

The Chuparosa

Chapter Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 3 - March 2017



Desert
Horticultural
Society of the Coachella Valley

Annual tour to spotlight four desert gardens



One of the gardens on this year's tour sprawls over several level and hillside acres.
Photo by Maureen Gilmer

Four desert-friendly, water conserving gardens, from back yards to HOA conversions to a private hillside display will be featured at the 12th annual Desert Garden Tour from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 26.

The self-guided walks through Palm Springs gardens showcase a variety of landscapes, large and small. Created by homeowners and design professionals, these gardens offer

insight and inspiration that speak to every garden landscape.

"Working Together to Save Water" is the theme of this year's tour," says Robert Musial, DHSCV tour chairman. "No matter the size of your planting area, you can take ideas from these gardens that will add color and beauty and conserve water."

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Our Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 19 at 6 p.m.

Cacti, Agaves and Yuccas of California's Deserts

Stephen Ingram's multimedia presentation explores some of the unique attributes of the cacti, agaves, and yuccas and highlights what makes them such intriguing components of our native plant communities. With stunning images of their colorful blossoms and unusual growth forms, this program showcases a number of species and varieties that occur in California's Anza-Borrego desert area.

The main slideshow-talk will be approximately 40 minutes, with time for questions. A second 10-minute show set to music illustrates the beauty of these remarkable succulents. Following the presentation, Stephen will sign copies of his book from Cachuma Press, Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada.

Ingram is a native Californian with a long-time interest in plants and plant ecology. He received a B.S. degree in biology from Lewis and Clark

College, and an M.A. degree in botany from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Following graduate school, he was employed as part of the Research Department at Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Fla. He now works part-time as a photographer/writer and biological consultant in the Eastern Sierra.

Ingram is past president of the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. His photos have been used in numerous books, magazines, and calendars, and are also sold as fine art prints.

5:30 p.m. Free plant exchange before the meeting. Bring pups, cuttings, plants to share with others. Even if you cannot bring plants feel free to adopt and watch your garden grow.

6 p.m. Meeting and presentation by Stephen Ingram. Free, open to the public.

Where: Hoover Room, The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert

More Upcoming Events

Here's a cache of events and meetings of interest to members of the Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley and fellow gardening enthusiasts. Read more at www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org.

Ongoing Mondays free help:

Through May 2017. Master Gardeners will be at the UC Cooperative Extension office in Indio to answer gardening questions, help solve gardening problems. Free. Drops-ins,

telephone calls, emails welcome. 81-077 Indio Blvd., Suite H. (760) 342-2511, anrmgindio@ucanr.edu

Ongoing "Ask the Gardener":

Master Gardeners set up tables Saturdays at Palm Springs farmers market; on second, fourth Wednesday at Palm Desert farmers market; on second, fourth Sunday at La Quinta farmers market. 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Ongoing: Docent tours of Moorten

Botanical Garden: By Master Gardeners, through middle of May 2017.

Scheduled between 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Free with admission (\$5 adults, \$2 for children 15 and under, no charge for children under 5). Garden houses: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily except Wednesday. 1701 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 327-6555. Call to confirm tours.

March 12 Potting and Propagation Projects:

Hands-on workshop, 9 a.m.-noon, Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. \$25-\$35. LDU@Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

Events, cont'd

March 15 Desert Backyard Habits: 9-11 a.m., Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. \$20-\$30. LDU@Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

March 16 Growing Citrus: How To's for the Desert: By UCCE Master Gardeners, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Free. Cathedral City Library, 33-520 Date Palm Drive.

March 16 Eco-Discovery Tour of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve: On this 3-hour stream-side excursion, Robin will identify native plants, and describe uses of these desert plants for food, medicine, tools, clothing, and shelter. Birds and other wildlife that may cross our path will be identified, and Robin will reveal fun stories about each. 8:30-11:30 a.m. Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 11055 East Drive, Morongo Vly, CA. \$20 per person. For more information or to RSVP, call 760-363-1166, visit www.powerofplants.com, or robin@powerofplants.com.

