

## Ten Locations in San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo and Contra Costa

### Richmond District

3rd Avenue between  
Geary & Clement  
(415) 752-1614

### Sunset District

2700 Sloat Blvd.  
46th & Sloat Blvd.  
(415) 566-4415

### Marina District

3237 Pierce Street  
Chestnut & Lombard  
(415) 440-1000  
9 to 6:30

### Novato

2000 Novato Blvd.  
at Wilson  
(415) 897-2169

### San Rafael

1580 Lincoln Ave. just off  
Hwy. 101  
(415) 453-3977

### Mill Valley

657 E. Blithedale at Lomita  
(415) 388-0102  
401 Miller Ave. at La Goma  
(415) 388-0365

### Kentfield

700 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.  
at Wolfe Grade  
(415) 454-0262

### Danville

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
(925) 743-0288  
M-Sat hours: 8 to 5:30pm  
Sun hours: 8am to 5

### San Bruno

675 El Camino Real  
(650) 869-6000  
3 blocks south of I-380

### Garden Design Department

401 Miller, Mill Valley  
(415) 388-3754

### Bulk Soils

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
(925) 820-1273  
(East Bay delivery only)  
M-Sat 8-4:30

Visit us on the Web: [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)



Open 7 days per week 8:30am to 5:30pm  
Spring/Summer hours begin March 8th:  
8:30am to 6:30pm, 7 days per week

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Great plants and great advice to help them grow!

8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK March/April 2009

## March & April Gardening Guide



### Plant:

Plant an ornamental or fruit tree now before spring. This is the time for **maples, magnolias, dogwoods, flowering cherries, plums and crabapples.**

Say yes to summer bulbs! Plant **gladiolus, dahlias & lilies** now for summer color.

Start spring vegetable seeds indoors or in a greenhouse. Heirloom varieties, seed trays, soil and everything else you need are available at Sloat.

Plant fragrant vines and

shrubs: **lilac, wisteria, daphne & pink jasmine.**

Rhododendrons and azaleas are budding and blooming. Feed them with **E.B. Stone's organic Ultra Bloom.** After the bloom cycle, use Azalea and Camellia food from E.B. Stone.

Plant more spring color: **violas, pansies & Iceland poppies.** Plant sweet peas! Vegetable planting time!

### Fertilize:

Fertilize your garden and houseplants with **Osmocote** to provide ongoing nutrition for up to four months. Use **Sure Start** fertilizer for new plantings to establish them quickly.

If you have a lawn, apply lawn fertilizer **Concern** to control annual weeds.

Stock up on a season's worth of top quality, plant-specific fertilizers from **E.B. Stone.** The "Naturals" and "Organics" lines are environmentally friendly.

### Prune/Maintain:

Snails and slugs are hatching in your garden right now. Non-toxic **Sluggo** can help.

Clean up and prune plants and trees (such as Fuchsia and Buddleja) clean up ornamental grasses before new growth begins to enhance their appearance and prepare them for spring growth.

Prepare planting beds for spring. Test your soil for pH, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and add appropriate fertilizer. We recommend amending your soil with **Sloat Loam Builder, Sloat Forest Mulch Plus or Sloat Planting Mix.** Also, add **E.B. Stone's Agricultural Lime** to soil to provide needed calcium for vegetables & fruit.

Aphids are beginning to appear. Stop them early with **Greenlight Rose Defense.** Use it on roses and all your plants! And don't forget lady bugs for combatting aphids; available once the weather begins to warm.



**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 or via email to [sloat@sloatgardens.com](mailto:sloat@sloatgardens.com)



# Gardener's Notebook

Volume 23, No. 1

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

March/April 2009



How does your  
garden grow?



grow your own

spring planting with seeds

organic solutions

get off your grass



# Mediterranean & eco-friendly!



**Celebrate spring** with the new **Monrovia** outdoor living boutiques at our Kentfield and Danville stores. We've featured this Mediterranean and eco-friendly collection to demonstrate the beauty and adaptability of plants that are perfect for our Bay Area climate, especially since eco-friendly gardens use less water.



What are the hallmarks of a typical Mediterranean or Eco-Friendly Garden? A casual landscape with overflowing shrubs and perennials with plenty of fragrant herbs like Rosemary and Lavender included. While it is considered a casual landscape, there is usually some formal structure. Topiaries and formal hedges look beautiful among tables, chairs and simple pottery for quiet afternoons outside.

