

UC Santa Cruz

News & Notes of the UCSC Farm & Garden

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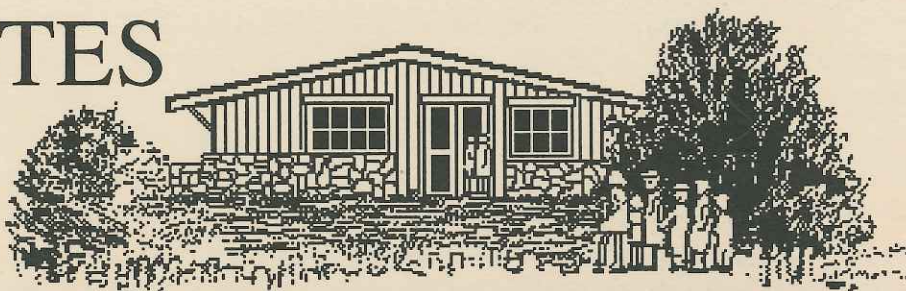
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NEWS & NOTES

*of the UCSC FARM
and GARDEN*



Issue 51

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Beth Benjamin & Mary Offermann, Editors

SEED SAVERS EXCHANGE PRESENTATION

Saturday, February 9, 10 AM - 12 Noon

Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm

The Seed Savers' Exchange (SSE) is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to saving old-time food crops from extinction. At 10:00 AM on Saturday, March 9, at the Louise Cain Gatehouse, the Friends of the UCSC Farm and Garden will be treated to a slide show highlighting the projects and accomplishments of this remarkable organization. Also included in the show will be a segment on hand pollination, and important technique in the preservation of threatened varieties.

The loss of genetic diversity that accompanies the disappearance of heirloom plant varieties is a problem that many of us deplore as we wonder what can be done about it. One course of action is the activities of the several thousand backyard gardeners belonging to SSE who are involved in searching the countryside for endangered vegetables, fruits and grains. Many SSE members are actively maintaining thousands of heirloom varieties, traditional Indian crops, garden varieties of Amish and Mennonites, and vegetables dropped from all catalogs, as well as outstanding foreign varieties.

Since its founding in 1975, SSE members have distributed over 400,000 samples of seed not available through catalogs and often on the verge of extinction. The organization is supported by membership dues, tax deductible donations, sales of project related publications and grants from private foundations.

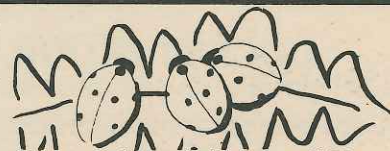


INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Saturday, April 13, 10 AM - 12 Noon

Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm

Lyn Garling and Sean Swezey will give an overview of Integrated Pest Management, describing the different control methods used within the system, and the pros and cons of this philosophy compared to conventional systems of pest management. They will give examples of the situations they have been meeting in their research for Agroecology, and answer questions about techniques that are applicable to our smaller gardens.



MEMBERS ONLY PLANT SALE AT THE GARDEN

Some Weekend Day in May, 10 AM - 12 Noon

Members who have paid their membership dues for the year will be invited to participate in our second annual Members Only Plant Sale, which will be held this year at the Garden. Don't miss this opportunity to purchase organically grown vegetable and flower seedlings and simultaneously to support the Farm and Garden. Orin Martin and Mark Sammons will be present to give horticultural tips. Last year there was a wide variety of beautiful perennial seedlings and slips in addition to vegetable seedlings. Your invitation will arrive with a list of the plants that will be available this year; plan your garden to include at least a few samples from this wonderful sale.

