

Bulletin of the California Horticultural Society

Cultivating Friendship, gardens and fun for 75 years

DON'T FORGET ...
Cal Hort's 75 year Anniversary Picnic
October 18th. See details on page 7

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

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

***Members free

***Non-members – A donation of \$5

The **Plant Drawing** each month is an important source of funds for the Grants and Scholarships Program.

For October, **Grand Lake Ace Hardware** courtesy of Tom Nelson will be donating plants along with **SF Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum** courtesy of **Don Mahoney**.

Our appreciation to:

- **Sloat Garden Center, San Rafael** courtesy of Steve Mauricio
- **SF Botanical Garden**, courtesy of **Don Mahoney**

for the outstanding selection of plants donated for the September meeting

Please patronize these business supporters of Cal Hort

October 2008

Volume 75, Issue 10

Plant Gems from the Emerald Corridor

Oct. 20th

**Presented by Dylan Hannon,
Curator of the Conservatory and Tropical Collections at
the Huntington Botanical Gardens**

The slide illustrated talk will focus on the plants of Colombia in the verdant mountains between the city of Cali and the Pacific Ocean at about 3 degrees north of the equator and also at over 10,000 feet on a volcano near the famous colonial city of Popayan. Of special interest were the various aroids, especially anthuriums, and along the way the botanists found a great wealth of flora in groups such as lobeliads, orchids, ferns, melastoms, tropical blueberries and many others.



The unparalleled biodiversity of Colombia was apparent in every natural area visited and includes more birds than any other nation. The country is estimated to contain a staggering 8% of the world's flora, or about 30,000 species, but still remains relatively poorly known for a variety of reasons. At the same time nurseries, orchid nurseries in particular, are a noteworthy component of the local and national economies and photos were taken in several growing locations.

November's meeting -

Nov. 17th

Monday, November 17, 2008

'Big Ideas for Small Gardens'

**Presented by Dave Egbert, horticulturist and host of
The national Coastal Gardener TV Series**

Dave will discuss creating gardens of lasting beauty in small spaces with design ideas for building plant associations, using foliage color, and using plants and spaces effectively. He is co-author of *Big Ideas for Small Gardens from Sunset Books*. The program will include book signing, plant sale and a question and answer session.

*"it is like lifting
up a piece of
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building
under it."*



President's message

Ellen Frank

I am so jazzed to go see the new Cal Academy building. What a wonderful classroom, man-made, but filled with the wonders of nature. Last month Dr. Frank Almeda described how the one stand-out architect, Renzo Piano brought his ideas to San Francisco. As I recall from the talk, most of the architects came with an entourage and the building already designed. Renzo Piano came with only his daughter and a sketch pad. He wanted to know the Academy's philosophy/mission statement, he wanted to interview the staff to see what their needs were, what their ideas were and then he wanted to sit on the steps of what was at that time the old de Young Museum to see the view of the site from that vantage point. The roof design "is like lifting up a piece of the park and putting a building under it." As Dr. Almeda was describing Renzo Piano's approach to design, I thought that is exactly how gardens are designed, collaborating needs, use and aesthetics. Now I am inspired to work on

designing my garden and how it will look and function when I finally decide the what, where, why and why-not of my garden. Don't miss it... Saturday, October 18th, the Big Anniversary Picnic Celebration. It is in Golden Gate park at Stow Lake from 11am to 3pm at the picnic area across from the boathouse. We are approaching the end of our 75th Anniversary year and we want to acknowledge the many people that have contributed to the Society and making it a wonderful venue for exchanging ideas, learning what this horticulture thing is all about and meeting some great friends at the same time. Go a little early and stay a little late, there are many treasures to visit in the park, the least of which is the new Cal Academy building and roof habitat. I have not spent a day in the Park in I can't remember how long. I would love to go see the conservatory, check out some of the other gardens and maybe

even sneak a peek at what is highlighted at the de Young. Please bring your friends and family, there is plenty to keep everyone entertained. See the flier on page 7 and RSVP so we know how many hot dogs to cook.

It might be a little early to think of gifts for the holidays, but Cal Hort has some pretty snazzy T-shirts, aprons and tote bags that make great gifts. Think of it as a gift that keeps on giving. The funds from the sale of these items will avail us to a wider spectrum of speakers in the future.

If any of you have any speaker suggestions, field trips, workshops or any activity that you would like Cal Hort to consider, please let us know. Either by telling a council member during a meeting (they wear the other colored name tags) or email me at president@calhortsociety.org.

I sincerely hope to see you all at the picnic and at our next meeting on our tour through the Columbian flora with Dylan Hannon.

