



# GARDEN GAZETTE

*The San Francisco Garden Club*

Winter  
2022 - 2023

## *Holiday Luncheon*

Thursday, December 15

Program Speaker

*Amy Vassar*

Presidio Golf  
& Concordia Club

## Calendar

### December

Thursday, December 15\*  
Holiday Luncheon  
Presidio Golf  
& Concordia Club

### January

No SFGC Meeting  
Saturday, January 7  
Volunteer at SFCC  
9:00 am - Noon  
Thursday, January 19\*  
New Member Reception  
Metropolitan Club - 6:00 pm

### February

Thursday, February 16\*  
Past Presidents' Luncheon  
Presidio Golf  
& Concordia Club  
Tuesday, February 14  
Valentines Day

### March

Thursday March 16\*  
SFGC Hosts International  
Floral Designer Hiroto Inoui  
Metropolitan Club

### April

Thursday April 20 \*  
Luncheon meeting  
Presidio Golf  
& Concordia Club

### May

Thursday, May 18 \*  
Annual Meeting./Luncheon  
Presidio Golf  
& Concordia Club

*SFGC Event\**

# The President's Letter



What a holiday season we are having. At our November meeting, Joe Rothleutner presented a wonderfully informative program revealing the exciting new Gardens of Golden Gate Park. Then December arrived and 20 members and guests created Christmas wreaths in a workshop conducted by the amazing Steven Brown. Following on its heels is our Holiday tour to Filoli on December 8th and then a joyous Holiday Luncheon on the 15th at the Presidio GCC. You don't want to miss the unique talent of floral designer Amy Vassar, whose sumptuous designs will give you many holiday design ideas.

I want to thank Bonnie Demergasso, Vice President and Program Coordinator; Courtney Clarkson, Activities and Tours, Lisa Harris, and Workshops and Events for the hours of work involved in making all this happen. There also is plenty going on behind the scenes by other members of the board. Applause also to Gail McCollom, Beverley Hayes, Verona Boucher, Judy Field, Tammy Braas-Hill and Donna Coit.

Mark January 19 on your calendar! The board will host a wine and cheese reception honoring our new members. Members and guests are invited to the 6:00 pm reception in our offices at the Metropolitan Club. Enjoy meeting our new members, chatting with board members, perusing our library collection and getting to enjoy our office surroundings. Our Membership Chair Cheryl Minvielle has purposely chosen an evening reception so that those whose days are filled with work and meetings can fully enjoy our vibrant Cub membership.


It's time for Flower Market badge renewal. If you want a badge for 2023, check the article (page 9) in this Garden Gazette and get your reservation in on time.

We have a wonderful surprise for everyone who appreciates the fine art of floristry. Lisa Harris has arranged for us to host a major international figure in March. Stay tuned!

This Club never stops. There is always something happening. Martha Woollomes edits such beautiful and informative Garden Gazettes. If you really want to stay on top of everything we are doing, be sure to read it the second it is received. That is the only way you can stay "in the know."

As we close this calendar year, let us join with other arts organizations to acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Rmayrush Ohlone, original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. Let us recognize and respect our responsibilities as stewards of their land as we benefit from living and working here.

I hope to be able to personally greet you during one of our December events. However, if that doesn't occur, please know my hope is for each of you to enjoy the Happiest of Holidays and a Joyous New Year.

All blessings, 

*"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." John Muir--*

## Let's help finish the SFBG Nursery

In December 2020 the Garden Club committed over \$10,000 towards the building of a new nursery for the San Francisco Botanical Garden. The buildings are almost finished but Covid and supply delays have added to the cost of the project. To complete the funds needed, a matching grant of \$250,000 has been announced.

SFGC members are invited to send a donation to the Garden Club and a collective check will be sent to the garden in the name of SFGC. It is hoped that this gift might equal \$5000, which when matched, would equal our previous contribution

# December Program

Amy Vassar, Star of the December Program

## Interview by Judy Field



“Somewhere along the line I saw floral designs and realized I could use my theater background in rigging to hang things,” said Amy Vassar, one of San Francisco’s top floral designers. “I could do floral sculptures and arches and a seven-foot elephant!”

