

# Gardener's Notebook

Volume 33, No. 1

News & Advice for Bay Area Gardeners

Early Spring 2019

## It's Tomato Time

Find a rainbow of locally grown, ready-to-plant tomato varieties at Sloat Garden Center. Join us in the stores for tomato growing seminars, or stop by with questions for our tomato experts. We'll help you grow the perfect tomato this spring and summer!

**In this issue:** our vegetable planting chart • growing herbs • rhododendrons • indoor plants • hellebores

*Tomato Time is late March & April*  
Now is the best time to plant tomatoes!

## Plant up a tomato sauce garden

(recipe by Sloat Garden Center Designer Jennie Strobel)

You don't need much to grow your own tomato sauce! Here are the ingredients:

Growing space or container (note: fewer plants are needed if growing in a container)

Tomato plants – choose a combination of San Marzano, Roma, and Plum

Oregano plants

Chive plants

Basil plants

Garlic (plant cloves in fall or early spring)

marigold & nasturtium plants  
(to keep insects away)

Sloat Organic Compost for the the ground Sloat

Organic Potting Soil for a container

E.B. Stone Organics Tomato & Vegetable Food

E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start

Tomato cages

### Cool tolerant tomatoes

#### Slicer varieties

Celebrity, Cherokee Purple, Green Zebra, Siletz, Black Krim, Oregon Spring, Big Beef, San Francisco Fog, Stupice, Early Girl

#### Cherry tomato varieties

Sungold, Sweet 100

### Warm tolerant tomatoes

#### Slicer varieties

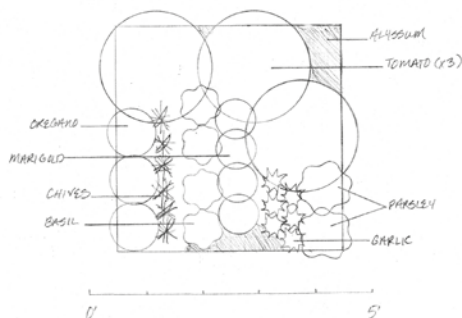
Brandywine, Early Girl Celebrity, Pineapple, Beefsteak, Isis Candy, Abe Lincoln, Berkeley Tie Dye, Ace, Black Krim

#### Cherry & paste tomato varieties

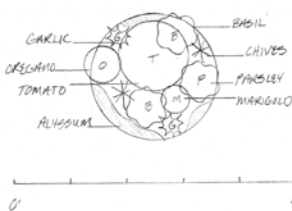
Sungold, Sweet 100, Roma, San Marzano and more.  
Visit your local Sloat Garden Center for a full selection!

Note: Availability varies with the season

2 tomato sauce planting options!



in-ground design



container design

## One stop vegetable shopping

Plant up salad greens & more!

### The best months to plant

**Cool weather vegetables** are most successful if matured when temps are mild and cool. If temperatures are very warm or hot, they'll become bitter and possibly "bolt" (go to seed) rather than produce edible parts. Plant in early spring to harvest before the summer heat. Plant a second crop in late summer.

	March	April	May	June
beets	●	●	●	●
broccoli	●	●		
Brussels sprouts			●	●
cabbage	●	●		
carrots	●	●	●	●
cauliflower	●	●	●	●
celery	●	●	●	●
chard	●	●	●	●
kohlrabi	●	●		
lettuce	●	●	●	●
onions		●		
parsnips		●	●	
peas	●	●		
potatoes	●	●	●	●
radishes	●	●	●	●
rutabega	●			
spinach	●	●		
turnips	●			

**Warm weather vegetables** want both warm soil and very warm temperatures. These plants are killed by frost and must be planted after the last frost date in your area. We use St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, as a "safe" date. If planted any earlier, you may need some protection from late season frost.

	March	April	May	June
beans		●	●	●
corn		●	●	●
cucumber		●	●	●
melon*			●	●
peppers*			●	●
pumpkins			●	●
squash, summer		●	●	●
squash, winter			●	●
tomatoes		●	●	●
watermelon*			●	●

\*Successful only in the warmest areas

Learn how to grow a bounty of produce this spring (including tomatoes!) with our 47 Kitchen Gardener planting guides: [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com).

Come in to Sloat Garden Center for the best fruits, vegetables, and herbs to plant in your Bay Area microclimate.

#### How to grow fresh spring herbs



Herbs grow best in well draining soil with plenty of organic matter, bright sunlight (for at least 6 hours a day), and regular water. They'll thrive in the ground, in pots, or indoors on a sunny window ledge. Windowsill herb gardens are lovely for both cooking and aesthetics. Plant new herb starts or seeds every few weeks for a steady fresh supply!

