



News & Notes of the UCSC Farm & Garden

Issue 69, Spring 1996

Roger Bunch, Jeff Arnett & Martha Brown, Editors

Grant Initiates African Apprentice Scholarship Fund Kenyan Woman to Attend 1996 Course

Last summer we received a letter from the Nguruka Women's Group in Embu, Kenya. They described their group as a village-level organization composed mostly of old women who do subsistence gardening. Their request was for scholarships to allow two of their younger members—their technical advisors for organic gardening and farming—to participate in our Apprenticeship training program. At the time, we had to send them our form letter explaining that we were very sorry but we had no scholarships for international applicants—a form letter that unfortunately gets much use in response to the scores of applications and query letters that we receive each year from Africa and other developing countries.

Now we can throw out that form letter—at least for Africans who wish to come to the Apprenticeship. Thanks to a generous grant of \$58,000 from the Margoes Foundation, we have initiated a scholarship program for African nationals. One of the Foundation's areas of interest is agricultural education for Africans, and they were especially encouraged by the practical, hands-on nature of our program. This fund will pay full expenses for two to three African participants a year starting in 1997; the scholarship will be replenished through further fundraising efforts. Currently we are developing a scholarship application form for the 1997 course.

Happily for 1996, however, the Margoes Foundation has allocated scholarship money for one participant in this year's course. As soon as we received notice of the grant in November, we contacted the Nguruka Women's Group in Kenya to let them know that we had chosen one of their members for a scholarship. The recipient, Anne Wanja Murangiri, acts as an advisor and instructor promoting organic farming and gardening in the local community around Embu. Following the six-month Apprenticeship, Anne will return to Kenya to continue working with the Nguruka Women's Group.

Gift to Sponsor Apprentices from West Bank and Gaza in 1997

A gift of \$30,000 from the Philanthropic Ventures Foundation (PVF) will support the training of four people from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1997 Apprenticeship. An organization called American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), that works in the West Bank and Gaza, will recruit candidates to apply for the scholarships. The trainees will then return to their home communities to teach organic growing methods and concepts.

See pages 6 and 7 for more Apprenticeship news

Farm & Garden CSA Project Expands to Sixty Members!

See page 8

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NOTEWORTHY NEWS

Curious Friends may note a new left to this issue of *News & Notes*. Thanks to CASFS staffers **Martha Brown, Melanie Mintz, Ann Lindsey, and Peggy Felix**, among others, we've combined material from the Docent Program, the CSA project, and the budding Apprentice Alumni Association, not to mention other contributors, into a bigger and, we hope, more nutritious newsletter. We invite other writerly gardeners to grace these pages with their words.

A photo of **Sean Swezey**, who coordinates the Center's research with regional growers, will be featured in an ad campaign for Patagonia's new line of organic cotton clothes. For the past several years Sean has been working with growers in Madera County to find the best techniques for growing cotton without synthetic chemical pesticides, little suspecting that he'd wind up a poster boy for the cause! Look for the ads in upcoming issues of *Audubon*, *Sierra* and *Outside* magazines.

New this year: Starting on the first Sunday in April, docent-led tours of the Alan Chadwick Garden will take place the first Sunday of the month at 2 pm. Thanks to tour program coordinator **Melanie Mintz** and the hard-working Farm & Garden docents for making this opportunity possible. For more Docent Program news, see the article on page 4.

Hummmmm, baby. Our Friends at the **UCSC Arboretum** are hosting a Hummingbird Festival, March 23, 10 am - 4 pm. Also look for their Spring Plant Sale, April 20th. Call 427-2998 for more info.

Congratulations to Interim CASFS Director **Jackie Lundy** who brought back **Maia Rose Lundy** (born 7/13/95) from Changsha, China recently. Her "new joy" joins the growing F & G family. Soon, we'll outnumber the unsustainables. Friends' vice president **Kurt Christiansen** reminds us that his second born, **Nico**, is a boy, not a girl. We trust Nico's gender has not been confused by our erratumness.

Friends can look forward to a cookbook featuring the culinary artistry of local chefs. Director **Margaret Bonaccorso** (whose art

continues to grace the *N & N*) is concocting the cookbook to serve up at this fall's Harvest Festival. Speaking of good food, former apprentice and catering CEO of Feel Good Foods **Britt Galler** was featured in a recent *Sentinel* article. Cater on!

Rumors among us: inspired by Director **Graydon Livingston's** urgings (see his gourd article in this issue), **Kurt Christiansen** is exploring the possibility of adding art to the Alan Chadwick Garden. He's a pukamani (erratum to follow) pole fan dating back to the Roots & Shoots celebration; he's also organizing the Friends' "Poetry in the Garden" celebration in June. Maybe he'll read a poem about his boy **Nico**. Also in the rumor mill is a plan to offer Friends the opportunity to memorialize a loved one with a handmade bench to be placed on the Farm.

A recent article in the *SF Chronicle* featured rock dust as a soil amendment. If you want to rock your garden with this mineral-rich dust, contact **OmBodhi Thoren St. John**, a Santa Cruz gardener who welcomes queries about remineralizing the earth at his internet address: ombodhi@cats.ucsc.edu. Who is this mysterious rock star?

Two new magazines for the guileless gardener: *Kitchen Garden* (800) 283-7252 @ \$24/ye. and *Water Gardening* ("The Magazine for Pondkeepers"), 1670 South 900 East, Zionsville, IN 46077 @ \$30/yr. Incidentally, we're looking for Friends to review both gardening magazines and/or books for upcoming *N & N*.

CALL FOR WORDS: *News & Notes* continues to solicit articles, poems, recipes, illustrations, and other contributions from CASFS staff, Friends and other gardening enthusiasts. Deadline for the summer *News & Notes* is May 15. On-campus contributions can be sent to Jeff Arnett, Porter Faculty Services, e-mail: jeff_arnett.ucsc.edu. Or send to *News & Notes*, c/o Friends of the Farm & Garden, UCSC Farm, SC, CA 95064. Call Jeff Arnett @ 425-1750 for more information.

Spring 1996 Calendar of Events

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE FESTIVAL AND OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, April 11, 4 pm – 6 pm UCSC Farm Apple Orchard

Community and campus members are invited to join Farm and Garden staff and apprentices for this spring get-together. We'll be serving up home-grown strawberries and offering a tour of the campus Farm. This is our kickoff event for the season's Community Supported Agriculture project, and your chance to learn more about this innovative farmer-consumer partnership. See the *CSA Corner* article on page 8 for more information.

SPRING PLANT SALE

Saturday and Sunday, May 4 - 5, 10 am – 2 pm UCSC Barn Theater (Bay & High streets)

Save these dates! The Spring Plant Sale offers a wonderful variety of organically raised vegetables, herbs, flowers, and perennial shrubs for your garden and yard. With our new propagation facilities in place, staff and apprentices have been working overtime to bring you the sale's biggest-ever selection of varieties, chosen especially for their ability to flourish in the Monterey Bay region.

