

# Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT Lynn Miller, Volunteer President

I may be dreaming, but I feel a chill in the air. Granted, not midday, but early in the morning and around 5:00 p.m. Yes, fall is here, and I love it. A myriad of pumpkin choices abound, neighborhood houses grow more and more haunted, and Thanksgiving is right around the corner. Its time to make soup again, though not quite time to light the fireplace. It's a lovely in-between time before the holiday hustle and bustle takes over.

For CalBG, fall means a bushel of good things. The Fall Plant Sale begins, and we are ready to add native plants to our gardens. To help make this happen, the staff and volunteers have busily labeled plants in the Grown Native Nursery. In addition, Native Designers prepared to sell 50 beautifully decorated wreaths to brighten our homes and gardens, with the proceeds going to the Volunteer Organization.

Good news! More opportunities to volunteer are available. Consider working in the Herbarium or in the Grow Native Nursery. Think about joining the Garden Guides or the Publicity and Hospitality Committees. The Board plans to bring Enrichment back and we welcome your ideas. The work crews still gather on Wednesdays and Saturdays to keep the grounds in shape. Contact Ming Posa or me if you are interested.



Volunteers like to get together, so on October 7th, we held our first 2022–2023 Quarterly Meeting in the Forest Pavilion. After a summer break, it was good to see each other and to hear Lucinda's latest Garden news. Lauren Stoebe, Public Relations and Events, spoke about the upcoming Waterwise Community Event on November 13th and encouraged volunteers to sign up for a shift. The timing of this daylong event could not be more perfect. We also honored Shaunna Gygli for her engaging series in Oak Notes on Native Americans. Thirty-five years ago, Shaunna developed a program to educate Bonita School District's fourth graders about California's Indigenous peoples, and the last seven years have been at CalBG. Thank you, Shaunna!

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the December 2022 issue of OAK NOTES is **Tuesday, November 15**. Thank you for your prompt submission!

**Volgistics reminder:**  
Please submit your monthly volunteer hours to Volgistics. Every volunteer minute counts.



Fall is an exciting time to think about volunteering at CalBG, and I look forward to seeing you again at the Garden.

Thank you for your help and be well,

—Lynn



## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Lucinda McDade,  
CalBG Executive Director**

A number of volunteers have recently told me that they are disappointed that they've not been asked to support a capital project at the Garden recently. First, let me fix that right away! We have three very high priority capital projects that need funding and that we will be moving forward on as soon as humanly possible:

1. Phase 1, Herbarium Expansion (elevator + ADA restrooms addition),
2. New Admissions kiosk and entry way remodel (including indoor gift shop space),
3. Remodel of area north of maintenance to provide high quality storage.

The Advancement office will be engaging with our Major Gifts Committee to move forward with these critical projects. Please ask me for more information on any of them that may interest you. *AND* don't forget those RMDs. For those of you who can spare it, that mechanism provides a painless way to give. Thank you!

Second, I think that you will understand that we needed to finish the Forest Pavilion project successfully before we could seek funding for additional projects: we needed to have that strong leg of performance to stand on! The fact that the project overlapped entirely with the impact of covid on supply chain, construction materials and costs, etc.

meant that it took longer than anticipated. I *do* hope that you all love it now that it is done!

I also wanted to mention that if you love education and prefer to think very long term, consider helping us to grow our endowed funds for graduate education. We now have about \$1.5M dedicated to this purpose (more about that below). My short-term goal is \$2M; my sights are on \$4M longer term. The easiest way to do this is to add to an existing fund (for example, some of you may be inspired to give to the Jessica Orozco Fund which honors our late alum and very special friend).

Moving on, it is just great to have volunteers back in action more fully day by day. Commendations to:

- the publicity/outreach group (actively taking CalBG out into the community at events),
- those of you who have stepped up to drive the trams for Garden events,
- the herbarium crews who are back in full action (I so enjoy greeting each day's group!),
- the Garden Guides who are back in the swing, among others.

