

# Let's Talk Plants!

Newsletter of the San Diego Horticultural Society

December 2011, Number 207

## Growing Proteas in Your Garden

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On the Cover: Proteas in a garden setting.

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## SAN DIEGO HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

**Our Mission** is to promote the enjoyment, art, knowledge and public awareness of horticulture in the San Diego area, while providing the opportunity for education and research.



### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Details on membership are on page 20 and at [www.sdhortsoc.org](http://www.sdhortsoc.org)  
For questions contact [membership@sdhortsoc.org](mailto:membership@sdhortsoc.org) or Jim Bishop at (619) 296-9215.

### MEETING SCHEDULE

5:00 – 6:00 Meeting room setup

6:00 – 6:45 Vendor sales, opportunity drawing ticket sales, lending library, plant display

6:45 – 9:00 Announcements, Hot Hort Picks, speaker, opportunity drawing

### MEETINGS & EVENTS IN 2011-2012

- December 3** Coffee in the Garden, Leucadia
- January 9** Scott Calhoun on Provocative Succulents: A Rollicking Trip into the World of Cactus and Succulents
- February 13** Robin Rivet on Trees of Ill Repute: Shifting From Maligned to Benign
- March 12** Susan Heeger and Jimmy Williams on From Seed to Skillet
- March 31** SDHS Tour – Gardens of La Mesa
- April 9** Susan Krzywicki on Fitting California Natives into California-Style Gardens
- May 14** Lorene Edwards Forkner on Small is the New Big
- May 17-20** SDHS Tour – Gardens of the San Francisco Area (see page 5)

**COVER IMAGE:** The big yellow blooms of this protea (photographed by our December speaker) look great in a water thrifty planting bed with succulents and cycads. Find out how to achieve this exotic look in your garden at our December 12th meeting. We'll be selling tickets to win a gorgeous protea floral arrangement to last through the holidays!

[www.SanDiegoHorticulturalSociety.org](http://www.SanDiegoHorticulturalSociety.org)



## Next Meeting: DECEMBER 12, 2011, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

### Topic: BEN GILL ON "GROWING PROTEAS IN YOUR GARDEN"

**Meeting is open and everyone is welcome. Admission: Members/free, Non-Members/\$10. Parking is free.**  
**Meeting Place: Del Mar Fairgrounds, Surfside Race Place, Del Mar; Info: (619) 296-9215**



For December we welcome Ben Gill, founder of California Protea Management and Founding Director of the California Protea Association. Ben will speak about the magnificent members of the proteaceae family, which traces its lineage back 300 million years and provides among the most stunning plants and cutting flowers in gardens today. Hear about Australian banksias, grevilleas, hakeas and isopogons, plus South African leucadendrons, leucospermums and proteas. He will discuss how to grow proteas: location, soil preparation, variety selection, irrigation, fertilization and mulching, shaping, pruning, and harvesting. Ben will share important observations and fascinating experiences accumulated during his extensive international projects and travels.

Gill has been involved with the protea business for over 33 years and has helped develop farms in California, Mexico, Chile, Colombia and China. He has contributed many articles to trade journals, magazines and newspapers, been an expert consultant to television and horticultural news programs. He has participated in the Del Mar Fair as a speaker, display designer, and builder. In 1989 Ben was awarded the Don Diego Trophy. He offers consultation services on development and growing techniques, and serves as Director of the California Association of Flower Growers & Shippers, Director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau, and Founding Director of the Palomar College Arboretum.

For more information visit [www.californiaproteamgmt.com](http://www.californiaproteamgmt.com) and see page 3. 🌿

## Activities Committee

We are organizing an Activities Committee to select topics, work with presenters, and conduct educational classes and hands-on workshops for our members. This year we had three very successful workshops: the Hypertufa Workshop, the Pebble Mosaic Workshop, and the Debra Lee Baldwin Succulent Container Design Workshop. We already have a list of ideas from our membership to get you started. We are looking for a committee chair and two volunteers. A terrific incentive, aside from this being a very fun committee, is that committee members who help out at an activity get to attend it for FREE!