Friends of the Farm & Garden members receive a 10% discount on all plant sale purchases. Memberships will be available the day of the sale. The *Spring Plant Sale Catalogue* will be mailed in early April (see page 5 for more plant sale enticements from Chadwick Garden manager Orin Martin).

APPRENTICE RECEPTION

Friday, May 10, 4 pm – 6 pm Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm

Join Friends' Board members and Center staff in welcoming the 1996 class of apprentices. This year's group includes forty folks from throughout the U.S., as well as Kenya and Pakistan. It would be wonderful to have lots of Friends and apprenticeship alumni on hand to help make the new apprentices feel at home. Refreshments provided, but feel free to bring something to share.

POETRY AND MUSIC IN THE GARDEN

Saturday, June 1, 12 noon to 2 pm Alan Chadwick Garden

Last year's poetry and music event proved to be a wonderful combination of art and nature, as we basked in the warmth of local talents and enjoyed the beauty of the Chadwick Garden. Join us for another afternoon showcasing local poets and musicians in the magical Garden setting. Refreshments provided.

Apprenticeship Classes Open to Friends, Docents, CSA Members, Alumni and the UCSC Community

Each year the Apprenticeship staff invites well-known speakers to teach classes on a variety of topics. This year we will hold several of these classes at either the UCSC Arboretum's Horticulture Building or Loudon Nelson Community Center so that other interested folks can take part. This spring, join us for two talks—

Land Trusts & Agricultural Land Preservation
Chuck Mathei
Wednesday, May 8 at 7 pm
(Site to be determined-will provide update)

Organic Soil Fertility
Amigo Bob Cantisano
Wednesday, May 15 at 7 pm
UCSC Arboretum Horticulture Bldg.

If you have questions about any of these events, call 408/459-4140.

Docent News

Monthly Docent Meetings — An Educational Feast

—by Melanie Mintz

Docents lucked out with every pot at the first docent potluck and meeting on February 21st at the Louise Cain Gatehouse. At the meeting, apprenticeship instructor John Farrell introduced the concepts for achieving a garden which is productive year round. Among these concepts: Ordering early spring flowers up to 1 year prior to planting—larkspurs, sweetpeas and snapdragons can be planted in November for an early spring harvest and thus might be ordered during the previous winter. To harvest broccoli during the winter, you must sow the seed in August, often only the beginning of Santa Cruz's summer harvest—not when you are likely to be preparing for winter. The group of 13 docents fastidiously took notes on succession planting, cool and warm season crops, and winter gardening.

The Farm and Garden axiom that Santa Cruz is "only 2° off paradise" was illustrated as docents learned that food, with good planning, can be harvested 12 months of the year in Santa Cruz gardens. John noted that year-round gardening inspires him to eat in tune with the plants and adds an element of exploration to eating. The potluck serendipitously and scrumptiously reflected his sentiment and was a winter feast with a root dish of rutabagas, turnips and carrots, a soup of cabbage and potatoes, and a spinach feta pie with freshly-picked spinach.

Docents meet monthly to share good food, schedule tours and to learn about the multitude of topics surrounding sustainable agriculture and organic gardening. Docent meetings are open to all; the topics to be presented will be listed in this column. If you plan on attending, please bring a potluck dish to share and your own eating utensils.

Docents lead visitors on tours of the Farm and the Alan Chadwick Garden. Anyone interested in organic agriculture is welcome to become a docent—the only requirement is enthusiasm and the time to volunteer. A docent

training will take place on Thursdays March 14-April 11. For more information, call Melanie, 459-3248.

Tour Schedule

This year's tours will take place on Thursdays at noon and Sundays at 2 pm beginning March 21. All tours begin at the Gatehouse on the UCSC Farm, except for the first Sunday tour of each month which will meet at the Chadwick Garden (Coolidge Drive entrance, across from Stevenson College). On the third Sunday of each month, tours will be bilingual, Spanish and English. An occasional tour of the Farm & Garden is a good way to learn what you can accomplish in your own garden as well as a delightful way to observe the changing seasons.

Group tours are scheduled outside of the regular Thursday/Sunday tour times. Call 459-3248 to schedule a special tour.

Farm & Garden T-Shirts, Gardening Books & More

Farm and Garden merchandise, including T-shirts, tote bags, aprons, notecards, and much more will be available at the Gatehouse 15 minutes before and after public tours. Thanks, Docents, for making this service available!

DOCENT CALENDAR

- ☞ Thursdays, March 14 – April 11, noon – 6 pm. Docent Training.
- ☞ Thursday, March 21. Public tours begin (every Thursday at noon and Sunday at 2 pm)
- ☞ Thursday, March 28, 5:30 pm. Docent Meeting & Potluck, Chadwick Garden. Topic: "Meet the New Docents & Introduction to Giving Tours in '96."
- ☞ Wednesday, April 24, 5:30 pm. Docent Meeting & Potluck, Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm. Topic: "Growing Potatoes."
- ☞ Thursday, May 30, 5:30 pm. Docent Meeting & Potluck. Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm. Topic to be announced.

Spring Plant Sale Preview '96

by Orin Martin and Cristof Bernau

You will ask: and where are the lilacs?
And the metaphysics muffled in poppies?
And the rain which so often has battered
its words till they spouted up
gullies and birds?

I'll tell you how matters stand with me . . .

—Pablo Neruda
from *A Few Things Explained*

Would that we had and could grow lilacs better in this climate (wretched mildew and lack of winter chill being the culprits). The *Platystemon* and *Papaver* species are best viewed while strolling through undulating meadows – serpentine and otherwise.

Ah, the metaphysics, they seem to fall somewhere between Mr. Chadwick and cutting edge sustainability.

And the recent rains (for a second year!) have banished all talk of droughts and dry years, while they may have wreaked havoc with plum and apple blossoms.

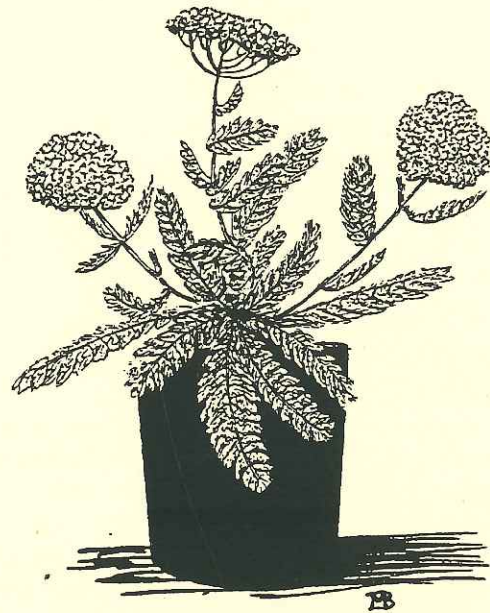
While there are no species of poppies and lilacs amongst this year's Plant Sale items, as always the number of plants, species and varieties and the quality continue to escalate. Here is a general overview of some of the plant collections being offered. (Note: in early April we'll mail the *Plant Sale Brochure* with descriptions of all the plants that will be available at the May 4-5 sale.)

