SCHS June Meeting Recap

**JUNE MEETING RECAP**

The June meeting of the Southern California Horticulture Society was an overview of water harvesting from an experienced designer of rainwater capture systems, Marilee Kuhlmann. Marilee, who is an SCHS Board member, and the owner of Comfort Zones Garden Design, talked about what it takes to capture and use rainwater from simple passive designs, such as swales and directed flows from downspouts, to active designs, including storage tanks that can hold up to thousands of gallons.

What became clear was that for the more active collection designs, like storage tanks and cisterns, there is no real monetary gain from a water-savings standpoint - and in fact, the costs could be daunting for the average homeowner. The benefits of a large, intricate system that captures and stores rainwater for later use were more in the nature of a belief that if you can do it, you should do it. This was also a talk aimed at answering the basic questions of “How can I?”, “Why should I?” and “How much will it cost?”

Marilee discussed the practical aspects of the simplest passive designs and how they should be a part of any garden, and certainly any new garden. Our relationship with water, especially rainwater, is complex. The old ideas of getting falling rain off the property and into the gutters and storm-drains as quickly and efficiently as possible, should no longer apply in the rapidly-changing world of gardening and horticulture. So please, consider this question “How much will it cost?”

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It was fascinating to hear about the day-to-day workings of a catchment system, from pumping or gravity feed to how the tanks are cleaned. Gray-water was also discussed, though Marilee does not deal with or design these systems (the water cannot be stored and must be used directly from the source). The extended drought we are currently suffering through has all made us so much more aware of water, where it comes from, and how we use it - and Marilee’s talk underscored the importance of being conscious of the cold fact that we import, treat and clean our water to a high standard of potable use, and then spray it on our lawns and gardens.

Surely a different approach is needed and the changes can come from many directions - drought tolerant landscaping, learning how to use water properly, water-saving techniques, and a willingness to change our habits are just a start. We will in future need to look beyond the easier fixes - perhaps to treated sewage water and split systems serving the urban sprawl. Education will be at the heart of any changes we will be asked to consider as we face the future of water use in California. Talks like Marilee’s Water Harvesting in Dry Times will help us understand so much more.

We would like to thank Marilee Kuhlmann for her timely and insightful presentation. And let’s also thank the Programs Committee and all who helped set up the meetings, run the proceedings and stay to clean up after.

**HORTICULTURAL HAPPENINGS**

**POSITIVE OUTCOME OF SHARING**

As a direct result of members making suggestions and inquiries, the Board was able to plan and put together the June 27 “Secrets of Somis - Revisited” Bus Trip. Members had been asking for an encore ever since the original trip and this gave the Board a very focused goal based on members’ in-put. Please remember we are always available to listen.

**GARDEN EVENTS**

**LA CANADA/FLINTRIDGE 91011**
Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive, La Canada 91011
818.949.7980 descansogardens.org

**ARCADIA 91007**
Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia 91007
626.821.4623 arboretum.org

**PASADENA 91107**
Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena 91107
616.398.5420 ecnca.org

**SABINE STEINMETZ**
Sunday, 7/12, 9am. SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAIN CNPS (California Native Plant Society) plant walks are on 2nd Sunday of each month. cnps-sgm.org
Thursday, 7/23, 7pm. SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAIN CNPS meetings are the 4th Thursday of each month. cnps-sgm.org

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**“Sharing Secrets” and more . . .**

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**MOUNTAIN CNPS**

**MOUNTAIN CANADIAN NATIONAL PLANT SOCIETY**

Please contact location(s) to confirm listed events, and for a full schedule.

Events are free with admission unless otherwise indicated.

**ARCADIA**
Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia 91007
626.821.4623 arboretum.org

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