden were also impressive, and allowed us to see all 4 locally native *Sarracena* (Pitcher Plant) species in full bloom at the same time, which would not ordinarily be the case. The bookstore was pretty interesting, and at least one book on North Carolina native plant habitats came home with me.

As those who join Kristin on her trips all know, she schedules various shopping opportunities for us, and a local retail nursery set within a recycled old train station is the setting for Logan's Trading Post in Raleigh. For those of us in the business, it was a treat to see a few things that are hard to find locally here, as well as some new to the trade items such as a deep red blooming shrubby *Dipladenia*, and a mystery *Choisya*(?) species with pinnate leaves and very fragrant flowers (could it in fact be a jasmine species?). Apparently nurseries in North Carolina can also be somewhat lax about labeling their plants...

There was one private garden on the trip this Saturday, and I must admit that the owner designer is quite a character in the best tradition of the South, Mr. Norman Beale of Raleigh. Plants were all beautifully grown and specimen size, and not a weed to be seen throughout. If I could have overcome my sudden onset of designer plant snobbery and just focused on the individual plants, my take would be as glowing as other people's on the trip, but... Mr Beale must be quite the sight gardening in hot Carolina sun completely covered up due to an allergic reaction to sunlight, and has accomplished an amazing collection of plants in his and two adjoining neighbor's gardens, despite the depredations of a local beaver colony in the adjacent pond.

The final event of the day was a visit to another J. C. Raulston inspired alumnus, the personal gardens and nursery of Tony Avent, of Plant Delights Nursery. First, I will mention his web site, <http://www.plantdelights.com>, for those who need a quick fix of softcore plant porn... Tony is known for his irreverent plant descriptions, highly successful mailorder nursery business, and for pushing the envelope of what can be grown in North Carolina. Lots of tropicals, *Colocasias* and *Cannas* to tempt even the jaded, a collection of South African xerophytic ferns, a "jones" for South African *Asparagus* species, (I can relate!), but as I discovered while in South Africa on a trip



Photo by Bruce Peters

with fellow California garden enthusiasts, will the wider public be as fascinated?) If any one can create enthusiasm for such easily overlooked subtleties, I think Tony can. The display gardens were gorgeous yet not at their fullest, lushest abundance of mid to late summer, and the nursery hoop houses took several hours to see thoroughly. I suspect that I was not the only trip participant to have jettisoned clothes to give room in the suitcase for plants. I was also pleasantly surprised to find that our unseasonal(?) North Carolina-like muggy rain this week brought my newly purchased Rain Lilies (*Zephranthes grandiflora*) into full bloom. I will have to devise a humidity chamber for pot placement to trigger blooms for all future special events!

We had the pleasure of hanging out with Tony, his wife and some of the employees for wine and cheese in the gardens after the nursery sales were over for the day, and surely Tony must have been a little hoarse by that evening, as the group kept the questions coming all evening. The trip was really great, and yet, makes me appreciate our local Bay Area all the more, our wide vistas, our greater variety of plants and lack of killing winter cold, and the contrasts between green, blue and gold, instead of that unrelenting forest of green everywhere. On the otherhand, Southern Live Oaks dripping with Spanish Moss, aroids on steroids, azaleas, *Kalmias*, *Rhododendrons* and *Sarracenias* and *Venus Flytraps*, alligators in the garden, virtually the entire state was an incredible natural garden, and has a talented group of designers, nursemens and horticulturalists that would certainly make it an interesting place to live.

*Psoralea pinnata*

The kool-aid bush  
FABACEAE family

Recently, I was on a garden tour in San Francisco. As a group of us walked down a street, hunting for the address of the next garden, we passed a small tree, or large shrub, covered in a haze of blue flowers. From a distance, it appeared to be a *Ceanothus*, but as we got closer, we realized that it was a large *Psoralea pinnata*, the South African shrub pea, or fountain bush. It was definitely popular with the local bees and other pollinators, and was practically buzzing with their activity.

*Psoralea pinnata* has been grown in gardens since the late 1600's, when it was introduced to English gardens from seeds brought back from South Africa. Like many South African plants, it thrives in the milder parts of California, where it is safe from frost. The name fountain bush refers to its habit of growing along streams and in wet places in the wild. In cultivation, it does best in well-drained soil, and needs little water once established. It can be pruned after blooming to limit its size, or it can be allowed to grow into a small, elegant tree up to 12 feet tall. The flowers are not very large, but they blanket the ends of the branches in a cloud of color ranging from blue to purple. When in bloom, the fragrance is similar to grape drink, leading to another common name: the kool aid bush.

