

Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Lynn Miller, Volunteer President

Right now, the air is crisp, some trees are changing colors, and it's time to don our sweaters. On November 13th, the Garden hosted its members and visitors for a new event, WaterWise, and with our drought-challenged landscape, the timing was perfect. As I walked around the Garden, I was glad to be wearing a light sweater and vest. It was sunny, a bit breezy, and it was cool. Perked up from the recent rains, the Garden was beautiful to see, and it smelled of sage and bay leaves. We often forget that we need to see, hear, and smell the Garden.

WaterWise was an opportunity to learn about native plants and saving water. Vendors offered information, instructors held sessions on native planting, children enjoyed crafts and storytelling, a moving exhibit informed us on the L.A. River, and there was music and yummy food.

More importantly, the GNN made planting a native garden possible. People were so happy with their new plants, and this includes those with one plant and those with a cart full. I felt like a proud parent when I saw what we offered to our guests. We hope they enjoy their new gardens and plan come back to CalBG. Thank you, Lauren Stoebel and Jennifer Scerra for your spot-on planning, and thank you volunteers for hosting and helping our guests.

Next, December is full of activity, so be sure to mark your calendars for Wednesday, December 7th, for our Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Holiday Party. Look for an invitation in your email, and this time—no brown bagging!

Luminaria Nights will return for two weekends: December 9th and 10th, and then December 16th and 17th. The Garden at night is magical, so I encourage you to come, and there are numerous opportunities to volunteer. The Volunteers will sell cider and cookies again, and we need your help. It's easy, fun, and our guests will be thrilled to enjoy a warm treat. Watch for announcements on Volgistics.

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

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

December is busy for everyone, but I do hope you find time for a breather, and CalBG may just the answer.

Here's to a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season.

—Lynn



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director

Hello volunteers! In terms of programming at CalBG, it feels like we have gone from treading water to roaring ahead this fall! Just a few short weeks ago, we were still in covid-wary mode with regard to a lot of activities. More recently, along with the rest of our region, we have gone back to business more or less as usual. (But please—continue to be careful everyone! The case rate is yet again rising in L.A. County! Get those boosters!)

I wrote last month's ON piece just after the opening of the GNN—busy days on which volunteers contributed a huge amount. We are now into the regular sales season and struggling to keep the stock in good shape, significantly for the very good reason that sales have been very very strong. Many volunteers help behind the scenes in the GNN on such vital tasks as labeling and organizing the stock. When the nursery is open, two in your ranks deserve special mention for service: Steve Bryant and Tom White. I am sure that many a customer thinks that Steve and Tom are staff! I know that Mariana agrees with me when I say that we are so very lucky to benefit from the work of *all* of the volunteers who help out in GNN.

I write this month's ON article just after the Waterwise Community Festival. The staff assessment is that it was a terrific day on which we provided extremely valuable resources for our community in this time of historic drought (and a good time!). Of course, we could not have done it without you volunteers—you were posted everywhere, from the parking lot to the kids' craft

stations to the Outdoor Classroom. I know that it is a little scary to volunteer for a brand-new event (and one led by a new staff member, Lauren Stoebel, at that!) and I trust that you found it very rewarding. I led my workshop on how to kill your lawn for either the fourth and fifth times—or is it the fifth and sixth? Regardless, I am happy to be helping members of our community chart their course to a waterwise home landscape. I hope you agree that Lauren—backed up by Jennifer Scerra and many other staff—did a great job with the event. By the way, we estimate right at a couple thousand participants. It is interesting that the Forest Pavilion has had the very positive impact of spreading people out across the Garden, thus enabling us to accommodate larger crowds without feeling crowded (important! Especially in the time of covid.). NOW if we could just solve that parking problem!

And on to Luminaria! I do hope that many of you will help out on one or more evenings at that event as well. As you know, it is magical to stroll in the gently (and beautifully) lit Garden with both music



A Very Happy December Birthday to:

Angela Alam	Carol Lerew
Stephanie Andrews	Susan Lominska
Austin Berg	Lisa McCarter
Barbara Booth	Arlene Medina
Judy Bryson	Alice Oglesby
Grace Clark	Tim Sowles
Nadja Cole	Michael Tschudi
Hal Croulet	Yvonne Wilson
Linda Battram Dorosh	Jade Wong
Rich Griffin	Deborah Woo
Patricia Hessenflow	

and a chill in the air. Please help us offer this lovely experience for our community!