## Our top hardy perennial & shrub picks for Spring 2009

**MONROVIA**  
Diverse in form and color, Monrovia plants are the perfect choice for your garden.

Look for the Green Monrovia Pots!



Dodonaea V 'Purpurea'



Olea 'Little Ollie'



Nandina 'Gulf Stream'



Euonymus 'Sunny Delight'



Juniper 'Spartan' Spirals



Cordyline baueri



Abelia 'Kaleidoscope'



Pittosporum 'Marjorie Channon'



Agave des. 'Variegata'



Tiny Tower Cypress



## Going Green Recycled plastic bird feeders from Woodlink by Audubon

Join the green revolution and choose recycled plastic products! These beautiful feeders and houses are made from over 90% recycled plastic. Environmentally friendly, they are designed for easy maintenance, large feed capacities and attracting more birds. All Going Green feeders have powder-coated perforated metal screen bottoms for drainage. The recycled plastic doesn't absorb water, so they won't harbor mold or bacteria.



**Clockwise from top:** Recycled Feeder with Suet Cage, Going Green Nyjer Tube Feeder and Going Green Recycled Plastic Wren House, suitable for Western and Mountain Bluebirds.

### Bird Feeding Tips

1. Keep your bird feeder full all year around.
2. Place feeders in a native landscape that has a healthy supply of trees and shrubs... the birds will feed more often and stay longer.
3. Birds are more likely to frequent your feeding stations that have a consistent supply of water near-by.
4. Locate feeders at different levels to avoid overcrowding and attract the greatest variety of species.
5. Attract more birds by providing a variety of different feeders.

## SLOAT GARDEN CENTER SEMINARS

Each month we select gardening experts to discuss garden solutions for our seminar series. The fee is \$5 (Gardener's Reward Program members are free) and all seminar participants receive a 10% off coupon for redemption at any of our locations. Please call ahead to the seminar location to reserve a seat - attendance is limited.

### Pruning Camellias/Azaleas/Rhodies

Marie Miller, aesthetic pruner, shows gardeners how to keep plants happy and blooming.  
Mar.15-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am  
Mar.22-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Sun., 10 am  
Mar.29-San Rafael, Sun., 10 am

### Japanese Maple Pruning

Elizabeth Ruiz demonstrates how to bring out the natural beauty of your Japanese maple.  
Mar.22-Danville, Sun., 10 am

### Liven up your outdoor space!

Mary Te Selle shares how to make your space exciting, inviting, relaxing, and colorful.  
Mar.25-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Mar.28-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am

### Big Ideas for Little Spaces

Bay Area garden designer Jason Hiller shows you how to make the most of your space.  
Apr.1-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

### Composting 101

Marie Miller shares how easy it is to make your own compost.  
Apr.4 -Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am  
Apr.19-San Rafael, Sun., 10 am  
Apr.26-Novato, Sun., 10 am

### Get Off Your Grass

Mary Te Selle shows how to create the coolest garden on the block with water saving alternatives. Use less water & stop mowing!  
Apr.8 -S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Apr.11-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am

## Grow your Own Edibles Seminar Series

### Fruit Tree Pruning

Elizabeth Ruiz explains when and how to prune fruit trees.  
Mar.11-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Mar.14-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am  
Mar.29-San Bruno, Sun., 10 am

### Growing Vegetables from Seed

Start your spring and summer edible garden!  
Cindy Bonilla, CCN Pro, shares how to successfully grow veggies from seed.  
Mar.15-San Bruno, Sun., 10 am  
Mar.18-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Apr.19-S.F. (Pierce St.), Sun., 10 am  
Mar.29-S.F. (Pierce St.), Bonilla, Sun., 10 am

### Healthy Eco-Systems in the Vegetable Garden

Jennie Strobel discusses using effective plant combinations for growing delicious vegetables.  
Mar.15-Novato, Sun., 10 am  
Mar.22-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am

### Organic Fruit & Vegetable Gardening Basics

Dinah Sims, CCN Pro, has grown veggies organically for years and can teach you how to create a delicious and healthy organic garden.  
Mar.28-San Rafael, Sat., 10 am  
Mar.29-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am  
Apr.19-Novato, Sun., 10 am

