



Maplethorpe Orchids - A Hobby Into A Business

by Jan Olafsson, MG '01

Sometimes you have what I call a "happy accident". That happens when you're looking for something and find something better instead. Around 35 years ago, George Stagi had a "happy accident." As he explained it to me, he was building a pond and was looking to find some water lilies and couldn't find any around. But, he did find some orchids he liked and took them home. It was love at first sight and pretty soon he was building a greenhouse for them. And then two and three greenhouses, and he was hooked.

If you've never visited George's Maplethorpe Orchids in Soquel, you're in for a treat when you go. I've gone up there several times, but this time I was armed with an interviewer's questions so I could share this knowledgeable man and his business with you. (Since Maplethorpe is open 7 days a week 10am-4pm, I should put "business" in quotes. You can tell it's still really his *love*

more than his business.)

I have never had much luck with orchids. I think I've heard so much of the misinformation out there, I just don't know how to take care of them. Also, I think I was purchasing orchids that

it shadier, but light on the bright side is preferred by both these species. A bright window might be ideal, if the leaf temperatures are not too hot. I've also heard that they don't like drafts, but as you'll see, he has fans going



George Stagi of Maplethorpe Orchids

are the less hardy types. I asked George: What is the best orchid to buy for a novice grower? He recommended the Dendrobium (Den-droh-bee-um) hybrids. They are Phalaenopsis-type Dendrobium hybrids, commonly called den-phalas. And he recommends looking for the Australian type Dendrobium—they are the hardiest of the species. He says the Oncidium (On-sid-ee-um) are also easy to grow. I thought orchids like

in his greenhouses all the time. He says they love breezes, but not *cold* drafts. And, there are orchids that grow outside here, too. For instance, the Cymbidiums and the Masdevallias (mas-de-VAHL-lee-ahs) do well in our cool coastal climates.

I asked him about those orchid pots you see with the holes in the sides and he says that's just to keep the roots from getting too wet. It's not necessary to get them because regular terra cotta pots are just fine.

The temperature wants to be 55-60F degrees at night and 80-85F degrees during the day. And the humidity wants to be in the 40-60% range. That's normal humidity in most of our homes and is just right for these orchids. If you have the plant in a bright window you can meet that criterion easily. People have trouble with orchids they put in bathrooms, he says, because it's just too dark in a bathroom and they don't need that much humidity. If you want an orchid for your bathroom, choose a Paphiopedilum (paf-ee-oh-PED-i-lum) or Ladyslipper type. George has lots of beautiful Ladyslippers to choose from.

Watering is another aspect of growing orchids that is connected with a lot of myths. I saw that George has a sink with about an inch or two of water in the bottom, and his potted orchids are sitting in the water until they've absorbed enough water just to make them wet. Then he takes them out to drain. He recommends watering about once a week and fertilize every time you water. He states most of the problems with death or decline of orchids are because of over-watering.

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Avoid excessive water on the leaves and in the crown of the plant in during humid or cool weather to prevent crown rot and fungal problems.

And, speaking of fertilizer, he uses 24-14-14 all the time. Use it one-quarter strength per gallon of good water (avoid chlorinated water). Cut that amount in half for the winter and about 6 weeks before you

want it to bloom again. The plant will bloom better if stressed a little. He advises that, if you have an orchid that gets mealybugs, use a q-tip with rubbing alcohol to remove them.

Re-potting should be done every two years (after blooming) or as the potting medium decomposes. If the orchid has small roots, use small fir bark mixed with a third perlite, and for large roots, use larger bark mixed

with a third perlite. Most of the commercial orchid mixes are just fine if you're careful not to over-water.

Maplethorpe Orchids carries many other species and varieties of orchids. Did you know there are hanging cymbidiums? I didn't! And, are they beautiful! I'm ready to try my hand on some of George's orchids. And I'm sure I'll be successful this time.

