

North State Gardener

WINTER 2020



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Diversity in the Desert

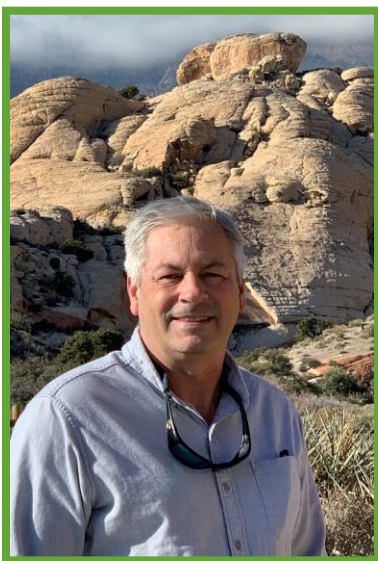
NSG Winter Calendar

- Pruning crape myrtles
- Planting bulbs
- Cutting back ornamental grasses
- Beginning mulching
- Beginning spring irrigation repairs



WELCOMING A NEW DECADE

Welcome to the beginning of a new year – and a new decade! At North State Gardens, we are looking forward to a year of growing and greening our environment, and the hottest landscaping trends for 2020 follow right along with our plans! Clients are looking for low-maintenance lawns and ways to extend their living space outside with open-air rooms and hardscaped entertainment areas. The trending color beginning this new decade is Classic Blue, and we will see it in plants from hydrangeas to salvia and in containers and outdoor accessories. Classic Blue reflects the color of our environment here on the coast: the deep calming azure of the ocean and the cloudless arc of the sky. A new year beckons, and we are excited.



Hello Friends,

This quarterly letter has become a much-needed occasion for me to reflect. As I hide from the cold and howling wind on this January day, I am so thankful to our wonderful clients and our dedicated employees for a record-breaking year in 2019. Our company continues to grow and we were fortunate enough to enjoy some interesting, challenging and rewarding jobs last year. This makes me look forward to 2020 even more! The backlog of work on the books right now is about as exciting as I can remember.

Of course, growth presents its own set of challenges, and finding good help continues to be the biggest one. We are constantly in hiring mode, so

whenever a good candidate walks through the door we snap them up! We are also using social media and web-based employment apps to find qualified folks. Fortunately, we have a very experienced and knowledgeable core group of managers who can train candidates in job skills allowing us to hire for the intangibles like work ethic, dependability and integrity – qualities that we consider vital in our employees.

Hardscaping continues to grow as an area of expertise for us and as a percentage of our sales. In fact, one of the hottest trends for 2020 is ornate and geometric hardscaping detail in the landscape. From walkways and patios to outdoor entertainment rooms with kitchens and fire pits, many clients are looking to integrate popular home decor patterns into their hardscapes. Today's interlocking concrete pavers come in conventional and permeable configurations, making them an environmentally friendly and sustainable choice. And as an extra perk, hardscapes do not need watering or conventional maintenance. They are also an area of your landscape that can be considered all-season use – enjoy your outdoor patio and fire pit every month of the year. In a reversal this quarter, we will feature a hardscape job with a little bit of landscaping thrown in - usually we do things the other way around – but this client had a special need, and that only makes our job more interesting!

Another top landscape trend for 2020 is smart irrigation technology. Clients are more concerned about the environment than ever before, and this awareness will contribute to rising interest in high-tech irrigation systems that deliver just the right amount of water to a lawn or landscape, conserving water and saving money in the long run. What better place to study new irrigation techniques than in the Mojave Desert? Our recent attendance at the Irrigation Association Show in Las Vegas brought home the importance of water conservation on a national level. It also showed that **North State Gardens is on the cutting edge of this new technology** and an area leader in educating our clients about the cost and environmental benefits of smart irrigation. We are looking forward to making 2020 our best and most environmentally focused year ever!

As always, thank you for your support.

Matthew



CONNECTING ALL THE DOTS



For this growing young family, it was important to keep the casual feel of their wooded property while finding a way to connect all of the outdoor living space into one cohesive environment. The existing flagstone pathways were rough and inconsistent, always covered with sand and dirt which got tracked in the house. However, the clients loved the shaded aspect of the backyard and wanted to keep as many trees and plants as possible.

To solve these problems, we created a design that connected the home's entrance, parking area, garage entrance, grill and greenhouse, and we added circular patios for a new dining area and a firepit. All of the existing trees were incorporated into the design, and many of the client's plants were reused as well. The homeowners chose a combination of pavers from Techo Bloc. The pavers compliment each other and add brightness as well as accommodating furniture well and being safe for young children. **Pavers are perfect for a wooded landscape because, if they are pushed up by roots, they can be replaced much easier than a cracked sheet of concrete.** The plantings are appropriate for the wooded setting and will soften the hardscape as they mature. We chose lots of ferns, Camellia sasanqua, and Ligustrum. The result is a relaxing tableau with free-flowing curved paths of cool stone leading to outdoor mixed-use areas in an uncontrived and natural way. We are very happy we could help this great family realize their own outdoor living space!

