HARDY GERANIUMS FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

We are pleased to welcome Robin Parer as our speaker for February. She is an Australian-born horticulturist who lectures frequently throughout the United States and has been featured in magazines such as Garden Design, Horticulture, Martha Stewart Living and Sunset among many others. She recently finished writing The Plant Lover’s Guide to Hardy Geraniums, published by Timber Press in 2016, and will be bringing copies for sale.

Robin Parer has owned and operated Geraniaceae Nursery in Marin County, California for the past 34 years, where she has collected and propagated over 500 geranium species, selected color forms and hybrids. She is a regular participant in the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, and has won Best of Show several times for her Marketplace Exhibit. Robin has also received an Annual Award for Outstanding and Meritorious Contributions to Horticulture in California from The California Horticultural Society.

Specimen plants from her collection of Geraniaceae are displayed in a one-acre demonstration garden along with perennial flowering shrubs and garden sculpture by local artists. Pelargoniums live in a 10,000 sq. ft. greenhouse which is full to overflowing. The garden and nursery are open by appointment.

Hardy geraniums are found on all continents except Antarctica, but not all are suited to the hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters of Southern California. Generally speaking, the shores and mountains of the eastern Mediterranean are likely to provide plants that are best adapted to hot summer gardens. However, most geraniums are wild flowers, and even some that grow in more temperate summers seem to be able to adapt.

Robin will show a number of suitable examples, talk about the latest selections and discuss how they might be used in a planting scheme. We look forward to learning more about this remarkable genus of plants that fills the role of the supporting cast in a garden, providing attractive leaves and bursts of flowers, particularly in the spring. Plants will be available for purchase after the presentation.

Joan DeFato
b. April 23, 1935
d. January 20, 2017

Joan DeFato, a beloved and longtime SCHS member, passed away January 20, 2017, surrounded by family, some of whom had come out from the East Coast to be by her side. She will be remembered fondly by the many people she crossed paths with when she served as head librarian for the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden from 1973 to 2004, and as secretary of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation from the 1990s until her retirement in 2004. Many of us at the SCHS will remember her as an enthusiastic member who actively volunteered in many society functions for decades, and for years mailed out our monthly newsletter and provided sparkling cider for our holiday party. We will miss you, Joan.

Susan Eubank, current Arboretum Librarian at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, remembered “having an immediate partnership” with Joan when they first met in the 1990s, as they bonded over shared interests in library science, all things botanical and their shared love of the plant life in the Los Angeles area. Susan remarked that Joan’s strength as a reference librarian was extraordinary, as she was often the first person to have an answer no matter how obscure the question. On a personal note, she recalled Joan as a welcoming and friendly presence when Susan first joined the SCHS, as well as a gracious colleague and mentor in later years when Susan took over Joan’s former position at the Arboretum Library. She said that Joan was always willing to make her wealth of experience and knowledge generously available to all, without imposing it on anyone. Susan will be writing a longer memorial tribute to Joan for the Arboretum which will be posted on their website at www.arboretum.org.
Our first meeting of 2017 was both entertaining and informative, as four Southern California landscape professionals shared their impressions of the 2016 Chelsea Flower Show in London. The program was moderated by Marilee Kuhlmann of the Urban Water Group and the G3 Garden Group, who introduced the panel of speakers: Yvonne Savio, Robert Lili, Shawn Maestretti, and Catherine Pannell Waters. Each panelist shared their personal slides and spoke about favorite designs and what they felt were the biggest “take away” ideas they brought home from the show.

Marilee gave a brief overview of the show, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), which takes place annually during the third week of May on 11 acres of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, London. It takes two weeks to set up the event which lasts for 6 days and features 17-21 gardens (each of which may cost $500,000 to build and 18-24 months to plan), plus 30 or so small gardens and about 500 exhibitors.

The first presenter was Yvonne Savio, whose experience at the show was from the perspective of a novice attendee. The event was on her retirement “bucket list” and she confessed to crying from the emotional response she had to the overwhelming scope and scale of the show. Yvonne therefore chose to focus on “My Favorite Take-Home Treasures,” including sculptures, crazy costumes and clothing, and specialty plants, such as a blooming Meconopsis. Other displays she enjoyed were the dyeing plants, such as a blooming crazy costumes and clothing, and specialty Home Treasures, including sculptures, and features 17-21 gardens (each of which may cost $500,000 to build and 18-24 months to plan), plus 30 or so small gardens and about 500 exhibitors.

