

On March 10, viewers who tuned in to our webinar on growing tomatoes got plenty of information from Sylmar Charter High School agriculture teacher Steve List. He enthusiastically presented us with growing tips, lists of favorite tomato varieties and resources, all the while responding to audience questions throughout the program.

List began his program by encouraging anyone wanting to grow tomatoes to get them planted as soon as possible, because once temperatures approach 100°F on a regular basis they will stop growing. He maintains that the “70/70 theory” (when daytime and nighttime temperatures average 70°F) provides the best conditions for tomatoes to establish and grow successfully. He then

went on to describe his lasagna method of prepping the potting mix: packed layers of compost, dried organics, potting soil, more dried organics, more compost and finally topped off by a mixture of raised bed soil and Harvest Supreme. His recommendation is to plant in nothing smaller than a 2' x 2' x 2' container to accommodate the tomato's root system, putting a sturdy cage (he uses contractor's mesh) into the container and positioning to receive full sun exposure. List likes to water deeply for the first five days and then not again for three weeks! He waters again after another three weeks (and feeds the plants), thereafter allowing them to nearly dry out between subsequent waterings. He noted that over-watering is the number one problem associated with tomato-growing - contributing to low fruit yield and increasing the plant's susceptibility to contracting diseases.

Photo provided by speaker.



After describing the different types of tomatoes (determinate, indeterminate, hybrid and heirloom), List offered some growing tips, including: choose determinate varieties if you have limited space; stake the rambling indeterminate varieties and “don't prune” them; select hybrids for higher yields and disease-resistance; and try heirloom varieties for traits that appeal to you. He also shared a list of his favorite tomatoes of all types, citing his top four as Momotaro, Sun Gold Cherry, Green Zebra and Lemon Boy and recommended taking good notes during the growing season for you to reference when selecting varieties for your site in the future.

As an educator, List has been cultivating high school horticulturists for the past 15 years at Sylmar Charter's two-acre Agriculture Center - teaching his students about urban agriculture, nutrition, edible landscaping and more. At various times during his presentation, he invited viewers to drop by Sylmar High to check out the gardens - citing weekends as a good time to just drop by. You can reach out via phone, text, email or social media.

For more tips, click here to find Steve List on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/steve.asklist, or for instructional videos, check out his “Ask Mr. List” YouTube channel.

To view the entire webinar, including Q&A, click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn9hJ36qr14>

We also wanted to extend our thanks to Mr. List for contributing free plants to our April 2 Horticultural Yard Sale - the tomatoes, strawberries and ghost peppers were much-appreciated!

BART O'BRIEN HONORED BY AMERICAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Photo credit: RPBG website.



It is always a pleasure to print good news, and even more so when it concerns someone we are all familiar with. On this occasion the SCHS is pleased to report that Bart O'Brien, current Director of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Berkeley and president of the California Horticultural Society, is this year's recipient of the prestigious American Horticultural Society's highest honor, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award.

This honor is described by the AHS as one awarded “to an individual who has made significant lifetime contributions to at least three of the following horticultural fields: teaching,

research, communications, plant exploration, administration, art, business, and leadership.” As O'Brien's career in horticulture has encompassed almost all of these areas, not merely three, he is a uniquely-qualified recipient.

He is probably best known in Southern California for his nearly 20-year tenure at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (now California Botanic Garden). There he was director of horticulture and of special projects, plant introductions and sales, before heading up north to RPBG in 2013.

The SCHS also appreciates O'Brien as a friend, long-time member and our 2005 Horticulturist of the Year honoree. We are very pleased to see his many achievements in horticulture recognized by the AHS with their highest of honors.

Congratulations Bart!



On March 26, the SCHS hosted our first Coffee-In-The-Garden event of 2022 at Pierce College, where we were treated to a tour of two of their horticultural gems - their 25-acre Arboretum and the Mark Taper Garden. Keith Peabody of the Horticulture Department led us on guided tours through both, explaining a bit of their history as well as plans for the future.

It was a perfect day to begin the spring season as we viewed amazing plant specimens, student projects, the arboretum's Braille Trail and more. Plus, Pierce generously provided catered lunch boxes for all the attendees of this free event! We're ready to go back anytime -

Thank you!



Photo credits: Sabine Steinmetz

SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

Here are some April garden tasks to do - when you're not going on a garden tour!

- Prune and feed your camellias and azaleas after flowering has finished.
- Continue your feeding schedule for roses, fruit trees and ornamentals.
- Thin immature fruits on your trees.
- Consider adding some seasonal color with warm season annuals.
- This is also a good time to plant new succulents or divide existing ones.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz