



# SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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## GREEN SHEET

## December 2004 PLANT FORUM NOTES

In addition to the plants discussed, the following plants, described (or listed) in the Society's *Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens*, were also shown:

*Arbutus unedo* 'Elfin King'

*Arbutus* 'Marina'

*Ceanothus arboreus*

*Ceanothus megacarpus*

*Chrysanthemum pacificum*

*Dahlia imperialis* (a particularly lovely pale lavender form)

*Hebe* 'Amy'

*Lophostemon confertus* 'Variegata'

*Ribes indecorum*

*Salvia brandegei*

*Salvia munzii*

Thank you to all who brought plants to the December 2004 meeting – it was a diverse showing of winter blooms. Everyone is encouraged to bring in plants to share with the group. Remember that you do get one free “exhibitor’s ticket” for the plant raffle if you bring in one or more plants for discussion at the forum table!

Note that all the *Ceanothus* shown at tonight’s meeting were brought in by Elizabeth Schwartz – most are blooming extremely early and highly out of season. The exception is *Ceanothus megacarpus*: it is in full bloom right now in the hills above Santa Barbara (and likely elsewhere!).

*Ceanothus cyaneus* 'YBN Blue' (Rhamnaceae). YBN Blue Ceanothus. Garden Origin: Yerba Buena Nursery, Woodside, California. This one is a personal favorite of mine. Plants are typically quite large – up to 12 feet (or more!) tall, and spreading wider. Brilliant indigo blue flowers are abundantly produced in long (often over 1 foot) branched clusters. Planted in full sun in a hot, summer dry part of your garden, this plant will be a showstopper when it (typically!) blooms in April. Deer will eat this one. The species, *C. cyaneus*, is quite rare – inhabiting a small area in the vicinity of Lakeside and Alpine in San Diego County. Plants of this species (including this cultivar) are usually among the last of the *Ceanothus* to bloom. They are also often very fast growing and short lived – but don’t worry about it; plan on replacing this fine shrub every 5 years or so and you won’t be disappointed. Pruning tip: Prune off old flower clusters as soon as possible as this will assure that your plant will develop a full, dense growth habit – and it will produce even more flower clusters in successive years. (Elizabeth Schwartz)

*Ceanothus* 'Dark Star' (Rhamnaceae). Dark Star Ceanothus. Garden Origin: Taylor Nursery, Aromas, California. This, along with the visually similar 'Julia Phelps', is one of the most popular of California’s *Ceanothus* riches. Cobalt blue buttons of flowers are beautifully displayed along rigidly arching branches and amongst nearly black tiny crinkled leaves. Floral bracts (sometimes showy immediately before the plant blooms) are often tinted red. As with most *Ceanothus*, plants prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Inland gardeners are often frustrated by the short life span (often 3 to 5 years), but then they never have to worry about the plant getting too big for a small front garden (near the coast, both of these cultivars may reach heights up to 10 feet tall and broad and often live much longer lives). Inland gardeners who want a more dependable (longer-lived) plant would be well advised to plant 'Concha', though its visual texture is coarser. (Elizabeth Schwartz)

*Ceanothus maritimus* (Rhamnaceae). Maritime Ceanothus. San Luis Obispo County, California. This species is highly useful as a ground cover planting or as a specimen plant in a rock garden or mixed border. Plants are remarkably adaptable, thriving in coastal and inland gardens (though those planted inland will typically benefit from some afternoon shade and will not



Photos by Steve Gerischer

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The following plants were also shown but are not described in the Society's *Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens*:

*Cuphea llavea*(?) 'Firefly'  
*Euphorbia pulcherrima* 'Carousel'  
*Salvia brandegei* × *Salvia munzii*  
*Salvia curtiflora*  
*Salvia fulgens*

