

JUNE MEETING RECAP

The June meeting of the Southern California Horticulture Society was an overview of water harvesting from an experienced designer of rainwater capture systems, Marilee Kuhlmann. Marilee, who is an SCHS Board member, and the owner of Comfort Zones Garden Design, talked about what it takes to capture and use rainwater from simple passive designs, such as swales and directed flows from downspouts, to active designs, including storage tanks that can hold up to thousands of gallons.

What became clear was that for the more active collection designs, like storage tanks and cisterns, there is no real monetary gain from a water-savings standpoint - and in fact, the costs could be daunting for the average homeowner. The benefits of a large, intricate system that captures and stores rainwater for later use were more in the nature of a belief that if you can do it, you should do it. This was also a talk aimed at answering the basic questions of "How can I?," "Why should I?" and "How much will it cost?"

Marilee discussed the practical aspects of the simplest passive designs and how they should be a part of any garden, and certainly any new garden. Our relationship with water, especially rainwater, is complex. The old ideas of getting falling rain off the property and into the gutters and storm-drains as quickly and efficiently as possible, should no longer apply in the Southwest. Even if we are not using the rainfall as water for our own properties, we should be helping to recharge the aquifers that lie beneath so much of the developed areas of Southern California. Marilee told us how this is being looked at seriously for future street and sidewalk planning where permeable ribbons will line the sides of our streets allowing rainfall to make its way into the aquifers (particularly in the San Fernando Valley).

It was fascinating to hear about the day-to-day workings of a catchment system, from pumping or gravity feed to how the tanks are cleaned. Gray-water was also discussed, though Marilee does not deal with or design these systems (the water cannot be

stored and must be used directly from the source). The extended drought we are currently suffering through has all made us so much more aware of water, where it comes from, and how we use it - and Marilee's talk underscored the importance of being conscious of the cold fact that we import, pump, filter and clean our water to a high standard of potable use, and then spray it on our lawns and gardens.

Surely a different approach is needed and the changes can come from many directions - drought tolerant landscaping, learning how to use water properly, water-saving techniques, and a willingness to change our habits are just a start. We will in future need to look beyond the easier fixes - perhaps to treated sewage water and split systems serving the urban sprawl. Education will be at the heart of any changes we will be asked to consider as we face the future of water use in California. Talks like Marilee's *Water Harvesting in Dry Times* will help us understand so much more.

We would like to thank Marilee Kuhlmann for her timely and insightful presentation. And let's also thank the Programs Committee and all who help set up the meetings, run the proceedings and stay to clean up after.

☞ Steven Gerischer

MEMBERS NOT "SHARING"

Regretably, the response to last month's "not really a Sharing Secrets question" was underwhelming as we received zero responses. Ironically, we thought the topic of where the Horticulture Society should be headed in the future would pique the interest of many, as we know gardeners frequently have strong opinions on any number of topics! Perhaps the question was too overwhelming and required more thought, but regardless of the reason, the SCHS Board is always open to receiving member in-put concerning what direction(s) the organization could take as we try to keep pace with the rapidly-changing world of gardening and horticulture. So please, consider this an open-ended query, and when you're ready, you can e-mail your thoughts to: gardensbysabine@aol.com, or speak with any Board Member directly when you next see them... Thank you!

Sabine Steinmetz

POSITIVE OUTCOME OF SHARING

As a direct result of members making suggestions and inquiries, the Board was able to plan and put together the June 27 "Secrets of Somis - Revisited" Bus Trip. Members had been asking for an encore ever since the original trip and this gave the Board a very focused goal based on members' in-put. Please remember we are always available to listen.



Look for a re-cap of the trip in next month's newsletter...

HORTICULTURAL HAPPENINGS

Please contact location(s) to confirm listed events, and for a full schedule.

Events are free with admission unless otherwise indicated.

ARCADIA 91007
Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia 91107
626.821.4623 arboretum.org



LACANADA/FLINTRIDGE 91011
Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive, La Canada 91011
818.949.7980 descansogardens.org



PASADENA 91107
Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N. Altadena Dr., Pasadena 91107
616.398.5420 ecnc.org

Sunday, 7/12, 9am. SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAIN CNPS (California Native Plant Society) plant walks are on 2nd Sunday of each month. cnps-sgm.org

Thursday, 7/23, 7pm. SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAIN CNPS meetings are the 4th Thursday of each month. cnps-sgm.org