On December 15 at the San Francisco Garden Club Holiday Luncheon, Amy will demonstrate her skill with smaller floristry, showing how to make evergreen wreaths and garlands adorned by flowers and household edibles, along with making a topiary holiday tree.

Her career in floral design began with a flourish, when she attended the former San Francisco Art Institute on Chestnut Street and became Director George Kuchar’s teaching assistant. “Those were some of my best days,” she said, describing the inspiration of learning in the historic Art Institute building that houses a Diego Rivera mural, with views of the bay and the smell of paint.



After earning an Art Institute degree she worked in the theater with rigging, and lighting — “which does most of the work, because it beautifies draperies at the opera and large floral installations,” she explained. Her designs also require both the mechanics to build supports, then to cover them with delicate flowers. “You have to do it right ... there’s softness, but rigidity has to go into it,” she said. Her work has been showcased by event planners, McCalls, Paula LeDuc, and Stanlee Gatti.

Amy loves the excitement of big events, explaining “you have to earn your way ... it’s nice work if you can get it, and “it’s an honor to be in the crew,” with opportunities to go behind the scenes. For ten years she created exhibits for the annual Bouquets to Art show, gaining an insider’s view of exhibiting at museums.

There is an opposite side to Amy’s career, though, at her Flower Mart shop, Garden Party. In the Mart’s rustic, scented cluster of shops and stalls, volumes of flowers arrive regularly from Half Moon Bay or by plane from Argentina, Columbia, Amsterdam, and Japan. It’s a time-intensive environment, requiring prompt transport and use of perishable flowers. During the early confusion of the pandemic, Flower Mart workers drove their trucks out to SFO to retrieve the shipments.

“There are very few flower marts in the country” she said, “one in LA and one in New York. It’s special that we have one in the City.” She chose the Flower Mart location for her shop because “there aren’t enough art stores, and the Flower Mart has everything you need ... where else can you get art supplies at four a.m.?”

A mother of four young children with daughters who enjoy making floral designs from flowers she brings home, especially swags, Amy sees a thriving future in the floral industry.

“I want to keep growing and make more art!” she explained.



## “Garden Party”

*is the name of Amy Vassar’s business*

For those who have yet to begin Christmas decorating,  
Amy’s firm delivers lighted Christmas trees to your home or business.

Sizes range from 3 ft to 10 ft. Prices range from \$125 to \$540

Info: [amy@gardenpartysf.com](mailto:amy@gardenpartysf.com) or 408-603-60343 3



# Member Activities

## December 2<sup>nd</sup> Holiday Wreath Making Workshop with Steven Brown



*Steven Brown*



*Betty Voris*



*Beverley Hayes*



*Magnolia Leaves*



*Eva Monroe, Beverley Hayes*



*Patty McCrary, Diana Ward*



*Lisa Harris*



*Steven Brown, Jean Ellingsen*



*Kasey Hansen, Steven Brown*



*Karen Handal, Terri Bailard,  
Nan Ray, Martha Woollomes*

## SFGC Members Celebrate the Gardens of Golden Gate Park's New Nursery

**Photos & text by Bonnie Demergasso**

The Gardens of Golden Gate Park's new greenhouse is a long building. Its floors slope to the center for drainage which is crucial for keeping bacteria and fungus under control. Heaters under the bedding tables keep the plant roots warm. The glazing is fiberglass, not glass. Fiberglass provides excellent reflective quality, but is fragile. This green building called the "Head House" has great eaves that provide protection from rain. The building's beautiful interior is lined with sophisticated marine-grade plywood and it contains sinks, windows, restrooms and 240-volt outlets to charge electrical power tools.



