

January 2010

Sacramento Garden Notes

Written and Published by

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For those who missed out on Echinacea 'Tiki Torch' last year, I will have more available this spring.

Garden Notes:

January is a month for a number of garden chores and a few warnings:

- a) Pruning of roses and many shrubs and trees, however check the notes on what NOT to prune in the last issue (Dec 07) so you don't cut off the blooms of early bloomers. There are a number of free pruning classes this month, check the Home & Garden calendar section of the Saturday Sacramento Bee or with your local nursery.
- b) Bareroot and Dormant plant material is coming into local nurseries this month and it is a good time to get many items into the ground and save a bit on them over potted plants later. HOWEVER some warnings are in order.. bareroot material should not

- c) be dried out or sprouting into early growth.. a major problem with packaged material in many box store retailers. Get in and get your material EARLY for best selection and quality.
- d) Please note that the bareroot that will be at both the February and March sales is FRESH for each sale, unlike at many nurseries, I get in FRESH material for each sale. I will also have large gladiolia bulbs coming in
- e) Certain summer bulbs are received early in nurseries but HATE chill, never mind cold.. so if your getting the following either plant indoors, in a greenhouse or hold off till the weather is warmer: Caladiums (need WARMTH or will just rot), colored tropical Callas (not quite as sensitive but want warmth) and Dahlias which are often hardy here, but if you put new tubers out too early you risk them rotting before they sprout.
- f) If planning on moving plants around, or digging and dividing perennials, early in the season is better as it allows them to establish better before our hot, dry summer hits.



Brunnera 'Jack Frost' is a good colorful foliage plant for filtered shade or shade, with bright blue flowers resembling forget-me-not in spring.

January Pruning –

Besides just Roses, many other items are pruned now, including deciduous fruit trees (such as apple, pear, peach, plum, etc) and other fruiting plants such as grapes, raspberry and blackberry. Flowering shrubs such as Buddleia (except *B. asiatica*) can be trimmed now; as can summer and fall bloomers, Clematis, ornamental and shade trees (except those noted below). Please note that Grapes and most Maples bleed sap badly if pruned to late, so prune those *NOW*.

Perennials that benefit from a good pruning back each winter/spring to control sprawl include hybrid Penstemon, Perovskia and large Salvias. Remember however, to wait on frost tender items.

Early spring bloomers such as Azalea, Japonica, Camellias, Lilac, flowering Quince, Forsythia, deciduous Magnolia, most species Roses, Dogwood, Pieris, Rhododendron, and the flowering forms of fruit trees (flowering peach, pear, cherry etc.. grown for flowers not fruit) have their buds already formed, so hard pruning will decrease or eliminate blooming this season. For these plants the rule is “Prune immediately after blooming”.



Rudbeckia 'Rolph Fiedler' is a new variety I carried for the first time last season. It did very well for me, with a long bloom season but I'd like YOUR comments on how yours did! Thanks.



The above is new root growth (the white roots) on a potted ROSE on DEC 25th of last year... It shows just how early roots start growing on many plants here, even when they look totally dormant or dead on top of the ground.

This is the reason that early planting works so well with hardy plants - it lets them establish a root system before top growth starts and the summer hot weather hits. This means better survival and growth!!

Volunteers:

I want to thank all the volunteers from last season, and hope you'll be back. However I know that changing situations with work, family and health mean some of you won't be available this season.. so I'm calling for some NEW volunteers.

Volunteers are needed at the sales at Gifted Gardener to help unload before the sale and load the truck at closing and to bag plants at checkout.

Here at the house I can use volunteers to help pot, sort, label and price plants (its an ongoing need) and also for loading the truck.

This can be a great learning experience since you get to handle so many different plants and ask about them as you do.

Volunteers not only get first chance at new plants, get to meet other plantaholics, and even a free lunch when working sales or through lunch at the house but also get a credit towards their plant purchases.

While volunteer time is just that, your milage in driving back and forth is tax deductible per IRS rules for charity work.

If you could help, please email me, or call me at (916) 943-6183. Bob



Stoksea 'Purple Pixie' is a newer variety that is more compact than previous Stoksea hybrids, making it better for containers and the front of the border.

Stoksea (Stokes Aster) is an easy to grow plant with evergreen foliage; it is drought resistant - for sun or part shade.

Notes and Cautions:

Remember the sun changes with the season when planting. That area in shade now may be full scorching sun in midsummer. The 20 ft shadow the house casts now may only be 2 foot come June. This is a common mistake people often make by not stopping to think about how high or low the sun is at different times of year.

Be careful early in the season about plants brought into nurseries from warmer areas that are far ahead of our area.

While most hardy perennials have a natural antifreeze in early spring as new growth emerges, these plants brought in from out of area have outgrown it. So while they may look

better, they are subject to cold and frost damage that locally grown would shrug off.

A good example is blooming Rose Bushes from Southern CA or Mexico sold for Valentines day..We often get frosts / freezes in February.



Salvia guarantica varieties such as this 'Black and Blue' are hardy, but probably froze to the ground in the hard freezes last month- it will return in spring from the roots.

Attention Backyard Growers:

I know some of you have backyard "nurseries" and would like to invite you to contact me if you'd be interested in selling your material at some of the Benefit Plant Sales.

This would give a better selection to customers since my space is limited.

I'd especially like to find someone that grows shrubs..or CA natives.