What is it that makes our **Annual Spring Plant Sale** not just another roadside attraction? Here are a few thoughts in that regard.

Organic Soil Fertility Program

In truth, commercial nursery plants have been force fed on a chemical fertilizer and spray regimen. This program has them flowering and looking amazing while on display. Unfortunately, this condition sees them at their ephemeral apex; it is often downhill from there. Too often, plants experience poor performance or even death when home gardeners place them in "normal" soil with only moderate amounts of water and fertility. This drop-off in performance is even more marked when gardeners are trying to grow organically using less potent but more precise organic fertilizers.

With the exception of a limited and expensive supply of organic vegetable starts, it is virtually



Achillea

—Illustration by Margaret Bonaccorso

impossible to buy organically produced container plants. The Farm & Garden Plant Sale is your only source of truly organically raised container plants! While these organic "country cousins" may not appear quite as showy and ostentatious as their city kin, their continued, healthy, incremental growth will reveal a yeoman-like character in the months and years to come.

Organic vegetable starts of varieties that are proven to grow well in this climate are the backbone of the home vegetable garden. Next to a proficient skill level, varieties and timing are the key to successful gardening—in essence, planting the right thing at the right time. Too often it is difficult for the home gardeners to get access to the "right stuff" (seeds and seedlings) via local nurseries. Farm & Garden vegetable starts are good-performing, good-yielding, and good-tasting varieties suited to the Santa Cruz area.

Ease of Care

With a few notable exceptions (and Delphiniums are worth fussing over, aren't they?), Farm & Garden plant sale material is generally trouble free and thrives in our coastal climate. Most are plants that live on perennially, coming on almost unbidden (albeit with a few well-timed inputs of compost and water) and offering handsome aspects of flower, foliage, fragrance, or fruit in return for moderate care.

(Continued on page 13)

Apprenticeship Feels Financial Pressures

— by Ann Lindsey

In 1996, we will carry on the wonderful 29-year tradition of training apprentices in practical organic methods at the Farm & Garden. In many respects, the Apprenticeship continues to evolve and improve each year, fine-tuning its unique blend of classroom studies and hands-on learning in the fields. But in one respect we seem to have hit the wall. The program's financial instability, which began after a series of UC budget cuts, has caused significant changes in both the Apprenticeship and in the staff's workload.

The State of California's budget crisis led to cuts in programs throughout the UC system in the early 1990's. Since 1988, the portion of the Apprenticeship budget covered by state funds has dropped from 57% to 10%. The program is now funded almost entirely through tuition income and produce and plant sales.

Many UC programs, faced with similar budget cuts in the early 1990s, either folded or severely curtailed their activities and services. The Apprenticeship staff, dedicated to continuing this unique training program, took on the challenge of making up the budget shortfall by increasing production and sales, raising tuition, and taking on more apprentices. Both production and marketing have been intensified, with sales rising from \$38,000 in 1987 to \$92,000 in 1995 and a projected \$100,000 in 1996. Tuition, which was \$1000 in 1987, is now \$2200, and apprentice numbers have increased from 30 to 40.

While we've been able to raise additional funds through produce sales and tuition hikes, there have been unintended and undesirable consequences. An increased emphasis on production and marketing has meant less staff and apprentice time for instruction and basic learning experiences. Tuition hikes have made the program less accessible to disadvantaged applicants, thus limiting the diversity of the apprentice pool. To us, the increase in apprentice numbers represents a step away from the true meaning of an apprenticeship in which master and student work side-by-side.

With no increase in staff to accompany the increased production demands and apprentice numbers, the staff works overtime to keep up. While we have succeeded in keeping the program running, the current situation is far from optimal. It's an interesting paradox: while the focus of our



work here at the Farm and Garden is on sustainable agriculture, the work itself (the staff's workload) and the system we've created has become largely unsustainable.

For these reasons we have initiated the Apprenticeship's first-ever fundraising drive to raise support from outside funders, including foundations, businesses, and individuals. Our goal is to raise enough money to allow us to return to a more sustainable level of production and to a more reasonable ratio of apprentices to staff.

While we plan to continue to self-generate funds through produce sales and tuition income, we need to be fully staffed so that the program can operate at a level that provides a quality education program. Toward that end we have developed a 1997 budget that includes additional staff for managing production and for increasing the instructional aspects of the program. To meet these goals for 1997, we need to raise at least \$100,000.

Work on this fundraising drive began in 1995, thanks to a \$30,000 grant from the Foundation for Deep Ecology earmarked especially for fundraising purposes (see next page). At present we are approaching foundations, businesses, and individuals for one- to three-year contributions. While our future goal is to begin work on a 21st Century endowment for the Apprenticeship in 1999, our interim strategy is to raise at least \$100,000 a year for the next three years to achieve the stability needed to maintain a quality program.

There is no doubt in our minds that many, many more generations of apprentices will train at the UCSC Farm and Garden. We have incredible faith in the importance of our work and in the work that 29-year's worth of apprentices have gone on to do. Our challenge now is to locate our many supporters out there who will help us continue this important work in a more sustainable fashion.

Donations Sought for Louise Cain Scholarships

Help Support Scholarships for Minority/ Low-Income Apprentices

Demand for the Apprenticeship continues to grow, reflecting not only a widespread interest but also the growing need for skilled practitioners and teachers who can help to create more sustainable food systems within local communities. Unfortunately, applicants from the communities with the most need are usually the ones who cannot afford to come to our program.

At present we have a small scholarship fund for U.S. citizens, which provides tuition waivers for people of color and those economically disadvantaged. This fund was initiated in 1990 by a donation from founding Friends member Louise Cain and by an anonymous donation from a former apprentice. The Louise Cain Scholarship Fund, as it is now called, has grown over the years with small donations from other individuals. Additionally, the 1994 and 1995 apprentice groups held raffles which raised approximately \$3000 each year for tuition waivers.

Since 1991, we have been able to offer full and partial tuition waivers to people of color and low-income people, thus fostering a more diversified program. Five apprentices will receive tuition waivers for the 1996 course; we have funds to provide approximately 4 more in 1997. At that point, unless more significant donations are made, the fund will be largely depleted.

