



coastal Mexico's lifestyle magazine

Ballet Folklórico - Universidad de Colima
photo by Allan Yanitski



- Good Deeds
- History and Mythology
- Nature's Wonders
- At the Movies
- Finance
- Culture
- RV Travel
- Recipe
- Learn Spanish
- Path to Citizenship

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To send submissions for possible inclusion in the magazine, please send to the editor by 15th of each month. We are always looking for writers or ideas on what you would like us to see as topics for the magazine.

Article submissions:

- Preferred subjects are Manzanillo and Mexico
- All articles should be 1000 words or less or may be serialized or 500-750 words if accompanied by photos
- Pictures are welcome
- Comments, letters to the editor, articles, photos and advertisements are always welcome

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A Truly Special Gift. Thank you, Margarita!

by Suzanne A. Marshall with photos by Allan Yanitski (unless otherwise noted)



The children are having a lot of fun!

This is our fourth year volunteering for the children's Christmas party in the barrio of Santiago. It's a special event held outside in the school grounds where a whole host of expats, neighbourhood volunteers, and older boys and girls, help us out each year.

It's a lot of hard work for the day, but so meaningful and satisfying to see all of these children, in their finest apparel, having a great time. They are extremely polite and shy, very handsome and beautiful, with their big eyes looking into all these foreign faces who are trying to speak Spanish and make them happy.

Thanks to the year-long hard work of Jimmy and Barbara Brown, Dennis and Linda Breun and Paulina Van Grimbergen (the Committee), this event has been taking place for over a dozen years. This year, we estimated that over 750 children attended, from toddlers to young teens.

The party jumps with raucous laughter and the antics of clowns and a well-organized area for kids to sit and enjoy the fun. Santa also attends and each child receives a very good-quality gift and stockings with candies to take home and enjoy. They can also have their faces painted, and many do!



The clowns are hilarious.

...A Truly Special Gift. Thank you, Margarita!

This year's gifts included 'shoes that grow', for children who are shoeless or outgrowing them quickly, as well as tables of children's clothing and items donated by many.

The volunteers have set up tables around the covered basketball court and there we cut up hundreds of pieces of pizza, pass out donuts and serve juice to each and every child. The moms and dads wait outside the fences and enjoy the show from a distance.



The tiny ones are served first and are seated in the shade.

As I stand there helping serve small plates of pizza to the long line of niños and the helpers, I can't believe how orderly and polite these children are. I wish them Feliz Navidad, and even sing a little to make them laugh, then let them select whichever plate they want.

As I am doing this, a young girl pulls out a wrapped candy for me and then passes me a neatly folded letter. Her name is Margarita. She wears a lovely red dress and is perhaps nine or ten years of age. Then she carries on down the line and I step back to read the letter.

It's a great understatement to say that I was deeply touched by this note. In fact I found myself teary-eyed and holding back the flow. I was so moved by this letter. There are no greater gifts than these in life and I am grateful to have been the person she decided to pass this on to.

The note read:

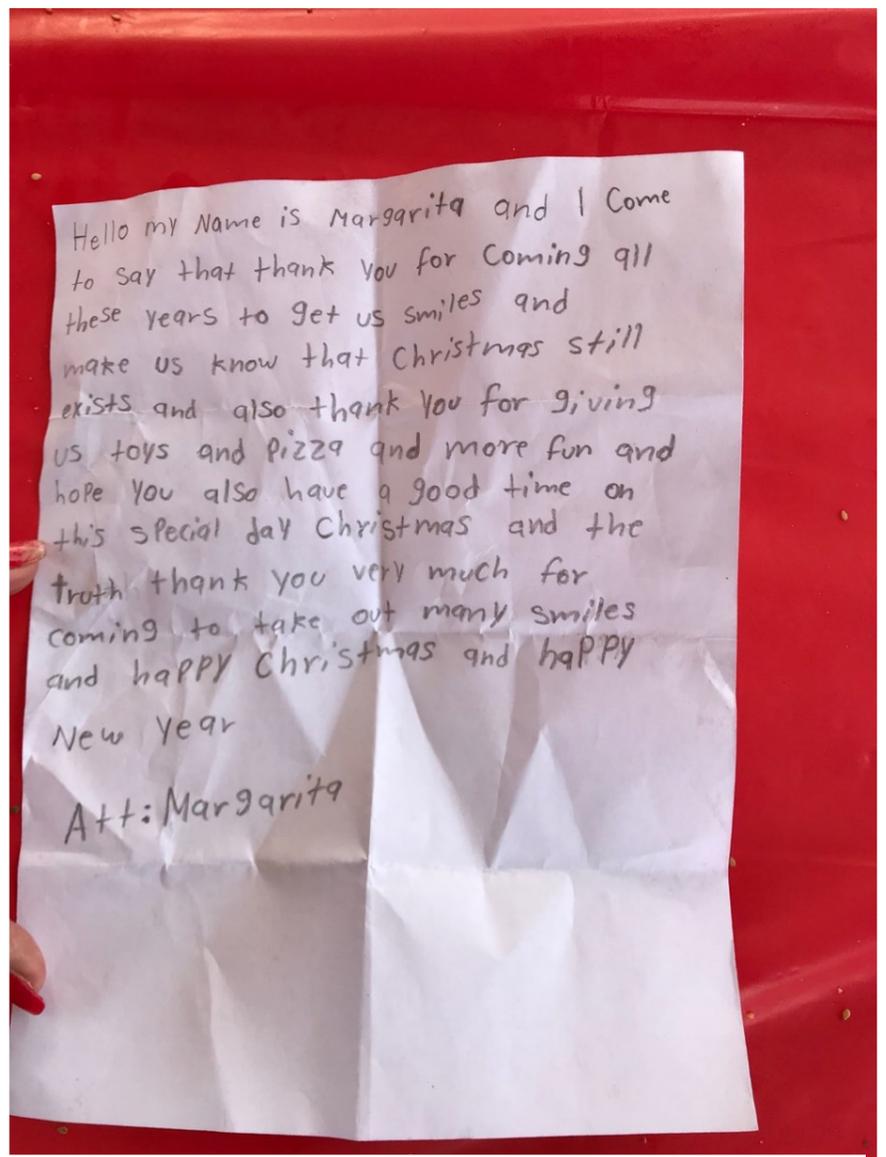


Photo credit: Laurie Henderson

This letter has so much meaning for us all about sharing and caring enough to be part of this event. Of course, I passed the letter immediately to the group who work all year to make this fiesta take place. I know that they were deeply touched as well. I think sometimes the task is daunting, and some wonder if they'll do it again next year. But this lovely young girl, who made such an effort to communicate with us in English no less, makes it all worthwhile, I think, and makes all the efforts so much more meaningful and special.

Thank you, Margarita, for sharing your feelings with us and for making this wonderful time of year even more meaningful. And thank you, committees and volunteers, for letting me be part of this truly joyful time.

Stay tuned for news and updates on how to participate in next year's events. The Committee will be letting us all know what they need in preparation for the festivities, throughout the year and closer to the day of the event.

... more pics follow

...A Truly Special Gift. Thank you, Margarita!



Margarita passes me her note.
Photo credit: Laurie Henderson.



The children enjoy the clowns and games.



Santa loves donuts, too!



Who wouldn't love this little kitten?



Juice, ready for serving

...A Truly Special Gift. Thank you, Margarita!



The faces of happiness (left and right).



This little boy wants a dinosaur.



Donuts for everyone!

...A Truly Special Gift. Thank you, Margarita!



Volunteers cutting and plating pizza.



Tables of apparel for the children.



Racks of yummy donuts, bagged by volunteers and ready to go.

you can reach Suzanne A. Marshall at suzanne@manzanillosun.com

The "FUN" Fundraiser is Thursday, February 21st!
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Seven Macaw

by Kirby Vickery

A Mayan Myth

This story is found in the middle of the Popol Vuh but is considered to be a Mayan myth all to itself. In the story of the creation of the earth and the sky, after the stick people were all destroyed and just before the people of corn were made, our hero twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, were tasked to enter into the underworld to avenge their father and uncle's death. It was there that they met a macaw named Itzam-Yeh (its-am-YEH), translated as Seven Macaw.

