

Making My Garden My Own

I'm stoked about 2021! With the prospect (sometime this year) of having visitors, to hangout in-person, and to share my harvest, I am excited about the possibilities for my garden. There's something special about meeting with friends or neighbors to chat about what's growing in our respective green spaces, whether cultivated or wild.

Garden planning has always been something I enjoy, but this year it takes on special meaning.

In reality very little time goes into actual planning for my 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?" Lucky for me I am able to walk the aisles of Berkeley Hort most any day to see what new and wonderful plants are available.

Water-frugal plants, bee-friendly plants, and edible plants are all still popular categories and top sellers in the nursery. But what I want to focus on in my garden this year are those that give me personal pleasure, and the two top categories are fragrance and bird attraction.

The reasons are simple. Life is short, space is limited, and these things make me happy!

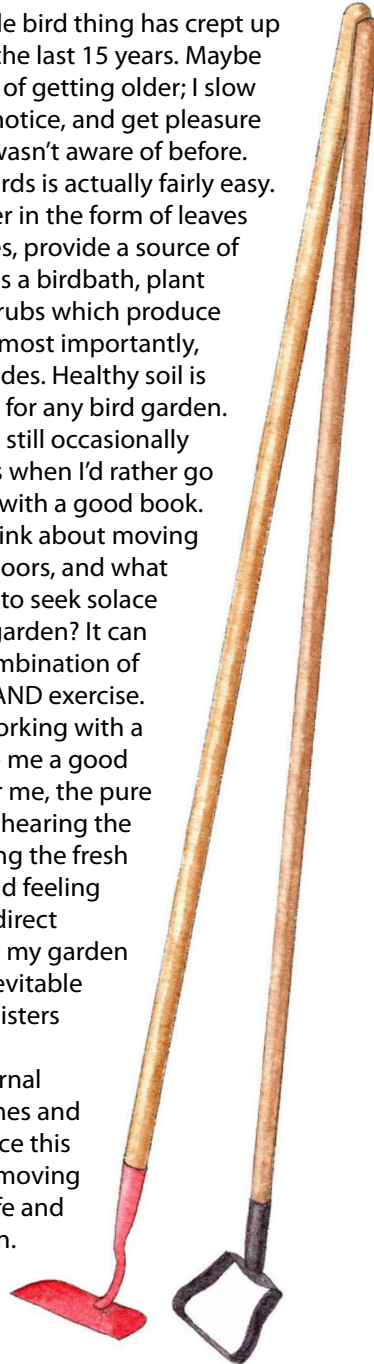
We all know what strong memories and emotions can be stirred up by simple smells, and the garden is one of the more likely venues for such stimulation. With this in mind, I have compiled a list (available from your sales associate) of plants with fragrant flowers and/or foliage for Bay Area gardens. 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 over the last 15 years. 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 easy. 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.

There are still occasionally gloomy days when I'd rather go back to bed with a good book. But then I think about moving around outdoors, and what 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! 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 vernal equinox comes and goes, embrace this as a time of moving forward in life and in the garden.

— Paul



WEEKEND SPECIALS

March 5-7

Ranunculus Plants

4 in. pots ~ \$3.99 (reg. 5.95)

March 12-14

Gardner & Bloome Fertilizers

4 lb. bags ~ \$8.25 (reg. 10.99)

March 19-21

Outdoor Ferns

1 gallon and larger ~ 30% OFF

March 26-28

Herbs (Organic)

3½ in. pots ~ \$3.75 (reg. 5.00)

April 2-3

Hats

all styles/sizes ~ 30% OFF

April 9-11

Terra Cotta Pottery

all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 16-18

Conifers

all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 23-25

Gloves

all sizes ~ 25% OFF

April 30- May 2

Tomato Seedlings (Organic)

3½ in. pots ~ \$3.75 (reg. 5.00)

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

New hours starting March 14th: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. No entry after 4:50 pm.

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Bamboozled?