March 16 Eco-Discovery Tour of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve: Learn about native plants uses, see birds, wildlife, some of oldest exposed rocks in the state. 8:30-11:30 a.m., 11-055 East Drive, Morongo Valley. \$20. www.powerofplants.com, (760) 363-1166.

March 17 Composting: By UCCE Master Gardeners. La Quinta Wellness Center, 78-450 Avenida la Fonda, La Quinta. 9-10 a.m. Free. RSVP at (760) 564-0096

March 18 Water-wise Gardening: With UCR Master Gardeners, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave., Palm Desert. \$25-\$35. LDU@Livingdesert.org, (760) 346-5694, Ext. 2501

March 18 Weed Meet: Join others to remove invasive weed species. 8 a.m.-noon, 9160 Whitewater Canyon Road, Whitewater. RSVP to Jennifer Prado at jprado@desertmountains.org

March 26 12th annual Desert Garden Tour: Noon-4 p.m. Registration noon-2 p.m. at Desert Water Agency, Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs, where guests will pick up map of tour. Members free, non-members \$15. Pre-register at deserthorticulturalsociety.org. Cash-only registration day of event. See Deserthorticulturalsociety.org for more information.

April 24 Les Dames D'Escoffier Spring Farm Tour: 8 a.m., bus tour departs Shields Date Garden, 80-225 Highway 111, Indio. Visit composting site, CVWD, major grower. Lunch at Café at Shields. \$80. Advance paid reservations required. www.ldeips.org,

Tour, cont'd

Transportation to one of the gardens will be provided by the city of Palm Springs' Buzz trolley and requires extra time to visit. More detailed instructions will be provided when you check in for the tour.

Pre-registration is strongly recommended and available online at deserthorticulturalsociety.org. Credit card payments only online.

Guests may also register and receive tour maps from noon to 2 p.m. at Desert Water Agency, 1200 S. Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs.

All guests and members must check-in at Desert Water Agency before visiting the gardens. A wristband will be issued and checked at each garden.

Admission is \$15 for non-members and \$5 for students. No checks or credit cards can be accepted. Cash only please. There is no cost for current DHSCV members.

Information and registration: deserthorticulturalsociety.org.

Sunnylands now more water sensitive

By Jamie Lee Pricer

When Walter and Leonore Annenberg built Sunnylands, their Rancho Mirage estate that hosted presidents, royals and celebrities, in the 1960s, water use was not the issue it is today. The world-famous estate on 200 acres was designed with 11 lakes and a nine-hole golf course that can be played as 18 holes.

A review of how water use has changed was covered by Janice Lyle, director of Sunnylands Center and Gardens, in a standing-room-only Modernism Week talk Feb. 21 at the Rancho Mirage Library.