Don't worry about trying

to remember all the details of Orchid culture as George has several handouts you can take and refer to. And, of course, there's George himself who has a wealth of information, and he's happy to share. Who knows, you may have a "happy accident" on your trip to Maplethorpe!

Maplethorpe Orchids
3300 Maplethorpe
Soquel, CA 95073
831-462-0257 ■

Gardening Faire Update

by Tom Karwin, MG '99 and Sheryl McEwan, MG '03

The Smart Gardening Faire's website is expanding rapidly. Check it out for the latest developments as the Faire continues to take shape: take a look at www.smartgardening.org.

We're eager to announce the early news of commitments by speakers, exhibitors and sponsors, but we're still pinning down the arrangements. Again, our website will have the latest!

At this writing, just after the first of February, we are sending invitations to participate to nonprofit, garden-oriented groups in the Monterey Bay area. We've already made informal contacts with most of the groups on our list, and we're

quite optimistic that their positive responses will lead to commitments to participate.

We're also confirming speakers for the Faire. We're planning for ten talks during the day, with some outdoors, under a large tent, and some indoors with an environment to support multimedia presentations or close-up demonstrations.

Our website is an important part of this planning. As we are able to announce a growing list of

speakers, exhibitors and sponsors, we expect to generate a degree of momentum and "buzz" about the Faire. For that to happen, we'll need visitors to the website, so encourage your friends to check it out. The Faire Planning Committee is hard at work. The original members

include Cynthia Jordan, Paul McCollum, Bonnie Pond, Betsy Shea and Gini Strup, as well as Co-chairs Sheryl McEwan and Tom Karwin. New participants who are expanding and enriching the

planning include Melita Israel, who is organizing an arts & crafts booth, Sharon Ettinger, who is developing a visitor survey, Mary Nosse, planning musical entertainment, Amy Savage, looking into food services, and the MBMG Propagation Team, planning a plant propagation demonstration booth.

Each of these folks would welcome your help, so if you have ideas, energy and enthusiasm to share, let us know! Send us electronic mail at info@smartgardening.org, voice-mail at (831) 457-7272 or snail mail at P.O.Box 7600, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. ■






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Fruit Tree Bare Root and Grafting Season

by Al Derrick, MG '95

January and February, our coldest and rainiest months of the year, are also the time to buy bare root fruit trees. Trees sold bare root have been field grown, dug while dormant, and kept in cold storage to prevent drying out and to stay dormant. I much prefer a field grown tree to one grown in a container, as the roots are free to grow with no container to restrict the normal growth. It is also the time to collect wood from your fruit trees to use for later grafting. This "scion wood" must also be kept refrigerated and damp to keep it dormant and alive until the selected rootstock is growing again after the dormant period. For most of us, we are looking for a tree that we are not already

in Monterey and in Santa Clara. We also have a chapter here in Sonoma County. Once a year in January each chapter has a scion exchange where members bring the scion wood saved from their trees annual dormant pruning in January. Some members grow rootstock of the varieties used in their area, and the chapter then offers them for sale at reasonable prices. Experienced grafting experts do grafting demonstrations and will graft scion wood to your newly purchased rootstock while you wait and watch. Fruit tree pruning experts do demonstrations on limbs of varying fruit varieties.

Everyone who appears at the door is welcome. Most local chapters have no facility of their own and so must rent a hall for this annual event. To cover this cost, everyone, member or not, is charged a small entrance fee to pay for the rental; this year Sonoma's was \$5. Any scion wood you choose from all that the members have donated is free, but some varieties are in short supply and you should limit yourself accordingly.

It is possible to buy both scion wood and rootstocks

mail order and have them shipped to you. I much prefer to meet and exchange

opportunity to join the statewide organization and receive the "Fruit Grower"



Grafting Demonstration CRFG

local growing information with fellow fruit hobbyists, and I think fresh locally grown stock gets a better start. You will also have an

magazine, but there is no requirement that you do so. For more information go to www.crfg.org ■



Scion Exchange CRFG

growing, so our own scion wood is of no use to us. Other hobby fruit growers have formed an organization, the California Rare Fruit Growers to share their scion wood and experiences with the many varieties of fruit we can grow.

