



Gardener's Notebook

Volume 18, No. 4

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

July/August 2004

Summertime in the garden



Gorgeous Gardenias
Exotic Passifloras
Showy Abutilons
and Much More!



Timely information to keep your citrus in the limelight

Summer is an important time to focus on your citrus. A little effort now will keep your trees looking great while maximizing fruit quantity and quality.

Early spring and late summer are the two major growth cycles for many kinds of citrus. Careful watering and proper feeding are essential during these periods.



For a young tree in hot weather, you may need to water 2 - 3 times a week. An older more established tree will benefit from watering once every week or once every two weeks. Citrus prefer a deep watering to a regular drip. The soil should be moist but not soggy. Always use good judgement when watering by checking soil conditions

before applying water.

Citrus are heavy feeders. Offer them a specialty fertilizer such as **GreenAll's Citrus and Avocado Food**. A quality citrus fertilizer will address the specific nutrient needs of citrus including high

nitrogen and trace elements.

Sloat Tip:

Yellow leaves are a common problem and are caused by:

1. Lack of fertilizer.
2. Overwatering (roots are rotting).
3. Pest problem.



Check your soil first, and if it seems to be draining, try fertilizing your tree. Check for pests next. Feel free to bring us a leaf in a plastic bag for a free diagnosis.



Summer care for hydrangeas

The optimal time to prune your mop-head and lacecap hydrangeas is before August as pruning any later could have an adverse effect on next year's blooms.

All deadwood and spent flowers can be removed from your plants and for hydrangeas that are at least four years old, a more aggressive pruning is possible. About 1/3 of the older stems can be removed down to the ground each summer which will reenergize your plant.

After the bloom is a good time to feed your hydrangeas with **Maxsea Acid Fertilizer** or **E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia and Rhododendron Food**.

Hydrangeas are long-living and trouble-free plants that offer gardeners a dependable and lasting bloom. To learn more about hydrangeas and their care please ask one of our California Certified Nursery Professionals on your next Sloat visit.

Gardening Guide

July & August

Plant

Plant additional heat-tolerant vegetables such as beans, chard, and cucumbers.

Summer flowers abound. Fill your garden with color that can carry you through until fall.



Plant

Time to plant fall vegetables (cole crops) including broccoli, kale, chard, cabbage, brussels sprouts, green onions, carrots, cilantro, spinach, and all sorts of lettuce.

Plant fall-blooming chrysanthemums.

Select and plant bearded irises for spring. Dig up and divide existing iris.

Fertilize

Feed vegetables, perennials and annuals with a water-soluble fertilizer such as **Neptune's Harvest Fish Emulsion** or **Maxsea**. Avoid feeding during the heat of the day.

Prune & Maintain

Support or thin early-bearing fruit trees to keep branches from breaking.

Mulch all garden beds to protect from summer heat and keep garden maintenance down.

Water lawns deeply and mow grass 1/2" higher than normal to protect against heat and stress. Leave lawn clippings in place to add nitrogen to the soil.

Cut back perennials that have gone to seed.

Check your sprinkler system to insure coverage during summer's heat.

Shade lettuce and spinach with shade cloth to discourage bolting.

Deadhead flowers to promote additional blooming.

Fertilize

Fertilize camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons with **E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia and Gardenia Food**.

Feed vegetables and flowers with a slow-release fertilizer such as **Osmocote**.

Watch for caterpillars and bud worms. Hand pick as you discover them.

Make sure all appropriate vegetables are supported by cages, stakes or trellises to avoid crop loss.

Water early to avoid evaporation. Check soil moisture with great care during hot spells to avoid drying out plants (especially those growing in containers).



Abutilon: A showy shrub that's excellent for espaliers!

While abutilon is often called a "flowering maple" or "Chinese lantern," we call it a lovely shrub that's reliable, easy to grow, and a prolific spring and summer bloomer.

Abutilon, despite its nicknames, is neither a maple nor known to be a native of China. This evergreen shrub has most of its roots in South America, although it has naturalized throughout the tropics and is widely cultivated.

Its leaves look like those of a maple, but the plant is actually a member of the Malvacea family. Like its cousin the hibiscus, abutilon has a lovely tropical look to it.