You will work with the Events & Outreach Committee to help identify presenters and set dates. The Public Relations Committee will create and send out email invitations and set up online registrations for each activity. The Activities Committee will handle the logistics to make the magic happen!

If you have good organization skills and would like to be in on the ground floor of launching this exciting committee, email Jim Bishop at [info@sdhortsoc.org](mailto:info@sdhortsoc.org).



## FROM THE BOARD

By Jim Bishop

### 2012 Events and Activities

As 2011 draws to a close, we look forward to a new year filled with outstanding speakers and events so be sure and participate in some of the great San Diego Horticultural Society activities in 2012. And, as always, we will need volunteers to help make all of these events a success.

The **Spring Home & Garden Show** is March 2, 3, and 4 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. We will have a booth again this year. Contact me if you'd like to be involved in the planning for this event.

Our **Spring Garden Tour** is March 31 and will feature gardens in and around Mt. Helix and La Mesa. Tour Coordinator Dannie McLaughlin and her committee members have confirmed outstanding gardens in this unique part of San Diego. This is the first local garden tour of 2012 and definitely not to be missed.

Our **Gardens of the Bay Area** tour is scheduled for May 17-20 (see page 5). It's our tour to the top public and private gardens and nurseries in the San Francisco Bay Area. We'll be staying in Walnut Creek, near the Ruth Bancroft garden. While our days will be filled touring the East Bay, North Bay, and the City, the evenings are yours to sample the wonderful restaurants in downtown Walnut Creek ([www.walnutcreekrestaurants.com](http://www.walnutcreekrestaurants.com)). Or, if you have energy left after a full day of garden touring, our hotel is located next to BART, providing easy access to the East Bay and San Francisco. I recently completed a scouting tour with trip leader Scott Borden of Sterling Tours, and am very excited about the stops we will be making. This tour is for SDHS members only and space is limited so first come, first served. Visit <http://www.sterlingtours.com> for more information and to reserve your space.



## TO LEARN MORE...

By Ava Torre-Bueno

### Proteas Galore!



Protea, the subject of this month's presentation, are OLD plants! "The Proteaceae family to which proteas belong is an ancient one. Its ancestors grew in Gondwanaland, 300 million years ago."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protea>

The California Protea Association has many pages of information: <http://californiaprotea.org>

Next year you can go to Chile for a conference on Protea. Why not?! <http://www.ishs.org/news/?p=1785>

Protea Newsletter International (a trade paper) apparently only had one volume in 2008, but you can read it here:

[http://www.ishs.org/sci/protea\\_1\\_1.pdf](http://www.ishs.org/sci/protea_1_1.pdf)

See page five for interesting agricultural information about San Diego County.

And to see hundreds of pictures of this exotic and wonderful plant, put "Protea" into Google and then click on "images." The plant shown above, photographed by Stan Shebs, is *Protea cynaroides*.

Member Ava Torre-Bueno is a psychotherapist in private practice and the organizer of Gardeners 4 Peace. This group of volunteers is helping to create a peaceful, organic, permaculture garden at the San Diego Friends Center. To learn more contact Ava at [gardeners4peace@hotmail.com](mailto:gardeners4peace@hotmail.com) and visit [sandiegofriendscenter.org/volunteers.htm](http://sandiegofriendscenter.org/volunteers.htm).

## New Membership Brochure

We have a new membership brochure! Rachel Cobb did a great job designing and giving it an up-to-date, professional style. Scott Borden and Susan Morse are shown here displaying the new brochure at our booth at the Master Gardeners Fall Tour – the brochures were a big hit. Be sure and pick some up at a meeting to share with your friends, a local nursery or garden club.



## Monthly Email

If you aren't receiving our monthly email message you are missing out! The monthly email includes:

- Link and password to the newsletter online. All members have access to the online newsletter even if they are also receiving the printed copy.
- Information about events and speakers.
- Information and registration for Coffee in The Garden. This is the only way to reserve your space for the very popular monthly coffees.