The California Rare Fruit Growers have a local chapter

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Who: ALL U.C. Master Gardeners
What: CA Statewide Master Gardeners Conference
Where: Dolce Hayes Mansion, San Jose, CA
When: October 5-6, 2006
What Else: Pre and Post Tours on October 4th and 7th

Conference Theme: The Master Gardener University: "Growing Your Garden of Knowledge"

- Start planning to attend a conference designed for Master Gardeners.
- Featured speakers, seminars, tours, idea exchange, and shopping are sure to satisfy the Master Gardener's appetite for higher gardening education.
- This conference will provide Master Gardeners with excellent, current information, the opportunity to network with each other, and a chance to celebrate 25 years of the MG Volunteer Program in California.
- Exciting keynote speakers have been confirmed. Pre and post event tours are being organized. Stay tuned for more details.

Website: <http://camgconf06.ucdavis.edu> (bookmark this webpage and check it for updates) ■

Interview with Sherry Howe, Owner of The Bird Feeder

by Nancy Ruiz, MG '03

Q. How did your interest in birds, bats, and other animals develop?

A. I always had an interest in wild things because I spent my childhood in the Mojave Desert. Later I earned a degree in biology. I always loved writing too and set out to be a writer of books on nature. I wrote a book on elephant seals and then realized that the writer's life was too solitary for me. I got a job working in the Nature Center Bookstore and then as a docent trainer at Ano Nuevo State Reserve. I was also active with the S.P.C.A. and was called upon frequently to give speeches for schools and other organizations. The person-to-person contacts and the educator role seemed to suit me very well.

Q. What inspired you to open your own business in such a specialized area?

A. I guess it was the idea of having a hobby that would pay for itself! I wanted to be my own boss too. All my previous jobs seemed to be leading to this. I know this whole area very well, having given so many talks and presentations all over the

county. Also, I looked at some stores with a similar focus, but they were chains. All the items in the stores were pre-selected somewhere by a corporate office! I looked around at these kinds of stores and thought, "I could do this - and I could do it much better because I know what kinds of products to select". Personal selection is very important to me. I spend a lot of time finding good products. I go through 8 to 10,000 pounds of seed per week! Also, according to the U.S. Census, wildlife watching is the number one hobby! Eighty two million people claim to be involved in it. So there is quite a large market for a business like mine.

Q. Do you also have a garden? What kinds of plants do you enjoy most?

A. My garden is about 50% natives. I have removed the lawn and the roses. Lawn products like Weed and Seed are very toxic to birds as they absorb the poison through their feet. I have a regular size city lot near Natural Bridges State Beach, so I have quite a bit of fog and wind - and clay soil. During

the winter my back yard is a seasonal wetland with standing water! Some of the plants in my garden are ceonothus, Pacific wax myrtle, holly, pittosporums, pyracantha, cotoneaster, and salmon berry. Birds need edges full of hedges to hide from predators - and they need plants that are of varied heights. I attract birds to feeders and also non-feeder birds. I have towhees, sparrows, mocking birds, goldfinches, orioles, and lots of other winter visitors. I have warblers in a birch tree and they eat the aphids. There is a hawthorn tree in my garden, too, and the birds love that. I make piles of prunings and plant vines over them to provide more cover for birds. At the peak of winter, I have 28 feeders and 8 bird baths with drippers. I am working on a new section of my garden along a fence. That is going to be my butterfly garden with echinacea, asclepia, and Joe pye weed. Also, because I am close to Natural Bridges, I have lots of monarchs.

