

# Gardener's Notebook

Volume 25, No. 1

News, Advice & Special Offers for Bay Area Gardeners

March/April 2011







### Celebrate spring with lovely Wisteria

This long-lived, twining, woody, climbing, deciduous vine needs full sun, good drainage, a very strong support system, regular water the first season, and well amended soil (don't forget the Sure Start)! Above are three wisteria varieties we've selected for Spring 2011 Bay Area gardens. Try one this spring and enjoy the fragrance!

#### White Japanese Wisteria

Prized for its huge grape-like clusters of very fragrant white flowers. Perfect for covering a patio, arbor or fence. Can be trained as a small tree.

#### Pink Japanese Wisteria

Produces a spectacular show of large fragrant rose-pink flower clusters. It should be trained on an arbor, trellis or fence for the best effect. An excellent patio cover!

#### Texas Purple Japanese Wisteria

This wisteria is best when trained on an arbor, trellis or fence to allow for viewing of the spectacular pendulous flower clusters. Blooms at a very early age.



#### Go bold with Loropetalum

#### **Ever Red Fringe Flower**

This exceptional foundation plant has vivid, deep red flowers, combined with extremely dark burgundy foliage, which creates a stunning compact shrub. Use this Loropetalum to create high contrast effects in beds and borders.

#### Spring Gardening Inside:



- Grow your own groceries!
  - Fresh eggs
  - Native plants
- Vertical gardens ....and more!

#### Visit our stores: Nine Locations in San Francisco, Marin and Contra Costa

**Richmond District** 327 3rd Ave 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 (Near Downtown) 401 Miller Ave. at La Goma (415) 388-0365 Garden Design Department (415) 388-3754

Mill Valley 657 E. Blithedale at Lomita (415) 388-0102

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

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro (925) 743-0288 M-Sat hours: 8 to 6:30pm Sun hours: 8am to 5pm

**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



420 Coloma Street Sausalito, CA 94965-1428



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

(or as noted above in Danville & SF Marina)

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Printed on 100% PCW recycled paper using vegetable based inks!

#### We'll help you grow the plants you love!

8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK March/April 2011

#### Plant:

It's Vegetable Planting Time! Organic vegetable starts and seeds are here.

Start your edible garden early this year. Add E.B



Agricultural Lime to soil to provide needed calcium for your vegetables and fruit.

Plant favorite annuals for spring. Impatiens, petunias, marigolds, cosmos and lobelia are all budding and blooming. Say yes to summer bulbs! Plant gladiolus

### March & April Gardening Guide

and dahlias now for summer color.

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.

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.

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.

Wait to prune spring blooming shrubs until after flowering.

Prepare planting beds for spring. Test your soil for pH, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium and add appropriate fertilizer. We recommend amending soil with Sloat Loam Builder, Sloat Forest Mulch Plus,

Sloat Planting Mix or our new E.B. Stone Planting Compost.

Aphids are beginning to appear. Stop them early with either Insecticidal Soap, Bonide All Seasons Oil....or, **Greenlight Rose** Defense. Use on roses and all your plants!

Use EXEL systemic fungicide (bolsters your plant's immune system as well as feeds) and Serenade bacteria based fungicide to prevent/cure spring rust and mildew. Both are OMRI listed.



### How to Grow your own Groceries:



It's gratifying and liberating to coax food from the soil. And did we mention relatively simple? Prepare to grow your own fruits and vegetables by keeping soil quality, sun exposure, plant nutrients and plant quality in mind. Here are our top tips for a healthy vegetable garden this spring.



1. Use quality soils. Our Planting mix is 100% organic and promotes drainage, air and water penetration, and loosens thick Bay Area clay soil.



2. E. B. Stone Tomato & Vegetable Food is formulated from natural organic ingredients for use throughout the vegetable garden as well as with soft fruits like strawberries. It will contribute to even plant growth without producing excessive foliage at the expense



3. Buy quality vegetable plants and use quality vegetable seeds for delicious local (and organic) vegetables.

Tip: Incorporate tall flowers into your vegetable garden for table flowers: cosmos, snapdragon and larkspur are fun to grow!

