

The 'Scotch Gardener' Now Resides In Aptos

By Ida Hills

Gardeners in the Santa Cruz area are the luckiest in the world according to Jim Kerr, "The Scotch Gardener," who now lives in Aptos. He feels both the climate and the soil are ideal for growing plants. He points out the ever increasing number of commercial growers in the area.

"The Scotch Gardener" is probably best known for his gardening program on KQED Channel 9, San Francisco's educational TV station. The program is presented Friday at 6:30 p.m. and rebroadcast the following Thursday at 12:30 p.m. He has presented this program for 11 years, making it the oldest program on California TV.

Kerr will participate in the upcoming annual KQED Auction which is the major source of financing for the station (\$290,000 last year). This will end his telecasting for the season, but he will return with his garden show in the fall.

Kerr also writes a daily garden column for the San Francisco Chronicle. He is considering returning to radio in the fall. He broadcast a weekly garden show on KCBS, San Francisco, for 15 years. He also is working on a book based on the thousands of letters he has received. The largest number was 3984 in one month in 1965.

Kerr was born in Banff, Scotland. He classes himself as a seedsman as were his father and grandfather before him. It is a profession which is rapidly becoming extinct. It was the duty of a seedsman to test seeds for germination and vitality and then sell them to the public, mostly in bulk. Seeds were tested on moist toweling at varying heat, and a seedsman was expected to know about all the various seeds he offered for sale. Most of these seeds were natural crosses produced by natural pollenization. Today most seeds are hybrids produced by hand pollenization and a man specializes in a particular plant.

Kerr attended Gordon College in Aberdeen, Scotland, and served a five-year apprenticeship before he was considered ready to serve the public as a seedman. He came to the United States 40 years ago. Because of the scarcity of men in his profession, he was not required to apply under a quota.

Kerr was first employed by the Ferry Morse Seed Company for whom he worked for 15

years. He worked under Cuthbertson whose strain of Sweet Pea seed is the standard today. Kerr then opened his own seed store in San Mateo where he did business for 25 years. In recent years it was the only store in Northern California where garden and flower seed could be bought in bulk.

The Kerrs are now making their permanent home in Aptos at the New Brighton Beach residence where they have spent their summers for the past four years. It is a delightful location at the end of Pine Tree Lane adjoining the New Brighton Beach park area.

The spur railroad skirts the edge of his property, and his nine grandchildren refer to the two trains daily as "grandad's train." The property adjoins a grove of huge Eucalyptus. On the newly completed deck which looks out over the beautiful park view, he has planted dwarf citrus in redwood tubs. There are two Myer lemon, a Eureka lemon, Bear lime and an orange. A grapefruit and an orange tree also grow in the garden, but the climate is not warm enough for the fruit to be edible quality. The garden also contains peach trees, nectarines, plum, apple and grape.

Kerr says the fruit crop is poor this year, presumably due to the excess rain this spring. There is a loquat which produces edible fruit. A new addition waiting to be set out was

a small evergreen California Nutmeg tree.

In his flower garden, the Scotch Gardener grows borders of pansies, beds of petunias including some of the new hybrids still in the experimental stage at Ferry Morse. He has a rose bed. Two handsome yellow Fremontia in bloom are samples of Kerr's increasing interest in California plants. A bed of tuberous begonias is planted against a grape stake fence. Japanese maple are interspersed with the begonias in the bed, and on the fence above them are redwood planters with hanging begonias in them.

A large fuchsia and a matching camellia grow under the dining room window where the flowers can be seen from the table. A smaller camellia, Mrs. Tingley, was still in bloom with perfectly formed formal pink flowers. A lavender rhododendron was also still in full bloom. A handsome bouganvillea blooms over the porch.

Unusual plants in Kerr's garden include a Mignonette which produces two to three-foot spikes of greenish white flowers with multi-colored spathes. Another plant which will not be on the commercial market for a couple of years is a geranium developed by Ferry Morse with bronze red foliage and bright red flowers. It is dwarf, very floriferous and each flower in the loose growing head is over an inch across.



Jim Kerr

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They will be grown from seed because this eliminates the infections transmitted by cuttings. A geranium will bloom from seed in eight months.

Kerr, who combines a subtle Scotch humor with his vast gardening knowledge, presented a question and answer program for the Aptos Garden Club, and a program with a lighter touch for the annual banquet of the SIRS Club.

Know Your Gardening Terms

By Sheila and Alan Swenson
NEA Garden Specialists

Your garden will prosper when you apply tips from experts. But since green thumb terms can be confusing, here are some definitions to guide your gardening:

B&B is balled and burlapped, referring to trees and shrubs with earth ball wrapped in burlap for easier moving and better transplanting.

Heels is a base piece of parent stem sometimes taken with cuttings. Or, it could mean to cut a trench, place plants in it temporarily until you have time to put them in a permanent location.

Miscible oil is one that will mix easily with water in sprays. Also, in spraying you might hear of antidesiccants, a preparation

to spray on plants to cut down moisture loss through the leaves.

In planting seeds or propagating new plants, here are several terms to keep the record straight:

Tips On Seeding Dichondra Lawn

Here are a few tips that may be of help in seeding your dichondra lawn:

Dichondra seed needs a warm soil before it will start sprouting, so it's best not to plant

Damp-off is a disease common with seedlings. It makes them fall over and die and is caused by a fungus in the soil, especially if soil is kept too wet. Avoid it by using Jiffy mix or

The seed should be covered with a very thin layer of soil, no more than 1/8 inch. If seedlings are made during the warm summer months, a layer of peat moss will be a big help in keep-

similar sterilized mixtures to start seeds.

Harden off means to expose plants gradually to more difficult conditions, such as before transplanting from hothouse or windowsill to outdoor locations.

Hybrid is the product of crossing two or more different species or strains of a plant. Usually the new variety is stronger and has the best qualities of both parents. An F-1 hybrid is the first generation of such crossing. Many new exceptional varieties are now available from F-1 seeds.

Bolt refers to plants like lettuce or others entering the seeding stage prematurely. Blast, however, means flower buds that dry up without opening.

Garden terms come in all