

Desert Trumpet

Newsletter of Desert Planters of Ridgecrest

Ridgecrest, California

January 2007

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"It's Time for Xeriscape"
"Maximum Color and Variety, Minimum Water"
Member of

Desert Empire District (DED)
California Garden Clubs, Inc. (CGCI)

Pacific Region and National
Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc.

General Meeting January 6, 2007—Roses in the Desert Program

Mike and Jerry Mumford have been growing roses in Ridgecrest for more than 30 years; they will come to the January General meeting and tell us how they do it! Be sure to bring your questions about watering, pruning, selection, planting tips and timing, anything else you have on your mind about growing roses. There will be plenty of time for asking questions and getting them answered.

The Desert Planters General meeting is on Saturday, January 6, 2007 at Immanuel Ministry Center, 1201 North China Lake Blvd. in Ridgecrest from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Be sure to tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers about this program!

Bare Root Planting Time is Here—detailed info provided by Marianne Kistler

Several categories of plants are available this time of year as bare root plants - fruit trees, berry plants, asparagus, and roses. Bare root means they are not in a pot with soil so require special handling. It is important to shop early for the best selection and quality plants. When selecting bare root plants one option is to use the numbering system on each plant to select the best plants--#1 is best quality, #1 ½ is middle quality, #2 is lesser quality. It takes practice to use the grading system so it works to just use the price as a guide besides the appearance of the plant. Be sure to buy plants that are kept outdoors (as opposed to inside, like in a grocery, where dormancy will break because of the warmth). Reading and studying before shopping is a very good idea so you know what to look for and how to prepare the planting area.

Bare root plants are significantly more cost effective than container plants and adapt to their planting site more quickly.

Plan to soak any bare root plant in water several hours or overnight prior to planting, to rehydrate it. Heeling-in bare root plants is usually done if plants are purchased on a whim and there is no spot ready for them or if the weather is cold and rainy. If the trench is kept moist, the plants can be held for a week or two. Burying the whole plant keeps it from drying out. If there is only space for the roots, damp towels can be placed over the branches.

Another rehydration method is to fill a trash can with water and stuff whatever plants (usually roses) into it, to sit in a shaded area until ready to plant (hopefully not longer than 3 weeks). With the smaller bare root plants like berries or asparagus, they can be heeled in altogether into a single can of potting soil, like a 2-gallon can, and kept in a shaded area until there is time to plant them—they can be planted singly in pots). Any confining ties or rubber bands around the roots should be removed.

Page 692 of the 2001 edition of the Sunset Western Garden Book has additional information on selecting and planting bare root plants but any edition of the Sunset Western Garden Book has lots of good information about bare root planting.

Editor's Note: If you have the current 2001 edition, please note that Ridgecrest is still in Zone 11, not Zone 10 as the book says. Check the differences between those two zones on page 59 of that edition—the map is on page 57. Zone 10 averages 12 inches of rain and is at 3,300 to 5,000 feet elevation! Sunset Magazine editors were made aware of the problem several years ago so let's hope they fix the error in the new edition, due out this spring, perhaps in February 2007.

Lots to do in the Winter Garden!

HORTICULTURE NOTES for January 2007 by Marianne Kistler, Co-President of Desert Planters of Ridgecrest

Here we are, in the heart of the winter season! It's gloriously cold out, at least at night. But as cold as it is, this is not a time to take it easy as far as the garden goes.

Winter can be:

- A time to plan for the coming gardening season (seed/plant catalogs are arriving)
- A time to clean up the garden (rake leaves, cut back frosted perennials)
- THE time to transplant roses, shrubs, small trees while they are dormant
- THE time to divide perennials like Shasta Daisies, Coreopsis, Michaelmas Daisies
- A time to start a compost heap (with those raked leaves)
- A time to start seeds indoors or in a cold-frame outdoors
- THE time to continue making hardwood cuttings (I started mine last month)
- A time to sharpen, repair, lubricate and replace tools such as shovels, hoes, rakes, spading forks, wheel barrows, pruners.

