



Gardener's Notebook

Volume 19, No. 3

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

May/June 2005

Springtime Gardening



New Clematis Delphiniums Annie's Annuals New Garden Accents Composting & more

Composting is great for your garden and the environment

If you have adopted recycling of bottles, cans, plastic and paper, perhaps it's time you started composting, too.

Along with helping to reduce landfill and water use, composting produces a rich, natural and powerful soil amendment with some exciting garden benefits.

Adding compost to your garden can improve clay soil, balance pH, improve soil fertility and drainage, and enhance root development. Should you need more convincing, just ask any gardener who has been composting for awhile for an opinion . . . but you better have some time on your hands to hear an enthusiastic report!

Compost is used as a mulch and/or soil amendment. You can spread a 2- to 3-inch layer in the garden anywhere you have plants growing. Adding compost to your planting mix and container soil will give them a powerful boost.

Another common use is to make a compost tea for watering plants. You simply fill a burlap sack with compost and soak it in a container full of water (maybe a trash can that you've retired thanks to composting).

Composting requires four basic ingredi-

ents for success: carbon, nitrogen, moisture and air.

Brown garden waste provides the carbon and includes such things as fallen leaves, small woody twigs and branches, straw, and dry grass.

Nitrogen is provided by green waste, which includes fresh plant and grass clippings, kitchen waste (fruits, vegetables, etc.), green weeds, fresh manure and more. The smaller the pieces the faster they will decompose.

There are several recommended ratios of brown to green material which probably reflect the amount of carbon and nitrogen found in various ingredients. A 60 percent brown and 40 percent green mix is a good place to start. Because brown material is more readily available, you can supplement your lack of green with **E.B. Stone Organics Compost Maker**, which provides nitrogen.

Compost is created when organisms and micro-organisms consume and break down the green and brown material. This can be a slow process taking



Gardening Guide

May

Plant

✂ Plant annuals including impatiens, marigolds, begonias, vincas, sanvitalia, coleus and other spring and summer bloomers.

✂ Good time to plant vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, gourds, lettuce and cucumbers, as well as parsley, basil, rosemary and other herbs.

✂ Select garden-ready blooming roses.

✂ Great time to add a beautiful hydrangea to your garden.

Fertilize

✂ Feed your lawn with **Ringer Lawn Restore**.

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

✂ Give vegetables a boost with **E.B. Stone Organics Tomato and Vegetable Food**.

✂ Use a time-release fertilizer such as **Osmocote** for your container plants.

Prune/Maintain

✂ Set and adjust sprinkler and drip irrigation systems. (See seminars.)

✂ Mulch vegetable and flower beds with **Sloat Forest Mulch Plus** to control weeds and conserve moisture.

✂ Prune spent flowers (deadheading) from roses and other blooming shrubs.

✂ Freshen up containers and replace spent cooler weather annuals with blooming 4 inch perennials.

✂ Release ladybugs and other beneficial insects to help control garden pests.



June

Plant

✂ Plant vinca, salvias, cosmos, lisianthus, portulaca and other warm season annuals.

✂ Plant herbs in pots for use in the kitchen.

Fertilize

✂ Feed roses and flowers with **E.B.**

Stone Organics Rose &

Flower Food.

Prune/Maintain

✂ Continue to deadhead roses, shrubs and other flowers to encourage new blooms.

✂ Mulch shrubs and beds to conserve moisture. Try **GreenAll Microbark** for its beauty and utility.

✂ Make sure vegetables are supported with cages, stakes, or trellises.

✂ Deep water trees and shrubs.

✂ Check early-bearing fruit trees for heavily laden branches. Support or thin trees now to prevent branches from breaking.



many months or a very fast process lasting 6 weeks or less. The key to speed is in the mixture of green and brown and the availability of moisture and air.

Compost experts recommend keeping your compost pile about as moist as a wet sponge. Water is necessary for life, but too much displaces air and the pile becomes soggy.

By turning the pile twice a month (or even twice a week) you will allow plenty of air into the mixture. Research shows that a pile turned twice a week will decompose 10 times faster than one that is not turned.

(continues on page 8)

Beautiful plants that offer much more than meets the eye!