Our goal is to continue offering at least five tuition waivers a year from 1997 on. With tuition at \$2200, the total cost of funding five full tuition waivers is \$11,000. To meet this goal, we are seeking donations from Friends and alumni, as well as private foundations and businesses. The progress of our scholarship fundraising drive will be reported over the next few *News & Notes* issues. Donor names will be listed in these progress reports (unless anonymity is requested.)

We strongly encourage donations from alumni and Friends! If you would like to receive an information sheet on the Louise Cain Scholarship Fund, or if you have recommendations about possible foundation or business donors that might support this fund, please call Ann Lindsey, at (408) 459-2321.

Fundraising Effort Initiated with Grant

Thanks to a grant of \$30,000 from the Foundation for Deep Ecology, fundraisers were hired and a fundraising campaign begun for the Apprenticeship in 1995. The fundraising drive is now well underway, and the Deep Ecology funds will help to support it through much of 1996.

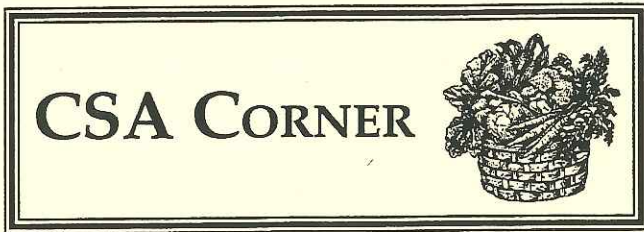
Fundraising is happening in several different ways. Grant proposals and letters are going out to private foundations and individual donors, and we are researching potential business donors. For the first time ever, Farm and Garden alumni have been sent a letter (with this newsletter) asking for their donations in support of the Apprenticeship.

Besides making a contribution, there are other ways that Friends and alumni can help with our fundraising effort. If you know of foundations, businesses, or individuals who might be interested in supporting our program and/or if you have fundraising skills you can lend to our effort, please contact:

Ann Lindsey or Peggy Felix
University of California
UCSC Farm and Garden
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
(408) 459-2321 or FAX 459-2779

If you are ready to make a tax-deductible donation to the Louise Cain Scholarship Fund, please make a check payable to the UCSC Foundation/Louise Cain Fund and send it to the address below. The UCSC Foundation office handles all donations for us and ensures that all are tax-deductible; they will send a thank you note and a receipt for tax purposes for a gift of any amount. They also forward donor information and any correspondence included with the checks to our office so that we can thank you too!

UC Santa Cruz Foundation
Attn: Louise Cain Scholarship Fund
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064



Community Supported Agriculture Project Expands into Second Season

This year, the Farm & Garden's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project will shift into full-gear, expanding to 60 members and serving a larger educational role in the Apprenticeship program. As an introduction to our 1996 CSA, we are inviting Friends and University community members to come to the Farm for a Strawberry Shortcake Festival and Open House on Thursday, April 11, 4-6 pm.

Community Supported Agriculture is an innovative model of direct-marketing that links consumers to the farms and farmers who grow their food. CSA members pay a portion of the farm's production expenses at the beginning of the growing season and in return receive weekly shares in the farm's harvest. Our goal is to attract CSA members from our most immediate communities—the University community and our Friends membership—thereby creating direct relationships with the people closest to us. (Details on the 1996 CSA can be found at the end of this article.)

The Farm & Garden began its CSA last season as a pilot project with 16 shareholders from the University community. Looking back at the pilot project, Farm Manager Jim Leap says he is glad we started small but that the scale of the project also made it difficult. While we met our goal of piloting the CSA, managing small plots of diversified crops on a field-scale system was not efficient. The half-acre CSA plot became a garden within the farm fields, with a diversity of needs to match the crops. It was a learning process—a rewarding one at that. Our shareholders were pleased with all we had to offer and in return gave us the support, enthusiasm and feedback we needed to make the adjustments for this year's 60-member CSA.

While Jim Leap and 2nd-year apprentice Susan Kester were educating apprentices on the production-end of a CSA, Jered Lawson, CSA West Coordinator, was organizing the first western region CSA conference with the assistance of many dedicated apprentices. The conference, attended by over 350 people, was an inspiring success.

"The conference lent credence to the idea of offering CSA as a training for our apprentices," said Leap. "It was wonderful to finally see a gender balance in entry-level agriculture as well as so many former apprentices involved in CSA projects around California," he added. For many, the conference was a springboard of inspiration.

Over the past six years, the number of California farms with CSA projects has grown from two to sixty—each with a unique expression. The Farm & Garden CSA is still taking shape, finding its unique expression, and integrating into our overall operation. With last year's experience under our collective belts, we're well on our way. Our vision, as stated in the Shareholder's Handbook, is to:

- establish a direct partnership between the local community and apprenticing organic growers;
- demonstrate a viable model of sound economics for small-scale farming and regional food systems;
- foster ecological stewardship;
- and provide the community with high quality, nutritious produce in season.

For more information on becoming a member of the Farm & Garden CSA project, please contact Kathi Colen, David Anderson or Jered Lawson at 459-3964. Or better yet, come on by the Farm for our Strawberry Shortcake Festival/ Open House to sign up, learn more about our CSA, or simply to sample a strawberry shortcake.

1996 Farm & Garden CSA Membership

Pickup site: the White Barn on the UCSC Farm

Pickup times: Tuesday or Friday, 12 noon - 6 pm

Cost: \$500 or approximately \$20/week for 24 weeks. Payment options:

One payment:

\$500 due May 17, 1996

Two payments:

\$250 due May 17, 1996

\$250 due August 9, 1996

Four payments:

\$125 due May 17, 1996

\$125 due June 28, 1996

\$125 due August 9, 1996

\$125 due Sept. 20, 1996

Start date between mid May and early June, depending on the weather, and continuing for 24 weeks.

Alumni Updates

APPRENTICESHIP ALUMNI USE TRAINING WORLDWIDE

— by Peggy Felix

Over 600 Apprenticeship alumni have dispersed throughout the U.S. and world since the program's inception in 1967. Many graduates are using their training to make substantial contributions to their communities and the earth. This was clearly demonstrated by the 200 alumni who responded to the postcard sent out by Farm & Garden staff last November requesting current contact and career information to publish in the Apprenticeship's first Alumni Directory.

Many alumni still are involved in horticulture covering a wide range of activities including farming, community gardens, horticultural therapy, nursery management, landscaping, consulting, teaching, international training, food preparation, organic certification, organic promotion and wholesaling. Even graduates working in unrelated fields emphasized how the Farm & Garden had affected their lives in some way.

After reviewing so many wonderful stories, we wanted to share just a few of the paths people have chosen to follow since leaving the Apprenticeship:

□ *Franz Muhl (1990 - 1992)*

Franz returned to his native South Africa after the Apprenticeship to start and assist several community gardens and other projects for the disadvantaged. Currently, he is starting an organic research and training center on the farm where he is based.