Some of our favorite herb recipes are available in the Sloat Recipe Box [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com)

## Joyful spring bloomers: plant Azaleas & Rhododendrons

Rhododendrons and Azaleas have sumptuous flowers that blossom every winter and spring. We have three new varieties that really knock our socks off for spring and summer: Azalea Fragrant Star (pictured bottom left) features blue-green foliage! Rhododendron Taurus (bottom right) produces the most incredible red color, and we love the compact Rhododendron Cherry Cheesecake (at right).

**Care information:** Plant Rhododendrons in the ground or in containers with *Sloat Organic Planting Mix* for ground planting, and *Sloat Organic Potting Soil* for containers. Rhododendrons need minerals, so apply soil acidifier *Greenall F.S.T.* at least 3 times per year. Acidifying the soil helps release micronutrients bound in alkaline soil so that they're available to plants. Purchase one of our handy PH meters to keep track of acidity levels.



*Make a colorful splash*

### How to grow Rhododendrons in a container

The trick to growing a thriving potted rhododendron is to choose a compact, smaller-sized plant that will adapt well to the confines of a large pot. Choose a dwarf variety (3 to 5 feet high) for best results. Use *E.B. Stone Organics Azalea, Camellia & Gardenia Food* through spring and early summer (after blooming), switching to 0-10-10 fertilizer in late summer through fall. Keep it at a manageable size with consistent pruning.

## Screen 'em out: planting for privacy

### How to create private spaces



Looking for solitude, but your yard or patio feels like a fish-bowl? Living privacy screens can help! Foliage rich trees and shrubs will allow you to create personalized spaces that offer sanctuary from traffic and nosy neighbors. The plant screen doesn't have to be high – it only needs to create volume. Trellises, hanging baskets, and small shrubs in lightweight pots can also be put to work as natural privacy barriers. Indoors, houseplants can be used to screen one room from another, or block views from outside.

Recommendations: Katy Thompson, one of our staff horticulturists, suggests the following larger trees and shrubs for this task: *Dodonaea viscosa* 'Purpurea' (Hopseed bush), *Pittosporum tenuifolium* varieties, *Photinia*, and *Podocarpus*. All are dense, easily pruned, mostly drought tolerant, and do well in a variety of climates. Visit us for help finding just the right plants and pots for your space.



*Photinia*



*Podocarpus*



*Pittosporum*



*Dodonaea*

sh with spring plants



: Hello beautiful Hellebores :

**Hellebores are super tough**, elegant shade perennials with a whole lot of personality. Available in a rainbow of unique, pastel, golden and chocolatey colors, their flowers bloom early winter through spring. Hellebores are a dry shade powerhouse in the landscape, blending well with native fern, Acanthus, Liriope, Heuchera and Sarcococca. They grow well on hillsides or slopes, and will do fine in containers. Drought tolerant once established and thankfully detested by deer. Feed with *E.B. Stone Organics All Purpose Food*. Come in to see these exciting varieties!

## Turn household waste into garden fertilizer with worms!

Back by popular demand! Worms are Earth's unique natural recyclers. By putting them to work in a worm bin you'll convert household food waste into nutrient rich, organic fertilizer and worm tea that plants love. We have two worm bin options for spring: the Worm Café is a simple and sleek bin for small spaces, like apartment balconies and patios. The Can-O-Worms is ideal for small to medium households. These bins have hinged lids to make it easy to feed worms and a non-drip spigot to collect worm tea fertilizer. Both are made from 100% recycled material. Sloat Garden Center also carries Tip Top red wiggler worms, the species best suited for composting.



*The Worm Café produces compost tea that keeps plants lush*



Our bulk soil department offers quality, locally-sourced soil mixes, barks, mulches, and construction materials to our East Bay customers. Quick delivery and affordable pricing will make any project easier.

## Our soils

We offer quality soil for every garden project, indoors and out. Whether amending existing soil with compost or planting in containers, our soil helps you grow vigorous, healthy plants. Keep an eye out: Sloat Organic Indoor Potting Soil is coming soon!

## 3 indoor plants that can dig a dark room



*ZZ Plant*



*Aglaonema*



*Sansevieria*

Have a poorly lit room that needs a bit of plant love? Here are three indoor plants that can handle the dark.

**ZZ Plant** is an EZ plant! This practically indestructible plant is sure to be the star of your indoor space. ZZ Plant is tolerant of a range of light, humidity, and watering conditions at home or in the office.