Hardwood Cuttings

What are they? Stems cut from deciduous trees and shrubs, to create new plants from them. The dormant season is THE TIME to do this.

The stems should be 8-10 inches long and as thin as a pencil. Cut the bottoms of the stems straight across just below a bud (swelling on the stem) and the tops on a slant just above a bud. This way you'll be able to tell the difference between the top and bottom of each stem.

Group together four to six stems from each shrub or tree and fasten with string or a twist-tie. The stems can be buried vertically or horizontally, in the ground or deep container. Label with the plant name and date. Mark the ground where you are burying the stems so you won't walk there. Water the ground or containers to keep moist. The stems will callous-over but will not root during this process.

In two to three months, dig up the stem-groups (or remove them from the containers), separate and dip each bottom-end into a rooting powder or gel (shaking off the excess). (I have Root-tone to share!) Now you will plant (or pot) each one individually, with half of the length of the stem in the soil.

Make a hole for the stem with a pencil or trowel handle so the rooting compound stays on the stem, and firm the soil lightly around it. This time the stems will grow roots over the next several months. Continue to water to keep the soil moist, and apply organic mulch around each stem at least 4 inches out from it but not touching the stem itself. Label each stem cutting with the plant name and date.

Plants to consider making hardwood cuttings from: hybrid forms of trees like the Chitalpa, Fruitless Mulberry, named varieties of Ash trees like Modesto, Fan-Tex, Raywood & Rio Grande, Chinese Pistache, fruit & nut trees. Shrubs to try are: Forsythia, Crape Myrtle, Spirea, Flowering Almond, Roses, Vitex, Pittosporum tobira, Boxwood, Euonymus, Privet. Some of the shrubs mentioned (the last four) are evergreen (not leaf-losing), & on those you will want to cut (not pull) the leaves off the bottom half of the stems, after they have been buried & you are getting ready to root them. Good Luck!

Potting Workshops, Starting Plants for Your Garden and DPR Plant Sales

If you need some good potting soil and other people to work with and learn from, potting workshops are planned at Donnie Woods' home at 458 East Monte Vista Avenue in College Heights on Wednesdays from 9 to 11:30 a.m. February 7th and 21st and March 14th, 2007. Weekend Potting Workshops will also be held on January 21st and February 11th at Judy Talbot's home. See page 3 for more information.

Now through February is the time to start tomatoes & peppers of all varieties, eggplant, summer & patty pan squash, melons, cucumbers, bush beans & any colorful annual plants you know (or think!) will survive our summers. Vegetable plants are always requested at plant sales & the Farmer's Market but we seldom have any! A sheltered spot out of the wind with filtered light is good for starting plants; if you have a unit for growing under lights that is great too, as is a sunny window.

Save your Rummage (no clothing) for the Spring Rummage Sale, date to be determined.

Shopping for Plants in Ridgecrest is February 3, 2007 Meeting Program

If you have shopped for plants in Ridgecrest you know the challenges we face: garden departments with few plants appropriate for success here, almost no plants available in the prime fall planting season, few soil amendments needed by desert gardeners, sales staff uninformed about gardening in the high desert.

The February Desert Planters General Meeting program will help you find good plants for your garden from a variety of LOCAL, well informed sources plus some good mail order sources. There are several native and xeric plant nurseries within easy traveling distance too and some with Mediterranean adapted plants. (The March program will have more on adapted plants!)

Bring your friends, neighbors and co-workers for an information-packed program by Marianne Kistler.

Weekend Potting Workshops Scheduled

Weekend potting workshops have been scheduled at Judy Talbot's home, 433 North Inyo Street in Ridgecrest on Sundays, January 21st and February 11th from 2-4 p.m. Bring seeds you want to plant in pots, plants needing transplanting to larger containers and/or cuttings you want to start.

