

# BERKELEY HORTICULTURAL NURSERY

## Gardening Suggestions

March ✨ April 2020

For me, very little time goes into planning the spring garden. I wake up one morning, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, I smell the flowers and wonder “what will I plant?” Most people probably don’t walk the aisles of Berkeley Hort each day to see what new and wonderful plants are available... I am exposed to so many options.

Water-frugal plants, bee-friendly plants, edible plants; these are all still popular categories and top sellers in the nursery. But what I want to focus on in my garden *this year* are Personal Pleasure Plants. The two categories that top my PPP list are **fragrance**, and **bird attraction**. The reasons are simple. Life is short, space is limited, and these things make me happy!

We all know what strong memories and emotions can be stirred up by simple aromas, and the garden is one of the more likely venues for such stimulation. With this in mind I have compiled a list (available at our sales counter) of plants with fragrant flowers and/or foliage for Bay Area gardens. Some of my favorites include the heady scent of roses on a warm day, the musty smell of wet boxwood leaves, and the minty aroma of Yerba Buena under foot.

This whole bird thing has crept up on me. Maybe it is just part of getting older; I slow down, take notice, and get pleasure from stuff I wasn’t aware of before. Attracting birds is actually fairly simple. Provide cover in the form of leaves and branches, provide a source of water such as a birdbath, plant trees and shrubs which

produce berries, and most importantly, avoid pesticides. Healthy soil is the first step for any bird garden.

As our Presidential Election approaches I find myself cringing at the political rhetoric, the anger, and the unwillingness to compromise. I am bombarded with misinformation and pseudo-science both in mainstream-, and social-media. There are days when I’d rather go back to bed with a good book. But then I think about moving around outdoors, and I have always felt that there is no better place to seek solace than in the garden.

It can be a nice combination of meditation *and* exercise. That hour working with a hoe will give me a good workout without the expense of a gym membership! For me, the pure pleasures of hearing the birds, smelling the fresh clippings, and feeling that I am in direct contact with my garden make the inevitable aches and blisters worthwhile.

As the spring equinox comes and goes, embrace it as a time of moving forward. Get out and have a conversation with your garden. It will be “perfect”. — Paul



# Grow a Cup of Peace for Yourself

The act of gardening can be a way to take a break from the rat race of urban living. Infusing a sense of wellbeing with a cup of homegrown tea can take your stress down another few notches.

Imagine putting down your device, walking into your garden, picking some young stems, waiting for the kettle to boil while examining the fragrant leaves you have in your hand. Crush them with reverence and put them in your favorite cup. Pour the water over and inhale the heavenly scents. Steep for a few minutes, sit in the garden and contemplate with curiosity how other beings go about their day. Transported to a better place yet?

Check the herb section for plants of these perennial mint family herbs:

## Spearmint (*Mentha spicata*)

Grow in a container, as it is very invasive. Even if you really love mint, you'll be sorry you planted it in the ground some day in the future. It needs good drainage, constant moisture and part shade. Morning sun is perfect. Mint can help digestion and calm nerves.

## Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

This lemony mint cousin tends to spread more from seed than roots, so pick off the flowers when you see them. It also takes to being in a container and in part shade. Tea made with it soothes the nerves and relaxes.

## Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)

Your feline friends or acquaintances will covet this plant so protect it from being rolled on by covering it with stiff wire mesh until it's well established. It can do with more sun but still likes it's feet moist. Catnip has a grassy flavor that complements other herbs. It is said to help indigestion and reduce restlessness and anxiety.

## Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)

This hardy herb has purple flowers that attract bees and butterflies. The plant is quite drought tolerant once well established and likes a full sun position. The leaves make an anise-flavored tea that helps clear congestion.

Whether you cluster some pots together near your back door or on your deck, knowing you can take a break and imbibe your garden can help you remember to relax and breathe.  
— Helen



# Oven Roasted Asparagus with Garlic, Fresh Herbs & Lemon

This is one of my favorite recipes to add as a side dish to any meal. Aside from being yummy, asparagus is loaded with vitamins A & K. It also has properties that fight cancer and lower blood pressure. Asparagus is easy to prepare and cooks quickly.