He was bright, loud, boisterous, and yes, very colorful, which is typical of the real macaws we know. He claimed to be their new god of the sun and everything else for that matter. A convoluted story, but interesting enough.

THE HERO TWINS AND 7 MACAW

Although the twins' purpose in entering the underworld was to avenge their father's death, they had decided that it was part of their destiny to destroy this loud bird named Seven Macaw and his two troublesome sons.

They had their own issues, but Seven Macaw kept boasting that he was the new Sun God and was just a little too flamboyant about himself for the twins to take seriously. The twins decided to shoot Seven Macaw.

They found the perfect time and place when Seven Macaw was eating lunch in a nance tree. Hunahpu used a blowgun to shoot Seven Macaw with a heavy dart. After sneaking up on the bird and taking careful aim, Hanahpu's dart tore into the bird's mouth, breaking his jaw and injuring his precious eyes.

All the jewels in his mouth and eyes were severely broken and the shot made Seven Macaw fall from the nance tree. However, Seven Macaw was still dangerous. When Hunahpu came over to him as he lay on the ground, Seven Macaw bit off the twin's arm and ran away with it. Seven Macaw hung the arm over a fire when he got home.

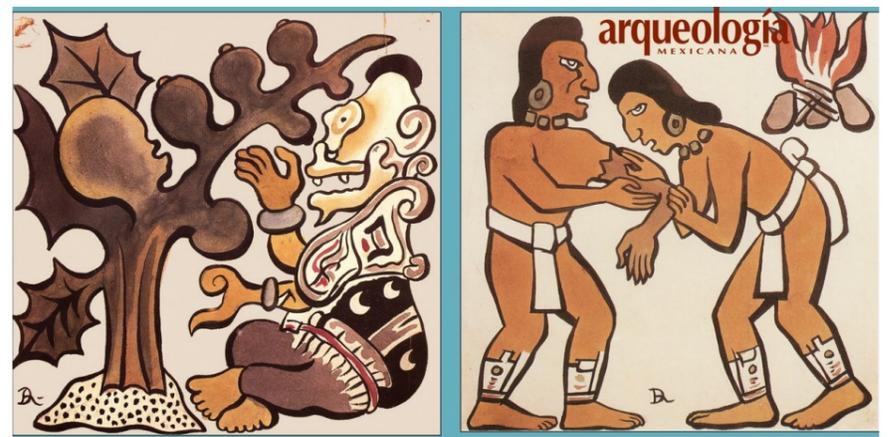
Hunahpu and his brother tried hard to think of a way to get the arm back. Finally, they met with an old and wrinkled man and woman who helped them devise a plan to get the arm back. The old couple agreed to pretend they were the twins' grandparents and off they went to find Seven Macaw.

When they got to his house, the old man explained to the bird that the twins were their grandsons. The old man also said that he was an expert in fixing broken jaws and curing damaged eyes. Then, as the twins had hoped, Seven Macaw invited the grandfather to help him restore his damaged jeweled features.

The old man gently pulled the gemstones out of Seven Macaw's mouth and eyes and replaced them with kernels of white corn.

When the old man was finished, Seven Macaw could no longer claim he looked like a sun god. Now, he just looked like an average bird. He had been robbed of his source of conceit and vanity and felt he no longer had any reason to live. So he keeled over and died. As soon as that happened, Hunahpu retrieved his arm from above the fireplace and placed it back on his body.

Now, Seven Macaw was survived by his own two sons. They were more like demons than sons, though. One was named Zipacna (zip-ak-NAH), or Alligator. The other was Cabracan (Two-His-Leg), and also called Earthquake. Like his father, Alligator also made boastful claims. He strutted about claiming that he was the maker of the mountains.



Seven Macaw (left) The Hero Twins: Hunahpu and Xbalanque (right)

One day, Alligator, while resting by the water's edge, saw a group of four hundred sons carrying a tree to use as a post for a house they were building. Alligator asked the boys if he could help them. In spite of their fear of such a large person-god, they agreed to let him haul a tree to the front of their house and were really impressed by Alligator's strength, but they also felt threatened by it and were sure Alligator would use his strength to hurt them. Alligator must be killed, they thought.

They sat down and came up with a plan that would end up killing Alligator. First, they would ask him to do them a big favor and dig a deep hole in the earth. When it was done, they would ask Alligator to drop down into it to show how deep it really was. Then the boys would throw a large wooden beam into the hole. They figured that when the beam landed on Alligator, it would kill him and end their problem. But, Alligator knew the boys wanted to kill him.

So, while he was digging the hole, he also dug an escape tunnel to one side of the hole. Alligator slipped to the bottom of the hole and called out to the boys. He crawled into his side

...Seven Macaw

cave as he announced its completion. The boys then dropped the beam in the hole, unaware that Alligator sat safely to one side.

Convinced that Alligator was dead, the four hundred sons held a celebration. They partied so hard and drank so much that they became intoxicated. They got so drunk that they never noticed when Alligator crawled out of his safety from the tunnel. The world will never know if Alligator had any ill intent when he offered to help.



The Popol Vuh codex

When that beam hit the bottom of the hole he had dug, his anger preceded him as he hauled himself out of it. Alligator picked up the boys' house and toppled it on their heads. All of the four hundred boys died under the weight of their home, and they became the stars in the sky, never to touch land again.

Our Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, were saddened by the death of the four hundred sons. So they planned to kill Alligator, just as they had killed his father, Seven Macaw. Their plan was to catch Alligator by offering him his favorite of foods, a crab dinner. They put together a wonderful artificial crab made from prairie grass, stone and bamboo. Then they placed it in a canyon draw at the base of a mountain called Meavan (mee-VAN). [It doesn't exist gang. I've looked everywhere for it. - Kirby]

The twins found Alligator in the water and asked him if he would like a deliciously large and tender crab dinner. Alligator told them that he hadn't eaten anything for two days as the fishing and hunting was really bad and he would gladly accept their invitation. Alligator slathered at the thought of such a treat and begged the twins to take him to it.

So off to Mt. Meavan they went, with Alligator growing more excited with each step. Just as they were approaching the

mixed crab meat, the big mountain collapsed on Alligator's chest. He couldn't move and turned to stone.

Seven Macaw's other son, Cabrakan, was no less boastful or honest than his father and brother. Cabrakan proclaimed that he destroyed mountains. One day, our Hero brothers confronted Cabrakan and told him that they had just discovered the highest mountain they had ever seen. They challenged Cabrakan to knock down this mammoth mountain. With his usual vanity, Cabrakan assured the twins that he could. To prove his boast, he asked the twins to take him to this mountain.

On their way to the mountain, the Hero Twins became hungry. As was their custom, they pulled out their blowguns and killed some birds, which they roasted for dinner. This was part of the plot to kill Cabrakan. They prepared one bird by cooking it together with a heavy chunk of the earth. They offered Cabrakan a slice of the earth-laden bird, and he ate it with the piece of earth enthusiastically. When they finished their feast, they walked toward the enormous mountain.



Cabrakan being buried by our Hero Twins

But the weight of the meal he had just eaten made Cabrakan feel very weak. After a while, he could hardly stand on his legs. In that condition, he couldn't make a mountain crash to the ground. The Hero Twins tied Cabrakan up, knocked him down, and killed him. Cabrakan, otherwise known as Earthquake, has been permanently buried in the ground ever since. And now, whenever he moves in his grave - he shakes the world.

you can reach Kirby at kirby.vickery@manzanillosun.com

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by Tommy Clarkson

Cockscomb *Celosia cristata*

Family *Amaranthaceae*

Also known as *Wool Flower, Brain Celosia, Red Fox or Velvet Flower*

(Yesterday, while stepping away from my regular morning workout - as a result of over-actively pushing my aging body and cracking a rib - I was walking through an area in which I'd not trod before, when I heard a soft, plaintive cry, "Oh, kind sir, please rescue me from this weedy existence and allow me to realize my full and beautiful potential." [Fluently speaking and understanding several dialects of the array of plant languages I, of course, immediately, recognized its accent to be that of the Amaranthaceae family.] Thus is the manner, course and cause of how this beauty came to be a part of the Ola Brisa Gardens family. That's my story and I'm sticking to it!)