Q. Do you keep a "life list" of birds?

A. No, because it is like

stamp collecting! I am interested in what the birds are doing. Often you can identify birds based on this. A new Stokes Field Guide includes information about bird behavior.

Q. Do you have a favorite bird?

A. Yes, the Ruby Crowned Kinglet - it's on my business card. It is a winter visitor and I look for it every year.

Q. What changes have you observed in peoples' attitudes toward wild birds and other wildlife?

A. The biggest change I have observed is a change in attitude. Birds are not seen as pests. The only reference to birds about 20 years ago in garden manuals was about birds as pests! Also, I get a lot of calls from people who see a bird in their yards and want to know what it is or what it is doing. I try to get them to describe it as well as possible, and I try to give some kind of compliment to the caller for noticing. This is also a change - people seem to be more aware of the wildlife in their backyards.

The Bird Feeder

347 Soquel Ave., SC ■

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Hydrangeas

by Stuart Walzer, MG '96

Why write about a plant as old fashioned and ordinary as a hydrangea? Haven't they been around forever and become quite boring? Well, yes, but they're still beautiful and they can light up a garden beginning in Spring and continue to bloom for most of the year.

In the coastal zone of Monterey County in mid-December, some of my hydrangeas are still in bloom. Mop head hydrangeas, about 3 feet tall, in partial sun, still bear white or pink puff balls of flowers. Another grouping of mixed mop heads and lace cap hydrangeas in a shady location have grown to be about five feet tall. They too have a splendid display of flowers. On

still other of my hydrangeas, the flowers, once profuse and vibrant, have grown dull and lifeless. On these plants it is time to deadhead, though this can be deferred until Spring.

Macrophylla, the big leaf hydrangea, is the most popular and most common species. This species includes mop head and lace cap types. The mop head hydrangea has large leaves and massed inflorescence composed of a large petal like sepals. The lace cap variety has a cluster of small, fertile flowers surrounded by a ring of big fertile ones.

Another species that does well is *H. Quercifolia*, the Oak Leaf Hydrangea. I successfully grow this broad, rounded shrub with deeply lobed, oak like leaves that turn bronze or crimson in the fall. Creamy white flowers

bloom in the summer and well into the fall. I cut some for the house a week before Christmas.

Hydrangeas like rich, well-drained soil. According to many authorities they do



Hydrangea Quercifolia, the Oak Leaf Hydrangea

not require much fertilization and some say none at all. Commencing about February 15th, I fertilize every few weeks with a weak solution of Mira-Acid. I may also mulch with chicken manure at some point. I'm a great fan of chicken manure in the garden.

Pruning hydrangeas
Hydrangeas don't need to be pruned - ever - except to remove dead stems and blooms. But if your mop head or lace cap is getting too large for its location you can prune moderately but always before August 1. Why such an arbitrary date? Flowers buds are formed on the stems of hydrangeas in August, September or October for the following spring. If those stems are pruned during those months or in winter or

spring the bloom buds will be removed and there will be little or no bloom the following year. Pruning should be done before the new buds form, July being the preferred time.

When pruning do NOT cut the brown stems off in the winter. The brown stems are what next year's blooms will grow on. You may top them for shaping the plant by taking off an inch or so on smaller

plants and three to five inches on larger plants. Cut just above a node (joint). They seem to like this "haircut." On a very full mature plant, you can remove some of the brown stems completely to encourage less, but larger blooms the next year. For more, smaller blooms leave the stems alone.

You can remove the old

blooms at any time of the year without endangering the blooms for the following year. In June or July you can cut them for the house with long stems or short stems because the bloom buds have not set for the following year. After August first it is best to cut off the old blooms with very short stems to preserve the blooming buds for the following year.

Permit me to engage in a flashback to a trip to the State of Washington. During my visit I was amazed at the deep coloration of the flowering Hydrangeas. My gardening friends mimicked the Olympia beer commercial "it's the water." The mineral qualities of the Washington water plus the plentitude of rainfall makes a huge difference in the coloration of these plants.

