

The San Diego

# Union-Tribune.



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## Blazes rip through Southern California

### Winds up to 75 mph fuel fires in 4 counties

By Shaya Tayefe Mohajer  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Southern Californians endured a third day of destruction yesterday as wind-blasted wildfires torched hundreds of mobile homes and mansions, forced tens of thousands of people to flee and shut down major freeways.

No deaths were reported, but the Los

Angeles police chief said he feared authorities might find bodies among the 500 burned dwellings in a devastated mobile home park that housed many senior citizens.

"We have almost total devastation here in the mobile park," Fire Capt. Steve Ruda said. "I can't even read the street names because the street signs are melting."

The series of fires has injured at least 20 people and destroyed hundreds of homes from coastal Santa Barbara to inland Riverside County. Smoke blanketed the nation's second-largest city

yesterday, reducing the afternoon sun to a pale orange disk.

As night fell, a fire fed by a sleet of blowing embers hopscotched through the winding lanes of modern subdivisions in Orange and Riverside counties, damaging or destroying more than 60 homes, some of them apparently mansions.

A blaze in the Sylmar community in the foothills in the north San Fernando Valley destroyed the mobile homes, plus nine single-family homes and sev-

SEE **Fires**, A27

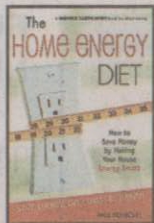


**U-T special report** | South Bay: Heyday to mayday

Summit of

## A LIGHT LOAD

Looking to save energy? Maximize the light wherever you are in your house by using light-colored lampshades and keeping the light bulbs and shades clean; dirt absorbs light, reducing its output. From "The Home Energy Diet" by Paul Scheckel.



# Home

communities • design

## Housing Scene

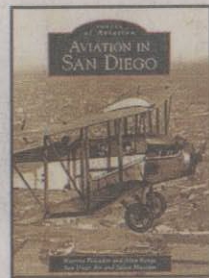
LEW SICHELMAN

When's the best time to close,

## IN HOMESCAPE:

### ATTENTION-GETTERS IN THE GARDEN

Coral bells are undemanding plants with eye-catching foliage that stays on the plant year-round. **H5**



## SAN DIEGO'S AVIATION HERITAGE

Considered by some to be the birthplace of aviation, San Diego and its role in airplane design and development will be explored at the Third Thursday lecture series, sponsored by the Save Our Heritage Organisation 6 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Old Adobe Chapel, 3950 Conde St. in Old Town San Diego. Information: (619) 297-9327 and sohosandiego.org.

## Smokestacks & Geraniums

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Southern Comfort



Alabama Sunr



Paris

# Ring master

20 years ago, coral bells  
caught his fancy; now he's  
the Heuchera honcho





Tapestry



Purple Petticoat



By Karen Dardick

The love affair began with a leaf. Dan Heims didn't know that it would change his life — and the gardens of countless plant lovers. Heims, a self-styled "hortiholic," owned an indoor plant business and was a connoisseur of tropical and foliage plants when he spotted the gaudy, garish leaves of coral bells (*Heuchera*) in a friend's home several decades ago.

"It just captured my heart," he recalled during a phone interview. "I was captivated by the silver finish and the red veins. I mean smitten. Evergreen and stunning in all four seasons."

The plant was *H. Americana* "Eco-magnifolia," one of the many species of *Heuchera* native to the Western Hemisphere from Mexico to Alaska. Some thrive in woodland shade, others in dry, mountain conditions where plants cling to crevices. Heims was intrigued by hues and texture of the foliage. He studied the 60 or so species of this perennial plant and began developing his own creations.

To market them, he, along with partner James Waddick, formed Terra Nova Nurseries, a wholesale breeder and grower of perennial plants in Portland, Ore. From a modest start in 1988 with "one *Heuchera* and a dream," the company has exploded and is responsible for the introduction of more than 550 new plant varieties. Those include close to 100 *Heucheras* and *Heucherellas* (close relatives resulting from crossing coral bells with foam flowers (*Tiarella*)). These introductions are so popular that they've propelled coral bells onto the perennial popularity chart. Heims prizes coral bells because they are undemanding plants with fantastically colored foliage that stays on the plant year-round, with the bonus of flower wands of delicate flower clusters. They're not brassy, sassy scene stealers like cannas, bananas or elephant ears. Rather, they are demure ground huggers that demand attention because of eye-catching foliage. Grow them in mass displays or in combination with other plants.

Fancy foliage in hues of purple, silver, peach or green can be used to great advantage in creative combinations. Bronze foliage is stunning with deep green plants like ferns. Purples are magical with silver or black. When the tiny bell-like flower spikes appear, they are magnets for butterflies and hummingbirds, adding their vibrant colors to the landscape.