The ingredients can be found fresh at most produce stores or farmers' markets during this time of year. Of course, nothing beats growing your own ingredients at home. All are available to purchase at Berkeley Hort. right now, as well. Enjoy! — *Che*  
*Serves: 4 Prep: 10 min. Cook: 10 min.*

## Ingredients

- 1 lb. trimmed asparagus
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice ('Meyers' is great!)
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tbsp. each chopped chives & parsley
- 1 tsp. each chopped rosemary & thyme
- Salt & pepper to taste

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 deg. F.
2. Coat a baking sheet or pan with olive oil or non-stick cooking spray. Arrange asparagus in a single layer.
3. In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, lemon juice, herbs and salt & pepper.
4. Pour mixture over the asparagus and roll the stalks around a bit to coat all parts. Bake for 10 min., or until asparagus is tender.
5. Scoop up any of the remaining herb mixture and place over the asparagus. Serve immediately.

# GARDENER'S CALENDAR

## March Checklist

- ★ Herbs are in good supply for early planting. Groom or divide your established plants.
- ★ As perennials begin growing protect the new shoots from slugs and snails. Consider evening escargot hunts.
- ★ Check your watering system for leaks. If automatic, set at low until our weather warms up.
- ★ You'll still find an excellent selection of Camellias at the nursery.
- ★ Start using your compost as surface mulch around shrubs and perennials.

## April Checklist

- ★ Tomato planting? Ready, set, go! Our selection peaks over the next 6 weeks.
- ★ Treat yourself to a new garden hat as the sun reaches higher in the sky.
- ★ Prune deciduous flowering shrubs (Lilac, Flowering Quince, Forsythia) during or after bloom.
- ★ Feed acid-loving plants like Camellias, Azaleas and Rhododendrons for growth.
- ★ *Narcissus* (Daffodil) leaves should be allowed to wither naturally after the bloom. Tie them back, but don't remove them yet.



## Japanese Maple 'Wading'

In early March Berkeley Hort's sleeping Japanese maple saplings wake up and push out their fresh spring leaves. The colors are vivid and showy, but the show is a limited engagement; it's best to stop by before May to view the trees in their liveliest shades of gold, green, orange, pink, burgundy and scarlet.

Though they do come alive with a bang, the forest of young trees is one of the most peaceful areas of the nursery. Wading among them might not be as life-changing as full-on 'forest bathing', but it still can be refreshing to focus for a few minutes on the trees' diverse leaf shapes, textures and colors, and even to ponder their varietal names:

'Moonrise', 'Harp Strings', 'Wet Heron', 'Glowing Embers', etc.

Most of Berkeley Hort's maple forest is comprised of cultivars of several Japanese species: *Acer palmatum*, *A. shirasawanum* and *A. japonicum*. A list of these varietals is available at the nursery's sales counter.

Whether planted in containers or in the ground, Japanese Maples generally need moist, well-drained, humus-y soil, and shelter from strong winds. Most grow very well in light shade or full sun with protection during the hottest hours; the laceleaf, threadleaf and variegated forms prefer dappled afternoon shade. — Margaret

## NEW ARRIVALS

### *Daphne odora* 'Aureo-marginata'

Nothing compares to the floral fragrance of the winter daphne in bloom. Always somewhat temperamental, requiring porous soil and mid-day sun protection, this variety is a bit easier to grow. Nice tidy appearance.

**#1 size cans**      **\$24.95**  
**#2 size cans**      **\$54.95**

### Edible Roots

Spring Garlic sets are now available in three Softneck varieties ('Chet's Italian', 'Oregon Blue', 'Inchelium Red'). These are prized for their ability to store for up to 8 months. And, for you gourmet cooks, we have sets of 'Dutch Red' Shallots. A bit later toward the end of March we expect to have our spring Potato selection. Bon appetit!

