

In February, the SCHS met at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens' Witherbee Auditorium, to listen to "A Tale of Two Floras," presented by Evan Meyer, the newly-appointed Executive Director of the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants.

Originally from Massachusetts, Meyer's east coast background in horticulture includes botanical positions at Harvard University and the Native Plant Trust, before his relocation to Southern

California, where he has managed the Seed Conservation Program at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont and most recently was the Assistant Director of the UCLA Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden.

The evening's program consisted of a slide show and talk about Meyer's recent horticultural exploration of the flora found in the Western Cape of South Africa, which he compared with native plants found in the California floristic province. He discussed the similarities and differences in the landscapes of these two botanically-rich and diverse Mediterranean-climate regions, as well as how plants make the journey from wild landscapes into gardens.

Meyer reminded us that both regions share a similar climate, vegetation structure and ornamental landscape palette, which is why we are able to grow many South African plants here - particularly shrubs, succulents and bulbs. However, there are specific differences, such as the pH and

structure of the soils, and the average annual precipitation, which affect how well plants from each region will grow as exotics in gardens halfway around the globe. By cross-referencing characteristics of the five major habitats of each region (for example California's coastal sage scrub and South Africa's fynbos), Meyer narrowed down which areas would have the most success if planting occurred in environments corresponding to their foreign counterparts.

Both California and South Africa experience occasional "super bloom" displays of wildflowers, and are home to a wide range of ornamental shrubs, as well as rare and unusual bulbs. Specialty growers in California, like San Francisco's Martin Grantham, are known for the popular South African plants they cultivate, although this type of horticultural exchange is less likely to be found in South Africa, where there is little demand for California plants. With over 9,000 species to focus on in South Africa, the interest in growing other plants is limited.

To conclude his program, Meyer shared stories from his horticultural expedition and the botanists he was traveling with. Many were collecting seeds to bring new plants into cultivation, both for scientific study and data-tracking to determine the viability of eventually growing them commercially. One of Meyer's goals is to encourage biodiversity through growing exotic plants, that have a specific and documented geographic lineage, alongside California natives in our gardens.

☞ Sabine Steinmetz

Click on the link below to see the entire presentation on SCHS's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWT1HLT4h50>

SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

Here are some things gardeners might think about working on during March:

- **Finish your winter clean-up, and ADD FRESH MULCH!**
 - **Finish weeding (before mulching)**
- **Continue cutting back woody perennial shrubs**
- **After mid-month, start planting warm season edibles and annuals**
- **Begin feeding your ornamentals on a schedule**
- **Adjust irrigation on fruit trees as necessary**
- **Harvest & enjoy your Citrus and Avocados - yum!**

☞ Sabine Steinmetz



COFFEE IN THE GARDEN



Sunday, March 22, 2020 from 10 am to 1 pm

Register online at: www.socalhort.org from March 4 - March 20

(See enclosed flyer for more information.)

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY

to see a unique Southern California horticultural gem and hear from the landscape designer who helped create this private garden. This is an event that has been made available exclusively to the SCHS.

Ruth Borun was a longtime SCHS member, often driven to our meetings in later years by her daughter, Nancy. The Borun family is inviting us to enjoy the garden this year at its spring peak.

REGISTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!