



March 2016 Newsletter

The Sometimes

I came home from the February Pride Center Garden rehab, tired and dirty but with a big smile on my face. It was fun! What a great working group we had! I have to complement the women who worked first. Jane DePadro brought us 2 gallons of coffee and 2 dozen donuts, and had a good eye for weed pulling. Diki Goodman, Lisa Haugen, Niki Joannou, Brenda Oakley and Sue Zimmer made me proud of being on the "weaker sex" team. Of course Chip Jones with two trucks full of plants and mulch and a trained hedge clipping employee lead the men's team. Paul Durbin brought a garden wagon loaded with tools, Jeff Sullivan furnished great bagels, more tools, and a strong back. Other great workers on that team were Randy Fischer, Joe Kras, Van Gosselin, Bob Isaacs, Stan Tillotson, Bob Henley, Chuck Ross, Bob Mays, Mago Sosa, Wayne Musgrave, Joe Snell, Ken Workman, and there were half a dozen handsome, hardworking men whose names I haven't learned yet. It was great fun and I managed to bring home a couple of cute weeds to grow in case a bird had dropped a prize plant.

One of my prize plants was a wild orchid, and it turns out that *Eulophia graminea* is an invasive species from Asia. It grows in mulch, may have grass-like leaves up to five feet tall and an inflorescence of inch-wide flowers that might tempt you to make it welcome. Don't do that, it is a weed. See examples of this pest at the end of this newsletter.

The next thing that had me doing the dance of joy was our February meeting. Of course Rick Leitner's program was informative and entertaining. Rick used a color wheel to show us that colors opposite each other on the wheel work together when plant bloom or leaf color is considered before a planting is set in stone. Adjacent tones also work. We saw that it was more effective to see a group of the same tone rather than an intermittent spacing of colors. Harmony can also come from using pots of the same tone.

That terrific plant raffle table brought in \$180, and the meeting costs were \$200. The refreshments were the best I can remember, and I have to mention that Chris Crepage made that palm tree laden cake from scratch. Others who contributed were Bob and Van,

Jeff, Jane, Mary, and there were cookies from?? I've planted seeds from Jeff's chocolate pudding fruit and will have give-away trees soon. **Your help with both raffle plants and food is needed for the March meeting, but why not? It's everybody's garden club! We can be happy that business will be very brief, but it's wonderful that the new By-laws will involve more people to make decisions.**

Finally plant talk time...

What do *Arums*, *Antheriums*, *Anchomanes*, *Alocacias*, *Amorpholhallus*, *Amdrium*, *Anybiasm*, *Arustaena*, *Caladium*, *Colocasia*, *Dieffenbachia*, *Monstera*, *Philodendron*, *Pistia* and about 3,500 more have in common? Ok, you want some common names? How about taro, jack-in-the-pulpit, calla lily, water lettuce? Sizes range from tiny duck weed to huge elephant ears.

They are all monocots, Aroids, and members of the Arum family. These plants are my new gotta-haves so you'll be hearing about them for the next few months. If you are about to go to sleep, try what worked in my old biology classes. Let's think about SEX!

For the most part these plants are grown for many uses other than for pretty flowers. The flowers look like rat's tails and are called spadix. Most are surrounded by a leaf like spathe. Flowers may be of one or both sexes. At any rate the females always mature first to prevent self-pollination. When the flowers are mature and ready for sex some, especially antheriums, produce heat above the ambient temperature of the environment. This endothermic reaction is triggered by a compound which they produce that is identical to aspirin. The heat encourages insects to come to the flower for warmth and deposit or leave with pollen. Aroids that are fly pollinated often smell very much like the stuff that attracts flies. Till this talk is continued next month keep your aroids shaded and moist.

Much of this information comes from: Brown, D. *Aroids Plants of the Arum Family*, second edition. 2000. Timber Press. Portland, Oregon. Pp.1-44

Be a pest detective

THRIPS: Buds turn black and shrivel or the flowers have pale tracks around the margins. Spray buds with Orthene to control the bloom eaters. (Orthene is sold as fire ant killer, but is safe for spray at about 1 tsp. per quart of water.)

SCALE: Look for light spots on top of leaves and then round spots of fuzz which will be male scale under the leaves. Look for elongated larger females on top of the leaves. Light summer oil and Neem sprayed 3 times at 5-6 day intervals should control these leaf suckers at least for a time.

MEALY BUGS: Look for white cotton-like masses in small niches.

APHIDS: Look for ants carrying their aphid cows up plant stems. The ants are looking after the baby aphids and in return for day-time child care, squeeze the plant juices out of the 'cows' when the ants take them back to the nest at night. Most insecticides kill aphids

MITES: They are abundant in early spring. Look for shriveled leaves and rub the underside with cotton, you may see the pink blood of these pests. Neem will help control them.

SPIRILING WHITE FLIES: Look for black soot-like material under affected leaves. I got rid of them for now with two sprayings of Sevin.

PLEASE NOTE: The EPGC and I are NOT responsible if these cures do not work or even kill your plants. They work for me, but our habitat and our plants are probably not like yours.

About Neem oil

Neem oil has been used in many products in India for about 4,000 years. It can be found in tooth paste, shampoo, cosmetics and skin creams. This is some evidence that it may be safe for us to handle.

It controls insect pests by either killing them shortly after spraying or by making them sterile which at least is a future help. It has been reported to also kill snails and slugs. You do need to coat all surfaces of the above ground plant and the soil under the plant. Here are some rules for mixing up a batch of neem:

1. Pure Neem will keep better in the refrigerator or at least in a dark place.
2. A solution breaks down in 4-6 hours so you need a fresh solution every time you spray.
3. Add a drop or 3 of dishwashing solution to the spray to help emulsify the spray since the Neem oil will float to the top of the sprayer unless you do.
4. The slightly onion smell of the spray goes away in a few hours.
5. **THE ONLY DOWNSIDE OF USING NEEM THAT I KNOW IS THE COST,** but it also costs to let pests harm plants.

Great news, we have a bus to take us to the Homestead area on April 30th. The stops have not been determined, but you should reserve your seat for \$30 at the next meeting.



Wild Orchid (*Eulophia graminea*)