In actuality, *Celosia cristata* happily grows throughout Mexico, northern South America, the West Indies and tropical Africa, as well as Southeast Asia. While, in cooler climates, Cockscombs are considered tender perennials and grown as annuals, here they can become perennials producing dense undulating inflorescences. In that these resemble the red combs on the heads of roosters, "Well duh - hence comes their common name.

While our new resident is a stunning red, its kin range from orange, yellow and gold to purple, pink and white. (Though, I must admit to not having seen all of these colors personally.) Beyond the instant gratification of their attractiveness in the here and now as they boisterously bloom in your garden, or cut and are appreciated in a vase for five days to two weeks, these large flowers can also be dried, used in floral arrangements and enjoyed for a more protracted period.



It called to me "Please rescue me from this weedy existence and allow me to realize my full and beautiful potential."

As to the family *Amaranthaceae* - all of which answer to the name of Cockscomb - there are around sixty different species. Three forms of the *Celosia* species were first introduced into England, from Asia, in 1570. In 1767, Thomas Jefferson recorded that he'd grown Cockscomb at Shadwell, his boyhood home. In fact, it was a popular garden plant in America commencing in the early half of the 1700s.

And, with a keen eye to etymology, *Celosia* comes from the Greek word *kelos* which means "burned." I'd assume that this alludes to the appearance of the brightly colored flowers for which some of this species are renowned. *Celosia cristata* are believed to have developed from *Celosia argentea*, which - while thought to be native to India - is common in the wilds of China.

...Cockscomb



Now, about those intriguing leaves . . .

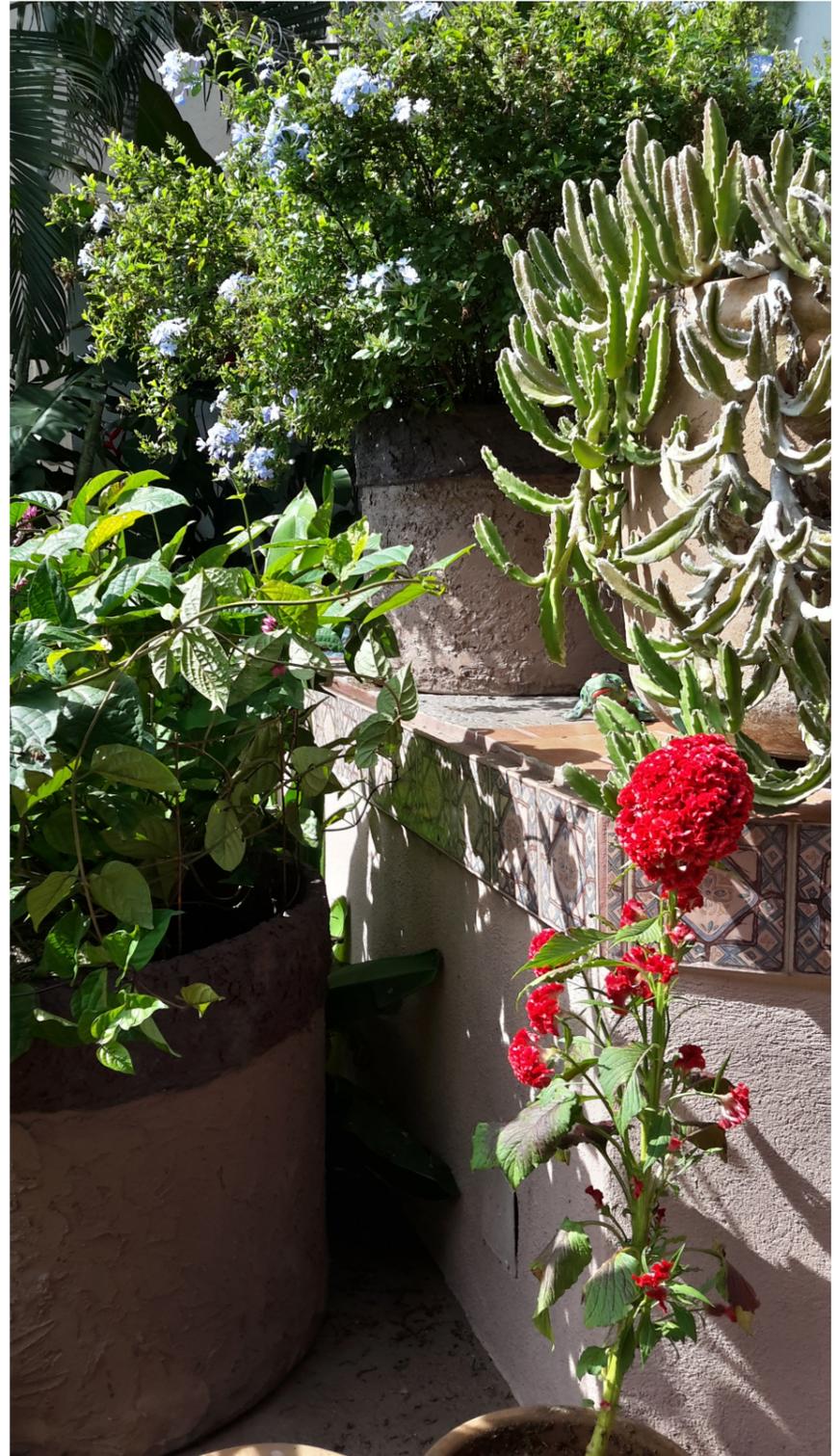
That's a rather nice bridge to now discuss the physical make-up of the flowers of the Cockscomb! Their rather oval leaves are arranged alternately along the stem and are, generally, borne on a reddish petiole (which we often call, simply, its leaf-stalk). Depending on the variety, they can grow to 9-32 inches (22.86-81.28 cm) in height. That stunning Cockscomb "flower" is actually comprised of colorful, densely arranged bracts which will, ultimately, produce copious amounts of seeds.

Obviously a full sun lover, they also like moist (but definitely not sustained wetness), well-draining soil. Around here, during the "dry times" one should water them regularly and give 'em a snack of general purpose fertilizer once or twice a month. To give them a little nudge during the hot weather, I'd suggest that you spray their foliage with a diluted liquid fertilizer solution.

They also are most appreciative of being mulched. They have no serious insect or disease problems, but are susceptible to root rot (Remember that earlier "well-draining soil" counsel?) and, possibly, fungal leaf spot diseases. Then there's this one last tidbit in Cockscomb growing: pinching back the first bloom of its flowers can promote branching and, hence, a more abundant display of flowers on your cockscomb plant(s).

More than a pretty face, young plants can be used as a garnish on salads or placed atop a steak. As a great source of protein, vitamins A and C, iron, calcium and phosphorus, its flavor is somewhat like spinach, with a basil-like texture. (*One wonders - perhaps added to scrambled eggs?*)

It is a commonly grown vegetable throughout Africa where its leaves, tender stems and young flowers are combined with other vegetables for soups and stews, as well as boiled or steamed as side dishes to meat and poultry. In fact, I've seen it touted



It's now happily sited here with a diverse array of other tropical botanical fellows!

at "the world's most beautiful vegetable" and, in point of fact, it's one of the leading leafy green vegetables in Nigeria, where it is known as *soko yokoto*. This means, "make husbands fat and happy."

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 ...Patty Murphy



by Tommy Clarkson

Parsley, *Petroselinum crispum*

Family: *Apiaceae* or *Umbelliferae*

Also known as: *Garden Parsley*

(Why have I not written about Parsley before? Just didn't think of it as a priority, I guess! But it'll grow here in the semi-tropics. I know, as I just found some I'd planted and forgotten about that is doing quite well, thank you!)

Actually, one of the real reasons I haven't taken fingers to keyboard in its regard is that it is a biennial plant and, generally speaking, I only write about tropical perennials. But I remember my mother growing this and putting it on the top of fresh buttered, split open, baked potatoes. *(And between my genetic Irish half and German half, suffice it to say, I really like baked potatoes!)*

From one of my earliest acquired plant books, many years ago—*A Handbook of Herbs*, by Richard Marshall and Charles J. Ziga—comes this: "In the old days, when heroes still rode chariots, parsley was more elevated in use and reputation than it is today. Greek warriors fed the leaves to their horses and crowns of parsley . . . were given to the victors at the Isthmian and Nemean games. Since the plant was held sacred to the deceased—they associated it with Achromous, the Herald of Death - it was used to decorate tombs. As a result, it had no place in the cuisine of ancient Greece. But, by the middle ages, Parsley was widely grown in Northern Europe for both culinary and medicinal purposes."



