

November Meeting Recap

The November meeting of the Southern California Horticultural Society was a *Geophyte Panel Discussion*—with **Sheldon Lisker, Dylan Hannon** and **Fred M. Roberts, Jr.** Our panel met to share with us their favorite geophytes (literally “earth lovers”) including true bulbs, corms and tubers. Each speaker was given a time limit and asked to briefly cover information on the bulbs they had chosen and how they grew them. The majority of the plants we were shown by our three panelists come from winter wet/summer dry areas—whether our own natives, or exotics from South Africa and Chile. Some of the details of variation in flower form and color (particularly with our native calochortus) were remarkable. One of the chief features of the night was the marked differences between each panelist regarding cultivation. Dylan Hannon has nearly perfected the practice of growing bulbs in containers with a very spare, well drained mix. Fred Roberts showed us many examples of bulbs in the wild and his gardening experience was more broadly based with some bulbs grown in containers and many in the ground. Sheldon Lisker mentioned that he does not grow plants in containers, preferring to construct raised beds (mainly with cinderblock) and work amendments into his soil to aid drainage and encourage growth. While each speaker had strong ideas about cultivation and gardening practices each showed that their results came more from understanding the life cycles of these plants. Thanks to our three speakers.

We had a number of vendors selling merchandise and plants at the back of the hall. Fred Roberts was selling his artwork in the form of cards and printed tee-shirts. Dylan Hannon was selling some of his selected rarities grown from seed and off-sets. We also had Rebecca Tufenkian representing

Dominus Plantarum (Matt-Dell was at the Cactus Succulent meeting. CNPS was represented, selling packets of native wildflower seed. And, Theodore Payne Foundation was selling native bulbs. It was a fun, informative gathering and showed how different approaches can lead to the same end—having amazing and beautiful geophytes in your garden. Thanks to everyone who helped setup and run the meeting. Special thanks to Lili Singer for arranging the event. Thanks to all who stayed after to help clean up. Next time it will be the Holiday Meeting—an event we all make together!

—Steven Gerischer

SHARING SECRETS

In November, we asked you to answer “*What is your favorite geophyte/bulb and why (and where did you get it?)*” and here are some of your responses. Read more on our SCHS MemberLodge website, schs.memberlodge.org.

Eucomis comosa variety unsure but it has some purple in the fresh leaves and rich pink flowers. Purchased at Huntington plant sale. The reason I like it so much is that it reappears with great enthusiasm each year after dormancy. The original bulbs have now filled out the shallow bowls. And I hardly care for them. Easy bulb for SoCal.
—Laura Morton

Drimia (and *Urginia*) *maritima*
Been growing these large bulbs as commercial cut flowers for some years now
I also use them in my xeriscape gardens I design & install
A bulb that erupts in the depth of hot summer months with glorious 4'-5' flower spikes out of hot baked soil
Huge bulbs available from Protea Farms of CaliforniaFallbrook Ca.
They are winter growers and now erupting with an interesting type of blue-green rosette foliage
—Roger Boddaert

Although I love the many crazy bulbs that have evolved in southern Africa (Albuca, Ledebouria, Urginea, Drimia), the bulbs that have delighted me most are the garlic chive bulbs (*Allium tuberosum*) that I received for free at a SCHS meeting. The plant is attractive and doubles as a landscape plant and a food plant. It's low maintenance, and incredibly handy! Unlike onions, I don't need to harvest them and store them or worry that I won't get around to using them quickly enough, and unlike chives, I can't seem to kill them. The flavor is great and they are handy to have when you just need some green flecks for a garnish. Also, they are almost never dormant.

—Sandy Masuo

Scadoxus multiflorus - orange sparklers in summer!
Spiloxene capensis
Sparaxis 'Lady Buttercup'

—Kathy Musial

I love bulbs of all kinds and I grow a large number of them (some better than others). But I must admit to having a sentimental attachment to crinum. These easy to grow lily-like flowers were a huge part of my childhood gardening experience. I joked that every house built before 1970 came with them pre-installed in the garden. I don't know if any were ever sold here in Southern California, as they seem to be what Felder Rushing calls a “passalong plant”. A British garden writer once said of crinum, “when the beautiful flowers appear one can almost forgive them their sleazy foliage”. I'm not sure I would be that harsh—in fact their unfurling leaves (if protected from snails and slugs) are a rather pretty reminder of spring and rebirth in my yard. I am currently trying some of the really dark flowered forms more common in southern gardens.

—Steven Gerischer