But comparisons are invidious. Our Monterey Bay hydrangeas are good enough; easy to grow, very adaptable to light and soil variations, and providing remarkable color to courageous gardeners. The flowers, long lasting in pink, red, white and blue can light up a garden for long periods of time and make excellent cut flowers. ■

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A Rose Worth Considering...Climbing White Maman Cochet

by Paul McCollum, MG '04

Anyone searching for an outstanding climbing rose that is healthy, vigorous, and beautiful might do well to consider the Climbing White Maman Cochet. A little history of this rose may be in order before making any personal observations. While researching the history and development of this rose, I found it interesting as to the variety of developers and times of introduction. While we may not have the precise year it was developed, we can come to some general conclusions as to its development.

The shrub Maman Cochet is a very popular rose with pointed buds that open to light pink blooms with a darker center and yellow petal bases. It makes a vigorous upright bush 4' to 5' in height. Maman Cochet has few thorns and the foliage is

dark green and leathery. The blooms repeat throughout the growing season.



General observations include these: **BOTANICAL GROUP:** Chinensis; **CLASS:** Tea; **SEED PARENT:** 'Marie Van Houtte'; **POLLEN PARENT:** 'Mme. Lombard'; **BREEDER:** Coche; **INTRODUCED:** 'Maman Cochet' was introduced by Cochet (France) in 1893. Others report that it was developed somewhere between 1876 and 1900. The Climbing White Maman Cochet (Knight 1907), is a

sport of White Maman Cochet (Cook 1896), which is a sport of Maman Cochet.

This rose is listed as being hardy down to zone 6. The parent rose is rated a very solid 7.7 (10 being the highest) by ARS members.

Several years ago I met and spoke with Tom Leggett, who served for decades as the chief rosarian for the San Jose rose garden. His "most" favorite rose is (at least it was then) the Climbing White Maman Cochet. It is

a wonderful climber as it has not only been disease free but

each side of the structure, and at this point it is almost entirely hidden by these two roses. The buds are pointed and the blooms tend to hang down or droop. This is common with many of the teas, so viewing of the flowers is excellent as you walk under the support. The color is a linen white with red-stained guard petals and light yellowing toward the base. The scent is strong tea but in no way overpowering. The leaves are dark green but not glossy – they make a very nice appearance in contrast to the flowers. This rose does have some prickles which are regularly spaced along the stems and are rather sharp. The bloom period is



in four growing seasons has grown to cover the support it was planted near. My support for this rose is a frame constructed from thin-wall electrical conduit measuring 7' high, 8' long, and 6' wide. I have one Climbing White Maman Cochet planted on

throughout the growing season but for me here in Aromas there are two major periods in which the entire plant is covered in what appears to be hundreds of blooms lasting over a period of several weeks – one in the

(Continued on page 7)

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Maman Cochet

(Continued from page 6)

spring and one in the fall. During the rest of the year there are flowers but not in such abundance. Even in January I can find a few.

For anyone interested in this rose, please be aware that there is a Red Maman Cochet that is also a climber. I have two of these plants and they do just as well as the white variety. Both of these roses can be purchased from a number of companies. I can recommend Vintage Gardens here on the west coast in Sebastopol and Ashdown Roses in South Carolina. Or, you can pay a visit to my

garden and take a cutting and propagate a plant on its own root for yourself.

