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*Garden Talk*

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## 'Tis The Season For Onions

By Ken Andersen



Onions are an easy and delicious crop to grow in our area.

The main things you need to be successful in growing them is rich, loose soil and consistent fertilization. Growing them in heavy clay or rocky soil can inhibit the growth of the bulb.

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## Christmas Lights at San Diego Botanic Garden



We were as pleased as Christmas punch to be able to preview the San Diego Botanic Garden's **Lightscape**. Following sold-out runs in the world's largest cities, including London, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, this fantastic

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## Cautionary Efforts Needed To Keep Birds Safe

By Vincent Lazaneo, UC Urban Horticulture Advisor Emeritus

Many people enjoy watching wild birds and listening to their calls. One way to do this is by going to a bird's home, it's natural habitat. Another way is to attract birds to your yard by putting a bird feeder and/or bird-bath in your yard. Some 59 million Americans feed birds this way. Many bought bird feeders for the first time during the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, this well-intentioned activity could be killing birds.

Humans are not the only species on our planet coping with a pandemic; birds are too. A highly pathogenic



Avian influenza (HPAI) caused by a H5N1 virus has been spreading across the US since January 2022 and it was first detected in San Diego County on October 18 in a dead bird from Lake San Marcos.

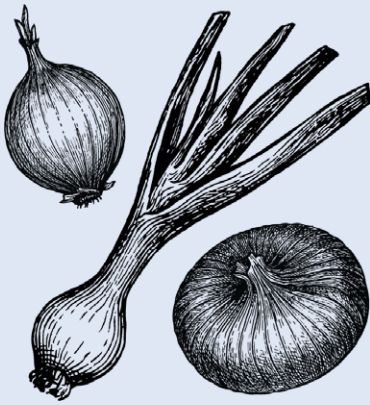
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## Onions

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If your soil is on the heavy side, you can improve it by generously mixing in a good planting compost. Onions can be planted from seed, seedlings, sets (small bulbs) and starts (plants about the same diameter as a pencil) depending on the time of year you are planting. Sets are generally available in the fall; seeds are available year-round and can be started indoors then transplanted outside.



Red, yellow and white onions are the most common to grow but other varieties are also available. Space the onions about 6-12 inches apart with the top of the onion just below the soil. Make sure they get adequate water; a good rule of thumb is to water when the top inch of soil starts to dry. Onions can be harvested at any time but will reach full maturity when the tops start to yellow and fade. If you are a pet owner, be aware that onions can be toxic to dogs and cats so plant them appropriately to prevent your fur babies from getting into them. Onions can also be grown in containers using a good potting soil. Make sure that the container is the appropriate size to allow the bulbs to grow without overcrowding. •

## Botanic Garden continued from p1



*The Voodoo Lily in bloom!*



*Just one of many sculptures at the show*

show illuminates evenings at San Diego Botanic Garden with more than one million holiday lights, tunnels, fire, sculptures and artistic installations. Best of all, because we are plant geeks, if you peek into the conservatory window, you might spot an in-bloom Voodoo Lily!! The event runs through January 1, 2023. •

## Santa To Visit The San Diego Store! Saturday, December 10 from 10am-12pm

*Now that travel restrictions have lifted, this will be Santa Claus' first trip back to the San Diego Store since December 2019 and we are excited to see him again.*

***Santa will take pictures with kids of all ages!***

***At noon, Santa will read "The Night Before Christmas" for anyone who wishes to stay and enjoy story time before he heads back to the North Pole.***

*Please note that our San Diego location is the only time Santa will visit our stores. There will be no holiday event held in Poway this year.*





## Succulents Are Here To Stay

By Melanie Potter



Succulents have enjoyed about a 10-year run and Greenhouse Grower posed the question whether or not their popularity would remain strong.

The consensus from industry experts is that they will indeed continue to shine in the spotlight and if anything, find new audiences and ways to be showcased. Here is how you may see succulents used:

**Unique Containers:** Unconventional containers such as teacups, tucked in ornaments or glued atop pumpkins. Presented in glass bowls, dish gardens, and mugs with catchy sayings are just some vessels for succulents.

**Flower Arrangements:** Succulents are ideal for arrangements because they are so long lasting. If florists could only find succulents already wired on a long pick, you'd see them more frequently in arrangements. However, at home, you have more creative leeway.

