

December 2009

Sacramento Garden Notes

Written and Published by

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Salvia regal shrub in bloom November 20th this year. This sun loving shrubby salvia is drought resistant and has orangey-red blooms in late summer and fall. It is a woody shrub that drops its leaves in the winter. A good hummingbird plant for fall.

December Garden Notes:

Many think of December as the start of the winter season and think of spring as far off, which may be true up in the mountains or in other parts of the country, but is far from true here in the valley.

In our valley climate, with hard freezes a rarity and even frost problematical in some areas, one of the biggest factors isn't temperature as much as day length for many hardy plants.

Due to this factor, the 21st of December (give or take a day or two depending on the year) is

a major turning point with it being Winter solstice (or the shortest day of the year).

After this point the days start getting longer by a few minutes each day, which is why so many early religions celebrated winter solstice as a holiday marking the return of the sun.

Many hardy plants react to this seemingly small change in day length by starting new root growth (which helps explain why fall and winter planted plants have such big root systems by spring, they have much longer to grow one), some plants start sap flowing up to make buds start swelling (which is why maples bleed badly if pruned in late winter/early spring), and plants such as Flowering Quince, Witch Hazel, Daphne, and several others will start showing flower buds by early January many years here in the valley.

Gardeners are affected by this in many ways, some of which are:

Rose pruning begins in mid December and runs through Valentine's Day, though the earlier you get it done, the better since roses begin to swell growth buds and grow very early. If you wait till early February you may very well be cutting off a lot of new growth along with the old.

To help those who are new at growing roses, I am going to demonstrate how to prune my roses in the front yard (Hybrids) on Sat/Sun Dec. 12th & 13th at 1 pm (Unless raining!).

There are also pruning clinics in January at several of the local nurseries such as the various Capital Nursery locations.

Speaking of Classes, I will be holding a couple this winter including one on plant propagation for home growers and one on gardening in the area for beginners (meaning those who are new to the area, or new to gardening, since many of the gardening rules for our area are SO different than elsewhere. I will schedule them AFTER I know the schedule for my surgery and will send out a separate notice on them.

Although many of you are busy with holiday planning, and most nurseries don't have a great

selection at this time due to concentrating on the holidays, it is still a great time to plant hardy material.

Some special notes for this time of year: Although thought of as the start of pruning time, some items should **NOT** be pruned at this time of year, since that would cut off the flower buds for spring. Included in this group are Azalea, Rhododendron, Pieris, Hydrangea, Flowering Quince, Flowering forms of Cherry, Peach etc, deciduous Magnolias, Dogwood, Flowering Chestnut, Forsythia, Witch Hazel and to some degree, Wisteria (this last will stand some pruning but not excessive hard pruning).

Get materials for protecting tender plants from frost together in one spot now - it is much easier than running around in the dark when a frost warning is issued.

If you or a friend have a fireplace, wood ashes spread across the garden during the winter are a good source of potassium and phosphorus plus trace elements. This is one reason that many plants grow so well after a fire, the ashes are rich in nutrients.



Returning this spring, Echinacea 'Tomato Soup' from Terra Nova Nurseries. This new Echinacea is a tomato red color. Also coming this spring is Echinacea 'Pink Poodle' shown in the right hand column.



Above: NEW Heuchera 'Electra'
Save 15% on Spring Purchases by buying Gift Certificates NOW!

If you buy yourself or a friend a gift certificate for the spring plant sales before Dec 30th, I will add an extra 15% to the amount of the certificate.

As examples: if you send \$50, I will send you a GC for \$57.50, send a hundred dollars and I'll make your certificate for \$115.

You can order a certificate for any amount of \$25 or more. Send your check to: Benefit Plant Sales, 1689 Vallarta Circle, Sacramento CA 95834.

Orders for this special must be postmarked by Dec. 30, 2009 and the certificates are valid for any of the 2010 Plant Sales.

Money from Gift Certificate sales will go towards acquiring some of the newer plants for spring sales that I probably couldn't otherwise afford.





Tradescantia 'Sunshine Charm' is a new release for 2010. This easy to grow plant will grow in sun or shade, though in shade the gold color may fade to lime green.

PLANT SALES AT THE GIFTED GARDENER FOR SPRING 2010.

February 27th /28th

March 13th & 14th

March 27th & 28th

April 10th & 11th

April 24th & 25th

May 8th & 9th

May 22nd & 23rd

June 5th & 6th

June 19th & 20th

All of the above sales will be in the COVERED parking area on 18th St, behind the store at 18th & J Streets.

RAIN OR SHINE!!

Hours will be 10 AM to 4 PM (NEW HOURS!!)

Based on how the spring sales go with both sales and volunteers, I will then decide on if I will be having others and their scheduling.



Many of the Sedums start putting up growth buds at the base of the stems, even as they die back for the year. This is normal and not something to worry about. They are very freeze hardy.



Anthyrium 'Burgundy Lace' - it has been several years since I've had this dark leaved form of Japanese Painted Fern available, but look for it again this spring!

Miscellaneous Notes –

If you run across fall bulbs on clearance, you can still plant them (they may flower late) but make sure bulbs are neither dried up or soft and mushy.

Bare root shrubs etc should arrive in most nurseries just after Christmas or the New Year. The best selection and quality is just after they arrive usually.

I will have a number of FRESH bare root perennials arriving for the February Plant Sale, along with Peony Roots, selected Bulbs and a wide selection of new perennials.



For those who were disappointed last spring when I ran out, I have some more pots of this small, perennial tulip species Tulip clausiana 'Lady Jane'. These species aren't as large as the hybrids, but are true perennials here and multiply when given a well drained spot. Picture taken at the Old City Cemetery, Hamilton Square, where it has prospered for several years.

I will also have 2 other varieties of species tulips available, one being a yellow and red form of the above.

Do you enjoy Garden Notes?

If so, a reminder that producing Garden Notes takes a lot of time, and several **EXPENSIVE** security programs to keep your email info safe from hackers.

Therefore, I am asking you to show your support by making a small donation to defray these costs.

Donations can be sent to: Garden Notes, 1689 Vallarta Circle, Sacramento CA 95834.

OR, you can help by buying a Gift Certificate as mentioned earlier in the newsletter and save yourself some money on your 2010 purchases at the same time!

This is especially helpful at this time of year when expenses for next year keep coming, but there is no income coming in.

Thanks! Bob Hamm

Personal and Others Updates:

Well, first off, the cancer screening, while showing cell changes, showed nothing needing treatment at this time. I go back in 6 months to check again.

I see the orthopedic surgeon on Dec 9th to see about scheduling the hip replacement.. The plant sales will go on using volunteers, even if I'm not able to be at some of them. Volunteers are needed not just to load and unload, but to spend time between the sales here at the house, labeling, pricing, potting and cleaning plants.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO ATTENDED THE HAUNTED HOUSE!! Donations this year were UP, with Sunburst making just over \$4,000 from the event! Thank you all!

The torn ligament in my arm from the last sale is still sore, its going to take a LONG time healing according to the doctor.

As a reminder, you can make an appointment to come consult with me and calling my cell if your in the area to see if I'm available is fine!

**WISHING YOU ALL A
HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON
AND A HEALTHY AND
PROSPEROUS 2010!!**

BOB



Above - Some of the starters I'm growing for spring.