

Sacramento Garden Notes

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*Written & Published
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Scilla peruviana is a winter growing, spring flowering bulb for our area. It likes a sunny spot, and since is dormant in summer does not need much (but can tolerate) summer water. Mine are just beginning to show the first signs of growth where they get some water. The ones in drier areas aren't showing yet.

September/October Calendar:

Sept. 6th & 7th Begonia Show and Plant Sale- Sheppard Garden and Arts Center, McKinley Park in Sacramento. Hours for the public are Saturday 1- 5, Sunday 10 to 4. I will be donating some plants for their sale, including 2 Variegated Alocasia odorata and assorted tropicals.

Sept. 20th – 9am to 3 pm – 1689 Vallarta Circle, Sacramento – a one day front yard plant sale – a wide assortment of things I

have left, including Salvias, Agastache, Abutilon, Variegated Alocasia odorata, Calif. Native chocolate flower, Limonium, Guara, Verbena bonerensis, Sedums and hundreds of one to a few of a kind. I will also have a selection of 1 and two gallon perennials I had potted for various projects but found I couldn't dig that big a hole in the soil filled with gravel and rocks the city used in the streetscape. I will also be selling some stock plants I decided I don't have the room for (selling these at Cost. All plants left from this yard sale will be donated to the Perennial Plant Club sale below.

October 4th & 5th – Garden and Arts Center Fall Sale – Sheppard Garden & Arts Center, McKinley Park. 10 to 4 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: Sedum spectabilis “Purple Emperor”. The upright S. spectabilis types and their hybrids are sun loving, drought resistant and come into bloom in starting in mid to late August. The flat

flower heads are very attractive to butterflies and other pollinating insects. Below is the green foliated *S. spectabilis* 'Hot Stuff'. There are now dozens of hybrids with different foliage and flowers colors and even different heights.



Garden Notes:

Fall Planting: September is usually thought of as starting Fall but in our climate it a month for a lot of growth in the garden since the weather is still warm, if not hot, yet the days have shortened enough to give the plants a cooler break at night which means they aren't as heat stressed and many go into a second spurt of growth.

Even if a plant doesn't do much top growth in the fall, the root systems of hardy plants are actively growing not only in the fall but also through most of the winter.

This is why fall planting works so well here for hardy material. You can plant a plant now that will have all fall and winter to root in, meaning an explosion of growth in spring.

This allows you to save by planting smaller plants in the fall, rather than larger more expensive ones next spring.

In addition, since the plant will have a bigger root system in the spring, it will be more resistant to occasional lapses in watering that might occur, which could be a major concern if we have another dry winter and it results in curbs on watering next year.

Unfortunately, many retail nursery outlets don't stress fall planting because they want to clear out the space for higher profit Holiday merchandise.



Salvia leucantha 'Santa Barbara' is an all purple form of this fall blooming Salvia. The species has purple and white flowers. Often called "Mexican Sage" this Salvia is fairly drought resistant, though dryness slows growth and keeps the plant shorter. When happy, can easily reach 5 by 5 feet in just a couple of years.

Fall Color - Because many people think of this as fall, they don't expect a lot of color in the garden. This is a false assumption as a number of plants come into bloom in the fall, continuing to provide color well into November in many years.

Many types of Salvia such as *S. elegans* (Pineapple Sage) and *S. leucantha* (Mexican Sage) are fall bloomers in addition to such items as perennial sunflowers (*Helianthus*), Asters, Chrysanthemums, and a whole group of summer bloomers that will continue to bloom well into late fall.

Things to do now - This is also a good time to seed in those California natives and winter growers that grow through the winter and bloom in spring such as California poppy, Clarkia, Blue Spot, Lupines, and almost all other poppies.

By this time of year, many of us have fallen somewhat behind in keeping up with weeding, watering etc. Now is a good time to make an effort to clean up weeds BEFORE they seed for

next year and also to give you room for fall planting.

Also keeping things well watered encourages fall growth and bloom.

A feeding of the garden in early September will help encourage many perennials to give a fall spurt of growth and to rebloom. Starved or drought stressed plants tend to stop growing and will even go dormant early, plus starved plants have more trouble making it though the winter.

To see the effects drought can have causing early dormancy, you only have to take a drive up through the foothills were the dry year is already causing some plants to color and go dormant a good month or two early. I've even seen some trees in downtown reacting this way from lack of water.



Above - Oxalis 'Grand Duchess White' – the Grand Duchess group of Oxalis are large flowered WINTER growers. They are just emerging dormancy now and will grow all winter and bloom in late fall, erratically thru mid-winter, again late winter and spring before going dormant for summer. Since they are summer dormant, they can stand dry summer conditions, though will also stand watering. In parts of downtown, come people have them scattered thru their lawns for

winter color. They also come in pink and lavender.

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!



Watsonia coccineus 'Orange form' this South African bulb is the only Watsonia I've found that had rebloomed for me in a watered garden setting. All Watsonia are sun lover, winter growing and spring blooming, and can tolerate bone dry summers while dormant, like other South Africans such as Ixia,

Chasmanthe, Babinia, Sparxis, Freesia
some of the species Gladiolia etc.



above – *Helianthus angustifolia* – one of the fall blooming perennial Sunflowers. I have a few of these in 4 inch pots for the Sept 20th yard sale.



Above- Hellebores have a fall through spring growth cycles.. see below for tips on getting best results from them.

Against the "rules" – I was wondering around the garden and noticed the Hellebores are starting their fall growth of new leaves, which made me think of all the other winter growers and reminded me to give you a tip that goes against "the accepted wisdom".

Accepted wisdom says not to feed in late fall and winter, however for things with "off" growth cycles like Hellebores, you need to feed now for their fall growth and again in late winter for their spring growth. For items that grow all winter, such as cyclamen, winter bedding plants, Watsonia and most of the South Africans, California poppies and California native annuals an occasional feeding during winter will help them along.

Also, a top dressing of compost or worm castings now will help Hellebores and other winter growers.

Tables for Sale: I have several 6' by 30" plastic topped tables that I need to get rid of. The legs fold up to the bottom of the tables for storage.

These run about \$50 new, willing to sell for \$25. They do need a good scrubbing down with bleach since had plants on them. I have two types, one solid 6' long, the others fold in half making them easier to store or transport.

Watsonia 'Cherry Splash' – I have a number of bulbs of this cherry red Watsonia that will be available at the front yard sale. I will also have some Chasmanthe bulbs, and some potted Watsonia.