□ *Ann Kennan (1993)*

Ann has pursued her vision of helping the disadvantaged by starting a community project, Seeds, in North Carolina. Seeds works closely with a halfway house to help individuals transition to a better life through horticultural therapy.

□ *Kim Murchison (1990-1991), Karen Zischke (1991), and Josh Slotnick (1991)*

Soon after the Apprenticeship, these three alumni started Clark Fork Organics Farm in Missoula, MT. Currently, Josh also is helping the University of Montana Environmental Studies Dept. and the Missoula County Health Dept. to set up an educational farm. A program (similar to the UCSC Apprenticeship) for college students will be run on the farm and will include training in nutrition & hunger prevention.

□ *Nancy Lingemann (1967)*

Nancy has co-owned a wedding flower business, the Flower Ladies, with partner Marcia Lipsenthal, since 1975. Nancy and Marcia grow and arrange some 200 varieties of old-fashioned flowers in the Chadwick tradition — strictly organic — in their two-acre garden.

□ *Mark Cain (1978 - 1979)*

Mark has farmed Dripping Springs Garden in Arkansas with land partner Michael Crane since 1984. Mark also has been active speaking and writing about organic market-garden techniques. In the future, he would like to continue blending the gardening techniques of Alan Chadwick and Masanobu Fukuoka and launch a newsletter to share this information with other experimenters.

□ *Jane Freedman (1990 - 1991)*

For three years Jane worked as the Garden Director for the Santa Cruz Homeless Garden Project and CSA. Jane has recently moved on to start a farm and CSA, Fan Tan Farms and Dirty Girl Produce, with Alison Edwards in Santa Cruz.

□ *Bob Howard (1970)*

Bob teaches horticulture at the Naropa Institute in the Environment Studies, Bachelor of Arts Program. He also owns and manages a landscape design and building company. In addition, he found time to author a book with Eric Skjei entitled, "What Makes the Crops Rejoice."

□ *Rick Lejeune (1971 - 1973)*

Rick co-owns Heath & Lejeune, a produce brokerage firm in Los Angeles specializing in distribution and consolidation of organic produce.

If you'd like to learn more, several alumni (including Morag Peden, Dave Golding, Dave Brodkey, Cathy Sneed Marcum, Meg Cadoux-Hirshberg, Sue Cohn, Ken Foster, George McNulty, Dorcas Wedmore, and Howard Stenn) were profiled in the Winter 1995-96 edition of the *News & Notes*. In addition, Martha Brown, the Center's senior editor, wrote an article for the Winter 1996 issue of *The Cultivar* featuring Josh Slotnick, Kim

(Continued on next page)

Murchison, Karen Zischke, Tim Crews, Patrick Archie, Franz Muhl, and others. Once completed this summer, the Alumni Directory also will include brief project descriptions for participating alumni.

The Alumni Directory

We know that there are many apprentices out there who have not yet received or returned their alumni directory postcard; over 500 people were entered into the alumni database after Roots & Shoots in 1993. With such a powerful group of alumni, we would like to include as many people as possible in the directory. Also, there are murmurings of a 30th Anniversary Gathering in 1997 of which we would like to apprise everyone.

This is our final plea to alumni. Please send in your directory card if you still have it. If you never received a card, or know someone who didn't, please help ensure that the following information gets back to us:

- Name & affiliation year(s)
- Current address & phone, permanent address & phone
- Brief description of activities since leaving the farm

The Directory will be a terrific networking resource and will enable UCSC staff to point out to potential funders the many important achievements alumni have made. Write to us today!

JOB LISTINGS FOR FARMERS & GARDENERS

Many programs, farms, and gardens send their job postings to the Apprenticeship office in hopes of attracting one of our illustrious alumni. Here are a few of the job listings sent to us this year. You're in high demand out there!

Sawtooth Community Garden Project
Karen Sherrerd (208) 726-9358
Market gardener to manage 1+ acre at a community education/research garden March-Sept. 1996; \$400.00 stipend plus 80% of proceeds from garden; must have reliable car.

Organic Farm on the San Joaquin River
John Teixeira (209) 659-3622; 11356 Bl. 51/2, Firebaugh, CA 93622
Need experience in Farmers Market, CSA, direct marketing, production, tractor work, harvest, and good PR skills, computer skills, etc.

Hidden Villa Farm
Jessie Levine (415) 949-8643 ; 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos, CA 94022
Internship positions available, college credit available, 40 hrs/week, \$300/month w/ \$100 on completion, includes housing and seasonably available food.
Summer Staff positions also available for summer camp program. Salaries range from \$165-200 with room and board. Season June 17-August 24 to apply call (415)949-8641, write at above address to request a Summer Camp Staff Application.

Lone Tree Farm
Wendy Rowe (1994 Apprentice) P.O. Box 425, Booneville, CA 95415
Market gardening partner needed for the 1996 season. 50/50 split of profits, after expenses, a room in a solar-powered greenhouse, and plenty of vegetables to eat.

Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation
Mike Powers (916) 625-4994 E-mail: mppowers@ucdavis.edu.
Ag. intern in Humboldt County to start a community garden and demonstration garden on the reservation for the summer of 1996. Need a self-starter with the ability to work cross culturally. Housing is being investigated; stipend of \$3,000.

Jubilee Farms
A project of the Stockton Emergency Food Bank
Dick Kobran (209) 464-7369
PO Box 2441, Stockton, CA 95201
Full-time, salaried position as farm manager for field-scale and intensive beds. Includes running CSA and supplying Food Bank.

U.C. Extension - Contra Costa County
Janet Caprile, Farm Advisor University of California Cooperative Extension, 1700 Oak Park Blvd., Room A-2, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
Part-time temporary beginning late March-Sept 1996, 10-20 hours per week flexible. Must have computer experience, ability to do repetitive tasks, strenuous physical activity, valid driver's license and own transportation, miles will be reimbursed.

The 16th Annual Eco-Farm Conference

by Ken Foster

This year's Ecological Farm Conference, held January 24-27 at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove was a very enlightening look into the world of sustainable agriculture. As always the conference had a broad spectrum of workshops spanning a four-day period. The challenge to attendees was to figure out how to be everywhere at the same time or sit back, relax and attend one workshop at a time. Having tried both, I prefer the latter. The conference had something for everyone. Farmers are an eclectic lot and the choice of workshops was proof. Of course there were the straight farm talk workshops like "Weed Management in Perennial Crops" and "Understanding Soil and Compost Microbiology"; there were the more left field workshops like "Designing the Organic Farm Village Cluster & the Sustainable New Rural Town" (which I'm sorry to say I missed); and there were the esoteric topics such as "On The Fringe of Organic Agriculture—Crop Circles & Medicine Wheels and Ritual on the Back Forty: Sacred Food."

