

# Geraniamania



## From the President

Thank you for electing me your President for 2019. I hope that you will all help me figure out what to do - and then remind me to do it!

I started growing geraniums back at the time that Balboa Park had the large geranium planting in front of the Museum of Art. I went down to Home Depot, bought 6 or so Zonal geraniums in 4 inch pots and a couple of Ivy geraniums. I planted these in our back yard in El Cajon and they thrived. Until August. And then there were these little bugs on them, and all of the leaves dropped off. Then members of another Floral Society snickered and said 'I told you so!'.

They say you're not a real gardener until you kill a hundred plants, and are not a Master Gardener until you kill a thousand plants. Even if I don't count weeds as plants, I am definitely heading for the Master Gardener title. So we tried again. This time Monica and I liberated (ahem!) some cuttings of Lemon Scented geraniums from the Wild Animal park and I treated them with my usual care and attention - i.e. I shoved them into a 5 Gallon pot together with a rose seedling. Inside a couple of months the geranium was bigger than the rose. We took cuttings, stuck them into soil - clay, sandy, potting mix, or whatever was handy - and they grew like mad.

I bought a couple of Ivy geraniums and these thrived in our southern facing planter in total clay soil. I shoved some cuttings into a couple of 5 gallon pots with some protea and they thrived. I put them into my carefully designed and engineered planter at the front of the house and they croaked. Stupid geraniums...

Hopefully I will do better in 2019!

"May all your enemies be left behind you,  
May all your friends be with you,  
And only Good Fortune be ahead of you!"

Patrick Powell

Happy  
Newyear

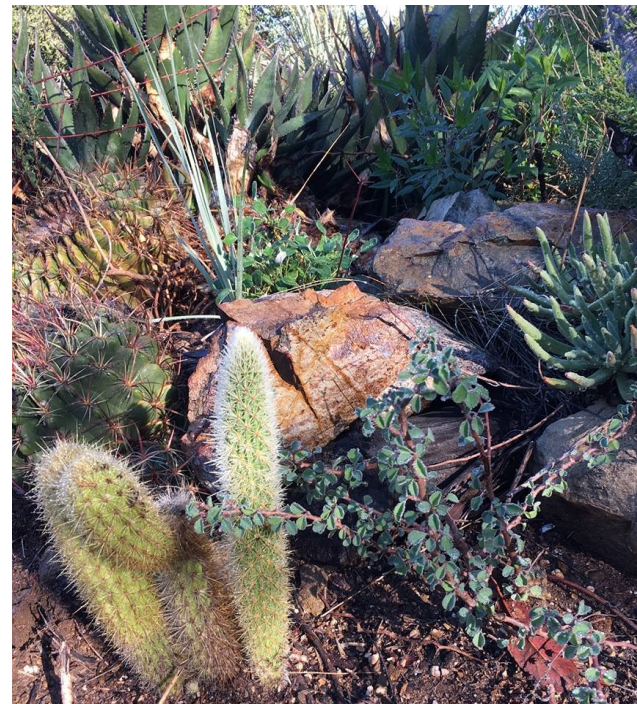
## January Meeting

Tuesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>  
7:00PM

Be sure to bring clippings from your garden -  
and goodies to share at the meeting!

## January Program

Our Speaker for January 8th will be Edmund Piffard. Edmund likes to talk about Native Plants, and is an accomplished artist.



A view of the coastal rarities section of Edmund's garden, some of which are extremely rare. Bergerocereus emoryi (velvet cactus) Ferocactus viridescens (coast barrel) Euphorbia misera (cliff misery) Agave shawii (shaw's agave) Dudleya attenuata orcuttii (borderfeild dudleya) Acnatherum diegoensis (San Diego needlegrass) Nolina interrata (Dehesa Nolina) Eriogonum grande rubescens. Just off screen Lycium californicum and Dudleya traskii. This is 12 miles inland facing southwest.

## Beer Fed Geraniums?

This 2-year-old geranium has produced more than 90 buds. Al Sumner, who has grown the large geranium at his home near Palestine, says he “feeds” the flowering plant beer to produce its bounty.

Texans like to brag that everything is bigger and better in Texas. Even people who move here from other parts of the country catch the spirit of the Lone Star State after a while.

That’s the case with Al Sumner, a retired commercial fisherman from the Northeast, who has grown a giant geranium at his home a few miles outside of Palestine.

“It’s just a hobby of mine,” Sumner said Tuesday afternoon as he pointed out his thriving black berry vines and lush vegetable garden.

But his true pride and joy rests in a big blue planter next to his driveway. The vibrant red blooms of his larger than normal geranium greet anyone who enters his drive.

The secret to his giant blooming geranium, Sumner shares with a smile while standing under a shade tree in his front yard — beer.

“I feed it beer,” Sumner said about the 2-year-old plant that currently has 92 buds. “I started giving it beer two years ago.”



Sumner, who retired after 38 years as a commercial fisherman in the Rhode Island area including working the waters where the film “The Perfect Storm” was filmed, stumbled upon the secret to his green thumb.

“I wasn’t much of a beer drinker but at night while working on my nets, I’d open a bottle and take a couple of drinks and pour the rest into a nearby plant,” he said.

At his home in Florida, he grew a geranium with 102 buds.

Sumner, who moved to Palestine six years ago, said his friends call his prized geranium his “alcoholic plant.”

“I take the plant in the house in the winter and put it to sleep,” he explained. “I give it one bottle of beer per week in the winter months, usually from November through March or April.”

The 72-year-old widower joked that the geranium he treats to Miller beer is “over 21.”

Sumner is already working on his next project, a young geranium plant given to him recently by his daughter.

“I think it’s a blue or purple geranium,” he said.

You can bet he’ll nurture it with a green thumb and a few beers.

When not working in his garden with his buddy Hunter, a 115-pound Labrador retriever, at his side, Sumner enjoys coming in to town and spreading a little joy, cracking people up with his jokes.

“I like to make people smile,” he said.