History

Aaron Dillon

This month, one of the south bay's most beloved and revered garden centers is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Yamagami's Nursery may have started out as a humble fruit stand in 1948, but it has survived the test of time and grown to become one of Northern California's top retail nurseries. The key to Yamagami's success has been the owners' willingness to embrace change in order to focus on the customers' needs.

Taro Yamagami first stated dabbling in the plant business in 1948. He needed something else to sell at his fruit stand during the off months when fresh produce was in short supply. After a few seasons, Taro realized that with the sudden rise in home construction taking place in the south bay after WWII, expanding his nursery operation made a lot of sense. Taro's growing interest in plants lead him to U.C. Berkeley where he received one of the first degrees issued for Landscape Architecture. His landscape business grew quickly and with this growth Taro's vision of the role of the nursery changed. He saw the nursery functioning mainly as a growing ground/supply yard providing plant material for his landscape projects. However, the retail customers kept coming and Taro's plans changed.

In 1953, Taro hired a man by the name of Mas Oka to help at the nursery during the busy season. Within a few years, the retail side of the business had taken off and Mas began working full time as the nursery manager. At this point, the nursery had outgrown the fruit stand so Taro began to plan the construction of a modern day garden center. The concept was to create a one-stop shopping home center where customers could purchase everything the needed to maintain their homes. Along with the new nursery, the shopping center contained a mower shop, paint shop, and even a coffee shop. It was a revolutionary idea at the time that helped to put Yamagami's on the map and establish its reputation as a leader within the industry.

By 1963, Taro decided that he was ready to focus all of his attention on his landscape business. He sold the business to Mas and Betty Oka, who ran the nursery 7 days a week with no more three additional staff members for the first few years. Their hours were long but they were reward for their efforts and the business continued to grow. During the late 1960's and early 70s Ya-

magami's, like nearly all retail nurseries at this time, benefited from American's changing attitude towards plants. Color in the form of perennials became big business, and as a result of the "hippie" movement there was increased at-

tention paid on going back to nature. Houseplants and terrariums (remember those) played a significant part of nursery retailing during this period.

In 1983, Mas and Betty Oka were ready to retire so their son, Preston took over the business. The 1980s were a difficult period for nurseries, the

economy was not strong and the prolonged drought made business tough. Preston credits the members of the Peninsula Chapter of CAN with helping to develop retail strategies that helped nurseries deal with these issues head on. Under Preston's watch, Yamagami's has continued to grow and thrive. Early on, he embraced the use of computer technology to track inventory and created databases to help the nursery stay connected with its customers. Today, Yamagami's has a well developed website and monthly online newsletter that gives customers timely gardening advice and information about the latest plant introductions. While much has changed in 60 years, Yamagami's remains focused on the needs of their customers. This customer first approach sets Yamagami's apart from the big boxes and is the most important reason they are still in business today.



Question Lady - Where does your garden path lead?

Ellen Frank, Martinez says:

My garden path will lead visitors up from the street to a landing. Along the way, as they climb up, they will pass through a drought tolerant Mediterranean garden with some amazing succulents standing out from the other plants with interesting shapes like the most renowned artist's sculptures. Once on the landing, one can either sit on the bench, take in the view and relax or go through the passage way into the courtyard where the soothing sound of trickling water can be heard. The choice to either go into the house, sit and listen to the fountain or continue on the path taunts the visitor. The path continues, but one can't tell where it is leading. As it passes interesting plant combinations and views where contrast between color, texture and form make the scenes dance with excitement. The garden path leads to a sunken garden room bordered by a bench wall. It is covered with a canopy of trees and one is totally isolated from the rest of the garden in this space. Here one can be hidden from the world and can get lost in their own world at the end of the garden path.

Robert Jubb, Plymouth, England says:

Gardening brings people together in many ways. I am not sure whether you have Allotment gardens in the USA I don't remember seeing any. Here in Britain and throughout much of mainland Europe particularly in crowded urban areas there is long tradition of hiring detached allotment gardens.

They reached their peak in WW1 and WW2 when public parks and gardens were dug up to produce food as part of a "dig for victory campaign". The British people were otherwise dependent on food supplies from the US. During the 1950s and 60s increased prosperity combined with the arrival of supermarkets and cheap food saw a decline in allotment gardens. Since the 1970s there has been increased interest in good quality home produced food and organic food which has caused and increased interest in allotment gardens once again. In addition allotment gardens are very sociable places and have a great community atmosphere. Some of the finest produce you see at garden shows throughout the country has been produced on allotment gardens.

I used to live in the town of Ivybridge in Devon. I was on a waiting list there for an allotment for 8 years. A group of us got to-

gether and formed an allotment association. In partnership with the Town Council we acquired a new site for the 50 people on the waiting list just as I was leaving.

