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LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

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DOUBLE FIELD TRIP: TWO tours for the price of one. Please note the early time for La Verne Nursery. Both locations are only a few miles from each other.

Date: May 26th

Tour #1: LaVerne Nursery, Piru
9:00 am start time

Program: **For Members Only, please.** Daniel Nelson Director of Nursery Operations will lead us on a tour of the nursery. Pre-ordered trees will be available afterwards. Trees must be purchased in advance; order forms will be provided by email prior to the field trip.

Tour #2: 2BGreen Farms, Fillmore
11:00 am start time

Program: **Avocado picking and much more!** Patti and Eric Breyfogle are growers of California avocados. They both began their careers in the high tech industry in 1996. Since then, they have continued to work with technology in a corporate environment. They have leveraged their technology expertise in their growing efforts as well. They grow amazing tomatoes and greens with their system of Aquaponics and use worm castings and tea to amend their soils. An abundance of honey bees pollinate their beautiful trees.

MEETING: **Garett Long: "Soil Health and Regenerative Practices"**

Date: June 23, 2018 at 10:00 am

Place: Sepulveda Gardens
16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, CA 91316

Program: Garett Long of Apricot Lane Farms will speak on "Soil Health," featuring an update on academia's understanding of soil organic matter, and a practical guide to supporting the soil food web and improving soil health on any scale. Garett is a self-proclaimed "soil geek." After studying biology in his home state of Washington, he moved to Moorpark, California to further explore his passion for plants, animals, conservation and ecology through a volunteer program at Apricot Lane Farms, a diverse, 213-acre organic and biodynamic farm. It was here - making compost, caring for sheep and tending 100 acres of fruit - he realized the interconnectedness of all life and uncovered a deep love for soil. In 2014, he left the farm to pursue a MS in Soils & Biogeochemistry at UC Davis, only to return again. He is currently the Research & Outreach Coordinator at Apricot Lane Farms. He is particularly interested in the relationship between farming practices, soil health and nutritional quality of food.

All Members: if your last name begins with A-M please bring something for our refreshment table.

SAVE THE DATES - CALENDAR FOR 2018 LA CHAPTER

- July – *No CRFG meeting this month* to allow attendance at the 2018 Festival Of Fruit on July 26-30 in Campbell, CA. To attend, please register at www.festivaloffruit.org/registration.
- August 25th - Sepulveda Gardens
- September 22nd - Field Trip
- October 27th - Sepulveda Gardens
- November 17th - Field Trip
- December 15th - Sepulveda Gardens - Holiday Party

Words From Our Chairman



Now that spring has arrived and we're heading into summer we're all enjoying seeing our trees come back to life from their dormancy. My avocado trees have babies coming and I hope that they hold the fruit because I have many of my varieties fruiting for the first time! Some of our members are reporting how beautiful their Red Baron peach trees are now that they are in full bloom. Others have reported that they have pineapples fruiting for the first time on their pink pineapple plant.

If you missed the recent meeting where we learned about the Los Angeles rise from cows to concrete, it was a very informative speech by the ladies who wrote a very informative book on the history of Los Angeles and how it used to be such a huge farmland from downtown to the outlying areas.

I look forward to our next event, which is going to be a field trip on May 26. We are going to attend LaVerne Nursery in Piru which is located off the 5 Freeway west on the 126 Highway. We will experience a great tour of their facility and will have an opportunity to purchase some of the plants that they sell throughout the Southern California area. Immediately following, we will have an opportunity to go picking avocados at a ranch in the nearby Fillmore area. They also have a great demonstration of aquaponics and hydroponics, including a tank with tilapia fish, which feeds their hydroponic garden. Avocados will be available to pick and purchase while we are at the tour. Let's come out and support a local family that has an avocado ranch.

I also hope that everyone is considering attending the Festival of Fruit July 26-30 in the San Jose area. It will be a great event and some amazing tours are available for us to take while we're in the San Jose area of local gardens and members of their CRFG chapter.

Enjoy the beautiful weather in our gardens.