There was a great selection of organically grown food on the menu for the meals, an awards program for stewards of sustainable agriculture, a evening dance and the Eco-Farm Talent Show.

The workshops I attended on Thursday included; **Your Plate and the Planet** with Alice Waters of Chez Panisse in Berkeley and Andrea Wilson of Earthsave. A fascinating discussion about the social-political-ecological ramifications of our food choices. The wisdom of having food grown nearby — specifically, the benefits of a kitchen garden for restaurants — she talked about the aliveness of food that has just been picked.

My wife and I passed up the opportunity to hear Santa Cruz's Sam Earnshaw and Josh Fodor in their workshop, **Integrating Native Plants into the Farmscape** to attend Bill Mollison's workshop called **Permaculture Elaborated**, the erudite babblings of a genius.

Next I attended **A Year in the Life of a Seed Company** with Alan Kapuler, Ph.D. and Howard Yana-Shapiro, Ph.D. with Seeds of Change. This workshop contained the brilliant philosophy and principles of this organic seed company.

During the next session I was part of a workshop in which I presented a slideshow on the history of my company Terra Nova Ecological Landscaping of Santa Cruz. My co-presenter was Steve Zien of Biological Urban Gardening Services (B.U.G.S.) Citrus Heights, CA. Our workshop was titled **Ecological Landscaping**, ways to make landscaping more sustainable. We had a good turnout for a landscape workshop at a farming

conference and it was a good first airing of my slideshow which begins with slides of the apprenticeship program and Alan Chadwick. Steve Zien is a storehouse of information on appropriate pest control, troubleshooting, and organic fertilization in the urban setting.

My wife, Joan attended the crop session on **Herbs** with small uncertified organic herb growers like Jim (RK) Curas from Watsonville, and large-scale herb growers like Lon Johnson from Trout Lake Farm who sells by the ton lot, and many others.

Friday morning I attended the **Successful Organic Farmers Plenary Session**. We heard from the winners of this year's Sustie's Award—stewards of sustainable agriculture. Sally Brewer and John Eveland of Gathering Together Farm and Nearly Normal restaurant in Philomath, OR., Alan Garcia of Garcia Family Farms in Orland, CA., and Jon Steinberg and Jeff Larkey of Route One Farms, Santa Cruz were the presenters. Sally and John did an inspirational slide show of their farm. I was happy for and proud of locals Jon and Jeff.

John Jeavons' **Effective Economic Mini-Farming** was the next workshop I attended. Jeavons elaborated on his theme of growing maximum yield from minimum acreage, and his famous line "I want you all to stop growing crops; I want you to start growing soil. Having said that, I want you to stop growing soil and start growing people—not procreating, but growing people who value healthy soil and sustainable food systems."

Next we sat in on the plenary panel discussion on the **Transformation to a Sustainable Agriculture** with Howard Shapiro, Wes Jackson, John Jeavons, Alan Kapuler, Bill Mollison, Paul Muller, Alan York. To quote the agenda schedule "As we approach the end of the 20th Century, we are faced with the frightening prospect of agricultural failure. The developing world is hungry. The developed world is overfed. It has become so through the use of irreplaceable fossil fuels. Agriculture as practiced today is degrading the environment, eradicating natural biodiversity, toxifying our soil, air and water at levels that threaten our health and the environment as we know it. We stand at the precipice as a species. We have the knowledge to develop adequate, socially just and sustainable food production systems. The choice to a sane alternative must be made. How do we do it?" This was a powerful panel of movers and shakers in the sustainable agriculture world and it was an inspiration to hear them all at the same table—a highlight of our stay at the 16th annual Eco-Farm Conference.

Audio tapes of the conference Plenary Sessions and Workshops are available from The Committee for Sustainable Agriculture, P. O. Box 838, San Martin, CA 95046. Phone (408) 778-7366, fax (408) 778-7186.

Gourds: A Primer

by Graydon Livingston

Gourds have been cultivated since man's early history. Remains of the genus *Lagenaria*, made into kitchen utensils, have been found in Egyptian tombs that date back to more than 2000 BC. The name gourd at one time included all plants and fruits of the *Curcubitaceae* family, which includes pumpkins, squash, cucumbers, and melons. Now only the non-edible species of this family are referred to as gourds, which can be classified under two main groups, *Lagenarias* and *Curcurbitas*.

The *Curcurbitas* are the small yellow gourds with yellow scentless flowers that bloom during the daytime. Their fruits are generally small, with many variations of color and bi-color.

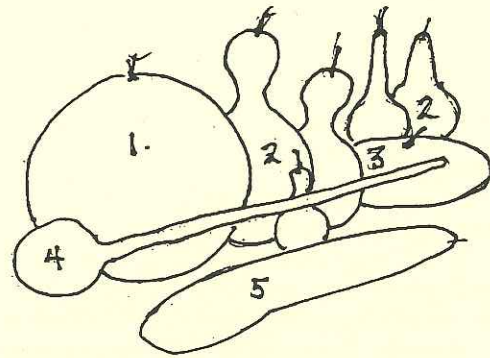
The *Lagenarias* are gourds that grow to immense size and in odd shapes; it is from this group that bird houses and utensils are made. The flowers of these gourds are white, five petalled with each plant bearing both male and female flowers. The gourd flowers are said to be pollinated by a night flying moth but in our observations here at the Farm it appears that the cucumber beetle is responsible.

Gourd plants occur in many parts of the world and there is great conjecture as to how the seed was disseminated. Bottle gourds are generally thought to have originated in Africa about 14,000 BC and have been found in cultivated states in many parts of the world.

There is an abundance of finds from the Americas: the oldest reported comes from Peru, dated 13,000-11,000 BC. In the Old World, the earliest report comes from Thailand dated between 10,000 and 6,000 BC. There are other records from New Guinea at 350 BC and from various other parts of the Pacific in early Christian times. From Africa the gourd is reported from the twelfth dynasty in Egypt, from Zambia and from South Africa, all dating to around 2000 BC. Cultivation of plants in the Americas probably began sometime around 6000 BC, so it is possible that gourds found after this date could have been cultivated.

How gourds came to the Americas. We have two possibilities: the gourd floated across the ocean or it was carried by man. The former hypothesis received considerable support in 1954 when Thomas W. Whitaker and George F. Carter demonstrated that gourds could float in sea water for at least 347 days with the seeds still retaining viability. In fact, these scientists found that these seeds would germinate after being in these gourds for six years.