Tip: Use alyssum to feed beneficial insects that prey on aphids.

Tip: We now carry large packs of mung bean, sandwich mix and alfalafa seed. Grow these to put in salads and on sandwiches!



## full sun, part sun, shade.

Planting in the correct sun/shade exposure reduces insect and disease problems. Definitions:

Deep shade: direct sunlight does not reach the ground

Part shade: there is direct light in either morning or late-afternoon...but usually none at mid-day. These plants will not do well in direct, hot afternoon sun

Part sun: can handle four to five hours of mid-day sun

Full sun: direct sun for at least 6-8 hours per day, including mid-day hours. Sun loving plants need this amount or they will not bloom or grow well.

Keep in mind: every gardening space has microclimates...the south side of a home will get hot sun all day, while the north side will be cool and shady. Pick plants accordingly.

### Why we love using E.B. Stone in our gardens...

Sloat Garden Center has always carried a full line of E.B. Stone garden supplies because we believe in their nutrient rich products. This is a company with a century of experience helping gardeners. Here are a few reasons why we recommend E.B. Stone to gardeners.

#### We support local businesses

E.B. Stone is a local, family-owned company that blends and packages soils and fertilizers for home gardeners. They've been doing it for almost 100 years! They sell their products exclusively to independent garden centers up and down the west coast, but their facility is in the Bay Area.

#### **Wind Powered Organics**

E.B. Stone is now constructing their second windmill, which will produce 100% of their facility's electricity needs on site (picture of their first windmill is at right).

#### **Great New Box**

This year E.B. Stone is phasing in new earth-friendly plant food boxes. These boxes are printed with zero VOC, soy based inks and an offset is paid by E.B. Stone to compensate for the carbon emis-



sions required to print their box. When the fertilizer is used up, you can recycle the box as you would milk cartons or juice boxes.

#### **Organic**

All E.B. Stone products are made with 100% organic and natural materials. Organic soil amendments and plant foods are not only great for your plants, but great for the soil. They are friendly to use around kids, your pets and wildlife (though you should follow instructions before using any ammendment!). Organic plant foods naturally slow release nutrients and provide for optimum plant success.

#### Sure Start

Most of all, we love their Sure Start! Sure Start gets newly planted plants off to a great start. Beneficial soil microorganisms help feed plants and your soil as well as promote long lasting success. We've tried both planting with it and without it, and we can always see the difference

in plant growth and health.



## Fresh eggs from your backyard

Keeping chickens has become all the rage across the U.S. this year, and why not? Taste a fresh egg from a backyard kept chicken and you'll become a convert, too. At Sloat Garden Center, we make chicken keeping easy with these superbly designed (and attractive) hen houses from Creative Coops. All have a dropping board to allow you to collect manure for your compost pile. They're also well ventilated with white roofs to reflect the sun's heat. These hen houses are available at the following Sloat Garden Center locations (but we can also send one to the location closest to you!) San Francisco (Sloat Blvd), Mill Valley (Miller Avenue), Novato and Kentfield.

Read about our adventures in chicken keeping on our website: www.sloatgardens.com



**Medium Standard** 

Door on side, nest box on side



**Medium Classic II** 

Door on side, nest box and window in front

Both medium-size coops have space for up to 6 chickens to rest at night (chickens should have a fenced outdoor space during the day to roam). Both coops come with outside access to the nest box and plenty of roosting stick space.

### Learn more!

#### **Keeping Chickens 101**

Mark Hall from Creative Coops in Grass Valley will discuss basic housing needs and general backyard chicken keeping.

Mar.26 – Mill Valley (Miller), Sat., 10:30 am Mar.26 – Novato, Sat., 3pm Mar.27 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Sun., 10:30 am



Starter Hen House on a Pedestal

The starter coop for 2-3 chickens can be expanded to a medium size by adding more parts when you want more chickens.

Each season we select local gardening experts and designers, as well as our knowledgeable senior staff, to speak in our seminar series. The class fee is \$5 (Gardener's Reward Program members attend for free) and all 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.