Abutilon's interesting and colorful flowers look like Chinese lanterns or have



Abutilon x hybridum 'Albus'

By pinching back younger plants you can create an attractive and bushy mounding habit that is also popular in landscape design. Abutilon enjoys our warm California climate and will tolerate some cold weather, too. For this reason it can be considered semi-tropical. Plant it in full sun to partial shade in fertile well-drained soil and keep young plants well watered during summer.

Here are just a few of the many varieties you can expect to find this season in our garden centers:



Abutilon x hybridum 'Nabob'

a saucer shape depending on the variety. They appear in spring in great numbers and continue their impressive bloom through summer and into fall.

Consider abutilon as a foundation plant in your Bay Area garden. This prolific shrub can quickly grow as high and wide as 15 feet. It's ideal for espaliers, trellises and arbors. Training abutilon to espalier (grow horizontally) to cover a wall or fence is one of the best growing techniques because the plant can range a bit if not corralled.

A. x hybridum 'Apollo'. This lovely hybrid has beautiful yellow 2-inch diameter flowers and grows 8 to 10 feet. It has an upright growth habit and handsome foliage.

A. x hybridum 'Nabob'. "Nabob is known for its exceptionally large maroon-colored flowers that are about 3 inches across. It received the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit in 1993.

A. x hybridum 'Strybing Red' A local plant variety from our own Strybing Arboretum. Its small flowers are bright red against dark green foliage.

A. x hybridum 'Albus' Beautiful

snow-white blooms and graceful stems offer gardeners a lovely display.

With so many abutilon varieties you must stop by and see for yourself what these wonderful flowers can do for your garden!



Abutilon x hybridum 'Apollo'

Trip up the thrips in your garden

Thrips are nearly microscopic elongated pests that can harm a wide range of plants. They commonly attack vegetables, fruit trees and annuals resulting in flowers and leaves that fail to open normally.

You may also see a discoloration of leaves and flowers. If you look closely, one of the more telling signs that thrips have arrived are small black fecal pellets from these pests that are left on your plants.

Thrips start appearing as early as May. If you find them

among your plants, consider introducing beneficial insects to your garden such as green lacewings whose larvae will eat the thrips (see our staff for more insect options).

Another good and environmentally safe choice is to wipe them out using **Safer Insect Killing Soap**.

It is important to trip up these thrips as early as possible as they multiply rapidly.

If you have any type of pest problem, please bring us a sample of your plant and/or the actual pest in a plastic bag. We will be happy to identify and troubleshoot your problem.



Fascinating flowers stir passion in gardeners!

The flowers of passiflora vines are so remarkable they have been described as fascinating, complex, beautiful, exotic and even as having religious significance.

Passiflora or passion vine got its name from 17th century priests in South America who sent the plant home to Rome where its flower form was interpreted as symbolizing the various parts of the Crucifixion.

While a bit of religious symbolism can certainly launch the popularity of a

famous passiflora hybridizer with our grower **Suncrest Nursery**.

The vines are extremely useful in the garden as they grow vigorously, which makes them ideal for quickly covering a wall, trellis, or arbor. The vines are great for creating a privacy or wind screen. They attach themselves with tendrils, which Pons-Worley sees as a great feature of the plant. "The tendrils will attach to anything that they can grasp," says Pons-Worley. You will need a trellis or framework of some kind if you wish to

easily if they seem to be having an impact.

In California's mild climate, passifloras are evergreen. If temperatures cool, they may go dormant for several months then spring back when the weather warms.

Passifloras can be divided into two varieties, warm and cool growing. The cool growing varieties are well suited to areas close to the ocean or bay with the more common warm growing varieties thriving in inland areas.

Gardeners may be familiar with common



Passiflora 'Donna Brigham'™

PHOTO: SUNCREST NURSERIES



Passiflora 'Quasar'™

grow them against a smooth wall. The vines will grow up or horizontally, but not down, he advises. It is therefore best to start the vine low and consider training it in an "S" pattern as it grows up if you wish to cover a wide area.

He also points out that the tendrils can be cut if the plant needs to be repositioned as new tendrils will reattach the vine. Growing on a structure or frame also allows you to move the vine when painting your home's exterior.

