

Sacramento Garden Notes

October 2014

Written & Published

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Volume 17 Number 10

October 4th & 5th – Garden and Arts

Center Fall Sale – Sheppard Garden & Arts Center, McKinley Park. 10am to 4pm both days. I will be donating leftover plant material to The Perennial Plant Club for sale, plus they will be bringing plants they propagated, and other clubs will have art, plants, books etc for sale.



Above: *Verbena bonariensis* – this tall grower is upright and thin, with a long bloom season and flower heads that attract both hummingbirds, pollinating insects and butterflies. Though can seed prolificly, and has naturalized in many areas, the young seedlings are easy to remove. Very tolerant of hot, drier spots, though like many plants, looks best with some water.

Some Garden Observations:

Several Narcissus are sending up growth. This is natural and nothing to be worried about. The foliage is frost proof in our climate. Other bulbs that are coming up now and will be green through winter include, Anemone, Dutch Iris, Scilla peruviana, Chasmanthe, Watsonia, Ipheion, Grape Hyacin, some Lycoris species, the winter growing Oxalis species such as the Grand Duchess types and *O. braziliensis*, Freesia, Sparaxis, some of the early blooming Gladiolia species such as *G. 'The Bride'*, *G. 'Imprssive'* and *G. byzantinum*, Babinia and Cyclamen, both species and hybrids.



Gladiolus colvilei 'The Bride' – an early spring blooming, winter growing species hybrid.

I tried a new annual vine this year, *Minia lobata*, shown at the top of the next page. It started blooming in late May and is STILL blooming on Sept 29th! The unusual tubular flowers are attractive to hummingbirds, and range in color, starting orange and going through yellow to almost white. It produces seed that you can harvest for the following year. I expect I'll grow some starters next spring for anyone that wants to try it. .



Minia lobata above, closeup of flower spike is shown below.



Looking Ahead:

I will be propagating some of the more unusual perennials for The Perennial Plant Club Vendor Sale the last Saturday in March next year (2015) where I will have a booth to benefit the kids of Sunburst Projects.

I will probably also have a spring Yard Sale of plants at a date to be announced.

I am getting back into my first plant love, Begonias and hope to have some of them available next spring also. Over the years, a number of new species have been discovered that are actually winter hardy in our climate and I hope to do some hybridizing to create new winter hardy hybrids.

I'm slowly planting both Davids yard and the city planting strip on the outside of the Sound Wall. The sound wall is an interesting area

that has become shady as the trees have grown, and has soil that is basically the leftover concrete, gravel and dirt from building the Truxel sound wall. Which makes it interesting to plant in. I'm trying to keep to things that can get by on twice a week watering, but am also trying some things that "common knowledge" considers high water users but I've found to resist drought. It should be an interesting experiment.

Garden Notes:

October is a changeable month with the cooling weather and days getting shorter throughout the month. Many plants experience a rush of growth and rebloom, while others get ready to go dormant for winter.

Fall planting is in full swing and can continue as long as the ground isn't frozen.

Even plants that seem dormant will benefit from getting into the ground where root growth can continue through the winter.

Remember to water in newly planted material well.

Fall planted spring blooming bulbs can be planted now. Although it is often recommended you chill them before planting, the only ones that actually need this are tulips and hybrid hyacinths, virtually all other bulbs can go straight into the ground.

Even with tulips and hyacinth, I have had good results skipping cooling and putting them directly in the ground, although those of you in the warmest parts of downtown, or if you're trying to force the bulbs into bloom early in pots, probably should chill them.

Some bulbs will start putting up foliage almost immediately and will stay green through the winter and bloom in spring, this is normal. The commonest of these fall growers in our area are Watsonia, Crocosmia, Dutch Iris, Grape Hyacinth, Ipheon, Cyclamen forms and some of the Narcissus such as paper whites.

Although some plants may be going dormant later this month, that does not mean you can let them dry out! Too many people tend to ignore the

garden in fall and early winter, letting things dry out.

The result is that they lose plants from drying out and then when they don't return in the spring, blame the winter rather than their own neglect.

