



LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

2017 Volume XXII Issue 3

<http://www.crfg-la.org>

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MEETING

Date: May 27, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

Place: Sepulveda Gardens

16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, CA 91316

Program: Anna Howell - Pollinators, Bees, etc

Potluck to follow. (Please bring something lunch-y)

Anna D. Howell, an entomologist from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, will be speaking on bees and other pollinators. Scientists estimate that one third of the world's food crops and four-fifths of its flowering plants depend on some form of insect pollination, mainly by bees. Yet honeybees and native bees around the globe are declining in numbers. Discover the fascinating world of pollination, pollinators, and its impact on the eco system.

FIELD TRIP: Mulberry Haven - Organic Orchard

Date: June 24, 2017 at 10:00 am

Place: (private address)

Program: Garden Tour.

Chapter Members Only

Carol Vesecky, owner of Mulberry Haven and Director of Biointensive for Russia will lead us on a tour of her organic orchard.

In 2007, Carol and her daughter Holly purchased Mulberry Haven with many varieties of mulberries and other fruit trees on a two-acre property. Known to some as the oldest mulberry farm in North America, the orchard was originally planted in over two hundred trees, most of them grafted.

The orchard is managed by Kody Ryan, who has extensive experience with Biodynamic farming techniques and worked with former owners Gordon and Marie Kennedy who planted the orchard around 1980. Kody and Carol will give us a tour and explain how to keep fruit trees healthy in our hot, dry climate. You will see mulberry, pomegranate, carob, persimmon, avocado, fig, apricot, peach apple, date palms and several varieties of citrus trees. If there is time and interest, Carol will show us her Biointensive food garden and composting techniques. Kody and Carol also have a farm stand with their produce and some succulents and geraniums for sale.

Pot luck to follow. Carol has promised to serve her wonderful mulberry punch and carob tea.

SAVE THE DATES - CALENDAR FOR 2017 LA CHAPTER

- July 22nd - Sepulveda Gardens - Jorge Ochoa: Passion Fruit
- August 26th - Field trip - Elliot Kuhn: Cottonwood Urban Farm
- Sept 23rd - Sepulveda Garden - Paul Talley: Figs
- October 28th - Field Trip- to be announced
- Nov 18th - Sepulveda Gardens – to be announced
- Dec 16th - Sepulveda Gardens - Holiday Party

Words From Our Chairman



Dear Los Angeles Chapter Members,

Spring has sprung, and we are up and running. Digging, tilling, planting, trimming and sowing seeds. We do all this hard labor for what? Hopefully, we work for an abundant harvest of our favorite fruits and vegetables.

There are many different types of seeds that the Los Angeles Chapter members are planting. We are sowing seeds for the next generation of gardeners, hobbyist, botanists, florists, nursery workers and owners working in the agriculture fields. We have adopted the Sylmar Agriculture Learning Center (SALC) at Sylmar high school (SHS) here in the San Fernando Valley and as a result are planting seeds into the students; several students that have graduated high school are now attending four year universities and enrolled in horticulture programs.

This all started with the CRFG development fund that formed a group of members to teach grafting to high school students, (thank you Joe Sabol, Bob Vieth, Bill Brandt and many others) That's where I met Steve List the Horticulture instructor, and floral instructor Araceli Aguilar at Sylmar High School. Steve has worked in the nursery business for about forty years, and has been teaching the last seventeen years. He has a vision to teach his students about agriculture and the many career opportunities in horticulture.

How do we sow seeds? Let me count the ways... CRFG members annually teach grafting at local high schools. The Los Angeles Unified School District has a horticulture competition that ends with an annual awards night dinner; we sponsor two tables for SHS students at that event, tables are \$175.00 each. We also give an annual scholarship award of \$250.00 in

honor of past Los Angeles chapter President Ed Hager to the top graduating senior in the SALC. We support an annual fund raiser – the Tree Symposium held at SHS. And lastly, we have an open invitation to high school students at chapter meetings held at Sepulveda Garden Center. It's exciting to see that we are making a difference in these young lives, and who knows how far they will go? Some may never go into a career in the agriculture field. But I hope they all grow up and plant gardens and fruit trees and of course join the Los Angeles Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers.

You reap what you sow.

Jim Schopper

LOOKING BACK

By Debbie Schopper, Member at Large

March Meeting

The 5th Annual Tree Symposium was held at Sylmar High School by horticulture teacher Steve List. There were both self tours and student led tours of the beautifully landscaped grounds, which includes greenhouses, growing areas, orchards, rose lined paths, raised beds, butterfly gardens, ponds, chicken coops, classrooms, and student projects. Tom Spellman of Dave Wilson Nursery was the guest speaker and spoke on "Backyard Growing". A real highlight of the Tree Symposium is meeting the horticulture students who led tours, checked in members, answered questions, served food, helped us carry trees and plants, and worked so hard to make this such a successful day. Thank you students and thank you, Steve List, for your enthusiasm and all of your work!