As I finish my Oak Notes column, I can also thank the many volunteers who were with us on Wednesday (12th), Saturday and Sunday (15th and 16th) as we



### A Very Happy November Birthday to:

Amy Baumann	Virginia Herd
Edward Becaria	Chris Ilgen
Fred Brooks	Patricia Nueva Espana
Betty Butler	Anne Odgers
Donna Chadwick	Joan Presecan
Barbara Coates	Barbara Quarton
Rebecca De La Cruz	Jean Rosewall
Louise Gish	Dean Shimek
Jeff Hanlon	Tom White

opened the Grow Native Nursery for the sales season. The Acorn event on Wednesday was spectacular as was the main 'launch' on the 15th. We really could not do this without the helping hands of many volunteers. THANKS to all! Please continue to take precautions so that you make these contributions safely!

I also wanted to provide you with up-dates on a few of the things that my Crystal Ball (CB) predicted last spring as Oak Notes (ON) was going on summer vacation. These were items that had not been brought to fruition by the time of the first fall issue of ON. First, the Marilee Scaff Butterfly Garden is to be joined by the Marcia Goldstein Celebration of Birds Garden under the umbrella of the "Interactions Garden." These to-be-renovated area is to the north of the Native Designs cutting garden and east of the Outdoor Classroom. Peter Evans has a design for it drawn; planting plans come next. It will include one of our wonderful recirculating water features, as well as excellent interpretation. I could not be happier about this new garden area nor could I be more pleased that we are honoring two wonderful volunteers!

CB: Two handwash stations in the women's room at the Forest Pavilion: CHECK! This job is now accomplished.

And two more updates from that earlier *Oak Notes* article: First, applications for new volunteers are open again, with a streamlined web interface and application form thanks to Ming and a small committee of volunteers. I am very happy that we are back! Second, over the last few months, we have grown our endowed funds for Graduate Education by about \$950,000. I had already told you about one bequest in the last ON. Two additional major contributions (one a bequest and one an outright gift) have since followed. Happily, these last two provide support for both graduate education and community education. As these are vital core components of our educational mission here at California Botanic Garden, these wonderful gifts help to ensure sustainability of these terrific programs. I am tremendously grateful to these benefactors—indeed, awed by their generosity.

And on into the fall! Hope to see all of you on the pathways, in action volunteering, and even indoors (!) at CalBG! It is good to be back (but get the booster and continue to be careful, please!).



## **DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT** **Amanda Behnke**

### **Joining the Susanna Bixby Bryant Council**

Beneficiary designation (i.e., designating CalBG as a fractional beneficiary of one of your retirement or other accounts) is one of the easiest ways to (plan to) give when you no longer need the money. This mode of giving does not require the upfront costs or the prep work of a will that some people dread. For questions, please contact Amanda at the Garden at 909.625.8767, x 222 or [abehnke@calbg.org](mailto:abehnke@calbg.org).

## **GARDEN GUIDES PREPARE FOR NEW TOUR SEASON** **by Ann Morgan**



We're not quite back to normal yet, but the Garden Guides are preparing for a year with more tours. In August, Jennifer Scerra invited Garden Guides to meet with her and review plans for the 2022–23 tour season. Since Jennifer was hired during the pandemic, she had many questions about scheduling and organizing. About a dozen veteran Guides attended and were able to provide useful background information and feedback. Jennifer then sent a survey to all Garden Guides and a tentative roster has been prepared.



On September 27, Shaunna Gygli invited Garden Guides to meet with her during the Bonita school district's Native American program for 4th graders. She shared the amazing array of artifacts, photos, and posters used during this program. While our

Native Partners program is on hiatus and is not nearly as elaborate, we were inspired with ideas for improving our own program. If you haven't already done so, read Shaunna's recent series of articles in *Oak Notes* about our local Native Americans.



Later that week, Jennifer resurrected the tradition of a Garden Guide Breakfast and Refresher. Over 20 Guides attended and enjoyed reconnecting. After updating us on plans for 2022–23 Jennifer presented



a short program on Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). VTS is a method for teaching someone to make sense out of something they're seeing for the first time. The teacher (or Guide) shows a photo (or perhaps looks at an

area in the Garden) and asks three questions: What's going on in this picture? What makes you say that? What more can we find? While VTS started with museums and art education, it's a technique that Garden Guides can apply to our work with students.

