

On February 11, the SCHS proudly presented its inaugural program in the newly-established Ruth Borun Lecture Series (a special annual presentation to augment our usual monthly programs) with speaker Jennifer Jewell, host of the weekly public radio program and podcast *Cultivating Place*. She focused her presentation on her philosophy — that gardeners and gardens are powerful agents and spaces for potentially positive change in our world. She showcased individuals who are manifesting change through horticulture in diverse ways, and also improving health and well-being. While Jewell never met Ruth Borun, she did cite her as just such an individual who exemplified these ideals in the building and ongoing evolution of her own garden.

Jewell began her presentation by positing that common ground between people transcends differences and can create a mind set shift through behavioral changes. It is her belief that individual gardeners and their choices can have an impact on our communities and the larger world through a “culture of care.” To illustrate this philosophy of empowerment through gardening, she wrote about 75 women doing important plant-based work in her book *The Earth in Her Hands*. Through their experiential diversity, combined with values, priorities and leadership, these people are influencing others to have a meaningful impact on communities world-wide.

With occupations ranging from botanists to plantspeople, agriculture to floriculture, landscape designers to horticultural writers, herbalists, public policy makers and more, Jewell chose to present the work of a small, but diverse group of people who are producing this ripple effect. They included: Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm (est. 2010), whose mission is to uproot racism in the food system by training the next generation of activist-farmers and strengthening the movements

for food sovereignty and community self-determination; Dr. Elaine Ingham, of Soil Food Web, working since the 1980s on improving soil health worldwide through encouraging cultural practices that support microbial ecosystems and de-emphasize the use of chemicals; Erin Benzakein of Floret Flowers, whose organic flower farm (est. 2008) has been a template for the growth of small to medium-sized U.S.-based organic floriculturists as local economic and environmental drivers; and professor Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer of SUNY college, the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, which focuses on the intersection of scientific and indigenous botany, and how a combination of these horticultural practices help support a healthy relationship between people and plants.

In addition to these leaders in the promotion of individual and communal health and well-being through plant-based work and education, Jewell also provided a brief look at a few innovative place-based gardens from her upcoming book, *Under Western Skies*. Photographed by Caitlin Atkinson, these gardens represent places that blur the lines between cultivated and wild — living spaces which are aesthetically pleasing while also being connected to their natural environment. She feels that the best gardens — like that of Ruth Borun — are a culmination of the natural history of a place, its cultural context, and the personal life of the gardener. Examples included: the 20-year-old garden of Jim Martinez and Jim Fissel in Marfa, Texas that features 90+ native species while also incorporating views of the natural grasslands abutting the property; the home garden of landscape architect David Godshall in Los Angeles, where he occasionally allows naturalized species to take hold, creating nuances and unplanned surprises amidst his designed spaces; the 3.5-acre Nature Gardens at the Natural History Museum of L.A. County, designed in 2013

to provide a nature-inspired wildlife habitat for the public by Mia Lehrer, and nurtured under the directorship of horticulturist Carol Bornstein (recently retired); the wildlife-friendly native garden created by artist Sheila Ford Richmond in Hood River, Oregon, who then rallied others to assist in converting a local space into a habitat garden benefitting the greater community; and the Thomas the Apostle Center, a retreat in Wyoming that has been restored by caretaker Jay Moody from a property comprised of lawns and flower borders into a wild refuge that blends into the surrounding natural landscape.

Jewell concluded her presentation by stating that “Our gardens are more than just spaces. They are moral, social, physical and political documents... compasses for us in what they say and don’t say.” We believe Ruth Borun’s love of gardening, which through her family has allowed the SCHS to establish this lecture series, speaks clearly to Ruth’s legacy. We know the family was watching this evening and hope they feel Ruth would have enjoyed this presentation as much as we did.

We look forward to what the future of the Ruth Borun Lecture Series will share.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

To watch this program on YouTube, click the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-pQrFpHCHU>

SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

Celebrate the vernal equinox in your garden this month by:

- Staying on top of weeding now to avoid headaches later
- Spreading a fresh layer of mulch
- Planting tomatoes and other warm season veggies
- Adjusting watering based on the month’s rainfall (or lack of)
- Putting in annuals now that are “must haves” in your garden
- Enjoying the seasonal show!

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

PHS WELCOMES NEW DIRECTOR

The Pacific Horticulture Society (PHS) announced the appointment of Sarah Beck as its new Executive Director, effective last month. She most recently held the position of Director, Programs and Education at the American Public Gardens Association, the leading professional organization for the field of public horticulture. During her more than seven years there, Beck launched the

Climate and Sustainability Alliance, led the pivot of their annual conference to a virtual format in 2020, and guided federal grants programs and partnerships.

“I am excited to work with Pacific Horticulture’s engaged members and bring horticultural expertise and inspiration to a broader audience,” Beck says. “At this critical time, sharing the power of plants to heal is needed more than ever.”

Beck has long been enchanted by the wild and cultivated landscapes of the West Coast and has lived in Santa Cruz, California since 2018.

Photo courtesy of PHS



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