

Flowercraft Garden Center

San Francisco's #1 Nursery

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HOME GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

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Mar/April Success Tips

1. Plant vegetables, berries and fruit trees.

This is all part of growing healthier food, fresher food, and better tasting food. You pick at the peak of ripeness, versus supermarket produce that is picked green, then gassed to finish the ripening process. Plus, when you grow your own, it can't be any more local, and you know it is clean, free from any pesticides.

2. Invite pollinators for dinner. Plant lots of plants that have flowers. If you want to know more, look up the UC Berkeley Urban Bee Lab on the web. They have an excellent list of bee plants and other information. Do NOT use on-line bee lists from outside California—they are worthless in our unique climate.

3. Adjust sprinklers. As we come to the end of the rainy season, it will be time to turn your sprinkler system back on, and gradually increase the amount of water you give your plants as the days heat up and become longer. Inspect your sprinkler system for leaks, plugged or mis-adjusted sprinkler heads, and vegetation that is blocking them. Make sure water is flowing out of each nozzle of a drip system.

4. Time to fertilize! Plants are particularly hungry this spring because the heavy rains leached more nitrogen out of the soil than most winters. Feed most plants with *EB Stone Organics All Purpose Plant Food*, citrus with *EB Stone Organics Citrus & Fruit Tree Food*, and lawns with *Natures Green Lawn Food*.

Plant a Berry Garden!



You can't get tastier or healthier food than berries, picked fresh from your garden. And with all the new varieties that have come out in the last ten years, you might say this has become the 'golden age of backyard berry production.'

We have lots of berries to choose from, including blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, and more. Plant these all in one section of your garden, where you can easily protect the fruits from birds with our bird netting. Plant enough and you'll have healthy berries for every breakfast, or those special Saturday breakfasts, or on ice cream, or in fruit compotes!

Blueberries (in the drawing above) are colorful, attractive plants, so you might want to plant-up some extras of these in large containers for use in a sunny entryway or patio. Blueberries want an acid soil, so ask us which soil amendment to use to create that.

Replanting After the Drought



We have lots of water, but there is no reason not to continue to plant smart to reduce your landscape water use. Replace plants that died or are doing poorly because plants are a critical part of life on Earth as they add oxygen to the air, filter out air contaminants, beautify our surroundings, and do so much more.

We have a great selection of low-water succulents and other low-water plants—experiment with these in your yard and you will discover that you'll come to love some of these plants just as much as plants that need lots of water.

Many people are not getting rid of their lawn, but simply reducing its size. If you are re-planting your lawn to make it look great again, we can help with that as well. New varieties of grass often use less water than old varieties, and there are some grass mixes that take far less water, that may be useful for certain areas you have.

Upcoming Classes!

Gardening 101

with Suzanne Bontempo
with Our Water, Our World!

APRIL 1 | 11am

Please RSVP by email, or at the store
(info@flowercraftgc.com)

Raising Chickens 101

with Lora Kellner
S.F. Professional Gardeners Association

APRIL 22 | 11am

Please RSVP by email, or at the store
(info@flowercraftgc.com)

Common Planting Mistake



Spring is an excellent time to plant! Did you know that one of the most common planting mistakes is planting too deep?

Here's why this is so common. People may place the plant at the correct height in the hole, but they forget that the soil will settle and lower the level of the entire plant. The deeper you dig the hole, the more settling will lower the soil level.

In almost all cases (tomatoes are an exception), the trunk of a plant needs to end up at the same soil level as when it was in the nursery pot. If the trunk becomes partially covered with soil, it is much more likely to succumb to crown rot that either causes the plant to grow more slowly, or sometimes kills it. Also, any grafted section may be covered, causing further problems.

So whenever you've dug a deep hole, plant just a little high so that once the soil settles, the trunk will be at the same soil level as it was in the pot. You'll end up with healthier plants!

Vegetable Jollies

A man walks into the doctor's office with a parsnip in one ear, a carrot in the other and his nostrils blocked with broad beans. "What's wrong with me, doctor?" The doctor replied, "You need to eat more sensibly!"



Little Joey helps his grandfather dig Lup potatoes and brush off the dirt. "What I want to know," he said, "is, why did you bury them?"

Dad found two-year-old Henry chewing on a slug. Dad's disgust was followed by curiosity. He asked, "Well, what does it taste like?" Henry thought for a moment and replied, "Worms."

Earth laughs
in a
FLOWER.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Have You Been Forest Bathing?



No, forest bathing does not mean taking a shower in a forest. It is a new practice of visiting a forest in a very specific way to promote your good health.

Forest bathing was first formalized in Japan in 1982, and now is recognized as a cornerstone of their preventive health care and natural healing medicine. Meanwhile, it has been spreading and becoming more recognized here in California, in Europe, and around the world.

Forest bathing is different than a hike through the forest for exercise, or a guided hike to learn more about nature. Its objective is to move slowly, to deliberately slow down, and appreciate things *with all your five senses*--to take a break from the stress of our daily lives and increase your sense of well-being.

Spending time in natural environments has been linked to **lower stress levels, improved working memory, and feeling more alive**, among other positive attributes.

Studies have been done comparing walking in nature to walking in an urban environment. It shows that when walking in nature, **stress hormones decrease, depression can decrease, and a type of white blood cell that fights infected or tumor cells increase**.

If you don't have a forest handy, may we suggest doing some **Garden Bathing?** I think we just coined a new term!! But seriously, gardening has long been known to produce positive emotional and mental health, as well as physical health.

So between spring planting and other gardening activities, take time in your garden to relax and just soak it all in!

Western Monarch Update

A total of 298,464 monarch butterflies were counted along the West Coast at select sites during the Thanksgiving holiday. The numbers counted are a little higher than the really bad recent years, but far lower than the highs of 1997 and 1998, when the counts first began. (In 1997, 1,235,490 monarchs, or over 4 times as many as last year, were counted.)



What makes this fall's counts even grimmer is that they include many more sites than those early years, so what we are seeing are far fewer monarchs overwintering at each site than before.

As things warm up monarch butterflies move out from where they spent the winter. Unfortunately we will be seeing fewer monarchs all through California this year.

If you want to help monarchs, consider planting a patch of milkweed (any species of milkweed) in your garden this year, from either seeds or plants. Monarch butterflies feed on a large range of flowering plants (so plant lots of plants that will bloom), but the caterpillars only feed on milkweed. Then have fun watching and observing all the action!