### Citrus Pruning

Elizabeth Ruiz discusses how and when to prune citrus trees.  
Apr.4-Danville, Sat., 10 am  
Apr.15-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm  
Apr.25-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am

### Jammin' with Leslie

Leslie Pizzino streamlines the process for making jam from the fruits you grow this spring and summer.  
Apr.11-San Rafael, Sat., 10 am  
Apr.18-Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am  
Apr.29-S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

### Vegetable Gardening in Small Spaces

For small spaces, growing vegetables can be a fun challenge. Let Jennie Strobel and Cindy Bonilla show how to grow your own vegetables in a small garden or patio.  
Mar.29-S.F. (Pierce St.), Bonilla, Sun., 10 am  
Apr.18-San Rafael, Strobel, Sat., 10 am  
Apr.22-S.F. (Sloat Blvd), Bonilla, Wed., 6:30 pm  
Apr.26-Mill Valley (Miller), Strobel, Sun., 10 am  
-San Bruno, Bonilla, Sun., 10 am

*Watch for seminars in May & June featuring what to do with summer vegetables!*





## Get off your GRASS\*

\* and conserve water by replacing your lawn with groundcovers!

**Take the plunge – get rid of your lawn habit.** 2009 is the year to reduce water consumption by replacing your lawn with groundcovers. We'd like to show you that groundcovers are not just adequate replacements, they're downright striking and beautiful. They can also be care-free compared with the chores and responsibilities that go along with a lawn. If you do need a lawn, reduce its size and keep just enough grass that you'll need—then turn the rest into groundcovers. *Save water, save time, create beauty...get off your grass!*

**Native groundcovers:** ceanothus, arctostaphylos (shrub type), armeria

**Drought tolerant mediterranean groundcovers:** trailing rosemary, vinca, wild strawberry, potentilla, rubus, iceplant, sedum, myoporum, polygonum, festuca

**Groundcovers you can walk on:** baby tears, isotoma, moss.



Photo © Tim Griffith.

The Living Roof at the California Academy of Arts & Sciences is planted with 2.5 acres of groundcovers and other native plants (nine species of native California plants in all).



Left from top: choose other ground covers, from iceplant, campanula and sedum.

We carry many of these plants...plus other native groundcovers:

### Perennials:

- \* Strawberry – *Fragaria chiloensis*
- \* Self Heal – *Prunella vulgaris*
- \* Sea Pink – *Armeria maritima ssp. californica*
- \* Stonecrop – *Sedum spathulifolium*

### Annual Wildflowers:

- \* Tidy Tips – *Layia platyglossa*
- \* Goldfield – *Lasthenia californica*
- \* California Poppy – *Eschscholzia californica*

## NatureMill: a kitchen solution to composting

**Feed the garden, not the landfill. Recycle your food scraps and make free compost for your garden!**

There's something satisfying about witnessing the entire food chain; from the garden, to the dining table, and back to the garden again. This is why we love NatureMill Pro Kitchen Composters!

They make composting food scraps easy and clean. Kitchen scraps are collected right where they are generated (in the kitchen!) to give home gardeners a source of rich, organic fertilizer.

A computer controls the temperature, air flow, moisture and mixing to accelerate the process and eliminate the work of composting. Everything is fully self-contained in a modern, attractive container in just a few square feet of floor space. No special plumbing or electrical connections are needed, other than a standard electrical outlet.

Find them at the following locations: Sloat Blvd, Mill Valley (East Blithedale), Kentfield and Pierce Street (SF) stores.



NatureMill Pro Kitchen Composters even accept dairy, meat, and fish, thanks to a sealed reactor and true "hot composting" temperatures.

# ORGANIC SOLUTIONS from our Garden Guru

Almost 50 years after Rachel Carson wrote the game-changing anti-pesticide book, *Silent Spring*, we gardeners have come to see that gardening organically is more than just forsaking toxic chemicals. Organic gardening equates to taking a holistic approach to the garden; which means everything from building up soil with organic matter, managing pests with beneficial insects, using natural sprays and solutions, companion planting,

and also rotating plants to maximize soil nutrients. With some experimentation and careful, proactive care, you can avoid the insects and diseases that ordinarily plague plants and make gardeners turn to chemicals. Our Garden Guru offers solutions!



