

Sacramento Garden Notes

January 2015

Written & Published
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Volume 18 Number 1

LAST CALL - January Plant Propagation Class

A 4 hour class on plant propagation from seed, cuttings and division, including a hands on workshop where you'll put down starts to take home.

Saturday January 17, from 9am to 1 pm.
Cost is \$35 per person.

You will get a chance to put down seed and cuttings and take them home as part of the "hands on" portion of the class.

Make checks payable to Bob Hamm and mail to 1689 Vallarta Circle, Sacramento, CA 95834. This is where the class will be held .

Rain and no early freeze – as I write this on December 19th, this is the first year in several that we haven't had abnormally warm weather followed by a hard freeze in November or early December. Our "normal" freeze months are Jan and Feb and maybe this year we'll actually be nearer normal patterns.

I actually have Angels Trumpets in bloom now (Dec 19th), something I haven't had in several years do the abnormally early and hard freezes the past few years.

Dec. 26- frost advisory for tonight, and looks like more frost for New Years Eve. This will be the first frosts for this season.

We are also having a normal rain pattern for the first time in years (so far at least), and the

two are related, since cloudy weather holds in heat at night.

As long as the rain continues, you can turn off your sprinklers for awhile and save water, at least till the regular rain stops.

Our drought is far from over.. even if we do have a normal rain year. We are so far behind, that would take a deluge season to make a major dent with water storage and ground water levels so low.



Above – Heuchera 'Wendy' is a large growing Coral Bells which is a cross of one of the large native forms. Flower spikes can reach 3 ft tall and attract hummingbirds. I have cuttings rooting for the Perennial Plant Club Vendor sale at The Sheppard Garden and Arts Center in McKinley Park, the last Saturday in March 2015.

Garden Notes & Things to do in January -

Now that we are past Dec 21st, the days are slowly getting longer again and many plants react amazingly quickly in starting root growth and swelling buds.

For this reason Roses should be pruned ASAP, since they bud out early, often putting out first leaves by late January.

Other things that can use pruning in January include Fruit Trees, many shrubs (see exceptions below), grapes, and many other berries. Many of the nurseries have pruning clinics in January, you can call your local nursery to check on what they have, or check the garden calendar in The Sacramento Bee.

Another source of free pruning information is the gardening section of your local library.

Some items that should not have much pruning done now are those that already have their flower buds for spring set. These include Deciduous Magnolia, Azalea, Rhododendro, Pieris, Forsythia, Flowering Quince (some of which are already opening flowers around town), and flowering varieties of Cherry, Pear etc (as distinguished from those grown for fruit).

Two items that can be pruned but shouldn't be overpruned are Wisteria and Hydrangea, since these bloom on last years wood.

To show off blossoms, many growers recommend removing old foliage of Epimediums and Hybrid Hellebores now. On Hellebores, remove only old foliage that is NOT on the upcoming flower spikes.

For those planning a vegetable garden, here is the link to Farmer Fred's (Fred Hoffman) when to plant list.

<http://www.farmerfred.com/sacplantingguide.htm>

I do have to say that Fred lives in a colder area than most of Sacramento city proper (Herald), so many of you can usually plant

summer items a bit earlier than he suggests, depending on your area.

An example of micro climates that have such an effect in our area, where conditions can change across ones' yard, never mind across neighborhoods.

Many perennials can be divided now and reset into the ground. They may not show much top growth, but most will start rooting in.

Bare root trees, shrubs and perennials will be arriving in nurseries with the next week or two. These make a good way to save some money on new plants, as long as you get them before they have sat too long. Packaged perennials are the worst at being kept too warm and either sprouting too early or rotting in the packages.

You should try and get these as soon as possible after they come in for best selection and quality.



The first of my Chasmanthe are blooming in the city sound wall strip, although they usually wait till mid January or a bit later here. These winter growing/ blooming South African bulbs are a good winter hummingbird food source. These are best in areas protected from hard freezes though will stand some frost. Chasmanthe, like many other South African native bulbs, will stand severe summer drought when dormant. This makes them great for use in areas that don't get much summer water.

