

Speed Bumps, Hurdles, and Walls

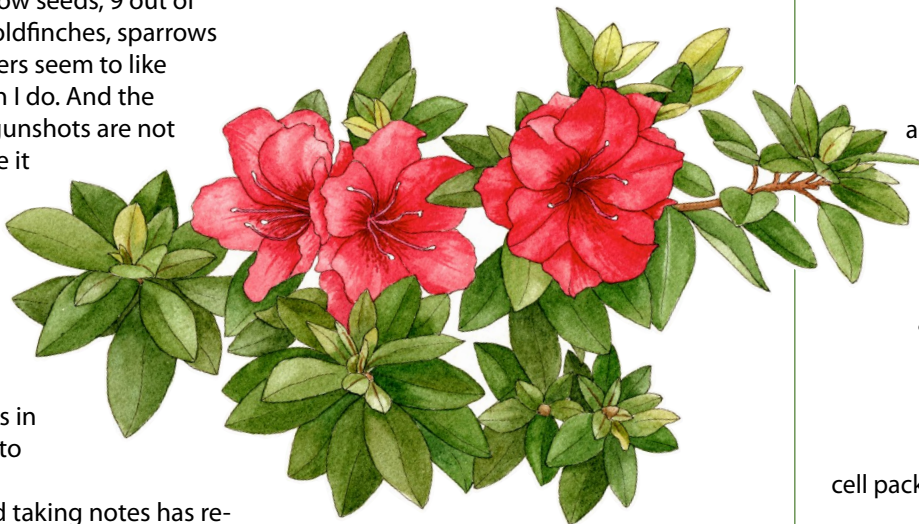
My dream garden is one where the sun shines every day but the plants get ample water. It is one where seeds germinate and reach maturity unmolested. It is a place for quiet meditation, where the birds, insects, and other wildlife co-exist peacefully. This garden produces enough cutting flowers to keep one or two vases in my home filled year-round; and it produces fruits, greens and herbs enough for my family and neighbors. Then I wake up.

In my real-world garden I don't have enough water for roses (the deer would eat them anyway), enough heat for melons, or enough shade for rhododendrons. Whenever I directly sow seeds, 9 out of 10 are food for the goldfinches, sparrows and quails. The gophers seem to like garlic even more than I do. And the sound of sirens and gunshots are not uncommon. But I love it anyway. Just being outside, moving, and breathing the crisp winter air is pure joy for me. Reality has taught me valuable lessons. Successes and failures in the garden continue to teach.

Being mindful and taking notes has rewarded me with local garden wisdom that could never come from books or online. Many years ago I wrote about a relatively new climate phenomenon involving an increase of ocean temperatures in equatorial Pacific waters. Since then we have settled

into an alarming trend of extremes. Hot, cold, dry, wet. What will this winter bring? Will the weather be mild? Will my cover crops grow?

If you are like me, it helps to share your experiences with others, and the staff at Berkeley Hort is only too happy to commiserate with you on any garden issue. Keep in mind that as gardeners we need to remember the old adage, "the best we can hope for is to have the serenity to accept things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Now get out there and get dirty! —Paul



This newsletter was written before the election, and it is our sincere hope that this Democracy is still holding up as intended by honest Abe. "Of the people, by the people, and for the people."

WINTER HOURS

Please note that with the time change on November 1, Berkeley Hort is open from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM through the winter. Visit us early!

WEEKEND SPECIALS

Nov. 6-8

Cyclamen

4" pots ~ \$6.50 (reg. 8.95)

Nov. 13-15

Cover Crop Seeds

1 lb. bags ~ 30% OFF

Nov. 20-22

Conifers

all sizes ~ 30% OFF

Nov. 27-29

Bulbs

all remaining varieties
50% OFF

Dec. 4-6

Wind Chimes

all styles ~ 25% OFF

Dec. 11-13

Winter Veggies

cell packs (organic) ~ \$4.50 (reg. 6.00)