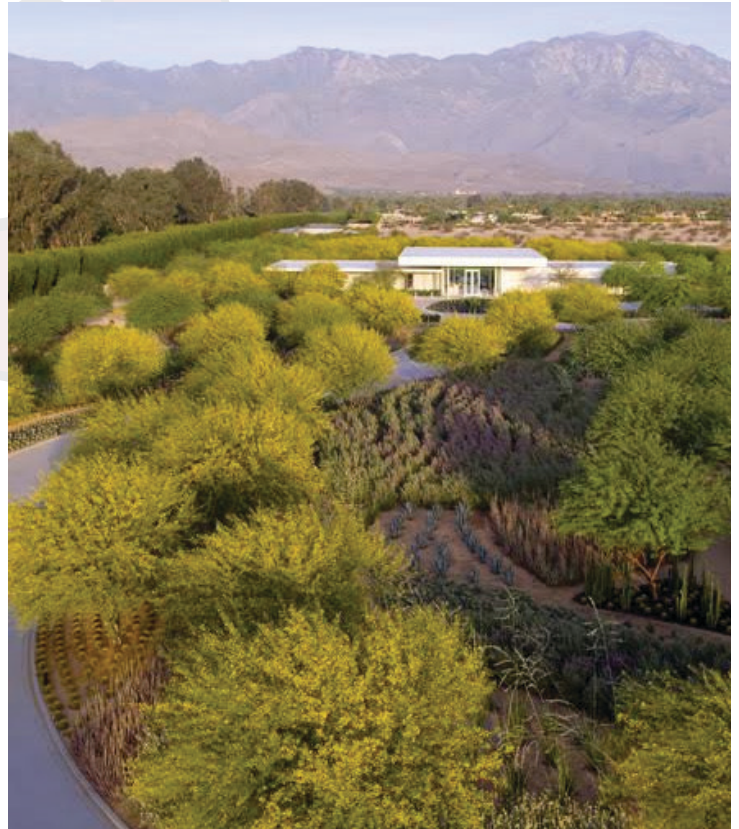
In the past few years, “We faced a significant challenge to cut water use,” said Lyle. When Sunnylands was first completed in 1966 it had 188 acres of turf. “Sixty acres have been cut out of irrigation,” said Lyle. Overseeding has been cut to about 10 acres immediately around the house.

The 17,000-square foot public Center is in a 15-acre parcel to the east of the private main estate. It includes nine acres of gardens designed by The Office of James Burnett: OJB Landscape Architecture. It has 53,000 individual landscape plants and 1.25 miles of walking paths.

To further cut water use, the Center garden has only arid-area plants arranged in designs inspired by the Annenbergs’ Impressionist paintings.



Sixty acres of turf was removed from Sunnylands and replaced with mulch and drought-tolerant grasses.



Sunnyland Gardens features 50 drought-tolerant and native plants. All photos copyright The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands.



Overseeding only 10 acres of lawn at Sunnylands resulted in a 66 percent drop in water consumption in December 2015 compared to December 2013.

UCR Palm Desert panel discusses local, international tree issues

By Jamie Lee Pricer

What gardener could resist a free talk by experts on trees?

UCR Palm Desert hosted one, "The Value of a Tree," in late February. It was part of a series in partnership with UCR Center for Ideas and Society and the California Agriculture and Food Enterprise.

The speakers provided an interdisciplinary panel discussion that took about 100 audience members around the world. Desert-specific topics were discussed in questions following the presentation.

Introduced by UCR Palm Desert ecologist Dr. Cameron Barrows, the speakers were:

- Ryan Berk, found of Parliament Chocolate
- G. Darrell Jenerette, professor, UCR Department of Botany and Plant Sciences.
- Jason Sohigian, treevangelist, Armenia Tree Project

Berk talked about the dangers of deforestation and the loss of cocoa species.

Jenerette, whose studies have looked at Phoenix as an ecosystem, noted the importance of trees in urban areas.

"Half the world's population lives in cities," he said. "In the next 30 years two billion more people will live in cities."

Benefits have dollar effects as trees provide cooling, absorb carbon dioxide and improve mental health.

"It's been shown that lifespans increase if you live on a street with trees," he said. "Trees improve students' concentration and increase mindfulness."

Cooking, heating and mining has led to severe deforestation in Armenia that has led to flooding and landslides, explained Sohigian. By 1988, the forest cover of oak, beech and pine trees had been reduced to about 8 percent.

In the years since, the Armenia Tree Project has planted 5.2 million trees, many of them fruit bearing, in more than 1,000 sites around the country that is the size of Rhode Island.

The three panelists and Barrows answered questions from the audience. Among them:

Q: How do you deal with the conflict between water conservation and growing trees?

A: Seek balance between habitat and ecosystem services for people. Use the right tree in the right setting.

Q: What about using gray water?

A: We should expand on reusing water, the more we can the better.

Q: What about planting non-native species?

A: Take the example of ficus vs. palo verde. You have to choose the trade-offs: A non-native that uses more water or a climate-ready, drought tolerant, water-efficient tree.

