



February 2022

Newsletter

Fecund fecundity from the fertile foothills

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Read the newsletter online:

<http://www.altadenacommunitygarden.com/newsletter.html>

[Visit our members discussion group on Facebook](#)

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Upcoming Events

- Executive Board meeting Sat. March 5, 2022, 10:00 am on the Garden Deck.
- General Membership Meeting, April 2nd at 10 am on the Garden Deck. Seeds will be available.
- The Farmer's Market hours: from 4pm-7pm Wednesdays

News

Executive Board Meeting

Sat. March 5, 2022, 10:00 a.m. Garden Deck. Must wear facial covering and practice social distancing.

Covid 19 Measures

The Garden members will continue to comply with the current Covid 19 pandemic safety guideline recommendations by the Los Angeles County Department of Health and the Los Angeles County Department of Parks & Recreation. Proof of vaccination may soon be required for Garden members to participate in Garden activities and to work in their plot.

Garden Membership Dues Increase

The Garden Membership Dues have remained consistently at \$70 for many years. Unfortunately, a number of added expenses have required the board to raise the dues, the new cost for full plot members now being \$100 and \$50 for associate members and handicapped plots. This is most regrettable and those who find this increase inflicts serious hardship are encouraged to speak with the Garden officials about making special arrangements.

Dumpster dumping

The dumpster will be emptied now twice a week to contend with increased waste demand. This is one of a number of issues necessitating a rise in membership dues.

Scout Troop 4601 bimonthly weeding and watering

– **Ayesha Lindsey Randall**

Our Girl Scout Troop 4601 members have resumed their bimonthly weeding and watering. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 9am to 10am and sometimes longer. If you need some weeding done in your pathway, please contact Ayesha at esha_bell@yahoo.com. (This is a picture of the girls, minus 9)



Ayesha Lindsey Randall and Girl Scout Troop 4601

Greystone Gardening

– **Jessica Yarger**

Dear Garden Community Members,

Los Angeles County UC Master Gardener George Pessin, in collaboration with Greystone Mansion, has put together a series of short, informative videos that cover an array of gardening topics. I have included a list of links and descriptions below. Perhaps, you will find just the information you are looking for in one of them (or all of them)!

Greystone Gardening with George

[Episode 1 – Getting Started](#)

Choosing a location, seeds, or seedlings, make a sketch.

[Episode 2 – What to Grow In](#)

Containers, raised beds, or directly in the ground? If you have the available space do all three.

[Episode 3 – What to Grow and When to Grow it](#)

In mild winter areas, we have two main growing seasons, the fall/winter and the spring/summer. We grow cool-weather crops in the fall and warm-weather crops in the spring. Please click here to view the [vegetable family chart](#) that I reference in the video.

[Episode 4 – Essential Tools](#)

What are the essential tools of gardening that you need to get started? Probably a lot less than you think.

[Episode 5 – Plant Nutrition & How to Amend a Bed](#)

To improve the structure of the soil as well as to add back nutrients we amend our beds every season by adding compost or manure. During the season we use organic fertilizers to feed our plants the essential nutrients they need in order to thrive.

[Episode 6 – Tomato Planting from Seed to Transplant](#)

From starting tomato seeds in trays to potting up, to transplanting, follow along as we grow our tomato plants.



Master Gardener George Pessin

[Episode 7 – How to Grow Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes](#)

Sweet potatoes are a warm-weather crop with a long growing season. Potatoes are a cool-weather crop, though here in southern California we can plant potatoes practically all year. See our video on how to get started.

[Episode 8 – Composting and Worm Composting](#)

Composting involves the decomposition of organic matter through environmental methods that speed up the process. Vermicomposting is the decomposition of organic matter by worms.

[Episode 9 – Irrigation](#)

Like humans, plants need water to survive. See best practices of irrigation for your garden and for your containers including different watering methods.

[Episode 10 – Garden Activities for Kids – Homemade Gifts](#)

Six different garden activities that parents and children can do together at home.

[Episode 11 – DIY Potting Mix](#)

Making your own potting soil can save you money and give you a superior product. You can use this mix for containers large and small as well as for raised beds.

[Episode 12 – Pollination and Pollinators](#)

Pollinators are the insects and bees that facilitate the sexual reproduction of plants. Learn about the male and female parts of a flower through The Honeybee Poem.

[Episode 13 – Harvesting](#)

Enjoying the fruits of our labor is what it's all about. Pick early, pick often!

[Episode 14 – Mulch and Mulching](#)

Mulch is indispensable. It provides nutrients, looks nice, and cuts down on watering.

[Episode 15 – Integrated Pest Management](#)

How we deal with pests and disease in our garden.

