LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

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http://www.crfg-la.org

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EVENT
Date: Saturday, September 26, 10:00 am
Location: TBD
Event: Bill Brandt Garden Tour with Hands-On Demonstration of Proper Pruning Techniques (Chapter members only!)

Bill Brandt's garden is enviable!!! Bill has been with CRFG for multiple decades and is remarkably knowledgeable and effective at getting fruit to grow. Bill's orchard is impressive, with many thriving fruit trees including beautiful and delicious mangos, apples, avocado, grapes, macadamias - 27 fruit trees in all. Bill will show us how to do end-of-summer pruning, which encourages fruit buds to mature into next year's spring blossoms. He will also show how to do a bark graft on an avocado.
PS – there will be a potluck lunch after the tour, so bring something to share for at least 4-6 people.

EVENT
Date: Saturday, October 24
Location: L.A. Arboretum (TBD)
Event: Fruit Tour (Chapter members only!)

The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, 127 acres, is an arboretum, botanical garden, and historical site nestled into hills near the San Gabriel Mountains in Arcadia. They have a fabulous selection of rare fruit trees, as well as a Library full of remarkable resources, modern and historical. There may be a small entry fee.

Save the date!
CALENDAR FOR L.A. CHAPTER 2026
November 28 TBD
December 19 Holiday Party

TAKE A LOOK!

Have you seen our chapter website lately? It's been completely revamped, with a new, clean look and lots of great information. www.crfg-la.org

You can find a copy of the "Propagation for Fun" presentation here, with full color photos: https://crfg-la.org/index.php/2026/07/08/how-to-get-free-plants-propagation-methods/

LOOKING BACK

By Sarah Bacon & Deborah Oisboid

July 25 – Jim & Eileen's Garden Oasis

July is a lovely month for touring gardens, and we got to visit a very special one that month. Jim and Eileen's garden adventure began over 20 years ago with the creation of what they call the "Citrus Grove" - 7 semi-dwarf citrus trees (3 lemons, 3 oranges and a grapefruit) along the northern property fence. The front yard was then re-imagined with raised gardens, fountains, statuary, a dry creek bed and an herb garden. There are now 20 fruit trees in the front yard (nothing is duplicated), along with an herb garden and an experiment with raspberries.

Despite their swimming pool taking up most of the usable space (1/3 of the backyard is a steep hill), they still created an oasis on the patio with 2 pergolas. The primary pergola has grape and passionfruit vines on the posts surrounding a firetable, along with patio furniture, a daybed, outdoor speakers, and a small fountain. The second pergola is on the hill and provides shelter for mango and starfruit trees with grapevines and dragonfruit vines growing on the posts.

Keeping with the edible garden theme, they added a California Bay Laurel tree (bay leaves for cooking), a few blueberry plants in 1/2 wine barrel planters, and a hedge along the side of the pool (to prevent dirt and rocks from the hill from sliding into the pool) made of Blue Tuscan rosemary (the best variety for cooking purposes). All of this is on a standard 7500 square foot property!

We learned a bit about the origin of Sylmar. Historically known for its sylvan olive trees, Sylmar traces itself back to the founding of the San Fernando Mission in the 18th century. It was once the largest olive orchard in the world, about 2000 acres. In 1893, the city name was changed to "Sylmar" - a fusion of the Latin words for "forest" (sylva) and "sea" (mar), representing the sea of olive trees, Their silver-blue leaves would look like the ocean when the wind blew through them.

There are still some original olive trees in Sylmar, if you look for them.

Touring the garden, we got to see some very special trees:

- Yellow long-necked fig
- Plumeria brought back from Hawaii
- Nagasaki Wase loquat from Japan.
- Black sapote (looks like chocolate pudding, tastes like melon, size of a baseball!)
- Spice Zee Nectaplum by Zaiger Genetics
- Allspice from Jamaica (unripened berries are oven dried as a spice, or add leaves are added to tea)
- Persian mulberry ("Shahtoot"; the berry juice will stain ANYTHING, best flavor in the world, needs fertilizer)
- Pakistan Mulberry
- Several Birds of Paradise, in honor of their golden retriever
- Gold Nugget mandarin (delicious!!)
- Hood Pear (tastes like Bartlett)
- Fuyu persimmon (crunchy, 200-300 chill hours, early harvest)
- Minnie Royal and its pollinator Royal Lee (cherries)
- Negronne, aka "Violetta du Bordeaux," black fig
- Eva's Pride peach (freestone, early)
- Bearss lime (no thorns, seedless)
- Anna apple (a low-chill Golden Delicious variety that can grow in warm climates such as Israel)
- Pineapple guava (wait until they fall on the ground to know they are ripe)
- Baba red raspberry (their "experiment" which succeeded)
- Angel red pomegranate (originally covered in netting to protect from pests, now harvested)
- Oro Blanco grapefruit
- Meyer improved lemon from China (cross between lemon and orange)
- Satsuma mandarin (semi-seedless, easy peeling)
- Valencia orange
- Washington and Lane Late Harvest navel oranges
- Ponderosa lemon (5 lb lemon, floral flavor, not too acidic)
- Pink lemonade lemon (variegated leaves and fruit, everbearing = fruit & flowers at same time)

