

The Gardeners' Club

Santa Cruz County, California

February 2013

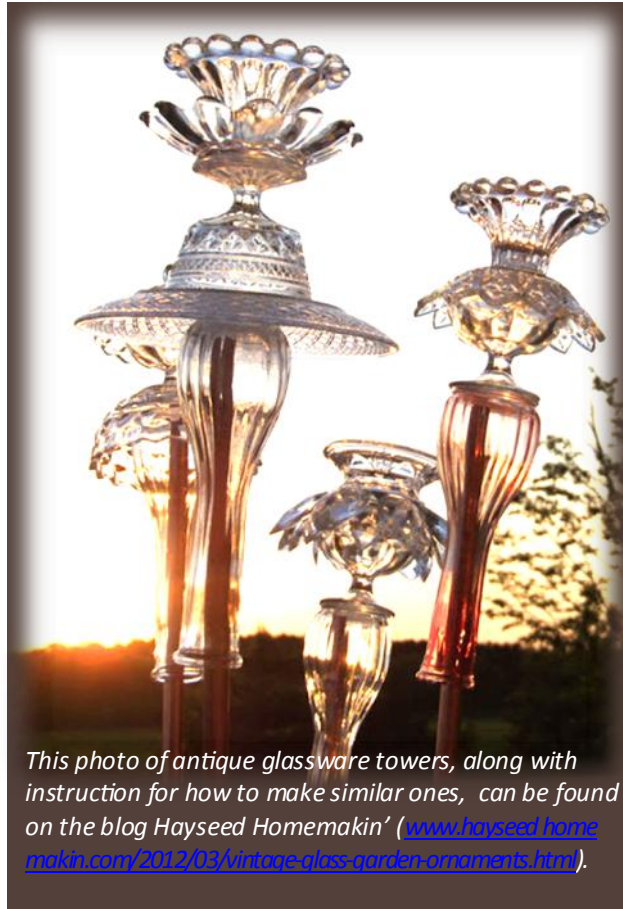
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Creating Glass Garden Totems

How to Upcycle Glass Vases, Dishes, Candleholders.
Etc. Into Art for Your Garden

What better way to spend Valentine's Day Eve than nourishing your creative heart with fellow gardeners? Club Member Lupe Allen and her friend Andrietta Hunter will be doing a presentation and demonstration on how to construct lovely glass totems for your garden. They will demonstrate how to select glass pieces, types of glue to use and the process and tips they have learned along the way to avoid mistakes and breakage. They will be bringing in examples of materials, providing tips on how to acquire glass pieces and how to assemble them for a beautiful and successful totem. They will also bring in



This photo of antique glassware towers, along with instruction for how to make similar ones, can be found on the blog Hayseed Homemakin' (www.hayseedhomemakin.com/2012/03/antique-glass-garden-ornaments.html).

completed examples of various types of totems and will assemble an example for members to view.

If you don't already have a stash of glass pieces, try yard sales, thrift shops and dollar stores. Lupe says lovely examples of totems to inspire you can be found online at

www.google.com/search?q=glass+totems&hl=en&tbo=u&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ei=NRP_UKyALaP3igLnoH4Ag&sqi=2&ved=0CDIQsAQ&biw=1720&bih=1189.

Working on a project like this is perfect for the quieter, slower winter months before the frenzy of spring gardening begins.



Glass totem in Lupe Allen's garden.

Monthly Meeting
February 14th, 7:00 P.M.
Aptos Grange
2555 Mar Vista Drive
Refreshments will be served.
Thanks to Susan Ford for snack
and Bev Little for dessert.



Glass totem in Andy Hunter's garden.

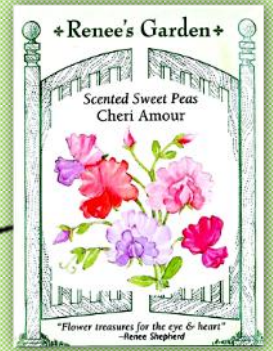


Giving seeds for 'Valentine' mesclun lettuce to someone you care for instead of a rose bouquet? Why not? (Botanical Interests)



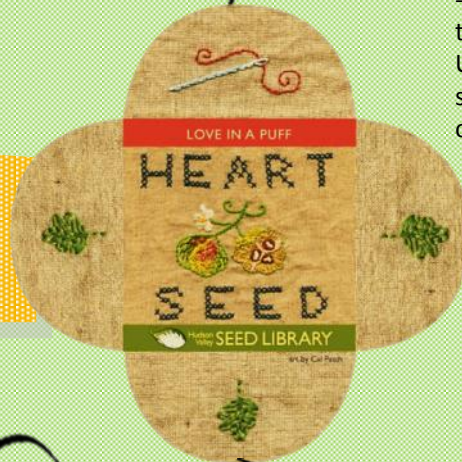
Hudson Valley Seed Library

...or give a packet of one of Renee's Garden's lover-ly "Seeds of Love"— such as 'Cheri Amour' Sweet Peas or 'Falling in Love' Shirley Poppies or 'Summer Love' Honey