**¼ lb. packages**      **\$10.95**

### *Iris germanica*

The nomenclature on this group of plants is seriously goofy. We prefer 'Tall Bearded Irises', but be aware that they are variously called Median, Border, Standard Dwarf, or Miniature Tall Bearded Irises! In the event that you did not plant your rhizomes last August, but you want to enjoy the flowers this spring, we are offering a large selection of these easy-to-grow perennials right now. Provide full sun and good drainage.

**#1 size cans**      **\$16.95**

### Blueberries

Just in, from Weeks Berry Growers in OR, we have 7 varieties in this easy-to-handle size. Most are the classic highbush varieties, but 2 are the ever-popular lowbush forms that can be grown in containers.

**#1 size cans**      **\$22.95**

## THE SEED CORNER

### Growing Tomatoes

Growing tomato plants from seed can be an incredibly rewarding experience, and they are relatively easy to grow. Only a few seeds from a packet are required to produce enough tomatoes to feed a family of four. If stored properly these seeds will remain viable for 4 to 5 years, so one packet of seed can provide you with tomato plants for a long time.

In coastal California, tomato seedlings can be started indoors in a bright location during March or April, and should be ready to transplant into the garden after 5 to 7 weeks. Plant these tomato seedlings out in the garden during April or May. Provide

them with a wind-protected warm sunny spot for best results.

#### In the Bay Area

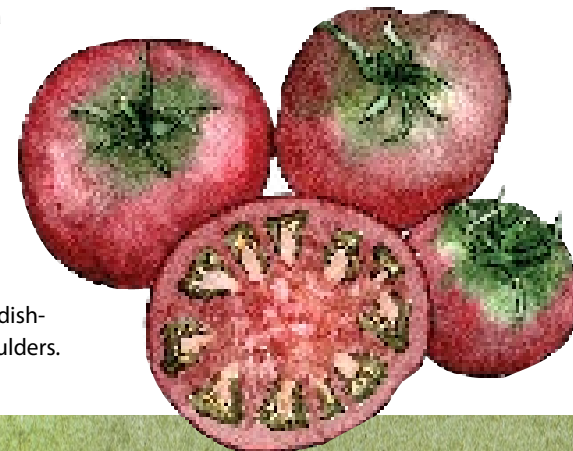
Growing tomatoes in the Bay Area can be tricky. Lack of heat in combination with summer fog is not ideal for growing many varieties. Most varieties require a lot of sunlight and heat until they will bear fruit. Seed packages often list sunlight requirements as **days to maturity**. By selecting early maturing varieties (70 days or less) you are likely to end up with more fruit. The following varieties tend to perform well in the Bay Area and are quite tasty:

**Sun Gold:** We have found that this golden yellow cherry has an unfair advantage in taste comparisons due to its high sugar content. Give it plenty of room to grow!

**Japanese Trifele:** A beautiful purple pear-shaped tomato. It is less prone to cracking and bruising than other tomato varieties. Incredibly rich flavor. Continues late into the season.

**Green Zebra:** This is fast becoming a customer favorite, with the high productivity of yellow and green marbled, mid-sized fruits that hold up well after harvest. Excellent classic flavor.

**Black Krim:** An heirloom tomato originating from Ukraine. The plant is indeterminate, bearing 8 ounce flattened globe fruits that are dark reddish-purple to black with green/brown shoulders.



**Summer Hours** Please note that as of March 8th our hours are:  
**Open daily from 9:00 to 5:30 • Closed on Thursdays**



# DR. CHLOROPHYLL

## Advice for the Horticulturally Harassed

Dr. C. was a regular writer and hortipersonality at BHN for many years until his retirement in 2011. As a nod to the 1980's, we are herein reprinting an article from another era.

The only thing that stops God from sending another flood is that the first one was useless.

— Nicholas Chamfort (1741-1794)

## Practicing Tolerance

Tom Paine wasn't the only author possessed of common sense. Here are some excerpts from a commendably sensible Tom Christopher in *House & Garden*:

"Genomic research has revealed that fully half the genetic material of a fruit fly and of Homo sapiens is comparable. Our constant conflict with insects springs from our shared tastes: we like to eat the same things and live in the same places. And we both enjoy gardens, though in different ways.