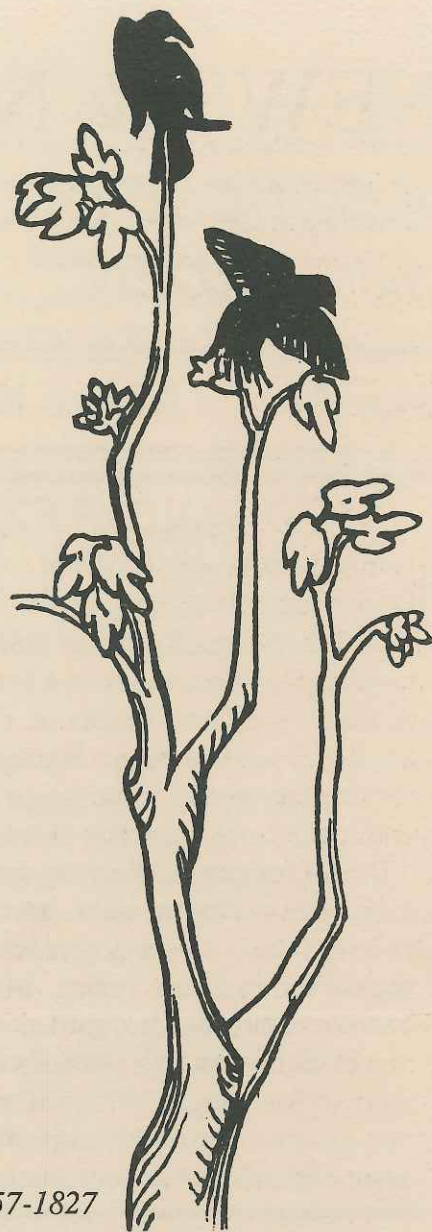


SPRING

Sound the Flute!
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and Night;
Nightingale
In the dale,
Lake in Sky,
Merrily,
Merrily, Merrily to welcome in the Year.

Little Boy
Full of joy;
Little Girl,
Sweet and small;
Cock does crow,
So do you;
Merry voice,
Infant noise,
Merrily, Merrily to welcome in the Year.

Little Lamb,
Here I am;
Come and lick
My white neck;
Let me pull
Your soft Wool;
Let me kiss
Your soft face:
Merrily, Merrily, we welcome in the Year. --William Blake, 1757-1827



DOCENT PROGRAM FLOURISHING: TRAINING AGAIN UNDERWAY

The delightful spring weather has encouraged a full contingent of new docent trainees. Ann Lindsay reports that eighteen interested and interesting people of mixed ages and backgrounds have begun the seven week Thursday afternoon series. This time Ann is asking for a greater commitment from the docents--six hours a month volunteer time in exchange for the course. During this year the program is supposed to become self-supporting, organized by volunteer coordinators, so help is needed with this work as well as leading tours.

The training focuses on the farm itself. Good information is given on the underlying principles promoted by the Agroecology program through education and research, so that docents have a good background for answering questions, but most classes are hands-on. Led by the staff both at the Farm and Upper Garden, there are sessions on propagation and greenhouse care, organic gardening techniques, basic cultivation techniques, and composting. Emphasis is placed on interpretive training: how to give a good tour that involves people, particularly tours with children, as at least three quarters of the tour requests come from school groups. In fact Ann said that if any Friends would like to attend the childrens' garden/Life Lab session, she would be happy to get their help with these school tours. Response for tours in general has been good; the docents from the first group are leading tours every Sunday at 2:00.

On March 14, the docent class will be a tour of fields and orchards, including the research fields. At 5:00 the trainee will meet the Friends' Board members for a potluck at the gatehouse. After dinner a slide show will be presented about the Agroecology research program. Any Friends are warmly invited to join the tour, the potluck, and/or the slide show. Just let Kima or Ann know if you are going to come: 459-3299.

AFTER THE KILLING FREEZE: WHAT NOW?

We have had years of drought, followed by a killing freeze. General advice has been to refrain from cutting off frost damage until spring. Now that the last frost date has passed, how do we best go about caring for injured plants? The best advice for citrus is not to prune at all. Studies following a killing freeze earlier this century showed that no pruning at all for sixteen months led to the best recovery and the highest yields on citrus trees. If you cut all the dead wood off you risk sunburn to the trunk. If you have already pruned, paint the trunk with white latex paint for protection. Don't let your trees dry out this summer, but don't overwater them either. Because there will be nowhere near the normal amount of green leaves to use the water, your trees will need less. The same goes for feeding; don't feed at all until you see green leaves sprouting, and then feed sparingly.

When it comes to succulents, another approach is needed. Decay organisms will move from the tissue killed by frost to living tissue. Pruning should be done shortly after damage occurs. If you have waited until now, be sure to cut down to a point below where decay has occurred. Your succulent should resprout somewhere below the cut, and you can always prune again later to remove unsightly stems.