The more you know about gardening the more you are sure to appreciate the gorgeous plants offered by grower Annie Hayes and her nursery **Annie's Annuals & Perennials**.

With some 4,000 plants under cultivation each year including varieties that simply cannot be found anywhere else in the West, the nursery is a far cry from most commercial growers.

Sloat was among the first garden centers to recognize her unique nursery and introduced her plants to local gardeners in the *Gardener's Notebook* back in 1998.

The good word about Annie and her nursery continues to spread as this year she's been featured in the February issue of *House & Garden* and in April's *Sunset Magazine*. It appears that *Horticulture Magazine* will be featuring her, too!

For people who are ready to graduate beyond what Annie calls "McGardening," (shopping only for common plants that are in full bloom), discovering her annuals and perennials will be a beautiful and enlightening experience.

Several things make Annie's plants so wonderful. First, her selection of annuals and perennials is incredibly wide. Thanks to the internet, she has been able to locate and acquire seeds from more sources than ever before. Strybing Arboretum as well as gardeners and friends have contributed to her seed stock as well.

While it's easy to see that the plants she chooses to grow are some of the most beautiful and interesting imaginable, what

may not be immediately apparent is that most of her plants have one important thing in common. Nearly all of Annie's annuals and perennials are Mediterranean plants. This characteristic makes them ideal for the Bay Area's climate.

Annie also grows everything from seed

and trials (tests) her plants for several years before she offers

cides. She also believes in compost rather than commercial fertilizers to make her plants strong and healthy.

Finally, when her plants arrive at our garden centers they are generally not in bloom. This too, is what sets Annie's plants apart from big commercial growers.

By delivering her 4-inch plants to gardeners prior to bloom, the plants are in a far better state for transplanting.

These pre-blooming plants concentrate their energy on putting out healthy root systems, which ultimately results in a much more productive bloom.

"European gardeners understand this benefit and expect to buy plants prior to bloom," explains Annie. "Unfortunately, 'McGardening' is still pervasive in

America and inexperienced gardeners simply don't trust plants to bloom."

Annie provides great color photos that show gardeners what to expect.

She also points out that many of her annuals will self sow as many as

three times a year.

"While some perennials may look a bit shabby late in the season, some of my annuals will continue to provide fresh new plants and flowers."

When introducing Annie's plants to your garden, she suggests focusing on your soil to make sure that it is in top condition before planting. Using a good planting mix will help insure drainage and the availability of oxygen for roots. Annie is a big fan of **Sluggo Snail Bait** and recommends using it to

protect your plants. Three to five days after planting she adds a 1/2-inch layer of compost to help her plants really take off.

Look for Annie's displays (and great photos) on your next visit and you are sure to become a little more international in your gardening technique.



'Double Azalea'
Apricot Snapdragon



Dahlia coccinea
'Mixed Colors'



Schizanthus grahamii
'Butterfly Flower'

Many of Annie's annuals will self sow as many as three times a year.



Ursina anethoides
'Sugar Fire'
Anagalis monellii (blue)

them to gardeners. This is an exciting part of her business as every week there's a good chance that something new is blooming at her nursery that nobody on the West Coast has ever seen before!

Her plants are grown outdoors without a greenhouse and without the use of pesti-

Spectacular new clematis for your garden

Anyone who loves the beauty and versatility of flowering vines is going to have a year to remember, courtesy of world famous clematis breeder **Raymond Evison**.

Two collections of clematis being introduced in 2005 are predicted to change the way clematis are grown in our gardens.

Like the recent improvement in roses, these new clematis are more disease resistant, more prolific bloomers, and offer longer blooming periods than traditional clematis.

The smaller-growing varieties being introduced are bred to grow in containers. These clematis

Three of the RHS clematis bloom longer than any other clematis in the world! All

show well in moonlight. This vine grows up to 7 feet and is good in the ground and excellent in a container.

Harlow Carr™ is the longest blooming clematis in the world, blooming from June into October. The plant's purple-blue flowers measure 4 inches in diameter and feature twisted sepals. The vine grows to 10 feet.

Wisley™ with its classic rich-blue color looks similar to the very popular *jackmanii* variety, but with the vigor and free-flowering habit of a *viticella* cultivar.