Pons-Worley has found that the vines will grow in just about any soil, including clay. The key, like with so many other plants, is adequate soil drainage. The plants need to be kept moist so he advises gardeners to consider a drip irrigation system or creating a basin around the plant as if you were planting a fruit tree.

Fertilize with an all purpose 10-10-10 or 20-20-20 during the growing season and prune as necessary to control growth.

Some varieties offer edible fruit and Pons-Worley has published a book with passion fruit recipes. It's the only book of its kind in the world! (See *Passiflora edulis*.)

Passifloras are almost pest free. Caterpillars and snails enjoy the plants, but these pests can be dealt with rather



Passiflora edulis 'Frederick'

PHOTO: SUNCREST NURSERIES

passiflora varieties such as *P. vitifolia* and *P. edulis*, but as you can see by these pictures there are some wonderful other hybrids to consider. Here are some great choices and two sneak previews that our grower plans to have available in the future:

Passiflora 'Donna Brigham'™

This new Patrick Pons-Worley hybrid is the first of its kind with inch long filaments inherited from its *P. pinnatistipula* father. The tri-lobed, green leaves have an interesting bubbled texture with a deep green color and great substance. The masses of flowers bloom over a very long period. The plant is very vigorous and a rapid grower.

Passiflora 'Quasar'™

This vigorous grower with dark green, lobed leaves produces flowers that have filaments and petals of pure white. This plant does not become invasive and makes an excellent, rapidly growing cover for a fence or small building. It is evergreen in our climate and the white flowers do not burn or turn yellow in full sun.

plant, what is likely to stir passion in today's gardeners are the expanding availability of gorgeous passiflora hybrids, the many uses of the vines and growing success, which is nearly assured.

There are currently about 600 species of passiflora vines, which is a far cry from 22 species that were identified when Linnaeus classified the plant 1745. Some of the latest hybrids are available to Bay Area gardeners thanks to the work of **Patrick Pons-Worley**, a world

Passiflora edulis 'Frederick'

Passiflora edulis 'Frederick' is the premier fruit producing passiflora. The flowers are fragrant and large. The fruit has a purple skin and delicious pulp when ripe. The fruit should never be picked, it must fall from the vine naturally. If it is allowed to wrinkle a bit after collecting, it becomes sweet am-brosia. The plant is very productive in warm areas. This outstanding Patrick Pons-Worley hybrid is vigorous and blooms from late spring until fall. This plant is excellent for a sunny location and makes a good, rapidly growing screen for a fence or outbuilding. The *Passionfruit Cookbook*, by Patrick Pons-Worley is available at www.ponsworley.com

Passiflora 'Gloria Moreno'TM

One of the showiest passifloras, Gloria Moreno has large rose-pink flowers. The trilobed, medium green leaves form the perfect backdrop to show off the masses of flowers that bloom over a very long period. The plant is a very vigorous and rapid grower.

Passiflora 'Purple Tiger'

We could not resist giving you a sneak preview of this exciting plant that our grower hopes to have in production someday soon. Another hybrid by Patrick Pons-Worley, this tropical looking plant has unusual winged stems and large, oval, waxy, deep green leaves. The flowers are very large with deep red petals and tiger striped filaments that are wavy at the ends. The flowers are sweetly scented and are extraordinary for their size, form and great beauty. They grow best in warm protected areas with full sun near the coast. Flowers appear over a very long period.

Passiflora 'Witchcraft'

Here's another sneak preview that showcases another new Patrick Pons-Worley hybrid and one that Sloat expects to be

among the first to receive when it becomes available. 'Witchcraft' has the darkest flower of any passiflora and its flower petals are reflexed so they are visible from all angles!

Passiflora actinia

Passiflora actinia is an outstanding species that produces masses of sweetly scented flowers in a huge spring flush starting in April and lasting for months. When September approaches it starts reblooming for another month or more. The foliage is dark green

deep blue filaments in two rows over pure white petals. The deep green foliage



has five lobes and is sturdy. This outstanding new Patrick Pons-Worley hybrid is vigorous and blooms over a very long season. This plant is

PHOTO: SUNCREST NURSERIES

Passiflora 'Witchcraft' (Sneak preview!)

and oval with a darker underside. It is a vigorous grower with slender branches that are easily kept under control.

