Native Garden Notes:
Fall to Winter
by Monica Tudor

RECENTLY I WAS RE-READING “CARE & MAINTENANCE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT GARDENS” to find out how to take care of the Encelia farinosa (Incensio) that was growing in the front yard. I had noticed the plant was growing taller and had started getting flower buds once the weather had cooled. Turns out I had accidentally picked the right time to trim it (late November). The instructions say to “cut back to 4 inch stubs whether it is blooming or not, or it will look disheveled.”

Even though I have no problem cutting many other plants back, Zauschneria (California fuchsia), Aster occidentalis (Western aster), Muhlenbergia (deer grass), it was hard for me to follow the directions of experts. Who knew I was so contrary? Anyway, I should have followed the advice given in the book. The Encelia does indeed look raggedy. So now I need to decide whether to trim it properly at this late date, or let it go until next year. Lucky for me it is towards the back of the yard and somewhat hidden by a pine tree.

It isn’t time to trim the Zauschnerias yet. I like to wait till the first frost, but certainly by the first week of January, frost or not. The Zauschnerias were great this year. The Flaming Red Penny was so thickly covered with blooms, you could hardly see the leaves. Even the petite Zauschneria cana surprised with two successive waves of flowers.

The Penstemon pseudospectabilis (desert penstemon)

Zauschneria cana

loves its current location. I had one that bloomed nicely in spring and early summer, but it died at that sandy location when the temperatures stayed over 100 degrees for days on end. However, the second pseudospectabilis is just a few feet away, with the exact same soil and watering conditions, but gets light afternoon shade from the palo verde tree. It is growing multiple branches and looks great. The only trimming it got was to remove the dried flower stalks. I saved the seeds and have planted them- now to see if they will sprout!

The Romneya coulteri (Matilija poppy) might need

Romneya coulteri (Matilija poppy)
severe trimming or not. If it is happy and left untrimmed, it will easily grow 7-8 feet tall and wide! If it is in a location it isn’t too pleased with, it will be much smaller, perhaps 3-4 feet tall and wide. (I have some in each category.) I finally had to trim one of the Matilija poppies that was happy, since it had grown taller than the roof line and was starting to take over its section of the back yard. The trimming hasn’t hurt it at all and it does look better for being trimmed. On the other hand, the other happy poppy which was not trimmed is most definitely looking scraggly. I went ahead and trimmed the unhappy poppy so now it isn’t just a half dozen long sticks. Now it is a half dozen short sticks.

Dale Gradek will be conducting a pruning demonstration to show how to trim/prune native plants. It will be at his house, 4224 Christmas Tree Lane on Saturday, January 11 at 9:00 am I’m planning on being there! 🌸

“Ditch Your Lawn”

A California native plant garden is water-saving, low maintenance, and great for the environment. Ditch Your Lawn is for anyone who wants information on how to bring California’s native plants into their landscape, whether they want to do a full-on yard transformation or a flowerbed.

Students will learn:

- Options for getting rid of a lawn
- How to determine soil type
- Irrigation options for saving water
- Plant selection and maintenance.

A field trip to an established native plant garden is included. Taught by Dale Gradek and Monica Tudor, California Native Plant Society members and experienced native plant gardeners.

Class schedule: Thursday March 26 and Thursday April 2, 2020, 6:00-7:30 pm with a field trip to an established native plant garden on Saturday March 28, 9:00 am

Registration begins Sunday, January 5, 2020 at 10:00 am on-line at: bakersfieldcollege.edu/levaninstitute or register by calling the Levan office: (661) 395-4431, or registering via mail or in person. 🌸