What’s better than spending time outdoors in your own little paradise, watching butterflies, playing mud patties, and nurturing plants that you end up eating? This is heaven for gardeners, and in July, the SCHS is pleased to be able to have board member and Master Gardener Yvonne Savio present a very timely program on growing your own veggies. During this time of quarantine, many of us are spending more time at home, so it’s no surprise that there has also been an increased interest in home edibles gardening. We are certain that Savio is just the person to tell us how to manage our own vegetable patch!

Savio grew up on a 3/4-acre hillside lot in Pasadena where her family grew fruits, vegetables and flowers year-round using lots of manure and compost and “making do” before it was called recycling or repurposing. She knows what “harvested at the perfect moment of ripeness” means and enjoys enabling others to enjoy the benefits of “growing your own.” For 36 years, she worked for the University of California, conferring with statewide vegetable, fruit, and ornamentals specialists; then she revitalized the Los Angeles County Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Savio taught 1150 Master Gardeners who in turn served 1.3 million county residents. Since she retired in 2015, she continues to inspire home gardeners through presentations and by providing monthly tips as well as blogging on her www.GardeningInLA.net website. She also invites everyone to participate by submitting gardening events and job opportunities that are open to the public.

During this presentation, Savio will discuss the distinctions between warm-season and cool-season edibles, techniques of seeding, transplanting, preparing the soil, fertilizing, irrigating, mulching, and the payoff - harvesting. We are also planning on having a Q & A session after her talk, so come prepared to pick Savio’s brain as you prepare to plant and pick your very own veggies at home this year.

Since this will be another webinar program, please invite friends to tune in as well, so we can all learn to “grow our own” the right way!
Last month the SCHS presented its second webinar, this time on the subject of agaves. While originally scheduled for June 11, the presentation by Jeremy Spath of Water’s Path landscaping and Hidden Agave nursery was cancelled last minute due to unforeseen circumstances. However, SCHS’s excellent program committee was able to book another agave specialist to give a talk on June 25.

In his presentation “Agaves for the Landscape”, nursery owner and author Greg Starr covered the basics about agaves, broken down into fascinating “tidbits” and then shared what he considers to be some of the best species for landscape use in the Southwestern United States. Starr Nursery is a mail order business established in July of 1995 and specializes in cactus and succulents, with a particular emphasis on agaves. Born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, Starr grew to love flora and fauna of the desert, and eventually received a degree in horticulture from the University of Arizona in 1979. His first trip to Baja California was in 1981 with noted Sonoran Desert botanists Dr. Ray Turner and Dr. Tony Burgess, and from there he was hooked on agaves. He has made many return trips to see these plants in habitat, and many of his slide show images showed them in the wild as well as in landscapes.

Starr began his presentation with an overview of this New World genus, comprised of 250-300 species, by describing their basic differences and showing pictorial examples of each. For instance, agaves typically have one of two types of inflorescences – spicate and panicle - and a third, intermediate type (racemose) usually indicative of hybrids. He also described the two basic vegetative forms (solitary and offsetting) and provided multiple photos of each. Further, Starr explained that while agaves usually grow in the full sun in their native habitat, they are not actually desert plants because they are mostly found above the desert proper and at higher elevations. He then presented examples of agave species grouped into five size categories ranging from approx. 12”-60+”, and provided suggestions for landscape applications of numerous species. He also spoke about general planting and care guidelines for agaves, as well as the individual culture for many of his examples.

Following the presentation, the SCHS again offered a live Q & A session for attendees with Starr providing useful tips about the growing, propagating and general care of agaves. (All of the Q & A can be found at the end of the archived YouTube video. See link at end of article.) Also, SCHS’s social media maven and Zoom host, Erin Castillo, “spun” our virtual prize wheel, awarding the winner a copy of Starr’s 2012 book Agaves: Living Sculptures for Landscapes. His first book, Cool Plants for Hot Gardens, is currently out of print, but he is working on revising it by next year. He was also a coauthor for the Field Guide to the Cacti and Other Succulents of Arizona which will be heading into its third edition sometime this year.

For more information about Starr, agaves, and his nursery, please visit: www.starr-nursery.com.

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SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

During July, we suggest you:

• Continue monitoring your irrigation, especially for containers, annuals and trees
• Harvest your edibles to keep them producing throughout the summer months
• Protect your fruits and veggies from critters by covering plants with mesh bird-netting and consider picking self-ripening fruits before their peak, to store indoors
• Slow down on the big chores - enjoy harvesting, maybe do a little dead-heading - but relax, stay hydrated and try to take it easy in the garden!
• It’s never too early to start planning for your fall planting...

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Analyzing SCHS Webinar Data & More

The SCHS had good attendance at both our May and June webinars, as well as gaining almost a dozen new members (see list on page 1). We are analyzing data to ascertain to what extent our growing online presence is influencing virtual attendees who may be considering membership. Additionally, feedback from members (and others) helps us when evaluating what speakers, programs and other events to schedule in the future.

Regardless, our increased presence online has translated into more engagement with the people visiting our various platforms, and that in itself is a positive thing. We cannot operate in a vacuum if we wish to grow and meet the needs of future generations of Southern California gardeners.

Please support us in this effort to increase our outreach by encouraging friends to check out past events on our YouTube channel (link below). And please, let us hear from you too!

Thank you for helping us grow!

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View SCHS on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYYBy88Q361IQVnV69qgmGg
Due to the restrictions on social engagement during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a number of our local botanic and public gardens, as well as venues providing resources and education for gardeners, continue to remain closed, or are only offering limited activities.

NOTE: Organizations below that have reopened as of press time are marked 'R'. Those with only an online presence, or holding virtual meetings, are marked 'N'.

Please support your local favorites, but check with individual venues for up-to-date hours, webinars, activities and entry requirements if you are planning a visit.

Many of your favorite nurseries have also reopened and would appreciate your support!

Please visit www.socalhort.org for updates on information about venues and events.
Until we are able to meet again in person, monthly programs will continue to be scheduled as online webinars.

**July 9**  
WEBINAR  
Yvonne Savio, UC Master Gardener & author of the Gardening in LA blog, will talk about edible gardening

**August 13**  
Program details being confirmed - TBA soon - Check online at www.socalhort.org

You can find other SCHS news, program announcements, horticultural trivia and more, by visiting:  
www.facebook.com/pg/socalhort  
www.instagram.com/socalhort

**GARDEN QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

“...this emotion of wonder filled me for each vegetable as it was gathered every year.”  
- Alice B. Toklas

**UPCOMING SCHS PROGRAMS**

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**Newsletter Editor:** Sabine Steinmetz  
Contributors to this issue: Greg Starr

**Next deadline:** Monday, July 13 (for August newsletter)  
Please contribute an article or information of interest.

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**NEWSLETTER** July 2020