Blooming from June to September, Wisley™ offers delicate-looking blooms that measure 4 to 5 inches in diameter and a vine that grows up to 9 feet. Gardeners can enhance the beauty of their garden by interplanting Wisley™ with roses.

The World's First Patio Clematis

The new **Patio Clematis Collection** was bred to be grown in containers and



Hyde Hall - RHS Collection

four are easy to grow and maintain.

Rosemoor™ is well-suited for experienced and novice gardeners alike. The foolproof Rosemoor blooms from May to September on both old and new growth, making it easy to maintain and prune. This deep-red beauty has oversized flowers that measure 5 to 6 inches in diameter. The vine can climb up to 9 feet making it ideal for pergolas and archways.

Hyde Hall™ is a prolific performer that will burst into bloom as early as May, and the flurry will continue through June. The plant's large glorious white flowers

measure 5 to 7 inches in diameter and



Cezanne - Patio Collection

varieties will bring the beauty and color of these plants to patios and decks.

The **Royal Horticultural Society** selected four of Evison's new clematis to commemorate its 200th anniversary. Known as the **RHS Clematis Collection**, each variety is named after one of the society's famous gardens.

With bold colors and spectacular flower forms, each of these plants features volumes of saucer-sized blooms that cover almost the entire vine.



Wisely - RSM Collection



Harlow Carr - RSM Collection

provide gardeners with vertical columns of color from spring to fall.

Like Evison's RHS Collection these clematis varieties are super performers with high flower and bud counts plus the incredible vigor and disease resistance that all gardeners enjoy.

This long-blooming and low-maintenance patio collection includes **Cezanne™**, with its glorious violet

Photo: Hines Horticulture

Photo: Hines Horticulture

Photo: Hines Horticulture

Photo: Hines Horticulture

flowers that bloom from early to mid-summer. This free-flowering showstopper explodes with violet blooms that measure 6 to 7 inches wide.



Photo: Hines Horticulture

Versailles - Patio Collection

The compact Cezanne grows only 2 to 3 feet, making it excellent for use with well-trained shrubs. To create an awe-inspiring look, gardeners can mix Cezanne with flat spreading silvery-grey conifers.

Picardy™ (newsletter cover shot) has pinkish-red flowers with contrasting yellow sepals and provides striking color from June to September with its 6 inch blooms.

This extremely free-flowering clematis grows up to 3 feet high, and offers a high

flower and bud count. The pinkish-red petals and contrasting yellow sepals look great when planted with well-trained shrubs.

Versailles™ is a wonderful wine red variety. This vigorous plant is the longest blooming clematis in the collection,

producing large, 6-inch blooms from May to September.

With a vine less than 3 feet in its entirety, a high flower and bud count, Versailles serves as a lovely complement to shrubs or other vines for the smaller gardens.

To learn more about these exciting new clematis introductions please visit our garden centers soon.



Photo: Hines Horticulture

Rosemoor - RSM Collection

Introducing Fiberstone planters, urns and columns!

If you admire the beauty of classic stone or concrete garden planters, urns and columns, but not the typical cost or backbreaking weight of these garden accents, we have

some very good news.

Sloat has recently introduced

an exciting new line of classic garden accents made from a patented combination of limestone and fiberglass.

Called **Fiberstone**, this material is revolutionary in that it truly offers a quality and look that compares with the original.

When you see and touch these lovely pieces of garden art we challenge you to tell the difference between the stone you love and this new material.

The limestone in the mixture gives these planter, urns and columns the texture and feel of stone. They, in fact, behave just like stone in that they will age nicely and offer comparable durability.