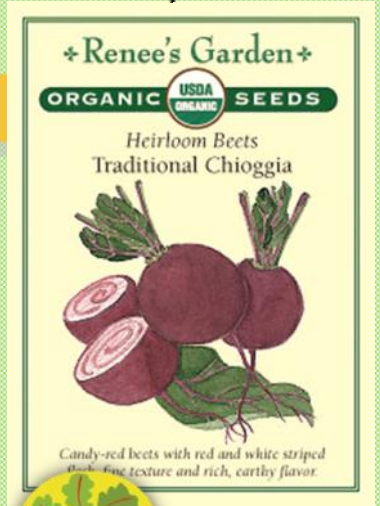
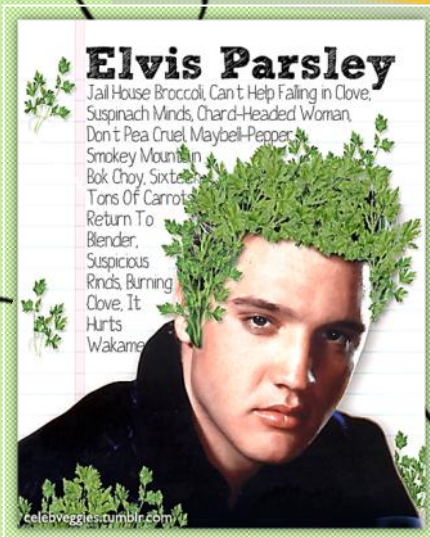
-Scented Alyssum. By the way, after careful trials, Renee's has added a complete range of USDA Certified Organic vegetable and herb seeds to its line. Renee's donates thousands of seed packets to groups that grow food for the hungry and school and community garden programs.

Go to the Hudson Valley Seed Library to order seeds that are packaged in frame-worthy art (www.seedlibrary.org/art-packs.html). Like this Heart Seed: "White flowers give way to green puffs, which hold three new heart-emblazoned seeds that are a cinch to save. Here at the Seed Library we (heart) these seeds, and plants that climb, and seed pods you can dry. This old fashioned ornamental vine gives us the triple love right back. Known as Balloon Vine, Love In A Puff, and Heart Seed, the paper lantern-like seed pods of *Cardiospermum halicacabum* (Cardio = heart, sperma = seed) carry three matte black seeds, each imprinted with its own white heart. Who says plants can't show affection to their caregivers?"



February 22 is Parsley Day. Celebrate it by planting some, or by singing "Return to Blender".

Photo and directions by Maria Alexandra Vettese at www.3191milesapart.com



Not everyone is passionately in love with beets, but if you are, good for you. Phytonutrients give red beets their gorgeous crimson color, also providing detoxification and anti-inflammatory benefits. Making the beet into hearts for salad only takes minutes. Slice beets (no need to peel) about 1/8th of an inch thick. Use a cookie cutter to cut out heart shape from each slice (about three slices per serving). Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cover roasting pan or a cast iron skillet with olive oil and turn each beet heart in the oil to coat. Season generously with salt and pepper. Roast, turning halfway, for 20-30 minutes or until soft and slightly shrunken. Oh, yes, and now's a good time to plant your beet seeds in the garden. Soaking and nicking the seeds helps germination.

Want to know what seeds to plant when? Try Dave Witing's easy planting calendar app at All Things Plants (<http://allthingsplants.com/apps/calendar>). Just type in your city and state, or your zip code, and voila! your custom Garden Planning Calendar will appear.



Photo: annastockwell.com

Here's an article shared with us by Kevin Lee Jacobs, who writes a great blog called A Garden for the House (see more information on the next page).

Winter-Sowing 101



BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I start my summer garden in December and January, using a neat trick called "Winter-Sowing." Winter-sowing is an outdoor method of seed germination (invented by Trudi Davidoff) which requires just two things: miniature greenhouses (made from recycled milk jugs) and Mother Nature. You can winter-sow your way to a beautiful garden, too...for pennies.

Here's how:



Make a Greenhouse. You can make a greenhouse from any container you like, so long as light can penetrate its walls. Like other winter-sowers, I use recyclables, including gallon-size milk- or water- jugs, and 2-Litre soda-pop bottles. With jugs and bottles, use a pen-knife to cut around the middle, almost all the way through. The uncut half-inch or so will serve as a hinge.

Next, punch out drainage holes in the bottom. A Phillips screwdriver, heated over a flame at the stove, will facilitate the hole-punching job. Punch out also a

few holes along the top portion of the container. These extra holes increase air-ventilation. Ventilation, of course, is the key to preventing excess heat from building up in the greenhouse, and baking the seeds to death. If there is a cap on your jug or bottle, remove it.