Dealing with Freeze/frost Damage:

- 1) Don't rush to throw out damaged plants, you'll be surprised how many recover with warmer weather.
- 2) If you can stand the mess, leave most damaged plants alone until after danger of more frost spells is past. Even dead stems can add a little protection to the base/roots that are still there. Although, with the hard freezes the last two days (Dec 8&9) it looks like my Angels Trumpets froze back hard and I will cut them back to the protected wrapped bases (good wood) to make it easier to protect whats left from further

freezes that may occur. Due to their size, I only try to protect the lower portions of them, to give them a good base to return from.

- 3) A few things sold as “hardy” here rarely survive freezing, including common Jade Plants, so if your jade plant has “melted” in the freeze and no SOLID base is left, its gone.
- 4) Additional hints on recovering plant care will be given in later newsletters, but note that the following often return from underground, even if frozen to the ground. Brugsmansia (Angels trumpets), Cannas, Gingers, Alocasia (Elephant Ears) and numerous Salvias.



In the above, starters are frosted, and the pots frozen, but they will defrost and be fine. One reason my plants are hardy, they are not (except for frost tender items) pampered.

NO greenhouse forced or pampered perennials from me. It is funny that so many people tell me I HAVE to have a greenhouse to be able to grow the plants.

It is true that most growers do greenhouse grow perennials early in the year to get them ahead of schedule and in bloom for sale, but I don't have a greenhouse and prefer the plants on a Natural schedule. They have less trouble adjusting when put in the ground that way.

Now, the Brugsmansias below are pampered a bit when it freezes in that the bases are wrapped and protected.



Temps in the 20's have frozen the whole top of these Brugsmansias, but they hopefully will recover from the wrapped, protected bases.



Below is what brought a lot of Brugsmansia, Calocasia and other tender starters through the freeze, 2 tables, 2 fluorescent lights and some plastic on the sunny south side of the house.



Notes on Upcoming – Classes, Surgery and other topics:

- 1) My Hip Replacement has been scheduled for January 28th, so hopefully I'll at least be able to attend the Feb 27th/28th sale. I will however need extra volunteers to help getting ready for it. Labeling, pricing, cleaning plants, packing bareroot for sale etc will all need to be done.
- 2) Classes will be held in March, see below for information, cost and times. Both include a light lunch (please specify any dietary restrictions when you register) as well as tea/coffee

Classes:Classes are 4 hours (10:00AM to 2PM) on either of the days given and are held at the house, address below. Cost per person, per class is \$40 or both classes for \$70. Reservations should be sent, with payment, to: Robert Hamm, 1689 Vallarta Cicle, Sacramento CA 95834

First come first served, all classes have limited availability. For more info email me or call. (see page 1 of newsletter)

Gardening in Sacramento – A class for new people –

It doesn't matter if your new to gardening, or just new to Sacramento, this is a class for you, concerning our climate, our growing seasons, our soils and how things grow and work HERE around Sacramento.

Soil types, effects of watering, why some 'hardy' plants fail here, our multiple growing seasons are all topics covered.

It also covers things like why so many things that DON'T do well here are sold in local nurseries, when to plant what, and translating labels& directions printed for National use into something for Sacramento.

Tues. March 16th or Sat March 20th.

Plant Propagation for Home

Gardeners: This covers how to propagate

plants from seed, cutting and division for the home gardener without fancy equipment, greenhouse etc. Not only does it cover techniques, but all the little things most classes miss that make major differences in your success. There will also be practical experience with you bringing the cuttings etc home!

Tues. March 30th or Sat April 3rd



New for 2010! Acanthus 'Whitewater' – this new variegated "Bear's Breeches" is a new release from Terra Nova Nurseries. Picture courtesy of Terra Nova.

Acanthus is an easy to grow plant here, showing bold foliage with large flower spikes in spring.

This variety is supposed to be more evergreen than the common form which is often summer dormant here.

Acanthus is very drought tolerant and fairly large growing.

Adopt a child a BIG success!!

A BIG THANK YOU to all who helped make the Holidays a happy event for the children.

Not only did we cover all of Sunburst Projects kids, but were able to adopt an additional 25 children served by other local AIDS agencies and provide them with presents!



Interesting - New Flower form on an old plant, this is a double flowered succulent Kalanchoe that I came across in a local Save-Mart store. Kalanchoes make good greenhouse or house plants, but don't stand frost well. I've also seen this in several other colors.

For those interested in it, try the various nurseries or floral display in your local supermarket to see what you can find.

Dutch develop new Hellebore type –

Plant breeders in Holland have been working on developing Hellebores suitable for use as potted floral plants.

They have come up with two new varieties that grow faster, bloom sooner and are very tight growing, with long lasting flowers that face UP and have foliage that stays bright and waxy.

I hopefully will have a FEW (24) starters of one of these varieties coming in the first week of January to try and will have them available at the February Sale. The variety is called Helleborus 'Candy Love' and is a pink blushed white. You find pictures of it and a write up by the originators at :

http://www.flandersplants.be/news/detail_en.php?id=20

If you think you'd like to try one, I will accept advance reservations for them on a first come, first served basis. I expect them to run about \$8.50 unless freight is higher than expected.

A similar variety H.' Ivory Prince' will also be available, picture below.



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!!)

I will also be selling plants at The Old City Cemetary Open Garden Tour on April 17th from 9 am to 2 pm. This tour will include the Perennial Plantings in Hamilton Square as well as the nationally recognized Historic Rose Garden. Details in a future newsletter.