After the first year of looking like this, it will go to seed the next.

This interesting herb, with its intriguing past, has several medicinal applications. Beyond its rather strong diuretic capabilities, its properties include that of being aperient, carminative and acting as a tonic. In addition, it has soothing qualities when added to bath water! Culinarily, beyond often being used as a garnish, it can be employed to flavor butter, meat, poultry, salads, soups, stocks and vinegars. Having the capacity to mask odors, it can be used to cover up odors such as garlic and I have read that it has been used as a deodorant. (And if you want to get your head really spinning, delve into any of the many scholarly articles online regarding an array of research activities focused on good old *Petroselinum crispum*!)

The preceding all duly noted - getting back to what we know and perceive - Parsley is one of the most important culinary herbs in European cuisines. In fact, there are three varieties: curly-leaf parsley, Italian or flat-leaf parsley, and root parsley. The latter is grown for its tuberous, edible root with numerous cultivars for each variety.

Parsley has a very high content of vitamins A and C and iron, in addition to being rich in chlorophyll. (Relative to all of this, here's another Nifty Nugget of Knowledge: Parsley is one of the main components of tabbouleh which is often regarded as the national dish of Lebanon. For those who may have forgotten, it is a delicious salad comprised of bulgar wheat, chopped vegetables - like cucumbers and tomatoes - and large amounts of chopped, fresh parsley and mint leaves. (That all said, some say it can cause allergic skin reactions or anemia or liver/kidney problems.)

...Parsley



It looks more than a little bit like - the very popular around here – Cilantro.

It is easily grown from seed, preferring to flourish in rich, moist soil, in partial shade to full sun. Parsley can also be grown in a pot indoors. Just remember to give it bright light, water well, and fertilize regularly.

Not only humans like to eat it, so do a few insect pests – but, generally speaking, few are serious in the home garden. Aphids would be the most common but, generally, are controlled by naturally occurring predators or parasites. If not, merely hose off your plants regularly.

Beyond those gastronomical applications, the Master Gardener folks at the University of Wisconsin Extension Service advise us that, "Parsley doesn't have to be restricted to the vegetable garden. Types with frilly leaves are especially nice foils to broad-leaved plants – either of other vegetables or mixed with flowering plants." (They further encourage that) "we consider mixing curly leaf parsley in an ornamental planting of purple-leaved basil, colorful Swiss chard (with) short marigolds or other annual flowers. Or, edge a bed of flowers with the low, fine-leaved parsley plants. Even in the second year when the plants go to seed, the flower stalks can add architectural interest to the garden."



Where's my baked potato?

And here's an additional plus for planting your Parsley in one of these manners - It is a happy host plant for Black Swallowtail Butterflies (*Papilio polyxenes*).

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Robin Hood

by Suzanne A. Marshall

Directed by: Otto Bathurst
Starring: Taron Everton, Jamie Foxx, Eve Henson, Jamie Doran, Ben Mendelsohn

"Robin of Loxley, a war-hardened Crusader, and his Moorish commander, mount an audacious revolt against the corrupt English crown, in a thrilling, action-adventure, packed with gritty battlefield exploits, mind-blowing fight choreography, and timeless romance."

I'd have to say this is the worst version of Robin Hood I've ever seen and that's a few since childhood. The special effects are over the top; confusing the entire plot and putting one into a stupor trying to figure out what the heck is going on. Basically, it tries too hard and does not succeed.

It's downright silly. Yes, the special effects are there but also make the movie totally unbelievable. This may account for the not-so-great box office earnings.

The IMDB rating of 5.2/10 is generous.



Life Itself

by Suzanne A. Marshall

Directed by: Dan Fogelman
Starring: Oscar Isaac, Olivia Wilde, Annette Bennington, Mandy Patinkin, Jean Smart, Olivia Cooke, Sergio Peris-Mencheta, Antonio Banderas, Laia Costa, Alex Monner



"As a young, New York City couple goes from college romance to marriage and the birth of their first child, the unexpected twists of their journey create reverberations that echo over continents and through lifetimes ."

In the end, I came to appreciate the message of the movie regarding all of the unknown coincidences throughout the world that can impact 'life itself' and the journey we all take till the end. But the first half of this movie is tough and pieced together in a back and forth rhythm that takes a while to understand.

As the story evolves, it does thankfully come together, leaving you feeling that you got the message though exhausted from trying to figure it all out.

A special note to those catching this movie in Mexico...the section that takes place in Spain has no English subtitles as it is a Spanish-speaking country, of course. So I had to really press the old brain to interpret the gist of this piece of the puzzle.

The actors were extremely good in their parts and overall this is a good movie.

IMDb has thus rated this movie at 6/10 based on 2,813 opinions

you can reach Suzanne A. Marshall at suzanne@manzanillosun.com

How to Work With Multiple Retirement Plan Balances

by Yann Kostic and Tom Zachystal

Are you getting close to retirement or have you already retired? If so, it is likely you have more than one retirement plan.

You're not alone. Many investors have multiple retirement plans; unfortunately they believe that having several plans makes it difficult to calculate required minimum distributions (RMDs). That need not be the case.

Say that in addition to several Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) you have a 401(k) plan and a 403(b) plan, all of which are still with the firms that initially handled the investments for your employers.

In this situation, you would be required to take three RMDs at age 70½: one RMD from each of your three separate pools of money. The first pool would be your 401(k) money; the second, your 403(b) money and the third your IRA money.

If you have multiple IRAs, once you have determined your total IRA RMD, you can choose to withdraw the total IRA, RMD from one or any combination of your IRAs. Similarly, if you have multiple 403(b) accounts, once you have determined your total 403(b) RMD, you can choose to withdraw the total 403(b) RMD from one or any combination of your 403(b) accounts.

While it is OK to have multiple accounts, the reason for consolidating is not the RMD. It is generally a good idea to roll over your 401(k) and/or 403(b) into a Rollover IRA, since you almost always have much better investment choices and flexibility with an IRA. Another good idea is to consolidate all your IRAs into one, even if you have multiple beneficiaries living in multiple countries: it is somewhat easier to manage and reduces paperwork (or internet accounts).

These points may need clarification, and tax laws are always changing. Consult your advisor before taking RMDs from your retirement account. Remember first that, whatever you do, do it well before December 31st, and second, that no one is ever too careful with RMDs as that the cost of procrastination is prohibitive: the IRS penalty for not taking your RMD out before the deadline is a very stiff at 50%.

This article is not intended to provide tax or legal advice and should not be relied upon as such. Any specific tax or legal questions concerning the matters described in this article should be discussed with your tax or legal advisor.

Note: This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide financial advice for your particular situation.

Yann Kostic, MBA and Tom Zachystal, CFP, are Presidents of their respective Assets Management firms, both US-Registered Investment Advisors (RIA). Tom is the San Francisco Financial Planners' Association President. Tom and Yann cater to US expats in Mexico and worldwide. Comments, questions or to request his newsletter, "News you can use" contact him at yannk@atlantisgrp.com, in the US at (321) 574-1 529 or in Mexico, (376) 106-1613.



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Christmas Fireworks

by Terry Sovil

Fireworks in religious ceremonies at Christmas are something I don't like! "Do some research", I thought. Despite many accidents, they still use fireworks...sky rockets that explode with an obnoxious "Bang!" but don't light up the sky. There are complaints in major Mexican cities. Why do they continue?

History

English-speaking folks think of Christmas with traditions from Northern Europe. Christmas trees, wreaths, Santa Claus, mistletoe. Mexican traditions are very different from those in the USA or Canada. Mexico has traditions influenced by the Spanish and indigenous cultures.

The Spanish started arriving in Mexico in the 16th century and they included Spanish Catholic priests. The priests brought Catholicism and Christian holidays, including Christmas. Some traditions are from these original first priests but many have grown and changed over time, often as a result of interactions with other cultures. In Mexico, Christmas is more than a single day. It runs from December 3 to February 2. It starts with honoring the patron saint of Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe, which has both religious and political history.