There are a dazzling number of varieties of **Aglaonema** available, and all are prized for their foliage. These lush plants will thrive in dark rooms. Aglaonema is also one of our absolute favorite air cleaning plants!

We can't get enough of **Sansevieria's** modern-looking, undemanding, adaptable, low-maintenance attributes. We carry several varieties that will flourish in any type of light and can withstand dry air, fluctuating temperatures, and little water.

Have a houseplant question? Stop in and let our experts advise you on your individual light and space needs.

### Feed your plants

*Tappin Roots All Stages organic formula can help houseplants stay vigorous and strong. This formula can help plants overcome failing health or neglect.*



### Modern Gwen Pottery

Our staff loved these stylish, handmade, indoor pots at first sight! Gwen pottery's sleek, modern style features attached saucers in new shapes and sizes. Available in matte white, matte black, and matte grey. Visit any Sloat Garden Center to see our expanding line of unique, indoor pottery.



*Gazania*

### Gorgeous ground covers

Create multi-layer garden spaces by planting ground covers beneath shrubs. This type of tiered planting helps reduce weeds and water use while providing protective cover for beneficial wildlife that feast on bad bugs. We recommend: Elfin Thyme, Dymondia, Gazania, Cotula Platts Black, and Chamomile planted beneath Phormiums, Cordyline, Ceanothus, and some of our featured privacy screen shrubs (see pg 4).

**Our Water, Our World (OWOW)** helps protect the environment through education and better gardening practices. Sloat works closely with OWOW in staff training. Their easy-to-read fact sheets help manage pests without hazardous chemicals. [www.owow.org](http://www.owow.org)

**PlantRight** works to stop the sale of invasive plants while promoting non-invasive alternatives. Sloat Garden Center, a founding member, recognizes that prevention is the most effective avenue to combating invasive plant spread. Learn more: [www.plantright.org](http://www.plantright.org)

## on location at our Danville, Diablo Rd. store

Tucked into the San Ramon valley at the border of Danville and Alamo sits our roomy Danville, Diablo Rd. location; our first garden center in the East Bay and also home of our bulk soil department.

"We're a sweet little store on a big property that includes demonstration beds for growing herbs and vegetables," explains store Manager Brad Sheehan. "This location is really community and neighborhood oriented, and we're definitely very dog friendly," laughs Brad as he gestures to the dog treats he keeps in the front for visiting pups.

Brad and his experienced staff of plant-lovers have the store stocked for spring with vegetables, herbs, and flowers from our favorite local growers like Blooms, Annie's Annuals, Soquel, and Flatland Flower Farms. They also carry a bounty of perennials, fruit trees, shrubs, succulents and our colorful, handmade pottery.

Brad and his team have three secrets to successful gardening this spring for every gardener: *1. Plant new plants with E. B. Stone Organics Sure Start. 2. Pick the right plant for your climate and location (sun vs. shade). 3. Don't be afraid to fail. Brad says: "Come in, bring your plants, and talk to us — we help gardeners solve their problems...gardening problems that is!"*



**Plant lovers in Danville: Brad, Pam, Lindsay & Spencer**

### Spring Gardening Seminars & Workshops

*Each season we select gardening experts and designers to teach seminars & workshops in our popular gardening education series. Seminars are free for Rewards Members (Workshop fees are additional), and \$10 for non-members (membership is free). See [www.sloatgardens.com](http://www.sloatgardens.com) for full details, times and locations!*

**Seminar: Learn to Grow Tomatoes 101**

**Make & Take Workshop: Create a Fragrant & Edible Herb Planter**

**Kids Club Make & Take Workshop: Join our Ladybug Party**

**Seminar: Learn to Grow Peppers 101**

**Kids Club Make & Take Workshop: Make a Planter for Mom**

**Make & Take Workshop: Create a Succulent Centerpiece**

Join us this spring and plant a few tomatoes during **Tomato Time**, release beneficial ladybugs in honor of **Love your Ladybugs week**, and choose a variety of plants to support the planet on **Earth Day**. See you at Sloat Garden Center!

## Useful resources: help for spring garden tasks



**Captain Jack's Dead Bug Flower & Vegetable Garden Dust** organically controls thrips, aphids, caterpillars and other leaf feeding insects. We value garden products that control many types of pests without scary chemicals, so this product gets our thumbs up! It's a ready-to-use dust formula that's convenient and safe for growing fruit and vegetables. Especially helpful for younger plants where a long lasting dust protects longer than a spray, and eliminates the chance of burning in warmer temperatures. Captain Jack's is US-EPA approved for organic gardening.