We may not know which vines are still alive for some months. Patience is the key here; wait until you see green stuff to determine the best cutting spots. We have lost many of our more tropical plants; many bouganvillea may have to be replaced. Many passionflower vines may also need replacing. Not all will, however; a number of varieties can withstand colder weather. Check in your Sunset Guide to see the lowest temperature listed for the hardiness zone referred to under your particular variety. The same advice goes for any plant of questionable vitality this spring. Lots of plants, even if they do resprout, may be damaged beyond what you will enjoy in your garden. Now is the time to replace them. Aim for hardy plants; we may have more cold winters in the future. If you must plant tropical plants, plant them in protected spots. A frost blanket can help protect your plant if the weather dips a few degrees below its tolerance, but frost blankets don't help when the thermometer drops to 13! Don't forget, though, that many plants--such as Ornamental Sages--die back each winter in colder climates and then come right back up in the spring. Heavy mulches of leaves and/or straw over the crowns of these and other plants can help protect them from killing freezes. Keep attuned to the weather and the conditions in your garden.

There are some benefits to the cold snap; the freeze has enhanced the blooming of things that enjoy winter chill. I've never seen rosemary bloom in Santa Cruz as prolifically as it is this February. Lilacs should also be covered with blossoms this spring.

SUMMER GARDENING IN A DROUGHT YEAR

Usually my solace in troubled times is in nature--in things that are not human. My favorite t-shirt says, "When the world wearies and ceases to satisfy, there is always the garden." But this spring, as the drought continues, how can we be comforted by puttering among the flowers and vegetables if we are having to ration water?

First, choose varieties of plants that produce long harvests from a single plant. For example, sow chard rather than spinach. Not only does it take less water, but it yields many pickings from a single plant. Tomatoes, eggplants, and summer squash can handle minimum water and produce food over a long period.

Space plants well and mulch heavily. Sink gallon cans with the bottoms cut out into the ground beside the plants before they are planted. Fill them with water, and it will soak in slowly where the roots need it.

This will be the year to forego the Brassica family. Drought stress always brings aphids. Skip also the vegetables that get bitter from lack of water. Think of the specialties of the Mediterranean regions. Stress makes flavors stronger: good with herbs and tomatoes, not great for lettuce and cucumbers.

Decide which vegetable you use often. I will plant herbs like basil, chives, parsley, cilantro, and thyme, because I get great pleasure from harvesting them every time I cook. I will put them in containers this year and mix one of the new water-holding polymer gels into the soil mix to keep it from drying out so fast. Containers are easier to water with recycled water that can be caught while waiting for the shower to warm up.

Cosmos, sunflowers, zinnias, gaillardia, and tithonia are good hardy flowers to plant. They are not only bright and beautiful but good food sources for bees and butterflies. Drip tape or leaky pipe are useful water conserving systems; if watering with a regular hose, remember not to water in the hot part of the day.

I think we can have some garden sustenance this year if we keep our gardens small, concentrated, and make wise choices. Remember to keep areas that will be left uncultivated over the summer mulched thickly to deep soil as moist as possible. Horse manure, leaves, or other clippings will protect the soil organisms until the rains come again.

WHAT DO MEMBERS WANT?

If you've ever been on television or the radio, you know the strange sensation of speaking to unseen multitudes. There isn't much difference between that and sending out a quarterly newsletter to the Friends of the Farm and Garden. Your new editors would like to know what you particularly enjoy reading and what you would like to see added. Beginning with the next issue, we hope to have news columns from both the Agroecology Program and the Apprenticeship Program at the Farm and Garden. Would you like more gardening advice? Less? Letters to the Editors? Recipes? Reviews of past events? Please write to us and let us know who our audience is and what you want.

How Marigolds Came Yellow

Jealous girls these sometimes were,
While they liv'd, or lasted here:
Turn'd to flowers, still they be
Yellow, marked for jealousy.

--Robert Herrick



How Violets Came Blue

Love on a day (wise poets tell)
Some time in wrangling spent,
Whether the violets should excel,
Or she, in sweetest scent.

But Venus having lost the day,
Poor girls, she fell on you
And beat you so, (as some dare say)
Her blows did make you blue.

--Robert Herrick

Thank you to Wendy and Dave Summer and to Sara Eblen for helping with this News and Notes.

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