Dec. 18-20

Books & Calendars

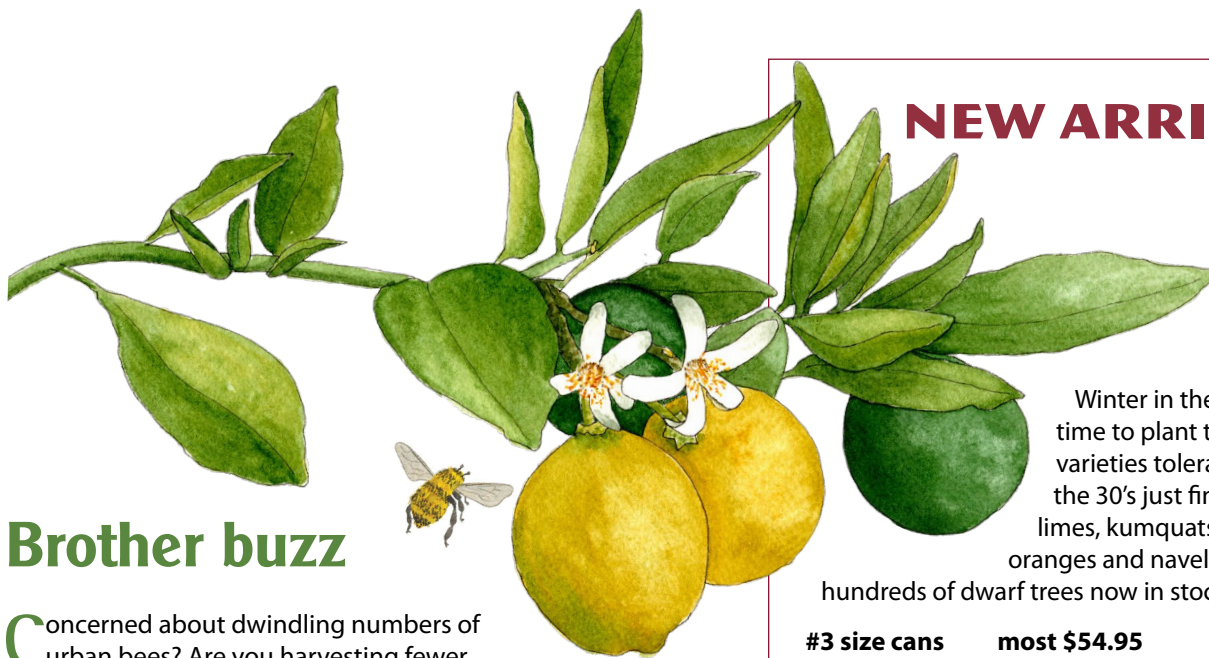
all titles & subjects ~ 30% OFF

Dec. 24

House Plants

35% OFF (Including Orchids)

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



Brother buzz

Concerned about dwindling numbers of urban bees? Are you harvesting fewer fruits and vegetables because of a lack of pollination? Can't think of any new child-friendly, educational outings? Check out the UC Davis Haagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven (free admission, details at beegarden.ucdavis.edu). Here you can stroll a half-acre bee-friendly demonstration garden full of practical tips on how to turn your yard into an apian paradise. You and the kids might show solidarity with the bees by donning black and yellow striped rugby shirts and strapping toilet plungers to your respective booties (this will also help with social distancing, as other garden visitors will steer clear as if you were killer bees). And if you are already in the valley, and you really want to get into it, consider driving a few miles further east, to Sacramento Beekeeping Supplies (sacramentobeekeeping.com). An excellent resource for supplies.

Fall Fluorescence: Japanese Maples

Like a large mixed flock of migratory birds, hundreds of young Japanese Maples, mostly varieties of *Acer palmatum*, *A. japonicum* and *A. shirasawanum*, have recently arrived and settled into their temporary roosts at the nursery. The trees will be undergoing their brilliant fall "molt" of orange, gold, scarlet and crimson leaves, but there should still be enough remaining foliage to get a sense of each variety's characteristic leaf size and shape, from the tiny crumpled stars of 'Shishi gashira' to the hanky-sized leaves of *Acer japonicum*. And soon, the bare branches and twigs of 'Sango kaku' and 'Beni kawa' will develop a strong blush of coral to scarlet, a seasonal change of bark color that contrasts beautifully with dark green conifers.

Whether planted in containers or in the ground, Japanese Maples generally prefer 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 parts of the day; laceleaf, threadleaf and variegated forms prefer dappled afternoon shade.

One gallon grafted trees start at \$46.95.

