



November 2013 Meeting

Wednesday, November 13, 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7:00)

Dylan Hannon

“Bulbs for the California Collector”



Drimia maculata, origin South Africa and Swaziland. Its “true” scientific name may be *Drimiopsis maculata* or *Ledebouria maculata*. *Photo: From “cactus_lover” on Dave’s Garden, davesgarden.com.*

Dylan Hannon’s presentation will focus on less common geophytic plants from around the world that are suitable for Mediterranean climates and indoor cultivation.

Examples include amaryllids (species *Narcissus*, *Eucrosia*, *Brunsvigia*, *Haemanthus*, *Strumaria*), hyacinths such as unusual *Lachenalias*, *Massonia*, *Drimia* and *Albuca*, and unique groups like

Eriospermum and *Oxalis*. Dylan Hannon will highlight the merits of these wonderful plants, with notes on cultivation, and will describe plants for the advanced or beginning collector.

His main interest is the propagation and distribution of cultivated plants, particularly material of known wild origin. These themes run through Dylan's writing, lectures, plant collecting, and a mail order business (“dylansbulbs” on eBay).

Dylan has worked for over twenty years in the botanical garden field, starting as a research assistant to Dr. Thomas B. Croat at Missouri Botanical Garden. He spent nine years at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden as Plant Propagator and has been Curator of Conservatory and Tropical Collections at The Huntington since 2003.

In between these posts, Dylan worked in the wholesale cactus business and for several consulting firms as a field botanist in San Diego County. Currently he maintains a collection of mainly geophytic plants and keeps busy with writing, photography, lectures, and a developing mail order business.

NOTE: Dylan is bringing a selection of bulbs to sell!

2013 Annual Holiday Party and December Speaker

December 11 ~ 6:30 p.m.

Christ Episcopal Church, 1040 Border Rd., Los Altos

All members are invited for a celebration of good company, good food, and a great after-dinner speaker, **Warren Roberts**, Superintendent Emeritus, UC Davis Arboretum, on plants that are especially meaningful to him, and some of his particular favorites.



Bring a favorite main dish, salad, or dessert to serve eight, and plates and utensils. The WHS Board will provide appetizers, wine and beverages, and cups and glasses. We will collect canned and packaged food for the Second Harvest Food Bank.

We will be honoring one of our members with the Founders Award. Past recipients include Dick Dunmire, John Coulter, Barbara Worl, Sally Casey, Elizabeth Garbett, Betsy Clebsch, Barrie and Carol Coate, William Kurtz, and Mary Kaye. Click on “archive” on the left hand side of our website, westernhort.org, for bio’s of past recipients.

Western Hort News

Thank you to Renee Shepherd We are delighted to announce that Renee Shepherd has offered to sponsor one of our Western Hort speakers in 2014. I'm sure everyone who heard her talk on May 9, 2012, "It's a Seedy Business," remembers how fascinating it was to hear about Renee's Garden, the second successful seed business she has created. Let's all thank Renee for her generosity. And by the way, Renee would love to attend more WHS meetings, but is unable to drive Hwy 17 at night. So if any WHS members could offer her a ride, she'd be ever so grateful to meet and carpool from Scotts Valley. ~*Nancy Schramm*

Plant Table We had wonderful plants and containers donated to the plant table last month. Thanks to all the members who made donations and thanks to all our members who shop and buy! People are enjoying looking over the table and picking out their favorite plants. It is the Plant Committee's responsibility to provide plants and bulbs for the table in November. Members are also welcome to bring donations. This will be our last Plant Table until January. ~*Roberta Barnes*

28 Years Ago Western Hort met on Wednesday, November 13, 1985 to hear "Larry Beyer, a Master Gardener and Cooperative Extension volunteer" give a talk on "New and Old Varieties of Fruiting Plants for Urban Gardens from Bareroot to Production." It sounds like he could be called an avid amateur—his home garden in Mountain View contained forty-five varieties. The promo for the talk announced, "He is especially interested in the new cultivars being developed for our region of California." Wouldn't it be fascinating to have a list of "new cultivars" from twenty-eight years ago, and see which have withstood the test of time?

