



COUNCIL THYMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA CONSULTANTS COUNCIL
Published since 2013

CALIFORNIA GARDEN CLUBS, INC. - NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

Chairman's Message

Greetings Gardening, Environmental and Landscape Design Consultants,

I am happy to announce the CCC is relaunching our "Council Thymes" newsletter to keep consultants – YOU - informed about school updates, credential requirements, educational articles, and upcoming business meetings and speakers.

We plan three issues each year, sent to all consultants. If you are receiving this and not a member of the CCC, please consider joining. You can join anytime for \$20 per two-year term. The funds support speaker fees, recognition awards, and discounts at CCC events. CCC awards are separate from CGCI and have no submission deadlines.

I am also happy to announce that President Adele Kelly has named Maria Krenek as the new CCC Chairman for the remainder of the term, while I transition to Interim 1st Vice President. I know Maria will be a great CCC Chairman and we are all in good hands.

Thanks to our dedicated volunteers for making the newsletter possible. Please submit articles to editor Sue Bennett—your contributions are valuable.

Thank you for keeping the CCC vital within CGCI. Though I'll miss working closely with you, I remain involved.

Remember: the more you KNOW the more you GROW.

Nina Blonski, CCC Chairman

Our Next Meeting/Speaker

Wednesday, April 29, 6:00 pm

Business meeting **via ZOOM**

All CCC members will receive the link with an agenda the day before the meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 4:45 - 5:30 pm

Location: Presidio Ballroom (Handlery Hotel, San Diego)

Speaker: Thomas (Tom) Krenek

Program: ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS OF NEUROLOGIC DISORDERS

Disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's are on the rise. Are environmental factors affecting this, and what can we do?

A little about Tom

Neurologist, retired since 2019

2024 Environmental Consultant

CCC Vice Chairman, Environmental Consultants

All registered for convention are encouraged to attend

Topic: "Records for all consultants" be put back in the CGCI yearbook.

The committee decided that a **Central spreadsheet to track consultants (relapsing and active)** would be created and put on the website, not in the yearbook. Sue Bennett has been working with the school chairmen and will complete it soon, then post it to the various school pages. The chairmen need different information than what will be posted. More discussion at business meeting.

Rational: Not everyone gets a copy of the yearbook, but everyone can go to the website.

2026-2027 CCC Officers

(pending final approve of the CGCI Board)

Outgoing Chairman: Nina Blonski
nblonski@gmail.com

Incoming Chairman: Maria Krenek
glenmarheather@yahoo.com

Outgoing Secretary: Maria Krenek
glenmarheather@yahoo.com

Incoming Secretary:

Treasurer and Editor
Sue Bennett
sue_c_bennett@att.net

Parliamentarian: Greg Pokorski
gregpokorski@earthlink.net

Vice Chairmen:

Environmental Consultants:
Tom Krenek
krenekthomas@yahoo.com

Gardening Consultants:
George & Judy Unrine
George: george.unrine@gmail.com
& judysgarden01@gmail.com

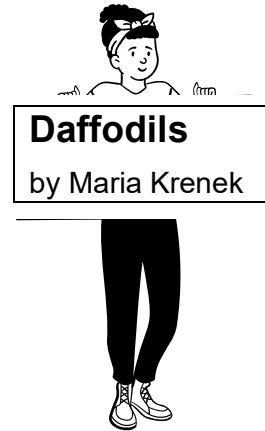
Landscape Design Consultants:
Nancy Compton
ncompton43@att.net

CGCI Schools Chairmen

Environmental Schools: Cynthia Jackson
Cynthia.jackson322@yahoo.com

Gardening Schools: Greg Pokorski
gregpokorski@earthlink.net

Landscape Design Schools: Alexis Slafer
ajslafer@gmail.com



*...When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. ...
-William Wadsworth, 1804*

In his poem, *Daffodils*, Mr. Wadsworth captured the essence of daffodils in the landscape. In three additional stanzas, he continued to describe a landscape that evoked emotion in him and in us with a flower. As gardeners and designers of gardens and landscapes, we strive to create an experience that satisfies our sense of beauty, nature and emotion through plants, color, texture, shape, scent and place is just a short list. I have shared Mr. Wadsworth's response and have experienced it many times as intensely as the first time. I hope you have. It is glorious and it is possible in your own garden. I do love daffodils.

Daffodils are bulbs and are traditionally planted in the fall. But spring is the time to see them bloom sometimes as early as November and sometimes as late as May. So, look around now and take note of those that catch your eye. They love to pose against a gray sky seeking your notice. They have names and are each unique. The classic daffodil is a yellow affair with a corolla that projects forward with six petals framing that corolla. But many, many more are out there to see, some hardly recognizable as daffodils. Thirteen divisions classify their distinctive and unique characteristics for us in shape, color, size, and pose.

There is even a Division 12 for those we have difficulty placing anywhere else. And yes, there are species to satisfy our sense of natural origins and history amongst the thousands that have been developed. Colors range from white through pink, red, orange, green and yellow in an amazing array of shades and patterns.



