

# APRIL SCHS MEETING RECAP - "COOL PLANTS FOR HOT GARDENS"

The April meeting featured a panel of guest speakers from four southland nurseries: Laura Bauer, garden designer, who represented Australian Native Plants in Casitas Springs (Ventura County); John Schoustra, grower and owner of Greenwood Daylily Gardens in Somis; Lili Singer, Director of Special Projects and Adult Education at the Theodore Payne Foundation in Sun Valley; and Bob Sussman, grower and owner of Matilija Nursery in Moorpark. Carol Bornstein introduced the panel, and then each speaker talked about the ten "cool" plants they brought along for use in home gardens. The specimens were also donations to the SCHS, and offered as prizes for the plant raffle which followed the presentation.

The first nurseryman to speak was Bob Sussman, who began by telling us that his Matilija Nursery has been operating for over 21 years, and features approximately 60% California native plants, with the balance being irises and a mixture of plants from the Southwest. His selections included the following:

1. *Salvia* 'Bon Bon' is a hybrid native sage resulting from a cross between *S.* 'Point Sal' and *S.* 'Aramis'. It grows 2½' high by 3' wide in full sun, with a blooming season running from spring through summer.

2. *Callirhoe involucrata*, aka Winecups, is a perennial with magenta flowers from late spring into fall, and a sprawl up to 3'. It grows 12" high in full sun, with a tap root which makes it relatively drought-tolerant.

3. *Conoclinium coelestinum*, or Blue Mistflower, blooms from spring into winter, and requires weekly summer watering. It's a valuable source of nectar for butterflies, and grows 2' high & wide in partial shade or full sun.

4. *Adiantum jordanii* is our evergreen, native, maiden-hair fern. Besides being easy to grow, it is ideally suited for shady areas. It grows to approx. 18" high & wide.

5. *Asclepias speciosa* is also called the "showy" milkweed for its large pink flower heads and full 3' high x 4' wide form. Attracts Monarchs and other butterflies as well.

6. *Berlandiera lyrata* earned its common name of "Chocolate Daisy" from the fragrance of its small yellow flowers. It is 1' high by 2' wide and will produce large clusters of flowers in full sun from spring into winter, making it a very good performer.

7. *Lavatera glabra*, or Island Bush Mallow, will grow into a 9' high x 9' wide shrub, covered with purplish-magenta flowers that attract bees. Plant in full sun, but be aware it can be susceptible to suffering frost damage.



8. *Sphaeralcea* 'Magenta Bob' is a hybrid desert mallow, introduced by Sussman. Growing 3' high & wide it flowers year round in full sun, and is an excellent bee plant.

9. *Iris* 'Call Ripley's' is a re-bloomer with peach and burgundy flowers that grows 3' high x 2' wide and may require weekly watering. Plant in well-draining soil either in full sun or filtered shade.

10. *Iris* 'Pacific Coast' is a native hybrid suited for shade and requiring no summer water. Expect this 2' x 2' beauty to bloom in its second year.

The next panelist to speak was board member Lili Singer, currently of the Theodore Payne Foundation for Native Plants. As she described her selections she also provided her unique horticulturist's perspective on their significance to Southern California gardens.

1. *Lewisia rediviva*, or Bitter Root, grows 6" high & wide in full sun on slopes, with pink flowers in spring. It has a tap root, needs good drainage and is summer dormant.



2. *Calycanthus occidentalis* (Spice Bush) has burgundy flowers in summer that attract birds and butterflies. It grows 8' high by 10' wide in partial shade, needs regular water, and is winter deciduous.

3. *Arctostaphylos auriculata* 'Knobcone Point', is a 5' high by 8' wide evergreen shrub that performs well in full sun both inland and on the coast. Its winter to spring flowering season attracts hummingbirds and bees.

4. *Bahiopsis laciniata* (*Viguiera laciniata*), or San Diego Sunflower, is an endangered evergreen shrub with low water needs. Adaptable to many soils, it grows 3' high x 5' wide in sun to partial shade, with yellow flowers in spring and summer that attract birds and butterflies.

5. *Dudleya farinosa* is a 6"-12" diameter succulent excellent on slopes or in containers. It grows in full to part sun and its blooms attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Avoid summer watering and provide good drainage.

6. *Marsilea vestita*, the Hairy Watercress, is an aquatic evergreen fern that grows to 12" high streamside in ponds or water gardens and also tolerates partial shade.

7. *Heuchera hirsutissima*, is an endangered evergreen perennial which grows 6" high & wide in dry shade. It attracts hummingbirds and can be grown in containers.

8. *Berberis nevini*, is a rare and endangered shrub which grows 6' high x 10' wide in full sun. Heat and drought-tolerant, it is adaptable to many soil types and provides food and shelter for birds. It also attracts butterflies in the spring with its yellow flowers.

9. *Eriogonum fasciculatum* 'Theodore Payne', is a 1' high buckwheat which spreads from 3'-6', forming a tight mat excellent for erosion-control. Heat and drought-tolerant, the flowers, leaves and seeds of this fast-growing evergreen are food sources for varied wildlife.