*Tish Brown, Sandra Swanson, Gail McCollom, Betty Voris,  
Anne Katz, Bonnie Demergasso, Jane Scurich*





# November Luncheon/Meeting



*Betty Voris, Bonnie Demergasso*



*New Members,  
Linda Miller, Brooke Bedingfield*



*Speaker, Joe Rothleutner*



*Beverley Hayes, Lela Gray,  
Lia Smit*



*Bonnie Demergasso, Eva Monroe,  
Katharine Snyder*



*Carol Ede*



*Eva Monroe, Andrea Smith*



*Janet Cushing*



*Janis Burke*



*Loraine Fulmer, Elaine Larkin*



*Sally Ketchum, Bonnie Demergasso*



*Delores Mizis, Linda Miller*



*Sandra Swanson, Cynthia Woods*



*Mary Van Zomeren,  
Susan Carothers*



*Toni Heineman*



*Sandra Swanson,  
Gail McCollom*



# Holiday Flower

## The Poinsettia

### *A story of horticultural alchemy*

By Dr. Judith M. Taylor

**I**n its native state the species known as poinsettia but actually *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, is a lanky six to eight foot tall succulent from the deserts of Mexico. How did it end up less than two or three feet tall in a billion pots and myriad shades? That, my friends, is what I call horticultural “alchemy.”



The Aztecs were enchanted by its exciting red bracts and every winter caused thousands of them to be brought up to Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) to brighten special ceremonies of the season. They used its sap for medicinal purposes.

Franciscan missionaries in Mexico wanted to stamp out all the pagan rituals but saw that this plant had a lot of potential for their own purposes. They cleverly transmuted it into a symbol of Christmas, allowing the Aztecs to continue enjoying it without an explicit battle over it. The wife of the Spanish ambassador to Mexico, Dona Fanny Calderon de la Barca, talked about its beauty when massed in the cathedral in her letters to her sister in Boston when her husband was posted there in 1839.

In the 1830s the American minister to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, 1779 to 1851, a somewhat pompous and touchy chap from Charleston, South Carolina, arranged for samples to be exhibited at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s show in Philadelphia. Both the professional experts and the public were thrilled by it and the plants were rapidly adopted.

Before long it had been taken to several countries in Europe including Germany. It was because of Mr Poinsett’s connection to the plant’s import into the United States that the name “Poinsettia” was proposed.

Then the hard work began. The plant was rather finicky. The bracts fell off just when they should have been at their peak. Only wealthy people with tall conservatories could cope with it in the colder climates. To make the most of its qualities the plants needed to be shrunk as well as become reliable for the holiday season.

The obsessives I call the “what if” brigade went into high gear: the problems of size, color, reliability and ability to withstand transport and the resultant rough handling in various outlets all had to be resolved. Plant physiologists worked at fever pitch, sharing the results of their efforts with commercial nurserymen to produce the plants at scale. It took many years before the “product” we know today emerged. Richard Turner, former editor of “Pacific Horticulture”, said he no longer regards it as a plant but simply a commodity. That is a little unkind but understandable.

For anyone who wants to know the specifics of how this was accomplished I can quite shamelessly recommend my own book, *“An Abundance of Flowers: more great flower breeders of the past”*. The opening chapter is devoted to the poinsettia.

*Illustration shows the Poinsettia in its native state*

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**Happy Holidays**  
to  
**SFGC Members and Their Families**



# Program/Lunches

A festive graphic for a holiday luncheon. It features a dark red background with a white border of diagonal lines. On the left, there is a white silhouette of a Christmas tree with a string of lights. Above the tree are two large, ornate white Christmas ornaments and several white snowflakes. The text on the right is in white.

SFGC  
**Holiday Luncheon**  
**Thursday, December 15**  
**Presidio Golf & Concordia Club**  
  
Program presenter  
***Amy Vassar***  
  
Cost \$69  
  
Pay with PayPal, Zelle  
or check sent to the SFGC Office  
640 Sutter Street, 4M  
San Francisco, CA 94102

A graphic for a February luncheon. It features a dark red background with a white border of diagonal lines. The background is decorated with numerous white hearts of various sizes. The text is in white.