April Meeting

Our April meeting was a field trip to Sunland to tour the gardens of member, Nancy Weilgart. Succulents, raised bed vegetables gardens, flowering plants, fruit trees, nursery

areas (for both plants and babies), a space for



star gazing, wood garden art made by Nancy's father, everywhere you looked, there was something to grab your attention. Nancy was a wonderful and attentive host.

Time of the Season:

Info & Garden Tips from The Old Farmer's Almanac

In 2017, the summer solstice falls on Tuesday, June 20, 9:24 P.M. PDT.

In temperate regions, the Sun is higher in the sky throughout the day and its rays strike Earth at a more direct angle, causing the warming trend we call summer.

This summer solstice is the day with the most hours of sunlight during the year. At the winter solstice, just the opposite occurs: The Sun is at its southernmost point and is low in the sky. Its rays hit the Northern Hemisphere at an oblique angle, creating the feeble winter sunlight.



If you take a picture of the Sun at the same time for several days (on a single frame), the shape traced out by the Sun over the course of a year is an analemma. The Sun's apparent shift is caused by the Earth's motion around the Sun when combined with the tilt of

the Earth's rotation axis. The photo to the left was taken in northeast Catalonia, Spain by Juan Carlos Casado (www.starryearth.com).

This knowledge can be useful; in the movie "Cast Away," Tom Hanks uses an analemma as a calendar.

The word solstice is from the Latin *solstitium*, from *sol* (sun) and *stitium* (to stop), because the Sun appears to stop. This happens again at the winter solstice.

Gardening Tips for May/June for Los Angeles (Southwest Region)

This list merges Almanac recommendations for May & June. For the full list check out <http://www.almanac.com/gardening/tips/CA/Los%20Angeles/03>.

CLEANING

- Pinch back growth of newly planted annuals and perennials to help develop more flowers.
- Prolong the flowering season for spring annuals by cutting off the old blossoms.
- Pinch back established mums and plant mums now for fall bloom.
- Remove faded or dead flowers from your plants to encourage new growth.
- Remove any unwanted or vigorous branches from trees.

PREPARING

- Apply mulch around heat sensitive plants to keep the roots cool and to reduce/prevent water evaporation.
- Put shade cloth over tomatoes.
- Continue fertilization of rose bushes; liquid fertilizers can be added every two weeks.
- Keep deciduous fruit trees well-watered this month. Do not prune.
- Cover fruit trees with netting to protect the fruit from bird damage.
- Apply a 3 to 4 inch layer of mulch around the roots of your plants to help retain moisture during the dry summer months.

PLANTING

- Summer flowers can now be planted; plant summer bulbs such as cannas, dahlias, and gladiolus.
- Cool-season vegetables will quickly decrease in quality once the weather gets hot. Be sure to harvest these vegetables and then replace them with warm-season vegetables such as okra and sweet potatoes.
- Native and imported heat-tolerant plants can be planted during summer months as long as they are watered regularly until fall.
- Plant colorful summer annuals such as cosmos, marigolds, salvia, or petunias.
- June is not a good planting month for most edibles. However, you can plant melons, sunflowers, and sweet potato transplants. Be sure to water transplants both before and after planting them.

OTHER

- Our wonderful winter rainfall will produce a bumper crop of bugs as well as weeds.
- Many bugs appear in May, including lace bugs, aphids, and bagworms.
- Some common problems to look for: gray leaf spot, blossom end rot, spider mites, and lace bugs.
- Fertilize both cool-season and warm-season lawns.
- June is the driest month. However, do NOT overwater. Water slowly, deeply (5 or 6 inches deep), and let the soil dry between watering.
- Cut back on fertilizing roses during the hot temperature. Water deeply. Hose off roses in early morning to increase humidity.

Propagation

By Deborah Oisboid, *Editor*

At the March 2017 CRFG meeting, Charles Portenoy discussed propagation methods, so it seemed like a good idea to begin a new column

in this newsletter: The Propagation Method of the Month.

Most of this information comes from one of my favorite resources: The American Horticultural Society Plant Propagation, edited by Alan Toogood.

Let's start with the simplest method, and one which is appropriate to the spring season – division. Strictly, division is the separation of one plant into several self-supporting ones. It takes advantage of a plant's production of shoots or buds, typically from underground growth. The term "division" is also used to refer to the separation of bulb offsets, of pseudobulbs, or of rooted suckers and rooted runners.

Division is typically done as a plant exits a dormant stage and starts putting out new growth. Water loss is minimized because of the lack of leaves, and roots grow quickly to reestablish the division. Dormancy usually ends at spring in Temperate zones.

The secret of successful division is to always have more root than shoot, to cut away excess foliage, and to keep the divisions moist and sheltered until established.

