

Mount Diablo Nursery & Garden

Half a Century of Tradition Revived with New Energy

By Sophie Braccini



Mt. Diablo Nursery & Garden, 3295 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette

Prologue: Harry Ide was born in Alamo, California in 1910. Early in 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the relocation of Americans of Japanese origin to internment camps. Ide and his wife were among them. Prior to his departure, Ide was stripped of his American citizenship and forced to sell his belongings. After the war, in 1945, the Ide's returned to Contra Costa County. It was here that he started his new venture in early August of 1950, Harry's Nursery. When Ide retired in 1982, he leased the business to Jiro Mishimoto and his brother, who successfully ran it for 30 years. The footprint of the nursery stayed the same during these years, a long narrow strip of land that runs parallel to the Lafayette Park Hotel. The bamboo on the East side of the nursery is the same and the building in the back served as the Ide's home during the early days of the business.

In the early 70's, a young man by the name of Garth Jacober worked part time at Harry's Nursery to help pay for school. Jacober had been raised locally and always enjoyed plants and nature. He loved Harry and his nursery and only in his wildest dreams could he picture himself owning such a place.

That's exactly what happened last March when Jacober and his wife, Marcia, bought the lease on Harry's Nursery from the Ide family.

Between 1972 and today, Jacober accumulated 30 years of experience in plants, landscaping and gardening. He took care of a very large property in Lafayette that was home to some 300 different types of camellias. He still owns many of the rarest plants. He worked with Magic Gardens in Berkeley and specialized in plant care, propagation, and winter pruning, held diverse positions with East Bay Parks and worked in Tilden's Botanical Garden. He's had a long standing sub-contracting agreement with Lazar Landscape in Berkeley. He has a passion for everything that grows in the ground and how to get it to prosper.

Marcia Jacober is the vegetable and rose expert of the family. A teacher and therapist by training, she worked at the Alcohol Youth Treatment Center in Concord. Marcia took a break from her profession to start the nursery with her husband, and is returning to her family practice on a limited basis.

When the Jacobers took over Harry's, they both wanted to infuse their own energy and personality into the business. The two have been renovating the Nursery with this in mind. Garth is constantly bringing in new plants and he selects the best quality from local California growers. Marcia is pleased to report that customers are discovering in their vibrant nursery plants they had never seen anywhere else before. In addition to their new plants, the couple is renovating the back building and patio where they plan to offer classes, hold garden meetings and organize art shows. Their interest in art is also highlighted

by the beautiful California mural that Mary Frank, a talented young local artist, is painting on the West wall of the property.

"Watering once or twice daily, attending to customers, receiving and arranging plants, managing a business, this is very hard work!" says Garth with a big smile, "and this is my passion."



Garth and Marcia Jacober

Photo by Sophie Braccini

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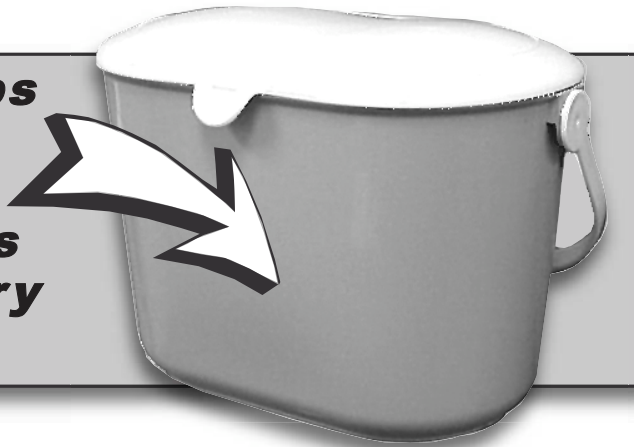
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