

## August Meeting Recap

The August meeting of the Southern California Horticultural Society was a presentation by Lucy Tolmach: *The Ojai Vinyard Farm—New Venture in Modern Farming*. The meeting was held at the Los Angeles Zoo in the spacious and well appointed Witherbee Auditorium. Lucy treated us to a two-part talk beginning with her time working at Filoli, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. When she came to Filoli in the 1970s, Lucy began caring for the extensive grounds of the estate. Later she convinced the board of directors that it was well worth the time and money to restore the gentlemen's orchard to its original glory. The restoration project began in 1997. Very little in the way of records was available to help identify the remaining fruit trees. As the revitalization of the orchard moved forward, local experts were consulted when the trees began producing fruit once more. As varieties of apples and pears were identified they were also being propagated. Todd Kennedy, a fruit historian and Filoli volunteer worked with Lucy, and eventually donated his collection of historic fruit trees to round out the replanting of the orchard. The remarkably dedicated group of volunteers caring for the grounds at Filoli then and now are part of the legacy Lucy helped create.

The second half of the talk covered Lucy's move to Oakview California and her work, with her husband, Jonathan, on their family owned Vinyard Ranch. The vinyard and farm are not open to the public, but are run in conjunction with a tasting room in nearby Ojai (for wine club members only). The details of the day to day struggles with figuring out soil fertility, proper watering, various pests and other headaches and heartaches associated with a modern, and organic approach to farming were insightful and amusing (Including the benefits of pigeon manure!). We learned the finer points of killing or deterring gopher and deer as well as when is the proper time to plant kale to reduce cabbage looper damage. For any of the audience members growing vegetables in their home garden, the information was useful, and dealt with familiar challenges and easy to understand solutions (on a much larger scale). Lucy has a direct and no nonsense approach to solving problems and trying new methods that is endearing and educational. Thank you, Lucy for a wonderful talk. Thanks as well to the staff and volunteers at the Los Angeles Zoo for helping make the meeting possible (and thanks as well to our Board

Member, Sandy Masuo for obtaining permission for SCHS to have another meeting at the Zoo).

Join us on Saturday, September 13 at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden for the Horticulturist of the Year Award Banquet honoring Don Hodel. (Please see the details online at: [socalhort.org](http://socalhort.org). in the Member Lodge section.) Thank you as well to all of our members and volunteers who help at these meetings with set up, running the meeting and clean up afterward.

—Steven Gerischer

### SHARING SECRETS

In July, we asked you to answer "*Are you currently using gray water, or other new strategies to save water in this drought? And how is it working for you?*" and here are some of your responses. Read more on our SCHS MemberLodge website, [schs.memberlodge.org](http://schs.memberlodge.org).

I have given up baths; instead, I take five-minute or less showers along with a bonny blue bucket, which is dumped when full in my (too many) large pots. I keep a plastic pitcher by the kitchen sink to harvest any water I would throw out -- boiled water from the kettle for morning tea, for example. The pitcher is then poured into pots. Fancy nozzles are now on all hoses. I drip drip drip into pots from the hoses now. I live in LA and would like to stay within the first tier of water allocation but I'm not going to make it -- not in summer. We have irrigation, most of it underground. Will I have to kill off some of the garden? Oh I hope not. (It's only a 5,000 sq.-foot lot, but densely planted.)

—Paula Panich

We've been conserving laundry water for the garden for about 30 years now and it is distributed to the fruit trees and ornamentals in the back yard. The front has been planted in CA drought tolerant natives and other drought resistant plants for about 15 years; we water these once a month during summer. The edible garden wants what it wants, but like others who've responded to this post, we've begun carrying out kitchen water in pitchers and pots. Especially I like reusing water used to steam or parboil vegetables (cooled first), as whatever vitamins or minerals shed in the process get returned to the new crop coming on. For about 25 years we've saved rainwater for use on container plants. I plan to increase the number of rainwater storage barrels this year. I plan to decrease the

quantity of container plants. Yes, we take 5 minute showers. Washing machine and dishwasher are run with full loads only.

—Kathryn Itomura

I'd been thinking about it for a long while; I wanted to sink a cistern in my yard to collect rainwater from the roof. Last year I ended up with a 5000 gallon tank buried in my back yard - it was a long process to get to that point and since the permit was signed off on, we have had one decent rainstorm - last March 2014, 3". That 3" allowed me to water my yard -at no cost- for 6 weeks. It will take an awful long time to pay off the initial cost of the cistern but it really does feel wonderful when I use 'free' water and over time it will make a difference and pay for itself.

I also bale my bathtub after a bath or shower to re-use the pretty clean 'greywater' water. The location of my clothes-washer is too 'downhill' to be able to use that water for any garden purpose....until I come up with a new plan. "Keep calm and carry on".

—Suzanna Wood

The house I live in is tucked into a slope in Glassell Park and the laundry room is in a basement. Water empties from the washer into a tub before it goes into a sump/cistern to be pumped up into the sewer. I had long thought about a gray water retrofit for the plumbing (and someday perhaps I will). In the meantime I purchased a submersible pump that hooks up to a garden hose. (I use bio-degradable, coconut oil based detergent to wash laundry.) I interrupt the wash and rinse flow of water, stopping it in the tub and pumping it out into the garden (the pump will even get it up-slope). I am currently watering the cruder and more water hungry plants this way (*Iochroma* and *Brugmansia* in particular). The downside so far is having to monitor all of this closely so as not to flood the basement or burn out the pump, but it seems to be working fine and I am now watering older, established shrub roses as well as trees this way. I will watch all for signs if the wash water is adversely affecting them—but so far so good! I also save kitchen water/rinse water from veggies and cooking etc. to water the many potted plants. On two of the three downspouts I have sections of rain gutter to direct rain out into the garden, the third goes into a 70 gallon galvanized trough (during heavier rain I pump overflow with my trusty submersible pump into plastic trashcans). Every drop counts!

—Steven Gerischer