If you are interested in attending any of UCR Palm Desert's ongoing series of free lectures: palmdesert.ucr.edu/events or (760) 834-0800

Maintenance by the Month: March

By Troy Bankord

Spring has sprung! Our winter with plenty of rain has caused our citrus to bloom early and many of our plants to spring into action.

We are most likely past our chance of frost so heavy pruning of frost damage can be comfortably completed now. Old branches, stems and foliage from previous years harbor insects, eggs and larvae that will become problematic as our growing season progresses. Cut back vegetation now for a flush of healthy (and hopefully insect-free) growth that will shade your plants through the summer months.



Lantana is a likely pruning target in March.

Frost-sensitive plants such as lantana, bougainvillea, hibiscus, Mexican Bird of Paradise, dwarf oleander, natal plum, pink and white Gaura, *Tacoma stans* (Yellow Bells & Orange Jubilee), purple fountain grass, and the like, actually bloom more readily on new growth, rather than mature growth. Furthermore, cutting back spent blooms/bracts on bougainvillea will encourage it to bush out and bloom more readily.

For a more natural look (that is also lower in maintenance), cut your plants back further to allow for new growth. You should do your drastic pruning and cutting back now to encourage new growth while the spring surge is upon us. Once that window of opportunity has been missed, one must be more conservative in pruning. The later it gets into our spring/summer, the lighter you'll want to prune.

Mexican Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*) can be cut back now. Because it blooms more prolifically on new growth versus old wood, it's best to cut them back to about 1 foot in height. With adequate water, they will easily reach the 6-foot height by summer's end. If it is used as a hedge or as a screen, you may not want to cut it back that heavily. Cutting it back by half will give you a fuller look — along with a plethora of spring, summer and fall color — while allowing more height.

Always remember

You should turn on your watering system after cutting things back to give them a good drink and a good start. I've found that giving them a "shower" — washing down their leaves and branches — along with a good drink around the roots, helps promote new growth more quickly.

In our dry climate, hosing down

bare wood on occasion after heavy pruning helps "soften" the wood, and allows new growth to protrude through the hard bark more readily.



Caesalpinia pulcherrima (Mexican bird of paradise). Bird of paradise can be pruned in March.

In addition, with our early surge of warm temperatures, you will need to add more time/frequency to your watering timer. Plants especially need more water from March-June, while they are flushing out with new growth. How often to water depends on many factors, including plant type and maturity, soil type and weather. As a general guideline for spring, water desert-adapted plants every week or so. Non-native, moderate or high-water-lovers may need irrigation every 5 to 7 days. Shallow-rooted annuals, perennials or wildflowers may need water every 2-3 days. Keep in mind that water is most efficiently utilized (with less

March maintenance, cont'd

evaporation) when applied prior to 9 a.m. and after 6 p.m.

Salvia species: Especially *Salvia greggii*, should only be sheared or dead-headed now through summer, as blossoms fade. It can be fertilized with a balanced or slow release fertilizer. Compost is good and even a shot of Miracle Gro will do wonders. Dead head other plantings, such as aloe.

Natural grasses: It's not too late to cut your desert grasses back but it's best now to leave at least 6 inches of foliage from the ground. They need a little shading and will need the old foliage at the ground to assist in manufacturing food to keep them alive and healthy. Make sure they are given a big drink after they've been cut back.

Citrus: Because citrus may have bloomed already, you should avoid pruning them at this time. Prune and trim once they set fruit. If you didn't fertilize them last month (around Valentine's Day), do so quickly and a little more sparingly. Many times, fertilizing citrus during blooming may cause premature blossom drop.

I've found fertilizing citrus at holiday times (Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day) is most effective for fruit production and healthy foliage. Organic, balanced fertilizers can be applied evenly around the root zone. Fertilizers should be mixed with water or water-in well after applying

for effectiveness and to avoid burning the roots.

