

Our October program featured long-time SCHS board member Lili Singer, speaking on “Beneficial Bugs for the Garden.” Lili is a horticulturist, educator and garden writer, and Director of Special Projects and Adult Education at the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants. A Los Angeles native, Lili admires California flora and fauna, as well as a wide range of other plants and animals. Her illustrated lecture highlighted helpful bugs you’re likely to find in home landscapes, with pictures and tips on how to attract, recognize, and conserve them.

Lili shared how she studied agricultural pest control early on at Pierce College and then later taught horticultural pest control at UCLA Extension, after learning more about Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and beneficial insects. IPM is a series of techniques used to keep insect pests in gardens at tolerable levels, allowing us to maintain a healthy balance between pests and beneficial insects. She explained that insects are on our plants either to breed or to feed, and that pollination is just one of the many by-products of their behavior.

Her slide presentation on “good bugs” began with insects that are classified as predators. In other words, they prey on and eat one insect, then move on to the next. Among the predators that we should look for and encourage in our gardens are green

and brown lacewings, which feed on aphids, mealy bug and scale; damsel bugs, assassin bugs and big-eyed bugs, which can help control spider mite and white fly populations; a good many species of beetle, including the convergent lady beetle which is the most common type found in California and is sold in nurseries; praying mantids; various wasps and thrips; and of course, numerous beneficial spiders.

Moving on to the next group of insects, Lili first explained to us the difference between parasites and parasitoids. Parasites live off of other organisms without killing them, often during just one period of their life cycle, whereas parasitoids live off their host for their entire lives, and do eventually kill them. Some of the parasites she advised that we learn to recognize and encourage in our gardens included: the greenhouse whitefly parasite (widely used in commercial greenhouses); the aphid parasite, which lays its egg into a live adult aphid in between the exoskeleton; the citrus mealy-bug destroyer; and the tachnid fly.

In order to attract and conserve beneficial insects for your garden, Lili recommended following a few simple rules. First - plant a diverse selection of flowering plants for free-living adult insects. Second - avoid using pesticides as much as possible (remember that “bad bugs” are the food source of many “good bugs”) and that the majority of all insects in your garden are likely to be beneficial. Third - provide a source of water for the bugs, and fourth - leave some sunny areas mulch-free for ground-nesting wasps and bees.

Lili wrapped up her talk by sharing some of the (many) plants that are bug-magnets for beneficials, including: *Achillea millefolium*, *Ceanothus* spp., *Helianthus annuus*, *Erigeron* spp., *Solidago californica*, *Salvia* spp., *Thymus* and all manner of native wildflowers. She also provided a hand-out that listed resources for further study, as well as all the insects and plants she discussed in her talk.

Two of Lili’s favorite books were available for sale after the presentation: *Insects of the Los Angeles Basin*, by Charles Hogue, Third Edition revised and edited by James N. Hogue as well as *Natural Enemies Handbook, The Illustrated Guide to Biological Pest Control*, by Mary Louise Flint, et al.. Together, these references can help you recognize both potential pests and “good bugs” in your own garden.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz



Photo courtesy of speaker.

EDITORIAL CORRECTION

In our October newsletter we thanked our Silent Auction donors and listed the contributing business donors. While all the companies appeared in the on-line issue, unfortunately the print version went to press with one omission...

We would like to apologize and correct our error at this time by acknowledging the generous donation by Asian Ceramics to our event. Their gift, as well as those of all the individual and business donors alike, are to be credited with the success of this and every year’s auction!

*Thanks again to everyone -
The SCHS Board*

SHARING SECRETS - cont’d.

What are your favorite “cool season” vegetables, herbs and annuals?

Chard and kale, California poppies and calendula...

- Steven Ormenyi

The only cool season herb that survives in my Burbank yard is mint, which tolerates my extremely minimal watering and seems almost as Lazarus-like as Bermuda grass. Just when I think it’s gone, it pops back up. After a few seasons of trying to grow vegetables, I gave up. They require too much attention from me and attract too much attention from slugs, squirrels, caterpillars, birds, and

aphids. For a few years, I established some wildflowers - California poppy, lupine, clarkia, gillia, nigella - and the only survivors are cobweb thistle (actually a biannual) and lunaria, which I know is a non-native and weedy, but like the mint, the conditions in my yard are harsh enough to keep it under control. Guess I’d better work on my mojitos!

- Sandy Masuo