To let us know your email address, or if you have a new email address, send an email message that includes your name to [info@sdhortsoc.org](mailto:info@sdhortsoc.org). Your email address will only be used to send email from SDHS. We never share your email address with anyone.



## THE REAL DIRT ON...

By Joan Herskowitz

### The John Tradescants

John Tradescant the Elder (1570-1638), shown here, and his son, John the Younger (1608-1662), are considered the first great gardeners and plant hunters in British history. They were responsible for introducing so many new trees, shrubs, herbaceous and climbing plants into England that they are thought of as the founders of English gardening.

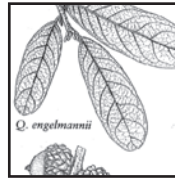


Tradescant the Elder began his career as head gardener for the Earl of Salisbury, and then went on to design gardens on the site of St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, and at New Hall, Essex for the Duke of Buckingham, among others. During this time he was also able to travel on plant collecting trips throughout Europe and to Russia, Algiers, Turkey and the Middle East. He returned from these trips with many new plants, including the apricot, gladioli, horse chestnut, lilac (*Syringia persica*), cherries, tulips, and anemones. He also collected various curiosities of natural history and ethnography, such as fossils, gems, rare birds, coins, poison arrows and other cultural treasures. In 1625, Tradescant leased an estate in Lambeth, and it was here that his collection, augmented by the efforts of his son, became the most extensive in Europe and the first accessible to the general public. It was referred to as "Tradescant's Ark" and then became known as the *Musaeum Tradescantianum*. The surrounding gardens became the premier horticultural nursery in the country. Tradescant's career reached its peak with his appointment to Charles I in 1630 as Keeper of His Majesty's Garden.

The younger Tradescant assisted his father, and in 1638, upon his father's death, he succeeded him in his royal service. He carried on the Tradescant tradition of plant collecting and on one occasion traveled to Virginia, where he collected trees, including magnolia, bald cypress and tulip trees; and garden plants such as phlox and asters. In his declining years, the younger Tradescant decided to leave the collection to the University of Oxford, but wanted his wife to have the income during her lifetime. He had become friendly with Elias Ashmole, a scientist, also a collector of curiosities, and founder of the Royal Society. However, the friendship ended when Ashmole persuaded Tradescant, in a moment of weakness, to sign the collection over to him. Tradescant immediately regretted the gift but the court ruled in Ashmole's favor. In 1691, Ashmole gave the collection to Oxford for the founding of the Ashmolean Museum. A part of the Tradescant's collection of artifacts from around the world can still be seen there.

The Tradescants are buried in the churchyard of St. Mary at Lambeth, which is now home to London's Garden Museum. The museum was set up in 1977 to rescue the church from demolition, and it continues to house exhibits and events on gardening and garden design. The burial tomb is located at the center of a knot garden planted with flowers that grew in the Tradescants' London garden four centuries ago. The genus *Tradescantia*, which contains the New World spiderworts, was named in their honor. *Tradescantia gigantea* is shown at the top left of this article.

Member Joan Herskowitz worked as a Biologist for many years, including time spent on staff at the County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use. Now retired, she is a docent at the San Elijo Lagoon and at San Diego Botanic Garden. ☞



## GOING WILD WITH THE NATIVES

By Greg Rubin

### Ravishing Rhamnus

There are few native shrubs more elegant than our native coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*). This is one of those plants that really messes with people's paradigm of what a native plant looks like. With its luscious evergreen leaves, red stems, and large, multi-colored berries, it is worthy of a place in any type of garden. One of my favorite uses is as a foundation plant in Japanese gardens. This is a shrub that can easily substitute for many ornamentals, like escallonia, raphiolepis, and especially cotoneaster. The popularity of this last one never ceases to amaze me, given that we have a native plant that is as lush and fruitful as this European favorite. Not to mention its natural attractiveness to local bird species.

