

Abuse Laws on Trial

By Vesta Copestakes

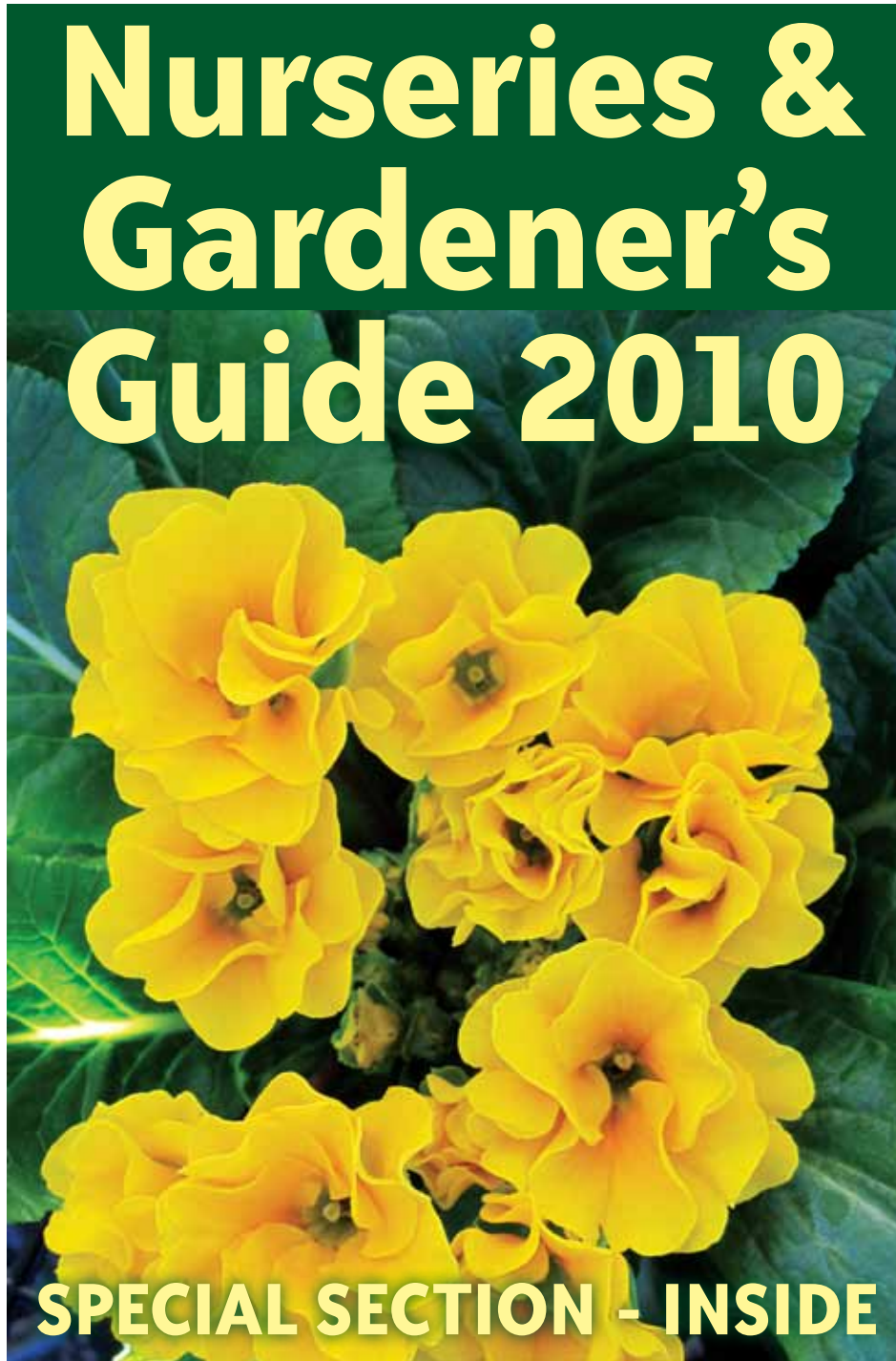
Abuse of every kind...physical, mental, emotional is wrong. That's an easy judgment to make...a simple right vs. wrong. Most people think of abuse in physical terms – he beats her, etc. That's the kind that gets in the news. But it's often more subtle than that – hidden behind curtains of shame so we don't even recognize the symptoms, often until it's too late.

On March 22 Aaron Vargas goes to trial for killing his abuser. He took an antique weapon and shot the man who abused him since he was 11, then waited until he died. Aaron wasn't the only person Darrell McNeill abused over the years. One victim committed suicide, others have come forward to tell their tale. In a small community, it's easy to see why people kept their shame to themselves. But not all did, and that's where the case crosses a line into a matter of law and justice.

Right now three Sonoma County officials are asking us to vote for them using domestic violence as their calling card. It's a good one because much needs to be done to change the way our system works. In the Aaron Vargas case numerous people went to the police over the years to ask for

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Nurseries & Gardener's Guide 2010



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Supes Vote on Dutra

Public Hearing on Dutra Plant Tuesday, March 16 at 1:30 pm

Does Sonoma County need Dutra's proposed asphalt plant on the Petaluma River opposite Shollenberger Park? Dutra says it does, that there are no significant health or environmental risks, and that their newly modified proposals for barge mooring and offloading nullifies concerns about navigability and dredging of the channel. According to Dutra, its production of tonnage is necessary for federal funding for dredging, keeping the river navigable.

These contentions are disputed by numerous local citizens, public bodies and environmental groups, contending that Dutra's statements are not trustworthy and that potential harms to human health, wildlife, the air, roads and river are huge. The Petaluma City Council has urged a "no" vote by the Supervisors, citing these concerns as well as visibility from the freeway at the southern gateway to the city and county.

Shollenberger Park is part of a historic wetland area, painstakingly restored to support wetland species of birds, plants, mammals, fish, and

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