At North State Gardens, we are so confident in our certified installers that we guarantee our hardscapes to not settle or crack. Our clients can rest assured their hardscape will remain a beautiful, low-maintenance aspect of their landscape for years to come.



The Case for Hydrangeas



Hydrangeas are well-loved for their big beautiful blooms and their lovely fragrance. From the Greek for water (*hydros*) and jar (*andros*), hydrangea literally means ‘water jar’ – a very accurate name as these plants need large quantities of water to produce their huge pom-pom shaped blooms. Although there seems to be a bit of disagreement about the number of species of hydrangea in the world, there are four types commonly grown in North American gardens: Bigleaf, Smooth, Panicle, and Oakleaf.

However beautiful and robust, hydrangeas can be hard to get established. Our temperate winter here in Zone 8 is the perfect time to plant and nurture these

lovely statement-making shrubs. The idea is to give the plant time to establish a healthy root system before the blooms appear in early spring. Keeping the new plants well-watered is a top priority. In the heat of the summer, hydrangeas can transpire faster than their roots can take up water – a notable reason to begin planting now.

Knowing where to plant your hydrangeas is also important. They love early morning sun and dappled shade but shy away from the heat of late afternoon.



Avoid planting hydrangeas directly under trees as this can lead to competition for valuable water and nutrients. The shrubs should also be placed where they are protected from high winds that can damage leaves and destroy flower heads.



Some of our favorite hydrangea varieties include the spectacular *Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Limelight’ (*shown right*) with showy blooms that start off a cool lime green and gradually blush to a luminous white. This particular hydrangea can soak up the sun all day but also does well in partial shade. Another favorite is *Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Marlesii Variegata’ (*bottom left*) with its lace cap blooms and creamy white tipped leaves. This variety prefers a shady environment with mostly cool morning sunlight.

At North State Gardens, we try to incorporate hydrangeas into the landscape whenever possible. Not only are they fairly easy to grow once established, but they also provide vibrant color in the garden during the scorching heat of full summer – a rare feat in our local coastal climate.

The Amazing Diversity of the Mojave Desert

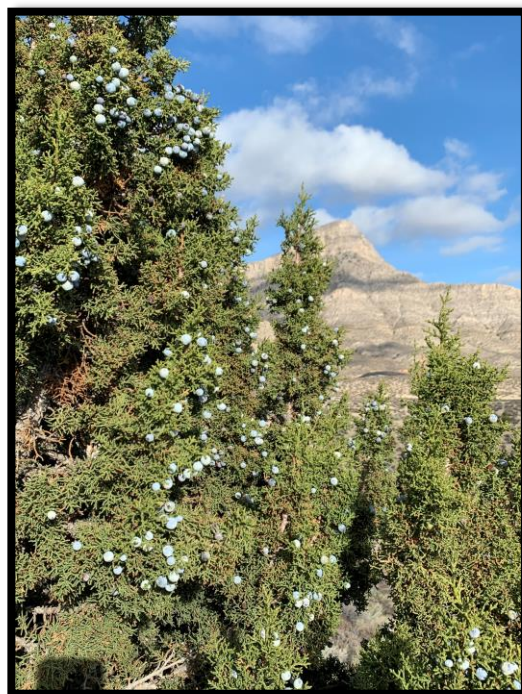


The Mojave Desert is comprised of 25,000 square miles of lands in southern Nevada, western Arizona, southwestern Utah, and a full quarter of California. The desert's boundaries are generally defined by the presence of Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*), an indicator species which attests to the health of its environment. Despite the presence of humans for over 20,000 years, the Mojave Desert has managed to remain in a relatively natural condition because so much of the area is too difficult for humans to inhabit, due to lack of water and extreme heat.

The Mojave Desert is known as a rain-shadow desert, formed when tall mountain ranges prevent moisture-rich clouds from reaching areas on the protected side of a range. As air rises over the mountain, water is precipitated and the air loses its moisture content, forming a desert on the leeward "shadow" of the range. The Mojave receives about five inches of precipitation annually as rain or snow fall. Just 15 miles west of Las Vegas lies the Red Rock Canyon Conservation Area. Some 600 species of plants are known in the area, including the Joshua tree (*bottom left*), Mojave yucca, banana yucca, creosote, and blackbrush. In the higher elevations, the Utah juniper (*bottom right*) and scrub live oak dominate the landscape.



The desert teems with more than plant life. There are literally thousands of species of small mammals, insects, spiders, reptiles and amphibians that call the desert their home. There are even groups of wild



burros that roam the many hiking trails! Red Rock Canyon offers scores of other opportunities to learn about this amazingly diverse part of our country and our ecological heritage.