#### **Growing Tomatoes 101**

Norma Novy, vegetable gardening expert, shares how to successfully grow tomatoes. Mar.19 – San Rafael, Sat., 10 am Mar.20 – Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am Mar.23 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm Mar. 27 – Novato, Sun., 10 am

#### Fruit and Vegetable Growing 101

Brad Sheehan talks about how to be successful with vegetables, herbs and fruits.

Mar.19 – Danville, Sat., 10 am

#### Basic Pruning 101

Elizabeth Ruiz explains how/why we should prune. Mar.19 — Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am Mar.20 — Novato, Sun., 10 am Mar.27 — S.F. (Pierce), Sun., 10 am

#### **Growing Vegetables 101**

Cindy Bonilla discusses all the fun vegetables you can grow in San Francisco. Mar.20 — S.F. (Pierce St.), Sun., 10 am Mar.30 — S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

#### Keeping Chickens 101

Mark Hall from Creative Coops will discuss basic housing needs and general chicken keeping. Mar.26 – Mill Valley (Miller), Sat., 10:30 am Mar.26 – Novato, Sat., 3pm Mar.27 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Sun., 10:30 am

#### Blueberry Goodness!

Marie Miller and Nate Cofer demonstrate easy recipes for those amazing blueberries.

Apr.2 – Mill Valley (Miller), Marie, Sat., 10 am

Apr.20 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd), Nate, Wed., 6:30 pm

#### Learn about Composting/Soils/Nutrients

Brad Sheehan teaches us how to maintain a worm composter, tumbler, or pile. Apr.2 – Danville, Sat., 10 am

#### **Growing Herbs 101**

Norma Novy shows how to make your own 'Herb du Provence' and enjoy other culinary herbs.

Apr.3 — San Rafael, Sun., 10 am

Apr.6 — S.F.(Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

(cont'd next column)

Apr.10 – Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sun., 10 am Apr.17 – Novato, Sun., 10 am

gardening seminars

#### Garden Designs from the SF Garden Show

Mary Te Selle, garden designer, shares slides and the back stories from this year's show. Apr.13 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

#### **Designing Raised Beds**

Fun & easy planting design for raised vegetable beds.
Apr.16 – Danville, Sat., 10 am

#### Gardening under the Redwoods

Mary Te Selle, garden designer, discusses deer-resistant plant combinations for color and success in the shade.

Apr.16 – Mill Valley (Miller Ave.), Sat., 10 am Apr.30 – San Rafael, Sat., 10 am

#### San Francisco Small Space Veggie Gardening

Nate Perry, from Garden for the Environment, shows clever ways to grow your own micro-crops.

Apr.27 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm

### 5 California native plants you'll want in your garden

When it comes to natural features, California is a vast domain; larger and far more diverse than many countries. California native plants reflect this; our hills, mountains, valleys, deserts and ocean bluffs are teaming with 6000-plus plant species that evolved and adapted to each particular region.

In California we have large trees, like oaks, maples and bays, which will grow to provide understory habitats for many other smaller plants, as they do in the wild. There are foliage shrubs, like Pacific wax myrtle (Myrica) and coffeeberries, plus many dazzling flowering shrubs; wild lilacs (Ceanothus) that make bold and decorative displays. Around the shrubs and under the trees can go a vast array of beautiful herbaceous perennials and subshrubs. The smaller buckwheats (Eriogonum), heucheras and Pacific Coast Iris are some of the showiest and most familiar, but there are many more. Beautiful Arctostaphylos manzanitas are tough, picturesque shrubs and small trees that will create a focal point in any landscape.

#### Learn more!

#### **Pruning Natives** Elizabeth Ruiz demonstrates how to keep your natives happy and healthy. Mar.16 – S.F. (Sloat Blvd.), Wed., 6:30 pm



Pacific Wax myrtle. A large shrub or small tree with smooth, light brown bark. It can grow 10-20' high but is easily restrained with pruning. Neat bush of narrow, shiny, dark green leaves with yellowish flowers which are tiny and inconspicuous but develop into small berries with a spicily aromatic wax, used in making scented candles. Will do fine with sun or shade, most soils, moderate to little watering when established. Hardy to 10°F or below.