Passiflora 'Blue Horizon'TM

Passiflora 'Blue Horizon'TM is an outstanding new hybrid. It features masses of flowers with

excellent for a sunny location.

Passiflora sanguinolenta 'Maria Rosa'

Patrick Pons-Worley collected this lovely larger flowering passiflora in Ecuador many years ago. It has darker pink flowers that are larger than other forms. The plant is more robust and the charming rose pink flowers are produced over a long season. The bi-lobed leaves are medium green and interesting in their own right.

Sloat will have many passifloras on hand this summer and we can also special order for you!

PHOTO: SUNCREST NURSERIES



Passiflora 'Purple Tiger' (Sneak preview!)

Soil Products to Supercharge Your Garden

If you'd like to enjoy the most successful (and easiest) year of gardening ever, make a commitment to getting and keeping your soil in tip-top shape with Sloat Planting Mix, Sloat Loam Builder and Sloat Forest Mulch Plus.

Each of these soil products has been custom blended to amend and improve the dominant soil types found in the San Francisco Bay Area. By using these products, you'll increase plant performance and improve soil structure, moisture retention, aeration and water

penetration. These soil products are especially effective in taming heavy clay soils and holding nutrients in your soil.



**Only at
Sloat
Garden
Centers**

Put a pair of Swiss-made pruners in your hand . . . feel the quality!

A hand pruner is certainly the most technical and perhaps useful tool a gardener can employ. Choosing a quality pair is therefore very important.

Hand pruners are normally carried everywhere in the garden as they do ongoing and often daily work.

An active gardener can make hundreds of pruning cuts each year shaping shrubs, removing dead wood, harvesting flowers

and much more. The bigger the job the more the value of a precision tool becomes clear.

A quality hand pruner makes cutting easier and helps avoid hand fatigue and pain. It is also good for your plants as a clean cut will tend to heal faster.

For over 50 years Felco brand pruners have been the standard that all other pruners are measured against. They are made in Switzerland in the region best known for its prestigious watch manufacturing facilities.



#2



#9

The **Felco #2** (the original Felco pruner) has an outstanding design featuring a hardened bolt and nut for adjusting the blades and keeping them in exact alignment. The handles are a solid-forged

metal alloy and guide the precision-made cutting and anvil blades. The pruner weighs a mere 8 1/2 ounces but has a wonderfully solid feel.

The **Felco #6** is designed for gardeners with smaller hands who might

prefer a smaller, lighter pruner. It is every bit as sturdy and powerful as the larger pruners and can be used in the same ways. The smaller blades make it better for cutting close to stems and, for this reason, it has become a favorite of gardeners and florists.

The **Felco #9** is for left-handed gardeners and equally well crafted.

The way to choose a hand pruner is to take it out of the package and see how it feels in your hand. Like so many gardeners before you, we think you'll know in an instant that these pruners are for you!



Photo: MONROVIA

Gorgeous grafted gardenias for your garden

Get ready for the sweet smell of gardenias (and success) when you add a grafted gardenia to your garden.

Monrovia Nursery's grafted gardenias take the root stock of *Gardenia thunbergia* known for its ability to grow well in our clay soil and graft to it some of the most wonderful above-ground gardenia performers.

Check our July/August 2003 newsletter at www.sloatgardens.com to learn more about these plants or just stop by and visit with one of our California Certified Nursery Professionals.

Utilizing common and exotic ferns in your garden

For many gardeners the potential beauty that ferns can bring to their landscape is largely untapped.

While ferns are a natural addition to any woodland setting, nearly all gardens can be enhanced when ferns are added to a planting design.

Depending on the variety (and Sloat has a staggering selection) gardeners can utilize ferns for everything from groundcovers and foundation plantings to accents and specimen displays.

Some landscaping opportunities for gardens include creating a native fern

grotto featuring **Western Sword** ferns and **Giant Chain** ferns. For a dramatic founda-

placed beneath a larger shrub.

Consider the **Squirrel's Foot** fern for

a hanging basket or an **autumn fern** when you'd like to display some handsome and uncommon fern colors in your garden.