NEW ARRIVALS

Citrus

Winter in the Bay Area is a great time to plant these, and most varieties tolerate temperatures in the 30's just fine. You'll find lemons, limes, kumquats, mandarins, blood oranges and navel oranges among the hundreds of dwarf trees now in stock.

#3 size cans **most \$54.95**

#5 size cans **most \$69.95**

Camellia sasanqua

These beauties bloom in fall or early winter around here. Delightful flowers end their show by dropping individual petals, leaving behind a snow-like ground covering. These are BHN staff favorites!

#1 size cans **\$24.95**

#5 size cans **\$79.95**

Azaleas

These treasures are grown by our friends at Nuccio's Nursery in Altadena, and they are always top quality! Many representatives from the groups Satsuki, Kurume, Southern Indica, Belgian Indica, and Hybrid can be found under our shade structure.

#1 size cans **\$19.95**

#5 size cans **\$54.95**

Polystichum munitum

Our Western Sword Fern is ideally suited to planting at this time of year. Under redwoods and the like, they thrive with little light. Fall rains should help them get established in time for our cool coastal summer.

#1 size cans **\$16.95**

Rhododendrons

Find an amazing selection, including several rare species, from Log Cabin Nursery in Springfield, Oregon.

#1 size cans **\$19.95**

#3 size cans **\$44.95**

Winter cover crops: the benefits of building your soil

Seasonal vegetable gardens can quickly deplete your soil of its nutrient resources. Soils with low nutrient levels produce low vegetable yields. Planting a cover crop during the winter is an easy and affordable way to add nutrients back into your soil.

In addition to enriching your soil, cover crops afford a number of other benefits including the creation of a natural weed barrier, reducing erosion from winter rains, and increasing the soil's capacity to hold water. By incorporating a cover crop into the soil, you will greatly improve its structure as the decomposing organic matter increases the air space between soil particles.

Any garden can benefit from the use of a cover crop. Which cover crop you choose will depend on the specific needs of your garden.

Fava Beans ~ Can fix up to 200 lbs. of nitrogen per acre, and increase the availability of phosphorus. Turn into the soil before blooms appear for maximum benefits. Hardy to 20 F.

Crimson Clover ~ Fixes up to 150 lbs. of nitrogen per acre. It also increases the availability of phosphorus, actively suppresses weeds, and attracts beneficial insects.

White Clover ~ An excellent perennial cover crop. Plant along with turf or other perennials as a long-term nitrogen and phosphorus supplement.

Winter cover crops should be planted during the fall or early winter. Incorporate cover crops into the ground at least one month before you intend to plant your garden. This will allow your garden maximum accessibility to its new soil resources.



Where do tulips come from?

Many people say; "from Holland." Between 1634 and 1637, speculation in tulip bulbs was the cause of Holland's very own investment bubble and subsequent crash. At one point, a single tulip bulb was worth as much as an Amsterdam canal house. The Dutch dominated world trade in those days, and nothing displayed success and wealth better than an array of tulips. Alas, the bubble burst in 1637 and great fortunes were lost, but it seems that the Dutch are back in the game.

In Holland, the Keukenhof may be the most well-known garden with its springtime display of 4.5 million bulbs, in which tulips figure most prominently. (You will never look at your bouquet of tulips the same way after a visit to Keukenhof.) I highly recommend it as well as a very informative history of the tulip in Michael Pollan's *Botany of Desire*.

Remember that November is the last month to buy your tulips, and that to mimic Keukenhof's winter temperatures, the bulbs need to be refrigerated for 6 weeks whether you plant them in containers or in the ground. *Plant deze bollen nu voor veel plezier in de lente.* (Plant these bulbs now for a lot of pleasure in spring.)

—Maria

THE GARDENER'S CALENDAR

November Checklist

- › Cut back floppy or overgrown perennials.
- › Last chance for spring-flowering bulb planting (check your fridge).
- › Plant winter annuals: Poppies, Stock, Sweet Peas, Pansies, Violas, and Primroses.
- › Apply an organic plant food for slow release of nutrients.
- › Be vigilant for cool weather weeds like bluegrass and oxalis.
- › **VOTE!**

December Checklist

- › Deadhead (remove spent flowers from) Chrysanthemums.
- › Clean and organize your garden tools.
- › Give Cymbidium orchids bloom food.
- › Sow wildflower seeds.
- › Turn that compost!
- › Plant green manure (cover crops) in your vegetable plot.