Excess plants from your garden can be brought and potted. Bring hand tools, drinking water, garden gloves if you prefer them, snacks and a marker for plant labels. A folding chair is always good too.

Pots are available as is potting soil using Marianne's special mix.

Donnie Woods potting area is still available on Wednesdays February 7th and 21st and March 14th from 9 to 11:30 a.m. for weekday potting workshops.

Call Judy at 371.1953 or Donnie at 375.7243 for more information.

High Desert Home Center Offering Desert Soil Amendments

High Desert Home Center is looking into keeping a supply of soil sulfur, alfalfa pellets or meal, cottonseed meal, gypsum, iron sulfate and 16-grit sand on hand for use with Kellogg's Patio Plus potting soil. Perlite is also a good additive to increase air spaces in clay soil--and when purchased in the paint department the price is better!

All of us need to support High Desert Home Center and encourage their willingness to carry what we need here. They are located at the corner of Ridgecrest Blvd and Downs Street in Ridgecrest.

Recipe for Potting Soil and Planting Bed Amendments

Marianne Kistler provides the following recipe for mixing potting soil (more or less can be made to suit your needs):

- 1-1½ cubic ft bag of Kellogg's Patio Plus (about \$5 per bag)
- 2 12-ounce coffee cans alfalfa pellets (provides nitrogen)
- 2 12-ounce coffee cans Perlite (improves air in the soil)
- 2 12-ounce coffee cans 16 grit sand for standard plants (double the amount of sand for planting cactus or succulents)
- A pinch of cotton seed meal on the potting mix near the bottom of each pot.

Use a short-handled small shovel to mix it with in a wheel barrow or large tub, adding a little water to make it easier to absorb water later. Mix should be damp when potting to enable better water absorption.

When enriching your garden's native soil, work in gypsum, soil sulfur, cottonseed meal, iron sulfate and alfalfa all over the beds with plants in them, not just next to the plants or in the planting hole. Roots reach out and rich moist soil encourages that. Each of these items helps balance alkaline soil and keeps it balanced for the growing plants.

Kellogg's Patio Plus is one of the few potting soils that does NOT have additives to make it more alkaline—adding something to our alkaline desert soils that makes it more alkaline is not what we need here! Read the labels just like you do at the grocery store and you can see the difference.

Finding Ways to Encourage Garden Club Participation by Judy Talbot

A couple of people have commented since the December 2006 newsletter that there was too much mention of help needed from members of Desert Planters. That it became nagging.

Finding the balance between that reaction while encouraging and educating members on specifically what help is needed when and where is often a delicate balance.

We all joined Desert Planters to meet local gardeners and to learn about gardening in this challenging climate--there is no better way to learn that to take part in garden club events and opportunities in addition to the general meeting. As committee chairs and members as well as club officers search for that delicate balance, please know that everyone of all knowledge levels is welcome to participate in all events—plant sales, Farmer's Market booth staffing, potting workshops, rummage sales, business meetings, car tours, all committee activities, all of it. Some of us are novices, some of us have lots of experience and knowledge to share—but we need members to participate in order to be able to share what we know and what we want to learn.

Please consider yourself invited!

Crafts to Sell at Farmer's Market

Debbie Wheeler suggests people donate homemade craft items to the Farmer's Market booth to raise money for DPR--small things people could use as birthday or hostess gifts or decorative items for ourselves.

If you would like to donate your craft items to benefit Desert Planters please bring them to the Farmer's Market—Janet Coleman has volunteered to take them home and bring them back the following week.

New Golden Gardens Magazine Issue Available

The December 2006/January 2007 issue of Golden Gardens Magazine will be available free to anyone interested on the Information Table at the January 6th General meeting. Golden Gardens is a CGCI publication for CA garden club members.

