

Sacramento Garden Notes

April 2014

Written by Robert B. Hamm

(916) 617-7516

Published by Valley Benefit Plant Sales

William House, Owner

1689 Vallarta Circle

Sacramento CA. 95834

vbpssac@gmail.com

Volume 17 Number 4

April Calendar:

Info on any of these, call Bob's cell at (916) 617-7516.

One of us will be available Friday through Monday, unless raining, from 10 am to 3 pm, at 1689 Vallarta Circle off of Truxel by I-80 EXCEPT as shown below:

Saturday April 29th – One of us will be at the Perennial Plant Club Vendor Sale at The Sheppard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, the other will be at the house, so will be **open at Both locations this day.**

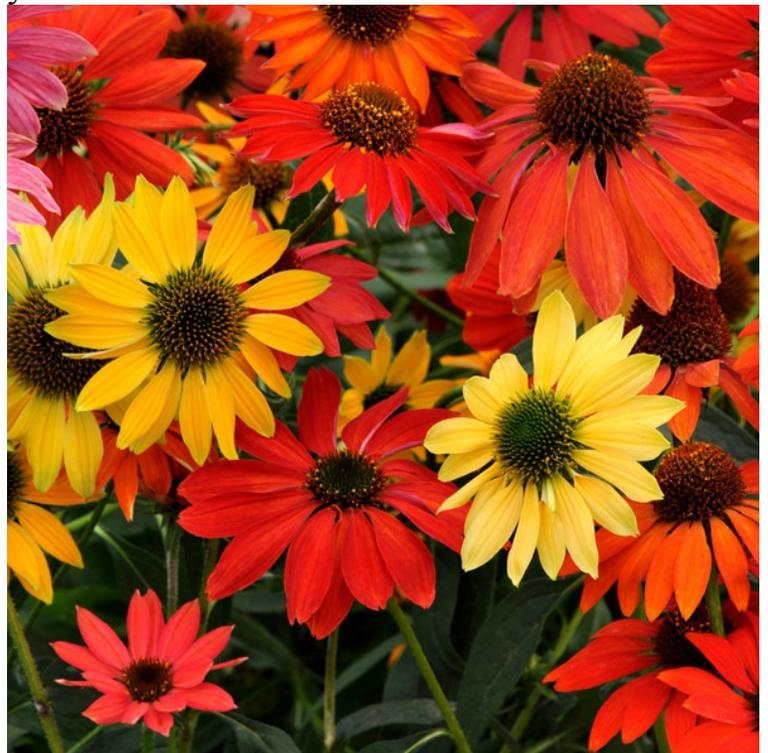
Saturday April 5th – Sidewalk Sale at The Gifted Gardener on 18th St, between J & K Streets, Midtown Sacramento. 10AM to 3 PM. **Closed at the house this day.**

Other days/ times by appointment.

Please – no pots over 4 inch please – We are phasing out larger pots, so don't need anything larger than 4". Thanks



Above, the winter hardy *Begonia grandis* for part shade to shade. This tuberous species produces little bulbils in the leaf axils before going dormant for the winter, which sprout into additional plants come spring. So your clump increases year to year. I also have a few of the white flowered form.



Echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit' – this strain has all the colors in it and many of you that got some last year gave it rave reviews for compactness and lots of flowers. I'll should have plugs available by April 5th for the Gifted Gardener Sale.



Lobelia speciosa 'Queen Victoria' this upright (to 3') perennial Lobelia is a great hummingbird attractor. It likes sun with regular water and will work well in pots. Needs snail bait early in the season or the new growth can be eaten to the ground. The Blue form, L. 'Fan Blue' is shown below.



April Garden Notes:

April is definitely Spring, trees have leafed out, plants are growing and blooming and as I write this on March 26th, the forecast is for on and off rain for the next week, which will help but not eliminate our drought

Remember that young, recently planted items take more frequent watering than older, established plants and the water should be applied at the plants base so the roots get it..

If you have any of the following that have finished blooming, now is the time for pruning /trimming them: Forsythia, Flowering Quince (see later note on quince), Azalea, Rhododendron, FLOWERING (grown for flowers not fruit) varieties of cherry, pear, plum etc, Witchhazel, early blooming Spirea forms and later in the month when done blooming Dogwood.

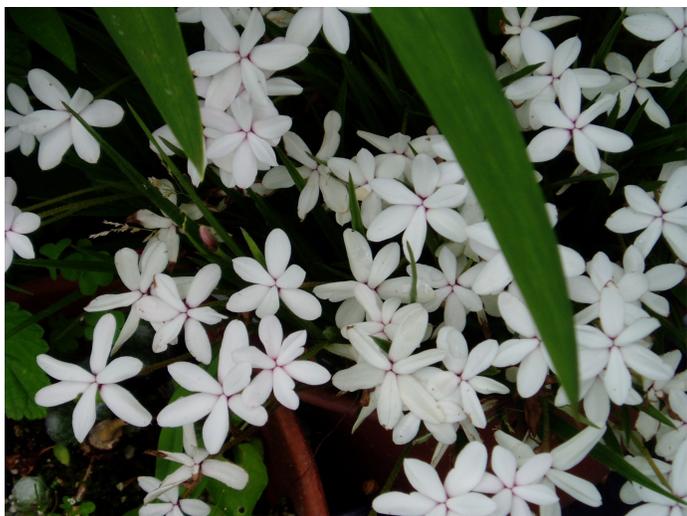
We are still running ahead of schedule and while my tomatoes in pots are doing fine, I doubt the soil is quite warm enough except in the warmest spots.