Aphids: These tiny, soft-bodied insects cluster on tender plant growth to suck plant sap. Aphids may be green, grayish-black or neon yellow. Control their population by periodically hosing them off with water or a mixture of dish soap and water. It's best not to spray your plants during the heat of the day. Another option is to leave them alone, as aphids attract green lacewings and ladybeetles. As long as a food supply is available, these beneficial insects will hang around your garden to consume aphids and other pests.

Roses: Roses can be fed now. Fertilizers formulated for roses work great. Always remember that fertilizer is a salt and when a plant is ailing, many people make the mistake of fertilizing it in hopes of resuscitation. Sadly, many times, the result is death. It is best if a plant is in somewhat healthy condition when applying fertilizers.

And nutrients must be well-watered into the root zone to avoid burning or death. Avoid manures, which are high in salts and weed seeds. Bat guano can be a great source of fertilizer that is lower in salt. Mulch, composts, coffee grounds and egg shells are also great forms of nutrients for your roses. Work them lightly around into the soil around

the root system.

In addition, Epsom salts, which are a great magnesium source that many of our fertilizers lack, can be worked into rose root zones. (1/4 to 1/2 cup per plant). They can also be dissolved in water and watered-in to each plant. Epsom salts will give your roses longer stems. Water your roses deeply and a little more frequently following the application of any fertilizers and nutrients. Spray for powdery mildew once it appears on your plantings.

Tree trimming

Trees should be trimmed, thinned and scaled back quickly this month while they are still somewhat dormant. The sooner they are trimmed, the sooner they will partake of the spring surge of growth that is around the corner. Again, giving them a deep drink afterward will minimize any stress they many have endured.

Trimming and thinning now in preparation for our April winds is always a good idea to minimize wind damage or loss. Dead wood (in reasonable amounts) can usually be removed throughout the year without any chance of harm. If a portion of your tree has died, avoid removing the dead growth during the hottest part of the year as the trunk may scald and the tree might lose canopy.

March maintenance, cont'd



You'll expect to see a wealth of brittlebush (*Encino farinosa*) in bloom this month.

March bloomers: *Aloe* spp. — 'Blue Elf', *A. ferox*, *A. saponaria*, *A. barbadensis* — sweet acacia, Indian mallow, *Bulbine* spp., bougainvillea, desert marigold, fairyduster, wooly butterfly bush, *Damianita*, brittlebush, cassia and *Caesalpinia* spp., *Salvia greggii*, *Justicia* spp., ocotillo, *Gaura* species, angelita daisy, gopher plant, *Dyssodia*, *Dalea* spp., blue palo verde, *Mimulus*, blackfoot daisy, *Oenothera* spp., *Penstemon* spp., *Ruellia* spp., *Hesperaloe parviflora* (Red Yucca), Mt. Lemmon marigold, verbena and *Wedelia*, among others.

Troy Bankord of Palm Springs creates 'Places of Peace' through connective landscape and interior design. His projects have been featured in publications, on architectural tours and on television shows. In Arizona, his firm was the forerunner in native desert plant species maintenance via natural and selective pruning practices. www.troybankorddesign.com, <https://www.facebook.com/TroyBankord-Design>

This & that

Desert Water Agency's view of water rights lawsuit

Desert Water Agency is involved in two cases. One revolves around water rights, the other about taxation.

A court ruling the second week of March upheld the Agua Caliente tribe's claim to a reserved right to groundwater.

Background

The Agua Caliente tribe sued Coachella Valley Water District and DWA in 2013 to establish exclusive rights to an unquantified portion of the groundwater supply in the Coachella Valley. Currently, the groundwater is accessible to the public on an equal basis. Local public water agencies, like DWA, charge only the cost of service to deliver and import water.

The case is divided into three phases. The ruling on Agua Caliente's water rights is part of phase one. The amount of water that the Agua Caliente would be entitled to use exclusively has yet to be determined. The second phase of the trial will determine the Agua Caliente's water quality and storage rights, and the third phase will quantify how much water Agua Caliente has an exclusive right to use.

