

OCTOBER MEETING RECAP

The October panel of local garden designers featured Chris Rosmini and Steve Gerischer, plus the extemporaneous input of several other audience members in place of Andreas Hessing who was taken ill and was unable to attend. Favorite plants were the theme, and each speaker made the case for his and her favorites. All reinforced the choice of plants according to foliage traits since foliage is so much longer-lasting than ephemeral blossoms.

Chris Rosmini, according to Steve Gerischer's introduction, "altered the look of Los Angeles... with her bold plant statements." She enthused about euphorbias, loropetalum's purple leaves working in with bronzes of isoplexis, *Cercis canadensis*, flax, and carex; and dymondia growing happily with succulents. Chris related the origin of dymondia in this country beginning with nurseryman Ed Carman bringing several small plants from South Africa and nursing them along for four years. He then gave two to Chris, who gave one to Gary Hammer. Inside of 6 months, Gary had propagated that one plant into many gallon containers. Chris concluded, "It's a matter of knowing what the successful conditions are that the plant wants." Gary certainly had the touch.

Steve Gerischer's "Plant Picks (and Pics)" included plants he uses frequently, his real workhorses. *Ceanothus 'Wheeler Canyon'* is tough, of moderate size, and with bubblegum pink and blue flower buds. *Iochroma cyanea* attracts hummingbirds. Roses - a special love of his - include climbing 'Butterscotch' and 'Distant Drums,' singles, shrubs, and English Austins. But if pressed to choose just one, it'd be the Austin rose 'Ambridge'. Additionally, Steve spoke of *Dodonea viscosa 'Purpurea'*, which does well paired with many drought-tolerant plants, is a fast grower that remains gracefully pointing upwards, and is good for open hedges planted four feet apart to obtain a full but not oppressive look; however it's not long-lived and it sows itself easily. *Coleonema pulchrum* originally hailed from South Africa, and chartreuse 'Sunset Gold' - which arose in Australia as nursery stock and was distributed from there - is tough once established, smells wonderful, and can be pruned fairly hard. *Arbutus 'Marina'* works well in Mediterranean, drought-tolerant, as well as more formal gardens; its smooth, reddish-brown bark is similar to manzanitas. *Grevillea 'Poorinda Constance'* and *Moonlight* are part of a great genus of plants from Australia with wonderful foliage and other

groundcover forms. *Aeonium 'Sunburst'* offers architectural structure, and Steve raved about a particularly handsome form of 'canariense' with beautiful and exciting red edging on chartreuse leaves. Steve added this caveat about succulents - many kinds don't last forever, and to retain their good looks in the garden over time they must be replaced with young plants as older ones fade or become leggy.

Afterward Chris and Steve answered questions and then Steve called on audience members to volunteer some of their favorite native landscape choices.

- Amy Nettleton: Endemics from the Channel Islands. Santa Cruz Island Ironwood, also called Catalina Ironwood, *Lyonothamnus floribundus ssp. asplenifolius*, an upright tree with fern-like leaves, of medium size that's good in groups or groves. Saint Catherine's Lace, *Eriogonum giganteum*, a rounded shrub to 6'x6' with largish silvery felty leaves, has flat flower umbels that can be as big as dinner plates, which start white and age to cinnamon then dark, chocolatey brown. Evergreen Currant, *Ribes viburnifolium*, is a dark green, arching, mounding groundcover for shady areas and under oaks.

- Orchid Black: Adding to the Channel Island theme with plants for year-round color include *Dendromecon harfordii*, Island Bush Poppy; *Lavatera assurgentifolia*, Island Tree Mallow; *Gambelia (Galvezia) speciosa*, Island Bush Snapdragon; *Verbena lilacina*, Lilac Verbena; and *Eriogonum grande rubescens*, Rosy Buckwheat. She also reminded folks that year-round bloomers generally originate in the Channel Islands or the deserts.

- Carol Bornstein: Native sages, especially *Salvia 'Winnifred Gilman'*, a wonderful cultivar of Cleveland or Fragrant Sage; and Island Snowflake or Catalina Silverlace (*Eriophyllum nevinii*; new name = *Constancea nevinii*).

- Sabine Steinmetz: *Eriogonum arborescens* and *Abutilon palmeri* were cited for their reliable performance as frequently used selections.

- Steve Gerischer: Steve then mentioned the beautiful seed heads the *Abutilon* produces after flowering, which adds to its charm and many of us do not trim off until much later. His final suggestion was of toyon, saying "I'll plant more toyon than anyone wants!" How appropriate, since toyon is the official native plant for the city of Los Angeles!

Yvonne Savio

SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES:

How are you keeping your trees alive during this extended drought?

I transformed my father's landscape in Covina to all 2" thick mulch and drip irrigation. I've been giving the trees minimum fertilizer to slow their growth and a deep soaking once a month. The mulch keeps soil cooler, holds moisture in, and adds much needed organic matter to soil depleted by years of lawn.

Once our trees are mature, they will get water provided by the drip irrigation for the perennials and shrubs living under them. Our 30-year-old Carrotwood is lush and very healthy, and while the 30-year-old citrus need more water, they have a bumper crop due to the mulch and switching to organic fertilizer every month.

Every day in my zone (West Los Angeles) I see many dead trees since people have stopped watering lawns. How very sad, but on the other hand, I see City of Santa Monica buying watering bags for the street trees.

- Katarina (Kat) Eriksson



California ReLeaf, Save Our Water, and the U.S. Forest Service partnered to create two instructional videos showing how to best care for our trees during this historic drought. CALFIRE and Davey Tree Expert Company provided technical support for the videos.

The link below will take you to the Save Our Water web page from where you can select from viewing a video on watering mature trees, or young trees, as the two techniques differ somewhat.

<http://saveourwater.com/what-you-can-do/tips/landscaping/save-our-water-and-our-trees/>

- Carol Bornstein