



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN SOCIETY NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

An international forum devoted to furthering knowledge and appreciation of plants and gardens suited to the mediterranean climate regions of the world

Number 46
Winter 2015-16

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tilden Walkabout

Bart O'Brien, Director
Regional Parks Botanic Garden
Tilden Regional Park
Sunday, Jan. 17
10:30 AM to 2:00 PM (or so)

Bart O'Brien, former head of *Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden*, has returned to northern California to lead the Regional Parks Botanic Garden at Tilden. He will share with us from his vast stores of knowledge of native plants and lead us on a walkabout through the new Southern California rock garden.

This event will only be cancelled in case of heavy rain. Bring a bag lunch. Email Bracey at braceytd@gmail.com to let us know if you will attend.

— Cheryl Renshaw



photo by John Rusk

Mediterranean Garden Workdays

The Mediterranean Garden at Lakeside Park in Oakland needs you! We have a workday on the first Saturday of the month from 9:00 AM to noon. The City charges for parking, but the parking fee will be waived if you tell the attendant you're there to work at the Mediterranean Garden. Please call *Nancy Swearengen* (510.547.2548) for more information.

— Nancy Swearengen

Upcoming workdays:

Dec. 5	Mar. 5
Jan. 9*	Apr. 2
Feb. 6	May 7



photo by Seán O'Hara

*January's workday is delayed due to New Year's Day.

BRANCH DATEBOOK

Other events of interest to our members:

- Jan. 22 *The History of Florilegium*
10:00 AM
UC Botanical Garden, Berkeley
- Jan. 28 *The Restoration of the Gardens at Alcatraz*
Shelagh Fritz
10:00 AM
UC Botanical Garden, Berkeley
- March 9 *Transforming the Landscape of Waterwise California*
Wendy Proud
7:30 PM
Western Horticultural Society, Los Altos

Stay up-to-date with our upcoming events at:
<http://sites.google.com/site/mgsnorcal/upcoming-events/>

More Northern California garden events are listed on the *Pacific Horticulture* website.



What a Roof!

On a perfect sunny day, we were privileged to tour the recently completed rooftop gardens of Facebook in Menlo Park with Lauren Swezey of Facebook and Chris Guillard, CMG principal and landscape architect who designed the gardens. CMG was also involved in the restoration of Crissy Field in San Francisco. The firm continues to return to this garden and tweak things.

In the garden, mostly California native plants are organized around different habitats that contain trees, shrubs and perennials. It is strictly a no pesticide or fertilizer garden. The roof top contains art pieces and working spaces for thinking and meeting as well as two cafes for snacks and meals. The view is also quite amazing. The employees are so lucky to have this space. The designers originally thought the bay would cause windy, cool conditions, but it's been quite warm so more shade is being added. The roof is nine acres in size and covers a single floor of work space, which in turn covers the parking area.



photos by Bracey and Richard Tiede

Constructed to support five stories of building weight, there is adequate structure for the soil, water and plants on the roof. The garden was finished in March 2015. Perhaps we can arrange another visit in a year or two to see how it's growing.

— Bracey Tiede



Palo Alto Public Gardens

On Sept. 20, a small group of us met at the Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden at Eleanor Pardee Park in Palo Alto to see the waterwise and edible gardens there, followed by a visit to the Mediterranean Garden at Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden. Master Gardener Roberta Barnes talked about the development of the waterwise garden, and Master Gardener Ann Burrell showed us the edible garden, which was originally designed by Susan Bouchez. After lunch under the big oak tree at Gamble Garden, I showed the redesigned mediterranean beds there, two years after they were replanted.



photos by Cheryl Renshaw



In both the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden and in the Gamble mediterranean beds, heavy adobe soil was amended and mounded to improve drainage. We also discussed choosing waterwise plants that survive shade and occasional freezing temperatures. It was a lovely day to wander in the gardens!

— Cheryl Renshaw

FUNICULÌ, FUNICULÀ: *Impressions of the 2015 MGS AGM*

I joined the MGS pre-tour that had been well prepared by Sally Beale (Majorca) and wonderfully organized by Boxwood tours. Eleven of us participated in a six-day adventure around Naples. The tour director from Boxwood, Helena Atlee, that accompanied us and all the guides that had been selected for the different visits were extremely knowledgeable, not only in botany and gardens but also in the different aspect of life relevant to the different sites we visited.

On the first day, we visited the Santa Chiara cloister with its wonderful inner garden marvelously decorated with frescos and majolica tiles. Then the Orto Botanico of Naples was opened for us with a guided visit by the Director, followed by a wonderful evening concert in the Teatro San Marco that has been in the center of opera and music performances over the last 200 years.

On the second day, we went to the Caserta palace that was built by the Spanish Bourbon family to surpass Versailles; its construction was started in 1752 and it is the largest royal residence in the world with some 1200 rooms. King Charles VII of Naples, who requested it, never slept in it. We toured a surprising Italian garden of 2 km long by horse buggy and small buses, followed by a long walk through an adjacent large English garden that was designed after the lady of the house was told that Italian gardens were not “in” anymore. What money can do is amazing. The visit of the living quarters was equally interesting with each of the different owners incorporating their tastes and imprints.

On the following day, we traveled to Capri to enjoy the garden of Axel Munthe’s villa San Michele with its beautiful view of the bay of Naples. A boat ride around the island made us appreciate the beauty of the cliffs and rock formations on the north side.