Season 2

[Starting the Winter Garden](#)

In southern California, the season for cool weather crops is approximately October through April.

[Saving Seeds and Sexual Propagation](#)

Saving seeds from our summer fruits for next season.

[Winter Garden Maintenance](#)

We discuss fertilizing, thinning, pest control, blanching, and harvesting.



Master Gardener Class Musings

– Sandy Chang

Silvera must have glimpsed evidence of lacking in our plot – be it the overrun nutgrass, the larvae infested cruciferous greens so chewed through that they resembled ragged dishtowels or the deformed ears of corn with missing kernels reminiscent of old men's missing teeth. So he sent me a note to attend the master gardener class.

I arrived early in the morning to find everyone enthusiastic and already halfway through the day's coursework. The class was held under a densely hooded flowering trellis with a built-in concrete BBQ grill as makeshift podium. Squawky green parrots zipped low and angrily across the sky protesting the interruption to their Saturday peace.

The group was passionately discussing insects and in the middle of passing around large mason jars with various species inside. Instead of cringe and recoil, the insects were met with affectionate oohs, aahs and photo-ops. Someone fancied how cool it would be if one could purchase praying mantises while others suggested finding insects with a magnifying glass, talking to them and treasuring their poop, because, much like honeydew, insects' "honeydoo" can attract ants of beneficial varieties. Much hype was made of the "pretty" slippery silvery trails that some insects leave behind.

During a short break, an organizer went around the group with signup sheets for compost and worm bins – about which attendees swarmed with no less enthusiasm than shoppers at a special on QVC.

Participants took turns presenting interesting topics such as crop rotation and solarization with Roundup – the pesticide currently considered public enemy number one, and arousing much resentment – closely followed by bird nettings. Gardeners were encouraged to detach themselves emotionally from no-longer-producing summer plants and to use the month of October to clear their plots in preparation for the next season, but were warned against starting winter crops prematurely. There was collective joy and exaltation in hearing SoCal's status as one of the world's only three Mediterranean climates and one of twenty-five worldwide bio-diversity hotspots. Much talk focused on safeguarding the local microcosm by keeping out a designated dirty dozen foreign plants that outcompete with native plants. The gardeners were reminded in growing native plants that : "The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap!"

Attendees never tired of the long sessions and when the class concluded, chard and sorrel seedlings were distributed like party favors. Some brought dragon fruit cuttings to share while others handed out seed journals, for who would have expected there to be such things as seed keeper stationery out there in the gardening universe.

If caterpillars, manure, fungi and the likes are of interests to you, or if you'd like to dive deeper into the fascinating world of gardening, or just experience a gathering of true garden aficionados, please consider signing up for a master gardener's class with gardener Patricia (Trish) Hansen at dgflightnurse@hotmail.com.



Performances in the Garden

Altadena, despite its diminutive size, is home to a surprising number of prominent Los Angeles area musicians who perform with local regional ensembles such as the Pasadena Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, LA Chamber Orchestra, LA Opera, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra etc. Mt Lowe Chamber Players (MLCP) is a consortium of musicians dedicated to giving concerts to the foothill community in which they reside. While their title honors Altadena's cultural history with its reference to the Mt Lowe Railroad, MLCP strives to enhance and enrich Altadena's current artistic climate.



Covid 19 has been hard on everyone but has had particularly adverse effects upon producers and performers of live presentations and concerts. MLCP provided remarkable concerts at the Altadena Library before the epidemic and has plans to continue with more free concerts at the Altadena Main Library this spring.

Upcoming Performances

Altadena Main Library (600 E Mariposa St, Altadena, CA)

Sunday, March 27, 2022 at 3:00 pm – brass quintet, Cathy Ryan and Chris Price (trumpets), Karen Klages (horn), Daniel Lawlor (trombone), P. Blake Cooper (tuba)

Sunday, May 1, 2022 at 3:00 pm – woodwind quintet Larry Kaplan (flute), Jim Foschia (clarinet), Michele Forrest (oboe), Phoebe Ray (bassoon), John Mason (horn)

Altadena Community Church (943 E Altadena Dr, Altadena CA)

Sunday, April 3, 2022 at 3:00 pm – Trio for violin, clarinet and piano, Irina Voloshina (violin), Michele Zukovsky (clarinet), Antoinette Perry (piano)

Sunday, May 15, 2022 at 3:00 pm – String quartet and oboe, Agnes Gottschewski and Irina Voloshina (violins), Dmitri Bovaird (viola), Maggie Edmondson (cello), and Sarah Beck (oboe)

Free admission and parking.

Because their concerts are free, they rely on donations to support the cost of musicians. All donors are acknowledged in the programs.