Running bamboos can exhibit “take-over-the-world” growth habit that leads to the fear (and occasional hysteria) about this group of plants. A newly planted running bamboo usually behaves rather tamely for the first couple of years and sends up new culms relatively close to the original planting. With time, the new culms grow progressively larger in diameter and height than the previous ones, and begin to emerge many feet away. The increase in size and spread corresponds to the increase in strength and vigor. This transformation in our perception of the plant from “benign” to “aggressive” is naturally alarming even in one’s own garden—all the more so when the invasion begins over the property line in the neighbor’s yard.

What follows are methods and strategies to contain running bamboos so that their beauty may be enjoyed in any landscape without anxiety.

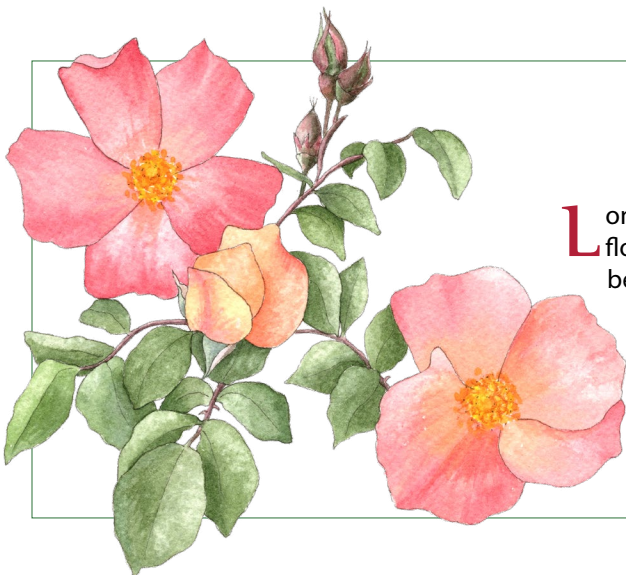
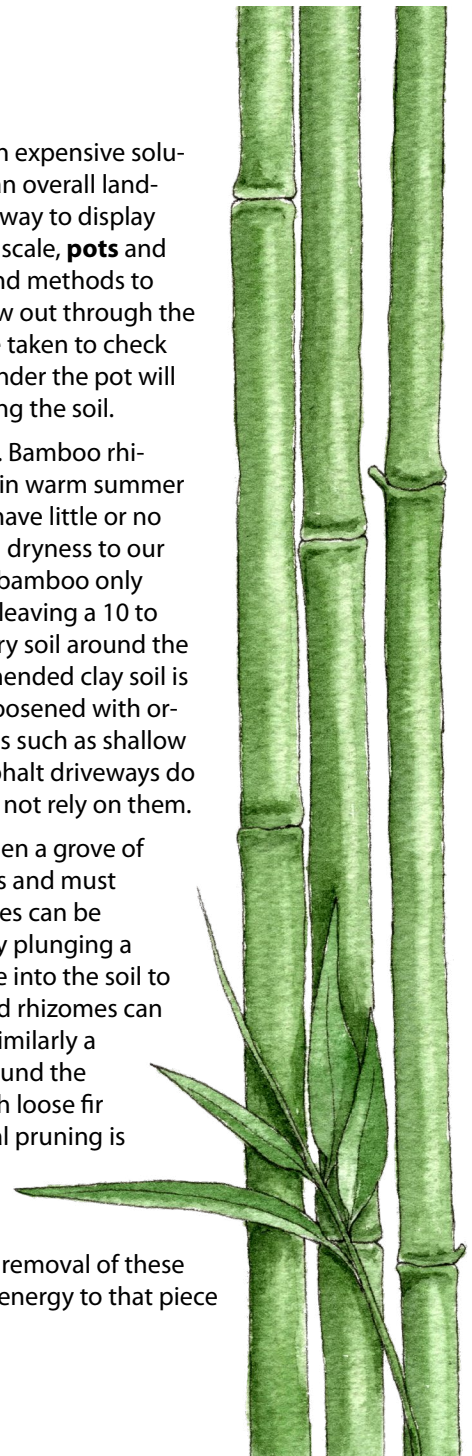
Rhizome barriers are commercially available, heavy, flexible plastic underground “walls” used to surround and define the parameters of stands of running bamboo. When buried in soil, this material is longer lasting than either wood or concrete, and when correctly installed, it will completely stop rhizome spread and is therefore the best method to use along property lines. Rhizome barrier should be installed so that 2 inches remain above soil level with the walls tilted outwards. That way, rhizome growth is directed up over the edge of the barrier where it can be seen and eliminated. The genus *Phyllostachys* (Black Bamboo and its cousins) have relatively shallow root systems in our heavy clay, typically occurring in the top 1 foot of soil. *Pleioblastus*, *Pseudosasa* and *Sasa* have deeper and faster growing rhizome systems. When planting these genera of bamboo or when planting any bamboo in loose, loamy, or sandy soil, it is wise to use a barrier that is 3 feet deep.