Training for new Garden Guides will be presented later this year. If interested contact Jennifer Scerra.

## WATERWISE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

by Lauren Weintraub Stoebel



CalBG's Waterwise Community Festival is coming up soon and we couldn't be more excited! After over three years with no large public events at the Garden, we'll be filling

the place up with activities, education, and fun on Sunday, November 13th, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Here's a list of just some of what the event will feature:

- Free admission to California Botanic Garden on November 13th,
- Fun and informative exhibitor booths featuring our friends from the Metropolitan Water District, Chino Basin Water Conservation District, LA County Dept. of Public Works, California Native Plant Society (Riverside and San Gabriel Valley branches), Alf Museum of Paleontology, local landscapers, and more!
- Tours and mini-workshops on waterwise landscaping featuring CalBG experts,
- Family friendly storytime and craft stations,
- A panel discussion on the impacts of drought on California native plant conservation efforts,
- Musical performances curated by the LA-based organization, Floating,
- Food trucks and drinks for sale,
- CA native plants available for purchase at the Grow Native Nursery,
- Raffle prizes including nursery gift certificates, water conservation supplies, CalBG merch, and much more!

Many of you know that CalBG volunteers are absolutely key to successful large events here at the Garden, so we hope that you'll check Volgistics for openings to help us out at the Festival. We can't wait to work with all of you to share CalBG with the

public on a grand scale after all this time! Got any questions about the Festival? Feel free to reach out to me at [lstoebel@calbg.org](mailto:lstoebel@calbg.org).

## VOLUNTEER SHIRTS

by Betsy MacLaren



Have you seen volunteers around the Garden wearing our new volunteer shirts that feature the Matilija poppy logo? You now have an opportunity to order one (or more!) for yourself. You will soon receive an e-mail including pictures of each of the 12 shirts available, including the sizing, colors, and price. There is a nice variety to choose from, including short sleeves, long sleeves, and vests.

There will be instructions with the e-mail on how to order and pay for the shirts. Please take advantage of this opportunity to add an attractive logo shirt to your wardrobe!

## CALBG RESEARCH LIBRARY

by Irene Holiman

It has been twenty-three years since I first stepped into the CalBG research library to be interviewed by Librarian, Bea Beck, with the hopes of being selected for the Library Assistant position. The moment I walked into the library, I knew what a special place it was: I felt at home. Thankfully, I was hired as the assistant, and am so grateful that I was. Now, years later, it's time for me to close the chapter on this amazing part of my life and move on to a new adventure with my family. I've had the pleasure of working with great staff and volunteers, all of whom I hold in high regard.



The library volunteers are dedicated, eager to help and willing to learn about library and archival procedures. We finished the conversion of the library system from Dewey Decimal to Library of Congress and invited the Garden staff to a celebration when the project was complete, a daunting project started by Bea that took years to process. The volunteers took on book sales, author talks, exhibits, displays, open-house tours, and one of the most favorite activities, making bookmarks using pressed flowers we recycled from the very popular annual wildflower show.

Throughout the years, the library volunteers have become an important part of helping me with library and archival duties; we've had a great time along the way. I wish I could name each volunteer here: some have resigned, some are still active with the organization, and sadly, some have passed away. Whatever the case, each one contributed to making the library and the archive collection a treasured resource. I am forever grateful for their time, their effort, and most of all, their friendship.

## A TONGVA VILLAGE

by Shaunna Gygli

Historically, the Tongva territory included watersheds of the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Rio Honda Rivers, including island and coastal areas. At least eight habitats existed within this mainland territory: Saltmarsh Estuary, Freshwater Marsh, Riparian Woodland, Chaparral, etc. Settlements existed in all these areas. Because the natural resources varied among these ecosystems, houses varied in construction and materials used.

At the time of European contact, there were about 50 settlements, with populations from 50 to 150 individuals each, and a total population of 5,000. These settlements were organized similarly. In the

middle was an unroofed religious structure, the *yovaar*, surrounded by the houses of the chief and elite tribal members. The wealth and social status of the owner determined the size and quality of construction. The houses were often 50 feet in diameter and lodged several related families. Beyond them were smaller homes, 12 to 30 feet in diameter, for the commoners. Poor members occupied lean-to structures on the outskirts.