MLCP had a booth at the Altadena Arts Festival on October 23, 2021 in collaboration with other Altadena arts organizations and there they encountered members of Altadena Community Garden and discussed possible collaboration with concerts to be offered at the Garden when conditions permit. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to make solid plans.

[The Mt Lowe Chamber Players web site](#) provides additional information on their organization.





The Online Garden

A [private Facebook discussion group](#) continues to provide online space for garden members to interact, share and rant with each other, instead of, or in addition to, talking over the fence.

Claudia Zhao has created a [Gardens Instagram resource](#). Suggestions and contributions are most welcome.

The official [Altadena Community Garden website](#), is being thoroughly updated by our new webmaster, Joe Nagy, who is delighted to receive contributions of news, prose, verse, screeds, diatribes, artwork and other media appropriate for inclusion therein. Much thanks to former webmaster, René Amy, for all his web work service over the years.



Our LFL



Our LFL Nook, Photo: Sean MacGillivray

A column centering on the Altadena Community Garden's Little Free Library

Did you know that the word "serendipity" comes from a book titled *The Three Princes of Serendip*? This Persian fairy tale inspired the English word which was first known to be used in 1754, according to the [Merriam-Webster online dictionary](#).

The dictionary defines serendipity as "luck which takes the form of finding valuable or pleasant things that are not looked for." We all know the feeling when it happens. Maybe you're busily looking for weeds to pull from your garden plot and uncover a lovely squash you completely forgot about. Or maybe you were headed to the tool shed for a good shovel and came across some corn seeds being offered for free at the community table. That's the spirit of the Little Free Library -- serendipity may smile your way the next time you pay it a visit!

Speaking of libraries, be sure to follow the Altadena Library's calendar of events for upcoming gardening workshops. Kirsten Guy, a Pasadena-based master gardener, will be leading two separate events. The first is [February 26th](#) at the Bob Lucas Branch about water-wise plants, and the second is [March 5th](#) for how to prep a variety of gardens (via Zoom). Another local master gardener, Brienna McWade, will lead a workshop about how to improve fall and winter garden production on [March 26th](#) at the Bob Lucas Branch.

Libraries are all about information and sharing it with people in mind. So here's a information searching tip: Check out [Ecosia](#) - the web search engine that plants trees! That's right, this Certified B Corporation is not-for-profit and uses advertisement revenue to fund reforestation projects in struggling communities. As of writing this, Ecosia funded projects have planted over 143 million trees across the globe. As a Librarian myself, I utilize different web search engines all the time. Ecosia's results are just as good as Google or Bing. So give Ecosia a try!

Happy reading and gardening!

Jared Burton
Plot #44A



New Members and their Plots:

– **Mary McGilvray**

From Marina Kochan, associate in plot #11A:

It's been a sheer joy for me to join the ACG in January 2022, in the role of Bernetta Driver's associate (plot 11-A). My background is in theology, visual arts, and film. I taught in the college setting a variety of subjects, and now I find true solace and healing (literally and metaphorically) in organic gardening. Thank you for making me feel welcomed. Marina (Mari) Kochan.

From Loretta Williams, associate of the Maust family in plot #32:

I am a 20+ year resident of Altadena and a life-long gardener starting with a backyard garden where I grew up on Long Island, NY. I have engaged in community gardens off and on for years starting with the Victory Gardens in Boston. My day job is as a public media journalist, editing and reporting for podcasts and public radio.

From Marianne Veach and Nathan Duer, associates of Yuki and John Paik in plot #03:

We are Marianne, Nathan, and June. We are new associates sharing Plot 03 with Yuki, John, Kaia, and Maile Paik. We just moved to Pasadena from South Pas where we were very involved in the community garden. We are excited to start somewhere new. Nathan is an RN at City of Hope, Marianne works part time for a global public health firm and



spends the rest of her time hanging out with June. June is looking forward to starting kindergarten in the fall where she plans on studying to become an astronaut. We like to dig around in the dirt and occasionally keep something alive long enough to harvest and eat.

Greg Berger, associate in plot #40A:

Greg grew up in Boston and spent 15 years in Washington, DC before making the mid-pandemic move to LA a year ago. He lives in northwest Altadena with his partner Sarah and son Norman (4 years old), who have already helped him 'dig in'. This will be Greg's first foray into community gardens and he may be more enthusiastic than knowledgeable, so don't be shy about pointing him the right direction. Please stop by plot 40A to say hi, offer tips, or talk health care policy.



Desultory Droppings

Compost for the cranium

Rat extirpation in the Garden – experiments and conclusions in non-toxic rat eradication

– Denis Titchenell

I was asked by our Garden president to explore feasible rat deterrent bait that could be deployed in the Garden but which would not harm predators (whom we have avidly been trying to attract, foster and cajole with owl nest boxes and owl-enticing ambiance for several years).