I enjoy my garden's insects as much as I do its plants. To the average gardener, insects (at least those of the plant-eating sort) are an axis of evil, which is unfair. We might compliment a beauty by describing her as 'doe-eyed.' 'Bug-eyed,' however, is unmistakably an insult. Yet a hungry deer will do more damage in a single night than a flock of aphids could do in a month of sap sucking. Besides,

if I tire of aphids, I can simply bump them off with a blast of water from the hose. That's something I rarely choose to do, however. I have learned that an overpopulation of one species is proof that my garden contains not too many insects but too few.

Given a large enough, and sufficiently diverse, population, insects police themselves. Enrich the insect habitat and your landscape will attract not only plant eaters but also the aptly named soldier bugs, assassin bugs, pirate bugs, big-eyed bugs, and robber flies—insects that eat other insects. These so-called predaceous insects will, if left to themselves, keep the plant eaters in check, reducing their populations to tolerable levels—just as wolves and cougars once controlled deer.

The problem is that most of us do not leave insects to themselves. Otherwise sensitive people feel no compunction about committing insect mass murder. What 20 years of experience has taught me, however, is that, in the garden, insecticidal sprays generally cause more problems than they solve. A spray, if well chosen, will kill many, but never all, of its intended victims. Even if the survivors don't simply repopulate (as an

insecticide-resistant strain), your spraying will have vacated an ecological niche. Some other species is going to move in to fill it, and often the new arrival will prove more troublesome than its predecessor. Before long, you'll find yourself running out for more chemicals to cope with the new plague, mired in the entomological equivalent of nation building.

Gardeners can boost predaceous insect populations by planting blooming shrubs together with nectar-rich flowers such as sweet alyssum, wild carrot, fennel, dill, coriander, yarrow, sweet clover and rue. Surround these with the creeping thymes, mints and rosemarys that furnish insects with cover. Then tuck in the bed with organic mulch such as shredded leaves or bark which will provide the moist, dark habitat that beetles prefer.

Cultivate insects and you'll reap rewards that go far beyond a freedom from sprays. Down on my hands and knees I've found in my insect-friendly garden a brand new world, one both beautiful and pitiless. Aphids come to feed and breed on my rosebushes, and ants follow, feeding on the sweet sap concentrate that aphids secrete—until the day when the fat aphids are themselves devoured, by the long-legged assassin bug. I used to crush the fat, four-inch hornworms that feed on my tomato plants. Now I wait for them to metamorphose into the hummingbird-like sphinx moths that flit through the garden at dusk."

*\*(see quote on back cover)*

Tennyson's rhyme found far more favor with Elizabeth Lawrence, than another pairing. "Occasionally there is a choice [in pronunciation]," she wrote in *Through the Garden Gate*, "between the correct and the accepted, but I have never found any justification for rhyming clematis with window lattice."

## WEEKEND SPECIALS

March 6-8

**Ranunculus Plants**  
4 in. pots ~ \$4.29 (reg. 5.95)

March 13-15

**Gardner & Bloome Fertilizers**  
4 lb. bags ~ \$8.25 (reg. 10.99)

March 20-22

**Herbs (Organic)**  
3½ in. pots ~ \$3.69 (reg. 5.00)

March 27-29

**Hats**  
all styles/sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 3-5

**Terra Cotta Pottery**  
all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 10-12

**Conifers**  
all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 17-19

**Gloves**  
all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 24-26

**Tomato Seedlings (Organic)**  
3½ in. pots ~ \$3.69 (reg. 5.00)

LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND.  
NO DELIVERIES ON SALE MERCHANDISE.



# Berkeley Horticultural Nursery

1310 McGee Ave, Berkeley CA 94703  
510-526-4704 • Closed Thursdays  
berkeleyhort.com



Rose, rose and Clematis;  
Trail, twine and clasp and kiss.

— A. Tennyson, 1870

*\* (see inside last page)*