

grams. Come to the library to register or register online and print your reading log at home. This program is for ages 18 and up.

See above for descriptions of *All Ages Knitting*, *Valentine's Day Card Creations*, and *Paper Tigers Origami*.

Regularly occurring adult programs include *Senior Chats* on Wednesdays from 10 to noon and *yoga* on Thursdays from noon to 1. Both are open to all and require no registration.

On Thursday, Feb. 6 from 2 to 4 learn how to up-cycle a book and turn it into a piece of art. This class will present the *basic principles of the art of book folding*. The participants will complete a heart design. Registration is preferred. This is the first of a two-part

series, with the second session on Feb. 13. Registration is required for each.

Life Circles will meet from 9:30 to 11:30 on Monday, Feb. 3. This group writes about memories of life events. Join a supportive circle, which will help you to be motivated and productive. No registration required.

The *Monumental Bookworms* will meet from 7 to 8 on Tuesday, Feb. 11 to discuss *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas. All are welcome to this book club sponsored by the Tri-Lakes Friends of the Library.

History Buffs will meet from 1:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday, Feb. 26. This group selects a different era to discuss each year. This year's topic is the *Making of America (1783-present)*. No registration

required.

The *Monument Library Spinning Group* will meet from 1:30 to 3:45 on Thursday, Feb. 27. Join a group of hand spinners. No registration required.

Palmer Lake Library Events

The *Palmer Lake Book Group* meets at 9 a.m. on the first Friday of each month. For the current selection, please call 481-2587.

Family Story Time at Palmer Lake is on Wednesdays at 10:30. Toddler Time is on Fridays at 10:30.

Homeschool @ Palmer Lake from 1 to 2 on Monday, Feb. 14 will be *The Northern Lights Science and Art Experience*. This program, for ages 6 to 12, explains the northern lights, what causes this scientific phenomenon, and where

and when to see them. Participants will then create a northern lights art project using chalk pastels. Please call 481-2587 to register.

Kidsmake Art: Story Art: Hooray for Fish, on Saturday, Feb. 15 from 10:30 to 11:30 will begin with a reading of *Hooray for Fish* by Lucy Cousins. Using crayons and tempera paint to outline and decorate fish of all types, attendees will practice drawing shapes, mixing colors, and creating art inspired by the book. This program is recommended for ages 5 to 12. Registration is required at 481-2587.

Harriet Halbig may be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Protecting our forest climate when landscaping

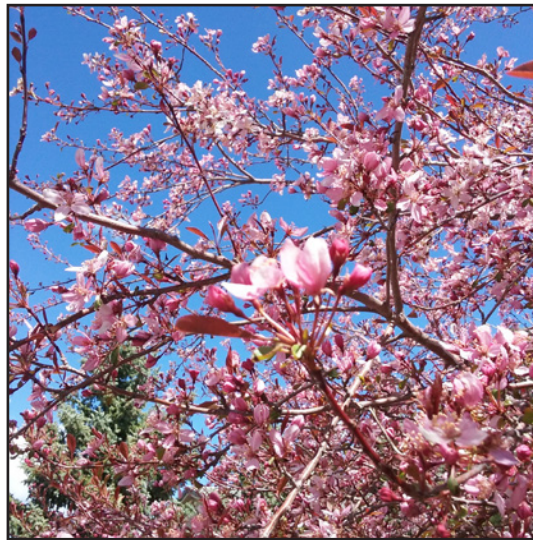
By Janet Sellers

The secret to our local garden success, I believe, is the soil. I say this a lot: Our native soil is perfect for conifers and forest ecology. We came here to enjoy the forests, after all. But many try to have their dream landscape by tearing out the forests they came here to live near.

Can we have both? Of course! To amend the soil for non-native things is done easily in one day if you know a secret that helps our local alpaca farmers and makes our gardens amazingly ready for whatever we want to put there—almost. Secret? It's alpaca manure—also known as alpaca beans—and I write about it a lot because I want people to understand how amazing this amendment is. We can mix it as fresh "green manure" or even aged "brown manure" with dry leaves from fall and voila! A perfect and fluffy amendment that can go right on the ground.

Do you have grass or other things where you want your garden bed? No problem. Almost any time of year, lay out cardboard flat or use newspapers on snow-free land, pile on your alpaca bean and leaf amendment 3-6 inches thick and top it off with pine needles from last fall to keep out unwanted sprouts. This makes very fertile soil that will grow most anything in our zone, and some that are only in close zones.

We've had success with this at Monument Community Garden and at my house. All the work is done in an hour or so, and it's immediately ready to plant seeds. You can bet critters will be on patrol, but the pine straw seems to keep most out until sprouts appear, and then it's spring and we can net the beds if



Above: Spring flowering trees are popular everywhere, likely because they explode into beautiful blossoms to refresh our souls. We can plant these even as thin saplings, and they thrive with pruning. I like to see the pink blooms framing snow-covered Pikes Peak, embraced in our clear, bluer-than-blue spring skies from my picture windows. I like to paint the scene and bring my students there to draw and paint, shaded under the branches filled with blooms. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*

needed.