**Question:** *Aphids are attacking all of my plants. How can I treat this organically?*

**Answer:** *With beneficial insects!*



Managing pests and mites by using their own natural enemies is one of the oldest and most successful methods of pest control out there. Beneficial insects like Ladybugs, lace wings, praying mantis and beneficial nematodes hunt down the hidden insects in your garden, and yet are harmless to people, plants and animals. They are the easiest of the organic solutions. If you need to use a spray amendment, you can use *Rose Rx* from Bonide, which is a natural insecticide and fungicide for fruits, vegetables, roses and houseplants.



**Question:** *Do some plants keep away bad bugs?*

**Answer:** *Yes - try companion planting!*



Companion planting is the practice of combining plants in ways that produce extra benefits for one or both. It is an aspect of IPM (Integrated Pest Management) and one of the keys to successfully growing vegetables and herbs organically. The companion plant releases a chemical that mimics a fright or scatter hormone of an unwanted pest, thus repelling it. At the same time, that chemical attracts beneficial insects. An example is the marigold, which repels aphids but attracts Hover flies whose larvae feed on aphids. Companion plants also provide pollens and nectars for beneficial insects such as ladybugs. You can see a full companion plant list on our website: [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)

**Question:** *My plants never look healthy or seem to thrive. I have kids and dogs so I don't want to use chemicals or strong fertilizers in my garden. Help.*

**Answer:** *You need to build up your soil!*



The best way to build strong, healthy plants is with strong, healthy soil. Each spring, we encourage gardeners to improve their soil because it has such an enormous impact on gardening success. The easiest way to create a superior growing medium for your plants is to add an organic mulch or top dressing to existing soil. Vegetable beds should be turned and amended before each planting season for the best results.

**Treat your soil right...**



**Sloat Organic Planting Mix** — 100% Organic, our Planting Mix promotes drainage, air and water penetration, and loosens clay soil.



**Sloat Loam Builder** - Rich with chicken manure, use Loam Builder to build up soil in vegetable gardens.



Use **E.B. Stone Sure Start** each spring. It's a blend of natural organic ingredients formulated to help newly transplanted plants develop strong roots and sturdy growth



# A Farmer's Market at Home?

## Grow your Own!



*Ah, rejoice in the pleasure of feeding your soil, harvesting crops and the sense of self reliance that gardening offers...*



### Tomato Time

**MARCH:** Our picks for the best early tomatoes for cool weather

Black Prince, Early Girl, First Lady, Glacier, Manitoba, Jetsetter, Siberian, Sun Gold and Stupice

**APRIL:** Our picks for the best tomatoes that grow to bragger size (1 to 3 lbs...wow!!)

Aunt Ruby's German Green, Coustralee, German Johnson, Kelloggs Breakfast, Old German, Omar's Lebanese, Pineapple and Mortgage Lifter

### Grow edible flowers

A culinary delight that goes back to ancient times, flowers are a beautiful addition to meals and beverages! Although many flowers are edible, others are also poisonous. Stick to known edible flowers and try introducing them into your diet slowly to gauge any allergies. Grow these flowers from our line of **Botanical Interests** seeds. Edible flowers are best if you grow them yourself.

**Bachelor's Button** (garnish)

**Calendula** (peppery, colorful salad garnish)

**Coreopsis Plains Dwarf Bicolor** (decorative in salads)

**Dianthus** (spicy clove taste)

**English Daisy** (garnish, salads)

**Hibiscus** (citrus/cranberry flavor)

**Hollyhock** (garnish, salads, color for sandwiches)

**Lavender** (flavored sugar, beverages, desserts, garnish, dried stalks as vegetable skewers)

**Marigolds African** (Tagetes erecta: Eskimo, Giant Sunset - strong flavor, garnish)

**Marigolds Signet** (Lemon/Tangerine Blend - lemony flavor)

**Nasturtium** (hot and peppery, beautiful spicy addition to salads)

**Snap Dragon** (garnish)

**Sunflowers** (green buds are edible, petals nice for garnish, seeds when mature)

**Pansy** (candied, cake decoration, salads)

**Petunias** (garnish)

**Poppy Hungarian Blue Breadseed** (seeds)

**Violet** (candied, cake decoration, salads)



### How to incorporate edibles into your yard

- 1. Go big.** Fruit trees make a beautiful addition to the garden or in a container on a patio. Citrus can provide an abundance of oranges, tangerines, lemons & limes.
- 2. Think texture** with edible shrubs and vegetables. Incorporate colorful, frilly kales and artichokes into perennial beds. Landscape with blueberries; an array of white to blush-colored flowers in the spring and foliage that changes in the autumn from a pretty green to vivid red and gold. And, you'll be rewarded with a lot of berries.
- 3. Add height** with vines! Grapes are a great vine for covering structures, and you'll be rewarded with sweet, juicy grapes for eating or for winemaking. For something a bit more exotic, try growing Kiwi. This native of New Zealand is delicious and easy to grow.