Important dates

December 3 starts a 9-day novena to the Virgin of Guadalupe. A novena is a Christian tradition of praying repeatedly for 9 consecutive days. The last day, the 12th, is the feast day of the Virgin. Many Mexicans celebrate with mass, serenades, dancing and singing "Las Mañanitas" to honor the Lady of Guadalupe.

December 16 – 24 is the season of las posadas, the name for "inn" which had a big role in the Christmas story. Posadas are processions or parties that celebrate the Christmas season. December 24, Nochebuena (Christmas Eve), is a traditional night for families to attend midnight mass then go home to a late-night feast of ham, turkey and mole with ponche to drink. Gifts are not traditionally exchanged but this is changing due to USA influence.

December 25 is called Navidad or Christmas day, a quiet day with family and rest from the previous night. December 28 is Dia de los Santos Inocentes, marking the day King Herod ordered all of the newborn babies in Bethlehem killed to prevent Christ from arriving. This has become a day of practical jokes and tricks, similar to April Fool's Day. December 31 and January 1 are celebrated much like in the rest of the world.



Massacre of the Innocents

...Christmas Fireworks

January 6 is Three Kings Day, celebrating the visit of the Three Wise Men. This is traditionally a gift-giving day. This is also Rosca de Reyes (King of Kings) day. There is a round fruit cake in the shape of a circle. Also baked inside are little figures of the baby Jesus. Whoever finds one is responsible for paying for the tamales and atole for the Candlemas.



Rosca de Reyes

February 2 – Candlemas, or the Día de la Candelaria, is the last day of the Christmas season. Tamales and atole are paid for by the person that got the baby figure from the Rosca.

Fireworks

In 2013, a sky rocket hit overhead wires, ricocheted into an accumulation of fireworks, setting off an explosion that killed 16 people and injured more than 100 in the state of Tlaxcala. December 20, 2016 42 people were killed in Tultepec, the main town for making fireworks in Mexico, when a rocket exploded at the height of the Christmas rush. That made international news. There have been 2 similar explosions there in the last 12 years. Every celebration there includes fireworks.

July 2017, 24 people were killed in a fireworks explosions in Tultepec. March 10, 2018 549 people received minor injuries



Tultepec explosion Dec 20, 2016

from a huge explosion from a pyrotechnic bull, *torito*, carrying fireworks that ran rampant among fair-goers. A 20-year-old man suffered second and third-degree burns to 19% of his body and a baby's blanket caught fire. July 2018, two children were among the 8 killed in a fireworks accident in Tequisquiapan, just northwest of Mexico City.



Exploding bull in Tultepec

Parishioners had donated fireworks for a festival "but something went wrong and they exploded". A video posted on social media documented people marching to the church when a giant blast sent them running and screaming.

The Catholic Church does speak up against "fun" that may have gone too far. About 30,000 people work in the fireworks

...Christmas Fireworks



Aerial burst

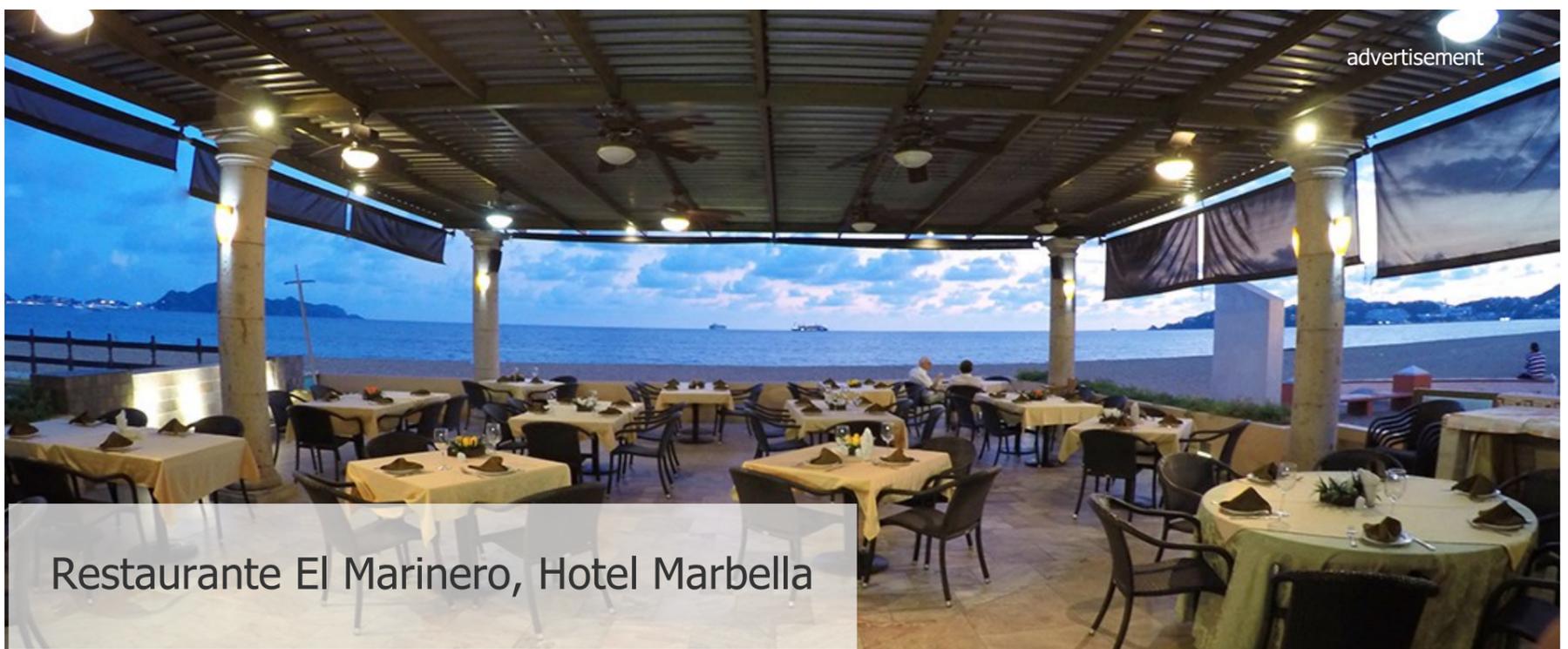
market in Tultepec. Paying homage to the deceased from a fireworks tragedy with more fireworks caused uncomfortable moments in Mexican society and in the Catholic Church. It was described as "excessive and often careless" use of fireworks in celebrations. Priests have few explanations for fireworks other than fondness for them throughout the country. "It's a way of expressing the joy of the fiesta, it's making noise with sky rockets. Just like church bells ring, sky rockets explode," said Father Hugo Valdemar Romero, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Mexico City. "It's a very old tradition. All the rural pueblos of Mexico maintain it and urban areas, too, including Mexico City."

In Tultepec, locals celebrate St. John of God, patron saint of fireworks makers, on March 8. They tell the story of how he braved fire to save patients in his burning hospital. Feasts and recognition days are often organized by a committee outside of parishes. Priests that suggest the money is excessive and should be spent on social projects often meet with resistance. There are some that believe prayers are amplified by exploding fireworks. One priest said he has been in risky situations but that people don't care. He notes that fireworks have become a part of local ceremonies.

Me? Both of my dogs cower and tremble at thunder and fireworks. I get blasted out of a sound sleep at 4:00am or jump when explosions go off every 2 minutes. You would think the Catholic Church would just say "No" as it sure doesn't improve their image.

Change is hard. A good, local friend advised "Everyone hates it! But it's a tradition and it's religious, so pretty much untouchable."

you can reach Terry Sovil at terry@manzanillosun.com



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Roca Azul, Lake Chapala

by Dan and Lisa Goy, exclusive to Manzanillo Sun

March 24 - 27, 2016 (Days 78-81)

Jocotepec, Jalisco

We got a good start on Thursday, March 24, as we headed for Guadalajara and our destination at the Roca Azul Resort and RV Park in Jocotepec, both located in Jalisco. This was the Easter weekend and Mexicans were on the road, en masse. Easter (Semana Santa) is the most important holiday in Mexico, without question. Roland and Janice led as we navigated our group through metropolitan Guadalajara and more traffic than we had seen on our 90-day tour to date. This seemed longer than usual, because of the traffic, and we were thankful to finally arrive at our destination, Roca Azul, on the shore of Lago (Lake) Chapala, about 50 KM south of Guadalajara.