Regardless of the season, unless we are getting regular amounts of rain that keep the ground damp, you will have to water.

Admittedly not as often in cooler weather, but this is one chore that doesn't go away with the end of summer.

This is especially true of potted and container plants which usually dry out faster than ground beds.

There is still time to get winter veggies in the ground and even to seed winter growing annuals (including California wildflowers) for late winter and spring color

If you are planning on bringing in house plants that have summered outdoors, move them into shade first to adapt them to lower light levels. Moving them directly indoors from bright outdoor light can cause excessive leaf drop.

Also before you bring plants indoors for the winter, it is recommended you go over them carefully to check for bugs. Flushing the pots with a good dose of water can help chase out bugs hiding in the soil.

Another precaution to keep from bringing pests indoors can be setting the pots in a tray with bug bait for several days before bringing them in. Bugs are much harder to deal with once they get indoors than they are before they come inside.

While Fall planting is in full swing, many of the mass merchant retailers start selling off nursery stock at clearance prices making room for more profitable Holiday merchandise, so if you watch and are a little cautious about what you buy (after all, they will also be selling off leftover TENDER material too), you can find some good deals around this month.



Astilbe chinensis pumila is a lower growing, later blooming Astilbe that is more tolerant of sun and occasional dryness than most of the larger forms are. This comes in several colors now as new hybrids are created. I hope to have some come spring.

Look Ahead and Plan Now -

Look ahead and plan now for freezes later this fall/winter. Check frost cloth and see if you need more.

Plan out where to put sensitive containers on frosty nights. If you put C7 or C9 Light strings on frost sensitive plants, check them now and replace burned out bulbs, its much easier than after they are on the plants.

Hopefully we won't have like last year, unseasonably warmth late into fall and then a sudden hard freeze. This caught many plants unprepared for cold and plants that normally would have hardened up to cold and been fine, froze.



A picture taken at the Annual Sacramento Begonia Show and Sale at the beginning of September.

Help the kids at Sunburst and get a great bulb selection!!

One mail order source of a HUGE selection of bulbs I'd recommend is Brent and Becky's Bulbs. For those of you who want a mail order catalog, the address is:

Brent and Becky's Bulbs
7900 Daffodil Lane
Gloucester, VA 23061
Toll-free: (877) 661-2852

For those of you who want to visit online, you can not only get a great selection but can also help the kids at Sunburst Projects by going to:

www.bloominbucks.com

Choose Sunburst Projects from the list of charities and it will then take you to the regular Brent and Becky's Bulbs catalog to place your order. Sunburst will get a percentage (25%) of your order at no additional cost to you!

Many Great Plants Being Lost -

While almost everyone knows that many species of plants are being driven extinct in the wild, few realize that many great cultivars that have stood the test of time are also going extinct!

Why?

It's a consequence of the current commercial practices to aim for the "new" releases, even when those may not be the best for a particular area.

Many new plants are tested, but as an example one of the main growers only has one California test sight, and that is in coastal southern California.. not a very good test of its products for the Sacramento area.

As "new" and of course patented plants arrive on the market, many older, hardy growers that have been around for decades are fading out of production.

The emphasis on "trends" in gardening isn't helping either, since last seasons hot plant may be completely ignored this year if its fallen out of "favored" status.

Add in the fact that more and more commercial propagators are emphasising the new, patented varieties of such large breeders as Proven Winners, and the selection tends to narrow and be the same in every store.



This is a reason to continue to support smaller nurseries and growers that continue to carry plants that the large growers have dropped, but have proven themselves hardy for our area. California Native Erigeron



Coming into Kings Canyon.



Kings River in Canyon on Sept 23rd

Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks – Wonderful scenery, awesome trees, and a fraction of the crowds of Yosemite. We had a friend visiting from

Kansas City area and so went camping for 2 days in Yosemite where the campgrounds were full, and two days in Kings Canyon where there were only a few others in otherwise empty campgrounds. The road into the Canyon to Cedar Grove closes for the winter but the rest of the two parks are open.



Bob at Big Stump grove— Sequoia National Park. Sequoia (Giant Redwood) in Sequoia N.P. Check out person behind fence for size reference.