Although in average years, mid to late April, if the weather cooperates, the soil *might* be warm enough for planting tomatoes, peppers and eggplant..I expect we'll be a bit earlier this year- BUT these like WARMTH and planting them in cold soil (and nights in the 40's) will just have them sulking and standing still, if it doesn't encourage them to rot in place. Planting too early is probably why so many have "trouble" growing these.

Of course the fact that the nurseries started selling them weeks ago just encourages this mistake and discourages many a beginning gardener. A lot like trying to plant Basil before the soil really warms. Basil, which is one of the tenderest herbs to even cool, never mind cold temperatures, tends to root rot VERY easily when night temps are low and soil is cold. It is a WARM TROPICAL plant and needs heat! You may be able to plant it in containers or raised beds in a sunny spot up to 2-3 weeks before the regular ground is warm enough

A note on QUINCE: flowering quince is one of the less common shrubs in that it only blooms on older (2 year) stems. So “shearing” isn’t recommended. It is better to cut a portion of the oldest stems (say ¼ to 1/3) back hard to near the base leaving the rest, which will encourage whole new branches to develop and bloom. Caution! Many varieties of flowering quince have thorns!

Get after weeds as soon as you see them, they are easier to remove small and you want to avoid them crowding /competing with your wanted plants.



Rhodohypoxis is a delightful little plant with grass like foliage and blooms, depending on variety, in rose (often called red), pink, white and bicolor (pink and white). I only have the rarer white form at this time. Sun or part shade, with good winter drainage is best for this 4 inch charmer. Good in pots and containers, especially if you tend to “lose” small plants or have poor drainage.

Hobby or Addiction? Dealing with a non-gardening spouse. (Reprinted for new customers)

I always find it interesting when I hear a spouse complaining about the money their

partner spends on plants, like its an addiction of some kind (even if it is for some of us). I’d counter by saying it has a lot of benefits for the cost.

After all, the complainers are often the same people who spend hundreds, if not thousands on their hobbies from old cars to season tickets, collecting “things” of all types to those that “have to have” the latest (and VERY expensive) electronics gadget.

Yet they still complain about the spouses “waste” of money.

They need to stop and think!! Imagine how it would cut into their hobby (OK, for some its closer to addiction) if you collected something really expensive like they do!

A perennial or shrub will last for years, bringing the gardener the thrill of watching it grow, the joy of watching it bloom and the therapy of working in the yard! That’s a heck of a lot for far less than the cost of a two hour dinner out, and definitely cheaper than an hour session with a therapist.

Which is one reason that when someone asks to be dropped from the email list because gas is to expensive to drive into town “just for plants”, I KNOW they aren’t real garden enthusiasts.

After all, many of us would give up a dinner out long before we’d give up that new, exciting plant to try!

So the next time your partner complains about your plant expenses, maybe you should suggest a few sessions with a therapist at \$75 to \$100 or more an hour.. it might just get the point across. Gardening is cheap therapy for those of us obsessed by it!

Funds to the kids at Sunburst – it has been a slow start to the year but I hope it gets better!

Date	Amount	YTD Total
3/4	\$104.20	\$104.20
3/10	\$ 55.10	\$159.30
3/17	\$260.00	\$419.30
3/24	\$225.00	\$644.30



Above, the dwarf growing Rudbeckia “Becky Mix”. Only half the height of the tall “Black Eyes Susans” this one is good for pots or the front of the border.

This is only one of several Rudbeckia varieties I expect to have by early April. Below is R. Denver Daisy.



Below and next column: *Salvia roemeriana* is a U.S. native woodland sage (Texas and Southwest) that forms a small 1' wide rosette of small, dark green leaves with purple veins. In late spring and early summer, *Salvia roemeriana* flowers heavily, topped with 12" spikes of bright crimson-red, tubular flowers...great for low-flying hummingbirds. *Salvia roemeriana* has survived 0 degrees F by reports no problem and actually reseeds near the original clump...good drainage and a pH above 6.0 give the best results.



Above: *Digiplexis illumination* 'Flame' -A new hybrid between *Digitalis* (Foxglove) and one of its tropical relatives (*Isoplexis*). This should be winter hardy in Sacramento, though I'm not sure about higher elevations. I expect to have a limited number of plugs of this plant available by April 1st.

I've seen this new plant selling for \$10 to \$14 dollars, so expect the far cheaper (\$5) plugs to go fast. Call me (Bob) at (916)617-7516 to reserve yours, or email me. There will only be approximately 18 available at this price.