Best in Show 2016, designed by Andy Sturgeon
Photo credit: www.telegraph.co.uk

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Marilee spoke about favorite designs and what she felt were the biggest “take away” ideas they brought home from the show. Marilee’s favorite take-aways from the show were the many inspirations and fresh ideas she is eager to share. Shawn Maestretti, landscape designer and member of the ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects), shared that his lasting impression was that the show presented “An Emphasis on Garden Culture” which he feels is not as strong in the United States as it is in Europe. He gave a brief history of the show, which began in 1862 as the Royal Horticultural Flower Show and was a way for the public to follow the gardening trends of the royals. Its popularity soon caused it to evolve and feature designs of individuals, eventually bringing it to its present renown with the participation of respected international designers. Shawn then shared pictures of some of his inspirations from the 2015 and 2016 shows, which were a combination of practical concepts that could be applied in any garden, as well as others that were more expressive and not as feasible for practical implementation. His favorites ranged from Dan Pearson’s Best in Show Naturalistic design from 2015 to the whimsical driftwood garden art sculptures displayed last year, all of which led him to the decision to refer to himself as a “Garden Architect” in an effort to promote a greater awareness of local gardening culture.

Next to speak was Francesca Corra, who concluded that her Chelsea experience tied in with the concept of creating a “Sense of Place” which she described as making one’s physical surroundings worth caring about and setting them apart from other spaces. This in turn led to related themes she pulled from the show, which were wellness and healing, and artistic elements. These concepts were evident in her selection of slides and included sculptural pieces, soothing fountains, well-designed stonework, a garden for meditative “mindful living,” and one of her personal favorites: Chris Beardshaw’s garden featuring a serene sculpture of a sleeping face. Francesca’s take-aways from the show were the many inspirations and fresh ideas she is eager to implement locally in future garden designs.

In summation, Marilee shared images from Chelsea shows she attended dating back to 2010. Some of the designers that were meaningful to her were: Luciano Giubbilei, Joe Swift, Jo Thompson, Paul Martin, James Basson, Cleve West and Andy Sturgeon. In particular, she remarked that Tom Stuart-Smith’s “cloud garden” was an example of a design that would translate well into a California palette. Marilee also spoke about the scope of the show, with television coverage beginning on the Sunday prior to the show’s Monday opening which is reserved for the press and the queen. RHS members are then admitted Tuesday and Wednesday, with the remainder of the public being allowed in Thursday through Saturday. An estimated 24,000 people attend daily.

The panel then answered audience questions, ranging from judging criteria to financing of individual gardens to how a design is actually executed once accepted into by the RHS for inclusion in the show. The entire evening was an interesting look at this annual event with facts and features for all horticultural tastes, and a great start to the new year of SCHS programs.

- Sabine Steinmetz

**FEBRUARY HORT HAPPENINGS**

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

**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF L.A.**

900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles 90007
213.763.3466 nhm.org

Sundays, 2/26, 3/5 & 3/12, 12noon-4:30 pm. Grow Your Own Vegetables: 3-Class Edible Gardening Workshop Series. Learn how to grow edibles; create good soil, what, how & when to plant; composting & watering; managing pests; increasing yield & variety. 3-class series: $100 members, $120 non-members. Visit nhm.org/workshops for info. about available discounts and registration.

**SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN**

26300 Crenshaw, PV Peninsula 90274 310.544.1948 southcoastbotanicgarden.org

Saturday, 2/18, 2-3:30pm. Beneficial Bugs In The Garden with Lili Singer. This illustrated lecture highlights helpful bugs you are likely to find in home landscapes, with tips on how to attract and conserve them. Lili is the Director of Special Projects and Adult Education at the Theodore Payne Foundation for Native Plants, as well as an award-winning horticulturist, educator and garden writer.

Continued on Page 3

**SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES**

Are you capturing or diverting any water from recent rains? In what ways?

Yes. Robert and I have identified and planned four separate areas for gravel reservoirs in crucial areas in our “formal” back and front yard that replace or will replace lawn areas. Three are completed. A fourth, our most ambitious, is in the works for this year. The results have all been positive and did not have enough water to go around and found ourselves in the dire straits of sacrificing heritage plants even though we were no longer watering lawns. I am sure all of you were in the same circumstances.

- Catherine Pannell Waters

Thank you for sharing this with our membership, Catherine! You can read a more detailed description of Catherine and Robert’s water-conservation efforts in the “Sharing Secrets” on-line column. - Ed.
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EL DORADO NATURE CENTER
7550 E. Spring St., Long Beach 90815
626.570-1745

Saturday, 2/4, 2-4pm. Foreground, Mid-Ground and Background: Vertical Space and the Well-Designed Garden.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ARBORETUM
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia 91007
626.821.4623
arboretum.org

Catalina Native Plant Society (CNPSC)
818.949.7980
descansogardens.org

Saturday, 2/11, 2-3pm. Camellia & Tea Festival. Celebrate the camellia! Enjoy tea tasting, camellia crafts for kids, a guided walk of the Descanso Gardens Camellia Collection, plus a dance performance and interactive workshop.