Although the fiberglass is

responsible for a significant weight reduction, it is also important to note that it is a very strong ingredient that has been used in modern times to build everything from boats to pipelines. While lighter in

weight, the Fiberstone collection should not be confused with the ultra-light plastic and/or fiberglass imita-

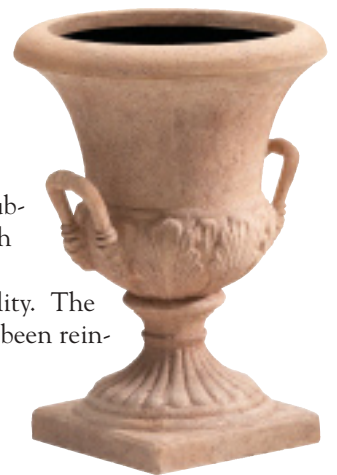
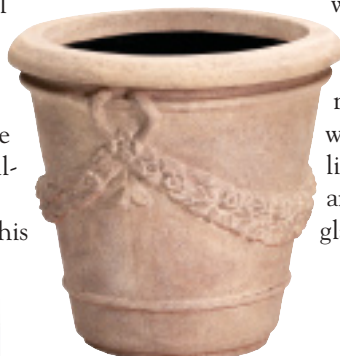
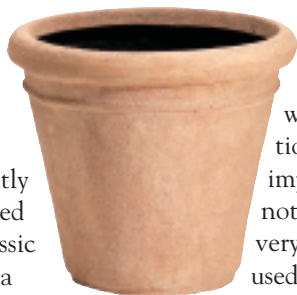
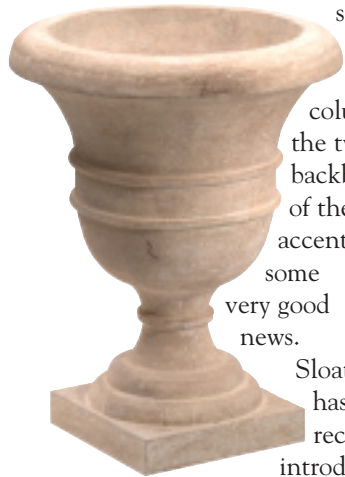
tion stone planters that you may have come across.

These new accents are much more substantial, which reflects their excellent quality. The handles have been reinforced, too.

The colors that have been added directly to the limestone and fiberglass mixture (not painted on or dipped) should appeal to most gardeners, too.

We have selected antique and natural looking colors that will go with most garden designs.

Please visit us soon and consider how these exciting new garden accents will add beauty to your home and garden.



The inside secrets to great container gardens

Without question, container gardens can be magnificent.

The ultimate in garden design flexibility, containers allow us to position plants where we want and need them. They also allow us to control plant growth to a degree, add the beauty of garden pottery to our designs and provide for easy seasonal updating.

While this form of gardening brings with it many advantages, it does have a number of potential challenges that, when recognized, can easily be overcome.

The first thing to note is that container soil tends to dry quickly, which makes regular watering essential. In addition, salts and other minerals may accumulate more easily in containers causing damage and stress. Proper drainage is paramount, and can

present as big a problem in containers as it does to in-ground gardening.

Finally, nutrients for plant health and growth are completely controlled by the gardener. To help insure your container gardening success, here are a few well-proven recommendations:

1. Choose plant varieties that are known to be ideal for containers.
2. Select a container that is large enough to accommodate the root system of your plant or plants. When in doubt, go big rather than small. A larger container will require less watering.
3. Use a quality potting soil and/or use



a plant-specific soil when available. Consider adding fresh compost to your potting soil, if you have it.

4. Insure proper drainage. Contrary to popular opinion and practice, putting pottery shards or gravel in the bottom of your container may not be the best way to promote drainage - it can actually have the opposite effect. With shards in the bottom of a container, the soil above it acts like a sponge. Where the soil meets the air space created by the shards, it holds the water until saturation occurs, then drips down. A better solution is to use our new **Keeper Stopper** screens, which do not inhibit drainage and keep soil in and insects out.

5. Prevent salt and mineral buildup. Depending on the amount of salt in your tap water, consider leeching your containers by running water through them for several minutes without the saucers in place once a month.

6. Check moisture in your containers on a regular basis using a probe or one of our handy moisture meters. Consider using **Soil Moist**, a product that helps retain moisture in your containers.

7. Repot your plants before they become overgrown, which will prevent unnecessary root damage and plant stress.

International Gardening Expertise

Ready to answer any of your gardening questions.