The Agua Caliente has not indicated what they would do with the water they are claiming as their own.

Next step

DWA and CVWD could petition the Supreme Court to accept an appeal. If no appeal is requested or granted, the case would move into the next phase.

Taxation lawsuit

The DWA case against the Department of Interior (DOI) has been dismissed.

Case background

In 2011, the DOI issued a regulation that exempted private buildings and investments (possessory interest) on land leased from tribes from state or local charges. Riverside County collects taxes for Desert Water Agency, which help pay for the capital costs of the State Water Project (imported water source). There are two cases DWA is involved with surrounding this DOI regulation. The case that was dismissed the second week of March focused on the threat that the DOI rule poses directly to DWA fees and charges.

In 2014, DWA joined the Agua Caliente v. Riverside County lawsuit, which will determine how the DOI rule impacts the County's collection of taxes on leased tribal land (1% tax). In addition to its own fees and charges, DWA also gets a portion of the 1% tax levied by the County.

Next steps

The Agua Caliente v. Riverside Coun-

This & that, cont'd

ty lawsuit is still pending and DWA is still involved with that case. The agency could wait for demonstrable revenue losses and file suit again against the DOI. DWA could also ask the Supreme Court to accept an appeal of the case.

Information: www.dwa.org/lawsuits

Learn how to make compost

The Riverside County Department of Waste Resources offers a year-long schedule of free classes on composting, vermicomposting, recycling and green cleaning.

Backyard Composting classes are held from 10 a.m. to noon. The dates and locations of the 2017 classes in the Coachella Valley:

March 11, Coachella Valley Water District office, 75-515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert.

Sept. 9, College of the Desert, Agricultural Science Building, 43-500 Monterey Ave., Palm Desert

Nov. 28, Demuth Community Center, 3601 E. Mesquite Ave., Palm Springs

The classes will give residents an overview of the composting process, how different methods of composting

work and the benefits of each. Residents will learn what materials can be used for successful composting.

After the class the county department will offer low-cost compost bins to Riverside County residents and will also give information on how you can build your own compost bin.

Information: www.rcwaste.org/composting/how; (951) 486-3200

If you'd rather buy compost

Coachella Valley Compost, 87-0111 Landfill Road, Coachella, sells compost, top soil, potting mix, bedding mulch and erosion mulch in large batches.

Delivery can be arranged for a fee or you can load your own truck.

Quantities range from 10 to 24 cubic yards. Prices range from \$8 to \$28. Desert erosion mulch that is created with ground palm fronds is free.

Orders should be placed at least 24 hours ahead at (760) 863-4364. Hours are 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

Tree health checkup

With the Coachella Valley's recent deluge of rain, preceded by drought, plus the desert's strong winds, homeowners might have concerns about the health of their trees.

Drought followed by heavy rains can cause root instability. An article in the Los Angeles Times gives pointers to tell if your tree is in danger of falling or dying.

- Are there changes in the tree?
- Is the tree tilting?
- Is the earth on one side of the tree rising?
- Is there cracking in the soil next to the tree?
- Are there dead branches or early leaf drop?
- Is there unusual insect activity or holes?
- Are there horizontal cracks in the trunk?
- Is the canopy less than one-third full?

An answer of yes to any of these questions might suggest problems. At this point it's best to find expert advice. We recommend hiring an ISA-certified arborist.

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Want to Get More Involved?

We have so many opportunities for members to become more actively involved with the Desert Horticultural Society of Coachella Valley. Jump in!

Send Us Your Photos & Favorite Websites!

We like to show off photos of gardens or plants that horticulture society members have collected. Please send your jpeg photos at full size attached to an email with your name, where the photo was taken and information about the photo subject.

And, have you come across online gardens, educational sources or conservation links you like? Email links and photos to Jamie Lee Pricer at jlp6@hotmail.com. We'll share them in future newsletters.