Raised beds basically behave as an aboveground rhizome barrier. A concrete block or poured concrete wall

surrounding running bamboo is an expensive solution, but when incorporated into an overall landscape design, it can be a dramatic way to display a specimen bamboo. On a smaller scale, **pots** and **containers** also act as aboveground methods to restrict spread. Rhizomes may grow out through the drainage holes and care should be taken to check and cut them annually. A saucer under the pot will also prevent rhizomes from entering the soil.

Natural barriers can also be used. Bamboo rhizomes do most of their spreading in warm summer months when we in the Bay Area have little or no rainfall. We can use the natural soil dryness to our advantage by watering a running bamboo only in the area where it is desired and leaving a 10 to 20-foot perimeter of unirrigated dry soil around the plant to block its expansion. Unamended clay soil is a more effective barrier than soil loosened with organic matter. Preexisting structures such as shallow concrete sidewalks, patios and asphalt driveways do NOT serve as effective barriers. Do not rely on them.

Rhizome pruning is best used when a grove of bamboo is accessible from all sides and must be done *each year*. Surface rhizomes can be cut late fall through early spring by plunging a sharp, flat-bottomed garden spade into the soil to prevent further expansion. Severed rhizomes can then be pulled from the ground. Similarly a 1-foot deep trench can be dug around the perimeter of a grove and filled with loose fir bark, sawdust or gravel. The annual pruning is somewhat easier in this looser material. Even if severed rhizomes are overlooked and grow on to produce shoots, the prompt removal of these shoots while young will eliminate energy to that piece of rhizome and cause it to starve.



Contemplate the Rose

Long-stemmed hybrids, climbers, floribundas, and grandifloras can become habit forming. We have condensed, distilled and reduced the thousands of stunning varieties out there to a group of nearly 50 that perform well in the Bay Area, and deserve a spot in your sunny garden.

Our main shipment of roses will be arriving soon. They are in #3 size containers and sell for \$44.95 each.

David Austin English Roses in #5 size containers are expected to arrive in late spring.

More information, details and a list of varieties available on our website. (Check in Menu under *In the Nursery*.)

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 these requirements as days to maturity. By selecting early maturing varieties (70 days or less), you are likely to end up with more fruit. We recommend the following varieties:

Japanese Trifele Black

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.

Stupice

This old Czech heirloom is a standard for those growing in cooler pockets of the Bay. It produces delicious small red treasures that are perfect for a salad or to put right in your mouth.

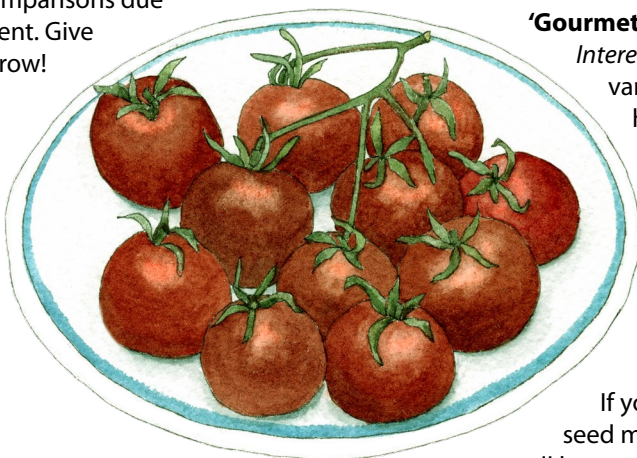
Sun Gold

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!