Resources:

- Vintage Gardens Antique Roses
2833 Old Gravenstein Hwy.
South Sebastopol, CA 95472
www.vintagegardens.com
- Ashdown Roses
www.ashdownroses.com/index.asp
- Roger Roses
www.rogersroses.com
- Help Me Find
www.helpmefind.com/rose/pl.php?n=6531
- San Jose Heritage Rose Garden
www.heritageroses.us/ ■

Photos From MBMG Quarterly Meeting, January



Alicia Molina with speaker, Gail Holman



Water-Wise Landscape Symposium & Expo

When: Wednesday, March 22, 2006
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Where: Rancho Canada Golf Course
Carmel Valley
Website: www.waterawareness.org
Email: plord@mcwd.org
Phone: 831-646-4656

The Water Awareness Committee of the Monterey Peninsula invites you to attend their Water-Wise Landscape Symposium & Expo! This event will be held from 8am - 3pm on Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at the Rancho Canada Golf Course facilities in beautiful Carmel Valley.

Learn from and meet local landscape pros who will share information on the latest water saving landscape technology, management practices, and water-wise garden design ideas!

Visit the WAC website at www.waterawareness.org, call 831-646-4656, or email plord@mcwd.org for information and attendee or vendor registration.

Happy Spring!

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Advanced Training Opportunities

Sat., Mar. 4, 8:45-4:15, Irrigation with Pete Elliott, UCCE classroom, Watsonville.

Sun., Mar. 5, 1:30 pm, Healthy Soils, Healthy Roses, Dr. Lakshmi Srisharan, botanist and molecular biologist, will give an illustrated lecture on roses and their successful culture. UCSC Arboretum, \$15 general public, \$10 for members.

Mon., Mar. 6, 9:45-3:00, Lawns with Dr. Harivandi, UCCE classroom, Watsonville.

Sat., Mar. 11, 8:45-4:15, Plant Diseases with Dr. Rabbe, UCCE classroom, Watsonville.

Mon., Mar. 13, 7:30 pm, The Flora of Scotts Creek Watershed. Pot luck supper at 6:30 pm precedes the lecture. UCSC Arboretum. Free.

Mon., Mar. 20, 7 pm, California Native Plants for the Garden, Bart O'Brien, Director of Horticulture at Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden, will give a presentation on native plants for the garden. UCSC Arboretum. Pot luck supper at 6 pm precedes the lecture. Free.

Thurs., Mar. 23, 1:30 pm, Native Plant ID Workshop. Learn to key out native plants using the Jepson Manual. Bring book if you have it, and 7x or 10x hand lens. No experience necessary. UCSC Arboretum. Free.

Sat., Mar. 25, 8:45-4:15, Weeds with Steve Fennimore (am); **Composting** with Jay DeDontney (pm). UCCE classroom, Watsonville.

Mar. 25, 10:30-11:30 am, Build a Pond with Chris Schriener

by Sharon Ettinger, MG '00 and Sharon Tyler, MG '04

and Dan Mertins, Garden Accents in Gilroy, 408-846-4555. Free.

Mar. 25, 9am-3pm, In depth tour of Buena Vista Landfill with the Santa Cruz County Master Composters. Lunch provided by Vision Recycling. Space limited. Call Karin Grobe at 427-3452 to reserve seats on the bus.

Other Garden Events

Sat., Mar. 11, 9 am – 4 pm, Hummingbird Day. The annual celebration of Hummingbirds at the UCSC Arboretum: with lectures, tours, and children's activities.

Wed.-Sun., Mar. 15-19, San Francisco Flower & Garden Show, Cow Palace, world-class display gardens, seminars, marketplace. Gardenshow.com.

Sat., Mar. 18, 49th Annual Cuttings Day, Friendly Plaza, Monterey. Plant a little bit of Monterey in your own garden: gardening buffs are invited to exchange softwood cutting materials, seedling plants, bulbs, potted plants, etc. The Parks Division will have free seedling trees available for the public. Participants are encouraged to bring cuttings and plants for the exchange, 831-646-3860.

Fri., Mar. 24, 1-2:30 pm, MG Newsletter Committee Meeting. Master Gardeners and new class members are welcome to join us for lunch (optional) at Applebee's restaurant on Green Valley Rd. in Watsonville. Learn how the newsletter is created. We invite your input! Contact joanmcleod@aol.com for questions.



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