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## Keep Birds Safe continued from p1

Since then, other wild birds in the county have also tested positive for the virus.

H5N1 can infect and potentially kill many species of wild birds, domestically raised birds, and in some cases, other animals like cats. The virus is shed by infected birds in bodily fluids such as saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. It can be transmitted directly from an infected bird, or indirectly through water, food, and objects contaminated with virus particles. The virus remains viable in water for some time. The H5N1 virus occurs naturally in the population of some wild birds. Some birds may get sick and die. Chickens and other domestic birds are highly susceptible to the virus and it causes 90-100% mortality in flocks. In California, there have been more than 75 positive wild bird samples, 12 affected commercial flocks, and eight infected backyard flocks, with over 600,000 birds killed this year.

To protect wild and domestic birds from H5N1, the US Fish and Wildlife

service and the San Diego Humane Society advise the public not to feed or provide water for wild birds until this is over. Bird feeders and bird baths cause birds of many species to congregate unnaturally in one area, and this makes the transfer of the Avian flu more likely. People who raise chickens or other domestic birds should avoid practices that attract wild birds to their property and should be careful not to introduce the virus to their flock or pet birds on contaminated hands, clothing, or other objects.

The San Diego Humane Society, [www.sdhumane.org](http://www.sdhumane.org), provides information on the Avian Flu, and what to do if you find an injured bird, or a young bird out of its nest. They also have a link to a California Department of Fish and Wildlife mortality report form that can be used to report a dead bird. They advise not to touch or handle dead birds. If you have sick or dead poultry, call the California Department of Food and Agriculture at 866-922-2473. •

## Christmas Comes Early For Us Plant Geeks



If you are looking for a unique gift for a plant lover, here is some good news. We have found a grower specializing in **rare cycads, palms, and succulents**. We will have a selection of **bonsai succulents** at our Poway store! How cool is that? •



## Succulents

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**Colors and Forms:** Puckered, twisted leaves, purple, red, silver, or yellow foliage, bulbous or angular, succulents encompass many shapes which is why they are a sought-after decorative touch.

**Combinations:** Retailers will sell more dish gardens, open glass terrariums, or recipes of 2-inch pots that consumers feel confident planting themselves.

**Outdoor Use:** Southern Californians know that succulents are a solution to drought-stricken, hot regions. Succulents will continue to be used for foundation plantings and in xeriscaping. •

## Camellias Are Winter Warriors

By Walter Andersen, Jr.

In mid-winter, there are not many shrubs with blooms on them, and few that produce such amazing blooms as Camellias. Generally, they are easy to grow and bloom well. If you plant different varieties, you can have Camellias blooming almost year-round. They are survivors, but given a little extra care, they can be an outstanding addition to most gardens. These were brought from China and Japan during the 19th Century and have become very popular. There are two basic types: **Camellia japonica** and **Camellia sasanqua** that are commonly sold. Camellias can also make great container plants for a patio or balcony.

### Camellia japonica

The most common are Camellia japonica with hundreds of named varieties. These generally produce the larger, showier and complicated blooms. Some can develop into almost tree-like plants, in time reaching more than 15' tall. They are usually kept as shrubs to about 5' to 8' tall. They can reach almost the same width if given the room. Generally, these grow and look best if they have a little shade during the warmest part of the day. However, the deeper pinks and reds can stand more sun than the lighter pinks and white varieties. Near the coast in San Diego (within 10 miles or so), most can tolerate full sun, but still look better with some shade during the hottest time of the day. These come in many shades of pink, red and white, with combinations of red and white, two-tone pinks and whites with a blush of pink. The blooms can be single with bright yellow stamens showing, to semi double with stamens more hidden, and formal varieties where no stamens are visible. Formal and informal forms are also found. Formal is where each



petal of the bloom is symmetrical. For informal varieties, the petals are formed in many different free form patterns. Camellia japonica blooms are usually 4" to 6" in diameter.

Some varieties are compact and bushy; needing only a light trim now and then to keep the shape you want. Other varieties are narrower and upright, and faster growing. The foliage is glossy and deep green; they look good even when not blooming. The plants are usually available all year long, but during winter when they are blooming, you will find the best selection.