Black Cherry

While Sun Gold may be the sweetest cherry, this variety produces a complex flavor that will please all. The tall vigorous vines produce abundant crops.

Happy sowing to all!



Salad Greens All Year Long Succession Growing in Containers

Do you love fresh salads from your own garden? Have you tried the cut-and-come-again technique? It gives you plenty of greens at the baby leaf stage in a relatively short growing period. This quick, fun project offers great rewards.

Planting in containers is a way to add gardening areas to your yard by taking advantage of spots that might not otherwise support plants, and it can allow you to keep your harvest near the kitchen door.

Choose pots that are at least 1 foot deep to accommodate the roots and as wide as possible for larger harvests. For a continuous supply of greens, use 3 pots and seed each one 2 weeks apart for successive crops.

Fill your containers to within 1 inch from the top with high quality potting soil like Recipe 420. Water thoroughly, and then scatter seeds so they lay approximately 1 inch apart. Barely cover with soil as lettuce needs light to germinate. Firm the soil lightly with the flat of your hand. Water well with a gentle spray and keep evenly moist while the seeds germinate.

In the cooler months, you'll want to place the plants so they get full sun exposure. In the hot months, move any pots containing small plants to a place where they will be sheltered from the sun during the hottest part of the day. Morning sun, dappled sun under a tree or bright, reflected light is great. Keep well watered.

When the plants are 4-6 inches tall, cut them off about 1½ inch above the soil with scissors. Another crop of new leaves will grow from the center of the plants. After cutting, you might fertilize the cut plants with a diluted liquid vegetable fertilizer or fish fertilizer to support the new crop.

After harvesting twice, discard the plants in the compost and start harvesting from your next container. Keep it going and you'll have custom gourmet salads all year! Here are some delicious seed mixes we have in the seed racks right now:

'Chef's Choice' Lettuce Mesclun Mix from *Botanical Interests* combines 6 colorful lettuce varieties with arugula, frisée endive and mizuna, a mild mustard.

'Gourmet Baby Greens' Mesclun Lettuce Mix from *Botanical Interests* has a mix of 6 butterhead, leaf, and romaine lettuce varieties that grow into colorful and multi-textural harvests.

'Sea of Red' Cutting Lettuce from *Renee's Garden* is a single variety of deep mahogany red lettuce that makes a gorgeous addition to salads.

'Mild Mustard Mix' from *Renee's Garden* contains 4 different varieties of mustard that when harvested young have a mild flavor that is perfect for salads.

If you decide to make your own custom greens or lettuce seed mix, try to match the days to maturity so the plants will all be ready to harvest at the same time.

