



## And the winner is...

*Mahonia* 'Soft Caress', a compact evergreen shrub with feathery foliage and vibrant yellow fall or winter flowers, was recently named 2013 Plant of the Year at London's prestigious Chelsea Flower Show. "It's like the Academy Award for plants!" says horticultural expert Janet Sluis. And we claim bragging rights since 'Soft Caress', bred by a nursery outside Atlanta, is sold exclusively on the West Coast through the *Sunset* Western Garden Collection, which Sluis directs. 'Soft Caress' looks delicate but is hardy to 0° and requires little water. [sunsetwesterngardencollection.com](http://sunsetwesterngardencollection.com) for retailers.

## 6 S.F. LITQUAKE

What's shakin' for book lovers: San Francisco's 14th annual Litquake, nine days of readings (hundreds of them, including appearances by Isabel Allende and Mary Gaitskill), panels, performances, and a Lit Crawl on closing night during which more than 80 Mission District businesses will host readings and performances. That finale has inspired other cities; L.A. will throw its first and Seattle its second Lit Crawl this month. Oct 11-19; [litquake.org](http://litquake.org).



## 7 Hot stuff

The new copper Modfire outdoor fireplaces are works of art that happen to be practical. Made individually in Phoenix, they can be kept polished to a high gloss or allowed to mellow into a natural patina. Either way, the inner glow is impressive. From \$2,250; [modfire.com](http://modfire.com).



## 8 TRANSPORTING OYSTERS

This Seattle seafood spot is definitely going places: The Narwhal truck is the Northwest's first mobile oyster shack. "We'd been doing oyster bars at weddings forever, so it seemed natural to create one on wheels," says co-owner Renee Erickson, left, part of the crew behind the popular restaurant The Walrus and the Carpenter. Under Washington law, Narwhal, which has parked at farmers' markets and a brewery, can serve raw oysters only at private events. Luckily, the general public can gobble its cornmeal-crust fried Hama Hama oysters, served hot with aioli; they're the most toothsome bivalves we've ever tasted. \$; [narwhaloystertruck.com](http://narwhaloystertruck.com).