When you think about it, ferns go with just about any plant. They are fantastic with clivia, azaleas, rhodies, hostas, impatiens, but as stand alone specimen plants they are simply magnificent.

Summer is a great time to do some work in the shade with ferns. Please take some time to review our huge collection and speak with

our helpful staff about which varieties will make the most sense in your landscape.



Photo: MONROVIA

tion fern try a **Norfolk Island** tree fern, the largest of all ferns. The **Brake Fern** fits in small spaces and works nicely when

How to keep those wonderful beneficial insects on the job

From aphid-eating ladybugs to mealybug munching lacewings, the ability of beneficial insects to remedy pest problems should be common knowledge to our newsletter readers by now.

While Sloat has promoted the use of these environmentally safe and effective methods of dealing with pests, we haven't touched on how to keep and attract beneficial insects to your garden.

Most people design a garden in a way that reflects their vision of beauty. This can lead to a gorgeous looking landscape . . . but may also result in a garden that is high maintenance, plagued with pest problems and out of balance with nature.

Beneficial insects are needed to maintain and restore the insect balance in your garden. When you introduce them to your garden to solve a problem (check with our staff to learn which insects we offer), they will go right to work. Unfortunately, they are not likely to stick around and continue to protect your garden unless you create a habitat for them.

The way to make these insects feel at home is to add plants to your garden that they enjoy when they are not eating other insects.

Morning glories in glorious bloom

When Morning Glory blooms it's nothing short of spectacular. This super star vine can grow 25 feet or more in a single season and produce hundreds and hundreds of blue, red, pink, lavender, or white flowers.

Morning Glory grows so fast and spreads so quickly, you'll want to keep it contained as it will jump a fence and invade your neighbor's garden or venture into open space areas where it doesn't belong.

Gardeners love it because it can be

As you may have learned, some "beneficials" work by laying eggs and their



The syrphid fly's larvae eat aphids, thrips and even small caterpillars!

offspring eat the bad bugs. When larvae mature, their diets change and they begin seeking nectar, pollen, and other food. If they don't find it handy, they move on or die out.

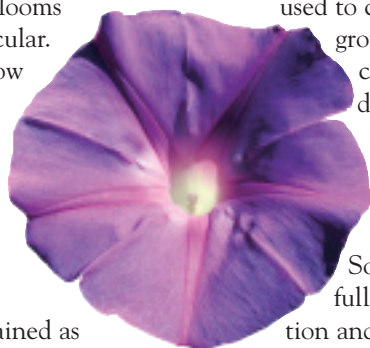
While we are not suggesting that you radically change your garden design to accommodate host plants for your beneficial insects, we think you'll see

that many host plants listed below will complement just about any garden design. Something as simple as a border of alyssum or a small herb garden may do the trick.

Here is a list of host plants provided by **Tip Top Biocontrol**, our beneficial insect provider. Please visit with our staff soon to learn more about the insects and host plants to add to your garden.

Partial Host Plant List

<i>Alyssum</i>	<i>Cosmos</i>
<i>Annual Baby's Breath</i>	<i>Yarrow</i>
<i>Annual White Clover</i>	<i>Cilantro</i>
<i>Bachelor Buttons</i>	<i>Mustard</i>
<i>California Poppy</i>	<i>Parsley</i>



used to cover walls and fences, as a ground cover and in large container plantings. It also delivers nonstop blooms from spring into fall.

Morning Glory belongs to the species *Ipomoea violacea* and is native to South America. It prefers a full sun or partial shade location and regular watering.

Its lovely foliage is another bonus and will please you when it is not in bloom. Visit us soon to see the blooms and consider adding some glory to your garden.

SLOAT SEMINARS

Attendance is limited. Please call ahead to the seminar location to reserve a seat. Seminar fee is \$5. (Gardener's Reward Program members are free.)

Magnificent Moss Baskets

Learn to make lovely moss baskets in this demonstration seminar given by Sloat's Gary Lavey. He'll cover plant selection and design.

July 10 - Danville, Saturday - 9 a.m.

Water Gardens

Join water gardening pro Tim Winkler and discover how easy and fun it is to add an exciting water feature to your garden.

July 10 - San Rafael, Saturday - 10 a.m.