In 2006 we moved to the sleepy village of St Germans which has population of 600 people. There are allotment gardens in the village but these are part of the Estate owned by the Earl and Countess. There are some derelict allotments but these have been purchased by property speculators who are hoping to benefit should the land ever be developed. After two years waiting I decided to take some action. I placed an advert in the local parish magazine and formed an allotment association. We now have 17 people who require allotment gardens.

There is a 100 year old law in the UK that states that where there are six or more people waiting for allotments the district council have a duty to provide allotment gardens. On the 27th August we attended a meeting of the local council after requesting provision of allotment gardens was included on the agenda. It was interesting to witness the sober and solemn process of democracy in action! We had to be formally introduced to the council most of whom are neighbours and friends. So the meeting commenced. We were item 23 on the agenda. A loud yawn seemed to do the trick and after the first three items the chairman said OK lets scrap the agenda on this occasion and deal with allotments. They have offered to help find suitable land. Next stop was the Earls Estate Manager who was also very helpful and is scouring the estate to find a suitable site.

I hope that this path will lead us in a year or so, to a thriving allotment /community garden.

Next month's Question Lady column asks "What is your most important gardening chore in the fall or winter?"

What do you do this time of year that if you didn't, you or your plants will suffer next spring? Please limit your answers to about 100-200 words. Email editor@calhortsociety.org, write it down - give it to Elsie at the next meeting or drop it in the mail to: Ellen Frank, 2101 Harbor View Dr., Martinez, CA 94553. Look for answers November's Bulletin.

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Get ready for CAL HORT Spring PLANT SALE

That's right, we need you to start preparing for Cal Hort's main fund raising event right now. You can help by propagating some of the plants in your garden. Take cut-

tings, plant seed; when you divide those perennials, orchids, succulents or bulbs, remember to fill up a couple of pots to donate for the plant sale.

Sunday, April 5th will be the sale to the public and Saturday, April 4th will be the pre-sale to members and the Gala social party with the auction of prized unusual plants. We will be looking for volunteers to help set up and help with the sale when we get closer to the date, but right now we need to start getting the word out and to secure specialty

nurseries that would like to collaborate with Cal Hort and be a vendor at the sale. If you know of any specialty growers, please pass on the word. Either give their name to the committee, or get them in contact with any of the committee members. The committee members are: Fred Bove, Kristen Yanker-Hansen, Don Gerimonte, Dave Tivol, Ann DeRosa, Jonathan Silverman, Jim Budke, Ted Kipping, Diana Ross and Ellen Frank. We are all in the roster and most of us

are at the monthly meetings. If you would like to help organize the event, please let Ellen know and we will include you in the emails and any organizational meetings.



Mark the date on next year's calendar and remember, we can all contribute to the success of the sale with a little dirt, a few pots and the plants in our own backyards.

Plant of the Month

Josh Schechtel

Masdevallias- Flag Orchids- Family Orchidaceae

There are hundreds of species and hybrids of Masdevallias, and unlike many orchids, these were practically designed for life in coastal California. Ranging from Mexico to Brazil, most of these orchids hail from the highlands of Ecuador, Columbia, Peru and



Bolivia. Masdevallias prefer shaded locations in cooler climates with constant moisture. If you've got fog, you've got perfect habitat for Masdevallias. These small plants are very

easy to grow, and will reward you with their jewel-like flowers. Remember to think cool- too much heat and these little gems will wither away. During dry spells, place the pots on trays of gravel and water to maintain some humidity around the foliage, or if you are a truly hands-on gardener, mist them with water to get

them through a drought. The potting medium should be finer than that used for most orchids- fine fir bark or tree fern fiber will work well. Masdevallias enjoy being root bound, but don't do well if the potting mix decomposes. Repotting every year or two usually keeps them happy. Feed them year-round with a dilute, balanced fertilizer.



Masdevallias were named in honor of Jose Masdeval, a botanist in the court of Charles III of Spain. Minimal care,

beautiful flowers, and royal connections. What else could you want from a plant?

Photos by Ted Kipping

November 6, Thursday evening, 7:30PM

14th Annual Sale of San Francisco Native Plants—The plants are all propagated from seeds and cuttings which were gathered in San Francisco or Montara and San Bruno mountains and grown by California Native Plant Society volunteers and by Go Native Nursery. At the Recreation Room, County Fair Bldg., 9th Ave./Lincoln Way in San Francisco. For more info call: (415) 282-5066, 7:30 PM.