Select the Right Soil. It is essential to use a soil mixture that drains well, and has a light, fluffy consistency. A commercial peat-moss and perlite mix is fine. Pour the soil, preferably to a depth of 2 to 3 inches, into the bottom half of your container. **Then moisten the soil thoroughly and let it drain.**



Sow the Seeds . Sow your seeds on the soil surface, and then cover them with more soil, when necessary, to achieve the proper planting depth. Gently pat the mix down, so that seeds and soil make good contact. Then replace the lid, and secure it with a strip of duct tape, as illustrated.

If you live in a cold climate, as I do, plant your perennial and hardy annual seeds first. Should these sprout during a weird warm-spell in winter, they will not be harmed.

Remember to Label! For each sowing, indicate with a paint pen the seed variety and date sown. Do not omit this step, for there is nothing worse than finding, in spring, dozens of miniature greenhouses brimming with seedlings, and not knowing what they are!

Bring the Greenhouse Outdoors. Your greenhouse, once planted and labeled, is ready to brave the outdoor elements. Select a location that is safe from strong wind, but where sun, rain and snow will be freely admitted. My assorted



greenhouses go on the patio table, out of the reach of Lily the Beagle who would otherwise knock them over. For further protection from tipping, I place them in a large plastic box, with drainage holes melted in the bottom.

Relax. Now sit back and let Mother Nature do her thing. As the weather chills and warms, your seeds will freeze and thaw. These natural actions loosen the seed-coatings. This is why advance soaking or nicking of hard-shelled seeds, such as Morning Glories and Sweet Peas, is not necessary when you winter-sow.



At the first kiss of spring, but while nights are still freezing, seedlings will begin to emerge. Now is the time to check for water. Open the tops, and if the soil appears dry, moisten thoroughly but gently, so as not to disturb tender root systems. Then close the tops again. On warm, sunny days, I open the tops for hours at a time, and let the seedlings enjoy the fresh spring air. The tops, of course, are closed at dusk.

I can't tell you how advantageous winter-sowing can be. Last year I produced an entire garden's-worth of perennials this way (far too many, in fact), without the need for light-systems, heating devices, or fancy seed-starting kits. And, unlike
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windowsill-germinated seedlings, which more often than not are frail and spindly, winter-sown seeds grow up to be strong, sturdy plants, completely prepared for glorious careers in the open garden.

If I were you, I'd give winter-sowing a try. Honestly, it's the easiest, most cost-effective way to achieve a beautiful garden.



Editor's note:

Kevin is an award-winning food, garden and lifestyle writer who lives in New York's Hudson Valley. Don't miss any of his home and garden inspirations. Sign up for his weekly newsletter by going to www.agardenforthehouse.com.



For more information about winter-sowing, go to the Winter Sown website (currently being rebuilt, but still chock-full, including free seed offers) at <http://wintersown.org>.



WinterSown.Org



Another recommended newsletter is Nathan Krupa's e-letter from Crescent Hill Nursery in Watsonville. You can subscribe by going to the nursery's website (www.crescenthillnursery.com).

Red signifies good luck in Chinese culture, and February 10th marks the 2013 Chinese New Year. Adding Crescent Hill's Plant of the Month—**Carex buchananii 'Red Rooster'**— to your yard or garden would be a perfect way to ring in the Lunar New Year. Here are some of the things Nathan has to say about it:



This New Zealand native sedge is a favorite due to its unusual coppery orange to crimson red hues. This eye-popping color certainly makes a statement, and is complimented

nicely by its tidy form. Red Rooster is an erect, densely clumping plant which usually grows to about 2' tall X wide in either full sun or part shade. It is especially effective in the wind, where the "curly-cue" tips of the mature growth vacillate gracefully along with the terminal flowers. Unlike many popular grasses (Ex. Fountain Grass/ Pennisetum), it is hardy for most California gardens (to USDA Zone 7) and will tolerate any frost the Central Coast can muster. Additionally Red Rooster is evergreen, and this stability gives it a leg up on other popular grasses (Ex. Zebra Grass/ Miscanthus) which go deciduous in the winter months. One reason this plant has landed in the "landscaper' delight" category is its wide-ranging versatility. It especially shines on borders, where the gently arching clumps move with the wind to create texture. This also makes it a great choice for mass plantings, where the off-color tone can create a dramatic statement. Container gardeners also appreciate Red Rooster's upright form, whether used alone or in concert with other plants in a mixed arrangement.

Crescent Hill is offering a Special E-Newsletter Price: \$5 per 1-gallon container. Mention this review to receive the discount. That's a great incentive to visit the nursery, which specializes in rare and unusual perennials for Mediterranean gardens. Call 831-246-1128 to arrange a visit and get directions to the growing grounds.