Truth be told, I have so many deer running through my yard that I've planted lots of Russian sage and other plants like native wildflowers or iris, cos-

mos and poppies, none of which are native but are very colorful and deer proof. The birds love my beautiful pink dwarf crabapple tree, especially after the crab apples are edible later in the year. It's a four-season tree with blossoms, green summer leaves, golden fall colors and tiny red apples in winter. It can be pruned down small or allowed to grow large.

My beloved Nanking apricot has stayed with me for about 15 years but doesn't get to bloom in February most years, even though it gets lots of buds. We get freezes in February and March when the apricot likes to bloom. It makes it through these awful temperature spikes with leaves for the summer and it's still a very pleasant tree. It was created to live through frigid Chinese winters and be fine down to minus 30 degrees, but its blossoms freeze off, it just can't take the start-stop of our unpredictable winters as the crabapple seems to be able to do. I'm sure that the apricot as well as the crabapple were grafted (onto some kind of plum tree?) in the first place, which is common for most nursery trees.

Dangerous liaisons

February sunny days are tempting to get nursery plants, but don't put them outdoors! Our icy weather spikes last until May, and many a lovely plant has met its demise unless kept protected indoors, even saplings.

Janet Sellers is an avid ethnobotanist and lazy gardener whose only additions to our land are soil amendments found in nature, then letting nature do most of the work to grow things. Send your garden tips to JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Mr. Jung Ying Tsao: Far East Fine Arts



By Janet Sellers

Happy (lunar) New Year—it's the Year of the Mouse! The Year of the Mouse (or rat) traditionally symbolizes intelligence and strong vitality both in cuteness and shrewdness. The mouse can accomplish whatever it sets its mind on. This idea reminded me of a story from my life about kindness and wisdom.

In my college years, I loved to visit my friend Mr. Jung Ying Tsao, at his art gallery in San Francisco. He was always very kind to me and taught me tremendous life lessons while we talked about Chinese art. In fact, he gave me a summer job in 1978 at his gallery translating things about art from Chinese to English.

My job as a weekend interpreter for the city ended suddenly when they closed that division, and I desperately needed something that would cheer me up. I knew seeing Mr. Tsao and the art would do it. To me, there was no museum in the entire city of San Francisco that had such amazing, uplifting art, but Mr. Tsao's Far East Fine Arts gallery did. Art for me is like visiting dear friends who are always ready to be with you and make you happy.

Practicing my Mandarin on him (poor guy) I asked Mr. Tsao if it would be OK for me to visit the art, because I needed to, as I had just lost my job and I felt really dumbfounded. Mr. Tsao seemed deeply moved, suddenly saying in English, "But you have a job! I give you a job right now." He took me into the back gallery filled with the precious artworks. "You enjoy the paintings; I will get something ready." After

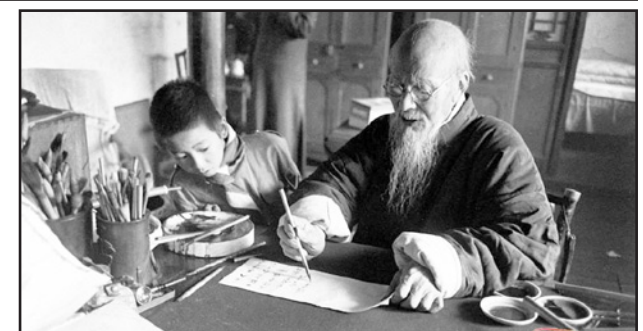
that, he guided me in translating and transliterating the names and dates and colophons, or inscriptions, of his gallery art all summer. I was in heaven in a room full of art to love and writing about it for someone who very likely was the closest to a Confucian gentleman I would ever meet in my life. At the time, I had no idea of the profound effect his good character would have on me lifelong.

Also that year, Mr. Tsao had the opportunity to go back to China and visit his family, whom he had not seen in over 30 years. "... China is opened up, I can go. I will see my family." The Open Door Policy of Deng Xiao Ping now allowed foreign investment. Mr. Tsao was elated. I was happy for him but sad for me. Soon after he left for China, I had to return home, too, to Southern California, having graduated San Francisco State University.

Afterward, I liked to write to Mr. Tsao for New Year's, and he always wrote me back a nice note on a card with a Qi Baishi painting. Mr. Tsao absolutely loved to share his passion for Chinese culture and art; it was his mission in life, I think. He was much loved by all who met him, and I have many more stories to tell you about him.

Janet Sellers is an award-winning artist, writer, teacher, and public speaker. Her biggest painting is 500 feet long in LA, and she has been writing poetry and prose internationally for publications for... decades.

Contact her at JanetSellers@OCN.me.



Above: Chinese artist Qi Baishi, born a peasant, started out as a carpenter apprentice at age 14, learning painting from the Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting. He became an influential Chinese painter, noted for his innovative, playful approach. His whimsical style was unprecedented in Chinese painting; he is credited for modernizing the gongbi style of Chinese painting in the 20th century. Painting, poetry, and calligraphy writing are considered the Three Perfections in one painting. Here, Qi shares his brush time with a small child. Cicada painting by Qi Baishi; both images are in the public domain at Creative Commons. *Caption by Janet Sellers.*