On toward the shortest days of the year! Happily, we have had a major rainstorm (3.93" at my house) which fell on top of a number of other smaller precipitation events since early September. The first of our native plants that respond to cool season rains by flowering are now doing precisely that: *watch* your favorite manzanita for flowers! Now we have only to wonder what the rest of the winter rainy season will bring! Let us hope that it earns its 'rainy' name!



LUMINARIA NIGHTS RETURNS!

by Lauren Stoebel, Assistant

Director of Visitor Engagement, Public Relations and Events

After a hugely successful Waterwise Community Festival, where volunteers were central to every aspect of the event, we're already pivoting to preparing for this year's lovely Luminaria Nights. Luminaria will be on Fridays and Saturdays, December 9 and 10, and 16 and 17 this year, with lights, music, drinks, and treats available each night from 6 to 9 p.m. As in the past, we're counting on volunteers to help create these magical evenings and make sure they happen smoothly. There are volunteer slots available on Volgistics, with tasks that include: assembling luminarias (in the week before each Friday "debut"), setting up and lighting luminarias, monitoring paths, helping musicians, welcoming guests at the registration table, and selling drinks and treats. Volunteer shifts are set up this year so that no volunteer will have to work throughout the entire event: the perfect opportunity to invite your friends or family to come and join you for a stroll before or after your shift! Got questions about volunteering at Luminaria Nights? Feel free to send an e-mail to myself (lstoebel@calbg.org) or Ming Posa (mposa@calbg.org). Hope to see you all there!



HOSPITALITY

Anne Odgers

Anne was born in Boston, and graduated from Cornell University. She met and married a local Claremont boy and has loved living in Claremont for over 30 years. She earned her Master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Loma Linda University and has worked at the Loma Linda Behavioral Medical Center and other agencies helping children suffering from trauma. Anne has been on the Board of the National Alliance on Mental Illness for over 14 years and is excited about now contributing to the California Botanic Garden. She joined the Garden many years ago, becoming a volunteer in 2019. She especially appreciates the Zen atmosphere and peacefulness of the Garden. Anne has enjoyed working at the gift shop and on the Public Relations and on the Native Designs Committees. Now that she is retired, she has time for her favorite activities including: hiking, sewing, watercolor painting, writing, and especially travelling.



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HORTICULTURE

Ashlee Armstrong

My name is Ashlee, and I have been with the Garden for six years. I started as an intern in the Production Nursery before moving into the Horticulture Department. My previous plant-related work was mainly as a farm hand on a large vegetable farm in Petaluma. Before plants, I spent quite a bit of time behind a computer in Washington DC, working for the Institute of International Education, and for the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies at American University. I have recently accepted the position of Assistant Director of Horticulture, taking over some of Peter's administrative responsibilities, as he spends a little less time at the Garden and

more time devoted to design work. Horticulture is a constant learning experience, and I am looking forward to continuing to learn and grow in this new position.



There are many different spots in the Garden that I enjoy; walking through the trails out in the Plant Communities, one of my favorite sections is the Southern Chaparral bed, with its groves of *Adenostoma sparsifolium* (Red Shanks, above left), *Ornithostaphylos oppositifolia* (Baja Bird Bush), and *Xylococcus bicolor* (Mission Manzanita). The *Xylococcus* (above right) has started to bloom, and may be in full bloom by the time this is published, so be sure to go and take a look!



**GROUNDS
MANAGER**
Jared Nokturne,

10 Years of Experience in Horticulture

I started as a Horticulturist in 2017, building upon my previous experience as a desert plant gardener at The Huntington Library. With five years dedicated to CalBG, I progressed from Senior Horticulturist to Grounds Manager. One of my long-term goals is to establish an ex situ, habitat-centric community for *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua Tree), specifically in bed CO3, south. I have successfully transplanted companion

plants such as *Opuntia basilaris*, *Echinocereus engelmannii*, and *Cylindropuntia echinocarpa*, and have also added *Scutellaria mexicana* and *Salvia columbariae*. Recently, I have taken online continuing education in chainsaw repair to bolster my technical skill as a power-tool operator. Although working with plants is my career path, the fulfillment I get from working at CalBG affects my aspirations outside of work. Being immersed in nature preserves my spiritual peace, and inspires other creative endeavors like writing, piano, and indigenous tradition. My favorite native inflorescence on site is *Amsinckia menziesii* (small-flowered fiddleneck), with its intricate yellow whorl.