February  
***Past Presidents' Luncheon***  
**Thursday, February 16**  
**Presidio Golf & Concordia Club**  
Social: 11:30 • Lunch 12:15 • Program to follow  
  
Program presenter  
***Steven Brown***  
  
SFGC Past Presidents will be honored  
  
*Menu choices are a Chicken Enchilada or a Vegan Fiesta Bowl*  
*Cost \$69 • RSVP by February 6*



# Betty's INDY Trip

My annual excursions to Indiana have become more interesting since my best friend and I have begun a tradition of mini-road trips. This year we chose Madison IN, staying at the lodge in nearby Indiana State Park Clifty Falls, our balcony allowing a perfect wine/cheese spot in the evening while watching the sunset on the river..



Madison became a town in 1810, primarily because it was a perfect stopping point on the Ohio River which could take a person north to the Indiana Territory, east to Ohio or west to the Mississippi River. A Madison banker and politician, James F.D Lanier, saw promise in this bustling 19th century town and convinced the legislature to build a railroad from Madison to Indianapolis, which he purchased after its completion. Lanier, whose property bordered the river, built a grand mansion which today is listed in the historical register and open for tours. He also financed several businesses, using both the boat docks and the railroad to service transportation needs. By 1850, Madison was one of the largest cities in the U.S. Its location, across the river from Kentucky, a slave state, made it an important location for the Underground Railroad. However, with the advent of the automobile and a centralized interstate railroad, Madison lost its prominence.

Today this sleepy town has less than 12,000 people who live in and among the 19th and early 20th century homes, still projecting an atmosphere of gracious living. A miles-long parklike walkway filled with benches for resting and gazing follows the river, giving residents a promenade on which to run or walk. Began in 1911 because of its specific river location, every Fourth of July The Madison Regatta draws 100,000 hydroplane powerboat enthusiasts to the annual race.

One afternoon a sign for Lanthier Winery [www.lanthierwinery.com](http://www.lanthierwinery.com) caught our eye. We followed the local signs, parked our car and walked around this wonderful old building to encounter not only the winery but an outdoor botanical wonder. Spread among several acres, the garden displays a huge collection of flowers, plants and trees. Scattered throughout are sculptures, benches, tables/chairs, miniature lighting and paintings. This amazing surprise filled several hours as we drifted from one location to another. The winery itself is full of historical items which you can peruse while tasting the wine. A real surprise was that they also serve and make vodka from wine. My personal opinion: its unusual flavor tastes neither like wine or vodka. But I did buy a small bottle for my interested friends. Throughout the year Lanthier Winery celebrates holidays with festivals. At Christmas it becomes a Kris Kringle Wonderland with thousands of lights and Christmas trees and decorations. What a gift to both the city and its visitors, worth at least one return visit.

Betty





## You are Invited January 19

**SFGC** members and guests are invited to a wine and cheese reception honoring the club's new members. The 6 pm social hour in its offices at the Metropolitan Club will allow those who often cannot attend during the day to mingle, chat with board members, tour the office and peruse our marvelous library.

**WHAT:** A wine and cheese reception  
**WHEN:** January 19th • 6 :00 pm- 7:00 pm  
**WHY:** To honor our new members  
**WHO:** Members and guests invited  
**WHERE:** SFGC Office  
640 Sutter Street 4M,  
San Francisco

**No cost - To RSVP, send an email to: [sfgclub@att.net](mailto:sfgclub@att.net)**

## Civic Participation Committee Seeks Recommendations

**L**ast year SFGC awarded \$7500 in Civic Participation grants to three worthy Bay Area nonprofit organizations.

With Covid restrictions easing, more nonprofits and educational organizations have resumed their community involvement. As a member of the San Francisco Garden Club, you may have knowledge of a deserving organization where added funds would assist their mission.