Tony

LOOKING BACK

By Debbie Schopper, Member at Large
And Debbie Oisboid, Newsletter Editor

March Meeting

Rain didn't deter this month's meeting at the Sylmar High School Agriculture Learning Center for the 6th annual "Fruit Tree Symposium." Instructor Steve List and his students were our hosts. Students greeted us with coffee, juice, infused and bottled waters, donuts, and pan dulce as we entered. Garden tours of the amazing grounds of the high school were led by students. We saw the green houses and hot houses where the plants begin and are later transplanted into larger containers or sometimes used in beautiful displays such as the succulent arrangements planted in a wheelbarrow, fountain and even a child's dump truck by student Savannah.



Tom Spellman, from the Dave Wilson Nursery, was our Fruit Tree Symposium speaker. Tom also gave a demonstration on fruit tree pruning. The first cut of his demonstration (which removed half of the sapling's height)

brought about cringing and "oohs." In addition to pruning, Tom covered such topics as:

Backyard planting. Think differently and not like a farmer. Space trees closer, plant several fruit trees in one hole, use closely spaced trees to form a hedge, keep trees shorter and fuller and prune for larger fruit, not more fruit.

Irrigation. Don't waste water, pay attention, make sure there's no runoff, only irrigate when needed, use a moisture meter.

Fertilization. Think 6 months on and 6 months off for trees in the ground and 9 months on and 3 months off for container trees. Use nitrogen for growth, phosphorus and potash for flowers.

Pesticides: Identify your problem and consider how to take care of it organically first. Understand the product you use. Know about wind direction, protecting yourself, and remember a high pressure hose with water can eliminate 90% of pests.

We all enjoyed a pot luck lunch, a huge tree raffle, ice cream from Helados Pops (lucuma, guayaba and avocado/almond flavors), and a display of handmade soaps and oils from Mandy Gough of XOM3.

April Meeting - "From Cows to Concrete"

We had quite the history lesson at our April 28 meeting. Dr. Rachel Surls and Judith Gerber, co-authors of the book From Cows to Concrete, took turns telling us the fascinating story of how Los Angeles grew from a fertile land full of wild grapevines where Downtown LA now stands, to the modern urban sprawl we now know. We learned about the very beginning of our city with first mission - San Gabriel - and the rise and popularity of cattle ranching when hides were considered the currency of the new state and were even called "California Bank Notes". It was surprising to discover the initial attempts to popularize citrus as a cash crop failed until the Gold Rush of the 1850's. With the rise of railroads the state boomed and land itself became the biggest "crop". We saw slides of the LA Aqueduct being built, the beginning of suburbs, how houses began encroaching on farms, and then incorporated farming in the Back to the Land movement of the 1960's and 1970's. It was a captivating and enlightening presentation and we thank Dr Surls and Ms Gerber for sharing our own history with us in such a beautiful way.

The Persimmon Pest – Part 2

By Joan Citron
(Inspired by last month's story)

I have grown persimmons (Hachiya, Fuyu, and Giant Fuyu, and another, marked as Giant Fuyu, but apparently something else) for about 40 years, and while in some years the crop has been large, it has

never been overwhelming. But for about 4 years there was no fruit at all. And then last year, the crop was huge. So I pondered what was different.

Pruning!

In most years, the trees were lightly pruned, mostly to keep them at what I considered to be a reasonable height - about 10-12 feet. Fruit production was generally good, but not overwhelming. But then, for reasons un-remembered, the trees were pruned severely for several years. And there was essentially no fruit. In 2016, I got too busy and the trees got almost no pruning. And in 2017 the crop was incredible. On one tree, the "fruit fall" covered the ground. And all of the others produced reasonable crops.

What I decided, after thinking about what happened, was the following: Persimmons bloom and bear fruit on new wood. However, if you cut off the year's new growth the following winter, the flowers produced the next spring, on new wood, do not seem to set fruit. But new wood, produced on last year's growth, blooms and sets fruit - a lot of fruit.