A number of Internet blogs and vlogs discuss quite an array of rodent deterrents and eradication devices including some rat-lethal baits that purport to be entirely nontoxic to predators. This seemed to deserve some experimentation. Though presumably benign to predators, these methods certainly do not provide the rats with comfortable euthanasia, as death by constipation or excessive eructation and flatulence is presumably highly unpleasant.

These fell into two categories, baits containing plaster of Paris, and those containing bicarbonate of soda, the former causing visceral ossification, and the latter, an untenable build up of carbon dioxide which, according to reports, rats are unable to expel, causing them to rupture. It can probably be safely assumed that predators capable of swallowing prey whole and then comfortably handling teeth, fur, feathers, bones and beak (and hooves?) would be able to regurgitate a bit of plaster as well. One can also probably conclude with confidence that the chemical reaction between baking soda and stomach acid will have concluded leaving only a relatively pH neutral residue.



The Garden already has a number of highly efficient rat traps which have served very effectively. They do however require setting and a good deal of maintenance. Various rodenticide baits, commonly using anticoagulant toxins are available in hardware and garden centers but we

have tried to avoid these in order not to harm predators. Their use has been shown to be a major factor in decreasing predator populations. Not to be found for sale as far as I could tell, plaster and baking soda baits are easy to mix and very inexpensive. I mixed and deployed both where I new rats to be present.

Note that this experiment with predator-friendly rat killers is not conclusive, as an apparent dearth of rats is not proof of anything. Still, I am confident that it has worked and it hasn't been necessary to repeat the process.

Recipe for constipation bait:

1. Equal parts flour and plaster of Paris
2. Add a package strongly fragrant powdered soup mix.
3. Mix and deploy in a disposable container – tacked or tied down where rats are known to frequent.
4. Check back to see if bait has been disturbed.

Recipe for Baking Soda Bait:

1. Equal parts flour and Baking Soda.
2. Add a package of strongly scented soup mix
3. Mix and moisten slightly so that the powder may be formed into pellets or balls
4. Deploy in a disposable container, fastened down.
5. Check for signs.



Let's give these a try in the Garden and possibly make a pre-mixed batch available.

Zoo Poo

Zoo Poo continues to be available in the Garden fertilizer bin in arbitrary quantities. It comprises a number of ingredients, scatological and otherwise, possibly including dik dik doo doo, oryx ordure, flamingo feces, emu excrement, eland effluvium, dugong doodle, markhor merde, camel crap, sheep scheiss, toucan turds, penguin poo, mandrill manure, dromedary droppings, duiker doodle, gerenuk guano, cob coprolite, flea frass, kangaroo kak, elephant excreta and saiga stool. Initial testing leads one to conclude that it is not devoid of noxious weed seeds, but may, given time and further composting, serve well as a source of highly diverse, not to say exotic, garden nutrients.

Overcoming Attachment

Why send me a bloated great MS Word file
Or a PDF picture with format and style
To convey a few lines of text easily said
Or an address or date I can keep in my head?

An email's text content is all that I need,
No attachments that need a vast program to read
Which could contain viruses, trojans or worse
When the content is just a place, time or some verse!



Notifications and reminders

From the President

Expert Gardening Consultation Offer from Jessica Yarger, UC Cooperative Extension

Dear Gardening Community Member,

Do you have a garden related question? Having trouble identifying a certain pest or want to get some information about how to start a vegetable garden?

Master Gardeners are available to answer all your garden related questions, including tree care, pest management, and soil health.

You can call the Master Gardener Hotline at (626) 586-1988 or send an email to mglosangeleshelpline@ucdavis.edu.

Regards,

Jessica Yarger
UC Master Gardener Program Assistant
University of California Cooperative Extension
Los Angeles County
700 West Main Street
Alhambra, CA 91801

Gardening Issues:

Now that we have a large supply of wood chips please put wood chips in your walkways.

Wheelbarrows, tools and other items that belong to the Garden must be returned to their respective shed before you leave the Garden. It is a violation of the by-laws to leave items overnight in your plot that belong to the Garden.

Please pay immediate attention to your irrigation system for any leaks or needed repairs. Inform Silvera of any leaky water spigot in your plot. We must all do our part to conserve the use of water.

Please note that the seeing eye/service dogs are the only animals allowed in the Garden.



Call for Newsletter Submissions

Have you done anything interesting lately that you would like to share with garden members in the next newsletter? Please let ideas propagate in your imagination and share the harvest with us. Artwork is most welcome. As the ACG Newsletter will be in digital form, multiple media may be included as links. Please submit creative thoughts or material to altadenacnewsletter@abacus-es.com