On the road from Guanajuato to Guadalajara

We were scheduled to be here for 4 nights in total and collectively decided to take a pass on Guadalajara. Honestly, we are all tired and the Easter weekend was upon us. We will visit Guadalajara another time. Easter in Mexico is always busy and loud, not so much at Roca Azul which was very busy and full but actually the guests were relatively restrained. Rafael Acevedo's family has owned the property for decades and had developed a terrific resort with all the bells and whistles, including a huge pool.

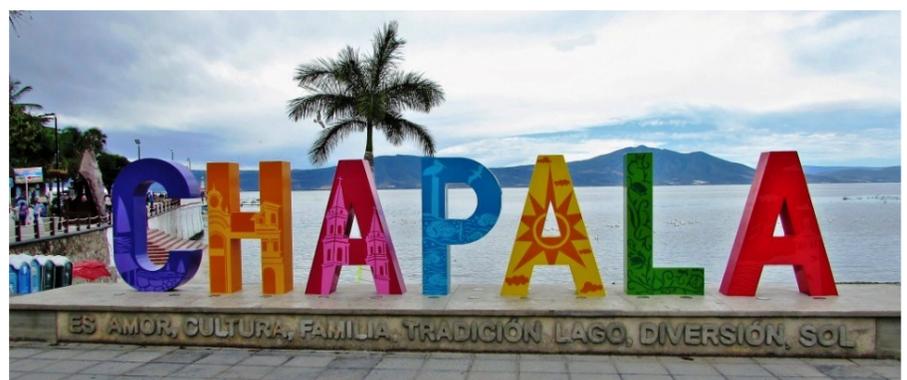
Had we wanted to head in Guadalajara, the resort has a van and driver/guide that offer that service a very reasonable rate. Spending Easter with Mexicans is great...so much enthusiasm for life, with lots going on with families.



On the road at Easter

The day after our arrival we went into the local town of Jocotepec, looked around the Mercado, found a bank, visited the Malecón and had lunch. The next day, we dropped over to Chapala, the biggest community around Lago Chapala. There were lots of activities, markets and shops open everywhere, as Mexicans were celebrating the holidays. We had a good walkabout and left around noon, which was good as there was much more traffic already.

Chapala itself is a cool place to visit, located on the north shore of Lake Chapala, Mexico's largest freshwater lake. Since the 1960s, Chapala has been frequented by both Mexican and international tourists and has a large expat population, many permanently there with an average year round temperature at 25C or 76F. Among the area's cultural attractions is mariachi music, which originated in the state of Jalisco.



While many fine mariachi bands have been based in Chapala, the more famous groups are based in larger cities nearby. The most famous mariachi in Mexico is Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, founded in the late 19th century in the southern Jalisco

...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Dan with Rafael and Jesús

city of Tecalitlán, but now based in Mexico City. We attended a concert they played in Vancouver a couple of years ago. What a performance!

Later we had a potluck for dinner and played Mexican Train. Janice, the novice, was the winner, sometimes it happens that way. Our last day, on Easter Sunday, brunch was hosted by Roland and Janice, which was tasty, for sure. Later, the gang hit the pool. No more excursions were planned. By the afternoon, lots of Mexican families had left and the campground was nearly deserted of locals. Sunday night was good, sleeping both cool and quiet, a well-deserved rest before we continued our journey north.

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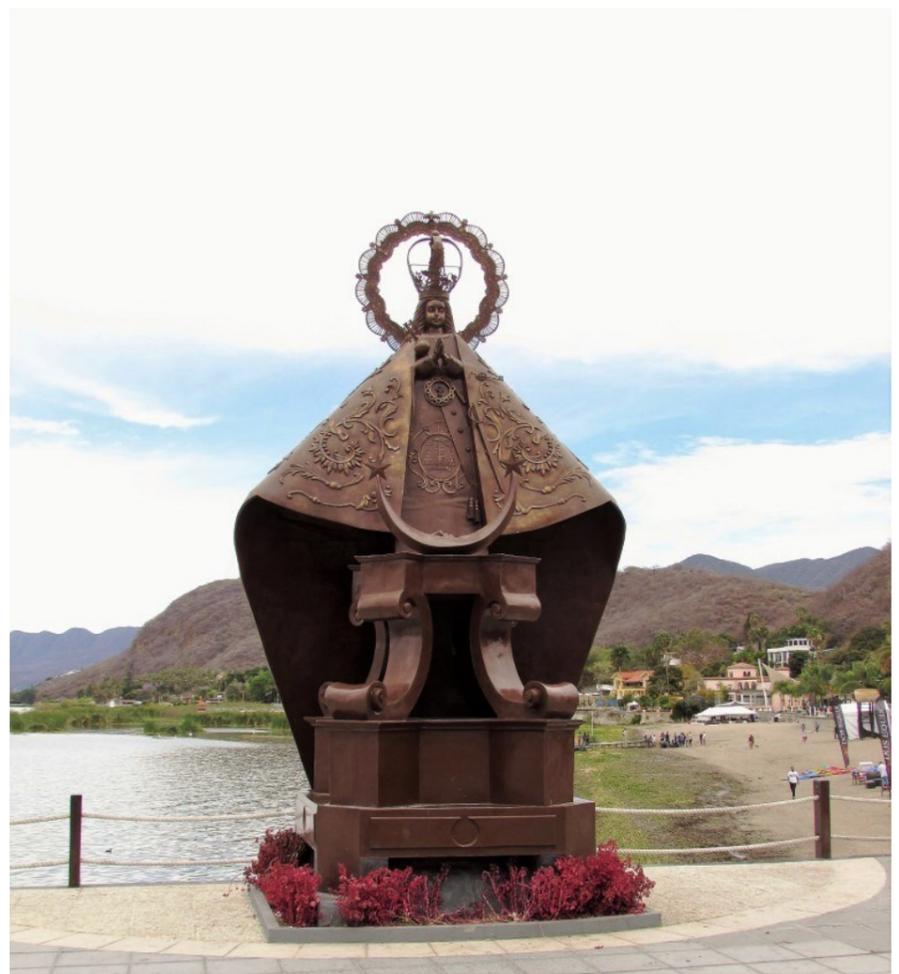
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Did you know?

Lake Chapala (Lago de Chapala) is Mexico's largest freshwater lake. It lies in the municipalities of Chapala, Jocotepec, Poncitlán, and Jamay, in Jalisco, and in Venustiano Carranza and Cojumatlán de Régules, in Michoacán.



Chapala public art

Geographic features

It is located at 20°20'N 103°00'W, 45 km southeast of Guadalajara, Jalisco, and is situated on the border between the states of Jalisco and Michoacán, at 1,524 metres (5000 feet) above sea level. Its approximate dimensions are 80 km (50 mi) from east to west and averages 12.5 km (7.8 miles) from north to south

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...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Jocotepec Cultural Centre

and covers an approximate area of 1,100 km² (420 sq mi). It is a shallow lake, with a mean depth of 7 metres (23 ft) and a maximum of 10.5 m (34 ft). It is fed by the Río Lerma, Río Zula, Río Huaracha, and Río Duero rivers, and drained by the Río Grande de Santiago. The water then flows northwest into the Pacific Ocean.



Horses in Chapala

Islands

The lake also contains three small islands, Isla de los Alacranes (most visible from the town of Chapala,) Isla Mezcala (the largest island featuring an old Spanish fort and an old Mexican prison), and a third very small island next to Isla Mezcala called La Isla Menor.

Ecology

The city of Guadalajara has relied on Lake Chapala as a principal source of water since the 1950s. Shortly after, a few consec-

utive years of poor rainfall dramatically decreased the water level of the lake. The level rebounded until 1979, when Lake Chapala's water level began rapidly decreasing due to increases in urban water consumption. Erosion due to deforestation along the lake, as well as the Lerma River, has led to increased sedimentation of the lake, also contributing to loss of lake depth. The shrinking depth has also raised the lake's average temperature, resulting in increased evaporation.



Enjoying the Lake Chapala pier

Simultaneously, the waters of Lake Chapala are polluted by municipal, industrial and agricultural wastes, coming primarily from the Lerma River. The increased presence of nutrients from the pollution, combined with the warmer water, has been a boon to an invasive species of water hyacinth.

