



Conejo Valley Botanic Garden December Bulletin



Red Hot Poker
(*Kniphofia*)



Coffeeberry
(*Rhamnus californica*)

Red Hot Poker

First described as a genus in 1794, this stunning 5 ft. tall plant is a native to South Africa. A **dramatic addition** to any garden, Red Hot Poker produces spikes of upright, brightly colored flowers well above the foliage, in shades of red, orange and yellow. The flowers produce **copious nectar** while blooming that attract hummingbirds and bees. Once Red Hot Pokers are established, they are easy to grow. Plant in full sun and loose rich soil. Moderate watering is needed during the hot summer months. Flower spikes will begin to bloom in the spring, however deadheading is necessary for continuous blooms.

Coffeeberry

A **California native** shrub averaging 6-8 feet tall, coffeeberry can sometimes reach 10 feet. This useful plant can be found in numerous habitats, including oak woodlands and chaparral. Coffeeberry is a drought tolerant plant that can take **partial shade**. Indigenous Native Californians had several uses for the plant as food, and as a **medicinal plant** to treat poison oak, wounds and burns. The seeds inside the berries make an excellent, **caffeine-free coffee**, superior to chicory and with overtones of mocha. Deer resistant.

-Sandy Krutilek-

What's in a Name?

by Diane Conejo

El Niños

Being a Landscape Designer during a serious drought has been a challenge; we have needed to re-educate the public on more suitable plant materials, soil quality and learn more effective conservation of our most precious natural resource: Water.

Now, in California the experts have warned us to anticipate severe winter weather patterns called the El Niños. These consist of an irregular, complex series of climatic changes which will cause higher humidity and heavier rains than we have experienced in a long time. (The last incidence of El Niño weather patterns hit Ventura County in the winter of 1966, leaving devastation in its wake.)

When combined with the dry, empty front yards and dead slopes that have ensued as a result of conserving water resources, this constitutes a very dangerous situation. We need to prepare our homes, gardens and neighborhoods before these rains arrive...

To Prepare Your Home:

- Clean your rain gutters of debris to ensure water flows smoothly into storm drains.
- Make sure downspout connections are secure.
- Install rain barrels; now is the time to capture water for later use.
- Call a professional to have a roof inspection. With the first heavy rain, check interior walls for leaks so that they can be repaired quickly. Leaks create Mold issues.
- Make sure your homeowner's insurance makes provision for flood damage.
- Fix leaking windows and check weather stripping around outer doors.
- Make sure any grading problems are tended to. No one needs the threat of heavy waters rushing toward their home.
- If you have V-ditches or French drains, perform regular clean-outs.
- Replace missing drain grates and irrigation valve box lids.
- Schedule pruning for any trees with large limbs that could crash through your roof.
- Purchase sand bags ahead of time. (When there is a need, they will be in short supply.)

To Prepare Your Garden:

- Lay mulch to absorb heavy rainfall. Bare soil will not allow rainwater to permeate and often will cause runoff and erosion. Mulch or gravel will slow the flow of water and help retain moisture in the soil. Construct dry creek beds or swales to direct the flow from roof gutters into your planting areas.
- If you are not on a "Smart Irrigation System" yet and control irrigation manually, turn the system "OFF" this winter.
- With cooler nights and warm days, now is the ideal time to be planting natives in your garden.

What's in a Name
by Diane Conejo

- If you have a slope or hillside, lay down a 2-3" layer of mulch and cover it with biodegradable jute netting or landscape fabric to hold the slope in place. Cut into the jute to plant native plants in the hillside. The fabric will breakdown as the plants grow.

Conejo Valley Botanic Garden holds a sale of native plants each Sunday from 11am to 3pm next to the Children's Adventure Garden. There is ample parking available.

Although we have been experiencing a serious drought for the last four years, and these heavy rains should help to refill our depleted reservoirs, we must continue to conserve and **"Be Waterwise"**. **Even after the rains...because every drop counts!**



Ginkgo Biloba Tree
(Ginkgo biloba)
Kids' Adventure Garden
Photo by Jim Cyr

The world's oldest trees, Ginkgos are the only survivors of a family that existed more than 200 million years ago. Even though they were living during the time of the dinosaurs, they eventually vanished in most regions of the world. But they had survived in China, where they were found in mountainous regions, palaces, temple gardens and monasteries. Buddhist monks, since the Middle Ages, had cultivated the trees because of their medicinal and culinary properties. The seeds then found their way to Japan and Korea. Early scientists thought the Ginkgos were extinct, until they were discovered in Japan by German naturalist and physician, Engelbert Kaempfer, who brought the seeds to Europe in the early 1700s.

-Sandy Krutilek-



PLANT SALES

Plant sales are held every Sunday at the CVBG from 10:30-2:30 in the area next to the Kids' Adventure Garden, located at 350 W. Gainsborough Rd. California natives, hardy, water wise perennials, shrubs, trees and succulents, reasonably priced are available. CVBG volunteers will be happy to help you with selections and share their expertise.

Irene Benyoung is willing, by special appointment only, to meet customers at the Plant Sale area on Wednesdays. Please contact her by e-mail to make an appointment. ibenyoung@yahoo.com

BIRTHDAY PARTIES (March-September)

SATURDAY Birthday Parties are available. Email Kathy at erwinkathy@yahoo.com.

SUNDAY Birthday Parties are available from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Email Jim Cyr at jcyr22@hotmail.com. Volunteers are needed to help with the Sunday parties. The volunteer hours are from 2:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

LEARN FLOWER DESIGN

Learn Flower Design in the Sogetsu Style. Develop creative self-expression through flower arrangement and learn the beauty of line and space. Keiko (Camille) Van Ast holds a First Teacher's degree from the Sogetsu School of Ikebana in Tokyo, Japan. She has studied Ikebana for more than 25 years.

For Registration call Camille at 805-498-7421

Classes will meet the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month

9:00-11:30 a.m. in the

Kids' Adventure Garden

Classes are ongoing

A one time fee of \$25 for a textbook is required.

Class fee of \$25 per class includes the flower fee of \$10

Want to Help us Grow?

Do you love Conejo Valley Botanic Garden and would like to help, but just don't have the time to volunteer? Even though much of the work you see going on in the garden is done by volunteers, we still have expenses for planting, heavy pruning and new improvements. These projects are funded through grants and donations from the community. If you would like to help us grow, tax deductible donations are always welcome and may be made out and sent to Conejo Valley Botanic Garden, 400 W. Gainsborough, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360. Thanks for all your support!

Conejo Valley Botanic Garden Needs You!

The Garden is managed and maintained by community volunteers. Without your help, the garden cannot thrive. None of the volunteer positions at CVBG has a minimum number of volunteer hours attached. If you can help for a few hours a month, great! For more information on any of our volunteer opportunities, please go to our web site at www.conejogarden.org and click "Volunteers."

WE CURRENTLY NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS:

Adopt A Garden: We have an ongoing need for volunteers to join the teams working in our theme gardens. Days and hours are flexible so give us a call.

Garden Nursery: There is no better way to learn about California native and water wise plants than to join the teams working in the propagation and sales nurseries.

The Kids Adventure Garden: KAG is open from 11:00 to 3:00 each Sunday. Docents **welcome families to the garden, answer questions and ensure everyone is safe and has fun. You will train with an experienced Docent. You can sign up for one shift a month or as many as you want.**

Email: conejogarden350@live.com

For information and directions to the garden, visit our web site at www.conejogarden.org.

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