Coffeeberry can be used in a variety of situations. Although it is highly drought tolerant once established, it can endure some moisture, heavy soils, and fairly heavy shade. The only unsuitable condition appears to be saturated, hot soil. Better to use it in shady conditions in poorly draining, inland sites.

Its leaves are usually dark green, leathery, and ovate. There are some varieties with grayer leaves as well. In fact, there are so many foliar types that it would be fun to devise a garden of just coffeeberry in all of its forms. There is that much contrast in texture, color, and form. This is an excellent shrub to use for the backbone of the garden. It also makes an excellent hedge and screen. It never looks dormant. It's the kind of plant that would look beautifully appropriate outside of an English Tudor (in Britain!). And it stays that way with almost no pruning.

Most natural forms of coffeeberry are large shrubs up to 15 feet tall. However, a number of selections and varieties are available for all types of situations. Here are some of the more popular varieties of *Rhamnus californica* for use in the native garden:

'Seaview' is the lowest growing form of coffeeberry. I have never used it and have not been able to find it locally. However, I am anxious to find it because a groundcover form of this plant would be beautiful as a foreground element and as a slope covering. Coffeeberries are quite fire-resistant when hydrated.

'Mound San Bruno' or 'San Bruno' is a smaller shrub form of coffeeberry, although I have seen it grow to 6 feet or more in the shade. It has smaller leaves and berries and would be excellent as a bonsai subject. It is very adaptable and refined.

'Leatherleaf' is also a somewhat compact form with curled, exceptionally dark leaves.

'Eve Case' is a very popular variety that is densely foliated with thick leaves and grows to about 8 feet. It is wonderful as a background shrub or screen. As with all coffeeberries, the large 1/2" fruit go from green to yellow to red to black; different colored berries are carried at the same time.

'Tranquil Margarita' is a selection introduced by Las Pilitas nursery that has remarkably shiny, green leaves that are reminiscent of citrus or natal plum. It is quite formal looking.

'San Gabriel' has wide, flat, serrated leaves with exceptionally large berries. These bright green, toothed leaves are quite distinguishable from most other varieties.

Member Greg Rubin is the founder and owner of California's Own Landscape Design, Inc. ([www.calown.com](http://www.calown.com)) and a popular speaker. A specialist in the use of native plants in the landscape, he has designed over 500 native landscapes in San Diego County. ☞



## BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Caroline McCullagh

### **We Made A Garden**

By Margery Fish



Every once in a while you have one of those weeks when one good thing leads to another, and I just did. I read in the newspaper that Crown Books, a company that specializes in selling remaindered books (unsold books returned to the publisher) at rock bottom prices, had moved into the space recently vacated by Borders in Mission Valley.

I dropped by Crown and found four great garden books for under twenty dollars total. And three of them involved one of my favorite authors, Michael Pollan. The real prize, however, was finding out that Pollan is editor for a series of garden books published by Modern Library Gardening.

The series includes *We Made a Garden* and nine others: *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett; *The American Gardener*, by William Cobbett; *A Garden of Earthly Delights*, by Joyce Carol Oates; *Green Thoughts*, by Eleanor Perenyi (reviewed here in July 2008); *My Summer in a Garden*, by Charles Dudley Warner; *In the Land of Blue Poppies*, by Frank Kingdon Ward; *The Gardener's Bed-Book*, by Richardson Wright; and *The Gardener's Year*, by Karel Čapek. That last name may ring a bell with you. Čapek, the late Czech writer, coined the word "robot" when he wrote a play called "R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)."

I wouldn't normally burden you with such a long list, but if they're good enough for Michael Pollan, I know they're worth reading.

The first one I read, *We Made a Garden*, is a small book, only 129 pages, originally published in England in 1956. Margery Fish tells about working with her husband, Walter, to create a garden at a country house they purchased in Somerset.

