

Season's Greetings from the Digital Gardener

The Digital Gardener (DG) is looking forward to the New Year as well as reflecting on the past year. Some of it's reckoning with "old age," as he tries to figure out how to maintain and enjoy his garden, and how much he will participate in the future in various Master Gardener activities. This update also covers the HOrT CoCo blog, recommendations on some books as seasonal garden gifts, and finally some thoughts about the future of Master Gardeners.

HOrT CoCo Blog

Following is a summary table of the HOrT CoCo blog posts since the last *The Latest Dirt*. The posted blogs on HOrT CoCo are an edited sampling of the various Help Desk responses from the questions asked. The DG tries to keep them timely and informative for the Contra Costa gardener. The DG thanks the Help Desk volunteers for their great work.

The format of the listing summary is a little different this time due to UCANR IT changing the reporting software and the DG not getting the "message." So for now, the DG can only report topics posted, not the most popular. Hopefully for the next *TLD*, the DG will have found and learned the "new" software to enable an easy view of the topics which are the most popular. There are strong indications that over 100,000 HOrT CoCo blog posts will be downloaded in this year.

Blogs Posted on HOrT CoCo early August 2018 to early December 2018

Title	Post Date	Tags
Transplanting a Very Spiny Berberis Bush	Posted 12/03/2018 0:09 AM	Barberry, Berberis, punctures, spikes, thorns
Armored Scale on Lemon Tree	Posted 11/26/2018 0:10 AM	citrus, citrus tree, hard scale, lemon, scale
Rain? Assassin Bugs in Your Home?	Posted 11/19/2018 0:09 AM	assassin bug, bug, kissing bug, rain, weather
More on Compost Tea	Posted 11/12/2018 0:17 AM	aerated compost tea, compost, compost tea
Oak Tree Critters (i.e., Galls)	Posted 11/05/2018 0:18 AM	Oak, oak gall, oak leaf gall
Who Is Eating My Cabbage?	Posted 10/29/2018 0:08 AM	cabbage, cabbage butterfly, cabbage worm, imported cabbageworm
Growing Hardneck Garlic	Posted 10/22/2018 0:10 AM	garlic, hardneck garlic
"Bamboo" Problems	Posted 10/15/2018 0:16 AM	Arundo, Arundo donax, bamboo, Giant Reed, invasive, invasive plant
Growing Bok Choy	Posted 10/08/2018 0:11 AM	bok choy, Bok Choy, Bok-Choy, bok-choy
Ginkgo Tree: To Prune or Not to Prune?	Posted 10/01/2018 0:14 AM	ginkgo, ginkho, ginko, maidenhair
Growing Winter Tomatoes in a Greenhouse	Posted 09/24/2018 0:11 AM	greenhouse, tomatoes, winter
Spider Identification	Posted 09/17/2018 0:13 AM	Brown Recluse Spider, Yellow Sac Spider

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Picking Ripe Apples	Posted 09/10/2018 0:10 AM	apples, picking ripe apples
Bougainvillea Doesn't Bloom	Posted 09/03/2018 0:17 AM	Bougainvillea
Neighbor's Cat Using Your Garden for "Bathroom"?	Posted 08/27/2018 0:19 AM	cat, cat feces, cats, pee, poop
Managing Compost	Posted 08/20/2018 0:27 AM	compost, compost drying, microorganisms
Apricot Tree Showing Signs of Brown Rot	Posted 08/16/2018 0:15 AM	Apricot, Brown Rot, Fruit tree diseases, Fruit Trees
Recommendations for Small Backyard Trees	Posted 08/13/2018 0:16 AM	recommendations, small trees
Issues with Ceanothus 'Diamond Heights'	Posted 08/06/2018 0:15 AM	Ceanothus, Diamond Heights, varigated

Note: You can find the HOrT CoCo blog post of interest by clicking the “Our Blog” box on MGCC’s public web home page (top center box) and use the search engine (upper right). Be sure to include and put HOrT CoCo in the search box along with your item of interest to shorten the “finds.”

Seasonal Gift Giving for Gardeners

For those of you considering gifts for the holidays, the DG has some book suggestions with a gardening theme:

For starters, any of the several books by our fellow [MGCC gardener, Susan Morrison](#). The DG recommends Susan’s books as great advice on designing and growing your garden.

Debra Lee Baldwin’s book, *Designing with Succulents*, is a great choice. Published in 2007, it is still current and informative. As an avid succulent gardener, the DG is inspired by many of her designs and plantings as well as her timely advice (web, etc.) on seasonal activities for succulents. Debra is from San Diego, has written several other books and has a wide following. You can also follow her on [Facebook, You Tube, her blog, and Pinterest](#).