- California bay laurel for cooking. (use more leaves when used fresh)
- Tuscan blue rosemary (best variety for cooking)
- Ruby Red dragonfruit (larger, purple inside), and "Delight" dragonfruit (smaller, purple inside).
- PTN1 mango from Papaya Tree Nursery (culls itself)
- Kajang starfruit (sweet, natural dwarf, does not like wind)
- Black Monukka grape
- Giant Grenadilla passion fruit (pulp taste like melon)
- Purple passion fruit (grown in barrels, they get very thirsty and need water daily)
- Venus grape (grows like a weed)
- Blueberries – Sharpblue, O'Neal, Emerald, and Bountiful Blue (grown in azalea mix, in rolling platforms for easy moving)
- Concord grape from the San Gabriel Mission

Some of the things we learned:

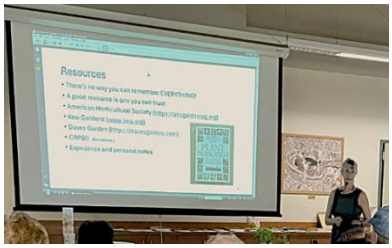
- They use plastic chicken fencing in the front yard to prevent raccoons from digging up the smaller plants.
- Citrus only require watering every 2 weeks.
- Navel oranges are ready to harvest in winter, but Valencia usually ripens in summer.
- If you use protective tree bags, get them with a zipper!
- They use quick release connections and splitters on their hoses. Get solid brass! Plastic won't last.
- Use shade cloth to protect from wind as well as sun.
- They use Arco dei pommadori ("arch of tomatoes"), an arch-shaped structure for supporting tomatoes and other plants.

Following the tour there was a scrumptious potluck lunch (served inside to survive the heat), with seating on their lovely patio oasis for the braver souls. It was a lovely day with amazing things to admire and plenty learn about! We thank Jim and Eileen very much for their generous hospitality.

August 22 – Propagation for Fun

Deborah Oisboid introduced herself as "Hello – my name is Plant Killer." But thanks to her persistence, she still manages to propagate quite a lot of plants.

She showed us many different types of propagation: by seeds and bulbs (and corms and rhizomes), by cuttings, by division, and by other methods.



Seeds are the most obvious way to start new plants, and we learned the different parts of a seed. The biggest part of the seed is taken up in food storage.

We also learned about "ancient" seeds which were brought back to life and germinated hundreds of years later, such as Egyptian date palm seeds (>2000 year old seeds which sprouted with scientific assistance) and lotus seeds (>1300 year old seeds which sprouted naturally after soaking).

Seeds need moisture, food, the right germination temperature, and the correct amount of light. Some sprout better close to the soil surface (California poppies). Others need to be deeper in the ground. Some seeds require temperature cycling ("stratification"), which duplicates a cold season followed by a warm season. This triggers germination in the seed, which thinks it's the right season to come to life.

Where can you get seeds from? You can buy, trade, or collect seeds directly from a plant. You can join a seed swap group. Sometimes you can find sprouted seeds inside apples, oranges, peppers, and other fruit. Give them a try!

Someone mentioned that garlic is easy to grow. (Garlic is a bulb, not a seed, but he wasn't wrong.)

Division is when you dig up a plant and break it up at the roots. Many plants become potbound or root-tangled, and benefit greatly from division, which gives them room to spread out new roots.

Cacti and succulents are easy to propagate in our warm, dry climate. Be sure to wait a few days, so the cut edges have enough time to dry and scab over before planting. The open cut can become infected and rot if planted too soon. Succulents can not only be propagated by stem cuttings, but leaves can also produce whole new plants from the base of the cut.

