

In May, the SCHS hosted speaker Rebecca Burgess, the executive director of Fibershed and chair of the board for Carbon Cycle Institute, who presented a program about fibersheds, which are geographic regions that provide all of the resources needed to make an article of clothing, including the production and use of natural plant dyes. Awareness of this bioregional designation engenders appreciation, connectivity, and sensitivity for the life-giving resources within these landscapes, and Burgess provided a look at the extensive network of farmers and artisans within the Northern California Fibershed, while also sharing some of the plants and methods used in creating the natural dyes they use.

Burgess' 25-year background in textile dying enlightened her to the major disconnect between what we wear and our knowledge of its impact on land, air, water, labor and health. This in turn led to the establishment of Fibershed and her current work in which she is focused on developing the vision and funding needed for

Photo credit: Paige Green.



regenerative fiber systems models to succeed at the community scale. Her presentation included a bioregional look into the natural dye traditions of North America, how they evolved into today's textile industry processes. It explored our region's fibershed through the lens of plants and whole ecosystems with an eye toward the restoring and supporting these systems for the future. Juxtaposing traditional methods of land use – many of which were consciously regenerative – with modern textile production, Burgess explained how synthetic dyes continually have a negative impact on the global environment. The Fibershed concept was made clear to her through these studies, and her work is currently focused on the intersection of restoration ecology and fiber systems, including dye-making. She gave examples of some of the plants she uses from California ecosystems, including specific species that offer light and colorfast hues for textiles. Using different parts of the plants, Burgess showed how *Baccharis pilularis* produces a buttery yellow dye, while *Mimulus aurantiacus* can create a mustard yellow or a light orange, and the stems of *Heteromeles arbutifolia* yield a red dye. Other color examples she shared were *Rhamnus californica*

(sage green), *Genista monspessulana* (pale green) and *Foeniculum vulgare* (dark green). Additionally, the type of fibers used, length of dyeing times and types of binding agents all impact the tones and intensities of the color that can be produced. Recipes for natural plant dyes can be found in Burgess' book *Harvesting Color*, and a broader overview of textile production can be found in her book *Fibershed: Growing a Movement of Farmers, Fashion Activists, and Makers for a New Textile Economy*.

Burgess stressed how conscientious harvesting and land stewardship were integral to supporting the ecosystems these plants come from, and reiterated the Fibershed module that "the goal of this work is to create and model that our textile culture and systems can function hand-in-hand with principles of ecological balance, local economies, and regional agriculture." Important work to be sure, and thoughtfully presented for our consideration. To learn more, visit Burgess' website at www.fibershed.org.

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✿ Sabine Steinmetz

To watch this program on YouTube, click the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wYhhKts0kI>

SCHS 2020 INTERN

As a non-profit, part of SCHS's mission is to provide educational opportunities to horticulture students through sponsored internships at various institutions.

In 2020, Sharon Zarate, currently graduating from Cal Poly Pomona, was our recipient of a 10-week internship at the Theodore Payne Foundation for Native Plants. Her experiences involved bulb sorting last August, followed by propagation in November, and a follow-up of growth assessment in April of this year.

Photo provided by S.Zarate



Click here to hear Zarate speak about her full experience:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZdY3Q1rjoY

✿ SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE ✿

Expect to do some of the following gardening chores in June:

- Deep water your trees once a month during the summer and monitor/adjust other irrigation.
- Continue succession planting of veggies to extend your harvest.
- Plant pumpkins now for Halloween!
- Keep after pests on actively growing plants - often a foliage washing will refresh plants while also removing pests.
- Protect fruit tree crops against garden thieves with bird-netting.
- Stay on schedule with feeding, weeding and dead-heading.
- Touch up rampaging vines by clipping to keep them in check as their flowering winds down.
- Slow down as temps heat up and enjoy your beautiful, abundant and well-cared-for garden!

✿ Sabine Steinmetz

Learn more about SCHS and check us out online at:

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