

In July, the SCHS welcomed Wendy Proud, California Sales Representative for Mountain States Wholesale Nursery, to speak about "Hot Plants for Hot Climates." With a degree in Ornamental Horticulture and over twenty-five years of experience in the retail and wholesale nursery business, she shared her passion for plants in general, and her excitement about the future of Southwestern landscaping in particular.

Wendy told us about Mountain States' niche as a grower and their focus on drought-tolerant plants from the Southwest and other arid regions. Their plant selections are also based on adaptability to soil, sun, alkalinity and wind conditions. Founded in 1969 by owner Ron Gass, Mountain States has two locations in Arizona. While some of the plants on their 550+ acres are greenhouse grown, the vast majority are field grown to help develop a natural habit, improve overall health and encourage genetic diversity. With many distributors in Southern California, and a focus on customer service, the nursery is also attempting to educate the public about changing landscape realities.

The on-going drought is driving California toward a landscaping evolution, both practically and aesthetically, according to Wendy. She emphasized that she is not advocating that Southern California landscaping should come to resemble Arizona in terms of design and/or plant material choices. Rather, she is promoting this as a time of exciting opportunities to develop a new look that will suit local communities in many individualized ways.

With this in mind, Wendy presented a slide show of plant selections she felt were attractive and well-suited to Southern California, including:

- *Acacia willardiana* is a 25'h x 10'w tree with peeling bark that looks nice when massed, in tight spaces between houses, or used as a substitute for white birch.



- *Caesalpinia cacalaco* 'Smoothie' is an evergreen, multi-trunked 20'h x 20'w hybrid tree patented by Mountain States, featuring smooth bark and yellow flowers.

- *Chilopsis linearis* 'Art's Seedless' is a deciduous multi-trunked 25'h x 25'w tree that blooms from April - October and does not produce pods.

- *Calliandra* x 'Sierra Starr' is a patented 3'-4' h & w selection that attracts hummingbirds. More compact than *C. californica*.

- *Eremophila hygrophana* 'Blue Bells' is a patented 2'-3'h & w plant useful as a smaller, look-alike alternative to *Leucophyllum frutescens*.



- *Russelia* x 'St. Elmo's Fire' has showier blooms and a larger habit (4'h x 6'w) than the species *R. equisitiformis*.

- *Muhlenbergia dubia* is an alternative option to *M. rigens* where a plant half the size is needed, but is otherwise identical to *M. rigens* in all horticultural aspects.

- *Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition' (aka "eyelash" grass) is a 2'-3'h & w selection that looks nice when massed.

- *Hesperaloe* 'Brake Lights' (dwarf with red flowers) & *Hesperaloe* 'Pink Parade' (with a 6'h flower stalk), are versatile plants, and attractive to hummingbirds.

- *Melampodium leucanthemum* is an excellent substitute for Santa Barbara Daisy with self-cleaning blooms appearing from February - November.

Other plants Wendy presented were: *Prosopis* x *Phoenix*, *Leucophyllum langmaniae* 'Lynn's Legacy', *Tecoma* 'Crimson Flare' and *T.* 'Solar Flare', *Muhlenbergia* 'Pink Flamingo', *Yucca pallida* and *Y. rupicola*, *Bulbine frutescens* 'Tiny Tangerine', *Eremophila glabra* 'Mingenew Gold' and *Mascagnia macroptera*. Everything she described can be found on the Mountain States website (www.mswn.com), and all share the traits of needing little water (infrequent but deep) and little maintenance.

In addition to showcasing many planting options, Wendy also answered questions and donated a choice selection of specimens for the well-received Plant Raffle which followed her presentation.

☞ Sabine Steinmetz

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SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES:

What veggies or herbs are you harvesting at home this season?



My biggest harvest right now is *Passiflora edulis* - passion fruit. I grew the vine from seed a few years ago and now it gives me about 200 fruits every July.

We have plenty of fresh basil and a few tomato plants that are doing well. I harvest lemon verbena for summery iced tea. And of course, like many gardeners I am faced by the challenge of too much zucchini.

- Lora Hall

Our peach tree is named 'August Pride', although it typically fruits for us in late June/early July - not once as late as August! True to form it has already expended itself for this year, but I was more vigilant than usual and was able to harvest a few dozen tasty treats for myself instead of simply feeding the squirrels.

Also in the recent past are fading memories of a few Santa Rosa plums, a handful of strawberries and the occasional serendipitously discovered blackberry.

And while it might partially be due to rose-tinted nostalgia, I'm fairly certain I was harvesting more ingredients for my grandmother's *pflaumenkuchen* recipe only a few short years ago. Yet as the drought persists, so does the optimism of the gardener, who at this time is eagerly looking forward to her pumpkin vine's potential yield in a few short months...

- Sabine Steinmetz

And from our most frequent contributor, also known as Anonymous:

I usually try to make a little space for some shishito peppers. I love them and they used to be really hard to find, up until Trader Joe's started carrying them last year. Sadly, this year my crop got overwhelmed by feral sunflowers that were just too gorgeous to remove. Choices!

Tomatoes (even though I can't eat them raw!). The winner this year for production is 'Super Fantastic' (awful name). Flavor winner-so I'm told, is 'Black Cherry'. Prettiest is 'Lucid Gem' - gold and purple blushed pink! Zucchini, yellow crook-neck squash, and walking-stick collards. My green beans were a washout this year. *Tagetes lucida* (Four Seasons Tarragon) for when I make chicken salad. And I got peaches this year! (Squirrels didn't get them all.) 'Eva's Pride' and 'Mid-Pride' ... mmmm.