Saratoga Horticultural Foundation was thanked for October's raffle table donations—and the then-current director, Philip McMillan Browse, along with Dick Dunmire & Ed Carman, were the MC's for the plant discussion. When Philip left Saratoga Hort and returned to England, he became involved with the Lost Gardens of Heligan and after that the Eden Project.

Remember the year of the Medfly? Reading the plant notes brought it back to me. There was a wonderful description of *Crataegus viridis* 'Autumn Glory' brought in by Phoebe Gilpin which included the comment: "In the year of the fruit fly, after the helicopters' spray had killed many predators of pests, the Gilpin's hawthorns were black with aphids, but in an ordinary year they are pest free." ~*Nancy Schramm*

How About Escarole? I was talking with Renee Shepherd about her generous offer to sponsor a speaker for Western Hort, and thought it would be fun to ask what her current favorite plant might be. Renee told me that her passions are edibles, and plants with fragrance. She's been trying out all the new *Ecinaceas*, but has not found any of the new colors that she would call splendid. She has a real fondness for the fragrant perennial Phlox, but again, the newer varieties just don't stack up to the old ones. She's also looking into different *Cannas*, but nothing yet worth sharing. So instead, she said, "How about escarole?" Never having grown it myself, I asked her to please, tell me more.

Renee told me that escarole is one of the real winners of the greens family. It's about the size of romaine lettuce, and makes attractive rosettes with frilly edges to the leaves. Grow it like any of the lettuces--it has the usual pests. It has a mild flavor, perhaps with a slight bitterness. Plants maturing in the cool weather are the mildest. You can plant escarole in the spring or fall. It is quite resistant to bolting, and it over-winters like a champ. In fact, Renee told me that frost will bring out a delightful sweetness to the flavor of escarole. It's a delicious ingredient in winter salads, and the dark green color just screams "healthy!" It's substantial enough to stand up to cheese in a main dish. You can stuff the leaves like cabbage leaves with any number of different fillings.

And at this point, Renee mentioned that one of her favorite dishes that includes escarole is the classic Italian meatball soup. It just so happens that she has a recipe for this soup in her new cookbook, and was pleased to share it with us. (The recipe is on page 4 in the online newsletter, and is an insert in the print edition.)

~*Nancy Schramm*

October Speaker Notes They say timing is everything, which seems to hold true for our featured guest speaker in October, Helen Popper. She delivered an informative presentation, “Maintaining Native Plants Throughout the Seasons.” With slides of plants, landscapes, graphs, and an entertaining way with words, Ms. Popper conveyed her thoughts of native gardening with clarity.



Dutchman's Pipe is the larvae food for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly. Photo: From Helen Popper's book, *California Native Gardening*, as previewed on amazon.com.

An economist and professor, Ms. Popper claims to be an amateur gardener and horticulturalist. But her presentation and photographs from her own garden say otherwise. Our speaker draws inspiration from her walks among native plants, keenly observing their growing habits through the changes of the seasons. Ms. Popper feels that if we understand our state's climate—temperature and rainfall—we will discover how easy it is to garden with natives.

Author of the recently published “California Native Gardening,” Popper starts her gardening calendar with the “shoulder” month, October, a good time to plant. October is also a good time to start natives from seed. To prepare the soil before sowing seed, follow these three steps, she stressed: Water, Wait, and Weed. Repeat these three steps up to three times before sowing seed in the soil, to minimize competition from weeds.