CALIFORNIA RARE FRUIT GROWERS
Foothill Chapter (L.A. Arboretum)
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia 91007
foothillcrfg.org

Saturday, 2/4, 9:30am. Annual Scion Exchange. Members share scion wood from apples, stone fruits, grapes, figs, pomegranates and more. Green cuttings from drapion fruit, cherimoya, white sapote, etc. will be available. Bring fresh scionwood from healthy deciduous fruit trees, fruit you’re currently harvesting, and homemade treats to share. DO NOT BRING CITRUS CUTTINGS OR SOONOWD OF NEWER PATENTED VARIETIES! For more info, visit website or email: Dave Szymkowski, david.szymkowski@gmail.com.

SUNDAY, 2/12, 1-3pm, outdoors in Garden for All Seasons. What’s Happening In Gardening - Hahamonga Cooperative Nursery with Nursery Manager Nick Hummingbird. Learn about this co-op nursery which provides low-cost native plants for restoration, conservation and park uses. $25 members, $35 non-members (incl. admission). Call Education Dept. at 626.821.4623 to register, or pay at class.

Thursday, 2/9, 9:30am-12noon. What’s Happening In Gardening - Gardens of Downtown L.A. with Rebecca Tufenkian. Join a virtual tour of beautiful gardens and green spaces amidst the cement jungle of downtown L.A. $25 per class (incl. admission). Call Education Dept. at 626.821.4623 to register, or pay at class.

Saturday, 2/11, 10am-12:30pm. New California Landscape with Arboretum Horticultural Supervisor Jill Morganelli. Includes garden construction, installation tips for irrigation, water-savvy plants from Australia, So. Africa, California natives, and our specialty gardens. Classes held outdoors in all weather. $25 members, $35 non-members (incl. admission). Call Education Dept. at 626.821.4623 to register, or pay at class.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY (CNPS)
San Gabriel Mtns Chapter / Eaton Canyon Center
1750 No. Altadena Dr., Pasadena 91107
818-398-5420
www.lacnps.org

Saturday, 2/18, 9am–10:30am. Medicinal & Edible Plants of Southern California and the Southwest. Herbalist William Broen discusses elderberry, white sage, yerba santa, manzanita and live oak, among other plant species. $35 members, $40 non-members.

HUNTINGTON BOTANICAL GARDENS
1151 Oxford Road, San Marino 91108
626.405.2100
huntington.org

Saturday, 2/11, 9:00am-12noon. Propagating California Native Communities, planting techniques, establishment, irrigation, pruning and maintenance. Prerequisite to 3-Part California Native Plant Garden Design course. $45TPF members, $55 non-members.

Saturday, 2/11, 9:00am-12noon. Propagating California Native Plants with Propagation Manager Jordan Isken. Learn basics of vegetative propagation. Start cuttings or divisions, and leave with a flat of start! Class limited to 10. $50 members, $60 non-members.

Saturday, 2/11, 2-3pm. Seed Workshop for Kids (ages 6-10) with Seed Program Manager Genevieve Arnold. Hands-on session on what seeds are and how they grow. Kids will leave with two 4-inch pots of sown seed and a packet of TPF Seeds. $10 TPF member child with 1 adult; $15 non-member child with 1 adult.

Friday, 2/17, 1:30-2:30pm. Native Plant Maintenance Basics with Steve Singer. A quick overview of maintenance for the California native garden, held outdoors. Wear comfortable shoes, and bring your hat and water bottle. $15 members, $20 non-members.

Saturday, 2/18, 10am-12:30pm. What’s Happening In Gardening - Water Walk with Rich Atwater and Rachel Young. A guided walk focusing on water resources and conservation efforts, the big picture of water in the L.A. area, water wise practices at Descanso, and conservation efforts for your own garden.

Sunday, 2/12, 1-3pm. Sowing, Seeding & Planting. Learn planting techniques for a sustainable garden space and how they can affect physical and emotional qualities of an area, and may help us shape satisfying spaces that emulate natural landscapes. $10 members, $15 non-members.

FEBRUARY HORTICULTURAL HAPPENINGS
Meetings regularly held at Friendship Auditorium, 3201 Riverside Drive, Los Angeles CA 90027, unless otherwise noted.

February 9 - Robin Parer, owner of Geraniaceae Nursery and author of *The Plant Lover’s Guide to Hardy Geraniums*

March 9 - Barbara Eisenstein, author of *Wild Suburbia: Learning to Garden with Native Plants*

April 13 - Scott Kleinrock, speaking on the new California Garden at the Huntington Botanical Gardens

**GARDEN QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

“She loves the bare, the withered tree, she walks the sodden pasture lane.”

- Robert Frost

**UPCOMING SCHS PROGRAMS**

- **February 9** - Robin Parer, owner of Geraniaceae Nursery and author of *The Plant Lover’s Guide to Hardy Geraniums*
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**Contributors to this issue:** Susan Eubank, Yvonne Savio

**Next deadline:** Friday, February 10 (for March newsletter)

Please contribute an article or information of interest.