

Belle Vie

Gardens & Nursery

June 2002 Newsletter

The garden is a restful place . . . On May 12, about 20 members and guests of the newly formed South Valley Fleurs Garden Club enjoyed a beautiful and relaxing day at Belle Vie during their monthly meeting. An affiliate of the Garden Clubs of America, they promote interest in gardening, floral & landscape design. The group is also active in civic beautification projects, such as revamping and maintaining the planter at the Gilroy Senior Center. If you are interested in gardening and would like information on becoming a member of this local gardening club, Irene Mort would love to hear from you. Her phone number is (408) 776-2933.

Is it soup yet . . . On May 19, a small group of family & friends got together at Belle Vie to plant vegetables and herbs in our planned U-Pick field. And, wouldn't you know it, it rained. Undaunted, we did manage to get a lot done in between the rain squalls--plant a few vegetables and scurry into the house for snacks and hot tea when the rain started, then back out to the field again. Well, a month has passed and everything is about triple in size. We're seeing blossoms on many of the plants and in another 2 to 3 weeks should begin to have some nice fresh veggies to pick. Visit us at the Morgan Hill Farmers' Market—we'll post a readiness chart when we get closer to harvest.

Our summer hours are:

Thursday & Friday	9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Saturday	9:00 AM to 1:00 PM (at the Farmers' Market) 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM (after the Farmers' Market)

Herb of the Month: The Insect Repellers

Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) is an easy to grow aromatic and attractive perennial that has brilliant green foliage and button-like yellow flowers. Companion gardeners recommend tansy to improve the vigor of roses and bramble fruits, and to repel pests like ants and beetles. Common Tansy grows and spreads very quickly, however, we found and planted a less invasive variety called "Fernleaf" Tansy around our Apricot tree and have virtually eliminated our ant problem. We have available a new variety called "Jackpot Tansy" which is not invasive and produces a cloud of small white flowers. Tansy is still used sparingly in salads, tea, and cooking by some, but can cause severe problems in larger quantities and I would recommend staying clear of this herb for internal use. In medieval times, tansy was strewn on the floor to be crushed underfoot, thereby releasing its insect repellent aroma.

Rue (*Ruta graveolens*) is another easy to grow perennial that has bluish-green, lacy foliage and attractive yellow flowers that grow in clusters. Rue has a pungent, musky smell and is recommended by companion gardeners to repel pests around roses and other plants. Another medieval strewing herb, Rue was used to repel fleas. Some gardeners have noticed an allergic reaction when brushing up against the plant on a hot, sunny day and their skin became blotchy, but we haven't experienced any bad reaction ourselves.

Insect Repellent "Tea"

You can make a "tea" with the above herbs to use in your sprayer. Take 1 cup of fresh herbs and 2 cups of water. Boil the water and pour over the herbs. Let stand for 6 hours, then strain the liquid and store in a glass jar. Mix 2 tablespoons of this "tea" with 8 cups of water and use in your sprayer. Spray your roses and other favorite plants when you see signs of ants or other pests.

Happy Gardening,
Donna Ahern and Kathy Nolan

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