

HOME & Garden

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2015

Spring plant sale has sprung!



HEATHER WEHNAU PHOTO

Stately valley oaks frame the approach to this private rancho featured on Santa Barbara Botanic Garden's garden tour. Mid-sized manzanitas line the drive, demanding little water even in the heat of summer.

By **BRUCE REED**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Spring represents the last window of opportunity for planting in Southern California. Things planted in summer struggle, even under a constant drip of life support. The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden now offers both a chance to buy great native plants while spring temperatures last and the opportunity to see interesting native-themed gardens in well-appointed style on an insider's tour of the Santa Ynez Valley.

The garden's annual Spring Native Plant Sale will start at 10 a.m. and go to 5 p.m. April 4 through

May 3. Beautiful, tough and hard-to-find plants will be on sale daily through April. Nearly 400 varieties and more than 6,000 individual plants will be available with helpful advice from volunteers and staff of the garden, located at 1212 Mission Canyon Road. Nursery admission is free.

Following this opening event, the garden's Cultivating the Wild: Native Gardens Tour on April 19 provides inspiration and a delicious meal. Limousine buses will depart from Santa Barbara early (there is also a scheduled pick-up in Buellton), carrying participants in cool comfort.

Stops on the tour include the recently created Santa Ynez Valley

Botanic Garden. The first tree plantings, in 2010, have matured nicely, and the garden has regular classes in sustainable gardening practices and arts and crafts for all ages. Puck Erickson, local landscape architect and one of the founders and designers of the not-for-profit garden, will be on hand to greet the tour and explain the layout of this newest local oasis. Planted with natives of the Santa Ynez Valley, attractions to the garden include its growing children's Adventure Garden and the adjoining willow maze.

Another highlight of the tour is the beautiful and inspiring Mission Oaks development in Solvang. More than two decades old now,

this gated community adjacent to shopping in Solvang was an early, large-scale example of landscaping using native Californian plants. Impressive, striking manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos*) decorate many of the front yards of these large and modern homes. Toyon (*Heteromeles*), bush anemone (*Carpenteria*) and deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) are commonly used in many of the yards, with no two designed in the same way or with the same plant placement. Landscapes are managed and cared for by the homeowners association. Smaller plots near the front doors and in the backyards are available

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■ SPRING

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to owners for non-native and vegetable gardening as desired. Drought-tough and also beautiful, the Mission Oaks community is a great example of a mature native landscape with both formal and naturalistic elements.

This scenic and comfortable tour does not neglect the taste buds. Lunch will be provided by New West Catering, the creative minds behind Industrial Eats, perhaps the most well-reviewed restaurant in Buellton. New West Catering uses meat and produce sourced here on the Central Coast. Lunch will be served at Montanaro Farm, borrowing the nostalgic atmosphere of its restored 1880s era grocery store. And, of course, wine will be served. Stolpman Wines will be featured during the luncheon.

As well as sharing their tasty wines with the group, Stolpman Winery is also a stop on the tour. Stolpman has 150 acres of vineyard planted on buried limestone, an uncommon soil type on the Central Coast. This deep, nutrient-rich soil capped by a layer of clay allows Stolpman to use an unusual technique, dry farming, which is the focus for the tour. Vines are only irrigated in the late winter and early spring as flowers set. As the season warms, irrigation is stopped, stressing the vines intentionally and resulting in arguably more intense flavors in the fruit.

Guides will be present on each bus, offering information beyond what the hosts at each site might offer. Another stop at the Witt ranchero, planted mostly to native plants, rounds out this first of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden's guided tours to home gardens of Santa Ynez Valley.

Both the Spring Plant Sale and the Native Plant Gardens Tour are fundraisers for SBBG, which receives no city, state or federal funding.

Bruce Reed is an arborist and horticulturist at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Email him at life@newspress.com.



HEATHER WEHNAU PHOTOS

The beautiful, established landscapes of the gated Mission Oaks community in Solvang are rarely seen by the general public. Oaks, toyon, California lilac and the twisting, mahogany trunks of manzanita are combined in infinite variations in these well-appointed yard designs.

IF YOU GO

Cultivating the Wild: Native Plant Gardens Tour

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 19

Santa Ynez Valley

\$125 general, \$95 members;

includes transportation.

Reservations required. Presented by Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

To RSVP and for more details,

call 682-4726, ext. 102, or go to

www.sbbg.org.