NAME
Gerry O'Donoghue

STORE
Bedding Buyer Sloat Boulevard
Sloat Garden Design Department

SPECIAL INTERESTS
Foliage and texture
Seaside gardening
Container gardening
Landscape design
Ornamental grasses

EXPERIENCE

Sloat Professional 4 1/2 years
California Certified Nursery Professional
Studied commercial nursery business in Ireland
Professional landscaping in Ireland, Australia and U.S.

Multiple visits to the Chelsea Flower Show

GERRY'S TIPS FOR SEASIDE GARDENERS

Seaside gardening requires special attention to plant selection and watering. In parts of San Francisco, Marin and where I grew up in Ireland, wind is one of the most prevalent forces that must be considered. Wind (whether cool or warm) tends to dry soil and plants quickly, so regular watering is important and mulching is a must.

When introducing plants to your seaside garden, it is best to use smaller specimens as they will get established faster. Depending on the variety, a one-gallon or 5 gallon plant will focus its energy on putting down roots, where a 15 gallon or larger plant may have too much above ground growth, which can slow root development.

Basil Basics

Basil is clearly one of the most popular garden herbs thanks to its wide use in the kitchen. Every year we make sure we have the most popular varieties ready for your garden and . . . kitchen.



Here are some quick tips for basil success:

1. Water your basil deeply as opposed to giving it frequent, light waterings. Deep watering creates big leaves. Too much water encourages disease.
2. Basils are full sun plants and love the heat. Pick a hot spot for them in the garden.
3. Provide loamy, well-draining soil.
4. Feed with a complete fertilizer. Try **E.B. Stone Organics All-Purpose**.
5. Pinch back any flowers to prevent your basil from bolting (going to seed).

Essential color for cottage and perennial gardens

Nothing adds more vertical interest, impact and sheer beauty to a spring and summer garden than **delphiniums**.

With dramatic flower spikes that can reach 8 feet in height, these annuals and perennials make a striking addition to a variety of garden settings.

Delphiniums are commonly



Photo: MONROVIA



Photo: MONROVIA

used in full sun borders where they can be massed or used as a backdrop for other plantings. These plants are also considered a cottage garden staple. Their height and showy flowers are hard to miss, which allows them to be placed just about anywhere in a landscape.

Small garden or large, delphiniums require relatively little space and can be easily grown in beds or containers. Their clumping habit includes leaves that are lobed or fanlike, and range in color from a common green to bright green.

The tall branching flower stalks come in a variety of colors including blue, pink, lavender, purple, and white. The flowers

typically have a contrasting "eye" formed by the inner sepals.

A member of the *Ranunculaceae* family, delphiniums have been hybridized exten-

sively for hundreds of years with many of today's garden varieties bred from *D. elatum*.

Depending on the variety, they begin blooming in spring and can continue their show through mid-summer.

Although the flower

stalks are sturdy, it's a good idea to plant delphiniums where they are sheltered from strong winds. The height of delphiniums will vary by variety. The taller ones such as the **Pacific Giant** will need to be staked to keep them upright.

Delphiniums require well-draining soil and are heavy feeders. Set up a regular watering and fertilizing schedule.

Once the flowers fade, cut the spikes off just above foliage to encourage new spikes and a rebloom.

Delphiniums are guaranteed to add dramatic vertical accents to your spring and summer garden. They also make wonderful cut flowers.

F.S.T. can improve plant health P.D.Q.

Yellowing leaves, especially with citrus, are a common problem that is often associated with a lack of iron in your soil. **GreenAll's F.S.T. Iron & Sulfur** can solve this iron shortage quickly as well as provide other key nutrients for plants.

Used as a supplemental feeding to normal fertilization, F.S.T. improves plant growth, fruiting and flowering. It's especially useful for citrus, azaleas, gardenias and camellias because it lowers soil pH for these and other acid-loving plants.

F.S.T. contains iron, sulfur, manganese and zinc. The sulfur helps maintain dark

green color in plants and aids in the use of nitrogen. Sulfur is considered essential for protein synthesis and stimulates plant growth, too.



Iron is necessary for chlorophyll production and is an activator for several plant processes including photosynthesis. The manganese is a catalyst for many enzyme systems and aids in photosynthesis and carbohydrate transformation. Zinc is needed for chlorophyll production and plant growth.