November 7- 8, Saturday and Sunday, 8:30AM – 6:00PM

Plant Driven Design—The Garden Conservancy and The Ruth Bancroft Garden present a seminar and study tour featuring Scott Ogden and Lauren Springer Ogden, Susan Van Atta, and Bernard Trainor. At the Civic Arts Education Building in Walnut Creek and The Ruth Bancroft Garden. Friday seminar: 8:30 AM –5:30 PM, Saturday Study Tour: 8:30 AM –6:00 PM. Fee for both days: \$155 members, \$195 non-members, fee for Friday only: \$90 members, \$110 non-members. For more info and to register go to www.gardenconservancy.org or call (415) 561-7895.

U.C. BOTANICAL GARDEN AT BERKELEY
(510) 643-2755 •
www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu

October 22, Wednesday evening, 6:00PM – 7:00PM

American Chestnut: The Life, Death and Rebirth of a Perfect Tree—Come learn about the cultural and economic importance of the chestnut to the East coast, especially Southern Appalachia and the strategies that are being used to bring the tree back. Light reception to follow. Members \$5, non-members \$10. 6:00 PM –7:00 PM.

November 2, Saturday afternoon, 1:00PM – 3:00PM

California Natives: Plants and People—Explore the Garden's magnificent California area through the eyes of the California natives who lived off the land using plants to produce everything. The Garden's expert docents will lead you on a tour based on the fascinating new Garden ethnobotanical publication: *California Natives: Plants and People*. 1:00 PM –3:00 PM. Members only, free. Registration required.

November 9, Sunday afternoon, 1:00PM – 3:00PM

Life After Lawn: Toward New Naturalism—Anthony Garza, Supervisor of Horticulture and Grounds, will offer his experience to achieve an always-interesting regionally appropriate garden. Emphasis will be on weaving ornamental grasses and grass-like plants into an intriguing mélange. 1:00 PM –3:00 PM, members \$20, non-members \$25.

SF BOTANICAL GARDEN SOCIETY

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

October 18, Saturday, 9:00AM – 4:00PM

Thirty Trees for the City and Smaller Properties—Join arborist, photographer and horticulturist Ted Kipping for an important talk on the ecology of urban trees, and learn how to care for backyard and street trees through proper selection and careful culture, planting, and pruning. Ted will answer site-specific questions and provide numerous slide examples. 9:00 AM –4:00 PM, members \$40, non-members \$45.

November 8, Saturday morning, 9:00AM – 12:30PM

What's New with Grasses?—Grassologist Bob Hornback returns to the SFBG and he's bringing an exciting new array of beautiful grasses with him. Most of the specimens will be available for sale. Bob will discuss the elements of caring for grasses and give a special presentation on species that need very little water. 9:00 AM –12:30 PM, members \$35, non-members \$45.

U.C. SANTA CRUZ ARBORETUM
(831) 427-2998 • www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum

October 25, Saturday morning, 11:00AM – 12:00PM

Human Uses of California Native Plants—This is an ethnobotanical tour of native plants and their traditional and contemporary uses. Meet in the lower parking lot. 11:00 AM –12:00 PM, members free, non-members \$5.

November 6, Thursday evening, 7:00PM

Peru: Coast to Altiplano—Intrepid traveler, hybridizer, scholar and plant nut Patrick Worley gives another installment of his illustrated adventures up and down the Peruvian Andes in search of high times and cool plants. Potluck supper at 6:00 PM precedes the lecture. Lecture at 7:00 PM. Free, but donations cheerfully accepted!



Cal Hort's 75th Anniversary Picnic Celebration

**At Stow Lake in
Golden Gate Park**

**Saturday, October
18th**

11 am to 3 pm

**Spend the day in the
Park**



**\$5 will pay for Hot Dogs,
dessert and beverages. Potluck on sides,
chips and appetizers.**

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7

The picnic area is across the parking lot from the boat house.
Enter from Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and there is plenty of
parking on either side of the one way road around the lake.
See map to the left. Arrow indicates picnic area.

PLEASE RSVP by Wednesday October 15th

Name : _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Number of people attending _____

Call Jim Budke to RSVP at 415-824-3237

X \$5.00 per person = total paid \$ _____

Pay at the picnic, or mail to Jim Budke at

127 Grand View Ave.

Friends and Family WELCOME! Page 7

To join, or for full range of membership levels, please visit our web site at 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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Ted Kipping

Submit your entries to the Cal Hort Photo Contest



The deadline for the Third Annual Cal Hort Photo Contest is coming up! Now's the time to go through all your photos and enter your best three in our contest. Or just head out into the garden and take some new ones. Just make sure the photo is horticulturally based. Send your images to photocontest@calhortsociety.org by October 31, 2008. Full submission guidelines are available on our website at <http://www.calhortsociety.org>.



The California Horticultural Society

San Francisco County Fair Building

9TH Avenue & Lincoln Way

San Francisco, CA 94122

www.calhortsociety.org

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