The Latin name for this plant comes from the Greek word 'psoraleos', meaning warty. This refers to the dots that cover the leaves. The species name, 'pinnata', refers to the pinnate form of the leaves.



Photo by Bruce Peters

*Psoralea pinnata* is easy to grow from seed. While small, make sure it gets regular waterings. Once it is larger and planted in the ground, it can do with occasional watering during the dry season. Flowering is best in full sun, although the plant can tolerate some shade. Seedlings can often be found growing near an older plant, and are easily dug up and brought to plant sales, where they find ready homes.

If you are looking for a fragrant, low maintenance plant that attracts pollinators to your garden, consider planting the kool aid bush. Your neighborhood bees will thank you.

## PHOTO CONTEST



The California Horticultural Society is having a photography contest for its members. In this round, we are offering no prizes, but think of the honor that will be bestowed on the winners!

Enter as many horticulturally oriented photos as you choose. Our intention is to allow the entrants to submit photographs until after the vacation season has ended. September 31, 2006 will be the deadline. The rules of the contest are on the California Horticultural Society website ([www.calhortsociety.org](http://www.calhortsociety.org)).

The contest is limited to members of the California Horticultural Society. Membership is only 40 dollars so, tell your friends!



## HORTICULTURAL CALENDAR

### Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays

Free Arboretum Tours—The U.C. Davis Arboretum offers a variety of seasonal, guided tours. Meeting times and places vary. Free. (530) 752-4880 or arboretum.ucdavis.edu.

### June 8–August 10

The Literary Garden—Readings in Landscape and Garden Design. Thursdays, 6:30–9:30 PM at U.C. Berkeley Extension's South of Market Center, 95 Third St., San Francisco. www.unex.berkeley.edu/landscape or (510) 642-4111.

### June 10

Let your Garden go to Pots—Suzanne Arca demonstrates how to design a great looking container garden. 9:30 AM–noon, at the Gardens at Heather Farm, members \$15, non-members \$20. www.gardenshf.org or (925) 947-1678.

### SF BOTANICAL GARDEN SOCIETY

(415) 661-1316 · www.sfbotanicalgarden.org

### First Sunday of the Month

Birding in SFBG—Bring binoculars and meet at the Main Gate at 8 AM (ends at 11 AM). Free.

### June 10

Plant Sale—General sale with Perennials. 10 AM–1 PM at the Nursery.

### June 17

Gardening with Succulents—Ernesto Sandoval covers all aspects of growing these weird and wonderful plants. 10 AM–1 PM, members \$25, non-members \$35.

### July 11–August 29

Blossom: The Art of Flowers—Eight sessions of floral illustration for all levels, with Mary Harden. 10 AM–1 PM, members \$130, non-members \$150.

### THE GARDENS AT HEATHER FARM

(925) 947-1678 · www.gardenshf.org

### June 10

Let your Garden go to Pots—Suzanne Arca demonstrates how to design a great looking container garden. 9:30 AM – noon, members \$15, non-members \$20.

### June 24

Composting at Home—Use kitchen waste to grow healthier plants. 11 AM–1 PM, members \$15, non-members \$20.

### U.C. SANTA CRUZ ARBORETUM

(831) 427-2998 · www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum

### June 11

Bamboo Workshop—With Karl Bareis at the U.C. Santa Cruz Arboretum. 9 AM–4 PM, members \$40, non-members \$50.

### June 19

The Genus Trichocereus in Argentina—With Guillermo Rivera. 7 PM, free.

### June 22

Native Plant ID Workshop—Use hand lenses and a Jepson Manual to key out plants. 1:30 PM, free.

Send submissions to [calendar@calhortsociety.org](mailto:calendar@calhortsociety.org)  
Deadline for publication is the third Monday of each month for the following month's Bulletin. Events during the first ten days of the month should be remitted two months ahead..

## Help the *Bulletin!*

The current **Calendar Editor** is soon going to have her hands full with other projects, so we need someone to help out with that.

Email the [editor@calhortsociety.org](mailto:editor@calhortsociety.org) for more info.



## EARN CEU CREDITS

We now offer Continuing Education Units for the California Certified Nursery Professionals—a program of the California Association of Nurseries & Garden Centers. Attendance at our monthly lectures and plant Forum will qualify you for one CEU. Sign in at the registration desk *following* the program.



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Membership year begins January 1 and includes a full subscription to Pacific Horticulture. Dues are \$40 individual, \$50 joint household, \$25 Student (with proof of enrollment). To join, or for full range of membership levels, please visit our website at [www.calhortsociety.org](http://www.calhortsociety.org) or call (800) 884-0009.



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