


Culture Maven: The Late Show Gardens, at Cornerstone Sonoma, leading gardeners and artists tackle climate change and sustainability, September 18-20, 2009

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By [Geneva Anderson](#)



This weekend I'll be attending a new type of garden show at [Cornerstone Sonoma](#) which says it's putting issues of climate change, drought, sustainable practices, and renewable resources at the forefront. I hope so. Just as "green" is a golden catch-phrase, many garden shows also now use terms like "climate change" and "global warming" to attract those of us who are concerned about the environment and our planet's future but then pack their booths with wares that don't match their message. "[The Late Show Gardens](#)" promises to be something different, something serious, and I'm excited. The show is the brainchild of Marin residents Robin Parer of [Geraniaceae Nursery](#) and Pam Scott, former head of the [Marin County Master Gardeners](#) and is thoughtfully planned in early fall, a key planting time for our Mediterranean climate. More than 15 innovative and socially responsible garden designs by local and internationally renowned designers will be featured as well as a panel of internationally prominent speakers, a few of whom are experts on climate change.

Among the noted speakers on the three-day program are environmental artist/designer [Topher Delaney](#), ornamental grass wizard [John Greenlee](#) and the editor of [Pacific Horticulture](#) magazine, [Richard Turner](#). Appropriately, the show will open on Friday morning with [Patricia Glick's](#) lecture "The Gardener's Guide to Global Warming: Challenges and Solutions" which will focus on climate change in Northern, CA. Glick is the [National Wildlife Federation's](#) Senior Global Warming Specialist and has worked on the issue of climate change for nearly 20 years. Later on Friday, San Francisco-based journalist [Mark Hertsgaard](#), who has covered climate change globally for the past 20 years, and has a reputation as a solid watchdog for global warming policy, will give a talk "Gardening Under Global Warming," exploring how global warming will alter weather and growing patterns world wide over the coming years. Hertsgaard's most recent piece "[Shades of Green](#)" for *The Nation* explored the [Waxman-Markey climate change bill](#).

"The Late Show" also promises to entertain us with thought-provoking garden displays that will prod us to consider gardens designed around the use of art, creative landscaping and sound installation—which do not require the use of water. [Peter Munder Good](#), [Liz Einwiller](#), [Adam Greenspan](#) and [Sarah Kuehl](#) have collaborated to create "Grow Melt," billed as a global warming demo—a wall of ice that is 6 feet high, 20 feet long and 10 inches thick that will thaw as "The Late Show" progresses. We can watch the effects of ice-melting on various plants in the environment they've created.

[Beth Mullins](#) of Growsgreen Landscape Design will exhibit her award winning garden from the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show. Mullins created "Over Growth" for "The Late Show Gardens" which thematically addresses the need to upset established order and systems before it is too late. [Stephen Glassman](#), known for his innovative use of bamboo, has created a sculptural installation for the show.

[Monica Viarengo](#) calls her garden path, "Black Soil," a spiritual and moral call that is a reflection on climate. Black is the color of fossil fuels but it is also the symbol of nobility, ambiguity and secrecy. Black is actually "achromatic," being the sum of all colors.

[Shirley Alexandra Watt's](#) "Garden of Mouthings" is a response to declining bee populations, celebrating honey bees as well as the 4000 bee species native to the US, of which 1600 species are found in CA. Watts collaborated with bee expert [Jaime Pawelek](#), CCAC faculty and architect [Andrew Kudless](#) and builder Ross Craig to put together an environment that combines a honeycomb structure, a sound installation based on a Sylvia Plath poem, and bee-friendly plants.

[Hugh Livingston](#) is a Mill Valley composer, noted cellist, and garden "soundscape" designer: he activates environments with innovative approaches to sound, softening traffic and background noise and accentuating the natural environment with custom soundscape compositions delivered through sculptural sound generators. He has teamed with sculptor [Phillip Livingston](#) to create "Garden Party." Life-size human figures will imitate the experience of a garden gala, with a flow of conversation and music. Visitors will be encouraged to join the party and will be handed parasols which will enhance the soundscape. And, at this party, the tomatoes will talk!

It all sounds wonderful and timely, especially the important emphasis on offering real solutions to the issues that threaten our environment. The press release for the event promises a setting where "world-class minds will come together in one place and present resource-saving ideas helping to improve our impact on the earth."

"The Late Show Gardens" is a registered 501 (c) 3 non-profit and the proceeds of the event will be used to support the [Trust for Public Land](#) and [The Garden Conservancy](#). Visitors will also be able to purchase plants and unique items reflecting the show's theme.