The increase in water pollution has had devastating effects on the ecology of the lake. Fish stock has decreased dramatically and some endemic species (e.g. certain *Chirostoma*) are on the verge of extinction. Contaminated fish stock has also posed a serious threat to the health and welfare of people who depend on the fish for food and their livelihoods.

The drop in the lake's water level has uncovered political issues that had been hidden for many years. Its fast decay has raised concern in the surrounding areas and in the scientific community. It was the Global Nature Fund's "Threatened Lake of the Year" in 2004. By 2007 and 2008, the level of Lake Chapala increased drastically, though the levels have yet to surpass the level in 1979, when they began a precipitous decline.

Although it is still subject to agricultural, domestic, and industrial sources of contamination, the actual levels of hazardous materials has not been officially assessed with regularity.

...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Chapala Centro

Although water level and quality improved due to water treatment plants along the Lerma river, in 2017 the water quality of Lake Chapala water was assessed as a risk to public health. In 2018, the Lake Chapala water level is at 81.68% of capacity, up from 66.66% in 2017.

Habitat and species

Great egret at Chapala Lake - The lake is a critical habitat for several species of migratory birds, such as the American white pelican, and is home to thousands of indigenous plants and animals. The Audubonistas de Laguna de Chapala holds an annual Audubon Society-sponsored Christmas Bird Count. In 2006, some 117 species were identified and, in 2007, the count was 125. By January 2011, some 173 species were recorded.

The subspecies chapalaense of the rough-footed mud turtle is largely restricted to Lake Chapala, while the more widespread subspecies murrayi inhabits the Lerma River basin (and some other regions in northern Mexico). The essentially harmless, **semi-aquatic obscurus subspecies, Mexican garter snake**, is restricted to the lake.

In addition to the **Chirostoma ("charales") species flock of fish**, the lake and associated rivers are home to many other endemics, including several goodeids, a few Algansea chubs, two **Tetrapleurodon lampreys**, two **Ictalurus catfish**, the Chapala chub (*Yuriria chapalae*) and more. Several of these are highly threatened. Other aquatic species found only in the lake and associated water systems are four **cambarid crayfish**: *Cambarellus chapalanus*, *C. lermensis*, *C. prolixus* and *Procambarus digueti*.



Lake Chapala fowl

Communities

There are numerous towns and cities along the coast of Lake Chapala, including Chapala, Ajijic, San Antonio Tlayacapan, Jocotepec, San Juan Cosala, Mezcala de la Asunción, Tizapán El Alto, La Palma, Michoacán and Ocotlán. Beginning in the 1950s, due to the pleasant climate and attractive scenery, a substantial colony of retirees, including many from the United States and Canada, has been established along the lake's shore, particularly in the town of Ajijic, located just west of the city of Chapala.

... more pics follow

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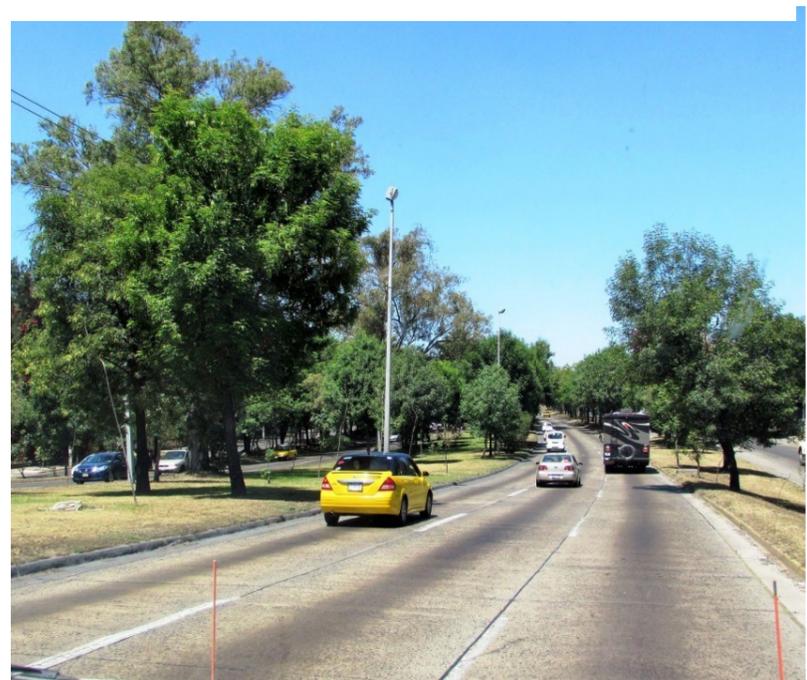
Leaving Guanajuato for Jocotepec



Roland and Janice in the lead



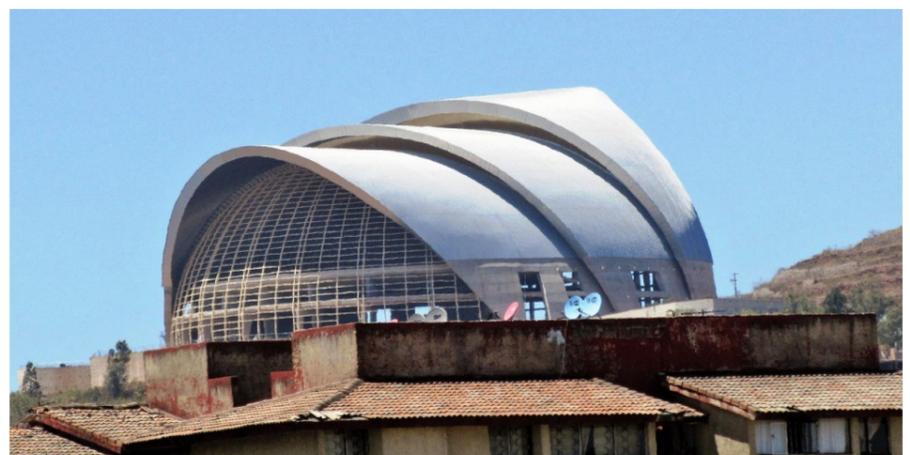
Welcome to Guadalajara



Guadalajara Periférico



Truckload of piñatas



In construction in Guadalajara



...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



On the entry drive to Roca Azul



Lots of families at Roca Azul for Easter



Our space in the shade at Roca Azul



Main drag in Chapala



Jocotepec market



Grass fire on the road to Roca Azul



Jocotepec zócalo

...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Celebrating Benito Juárez's birthday in Chapala



Chapala market



Chapala zócalo



Collecting cans



Don't drink and drive

...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Fountain by the roadside



Musicians in Chapala



Roadside mural



No car seats for these kids



Lago Chapala at Roca Azul

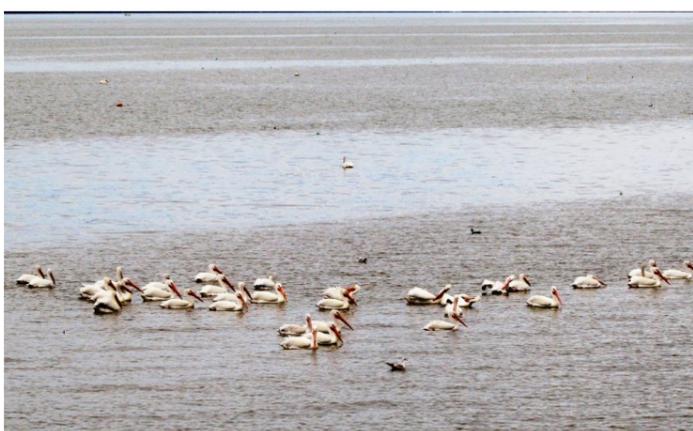
...Roca Azul, Lake Chapala



Lago Chapala fountain art



No bucket truck? Use a ladder.



Pelicans of Lake Chapala



Lago Chapala dude



Lake Chapala water park

Submitted by Dan and Lisa Goy
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Jericalla Custard

This rich custard, named after the small city of Jerico in Colombia, is also popular in Mexico, particularly in the Guadalajara and Puebla regions.