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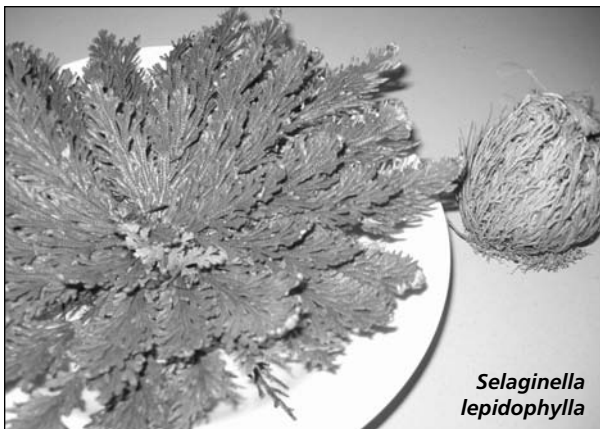
The identity of the following plants could not be completely ascertained:

*Citrus* – chimera – pink lemon  
(brought in by Joan Citron).

Unfortunately, I was unable to ascertain the identity of the showy large flowered daisy, as I didn't end up with a specimen to check further. I believe it may be a species of *Verbesina*, but can't be sure without a specimen to run through the keys and the person that brought it in didn't fill out a card with their name...

live as long as their coastal brethren). There are many selections, focusing on two traits: flower color and growth habit. The lowest selections are usually less than 12 inches; the tallest are over 24 inches. Spread varies from about 3 feet to 6+ feet. This species is from the *Cerastes* group (those with opposite, small, thick leathery leaves) that are typically more drought adapted than those from the *Ceanothus* group (alternate, larger, thin leaves with three main veins). (Elizabeth Schwartz)

*Salvia wagneriana* (Lamiaceae). Costa Rica north to the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Evergreen shrub or gigantic perennial. One of my memories of this species is seeing it growing through, about, and above a mature apple tree in coastal Central California. This is a large sage that we are fortunate to be able to grow and flower (further north, this species often freezes before it blooms). It is a very late bloomer, often just getting started in November and continuing through winter. The large showy floral bracts are particularly effective (think of *S. involucrata* on steroids – or excess fertilizer – and you'll have a close picture of what to expect). Flowers (and bracts & calyces) can vary alarmingly in color from plant to plant – from pure white, to brilliant pinks, roses, magentas, and reds – so it is always a good idea to know which clone you're getting! Plants do want regular watering and prefer fertile soils. Near the coast, they can be grown in full sun, but generally they are best grown in partial shade or amongst other large vigorous (can you say "thugs"? ) denizens of the garden. Plants that are grown without support of an adjacent structurally sound tree or shrub are either shorter or flop about (not a good thing if you live in a wind-prone area). To keep your plant under control, cut it back in late winter or early spring – older stems that have flowered may be cut nearly to the ground. The chicken in me doesn't let me cut the entire plant all the way to the ground as I do the even more indestructible *S. confertiflora* and *S. madrensis* – but that's just me. Needless to say, this is another hummingbird favorite! (Dick Kohlschreiber/South Coast Botanic Garden)



*Selaginella lepidophylla* (Selaginellaceae). Mexico. Resurrection Plant. Xeric fern ally. This odd plant used to be commonly encountered in gift shops, airports, and from other purveyors of the unusual. The dried brown plants are tightly wrapped into ball-like lumps the size of your fist. Place them in a dish of water and – voilà! – they unfurl into a flattened to slightly cupped filigree rosette of vivid moss green. It would be instructive to quote George Schenk from his book, *Moss Gardening*: "The plant dies when it is unnaturally awakened too often or for too long a time. Open-ground cultivation is suitable only in a desert. Elsewhere, grow this species as a pot plant, wintered dry and cold...and summered out in the sun and rain, but never watered except perhaps as a rare treat..." Schenk also notes that in the wild, the plant grows in deserts and naturally dries up in summer and fall. There doesn't seem to be any information on cold hardiness for this plant. Gary Hammer was selling these plants at our December meeting; I and undoubtedly others will be growing them and will hopefully report back our successes and failures keeping this plant alive over time. (Gary Hammer)

— Edited by Bart O'Brien (Can you tell that I wrote this one while on vacation? Happy Holidays!)