Probably coming closer to Master Gardeners’ interests are publications by gardening author Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, who has a Ph.D. in Horticulture from Oregon State University. She is an ISA-certified arborist and an ASCA consulting arborist. She is Washington State University’s Extension Urban Horticulturist and an Associate Professor in the Department of Horticulture. She conducts research in applied plant and soil sciences, publishing the results in numerous and readable scientific articles and University Extension fact sheets. Dr. Scott also is the award-winning author of several books: the horticultural myth-busting *The Informed Gardener* (2008) and *The Informed Gardener Blooms Again* (2010) from the University of Washington Press, *Sustainable Landscapes and Gardens: Good Science – Practical Application* (2009) from GFG Publishing, Inc., and *How Plants Work: The Science Behind the Amazing Things Plants Do* (2015) from Timber Press. I’ve read, own and recommend *The Informed Gardener* and *Amazing Things Plants Do*. In 2018 Dr. Scott was featured in a video series *The Science of Gardening* produced by The Great Courses. She also is one of the Garden Professors—a group of academic colleagues who educate and entertain through their [blog](#) and [Facebook](#) pages. Dr. Scott’s contribution to gardeners was recognized in 2017 by the Association for Garden Communicators as the first recipient of their Cynthia Westcott Scientific Writing Award. I’ve read, owned, enjoyed and recommended both *The Informed Gardener* as well as *How Plants Work*. Her participation and writing in “The Garden Professors” are also great reads and often come with lively discussions.

There is also a weekly Northern California gardening podcast on NPR radio, “[Cultivating Place: Conversations on Natural History and the Human Impulse to Garden](#)” from North State Public Radio. The podcast of December 6, 2018, “[Cultivating Place: Seasonal Garden Book Round Up](#),” takes a deep dive into a half-dozen recommended garden books. These are great gardening podcasts. This particular podcast is an interesting discussion of garden books and recommendations from some very experienced gardeners.

Finally, did you know that there is a “Master Gardener Bookshelf” **Facebook** Group? Looks interesting, but just remember you live in Northern California when you see a book that might interest you. You can find it on **Facebook** at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MGbookshelf/>

“FACEBOOK GROUP DESCRIPTION OF MASTER GARDENER BOOKSHELF

Books of interest to those who garden, reviewed by Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners are asked to indicate the target audience, credentials of the author, or any information you feel is pertinent to prospective readers. Note: the information in these books does not always meet the research-based criteria Master Gardeners use when giving advice to the public. Comments in this regard are welcome here! No sales of products are allowed.”

The Future of Master Gardeners?

This topic caught my interest as I was browsing through [Slideshare.net](#). I often browse Slideshare for new ideas from others on topics I’m interested in (and maybe some plagiarizing?). Slideshare is essentially “Powerpoint” presentations on a multitude of subjects posted by a multitude of people. Not all are “great” but many are interesting, fast views of some interesting “facts” and/or stories.

The facts that caught my attention this time were in a slide show on the status and future direction of [Master Gardeners of Arkansas](#). I used that slide show to consider and compare the “facts” here in Contra Costa County. While I still don’t have confirmed “facts,” I do have plenty of questions and some ideas.

An early slide captured my attention. It was titled “**Nationally 1/3 of new (Master Gardener) volunteers don’t return in year two!**”

- That woke me up!
- Why? Is that typical? What a waste of resources!
- You too can look at the slide show (@ slide #5 slide in the [Arkansas slide show](#)) yourself to see what Arkansas Master Gardeners are doing to try and resolve this problem and put actions in place to retain more of their volunteers.
- Is the situation any different here? Without facts, I don’t know.
- So, what are the MGCC Executive Leadership Team and Executive Committee members doing to prevent such circumstances here in Contra Costa?

An MGCC event I attended recently was “Integrated Marketing Team,” led by Jill Cordry. I was very impressed with Jill’s leadership and the team’s enthusiasm. But the answers to many of the “problems,” “questions,” and “desires” of that team alone are still questionable: “Who exactly is going to volunteer to do **it**?” It seemed like that same concern, mobilizing Master Gardeners to volunteer, kept coming up again and again.

So, what can **WE** do? I have a few, if minor, ideas as the Digital Gardener. For example: putting all training on video and on the web so it can be viewed by all, not just those who are able to attend the various Master Gardener seminars and training. Ditto for most meetings, so that *all* Master Gardeners can be aware of the meeting or training. It would appear, however, that training in video production would be required to implement this proposal, as well as the availability of Master Gardeners to do the taping.

Once again, the question still comes down to **how and who is going to do it?**

Your thoughts and ideas are solicited, but you **must** also explain how it can probably be accomplished.

CHEERS!

Steve Morse, 2010