Walter knows a lot more about gardening than Margery does and does not hesitate to tell her so. If they'd been a modern American couple, Margery would probably be writing her memoir from prison after having whacked Walter with a spade. But he seems to please her, and anyway, she has the ultimate revenge. She outlives him and remakes the garden the way she wants it.

They start out by trying to improve the soil. Discovery number one: the soil is heavy clay and rocks. Discovery number two: the area has been used as a rubbish dump – no trash pickup in those days. As they dug and leveled they found, "old beds, rusty oil stoves, ancient corsets, pots, pans, tins and china, bottles and glass jars, and some big lumps of stone which may at one time have been used for crushing grain."

They persevere and triumph to the point that the cover text describes Mrs. Fish as one of Britain's leading gardeners. Ultimately thousands of visitors came to see her garden.

Her chatty discussion of her work gently teaches the reader about the basics of good garden design and technique. She was opinionated, and Walter was, too, but it all works to our advantage.

Note: Crown Books is what is called a pop-up store. They'll be in that location until the first of the year. They hope to stay longer, but there's no guarantee. There are three others in San Diego County.

Note to my readers: I've spent nine years recommending books on gardening and plants to you. I'd love to know if you have any to recommend to me. If so, send them to me at carobil.1@netzero.com. ☺



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

By Linda Johnson

### **Lots of Events to Celebrate the Holidays**

We need someone to take over writing this column ASAP. Please contact Susi Torre-Bueno at 760-295-2173 if you'd like to learn more. Thanks so much, Linda, for a great 3-year run!

### **San Diego Floral Association – Balboa Park December Nights – Dec. 2 and 3**

Enjoy the annual tradition "Festival of Trees" during December Nights at Balboa Park. This year's theme of "Through the Eyes of Children" will highlight the magic of the season as reflected in 20 beautifully decorated trees designed and contributed by garden clubs and plant societies throughout the county. To share the joy of the season, all of the trees are later donated to retirement and assisted living facilities. There will be traditional gingerbread cookies, creative floral designs by the Flower Arrangers Guild, and protea stems for sale, benefiting San Diego Floral Association projects. **Location and times:** Balboa Park Casa del Prado, Room 101, on Friday, Dec. 2, 5:00-10:00 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 3, noon-10:00 p.m. FREE. Contact the San Diego Floral office at (619) 232-5762 for information or visit [www.sdfloal.org/events.htm](http://www.sdfloal.org/events.htm).

And, don't miss the 25<sup>th</sup> annual poinsettia display in the Botanical Building in Balboa Park (photo is from the 2010 event). Hours are 10am-4pm daily (closed on Thursdays), all during the holiday season.



### **Palomar District's Floral Design Forum – Dec. 5**

Attend a presentation by Gudi Kimmel on "Christmas Designs For Your Home" An award-winning floral designer, Gudi has presented floral design programs at various California garden clubs and is a Master Flower Show Judge for garden clubs nationally. Be prepared for some unique design ideas and to have fun while you learn. The fee is \$12 for garden club members, \$15 for guests. **Location and time:** December 5, 12:30 p.m. at the Joslyn Senior Center, 213 Park Avenue, Escondido. For more information call Marcia Townsend at (760) 749-4976.

### **Village Garden Club of La Jolla Holiday Meeting – Dec. 8**

Attend "Tis the Season to Decorate for the Holidays" by Sharon McGukin and learn how to decorate with garden treasures. **Location and time:** Dec. 8, 10:00 a.m., Torrey Pines Christian Church, 8320 La Jolla Scenic Drive North, La Jolla. For information call (858) 454-4117 or visit <http://www.villagegardencluboflajolla.com>.

### **Point Loma Garden Club Annual Holiday Bazaar – Dec. 14**

The Annual Tea and Holiday Bazaar offers great garden-related holiday shopping and a lovely tea with other gardeners. **Location and time:** Dec. 14, 10:00 a.m.- noon, Portuguese Hall, 2818 Avenida de Portugal, San Diego 92106. For information visit <http://www.plgc.org>.

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