When it comes to cuttings, there's a huge range to work with. Softwood cuttings are the tender, first flush of growth. They have high rooting potential but low survivability because they lose water quickly. Try rooting them in water.

Greenwood cuttings have firmer stems and may be easier to handle and produce roots. Semi-ripe cuttings are when buds begin to develop. And hardwood cuttings have dry bark on the outside. Hardwood

cuttings root best when cut from dormant plants and are best grown in a planting medium (sand or soil).

When propagating by cuttings, cut stems to 3-5 nodes (where the leaves grow, and where adventitious roots will grow). Put the bottom two nodes in water or planting medium. Deborah uses sandboxes which are 18" deep. The sand maintains moisture against the stems, while allowing softer roots to branch out. Rooted cuttings are also very easy to dig up for repotting.

A plastic clamshell was displayed, which contained several great examples of cloned leaves: African violet leaves and begonia leaves can produce entire new plants with roots if you bury the stem and bottom part of the leaf in moist soil. The clamshell maintains high humidity without the need to water it daily.

"Adventitious" roots are how plants naturally propagate themselves. Natural layering is when the plant stem touches the ground and shoots out roots. (Think of blackberry vines.) Tip layer is the same but only at the tip of the plant. (Think of strawberries.)

Air layering is a way to force the growth of roots in the middle of a branch. Deborah provided detailed instructions for this method, which includes cutting the bark, applying hormone paste, and wrapping with moss, then several layers to maintain moisture and keep out the sun. It takes a couple of months to grow enough roots for an air layered plant to become independent.

Finally, we were advised how to look up whether a plant is patented or not. Patents last 20 years, and it is illegal to propagate and resell a patented plant. Trademarks differ in that you can propagate but cannot SELL it using the original name. For example, "Pink Lady" apples are trademarked.

A lot of useful information was also provided by the meeting attendees. California has some of the strongest agricultural regulations of any state, and we should be aware of the import rules and which plants are prohibited from entering the state due to risk of spreading diseases.

www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/PE/transport_animals_plants.html

Bill Brandt recommended that air layered plants should have their mature leaves removed when transplanting, leaving only the youngest leaves to produce food for the plant, as the older leaves won't send as much energy into root production. This might apply to rooted cuttings as well.

Someone asked if you can propagate Matilija poppies from stem cuttings. Although the question was not answered at the meeting, later research suggests it would be possible. Hopefully that person will try and let the rest of us know how successful he was!

Several people brought plants to share for propagating. Deborah brought purple Okinawa potato cuttings, and rooted cuttings from a white sweet potato which started growing in her pantry. There were also spider plant and strawberry babies (good for "tip propagation"), *plectranthus* (also called Cuban oregano or Mexican mint) cuttings (good for rooting in water), and rose apple seeds.

After the meeting, we had two special announcements and a second event. The first announcement was from Alasdair Burton of the Foothill CRFG chapter (https://foothill.crfg.org/) They will be holding an informative meeting on December 6 to discuss the proposed California "Zone Zero" garden rules, which insist that no plants may approach within 5 feet of a structure in a fire zone – ir perhaps in general. There will be several fire department personnel to help answer questions.

The second announcement was from Eve Guth, who introduced an entire collection of propagation equipment which was put up for sale using the "silent auction" method. This equipment included grow lights, potting materials (pods and coir), heat pads, misters, and many other useful tools. Items which were not sold at the meeting will be available again in the future.

We then were introduced to representatives from L.A. Compost who told us about their project. They collect food scraps at farmers' markets, and from donations by the general public, compost it down, and make it available again at special events. They have several composting facilities around the city, including one at Sepulveda Garden Center. (See www.lacompost.org for more information.)

After the introduction we were invited onto the back patio to participate in a sifting and collection event. We were given finished compost and sifted it into our own containers to bring home. Talk about black gold! You could see how rich it was from the dark color. We were advised to mix it with other soil, because if used it by itself it may be too rich, especially for baby seedlings.

Following all of this excitement (and some sincere hand-washing) we had another scrumptious CRFG-LA potluck, full of delicious foods and desserts, and plenty of home grown fruits and vegetables.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this multi-part event. It was very informative and we all got a lot out of it. Oh, and one last thing to remember. "Soil" is what you grow plants in. "Dirt" is what your vacuum cleaner picks up. {With appreciation to Mark Presky for the quotation.}