Ceanothus. Wild lilac. This beautiful flowering shrub is a keeper for any native landscape. So easy to grow & beautiful! Flower colors range from white to deep true-blue, violet (and even pink) and flower in March or April. Needs sun, well drained soil, and little watering once established.



Eriogonum. Wild buckwheat. This immense group of western natives, encountered from coastal bluffs to mountain peaks and the desert floor, are shrubs with decorative, often woolly leaves and tiny, brightly colored blossoms borne in dense clusters. Needs sun, well drained soil, little or no watering once established.



Pacific Coast Iris. Some of the most beautiful plants are natives of our woods and meadows. Native iris are more delicate in appearance than the better-known European and Asian iris. Forms handsome clumps. The large flowers are borne in spring, two or more per stem. They include a rainbow of hues, from purple or deep blue, maroon or mahogany to yellow and white. Needs sun or part shade near the coast, part shade elsewhere, reasonably well drained non-alkaline soil, moderate to occasional watering when established. Hardy to 0-10°F.



Arctostaphylos. Manzanita. Their ornamental features include reddish to purple, often crooked trunks, round to pointed oval, green to greyish green leaves, and clustered, fragrant urn shaped blossoms, painted pink to white. Flowers in late winter and early spring. Needs sun, well drained soil, occasional to no supplemental watering once established. Most are hardy to 0-10°F.

# Growing vertical.

"Avid and aspiring gardeners, frustrated with little outdoor space, are taking another look at their walls and noticing something new: more space." - "Gardens That Grow on Walls," The New York Times, May 2010

Vertical gardens, sometimes called living walls, are excellent options for urban, suburban and rural gardeners alike. They provide an organized system where plants can grow up a wall, fence, or other vertical surface; but they are also a beautiful way to just show off plants, cover a wall, or create privacy in a courtyard. Because they're hung vertically, these gardens hardly take up much space. They're perfect for creating a garden when you have vertical space to spare, but not land. At Sloat Garden Center, we have two excellent vertical garden systems to offer this spring...



#### **Woolly Pockets**

Woolly Pockets are flexible, breathable, modular gardening containers. They can be used both indoors and out; built-in moisture barriers help protect your walls, and they are completely modular. Woolly Pockets are lightweight and can be folded flat, which makes them very easy to use, move and store.

Woolly Pockets come in two styles: those designed to be placed on horizontal surfaces, and those designed to be hung on walls for vertical gardening. The Woolly Pocket Vertical Gardening System is unique because it's easy to install, healthier for plants, and very easy to maintain. See Woolly Pockets at our Sloat Blvd. (SF), Blithedale (Mill Valley), Miller Avenue (Mill Valley), Kentfield and Pierce Street (SF) stores.





#### **INKA Wall Garden**

Grow delicious herbs, leafy greens, fruits and other vegetables with an easy to manage vertical garden mounted at any height you choose. The Inka Wall Garden uses the proprietary BioQuilt fabric based growth medium instead of soil to support plant growth. The BioQuilt is designed to evenly distribute nutrient rich water across a vertical surface, supporting plant growth while minimizing water consumption.

This spring, Inka Biospheric Systems is offering customers who purchase the Inka Wall Garden from Sloat Garden Centers through April 30, 2011, customer support in establishing their space saving/water saving Inka Wall Garden. Support includes standard wall mounting, initial garden set-up and planting assisted by Inka's horticulturalist with a one-on-one maintenance orientation. (Plants not included). For a period of six months following the date of purchase, customers will receive: phone and email support and once monthly service visits within the nine-county greater Bay Area. This offer is for a limited time — other terms and conditions apply. Visit the Sloat Blvd. or Pierce Street stores in San Francisco, or the Blithedale Avenue store in Mill Valley for details.

### Custom Garden Design by Sloat Garden Center

Whether you need short on-site consultations or a full planting plan, contact our Garden Design Department for help designing your garden. We will develop a loose "bubble diagram" and provide a complete plant list with quantities and sizes of plant material, soil requirements, and pruning, feeding, and care information.



415-388-3754 design@sloatgardens.com

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## Recipe for a beautiful (an

Time to experiment with growing your own groceries this spring...with figs! The below selections are attractive trees that add texture and

interest to any garden. All will do well throughout the Bay Area, although Kadota does need more heat than San Francisco microclimates can offer.