Fruit Trees FROM PLANTING TO HARVEST

A 3-Day Short Course

February 8-10, 2013*

Alan Chadwick Garden
at UC Santa Cruz

Friday from 5:30-7:30 pm,
Saturday & Sunday, from
10 am-4 pm



If you're ready to immerse yourself in the art and science of organic fruit tree growing, this brand new class is for you! This comprehensive course will give you the tools you need to successfully cultivate fruit trees on a backyard or small-orchard scale. The course takes place February 8-10 at the historic Alan Chadwick Garden on the UC Santa Cruz campus.

Through lectures and hands-on practice you'll learn how to select appropriate fruit tree varieties; choose and use the right tools; prepare the planting hole; plant, fertilize, and prune your trees; set up an irrigation system; improve the soil with cover crops; and control pests and diseases. Registration cost includes the Fruit Tree Reader, a selection of articles designed for this course. The course will be taught by Orin Martin, manager of the Alan Chadwick Garden at UC Santa Cruz. For over 35 years Martin has cultivated hundreds of organic fruit trees at the Chadwick Garden, and taught thousands of

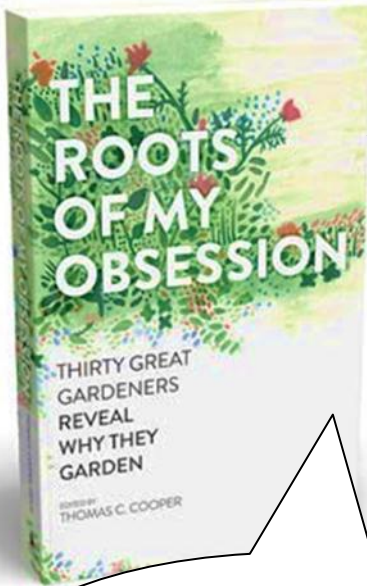
students and community members how to establish and care for fruit trees. Zoe Hitchner and Sky DeMuro, organic farmers at Everett Family Farm, will be co-instructors. Class size is limited to ensure a quality experience, with an emphasis on hands-on learning.

Cost is \$300 General Public, \$275 Friends of the UCSC Farm & Garden. To register, go to <http://fruittree.brownpapertickets.com> OR send check made payable to "UC Regents" to CASFS/UCSC Farm 1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

Questions? Call 831.459-3240 or email casfs@ucsc.edu. NOTE: In case of heavy rain, the class will be rescheduled to February 15-17.

Why do you garden? For fun? Work? Food? The reasons to garden are as unique as the gardener. The Roots of My Obsession features thirty essays from the most vital voices in gardening. They show that gardening is a passion and obsession that cannot be conquered or abandoned, only indulged. Each gardener tells a compelling story. Whether their muse is the quest to achieve a personal vision of ultimate beauty, a mission to heal the earth, or the attempt to grow a perfect heirloom tomato, the writing is direct, engaging, and from the heart. As you read, you may find yourself nodding your head in agreement, or gasping in disbelief. What you're sure to encounter is some of the best writing about the gardener's soul ever to appear. For anyone who cherishes the miracle of bringing forth life from the soil, The Roots of My Obsession is essential inspiration.

A Suggested Read



"'Garden' is a verb, not a noun...It's an active, fidgety sort of pastime, another way of jiggling the loose change in your pocket, except that the pocket happens to be your backyard..."-Amy Stewart

"Gardeners don't listen to 'easy'. We want to tame nature give it order, play with it and against it." - Page Dickeu

"To set the record straight, I don't garden of my own free will. I am held hostage. Always have been. Not long after birth some green thing or other...grabbed me. No struggle ensured, just complete and total submission." —Tovah Martin.

"To paraphrase Descartes: I garden, therefore I am. For more than six decades I've been fiddling around on the Earth's crust, and the pleasure of such activity has only increased..." - David Wheeler

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are still only \$12.00. The membership year lasts through the end of December, 2013. Dues entitle members to all club educational programs, our special events, plant trades and our awesome monthly newsletter. The "green" option is to receive an electronic PDF FULL-COLOR version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option below. Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. Renew your membership now so you won't miss a thing...you'll be glad you did.

The Gardeners' Club Membership Form

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

Newsletter Preference (check one): Full color PDF via e-mail Paper copy (B&W) via snail mail

Enclose check for \$12 per member made out to *The Gardeners' Club*. Mail to
The Gardeners' Club c/o Suzanne Mercado, P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond CA 95005.



Mating Monarchs



Kissing Snails? Photo by Francisco Welter-Schultes



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It's easy-peasy to join our club!

Dues are \$12 per calendar year. Make check to "The Gardeners' Club" and mail to P.O. Box 3025., Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos.

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www.thegardenersclub.org