So how do we take advantage of these beauties for our own gardens and landscapes? First let's find out how to grow them. Daffodils are long lived and will colonize over time through the landscape. Let's understand that the daffodil bulb is an adaptation to the environment in which it developed. Generally, that environment was characterized by drier summers. So instead of struggling through dry summers, they evolved to be dormant and await the first rains of fall to begin a growing cycle that took advantage of fall, winter and spring rains to grow and bloom and seed only to retreat when conditions were dry again. So, it makes sense then to plant them out of areas heavily watered in summer months and in well-draining soils for expanding, long lived colonies.

With a suitable site that is dry in summer with good sun exposure during growing, daffodil bulbs also need a place where their foliage is undisturbed until it

browns in late spring and early summer. This browning is the signal that the bulb has been fed well from the photosynthetic processes in the foliage and can support dormancy and flower development into the next season.

removing foliage too soon after bloom or braiding foliage for neatness, stunts the process that produces the healthiest and best developed bulb. Bulbs do not need to be dug up and stored every year especially if they have room to grow. Bulbs can be dug up during dormancy and stored in cool, dry conditions to harvest for and plant in other parts of the garden. Daffodils can also be successfully grown in containers for staging around the garden, especially if favorable sites for ground planting are few. Growing daffodils in containers is a discussion for another occasion. Information about daffodils with lots of pictures is available at the American Daffodil Society website: daffodilusa.org

Once your planting site is selected, dig a hole or trench whose depth is three times the size of the bulb. Daffodil bulbs come in a range of sizes associated with its type generally between 1/2" to 3". Most are 2" - 3" which means they need 4" - 6" depth for planting. Soil rich in humus/compost is sufficient to support their growth. Water regularly if rain is not in the forecast. Plant the bulbs in cooling soils or after first frost but before snow in areas that have snow. Then wait for foliage to grow and finally, blooms to appear. Pests and diseases are few and daffodils are rarely bothered by deer or other wildlife. Each daffodil type has its own schedule. For a long season of bloom in the garden choose multiple types. Bloom times are usually identified as very early, early, mid and late blooming spanning November through May although autumn blooming types do exist.

The real fun starts with choosing how to use your daffodils to produce the effect you imagine. Whether it is a drift or river of daffodils over a rise, planted amongst annuals, perennials or other bulbs, surrounding trees, lining a walk, in containers or a multitude of other possibilities, look around you now and see them bloom. Make some notes, sketch out some ideas and plan to plant in October or November. Bulbs will soon be available by mail order starting usually in May and June followed by availability in your local nursery beginning in September.

Planting groups of the same bulb yield the most dramatic effect in the shortest period of time.

*...When all at once you'll spy a crowd of daffodils...
in your garden next spring.*



The Environment and Health

LIFE IS LIKE A BOWL OF PLASTICS

By: Tom Krenek, CCC Vice Chairmen -
Environmental Consultants

“I just have one word I want to say to you. Just one word...PLASTICS”

-Mr. McGuire speaking conspiratorially to
Dustin Hoffman’s character
in THE GRADUATE, 1967.

One may consider Mr. McGuire a modern-day Nostradamus for his prediction, when one considers that plastic production was 234 million tons in 2000 and 435 million tons in 2020 and is expected to increase another 70% by 2040.

Plastics are synthetic long-chain molecules made up of monomers attached together (much like natural polymers such as proteins and DNA). A common example is polyethylene which is widely used for packaging and containers. Including additives, plastics are associated with over 13,000 chemicals. 10 groups of these chemicals are known to have high toxicity (e.g. flame retardants, UV stabilizers). In addition, microplastics have coarse, irregular surface areas that act as a vehicle for both organic and inorganic contaminants.

When plastics degrade in the environment, their smaller size enables them to enter our bodies through a number of routes. Microplastics, 5 mm or less, are usually ingested. Nanoplastics, 2.5 microns or less, are inhaled in the lungs and can be directly absorbed into the bloodstream which carries them to tissues and organs throughout the body. Even skin absorption can occur with products such as clothing, cosmetics and facial scrubs.

In all the tissues in which microplastics have been found, it is noteworthy that they are seen in human breast milk and in infants' first stool. A study in samples they examined in 2021 with 15.5 particles per 50 grams of tissue (compared to 4.1 in 2006). One might expect the highest concentration of the plastic to be in organs such as the liver or kidneys, whose job it are to detoxify and filter our system. In fact, that honor goes to our brain which contains 7 – 30 times the concentration in liver or kidneys. Furthermore, a study in 2024 showed a nearly 50% increase since 2016, up to 5000 micrograms per gram (1/2 of 1% by weight). To add to the problem, brains from patients with dementia have levels up to 10 times higher than normal.



There is a growing body of literature on the role of micro- and nanoplastics in the pathogenesis of disease in general and neurologic disorders in particular. A study published in 2024 examined plaques from 257 patients who underwent surgery for asymptomatic carotid artery disease. 58.4% of these had microplastics in their plaque, and these patients had a 4.5 times higher risk of MI, stroke or death in the following 34 months compared to patients who had no microplastics.