The houses, named *kish* or *kiitcha*, were usually built in the spring when willow (*Salix*) bark was green and cordage could easily be made. A tall pole was erected in the center of a cleared area and a long string attached to the pole. Using this, the builders scratched a large circle in the ground. Post holes

were dug a step apart around the circle and the poles of sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) or willow erected. Each pole was bent and lashed to the opposite pole with willow cordage to form a domed framework. Horizontal cross pieces strengthened the frame. The frame was then covered with tule (*Scirpus acutus*) mats. The floor was sprinkled with water and pounded hard. A hearth was located in the center with a smoke hole above.



The house was furnished with tule mats, animal skin blankets and rugs, steatite (soapstone) jars and bowls, stone mortars, baskets, and water baskets. Hooks and pegs provided a place to hang bows, quivers,

brooms, fire drills, and bags.

Many houses had ramadas for outdoor cooking and food preparation. Large coiled granary baskets used for storing acorns and chia seeds sat on raised platforms. The village would have a playing field and burial grounds, plus a sweat house near a river or pond.

Early forcing of the Indians into missions and ranchos, followed by mass urbanization, makes it difficult to locate these settlements. Researchers have had to rely on historic and ethno-historic sources.

## IRRITATING PLANTS

### by Steve Bryant

Land plants have little freedom of movement, generally being rooted in place, so don't have defenses we generally associate with animals that can fly, burrow, run, fight with claws and teeth, etc. Plants generally fight with chemicals, and sometimes with thorns, prickles, and spines, as do some animals (Lion fish, puffer fish, sting rays, snakes, skunks, etc.). In general, the muscle tissue of vertebrate animals is edible to humans, and tastes, well—like meat. Plants, however, usually taste different from each other. These masters of chemical defense sometimes produce compounds, generally in minute quantities, that we find pleasurable. Therefore, the spice shelf in a grocery store is almost exclusively composed of plant-defensive chemicals, not animal derivatives.

Often, seeds and vegetative plant parts are poisonous to humans, while many fruits are not; it wouldn't do to poison your animal helpers. Therefore, it is easier to list plants that are not poisonous than list those that are. So for this article, I'll list some CA natives that may be irritating. The next article will consider plants that are exceptionally poisonous.

**Irritating sap** (to some people): (Euphorbiaceae) *Euphorbia*, *Croton*; (Apocynaceae) *Asclepias*, *Apocynum*, *Funastrum*; (Anacardiaceae) *Toxicodendron*.



*Asclepias erosa* with fruits



*Mentzelia laevicaulis*

**Irritating leaves/spines:** (Agavaceae) all; (Arecaceae) *Washingtonia*—sharp hooks on petioles; (Cactaceae) all, but especially *Cylindropuntia bigelovi*; etc.; (Fabaceae) *Prosopis*, *Senegalia*, *Parkinsonia*, *Senna armata*, *Olneya*, *Psoralea spinosa*, *Glycyrrhiza lepidota*; (Fouquieriaceae) *Fouquieria*; (Loasaceae) all, but mainly *Eucnide urens*; (Malvaceae) with irritating hairs—especially to eyes and nose—*Abutilon*, *Eremalche*, *Sphaeralcea*, *Fremontodendron*, others; (Papaveraceae) *Romneya*; (Polygonaceae) *Chorizanthe rigida*; (Rosaceae) *Rosa*, *Rubus*, *Ribes*; (Solanaceae) *Lycium*; (Urticaceae) *Urtica*, *Hesperocnide*.



*Washingtonia filifera* petiole spines



*Romneya coulteri*



*Fremontodendron*



*Lycium parishii*

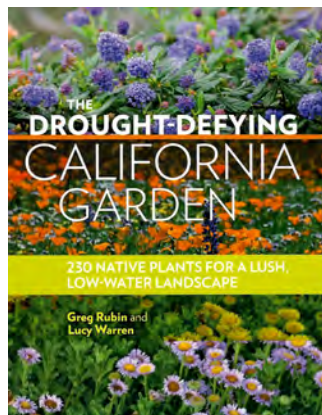


**Leaves with prickles or saw-like edges:** *Berberis*, *Prunus ilicifolia*, *Quercus* (evergreen), *Nolina* (pictured left).