Aquatic Plants

**Something for every water garden,
from small bowls to large ponds!**

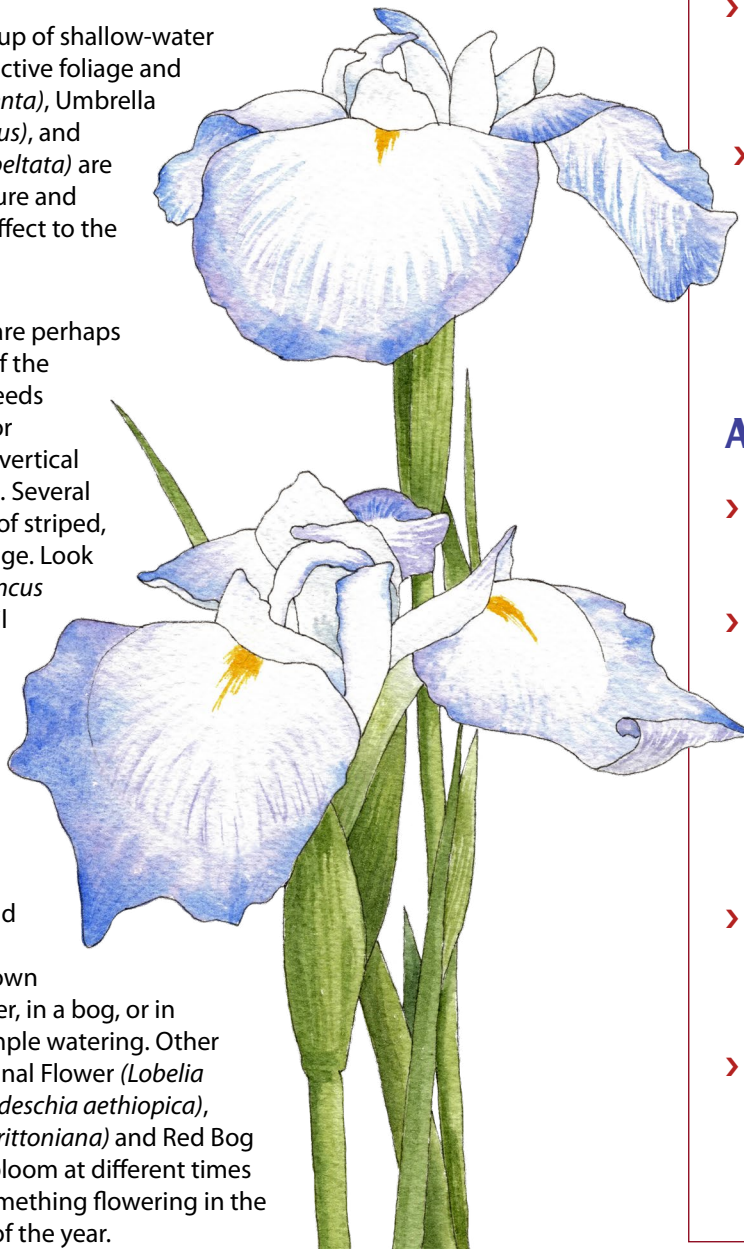
Water Lilies (*Nymphaea*) are a true delight; the main plants that highlight the beauty of a pond. We offer a selection of colors (whites, pinks, yellows, reds and changeables) that have been rooted a year in advance, so they should produce flowers 4 to 6 weeks after planting.

Water Striders are among the most popular plants for the water garden. There is grace and intrigue in the way their small leaves and delicate flowers trail across the pond's surface. Some favorites include Floating Heart (*Nymphoides peltata*), Four-leaf Clover (*Marsilea mutica*), and Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum brasiliense*), which is an oxygenator. Most varieties perform nicely in small containers, such as half barrels.

Dramatic Foliage This group of shallow-water varieties has uniquely attractive foliage and form. Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), Umbrella Papyrus (*Cyperus alternifolius*), and Indian Rhubarb (*Darmera peltata*) are among those offering texture and structure that add a bold effect to the pond.

Rushes and Reeds These are perhaps the most natural-looking of the water plants. Rushes and reeds don't have showy flowers or lush foliage, but they offer vertical lines, stiffness and contrast. Several have the added attraction of striped, banded, or variegated foliage. Look for the Corkscrew Rush (*Juncus spiralis*), the Graceful Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), and the Horsetail Rush (*Equisetum hyemale*), and many others.

Bog Color Water Irises and a variety of bog plants provide a broad spectrum of colors in their flowers and foliage. The vigorous, free-blooming irises may be grown submerged in shallow water, in a bog, or in regular garden soil with ample watering. Other bog plants, including Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), Calla Lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), Mexican Bluebell (*Ruellia brittoniana*) and Red Bog Lily (*Crinum 'Menhune'*), bloom at different times of the year, allowing for something flowering in the pond nearly every month of the year.



THE 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.