10. *Monardella viminea*, is a rare evergreen perennial that grows 1'-2' high & wide in full or part sun. Its purple flowers attract butterflies in spring and summer.

Board member Laura Bauer followed, speaking on behalf of Jo O'Connell, owner of Australian Native Plants. This specialty nursery is open by appointment only and offers a diverse selection of plants that are adaptable to southern California gardens, including:

1. *Melaleuca* 'Brian Walters', is a 2'-3' high x 4' wide shrub with creamy-white flowers. It grows equally well in full sun in-ground or in containers, and resembles a myrtle.

2. *Anigozanthos* 'Rufus', is a variety of Kangaroo Paw that grows 3' high & wide, with blue-gray foliage and red flowers. Grow in full sun with good drainage.

3. *Banksia grandis*, this dwarf form can be trained as a small 8'-10' high tree. It flowers from fall into spring, is drought-tolerant and performs in sun or partial shade.

4., 5. & 6. *Eremophilos*. These heat and drought-tolerant plants love the sun and can tolerate high-alkaline, heavy clay soils. *E. decipiens* sprawls 3'-5' high & wide with red flowers in spring and summer. *E. racemosa* (aka Easter Egg bush) is more upright at 3'-5' high & wide with flower colors of yellow, orange and hot pink on the same plant. *E. polygoniflora* is a 9'-12' tree form with lavender-pink flowers that resembles *Chilopsis* and can tolerate poor drainage.

7. *Acacia terminalis*, or Sunshine Wattle, is a 12' high drought-tolerant tree that tolerates most soil types. It grows in full sun or partial shade, with yellow flowers appearing from fall into winter.



8., 9. & 10. *Grevillea*. These plants perform best in sunny locations or light shade, with well-draining soil. They are highly sensitive to phosphorus and over-watering. *G.* 'Robyn Gordon' is a dense 6' high & wide shrub with large rosy flowers that bloom nearly all year. *G. banksii* is the Red Silky Oak that grows into a 15' high x 12' wide tree with red flowers that bloom off and on during the year. *G. bipinnatifida* is a 12" high ground cover that can spread 3'-5' wide. It is covered with large red flowers most of the year. Bonus plant #11: *G.* 'King's Rainbow' is a brand new hybrid everblooming shrub. At 6' high x 8' wide, with yellow/red bi-color blooms it will become available this summer.

The final presenter of the evening was John Schoustra, board member and frequent speaker on topics ranging from plant introductions to garden design. His selections included favorites as well as plants he thinks will see increased popularity due to their versatile attributes.

1. *Hemerocallis* 'Elves', is a daylily that blooms year 'round, with a yellow flower on a 40" high black stem. They need full sun and like regular water, but become more drought-tolerant over time.

2. *Pelargonium* 'Moras Shubert' is a profuse 8" high bloomer with fragrant foliage, that can grow in full sun as well as deep shade. Schoustra suggested massing it under *Tabebuia* for a long display of color.

3. *Salvia flocculosa*, or Blue Ecuadorian Sage is a perennial that can grow in most soils, and whose 10 month bloom season attracts bees. It can exceed 4' high with an even wider sprawl, but looks better kept at 4'-5' wide. Grow in full sun, or partial sun inland.

4. *Hesperaloe* 'Brakelights' has blue-gray foliage and clear, true red flowers that attract hummingbirds. At 2'-3' high & wide and drought-tolerant, Schoustra predicts that this and other "false aloe" will become an increasingly sought-after genus in the near future.

5. *Iris* 'Bernice's Legacy' grows to 32" high with deep maroon flowers. It only requires water bi-monthly, tolerates light shade, and may bloom up to 5 times a year.

6., 7. & 8. *Pelargonium*. These perennials provide almost year-round color, are water-wise and perform in both full sun or light shade. All are new introductions for Southern California gardens. *P.* 'My Valentine' is an 18" high Regal Pelargonium that blooms with deep pink flowers from February (inland) through fall. *P.* 'Queen of Hearts' has red/black flowers, and looks best if cut back twice a year. *P.* 'Queen of Orange' has orange/salmon flowers, with a more formal growth habit than 'Queen of Hearts'.



9. *Salvia* 'Love Child', is a cross between *S. clevelandii* and *S. leucophylla*, with the fragrance of the former and the pink flowers plus low growth habit of the latter. A true sun-loving southern California native!

10. *Alstromeria* 'Indian Summer', has tri-color flowers that bloom all year long and burgundy foliage, requiring little water or maintenance. In full sun, filtered light or as a cut flower, Peruvian Lilies are strong performers.

The program concluded with an enthusiastic response from the audience when invited to examine the plant selections, resulting in the purchase of more tickets for the plant raffle which followed. Winning raffle numbers were announced and lucky participants selected their prizes of unique hand-picked selections to take home to their gardens.

✿ Sabine Steinmetz