Gourds have been used throughout the world in many configurations as containers for liquid, grains, and other food storage. Some have thought that man's first pottery was based on gourds. It has been



1. Bushel Basket (approx. 18" in diameter)
2. Bird House
3. Canteen
4. Long Handle Dipper
5. Long Mamorata

suggested that basket making began with the weaving of nets which were invented as an easy way of carrying gourds. As a food plant today, the gourd is apparently of greatest importance in China, Japan and India. In Japan, gourd flesh is cut into strips and sun dried. You will find them in some stores under the name of *Kampyo*. Medical uses: internationally for headaches, for coughs and as a purgative. Fascinating use occurred in pre-Colombian Peru in a surgical operation of trepanation, in which the skull was repaired with a piece of gourd or a thin plate of gold. Gourds have been and are still used as floats and rafts, pipes and snuffboxes, containers for crickets in China, birdhouses, masks and penis sheaths. In South America, the gourd is the preferred container from which to drink *yerbamate*, a caffeine like substance which has stimulating properties.

To grow gourds from seed in this area one should start seed indoors March 1-15. Gourds are comparatively easy to cultivate but they need an abundance of plant food. Seed or young plants are usually spaced in rows 7 to 9 feet apart with plants 4 to 5 feet apart in the row. A growing season of 140 days or more is required for their maturity. Here at the UCSC Farm in '95, seeds were started 3/28 and harvested about the end of September, so about 180 days. The first flowers will all be male blossoms and are only on the lateral branches. Increase your laterals and you have more fruit. As soon as the main vine reaches 10 feet, cut off its end. This produces sub-laterals which you allow to grow as long as they can. Withdraw feed and water about 45 days before expected maturity. An indication of maturity is the drying or turning brown of the attaching stem. Note: If you plan to grow more than one variety and plan to save seed for your next crop, you must grow the plants far enough apart to prevent hybridization or you must hand pollinate.

For best results, gourds should cure slowly; it is not uncommon for those of the *Lagenaria* group to be several months to a year in curing. When gourds are first gathered, they should be washed in some

disinfectant to prevent development of molds, and then dried in a dry, well-ventilated space. Although this is considered the best approach, many large growers simply leave the crop in the field over the winter, exposed to the elements.

Assuming that you have grown, cleaned and dried your gourd crop, you now decide what to do with them. Make bird houses, paint, pressure engrave or pyroengrave, make Christmas tree ornaments, wreaths, dolls, hats and all types of dishes.

Sources of information:

- *The Gourd Book* - Charles B. Heiser Jr. Paperback found at Santa Cruz Bookstores
- American Gourd Society, PO Box 274 GE, Mt. Gilead, Ohio 43338-0274
- *Profitable Gourd Crafting*, Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 N.Pacific Hwy., Albany, Oregon 97321
- *Useful and Ornamental Gourds*, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Farmers Bulletin #1849
- *The Essential Gourd*, Art and History in Northeastern Nigeria, Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles

Also, you might visit Rhythm Fusion in Santa Cruz to see the variety of instruments made from gourds.

(Continued from page 5)

Here are some feature plants for the 1996 Spring Plant Sale—

Roses

It's looking like an "on" year for roses at the Spring Plant Sale. This "motley" collection features a "greatest hits" approach of the best of the old and relatively new classes and varieties. The method of propagation of these roses is from cuttings. Roses grown "on their own roots," as opposed to budded or grafted stock, offer some distinct advantages. To quote the "doyenne" (French for queen) of garden rose aficionados Gertrude Jeckyll from her *Roses for English Gardens*: "They are much longer lived, they give more bloom, they bloom continuously, and they throw up no troublesome suckers. Grafted plants may be best for production of show blooms, but the bush is out of the category of beautiful things in the garden, whereas own roots roses fulfill their best purpose as garden plants."

The main drawbacks to "own root roses" are: not all types can be propagated this way. Modern bush roses are particularly finicky in this regard — thus accounting for the hit and miss nature of our varietal list.

While growth rates differ among varieties in general, "own root roses" are somewhat slower to

reach blooming size than their grafted counterparts. While our stock is a bit smaller, so are our prices. Among this year's offerings —

Hybrid musk roses

- Buff Beauty
- Cornelia
- Will Scarlet (climbing and bush forms)
- Bloomfield Dainty

Hybrid teas

- Kentucky Derby
- Gold Medal

Floribunda

- Bonica

Climbers

- Souleanna
- Dr. Van Fleet
- Banksia lutea*

Shrub Roses

- Mutabilis

There are only a handful of some of these varieties, so shop early!

Vegetable Starts

With each passing year, we have added greater diversity of varieties and number of 6-packs at the Spring Plant Sale. This seems to be a "win-win"

(Continued on next page)



Heuchera

—Illustration by Margaret Bonaccorso

situation. We feel better about providing food plants as well as ornamentals (rumor has it there are fruit trees on the horizon, before the millennium) and the response (some call it a feeding frenzy) has been heart-warming (not to mention lucrative).

I might add that raising 6-packs in a soil/compost-based organic soil mix is difficult as well as space and time consuming. The warm season species—tomatoes, eggplants, peppers—and the whole host of basil must be started in flats with bottom heat in early February, pricked out into 6-packs in late March, and then shepherded through the back and forth weather that seems to have become the new spring norm.

The seeds for most of our vegetable and flower varieties are provided by the capable folks at Shepherd's Garden Seeds (6116 Highway 9, Felton), who have combined quality with a blend of reliable heirloom and cutting edge varieties. Among the vegetable 6-packs available will be broccoli, lettuce, salad mix (see below), squashes, and cucumbers, as well as those mentioned above. Flower 6-packs will include asters and zinnias.

Salad Mixes

Mesclun is the term given to a mixture of tender young lettuces and greens. Although the ingredients can vary, Mesclun's hallmark is a wonderful combination of colors, textures and flavors, quick to harvest and ready to serve with just a simple dressing. Today in France, and increasingly in Santa Cruz markets, big baskets of these mixed baby leaves are offered in groceries and in green grocers stalls for instant, no-work salads.

Growing Mesclun mix provides a large diversity of salad greens from a small, concentrated growing space. Whenever you want a superb salad, simply go into the garden and snip the necessary quantity of young leaves off with scissors for ready-to-use, mixed baby leaves. After cutting, water and lightly fertilize the cut plants' crowns and the Mesclun will regrow for continuous "cut and come again" harvests.

Our Plant Sale will feature 6-packs of Garden Salad Mix which will include: cutting lettuces, arugula, mache, chervil, mizuna, mustard, red mustard, red chard, and tatsoi.

Everlastings/Immortelles

Everlastings, immortelles or dried flowers are all terms used interchangeably for that unique category of flowers that retain their color and form long after harvest. Most everlastings differ from

fresh-cut flowers in that they have a very low moisture content even when they are alive and growing. Their culture is easy: good sun, moderate to light-textured soils (improved clays, silts and sands), moderate to low water and nutrient needs. In a sense, given the proper environmental conditions and a modicum of care, they practically grow themselves.

Of course, the term everlasting is a bit of a misnomer. Depending on the time of harvest (ideally, before flowers are fully opened), the ambient humidity and light (ideally low), some everlastings will stay beautiful for months, others for seasons or years. They last longest out of direct sun.