They can however, stand being in a watered garden.

Another Ahead of Schedule – the first seedlings of the reseeding *Impatiens* species *I. balfourii* usually show up in my yard sometime in mid to late February.

This year I noticed seedlings coming up on the north side of the house in a large pot on December 27th!!

I have no idea why they are 6 weeks early!!



The variegated *Alocasia* above will be available this spring in several sizes. I expect to have several different *Calocasias* also.



I am going to dig and divide the Japanese Iris above, along with one other so I will have some in 4" pots come spring.

Other items I have or will be potting up include *Dicentra formosana* 'Aurea' (white), *Sisyrinchium* 'Devon Skies', *Ipheon* 'Rolf Fiedler' (Indigo blue), some *Digiplexis*, an Apricot colored Foxglove, as well as almost

50 types of perennials I have started or am starting from seed.



Begonias coming along under lights in the garage. See notes below.

Tropicals Notes:

Interesting notes on fall propagation of Begonias – this fall (Sept – early Nov. 2014), I put down a lot of begonia cuttings given me by members of the local branch of the American Begonia Society.

Many questioned whether I thought fall cuttings would work, since many have had trouble with cutting taken in fall and we had often theorized that the plants going into dormancy for winter was the cause. So to test if it was daylength that was causing the problems many of us had I put most of the cuttings down under fluorescent lights on 14 hour days.

.. and here are my results.

September cutting were put down both under lights and natural light (Canes only in natural light) and all did fine.

October and November cuttings were all put down under lights, receiving 14 hours a day of light.. and here the results get interesting.

All the cuttings did fine until mid November when our temperatures suddenly dropped – with nights suddenly dropping for the upper 50's (F) into the mid to low 40's (F), then the results depended on where the cutting were and how far along they were.

The cuttings that had started growing, even the leaf cuttings (meaning those showing plantlets) , slowed down but continued to grow regardless of location. Leaf cuttings that hadn't started growth (some rooted and some not) split into different results.

Those in the house with warmer temps continued to grow though slower. Those under lights in the unheated garage with cooler temperatures, especially at night, had a group of cuttings that keeled over and died.

Let me also note I had NO trouble with mold or mildew UNTIL the temperature dropped.

This was NOT across the board.. Cane cuttings did fine though slow. Leaf cuttings both whole leaves and wedges) depended on the variety. In some cases every cutting of a particular variety died.. in others, all cuttings of many varieties did fine, and some varieties were mixed, with some cuttings dying and others slowly progressing. I suspect these varieties were marginal in tolerance of cooler temperatures.

Since all of these cuttings received the same hours of lighting, I have to conclude that temperature, especially night temps, seem to have more effect in causing trouble with fall propagation (especially from leaves) in some, though not all, Begonia varieties – at least under fluorescent lights.



Above, *Dicentra formosana* 'Aurora', the white flowered form of the native bleeding heart.



Above, *Styloporus* or “Wood Poppy” is a good woodlander for a shaded/dapples shade area with regular water. It has been growing on the north side of the fence here for over 5 years with no special attention paid to it. Even when not in bloom, the cut foliage is interesting. It is winter dormant (to the ground) from November to February.

Last Renewal - Donation Call for 2015! Do you like Garden Notes?

Do you want to see new perennials for the 2015 Sales?

If you get them by email: I ask you to please send a donation of \$10 or more for the coming year. Make checks payable to Bob Hamm and send to:

Bob Hamm, 1689 Vallarta Circle, Sacramento, CA. 95834

Any amount received above cost of the newsletter and maintenance of the computer access needed for it (above \$10) will go towards new plant material/supplies for 2015 Sunburst Projects Fund Raising and you will receive a tax receipt for the amount .

In the past several years I have turned your donations into almost 3 times as much for Sunburst through the plant sales.

For those that receive printed, mailed copies, the renewal cost is \$25.00 a year and you will only receive a tax receipt for amounts above that.

Thank you!