

NOTE: If you would like to obtain a downloadable PDF of the entire March presentation, go to the “Monthly Meetings / Past Meetings” tab on our website at: www.socalhort.org. ☞

In March we were treated to a program presented by native food expert, educator and enthusiast, Antonio Sanchez, who not only gave us a history of California native edible plants, but also brought along recipes and tasty samples. He has worked with California native plants and foods for over a decade, and was one of the lead organizers for the 2015 California Native Food Symposium in Claremont. He also co-founded Nopalito Native Plant Nursery in Ventura.



Photo by: Laura Maher

Sanchez began with an introduction to common food crops historically found throughout Mesoamerica and the Californias, some of which have been lost to us, but many of which are viable options for growing today. Among the reasons he cited to consider growing native foods are to providing a sustainable and available supply, cultural revitalization, commercial development of a regional resource (food security) and water conservation. He strongly advocated against foraging in the wild and suggested growing them

at home or a local community garden instead. Sanchez presented a list of native edibles that can easily be grown, and various foods that can be derived from them. His top growing picks included:

- *Claytonia perfoliata* - Miner’s lettuce (fresh greens, soup, pesto)
- *Salvia clevelandii* and hybrids (seasoning, pesto, beer, ice cream, baked treats, infused in oils)
- *Allium unifolium* - one-leaf onion (use like garlic, shallots, or chives)
- *Vitis* ‘Roger’s Red’ and other grapes
- *Ribes aureum* - golden currant (jams, eaten fresh, cordial, medicinal)

Other plants not typically used in food cultivation but that should be considered for the near future were mentioned, such as various native berries, pinyon nuts, purslane, and the Slim Jim bean.

In addition to “growing our own”, Sanchez also recommended introducing these foods through community and demonstration gardens, local farmer’s markets, and even selling food products derived from these plants online.

To wrap up the evening, Sanchez took audience questions and invited attendees to sample some of the foods he brought with him, all of which were mentioned in the lecture. He left us intellectually and gastronomically satisfied, with much “food for thought” to take home to our own kitchen gardens.

☞ Sabine Steinmetz

On Sunday, March 25, 2018, the SCHS hosted a special Coffee in the Garden at “Baker’s Acres,” a specialty cactus and succulent nursery in Tarzana. Donna Marie Baker, the wife of late founder and plantsman Bill Baker, graciously opened the gates of her one-of-a-kind nursery and garden to us for a few hours. We were able to explore the grounds and enjoy refreshments provided by SCHS board members.

We heard about the history of the nursery in a short presentation given by two of the Bakers’ longtime friends: Royce Wood, botanical illustrator and landscape designer, as well as Tim Thomas, botanist and co-author of *Southern California*

Mountains Wildflowers. They spoke of Bill Baker’s many plant introductions, including: *Pachyphytum* ‘Bill Baker’, numerous *Dyckias*, such as ‘Brittlestar’, ‘California’ and ‘Tarzan’, plus other plants like *Aloe* ‘Hercules.’



Photo by: Sabine Steinmetz

After the presentation, Wood led a garden walk and pointed out many unusual specimens (not all succulents) growing on the grounds, including: *Xanthorrhoea preissii*, *Strelitzia juncea*, *Erythrina flabelliformis*, *Brachychiton rupestris*, and the Buddha’s Hand citron. Following the tour, guests browsed for plants, botanical prints and books that were offered for sale.

Many thanks again to our hosts, and to the SCHS board for arranging this memorable Coffee in the Garden event.

☞ Sabine Steinmetz

Visit our Facebook page to see more photos of this garden!

SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES

What critters are you welcoming (or discouraging) in your garden as we head into spring? And how?



My critter issue is squirrels. I can’t stop them from visiting, but I force them to share the nectarines and plums with me by protecting the larger fruit clusters with drawstring net bags. I purchase two or three sizes online. Unfortunately, squirrels can gnaw holes through the fabric when motivated, and both the fruit and bags must be monitored occasionally, but it slows them down a lot and allows me to pick a decent harvest. I intend to experiment with other barrier materials this season or next.

Yoav Paskowitz

Spring brings the flush of fresh new growth in our gardens. And sometimes the heartbreak of finding that fresh new growth pulled out or chewed up!

I’m always happy to host the White-Crowned Sparrows over the winter, and am sad to see them go in the spring. But I am glad my pea shoots will have a chance to recover.

Anonymous

Thanks for sharing!