July 24 - Kentfield, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Great Organic Gardens

Enjoy the benefits of a healthy organic garden by learning to compost, mulch, control pests and more with local expert Lisa VanCleeef.

July 11 - Mill Valley (Miller), Sunday - 10 a.m.

July 25 - San Rafael, Sunday - 10 a.m.

Aug. 11 - S.F. (Sloat) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Firesafe Landscaping (Free!)

This seminar is a must for anyone who lives in an area that may be threatened by wildfire. Learn from members of Fire Safe Marin to recognize landscaping hazards and how to use various plants to create zones of fire safety. This is a free seminar for everyone!

July 17 - Novato, Saturday - 10 a.m.

July 18 - Kentfield, Sunday - 10 a.m.

July 21 - Mill Valley (Blithedale) Wed. - 6:30 p.m.

July 31 - San Rafael Saturday - 10 a.m.

Designing with Foliage

Here's a great seminar that focuses on foliage instead of blossoms for garden color. Given by Sloat's Gerry O'Donoghue.

July 28 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.

Garden Tune Up

If you'd like to reenergized your garden, this seminar is for you. Local horticulturist Elizabeth Finley will guide you on how to tame your jungle, revitalize your garden beds and much more.

Aug. 1 - Larkspur, Sunday - 10 a.m.

Aug. 8 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sunday - 10 a.m.

Container Gardening

Container gardens are an easy way to beautify your home and garden. Learn to create magnificent displays and avoid common mistakes. Given by Sloat's Gary Lavey.

August 7 - Danville, Saturday - 9 a.m.

Four Season Gardens

Tune in to the four seasons of gardening in the Bay Area. Local horticulturist Mary TeSelle's advice will go a long way in maximizing the beauty of your garden as you work with the growing cycles of your plants.

Aug. 7 - Kentfield, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Aug. 18 - Mill Valley (Blithedale), Wed. - 6:30 p.m.

Aug. 21 - San Rafael, Saturday - 10 a.m.

Lawn Care

Keep your lawn in top condition by learning to control weeds, fertilize, water and more with Sloat's Rob Benson.

Aug. 25 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wed. - 6:30 p.m.

Nine Locations in San Francisco, Marin & Contra Costa

Richmond District
3rd Avenue between
Geary & Clement
752-1614

Sunset District
2700 Sloat Blvd.
46th & Sloat Blvd.
566-4415

Novato
2000 Novato Blvd. at
Wilson
897-2169

San Rafael
1580 Lincoln Ave.
just off Hwy. 101
453-3977

Larkspur
279 Doherty Drive between
Redwood High &
Downtown
924-7390

Kentfield
700 Sir Francis Drake at
Wolfe Grade
454-0262

Mill Valley
657 E. Blithedale at Lomita
388-0102

401 Miller at La Goma
388-0365

Danville
828 Diablo Road
(925) 743-0288

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8:30 am to 6:30 pm**

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Fun summer table top recipe

Here's a quick and easy container idea that you can use to decorate a table, window sill, kitchen counter top, or any place that needs a little summer fun. Finish the container with beach glass, seashells, small rocks or anything else that fits the "scene."

(1) 6-inch diameter Oxblood pot

(1) Aloe Vera

(2-3) Hen and Chicks succulents

(1) Scotch Moss

(1) Bag of Cactus Mix

(1) Bag Horticultural Sand

Decorate with rocks, seashells or sea glass.



SEMINAR ALERT:

Firescaping

If you live anywhere near open space in Marin, Sonoma or Contra Costa counties you must seriously consider the importance of attending one of our FireSafe Landscaping seminars.

Wildfires are a frightening reality of living in California, but fortunately there is plenty of good information about how to plant a garden that is both beautiful and provides a degree of safety from wildfires.

Join members of FireSafe Marin for one of our many free seminars in July. See page 7 for a listing of locations and times and visit www.firesafemarin.org for more information.

About this Newsletter: The Gardener's Notebook is published bimonthly by Sloat Garden Center for the education and enjoyment of Bay Area gardeners. Information is collected from Sloat's expert staff, current horticultural publications and Sunset's Western Garden Book. Send address corrections to: 420 Coloma Street, Sausalito, CA 94965.