SEE Bells, H7



Obsidian



Peach Flambe



Hollywood

## ▶ BELLS

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# Colorful plants are undemanding and popular

Coral bells aren't fussy about their location, although in general, darker purple foliage can take more sun, while metallic lime or orange grow better in deep shade. In hot, inland sections of San Diego County, morning sun and protection from afternoon sun is recommended. Shallow rooted and not invasive, they work well beneath trees and shrubs, sites that can be difficult to fill.

Heims' breeding has resulted in a new group made from crossing a close relative, foam flower (*Tiarella*), noted for heart-shaped leaves and delicate flower wands, with coral bells. He's named his new category foamy bells (*Heucherella*). Their virtues are prolonged blooming in addition to the fascinating foliage inherited from their close cousins.

The compact growth habits of coral bells and

foamy bells make them ideal for containers. Here's where creativity can bloom, too, by combining purple-hued varieties like Plum Royale with silver plants like artemisia or chartreuse-colored begonias.

Coral bells have many uses. Flower spikes can be cut for arrangements. So can foliage. A current craze in Europe is using fancy foliage for flower arrangements. According to Heims, foliage will continue to live in water, even growing roots (although not enough to create a new plant). This means foliage arrangements will last a long time.

Heims, with writer Grahame Ware, has written the definitive book detailing the lineage, descriptions and uses of coral bells and foamy bells: "Heucheras and Heucherellas" (Timber Press, 2005, \$27.95). You can also find more details about specific varieties and their uses at terranovanurseries.com. To purchase plants, mainly sold through Proven Winners, check out local nurseries and gardens centers in San Diego County.

**Karen Dardick** is a freelance garden writer.



**While coral bells are undemanding perennials, in hot inland San Diego regions, afternoon sun protection is recommended.**

## CARE AND CULTIVATION

Give coral bells well-draining soil, a location suited to their specific requirements, moderate water and only a small dose of fertilizer, and they will thrive. When planting, don't place plant too deeply into the ground. "Be sure that the plant is at the same level or slightly higher than it was in the container," Heims said. "Be sure to let plants dry out between watering. More plants die from too much rather than too little water."

Coral bells don't need a lot of fertilizing. Whether in landscapes or containers, Heims recommends a slow-release granular fertilizer applied in spring. Insects rarely are a problem. Roots can rot if drainage isn't adequate.

Similar to other types of perennials, coral bells need to be lifted and refreshed every three to four years. Simply dig up the clump, divide (every stem will root), share with friends or spread throughout your own garden.

— KAREN DARDICK

## CORAL BELLS AND FOAMY BELLS FOR SAN DIEGO

*Heuchera* expert Dan Heims recommends the following varieties for San Diego:

### CORAL BELLS (*HEUCHERA*)

**Crème Brûlée:** This large-leafed plant has coppery foliage that fades slightly to cream with darker amber edge. Sun to part shade.

**Hollywood:** Heims regards this as one of his top five performers. Strong reblooming spikes of dark coral flowers are produced over white-veiled, lightly ruffled metallic leaves. A heavy bloomer all spring and summer. This is a large *Heuchera* with 19-inch flower stalks. Part shade to full shade.

**Obsidian:** Deeply purple – almost black – mounding plant with smooth, rounded leaves. Chartreuse-white flowers are produced on 24-inch spikes. Sun to part shade.

**Paris:** Also a top-five favorite of Heims because it blooms heavily spring, summer and fall. Medium leaves have white veins. Flowers are dramatic deep rose. Sun to part shade.

**Peach Flambé:** Leaves are bright peach color in spring and fall; soft peach in summer; plum in winter. White flower spikes appear in spring. Performs best in part shade to shade.

**Plum Royale:** New for 2009. Shiny purple leaves retain their color all year. Pinkish-white flowers appear in spring and summer. Sun to part shade.

**Purple Petticoats:** Prized for frilly, dark

purple foliage with unique texture. Flowers are insignificant. Sun to part shade.

**Rave On:** This beauty bears small silver leaves with numerous wands of pink flowers that appear in profusion spring and summer. Grows as a tight ground cover. Full sun to part shade.

**Southern Comfort:** Large cinnamon peach leaves make bold landscape statements. Creamy white flowers appear in late summer. As the year progresses, foliage changes to burnished copper, and then amber. Prefers shade to part shade.

### FOAMY BELLS (*HEUCHERELLA*)

**Alabama Sunrise:** Foliage color changes with the seasons. Spring to mid-summer, leaves are gold with red veins. In late summer, gold changes to green with red veins. In fall, the older foliage turns orange pink. White flowers appear in spring. Shade to part shade.

**Burnished Bronze:** This *Heucherella* has large cut leaves and a glossy, burnished bronze finish. Small soft pink flower stems appear in spring and can repeat again during the season. Sun to part shade.

**Tapestry:** Multicolored foliage and warm pink flowers add drama to landscapes or containers. The dark-centered leaves are blue green in spring and summer, then change to green with dark centers in fall and winter. Flower stems appear in spring. Shade to part shade.

— KAREN DARDICK