Ms. Popper's talk was sprinkled with bits of gardening truths: Nursery-grown plants, even if considered “deer resistant,” may be nibbled when there is a shortage of food for deer (usually November or December). Gophers are tough critters

to eradicate—hardware cloth helps, when laid below a native fescue lawn, or wrapped around container-grown plants. Speaking of containers, Ms. Popper cautioned that bigger is not always better. A root-bound container-grown plant is a recipe for a short life—inspect the roots before purchasing.

Ms. Popper stressed the importance of frequently watering newly-planted natives during dry periods. She also advises extending the season for watering natives past the rainy months, into March and April, to help natives through the summer months. Watering should cease about the end of June.

For those who attended our meeting, Ms. Popper's book was available to purchase. Described as “a month-by-month guide,” it's packed with information on the planting and care of our wonderful California natives, following this unique gardening calendar. Yes, timing is everything—looks like it's time to get busy! ~Mark McCabe

Western Horticultural Society

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To contact us, please send email to info@westernhort.org, or contact Chris Egan at 650-948-4614, or send mail to Western Horticulture Society, PO Box 60507, Palo Alto, CA, 94306.

About membership in Western Hort: To join or renew, send your name, address, phone number and a check made out to “Western Horticultural Society” to PO Box 620673, Woodside, CA 94062-0673.

Membership Rates: A one-year membership (Sep-Aug) includes four issues of Pacific Horticulture magazine. Regular membership is \$35, Sustaining is \$45, Contributing is \$60 and Plant Lover is \$100+. We have also added a Family membership of \$50 for two or more members at the same address, and a Student rate of \$20.

Please visit our website at westernhort.org for a membership form.

Newsletter Submissions and Address Changes

Please send info for the December 2013 newsletter by November 18 to Marianne Mueller, mrm@sonic.net or 650-326-2029.

Please send address changes to greg@pacbell.net or 650-851-5162.

Italian Escarole Soup with Meatballs by Renee Shepherd, *Renee's Garden: Heirloom & Gourmet Vegetable, Flower & Herb Seeds*, reneesgarden.com. Click on "Cookbooks" on the left hand side of her website for details and ordering info about her acclaimed cooking-from-the-garden books.

My version of Italian wedding soup combines feather-light meatballs with tender rice and flavorful escarole for a hearty and satisfying cool season supper. This rich-tasting soup is memorable with a full-bodied Chardonnay and crusty sourdough bread.

1 cup soft bread crumbs (about 2 slices of bread)
1/2 cup milk
1 1/2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 pound ground turkey
1 sweet Italian turkey sausage, casing removed
2 egg whites
3 scallions, finely chopped
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
4 tablespoons chopped parsley
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 large cloves garlic, minced
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
2 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
2 tomatoes, coarsely chopped
7 cups chicken broth
1 large bunch escarole (1 pound), cut crosswise into 1/2-inch strips
1/3 cup long grain white rice

GARNISH

1/2 cup chopped parsley, 6 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

MAKING MEATBALLS

To make the meatballs, soak the bread crumbs in the milk until soft. Squeeze out excess moisture.

Combine well with the Worcestershire sauce, turkey, sausage, egg whites, scallion, thyme, parsley, salt, and pepper. To check the seasoning, sauté a teaspoonful of the meat mixture, taste and adjust. Refrigerate the meatball mixture until chilled, then shape into small balls, the size of small walnuts.

MAKING SOUP

To make the soup, heat the olive oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Add the garlic and onion and sauté until softened. Stir in the carrots, tomatoes, and chicken broth. Cover, bring to a boil and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, or until carrots are almost tender.

Add the escarole and rice. Return to a boil and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Drop in the meatballs (pot will be full) and cook an additional 10 to 15 minutes, gently stirring occasionally to redistribute ingredients, until meatballs test done.

Serve in soup bowls with a sprinkling of parsley and Parmesan cheese.

Makes about 2 1/2 quarts.