The visit of Pompeii on the next day was absolutely superb and will merit another trip. As indicated earlier, our guide was great as she was an archeologist that was working on the site. Pompeii is continuously being excavated from under the ashes and new discoveries are made every year. A lunch including spaghetti with garum sauce—a fermented fish sauce used by the Pompeian’s—was served and tantalized our taste buds.



This wonderful pre-tour was concluded with a visit of the Amalfi coast where the best garden visit was probably that of a lemon tree farm. We learned how the limbs and branches from local chestnut trees were used to support the lemon trees, growing on steep terraces in what looked like arbors. The fruits hang down from the top of the arbor making their gathering quite easy. The taste of a complete slice of this variety (Sfusato Amalfitano), including the pulp and the skin, proved to be lightly acidic but tasty. However, the limoncello tasting that ensued was even better appreciated by all of us.

Following the conclusion of the pre-tour we went by ferry to the island of Ischia for the MGS AGM and its associated visits. Ischia is a volcanic island located northwest of Capri and is approximately 3 times larger.



La Mortella where the AGM took place was one of the highlights of our visits as it is a large garden, more a botanical garden, where composer Sir William Walton and his wife Susana resided. Dr. Alessandra Vinciguera, the garden director and an MGS member, made our stay very agreeable and educational. At the conclusion of the AGM, we were treated to a wonderful one-hour concert by three brilliant young performers (violin, viola and cello) that included a piece written by Sir William Walton.

Other visits included a trip to the Aragonese Castle and its gardens as well as a look at an underwater archeological site and its associated museum. In Roman times, after an eruption of the local volcano, the lava that spewed out of the crater created a large underground cavern that collapsed under the weight of the town. This happened very suddenly, in a matter of hours, and most of the population perished.

This trip, to an area of Italy that I did not know, was very interesting and with the always-enjoyable MGS members we tasted many excellent pizze washed down with the local red wine made of Piediroso and Guarnaccia grapes.

— Jean-Pierre Bouchez



*photos by Jean-Pierre Bouchez
top to bottom: Caserta Palace Italian Garden,
view from San Michele, Pompeii Forum*



photo by Cheryl Renshaw

PLANT PROFILE: *Kniphofia 'Christmas Cheer'*

Christmas cheer, it's that time of year! And what could be better than a fall/winter blooming Kniphofia named 'Christmas Cheer'? The genus is commonly known as Poker Plant or Torch Lily and is native to South Africa, that great source of many mediterranean climate plants. Pronunciation may range from nip-HOFF-ee-uh to ny-FOE-fee-ah, all in honor of Johann Hieronymus Kniphof (1704 -1763), a German physician and botanist.

More than 70 species and many, many hybrids of this perennial allows the gardener to choose from pale yellowish-green to bright yellow and bright red and combinations of flower colors. Its clumping growth habit is similar to the closely related Aloe. Plantings may reach 3-5 feet in diameter and 4-7 feet in height. Full sun and soil that drains relatively fast are the order of the day. Kniphofia are said to be hardy to 20°F/-7°C, but the flowers may be affected by frost. Little care is required other than dead-heading and trimming spent leaves.

The 'Christmas Cheer' selection was introduced by Huntington Botanic Gardens in the 1970's and the upper 3/4 of the inflorescence is a very attractive bright orange-red while the lower 1/4 is yellow. This is one of the taller varieties with flower stalks growing to 5 or 6 ft. Like other Kniphofias, it has dark green grass-like leaves. It is thought to be a hybrid and is a great hummingbird magnet. Truly a plant for the holidays.

— Richard Tiede

Online MGS Forums

The international MGS website at <http://mediterraneangardensociety.org/> has two online forums. The Mediterranean Gardening and Plants forum is open to anyone interested. The MGS Members Forum is only open to MGS members, and is a place for members to discuss any topic of MGS interest, apart from gardening.

So, if you want to talk about your garden or your favorite mediterranean climate plant, go to the first forum at:

<http://www.mgsforum.org/smf/index.php>

If you are interested in talking about issues related to the society itself with your fellow MGS members, sign in to the Members Forum at:

<http://www.mgsmembersforum.org/smf/>

— Cheryl Renshaw

Mediterranean Gardening International

The MGi is an international group of independent, affiliated societies with shared interest in mediterranean plants and gardens. Here are links to the MGi and its current members; you may be interested in receiving their newsletters as well:

[Mediterranean Gardening Intl.](#)

[Mediterranean Gardening France](#)

[Mediterranean Gardening Assn. Portugal](#)

[Mediterranean Plants & Gardens](#)

[Mediterranean Gardening Margaret River](#)

[Cape Horticultural Society](#)

— Bracey Tiede

BRANCH OFFICERS

CHAIR

Bracey Tiede

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jean-Pierre Bouchez

Cheryl Renshaw

Nancy Swearingen

Judy Thomas

Bracey Tiede

Richard Tiede

ADVISORY BOARD

Betsy Clebsch

Tricia Christopher

Anthony Garza

Bill Grant

Katherine Greenberg

Chris Jacobson

Seán O'Hara

Warren Roberts

Bernard Trainor

Richard Turner

Payment of dues for the Mediterranean Garden Society includes you in this Branch if you specify branch inclusion directly on the membership form. You can join at any of our events or send your application separately. For a membership form, visit the MGS web site:

www.MediterraneanGardenSociety.org

This newsletter is published in the FALL, WINTER, & SPRING (dormant in SUMMER!) to announce the events and news of the Northern California Branch of the MGS.



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN SOCIETY

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

MGS_NC@YAHOO.COM

WWW.MEDITERRANEANGARDENSOCIETY.ORG