The Civic Participation Committee, under the leadership of Donna Coit, is seeking the names of such organizations for this year's consideration. If you know of an organization to recommend, please send an email to [dmcoit@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dmcoit@sbcglobal.net)

## 2023 Flower Mart Badges Are Now Available

- If you purchased a badge in 2022 and still have your Proximity Card (which opens the gate), the cost is \$25.00 for your 2023 badge.
- If you did not purchase a badge and Proximity Card and want to purchase the set for 2023, the cost is \$50.00. If you lost your Proximity Card and want another, you must purchase the entire package for renewal. Total cost is \$50.

***Deadline for renewal is January 27, 2023.***

You may pay through either Zelle or PayPal at [sfgclub@att.net](mailto:sfgclub@att.net). You also can mail your check to the office. Checks should be made out to the San Francisco Garden Club. NO payment will be honored after January 27, 2023.

Cards will be available at the February and March luncheons. For an extra fee of \$5, they can be mailed to you in late February. However, cards which are mailed and not received will not be the responsibility of the Garden Club.

## Volunteers Needed at SF City College

**T**he SF Garden Club and CCSF's Environmental Horticultural Department have had a special collaboration since 1949. Now Club members have another opportunity to help by volunteering in the 5 1/2 acre nursery every other month on the first Saturday of the month. Because there have been many cutbacks at CCSF in recent years, just one person oversees the nursery, Sungmun, a previous Alice Eastwood recipient!



### Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> • 9:00 am to Noon

*371-375 Judson Street (street parking should be easy on the weekend)*

Bring gloves and water. Gardening tools will be provided

Mid-morning coffee and refreshments provided

A special gift will be provided by Steven Brown as a thank you.

RSVP: Gail McCollom, [gailmarymc@aol.com](mailto:gailmarymc@aol.com), 415-260-7980

### Additional dates

Saturday, March 4 and Saturday, May 6

*In case of rain, volunteering will be canceled.*

San Francisco Garden Club  
640 Sutter Street 4M  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 771-0282  
sfgardenclub@att.net

## *Garden Gazette*

### *Winter 2022/2023*

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Martha Woollomes

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Lisa Harris, Gail McCollom, Dr. Judith Taylor,

Betty Packard Voris, Martha Woollomes

#### PROOF READERS

Eva Monroe, Jane Scurich,

Betty Packard Voris

#### OFFICERS

President: Betty Packard Voris

Vice President: Bonnie Demergasso

Recording Secretary: Verona Boucher

Corresponding Secretary: Beverley Hayes

#### UPCOMING EVENTS AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

*Zoom Meetings/Programs begin at 1:00 pm*

*In person Lunch/Meetings/Programs;*

*Social: 11:30 • Lunch: 12:15*

#### Thursday, December 15

Luncheon/Program

Presidio Golf & Concordia Club

**Menu:** *Baked Ham with sliced pineapple*

and seasonal vegetables

or Vegetarian: *Pasta Primavera (VG)*

(Seasonal mix of grilled vegetables,

Penne Pasta with grated Parmesan Cheese)

Chocolate Duet

**Cost:** \$69

#### No January Meeting

#### Thursday, February 16

Luncheon/Program (Past Presidents')

Presidio Golf & Concordia Club

**Menu:** Chicken enchilada with corn tortillas,  
red sauce, chopped chilis and shredded cheese  
or, Vegetarian: Fiesta Bowl with rice, black beans,  
pico de gallo, roasted vegetables, shredded  
cheese and crema drizzle.  
Lemon Bar Royal

**Cost:** \$69 • RSVP by February 6

The San Francisco Garden Club is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Check Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card: (MC) \_\_\_\_\_ (Visa) \_\_\_\_\_

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Billing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### DONATIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ San Francisco Garden Club

\_\_\_\_\_ Alice Eastwood Fund

\_\_\_\_\_ In Memory/Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAND TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

#### SFGC OFFICE

640 Sutter Street 4M,

San Francisco, 94102

Phone: 415-771- 0282 • Email: sfgclub@att.net

Web: www.sanfranciscogardenclub.org

**PLEASE INFORM THE** CORRESPONDING SECRETARY Beverley Hayes  
(Email: beverleyhayes@sbcglobal.net) of membership news regarding births,  
illness, or death, so that the appropriate card may be sent.