



# Garden Notes

"Creating edible and ornamental gardens"

[www.claremontgardenclub.org](http://www.claremontgardenclub.org)

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December 2017

## Welcome to the SC Garden Club newsletter!

🐞 Do send us info and questions about gardening!

## Please join us for our Winter Potluck!

Laughter, garden talk, and good food! Wednesday, December 13, from 6:30 pm til whenever. RSVP [info@claremontgardenclub.org](mailto:info@claremontgardenclub.org) for the address.



### Indoor Gardening

Houseplants add oxygen, clean the air, humidify the atmosphere, and look great! Here are a few thoughts from the November meeting:

- If a plant wilts (and the soil is dry), water it and wait a week to allow time for it to recover
- If soil has shrunk away from the sides, gently squish the pot so water doesn't run right through
- Cover the soil with pebbles to reduce dust if air particulates are a problem
- Tap water (but not softened water) is OK for most plants but if you see tip burn, use distilled water
- Use water at room temperature; cold water can damage roots
- Handle a well-watered pot and then water when the pot feels light
- Roots need air: Use a potting soil that is one-fifth pumice or perlite
- Use 'gorilla hair' to mulch surface and retard water loss
- Group plants and stand them on rocks in trays with water below pots so it will evaporate and increase local humidity
- If a plant starts to lose bottom leaves or look "stretched", it may need more light—move it to a sunnier spot one day a week (or permanently)



**Insect Decline** (photo of white-lined sphinx moth caterpillar on native willow herb from John Anderson)

Recent studies in Germany have recorded as much as a 75% reduction in flying insects in natural areas. Loss of insects creates a domino effect affecting plants that depend on them and the other animals that eat them. We can help by providing insect-friendly habitat and reducing pesticide use. You can see a summary with a link to the original article here:

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/10/germany-s-insects-are-disappearing>

## Ornamental of the Month

*Strelitzia reginae*



Bird of Paradise, one of our most impressive garden plants, is the official flower of Los Angeles. The thick, large-bladed, evergreen leaves grow 4-6 ft long, arranged in a fan. Clumps form by rhizomes. The stiff orange and blue flowers appear fall through spring. They are pollinated by sunbirds in their native South Africa. Here they do not set seed. Best locally with light afternoon shade, regular water, damaged below 24°.

## Edible of the Month

*Brassica oleracea*



Cabbage is one of the best cool-season vegetables. There are green, white, purple, smooth, wrinkled, tight, loose, round, pointed varieties. Plant seeds or seedlings in early fall to harvest in spring. Biennial. Full sun, regular water and fertilizer. Good cooked or raw. Some recipes at:

<http://www.delish.com/cooking/g1237/cabbage-recipes/?slide=14>

**Survey:** You can still enter the drawing for the Armstrong gift card by completing our survey by December 31. The form can be found at <https://goo.gl/forms/xTpnY30KEnWPIQIL2>

**True, False, or In-between?** (adapted from June 2017 *Garden Gate*)

- **Misting houseplants reduces water loss from transpiration:** not unless you do an awful lot of misting, although it keeps the leaves cleaner and discourages spider mites. Better to set plants on rocks in trays as above.
- **Coffee grounds acidify the soil:** only a little and they break down quickly. They do add some nitrogen and are good in the compost pile.
- **A few drops of dish soap in water makes a good insect spray:** not unless it is an animal fat or vegetable oil soap without additives as these can remove the natural protective waxy coatings on leaves.
- **Mulch encourages termites:** they won't come in the bags but the ones already in your garden may travel through deep mulch. Keep it away from your house and wooden structures, and use cedar or redwood.

**Favorite Quote** (courtesy of Sharron Neyer)

*"They know, they just know where to grow, how to dupe you, and how to camouflage themselves among the perfectly respectable plants, they just know, and therefore, I've concluded weeds must have brains".* Dianne Benson

**Seen at the Huntington:** tall cacti and succulents bordered by boxwood hedge—great contrast! And a swathe of prostrate cactus which would make a great, low barrier! (*Stenocereus eruca*, "creeping devil")



### Upcoming events and more

**Dec 13: Garden Club Potluck!** – 6:30 pm. Let us know you will be coming and we will send you the address. RSVP to [info@claremontgardenclub.org](mailto:info@claremontgardenclub.org)

**Jan 10: Garden Club:** 6:30-8:30pm, talk at 7pm; Napier Center, 660 Avery Rd, Sherry Best will talk about "Keeping Chickens in the Garden"

**Smart Gardening Workshops:** 9:30-11 am, free. For dates and locations, see [http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/wk\\_schds.cfm](http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/sg/wk_schds.cfm)

**Chino Basin Water District:** classes on waterwise landscaping, irrigation; mulch giveaways: <http://www.cbwcd.org/150/Workshop-Descriptions>

**Armstrong classes:** <http://www.armstronggarden.com/pages/classes>

**Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden:** [www.rsabg.org/upcoming-events](http://www.rsabg.org/upcoming-events)

**Huntington Library:** Free talks, plant sales [www.huntington.org/](http://www.huntington.org/)

### Did you know?

**Botanical Latin:** "Strelitzia" is named for Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, who was from the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz; "reginae" means "of the queen"

**Plant miscellanea:** An "umbel" is a type of inflorescence in which a group of flowers are all attached to the top of the flowering stalk. In chives, the individual flower stems are so short that it looks like a ball on a stick.

### Things to do in December

#### General

- ✓ Move frost-tender container plants under shelter if frost threatens
- ✓ Well-watered plants withstand cold weather better
- ✓ Make wreaths from grape prunings or succulent cuttings

#### Pest/disease management

- ✓ Protect cymbidiums from snails
- ✓ Use dormant oil spray on fruit trees after leaf drop
- ✓ Don't water in-ground succulents

#### Edibles

- ✓ Prune deciduous fruit trees once leaves drop
- ✓ Prune grapes
- ✓ Grow herbs indoors; plant out in spring
- ✓ Plant artichokes, beets, cole crops, carrots, celery, lettuce, peas, potatoes, radishes, chard, turnips

#### Ornamentals

- ✓ Stake cymbidium bloom spikes
- ✓ Choose sasanqua camellias to buy
- ✓ Harden off roses—no fertilizer or pruning and water sparingly
- ✓ Plant bulbs
- ✓ Cold weather can postpone bloom in cool-season annuals
- ✓ Prune natives (except ceanothus)
- ✓ Prune wisteria

**Please send photos and info about plants you've grown, gardens to visit, gardening lore, questions.** Sue Schenk, editor

The Metropolitan Water District is not currently offering rebates for turf removal. <http://socalwatersmart.com/index.php/>

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