When planting a new plant, be sure the hole is a little deeper than the original root ball and about half again wider than the root ball. Put some new mix in the bottom of the hole, maybe 2" to 3" or so. Back fill around the root ball with E.B. Stone Azalea Mix in the pink bag. Be generous with this mix, at least half mixed with your old soil. You can plant in straight E.B. Stone Azalea Mix. We recommend building a berm around the plant; a little larger than the original planting hole to be sure the water soaks down deep when you water.

In spring, start feeding the plants with Camellia and Azalea food. Try to apply this every two months. Stop feeding in fall when you see small

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## To Do List: December



*Look for Holly & Living Christmas Trees*



*Roses are arriving later this month!*

### Plant

- > Bulbs: Force Paperwhites now for Christmas blooms. Last chance for fall bulbs.
  - > Color: Don't miss Pansies, Violas, Stocks, and Calendulas.
  - > Vegetables: plant onions, garlic, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, beets, carrots, and more.
  - > Plant conifers, junipers, evergreens, California natives and drought-tolerant plants.
  - > Roses, roses, and roses are due the third week of the month.
  - > Potted pomegranates, figs, grapes, and cane berries are here! Selection varies by store. Call for details or [check the website for the list](#).
  - > Look for Camellias, Azaleas, Pyracantha, Holly, Living Christmas Trees, Poinsettias, Christmas Cactus, Cyclamen, and Photinia.
- ### Pest Control
- > Dormant spray for diseases and over wintering pests. Use Liqui-Cop for disease control and Horticultural Oil Spray. •

## Camellias continued from p4

flower buds forming. If you keep feeding them heavily in late fall, they may try to put out new growth and drop the flower buds. Enjoy their blooms, and as the blooms disappear in spring, start feeding again.

There are not many insects that bother them, but watch for aphids on the new growth or flower buds. Occasionally you might find scale feeding on them. This usually happens on the woody stems and older leaves.

### Camellia sasanqua

Sasanqua varieties of Camellias take similar care, but can tolerate more sun. Plant and fertilize as you would a japonica. Some sasanquas start blooming a month or two before the japonicas, some in full bloom at Thanksgiving or Christmas. The blooms are usually smaller and more open, more semi-doubles and singles, to about 3" across. Sasanqua varieties have a more

open growth habit, and most don't get nearly as large as the japonica varieties. There are some low growing (to about 14" tall) varieties that can be used as a groundcover. Others are more upright to about 4' to 6'. A few can reach higher, to 8'. These too can be pruned to shape if you like. A light pruning during new growth will form more branches and a thicker plant.

### Other Varieties

There are other varieties of Camellia you might find interesting. **Camellia sinensis** is the plant grown for tea. The foliage is smaller and the blooms quite small, not considered showy like the others discussed.

**Camellia reticulata** have quite large blooms, most are informal in shape and the growth shape is open and sprawling. They are fussier to grow; they are more of a collector plant, not commonly stocked at most nurseries. •



## Best Visitor EVER!



*Ken Andersen with Judy Beckett & Coco*

The animal that visits most regularly to our stores is by far, DOGS! However, did we get a treat when **Coco**, a pony, dropped in with her mom. Our friend, Judy Beckett is the executive director at **Cornerstone Therapeutic Riding Center** in Escondido and she just happened to have Coco and another pony with her. Coco came into the store, enchanted everyone who said hello to her, then polished off an apple and the mess it made. We loved meeting Coco and it's wonderful to know she does such good work at Cornerstone Therapeutic Riding Center that enriches the lives of wounded and recovering service members, veterans, first responders and their families. •





## Store Holiday Hours & Closings

### December 24

Poway closes at 2pm

### December 25

Both stores closed for Christmas

### December 31

Poway closes at 2pm

### January 1

Both stores closed for New Year's Day

**Happy Holidays!**

## Garden Classes: December

Saturday classes are **FREE** and last about an hour. Complimentary coffee is served. During inclement weather, classes are held indoors in San Diego and on the covered, heated patio in Poway. Topics are subject to change. See the full schedule at <https://www.walterandersen.com/classes-events/>.



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## Visit Our 2 Locations

### SAN DIEGO

3642 Enterprise Street  
San Diego, California 92110

**619-224-8271**

**Open 8am-5pm | 7 Days-A-Week**

### POWAY

12755 Danielson Court  
Poway, California 92064

**858-513-4900**

**Open 9am-5pm | 7 Days-A-Week**

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