**Spiny/prickly fruit:** *Datura*, *Marah*.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

by Barbara Nakaoka



*The Drought-Defying California Garden: 230 Native Plants for a Lush, Low-Water Landscape*, by Greg Rubin and Lucy Warren, Timber Press, Inc., Portland, Oregon, 2016, 185 pp.



*Native Plant Gardening for Birds, Bees and Butterflies*, by George Oxford Miller, Adventure Publication, Cambridge, Minnesota, 2022, 272 pp.

In the L.A. Times this past weekend, October 9, was the article, “Going Natural Brought Her Yard Shade and Peace.” The front yard garden the writer visited was Serlina Covarrubias’ of Altadena. She and her husband have long wanted to replace the front lawn with “drought-tolerant plants native to Southern California,” that “endured the heat with little watering” and would be a place she could process the loss of her father and use as a rest area when her chronic illness flared up. Her observations of the landscape, birds, and insects enjoying it brought her peace and joy that she wanted to share with her neighbors.

It sounds like this neighborhood will need, *The Drought-Defying California Garden: 230 Plants for a Lush, Low-Water Landscape*. It would bring them success by suggesting what to consider before starting the project. We are reminded that California is in a water crisis due to a persistent drought, and can create interesting landscapes “based on a realistic, healthful, and sustainable protocol.” The authors present a convincing argument for using drought-tolerant native plants and “taking advantage of plant communities.”

They selected 230 plants, from native trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and perennials, to vines. For each plant, icons indicate its requirements, such as drainage, soil preference, light, and mulch. It also includes a picture of the plant, the community it belongs to, and its landscape usage. If you are doing the work yourself—remove the lawn, checking the soil, installing the irrigation, and planting—the next section will help. The Care and Maintenance section describes fertilizing, watering, trimming, and pruning.

Serlina Covarrubias ends the article by saying the garden of native plants has given her so much. She gained life lessons and purpose she wants to pass on to her neighbors by planting native plants in underutilized spaces in the neighborhood. “Its daily existence is what gives it value. The birds and butterflies knew that before I did.”

The birds and butterflies bring us to the next book, *Native Plant Gardening for Birds, Bees & Butterflies*. The author is a botanist, environmental journalist, and nature photographer. This book complements

the previous one, building on plant communities and giving the “A, B, Cs for a Pollinator Habitat Garden.” It also describes and defines “plant syndromes.” It is a field guide, covering 108 plants, each with key information that differs from the other book. This information covers plant characteristics, bloom period, growing conditions, and what the plants attract. You can read the plant profiles in the text or check the list, “Southern California Plants at a Glance,” at the beginning. There are lists in the back that correlate the plants with butterflies or bees, which plants are good in containers and for pollinators, and which are hummingbird plants.

If you have a native plant garden or are thinking of planting one, these two books are a good resource, making you feeling confident in your plant selection. You will also learn how to install, care for, and maintain these plants. Not only will you enjoy your garden more, it will do much for your neighbors and the environment.

## THE GROW NATIVE NURSERY HAD A VERY SUCCESSFUL OPENING WEEK!

by Ming Posa

The overcast weather seemed to put people in the mood to plant and the GNN had a great turnout during Acorn Member’s Pre-Sale as well as the opening weekend. The volunteers and staff were kept pretty busy during the member’s only sale on Saturday, October 15th from 8 a.m.–10 a.m. By noon, it was apparent to GNN manager Mariana Rodriguez that there would be very few plants left on the sales floor for Sunday! So, with the help of the afternoon shift of volunteers, around 400+ additional plants were labelled and entered into the inventory. These were placed out on the sales floor in time for the shoppers on Sunday. We ended up selling more than 3,500 plants—over 90% of the inventory! Thank you to all who helped make this event a success!

Photos by Ming Posa, Lauren Stoebe, and Mariana Rodriguez





# VOLUNTEER QUARTERLY MEETING

## OCTOBER 7, 2022

Photos by Marla White