Ingredients

- ✓ 3 cups milk
- ✓ 3/4 cup sugar
- ✓ 2-inch piece true cinnamon bark
- ✓ 1/2 vanilla bean, split lengthwise
- ✓ 3 egg yolks

Instructions

In a saucepan over medium heat, stir together the milk, sugar and cinnamon. Using the tip of a small knife, scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean into the milk. Bring to a slow boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved, then reduce the heat to low and simmer gently until the mixture is thick enough just to coat the back of a spoon, about 20 minutes. Strain the milk mixture into a bowl and let cool slightly.

Preheat an oven to 325°F.

In another bowl, beat the egg yolks until blended. Add 1/3 cup of the hot milk mixture, stirring constantly, then pour the egg mixture into the rest of the milk mixture, stirring constantly. Divide the mixture evenly among 6 to 8 flameproof custard dishes or ramekins. Place the custard dishes on a rack in a baking

pan, making sure they do not touch, and pour hot water into the pan to a depth of 1 inch. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a custard comes out clean, about 1 hour.

Remove the custard dishes from the water bath and arrange on a baking sheet. Turn the oven to broil, place the baking sheet under the broiler and broil until the tops of the custards are browned. Let the custards cool, then cover and refrigerate for several hours until chilled.



Serve cold in the dishes, or run a knife blade around the edge of each dish to loosen the custard and unmold onto dessert plates. Serves 6 to 8

Recipe and images from Williams Sonoma



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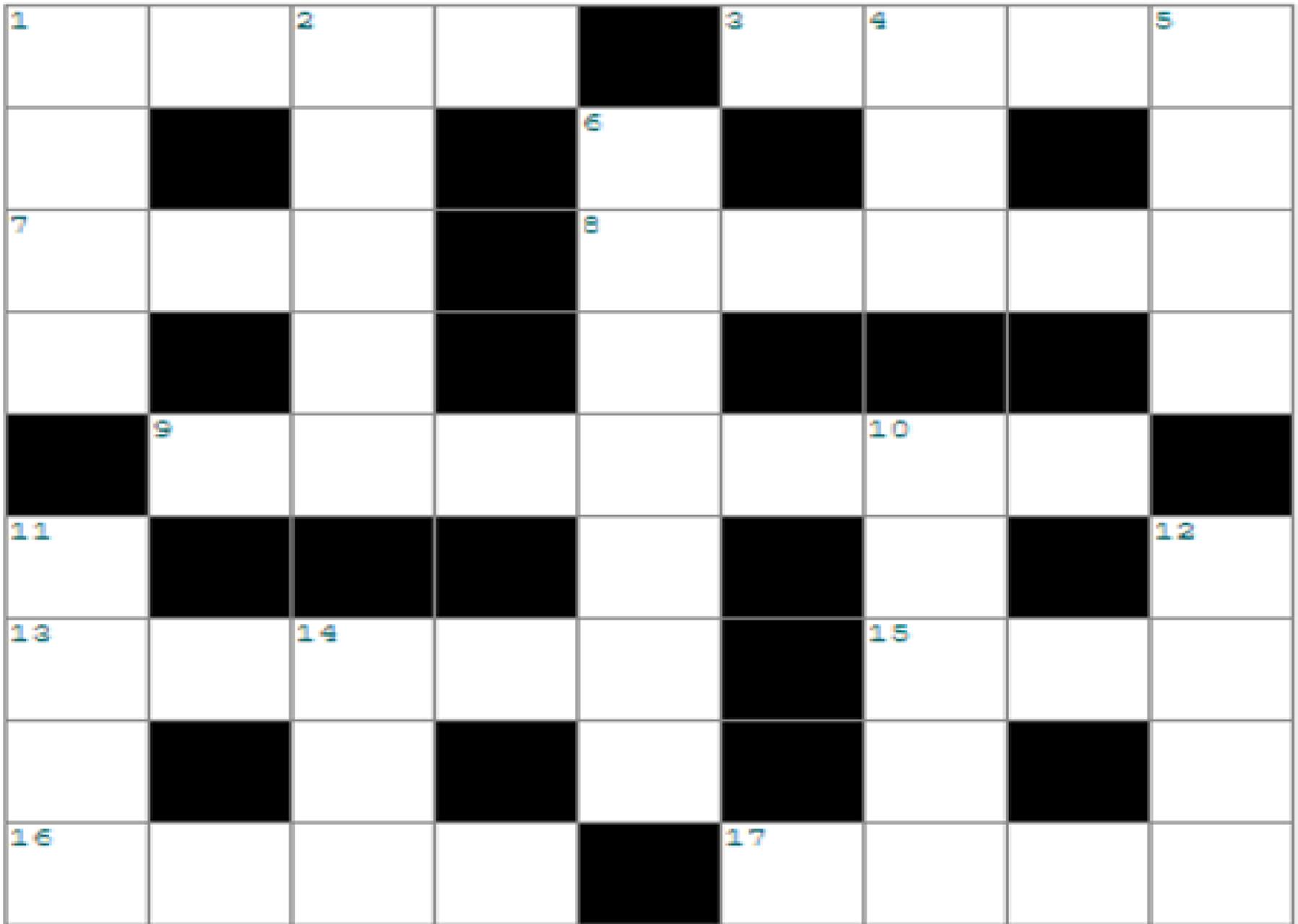
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Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition



Across

- 1 bucket; cube
- 3 (it) had
- 7 one
- 8 class, category; type
- 9 (you/vosotros) empty
- 13 tribe
- 15 bread
- 16 loyal
- 17 art

Down

- 1 cross
- 2 joke
- 4 (he) uses
- 5 to smell
- 6 attitude
- 10 odd, not divisible by two
- 11 useful
- 12 before, in front of in space
- 14 (she) was going

Last month's crossword solution:



lexisrex.com

Father of the Nation

from the Path to Citizenship series

Don Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo-Costilla y Gallaga Mandarte Villaseñor (8 May 1753 – 30 July 1811), more commonly known as Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla or simply Miguel Hidalgo was a Mexican Roman Catholic priest and a leader of the Mexican War of Independence.

He was a professor at the Colegio de San Nicolás Obispo in Valladolid and was ousted in 1792. He served in a church in Colima and then in Dolores, Dias. After his arrival, he was shocked by the rich soil he had found.

He tried to help the poor by showing them how to grow olives and grapes, but in Mexico, growing these crops was discouraged or prohibited by the authorities due to Spanish imports of the items. In 1810 he gave the famous speech, "The Cry of Dolores", calling upon the people to protect the interest of their King Fernando VII (held captive by Napoleon) by revolting against the European-born Spaniards who had overthrown the Spanish Viceroy.



He marched across Mexico and gathered an army of nearly 90,000 poor farmers and Mexican civilians who attacked and killed both Spanish Peninsulares and Criollo elites, even though Hidalgo's troops lacked training and were poorly armed. These troops ran into an army of 6,000 well-trained and armed Spanish troops; most of Hidalgo's troops fled or were killed at the Battle of Calderón Bridge.

In 1803, aged 50, he arrived in Dolores accompanied by his family that included a younger brother, a cousin, two half sisters, as well as his wife, María and their two children. He obtained this parish in spite of his hearing before the Inquisition, which did not stop his secular practices.

After Hidalgo settled in Dolores, he turned over most of the clerical duties to one of his vicars, Fr. Francisco Iglesias, and devoted himself almost exclusively to commerce, intellectual pursuits and humanitarian activity. He spent much of his time studying literature, scientific works, grape cultivation, and the raising of silkworms. He used the knowledge that he gained to promote economic activities for the poor and rural people in his area. He established factories to make bricks and pottery and trained indigenous people in the making of leather. He promoted beekeeping. He was interested in promoting activities of commercial value to use the natural resources of the area to help the poor. His goal was to make the Indians and mestizos more self-reliant and less dependent on Spanish economic policies. However, these activities violated policies designed to protect agriculture and industry in Spain, and Hidalgo was ordered to stop them. These policies as well as exploitation of mixed race castas fostered resentment in Hidalgo of the Peninsular-born Spaniards in Mexico.

In addition to restricting economic activities in Mexico, Spanish mercantile practices caused misery for the native peoples. A drought in 1807-1808 caused a famine in the Dolores area, and, rather than releasing stored grain to market, Spanish merchants chose instead to block its release, speculating on yet higher prices. Hidalgo lobbied against these practices.

Image and article source: [Wikimedia](#)

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