When to Harvest "Winter" Greens for Best Flavor:

Endive and Escarole—Plant these greens in mid- to late-summer for a fall harvest. Cut whole heads of endive and escarole when they begin to fill with lighter leaves in the center. Some gardeners tie or rubberband the outer leaves around the center, and leave them closed for about a week to blanch and sweeten leaves inside. Cold weather makes these leafy greens even more crispy-sweet and succulent. *Tip from Renee Shepherd, reneesgarden.com.*



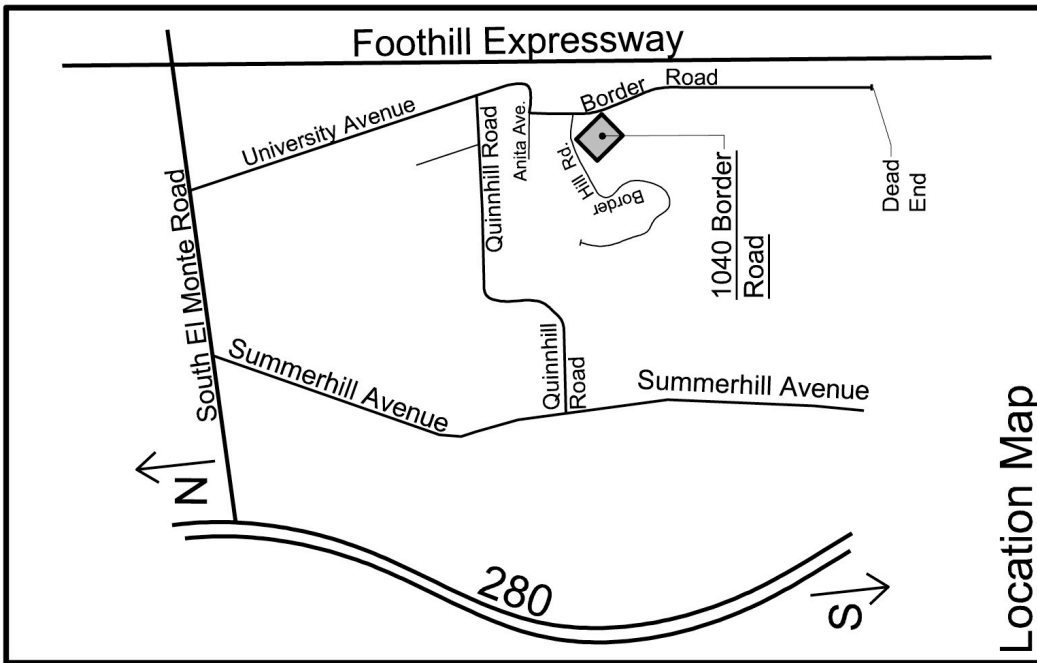
Characterized by broad outer leaves, this member of the chicory clan does have a slightly bitter taste, but much less so than many other forms of endive. With a crinkled shape to the leaves, escarole is an example of greens that provide various degrees of flavor as the outer leaves are removed. While the outer leaves are a dark green, peeling back a layer will reveal a lighter shade of green. As more layers are peeled back, the leaves continue to lighten in shade. As the shade of the leaves lightens, the degree of bitter taste also lessens. The result is that it is possible to use different layers of escarole to achieve the taste you want with the dish you are preparing. *Photo and caption: wisegeek.org.*



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Location Map

MEETING LOCATION Christ Episcopal Church, Parish Hall, 1040 Border Road, Los Altos. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. and meetings begin at 7:30.

You are invited to join our November speaker, Dylan Hannon, for **dinner on November 13** at 5:30 p.m. at the lovely Italian restaurant, Bella Vita, located at 376 First Street, Los Altos. There is ample parking near the entrance. Please contact Rosalie Shepherd to confirm: shep8283@comcast.net or 650-321-8283.

Would you like to **sponsor a lecture** for the WHS that is of particular interest to you? It would be much appreciated! Please call Pat Knight at 650-941-6136.

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Monthly Meetings
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Parish Hall
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