#### **Brown Turkey Fig**

Produces tasty, brownish-purple fruit twice each year: late spring & late summer.



#### Black Jack

Especially sweet, elongated purple fruit in summer. Semi-dwarf form makes it a good choice where space is limited.



#### Mission Fig

Especially sweet, purplish-black fruit in summer. Well-adapted to all areas. Needs light annual pruning.



#### Kadota

Sweet, greenish-yellow fruit producing a reliable harvest each fall. Needs light annual pruning.



Read more about Growing Your Own Groceries

(including 2 terrific fig recipes): www.sloatgardens.com

## Ask the Garden Guru!

#### Dear Garden Guru,

I keep hearing about mycorrhizae in relation to my garden. What is mycorrhizae and how does it benefit plants?

- Beth in San Francisco

#### Dear Beth,

Mycorrhizae are beneficial soil fungus that develop in and around a plant's roots, stimulating its nutrient and water uptake, increasing fruit and flower yield, and reducing transplant shock and other environmental stresses.

These fungi are an important component of soil life and chemistry, and can be found on the roots of most plant species. Once established they become a natural extension of the root system.

Mycorrhizae are one of the reasons we carry Monrovia plants at Sloat Garden Center. Monrovia soil is alive with mycorrhizal microorganisms that maximize the disease resistance and fertility of your garden's ecosystem.

Twelve different types of mycorrhizae are added to Monrovia's soil mix to create an environment that dramatically increases the life of plants.

We also carry Sloat Planting Mix and Sloat Potting Soil, which are inoculated with mycorrhizae. These soils help ensure that plants flourish, making them far more resistant to pests and disease.

> Thanks for choosing to garden with us. -The Garden Guru

Read more answers from the Garden Guru on our website!

**않MONROVI** &

### d edible) landscape:



Celebrate delicious blueberries: Stop by our stores and select a range of blueberries in every shape and size!

#### Southern Highbush low chill varieties

(semi-evergreen varieties) Sunshine Blue, O'Neil, Sharpblue, South Moon, Legacy, Misty

Northern Highbush (longer chill) varieties (these are often considered to have the best fruit) Bluecrop, Berkeley, Blueray, Chandler, Reka

#### Blueberry Goodness!

Marie Miller and Nate Cofer demonstrate easy recipes for those amazing blueberries. Apr.2 – Mill Valley (Miller), Marie, Sat., 10 am Apr.20 - S.F. (Sloat Blvd), Nate, Wed., 6:30 pm









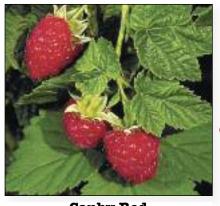


Heritage



**NEW:** Bountiful Blue® Blueberry

Prolific large, super sweet berries and the bluest foliage; a standout in the landscape or in a container. Will set fruit alone, but berries will be more numerous if planted near another blueberry; 'Sunshine Blue' is a great pollinator. Semievergreen in warm climates. Prefers acidic soil.



Canby Red

All three of these raspberries are prolific producers of tasty dark red fruit in midsummer to fall of their second planted year. Small white flowers precede fruit on erect, thornless canes. Very hardy. Deciduous.

### Broad spectrum organic control for your garden with Spinosad

Finally....an insect application that takes care of a wide variety of garden pests! (We are big fans of products that handle multiple pest needs at once).

Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew (containing Spinosad) takes care of many difficult to control insects; thrips, aphids, Japanese beetles, caterpillars and other leaf feeding insects. It's also effective on borers, miners and other insects which have not been as susceptible to organic products in the past.

Spinosad has an interesting story. It's made by fermenting a bacterium which is only found in one place in the world...the ruins of a rum distillery in the Caribbean! The bacterium was discovered in 1983 and the insecticide was developed by Dow AgroSciences for widespread use in agriculture where growers wanted an organic control of many insects on ornamentals, fruits and vegetables. Spinosad is now being recommended by universities and extension specialists for consumer insect control.

Captain Jack's is US-EPA approved for organic gardening; it'll make pests in your garden walk the plank this spring!



Raspberry Fun!