This year, the trees have been only lightly pruned, and I will be watching closely to see what happens!

The Anatomy of Garden Weeds: Part 1

By Roy Imazu

For those of us who work in the garden, weeds are as synonymous as dirt, water, and sunshine. Choose any sunny bare plot of dirt and give it some water, and in time weeds will be sprouting up. May I expound on the subject more by providing a definition? Weeds are plants that are growing in the wrong place. In the proper situation, they would be considered a welcome plant.

For example kikiyu and Bermuda grass are, in most scenarios, a pest and an intruder that needs to be eliminated. But at many parks and playgrounds, those grasses have become established on their own with minimal help and are welcome. In the Imperial Valley, Bermuda grass is grown for zoo elephant fodder. Another example is dandelion. In most cases, it would be eliminated by several means. However, it is also grown on farms to be harvested as a salad item.

The next step is to understand the propagation process. The more common method is through

seeds. And each plant will make huge amounts. Mankind benefits in the case of grains such as wheat and rice. Some plants multiply by developing underground bulbs and tubers. Through vegetative propagation, the stolon and rhizome portions of Bermuda grass will form new plants. This hardy weed needs only a tiny crack in the pavement to get established.

Why not have a gardening philosophy of “live and let live” and co-existence? Some would rather pursue a goal of purity. Their goal is one variety and not a multitude. Also, your crop may suffer in productivity when it has to compete with other plants. Your crop may even have to be thinned-out for maximum production.

In future articles, I will discuss the prevention and control of weeds through use of pesticides and non-chemical means.

I was a gardener since 1960 in the SF Valley and held a C-27 landscape contractor and State pest control license since 1975 prior to my retirement in 2015. I was in charge of the irrigation system and weed control at St. Nicholas Church at Balboa and Plummer in Northridge for 10 years.

--Roy Imazu

A Plant To Dye For?

By Deborah Oisboid, editor

It's not a rare fruit - in fact, its byproduct is “not approved for consumption” by the FDA. But this evergreen shrub is a fascinating plant with a rich history, and which might really enjoy the hot summers of Los Angeles. (I'll let you know next year!)

Camphire. Mignonette Tree. Indian Mehndi. Egyptian Privet. *Lawsonia inermis*. Hina. Henna.

Henna has been used since antiquity as a dye plant. The leaves contain the dye molecule lawsone with the highest concentration in the petiole, the central vein of the leaf. Crushed leaves produce a reddish-brown dye that is temporary on human skin. The dye can be processed for a more permanent color on fabrics.

Henna has been used for centuries to dye leather, wool and cotton. The bark, stems, and seeds have been used medicinally for centuries in the Orient.

The plant is native to Egypt and other parts of North and South Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Near East and South Asia. It was traditionally used as a windbreak for vineyards. Henna was introduced to Europe at the end of the 19th century. These days it is widely cultivated in

China, Pakistan, India, the West Indies and Australia, as well as in its native countries.

Henna is a member of the Loosestrife family (*Lythraceae*), a family that includes crepe myrtles, cigar plants, and pomegranates. A single species makes up the entire *Lawsonia* genus. It is a variable, often spiny



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shrub with dark green, pointed leaves which have a tea-like aroma. Small white to pink, highly scented flowers grow in panicles/ clusters mainly in summer. The flowers are attractive to bees and butterflies, including the Monarch. The “fruit” is a dry capsule with many seeds. The branches do not tend to grow thicker with pruning.

Lawsonia inermis grows better in dry soil than damp soil, thriving in sunny positions and heavy soils. In the wild it can be found on plains, low hills, and river banks. It thrives in heat up to 120F degrees and, in fact, produces more dye at these temperatures. But it does not tolerate frost, will wilt at temperatures below 50F, and will die if the temperature drops below 40F.

Henna can be propagated from seed (when soil is above 65F), from softwood cuttings in the spring, and from hardwood cuttings in autumn.

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Letters to the Editor

Have a suggestion? A question? A story to share? Send it to editor@crfg-la.org and see it published here!