# Grow your Own Soft Fruits

## Blueberry Tartlets with Buttermilk-Vanilla Cream

Make Blueberry tartlets with blueberries from your yard! You can also use raspberries, blackberries or ollalaberries. **In stock this March:** Blueberries and strawberries.

**In stock this April:** Blackberries, tayberries, raspberries, and currants.



Combine sugar, flour and salt in a mixing bowl with a whisk until evenly mixed and set aside.

Combine egg yolks, vanilla scrapings/extract and buttermilk.

Incorporate egg yolk mixture into dry mixture and whisk briefly. Place mixture into a heavy-bottomed sauce pan and bring to a simmer, whisking constantly. Cook 3-4 minutes while whisking.

Immediately place the bottom of the saucepan into an ice bath and whisk occasionally while cooling ten minutes.

Evenly distribute the still-warm pastry cream into each of the mini tart shells and cover with blueberries. Serve promptly while cream is slightly warm. Garnish with mint.

12 pre-baked tartlet shells, about 3" diameter each  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
2 cups buttermilk  
4 large egg yolks  
Scrapings from 1 split vanilla bean or 1/2 tsp vanilla extract  
1 pint fresh blueberries, cleaned and dry  
Mint for garnish



## Welcome Spring with Botanical Interests Seeds

March is the beginning of the gardener's year, when gardeners begin a spring ritual of sowing seeds and getting ready for the first day the earth is warm enough for planting. *Botanical Interests Seeds* has been a major part of that seasonal activity for 15 years.

*Botanical Interests* began in a spare bedroom of Judy and Curtis Jones' house and has grown to over 500 different lines of seed. The packets are beautifully and delicately illustrated, and inside each packet is a very in-depth instruction guide specific to that plant. We asked Judy and Curtis a few questions about the company and how gardeners can find success growing from seed. Sloat Garden Center offers 149 organic vegetable and flower seeds!

### Why should gardeners plant seeds?

It's economical, it's important for ecological diversity and it's fun. Witnessing a seed sprout and grow into a plant is a joy and wonder of nature! Starting plants from seed gives you control over growing conditions. It's definitely less expensive than purchasing plants if you want large numbers.

All Botanical Interests seed varieties have been pre-tested for germination rate at an independent laboratory to give you the best chance for success.

### What do seeds need to succeed?

**A Comfy Container** - Almost any empty container at home can be used to start seeds - clean milk, yogurt, egg cartons, or seed starting trays. Any container must have drainage holes on

the bottom. If you reuse containers each season, be sure to disinfect them with a 1:9 bleach solution to destroy any potential seedling pathogens.

**Good soil** - For best results, always start your seeds in a high quality seed starting mix (like Sloat Organic Potting Soil or E.B. Stone Seed Starting Mix). It will be light and fluffy to prevent compaction and will not have pathogens or pests like garden soil.

**Consistent moisture** - Seedlings must be kept moist (but not soggy) at all times. If they dry out just once, they are "toast"! Conversely, you don't want to drown them. Soil that is too saturated is an invitation for fungal problems.

**Air Circulation** - When starting seeds indoors, provide good air circulation (similar to wind fluctuations outside) to help prevent damping off fungus (causes stems to get spindly and fall over) and increase the strength of each seedling's stem. To do this, you can place a small oscillating fan a few feet away from seedlings.

**Temperature** - Most seeds will germinate just fine at room temperature. A heat mat is usually not necessary, but seeds that prefer very warm temperatures for germination (like tomatoes and peppers) may benefit from it. And most importantly ... Let there be light!

**When you start seeds indoors, do they get tall and skinny and fall over?** The most common reason that seeds don't develop into healthy plants is lack of sufficient light. If you are starting them indoors, they must be in a sunny south-facing window that gets light most of the day or be under fluorescent light bulbs with 14 to 16 hours of light every day. (You should keep the lights 1-2 inches above the seedlings to prevent them from stretching towards it.)