### **Bonide Bug & Slug Killer**

Unfortunately, it's slug and snail season practically year-round for Bay Area gardeners. We've found an effective solution to suppress these destructive invaders. Bonide's pelletized formula of Spinosad, plus iron phosphate lures pests from plants and hiding spots. It also controls ants, earwigs, and other common chewing garden pests. Wait 3 days after applying before harvesting vegetables, fruit and herbs. Safe for pets.



### **New premium, lightweight hoses**

Make gardening easier with our new hoses! Our expandable hoses are lightweight but constructed of heavy-duty polyester casing with a strong double latex inner tube. Durable, with solid brass connections, it resists kinks and tangles. This compact hose lets you store 50ft. of hose in 1/3 the space of a traditional hose!

*Tip: Always turn water completely off and drain hose after use to make storage easier and avoid hose damage.*

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

### San Francisco

327 3rd Ave between  
Geary & Clement  
(415) 752-1614

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

3237 Pierce Street  
Chestnut & Lombard  
(415) 440-1000

Hours: 9-6:30

### Novato

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

### San Rafael

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

**Kentfield** M-F: 8-6:30

Sat & Sun: 8:30-6:30

700 Sir Francis Drake Bl.  
(415) 454-0262

### Mill Valley

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

### Pleasant Hill

2895 Contra Costa Blvd.  
(925) 939-9000

### Martinez

6740 Alhambra Ave  
(925) 935-9125

### E. Blithedale:

M-F 8-6:30

Sat/Sun

8:30-6:30

### Danville

800 Camino Ramon (in the  
Rose Garden Center)  
(925) 837-9144

### 828 Diablo Road

at El Cerro  
(925) 743-0288

M-Sat hours: 8am-6:30pm

Sun hours: 9am-5pm

### Concord

1555 Kirker Pass Rd.  
(925) 681-0550

### Garden Design Department

401 Miller Ave.,  
Mill Valley (415) 388-3754

### Bulk Soils

828 Diablo Road at El Cerro  
(925) 820-1273

(East Bay delivery only)

M-Sat hours: 8am-4pm

Currently  
available  
in Marin  
& SF only

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

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

(or as noted above)

Celebrate *Earth Day* on April 22nd!

# S l o a t



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8 SLOAT NOTEBOOK Early Spring 2019

## Bay Area Gardening Guide:

## March & April

### Plant

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

☞ It's vegetable planting time! Grow your own groceries with organic vegetable starts & seeds: lettuce, tomatoes, herbs, zucchini and peppers.

☞ Plant your favorite spring annuals. Petunias, Alyssum, Marigolds, Cosmos and Lobelia.

☞ We carry plants that will provide flowers and foliage for shaded spaces: choose Begonias, Heucheras, and Impatiens.

☞ Plant Gladiolus and Dahlias for summer color.

☞ Choose a large tomato cage now -- your tomatoes will grow larger!

☞ Plant a tree, shrub, flower or vegetable for Earth Day or Arbor Day.



☞ Rhododendrons and azaleas are budding and blooming. Feed them with **E.B. Stone Organics Azalea Camellia & Gardenia Food** after flowering.

### Fertilize

☞ Stock up on top quality, plant-specific fertilizers: we recommend **E.B. Stone Organics Rose & Flower, Tomato & Vegetable** and **Citrus & Fruit foods**. Use **E.B. Stone Organics Sure Start** for all new plantings to establish them quickly.

### Prune/Maintain

☞ WaterWise tip: For new plantings, use water-holding polymer **Soil Moist**. The non-toxic granules hold water longer than soil alone; minimizing moisture loss to evaporation.

☞ Water early in the morning to prevent wet foliage. Wet foliage attracts snails and fungal diseases. Non-toxic **Sluggo** helps keep slugs and snails under control.

☞ Stop aphids early with **Bonide Neem**

**Oil, Bonide Rose Rx 3-in-1 or Monterey Take Down Spray.**

Spray at day's end after bees have stopped foraging.

☞ Release ladybugs, praying mantis, and other beneficial insects to help control aphids, mites, whiteflies, and other garden pests.

☞ Use **Sloat Mini Bark** or **Forest Mulch Plus** as a top dressing on established and new plantings to reduce moisture loss and keep roots cool while inhibiting weed seed germination.

☞ Prune freeze damaged plants now (if you haven't already). But, you should wait to prune spring blooming shrubs until after flowering.

☞ Spring is the best time to repot houseplants and give them a feeding. Use **Tappin' Roots** to keep houseplants healthy.



About this Newsletter: The Gardener's Notebook is published three times a year 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)