There are several processes by which plastics can affect health in general. They increase oxidative stress and can produce reactive oxygen species which can damage cell organelles and DNA and can affect the immune system. Plastics can cause an inflammatory response or aggregate with other particles resulting in blood vessel damage or blockage. Within the central nervous system plastics can damage the blood-brain barrier; alter the gut microbiome and gut-brain axis; and overwhelm the glymphatic system responsible for waste removal from the brain.

Some international agreements have been reached that aim to address plastic pollution. This includes the 2019 Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments, and MARPOL Annex V. The United Nations Global Plastics Treaty remains in negotiation since March 2022.

While I offer no definitive answer to this problem, I hope this information will give you food for thought the next time you drink from a plastic bottle or add a plastic pod to your dishwasher or laundry.

REFERENCES

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 MICROPLASTICS AND HUMAN HEALTH

G. Shaw
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 MICROPLASTICS ACCUMULATE AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE BRAIN



Yellow Bearded Iris,
 Sue Bennett's
 yard/photo



Gardening Consultant News

By: Greg Pokorski, Gardening Schools
 Chairman, CCC Parliamentarian

A record-breaking 18 Consultants lapsed on December 31, including 15 of them coming from the Valley Lode District. These 15 individuals had finished the 2020 school at that location but did not attend a refresher course.

Congratulations (Editor's words) to the Southern California Garden Club who successfully completed Series 27 in Encino (one course per month, July through October 2025). That School gave us 23 new Consultants and 6 new Provisional Consultants, mostly from San Fernando Valley District. 13 Consultants (from all over the state) attended for refresher credit to update their Good Standing dates. Congratulations to all the new Consultants. 16 of them were recognized and celebrated with presentation of certificates and their official records at the club's January meeting. And congratulations to Southern California Garden Club on the completion of its **fourth** NGC Gardening School. Talk to members of that club to learn how conducting a school can be a beneficial club or district project and how it was a significant financial benefit to the club.

The club budgeted conservatively for attendance at each course by 25 club members and 5 non-members (with discounted fees for club members and lower fees than many East Coast states charge for these courses). On this basis, total revenue of \$8,200.00 (for all four courses) was anticipated with projected expenses of \$7,900.00, hopefully resulting in a net profit of \$300.00. About 31% of the club membership actively participated by attendance at courses and/or providing volunteer work related to sponsoring the school. Fifty-three individuals attended one or more parts of the school (benefitting from the instruction provided), with attendance for each course ranging from 32 to 45. Eight instructors were utilized for the entire School, with a minimum of three and a maximum of five teaching in each of the four courses. Because of higher attendance than budgeted, less food cost (for snacks and lunches) due to many donations, and the sale of gardening books at each course and plants at some courses, the club actually received \$11,594.00 in revenue (more than budgeted)

and had only \$6,385.00 in expenses (less than budgeted: \$4,100.00 for instructors, \$0.00 for the venue, \$495.00 in refunds, \$1205.00 for food, and \$585.00 for NGC fees.) Therefore, revenue over expenses was \$5,209.00.

You can see that sponsoring and conducting an NGC School **can be a successful fundraiser** in addition to being a **valuable club or district team project and a means of providing education to members and to the public.**

Thanks to this latest school, our numbers are up from a year ago. We now have a total of 71 Gardening Consultants, including 34 Consultants, 15 Master Consultants, 13 Provisional Consultants and 9 Emeritus Consultants. Joan Craig and Julie West became Emeritus Consultants. Sadly, Master Consultant and long-time school supporter Myrtle Findley died in October.

The Los Osos Valley Garden Club's planned (Feb and March 2026) Gardening School was postponed, with no update on rescheduling. Two clubs, one in Northern California and one in Southern California, are considering holding a future Gardening School.

Contact this chairman to learn how to sponsor and conduct a Gardening School. We are always looking for clubs or districts to offer these wonderful programs. And contact this chairman for information about your Gardening School student or consultant status.

For those Consultants who need to refresh, there is a Zoom Course 2 offered by Maryland April 9 & 10. Check the NGC website for details and please advise this chairman if you are attending. Additional courses are posted on an ongoing basis so periodically check the NGC website.

A friendly reminder about membership
Taken from the CCC Bylaws

Article III—Members Section 1. Qualifications for membership are:

- a. be a member in good standing of a NGC Garden Club and
- b. be accredited as a consultant by NGC, or
- c. hold Emeritus status or

- d. have successfully completed at least two courses in any one area of study (achieving NGC Provisional Consultant status).

Section 2. Membership classifications:

- a. Consultant - having successfully completed four courses in any one area of study and being certified by NGC as a Consultant.
- b. Provisional Consultant - having successfully completed two courses in any one area of study (achieving NGC Provisional Consultant status).
- c. Emeritus Consultant – having been granted Emeritus Consultant status by NGC.

Section 3. Admission Procedures:

- a. Qualified members may join upon payment of dues.
- b. Dues are payable July 1 of an odd-numbered year; and shall be for a two-year term beginning July 1. The fiscal year shall be from July 1 to June 30.
- c. The amount of dues shall be set forth in the Standing Rules.



Sally Holmes, background, Grape Jelley, Burgundy Iceberg, Celestial Night. Sue Bennett's yard/photo