Past Director of Desert Empire District Dies

Jeanny Graham, District Director of Desert Empire District from 1981 to 1984, died of congestive heart failure last week in Highland CA. Services will be at Highland United Methodist Church, 27555 Baseline Street, Highland, CA 92346 on Sunday, January 7, 2007 at 2 p.m. She was a State Flower Show Judge and on the Judges Council of Southern California; she was at the Oasis Garden Club of IWV flower show in Ridgecrest last fall as a judge. She was a member and officer in Barstow Desert Holly Gardeners for many years.

Farmer's Market meets every Friday year-round at the Ridgecrest Triangle, 8 to 11 a.m. offering locally grown and acclimated plants, good gardening advice for this challenging climate, gardening books written by local gardeners, hats, neck coolers, plus printed information of all kinds.

Help staffing the DPR booth is always appreciated—no special knowledge required!

Desert Planters Officers 2006-2007

Dues are \$25 per year per individual; \$35 per year per household.

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Calendar of Events

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME	NOTES
Saturday, January 6, 2007	General Meeting	Immanuel Ministry Center, 1201 North China Lake Blvd, in Ridgecrest	1 to 3:30 p.m.	Program on Roses in the Desert by Mike & Jerry Mumford, Ridgecrest rose gardeners for 30 years!
Tuesday, January 16, 2007	DPR Business meeting	Immanuel Ministry Center, 1201 North China Lake Blvd, in Ridgecrest	1 to 3:30 p.m.	Officers are requested to attend; DPR members and guests are invited to attend; guests cannot vote.
Sunday, January 21, 2007	WEEKEND Potting Workshop	Judy Talbot's garage, 433 North Inyo Street, Ridgecrest	2-4 p.m.	See article on page 3.
January 25-27, 2007	CGCI Winter Board Meeting	Santa Maria CA		State Board Members LaVerne Harms and Shirley Craver are eligible to attend.
Saturday, February 3, 2007	General Meeting	Immanuel Ministry Center, 1201 North China Lake Blvd, in Ridgecrest	1 to 3:30 p.m.	How to shop for plants in Ridgecrest when most sources don't carry many plants that can survive here and don't have plants to buy in the prime planting season—by Marianne Kistler.
Monday, February 5, 2007	Desert Empire District Winter Board Meeting	Desert Empire Fairgrounds, 520 South Gateway Street, Ridgecrest in Oasis Club Room	9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. RSVP required for lunch which is \$5—call Judy Talbot to RSVP, 371.1953	Hosted by Oasis Garden Club of IWV. All DPR members and guests are encouraged to attend.
Wednesday, February 7, 2007	Weekday Potting Workshop	DPR Potting Area at Donnie Woods' home, 458 East Monte Vista Ave in College Heights	9 to 11:30 a.m.	See article on page 2.
Saturday, February 10, 2007	Car Tour	Berniece Meade's Daffodils		Details in February newsletters
Sunday, February 11, 2007	WEEKEND Potting Workshop	Judy Talbot's garage, 433 North Inyo Street, Ridgecrest	2-4 p.m.	See article on page 3.
Tuesday, February 20, 2007	DPR Business meeting	Immanuel Ministry Center, 1201 North China Lake Blvd, in Ridgecrest	1 to 3:30 p.m.	Officers are requested to attend; DPR members and guests are invited to attend; guests cannot vote.
Wednesday, February 21, 2007	Weekday Potting Workshop	DPR Potting Area at Donnie Woods' home, 458 East Monte Vista Ave in College Heights	9 to 11:30 a.m.	See article on page 2,
Saturday, February 24, 2007	Car Tour	To Death Valley to see wildflowers	All Day	Meeting time and location will be in the February newsletter

Please stop by the Desert Planters Booth at the weekly Farmer's Market on January 5, 12, 19, 26, from 8-11 a.m.

All members and guests are invited to the monthly DPR Business meetings on the third Tuesday of each month (except June, July and December) at 1 p.m. at Immanuel Ministry Center.