YEAR-END AT BERKELEY HORT

We will be open until noon on Thursday, December 24 for your last-minute shopping convenience. There will be plenty of holiday gift ideas, including some deep discounts on all of our indoor plants and orchids. Then, we will close for our annual winter nap until Saturday, January 2, 2021. Cheers!

DR CHLOROPHYLL

ADVICE FOR THE HORTICULTURALLY HARASSED

"A conscience is what hurts
when all your other parts feel good."

"Support bacteria
—they're the only culture some people have."

"Experience is something you don't get
until just after you need it."

OVERHEARD AT THE GRAND LAKE FARMERS MARKET:

Shopper to vendor of foraged wild mushrooms and berries:
"How can you tell which wild berries or mushrooms are safe to eat?"

Vendor to shopper: "Always look for berries or mushrooms gathered in a pale green or gray cardboard box with a cellophane covering held in place by a red rubber band. Berries and mushrooms with those features — like these — are always safe to eat."

HOW SWEET IT IS

If you are planning to offer bowls of fragrant forced paperwhite narcissus as gifts or holiday decoration (excellent for decking-the-halls combined with poinsettias and evergreens) remember to allow 3-4 weeks lead time before show time. Shop for paperwhite bulbs now — chances are they will be gone by the end of December, and like Christmas, they come but once a year. Look for bulbs that are firm and large. Bigger is definitely better when it comes to narcissus (and other) bulbs — the larger the bulb, the more flowering stalks it will produce. Pour about an inch of pebbles into the bottom of a bowl at least 3" deep and 5" in diameter, then pack in as many bulbs as the bowl will accommodate, spacing the bulbs about ¼" apart. Add more pebbles around and between the bulbs to cover at least the lower 2/3 — the roots your paperwhites will produce are strong enough to push the bulbs right out of the bowls if you don't. Fill the bowls with water up to but not touching the bottom of the bulbs. Roots will grow down into the water, and if the bulbs are in direct contact with moisture they will rot long before they bloom. Place the bowl in a cool, bright room, check the water level every few days, and expect flowers in about a month. To keep floppy foliage to a minimum, try this firewater formula developed by researchers at Cornell University. Start your bulbs with regular tap water. Once roots have developed and stems are about 2" tall, replace the water in the bowl with a solution of one part 80 proof liquor (rotgut gin or vodka works beautifully) to seven parts water. Use this mixture to top off your bowls as necessary for as long as they flower. Salut!

DIY seed collections

Seeds are the ultimate encapsulation of hope. They hold the promise of future growth. I don't know about you, but hope is the most precious thing to me right now. Spending time in the natural world can be a balm in this time. A houseplant on the desk, a work break in the backyard, or some morning time with the potted plants on the balcony before the first Zoom call can soothe our over stimulated nervous systems and ground us a bit.

When there is so much uncertainty in our lives it can be soothing to be reminded that spring is going to come, seeds will sprout, flowers will bloom, and the zucchini plant will produce more than we can eat again.

We have devised a way to get some of that hope to your workmates, family, friends and other favorite people by designing some seed packet collections. These gifts are easy to send — just pop a couple in a card and put in the post. Curate the collection to fit the taste and lifestyle of the recipient. You can also add some gloves, a small hand tool or calendar. Here are some samples to inspire you:

CHEF'S HERB COLLECTION

Cilantro, parsley, chives, basil, Mexican tarragon
(add some terracotta pots)



EAT YOUR GREENS COLLECTION

Kale, spinach, mustard, Swiss chard
(add some scissors for harvesting)

HEIRLOOM VEGETABLE COLLECTION

Cherokee Purple tomato, Lemon cucumber,
Jimmy Nardello sweet pepper,
Costata Romanesco zucchini



KID'S STARTER MIX

radishes, mesclun, bush snap pea
(add some kid's gloves and a hand digging fork)



PLANT A SPRING SALAD

lettuce, spinach, radish, garden cress, arugula
(add a trowel and gloves)

FEED THE BEES

Calendula, coreopsis, cosmos, French marigold,
borage
(add a Cavallini fabric pouch to hold them)



NATURAL DYE COLLECTION

Coreopsis, marigold, black scabiosa, yellow cosmos