This powerful product will keep your plants thriving while providing you with an effective soil pH management tool.

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.)

MOSS BASKET WORKSHOP

Here's a hands-on workshop where you'll create and take home a lovely hanging basket. Given by horticulturist Elizabeth Finley. **Materials fee: \$45, Gardener's Reward Members \$35.**

May 7 - San Rafael, Sat. 10:00 a.m.

May 29 - Novato, Sun. 10:00 a.m.

June 12 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.) Sun. 10:00 a.m.

IRRIGATION BASICS

Join Tom Bressan, one of California's top irrigation experts and founder of the Urban Farmer Store, for a great seminar on do-it-yourself irrigation.

May 11 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wed. 6:30 p.m.

May 22 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.) Sun. 10:00 a.m.

MAGNIFICENT MOSS BASKETS

Learn to make beautiful moss baskets in these demonstration seminars given by Sloat's Gary Lavey and Gerry O'Donoghue. They'll cover plant selection and design.

May 14 - Danville, Sat. 10:00 a.m.

June 8 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wed. 6:30 p.m.

PERENNIALS OF NO. CALIFORNIA

Gardening expert and KSFO radio show host Bob Tanem will discuss perennial gardening and introduce his latest book.

May 18 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wed. 6:30 p.m.

May 21 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.) Sat. 10:00 a.m.

PRUNING BASICS

Pruning is an essential task. Learn when and how to prune shrubs, trees and other plants with horticulturist Marie Miller.

May 22 - Sonoma, Sun. 10:00 a.m.

May 28 - San Rafael, Sat. 10:00 a.m.

CHOOSING A SHADE TREE

If you'd like to add a beautiful shade tree to your landscape, join Sloat's Richard Avery when he discusses how to select the best tree for your landscape design.

June 4 - Danville, Sat. 10:00 a.m.

COMPOSTING BASICS

Composting is fun, easy and produces a powerful soil amendment. Join horticulturist Fred Bove who will explain the various methods and how to get started.

June 4 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.) Sat. 10:00 a.m.

June 19 - San Rafael, Sun. 10:00 a.m.

BUTTERFLY GARDENS

Butterflies are a cherished sight in the garden. Learn to attract them and encourage them to stay in your landscape with horticulturist Mary Te Selle.

June 11 - San Rafael, Sat. 10:00 a.m.

June 22 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd.) Wed. 6:30 p.m.

June 25 - Mill Valley (Miller Ave.) Sat. 10:00 a.m.

Ten Locations in San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma & 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

Mill Valley
657 E. Blithedale at Lomita
388-0102
401 Miller Ave. at La Goma
388-0365

Kentfield
700 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.
at Wolfe Grade
454-0262
Sonoma
23566 Arnold Drive
(707) 939-9400
Hours: 9 am to 6:30 pm

Danville
828 Diablo Road
(925) 743-0288
**Garden Design
Department**
401 Miller, Mill Valley
388-3754

Visit Sloat on the Web: www.sloatgardens.com

Opening this summer on Pierce Street in San Francisco!

Open 7 days a week 8:30 am to 6:30 pm



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Intrec

Great plants and great advice to help them grow!

8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK May/June 2005

Composting *(continued from page 2)*

Decomposition in a compost pile provides an ever-changing environment that allows different organisms to thrive at different times. As these organisms work, heat is generated and your compost pile can reach 160 degrees.

Once your compost pile is no longer generating heat, it is ready for your garden.

At a minimum you should aim for a compost pile that is a cubic yard (3 ft x 3 ft x 3 ft). A great way to start is with one of our manufactured bins, which are made of durable plastic and can prevent animals from enjoying your food scraps.

SLOAT TIP

All organic material will decompose, but for public health reasons do not compost meat, bones, dairy products, fish, greasy foods, pet feces, toxic material, invasive or diseased plants.

Once you get started and produce your first batch of super rich compost, you're sure to get hooked on the idea.

There is plenty more to learn about composting, so please engage our expert staff for advice and plan to attend our composting seminar (see page 7).

Special Notice!

Sausalito Woman's Club
Bi-annual Garden Tour
June 4th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Information: (415) 331-5775
www.sausalitowomansclub.org

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

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.