This year the Spring Plant Sale features a wide spectrum of both annual and perennial everlasting flowers. The annuals will come into bloom in 6 to 8 weeks and offer you bounteous armfuls of fresh (yes, they can be used as fresh-cut flowers too) and dried flowers. Some like strawflowers (*Helichrysum*) and love-in-a-mist (*Nigella*) will over-winter along the coastal strand. Perennials may take a year or two to fully establish their productivity. They are well worth the wait because like most perennial flowers they offer a subtlety of color and intriguing architectural form (stem, flower and plant) that eclipse their gaudy, flower factory-oriented, annual kin.

Below are the species of everlastings we gladly offer this year -

Annuals

Bells of Ireland
Helichrysum
Helipterum
Honesty
Nigella
Xeranthemum

Perennials

Achillea spp. - Yarrow
Centaurea montana - Mountain Bluet
Delphinium spp.
Helichrysum lanatum
Lavendula spp. - Lavenders
Limonium spp. - Perennial Statice
Origanum spp. - Oregano, Marjoram
Phlomis fruticosa - Jerusalem Sage
Phlomis lanata
Salvia farinacea
Santolina spp.
Stachys hidalgo
Stachys lanata - Woolly Lamb's Ear

Grasses

Ornamental grasses accent foliage, flower and color, often all in the same specimen, over the course of the seasons. They are valuable for their softening effect, especially when set against rigid right-angled building materials in the home or institutional garden.

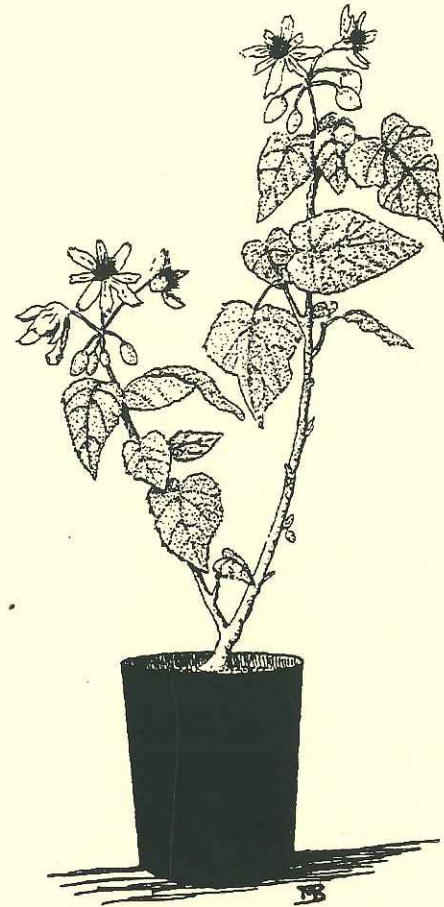
Ornamental grasses possess many of the qualities that recommend them to the resource-efficient gardener. They are able to improve the very soil they grow in, contributing a steady supply of organic matter by the sloughing off of dead roots. This phenomenon reduces the need for fertility amendments to achieve continued good growth. Additionally, grasses could be dubbed "undemanding" as their needs and cultural requirements. Given a relatively fertile, well-drained soil, an open sunny situation, moderate water and relative freedom from weed competition, they will flourish with minimal care from the gardener.

At the Farm & Garden, we have been propagating ornamental grasses for your garden. We suggest you pick some of these up at the Spring Plant Sale –

- Eragrostis trichoides* – Sand Love Grass
- Festuca glauca* – Blue Fescue
- Helictotrichon sempervirens* – Blue Oat Grass
- Miscanthus sinensis 'gracillimus'* – Maiden Grass
- Pennisetum setaceum 'rubrum'* – Red Fountain Grass
- Stipa tenuissima* – Mexican feather grass

Lavenders

This year we are again pleased to offer a number of selections from the genus *Lavandula*. Lavenders form a relatively small group of evergreen sub-shrubs, highly valued in the garden for their gray-green foliage and fragrant flowers. Principally of Mediterranean coastal and inland hillside origin, lavenders are well adapted to our rain-free summer climate. As in their native habitat, they virtually all require full sun and good drainage to thrive. Nutrient-rich soil, however, is not essential, and in some cases may produce excessive vegetative growth at the expense of floral abundance. Once established, i.e., a complete summer in the ground, lavenders need only infrequent watering, as little as once a month near the coast. All of this year's selections will tolerate the winter frost conditions that prevail in the mountains around Santa Cruz, especially if not placed in low spots in the garden where cold air tends to accumulate.



Sparmania Africana

—Illustration by Margaret Bonaccorso

Widely grown in gardens throughout the west, lavenders are prized both for their attractive nature and ease of care. Fragrant flowers, produced primarily in late spring and summer, are borne on short to long (species dependent) upright stems, their variously blue to purple blossoms add a subtle but obvious contrast to their gray-green foliage. In most cases, the flowering period of individual species can be extended through regular removal of spent blooms. Or try cutting larger quantities earlier on, which can be displayed either fresh or dried.

Virtually all varieties can be kept neat and compact, as well as providing stronger subsequent blooms, though annual light pruning and shaping. In frost-free areas this is best accomplished in the fall, but with or without the likelihood of frost, late winter to early spring (February to March) is also a suitable time to prune. Regardless of what varieties you choose, lavenders are assured to provide a wealth of visual and olfactory pleasure.

Backyard Acrobats

by Margaret Bonaccorso

In past winters our large backyard persimmon tree has been a favorite dining spot for many of our local birds, but this December a different group of residents moved in for the feast. Grey squirrels, which have nested in our Modesto ash trees for years and regularly harvest the neighbor's walnuts, had never attempted the art of persimmon purloining before—at least not from our tree. I guess after years of envying the birds their winter treat, some inventive, Thomas Edison-type squirrel finally figured out the winning technique and taught the rest.

It's obvious that the direct approach to persimmon snacking would never work. A plump, well fed squirrel climbing out on a small limb already burdened with a heavy fruit would only send the branch dipping earthward and the squirrel leaping for safety without his prize. No, considerably more strategy is called for, and here's how it goes. Choosing a sturdy branch approximately a body-length above the chosen persimmon, the squirrel grabs the branch tightly with his hind feet, then lets its upper body swing down so its front paws can grab the fruit. Now, hanging upside down, dinner begins. Picture a tree with four or five squirrels hanging like monkeys, munching on persimmons. I assure you, it's quite a sight.

When the squirrel has its fill, it just curls up, grabs the upper branch with its front paws and scampers off to take care of other squirrelly pursuits.

I've always enjoyed watching the antics of our bushy-tailed neighbors, but the raiding of our persimmon tree was squirrel acrobatics at its best.



—Illustration by Margaret Bonaccorso

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