Here are a few division processes for specific plant types and species:

Clump-forming plants. Growth clumps are split

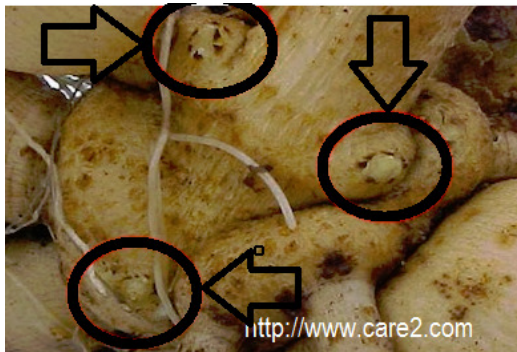


into sections, each with at least one shoot or bud and its own roots. Divide a clump at the start of growing season, making sure each section has at least one healthy growing point and some healthy, vigorous

roots. Young crowns are easier to deal with than old, woody ones.

Bulbs and Corms. Most offsets usually form within the parent bulb's tunic, or skin, if there is one. They are attached to the basal plate from which the roots grow. In nearly all cases they can be removed by hand, but some tight clumps may require a knife to be cut free. If you wound the parent, dust the exposed area lightly with fungicide before replanting to protect it from rot.

Tubers. Tubers are underground storage organs.



Most have a dormant period (usually winter) during which they often die back to the

tuber. This is the best time to divide them. (Exception: Pelargonium are dormant in summer – divide in late summer before they come back into growth.) When dividing, make sure each tuber has at least one shoot or growing point. Simply lift the plant and pull away some healthy tubers. Cut if necessary. Pot/plant immediately.

Cacti & Succulents. Divide a clump at the start of the growing season, making sure each section has at least one healthy growing point and some healthy, vigorous roots. Some mat-forming or trailing varieties root along their stems wherever they come into contact with the soil. Established plants may simply be cut into smaller clumps with a sharp knife. The divisions may then be potted or replanted.



Orchids (Pseudobulbs). When plant is dormant (autumn), lift and divide to produce new plants.

Ease pseudobulbs out of the clump, while avoiding damage to the roots. Old, shriveled pseudobulbs should be discarded. Clean off any dead matter, remove any loose papery tunics from the viable pseudobulbs.

Orchids (tuberous). Some tuberous orchids produce very few new tubers, while others form substantial colonies of offsets. Lift and divide any



time during dormancy. Autumn division avoids damaging young

roots, which begin growth early in the year. Spring/summer division is done just as the flowers begin to fade.

This is Not Chia

By Deborah Oisboid, *Editor*

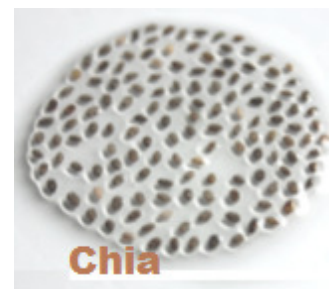
This month I discovered Thai basil seeds, or *mangluck* in Thai. These black seeds are *ocimum basilicum*, coming from the sweet basil (Holy basil?) plant. But the fascinating thing about them is the way they grow a gel when immersed



in water, similar to chia. Chia seeds (*Salvia hispanica* L.) also swell into gelatinous pearls. The gel formed is not only safe to eat

but is associated with soothing abilities for the digestive tract.

Thai basil is widely used throughout Southeast Asia. Its leaf flavor is described as anise- or



licorice-like and slightly spicy. Thai basil has small, narrow leaves, purple stems, and pink-purple flowers.

Its seeds look like small black sesame seeds. When soaked in liquid, their pericarp or outer skin swells into a jelly bubble of purple-greyish color. Unlike chia seeds, which can be eaten raw or soaked, they are eaten only after being soaked.

Basil seeds have been used for both medicinal and culinary purposes. For example, it is said that traditional Persian herbalists administered soaked basil seeds to help with coughs, asthma, or colds due to their antispasmodic effects. Basil seeds have also been used for digestive issues such as constipation, as well as for alleviating stress levels and depression. In addition, basil seeds are high in iron. They are a key ingredient to rose-water infused beverages such as Persian *faloodeh* or Thai *nam manglak*, and create a refreshing drink, especially in hot weather.

I like to soak the seeds in water, followed by soaking in vinegar or sprinkling with sugar and adding them to salads for an extra zing.

For small children seeking a new tactile experience, the seeds can be colored for nontoxic fun.

- 1 Tbsp of this Basil Seed
- 1 and 1/4 cup water
- Food Coloring



Add the food coloring to the water. Soak the basil seeds, stirring occasionally. Within about 5 minutes, they will have absorbed all the water.

When you are ready to play with them, add a little extra water to the container to help them move more fluidly (otherwise they tend to stick to each other and hands). Be warned: they will **STICK TO EVERYTHING**: clothes, furniture, towels, carpets...



Sources:

<https://scienceandfooducla.wordpress.com/2016/10/25/basil-seeds-chia-seeds-doppelganger/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thai_basil

<http://www.funathomewithkids.com/2013/10/safe-edible-non-chokable-mini-water.html>

Letters to the Editor

Thanks to Edgar Valdivia for the photo of Nancy during the April tour.

Have a suggestion? A question? A story to share?
Send it to editor@crfg-la.org and see it published here!