“Immortality mildews in the museums of the moon”, a line from Mina Loy, my favorite poet.

VOLUNTEER LIBRARY HOURS



Effective January 2023, the Volunteer Library will be open the first Tuesday of each month, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This is the day the Volunteer Library Committee meets and its members will be available if you need assistance checking out or returning a book. The Volunteer Library is located on the northeast corner of the Administration building. The library

has many books that are helpful resources for Garden volunteers. If you are at the Garden on the first Tuesday of the month, please stop by and see all that the Volunteer Library has to offer.

CALIFORNIA INDIAN BASKETS

by Shaunna Gygli



No one in the world made more useful, finer, or more beautiful baskets than The First People of California. Every family typically had 22 types of baskets for a variety of purposes. The basket weavers made water-tight baskets for cooking and carrying water, for collecting acorns and seeds, and for sifting and winnowing. They wove hats, skirts, shoes, baby carriers, traps, weirs, and seed beaters.



Over 75 plant species were used by California Native Americans to make their baskets. They were made from the shoots, stems, fiber, roots, and bark of native plants such as willow, sedge, redbud, deer grass, juncus, sumac, and yucca, along with many other

grasses, herbs, ferns, rushes, shrubs, and trees. Sunflowers, buttercups, elderberry, and indigo bush were some of the plants used for dyes. The plants used by the individual tribes varied depending on availability and cultural traditions.

Plant management was practiced: fields of useful plants were weeded and pruning produced straight

twigs and grasses. Fire maintained the grasslands and the young sprouted grass after a fire was preferred for baskets.

It took many months to collect material. Tender bark was gathered in the spring. Grass stems were pulled in the late summer when they were tall and straight. Roots had to be gathered at the right time.

Basket material was carefully prepared. Sedge roots were cleaned, stripped, and put in rolls like twine to be stored. Seeds were scraped from the stems of grasses. Material could be dyed in wet ashes or iron-rich mud.



Some basket makers preferred the coiled method (left) while others preferred twining. A coiled basket was made by wrapping a bundle, such as long pine needles, with root strips and “sewing”

each coil to the preceding layer by pulling a strip of plant fiber through a hole made with a bone awl.



Twining (left) is a method where two or more weavers cross each other as they weave around the spokes. This is really hard to explain. Come to the Native Designs grapevine harvest and wreath

making next St. Patrick’s Day, and I will show you! I have no idea how the amazingly intricate, beautiful designs were created in the coiled or the twined baskets.

Next month’s article will feature today’s basket weavers, the challenges they face, and the efforts of the California Indian Basketweavers’ Association (CIBA).

Photos from the L.A. County, Department of Education

EXCEPTIONALLY POISONOUS PLANTS

by Steve Bryant

The toxicity of many plants can change with time and growing conditions, but this subject is often understudied. There is a wide variety of poisons, produced by various plants. Some plants produce cardiac glycosides that can cause fatal cardiac arrhythmias, others contain cyanogenic glycosides that produce hydrogen cyanide when metabolized.

Below are some plants reputedly toxic to humans when ingested in small quantities.

Anacardiaceae: *Toxicodendron* (Poison Oak) is poisonous internally as well as externally. If burned, the volatile poison may damage the lungs.



VOLUNTEER QUARTERLY MEETING AND HOLIDAY PARTY

December 7th 11:30 a.m.

in the Forest Pavilion

Connect with old friends and meet new
volunteers! Staff welcome.

Live Music

Lasagna from Spagetti Eddie's , hot cider!
(Heaters provided)

Please bring a salad, side dish, or dessert
Tram starts at 11:00 a.m. from Kiosk

Apiaceae: Many, including *Conium maculatum* (Poison Hemlock, naturalized in much of CA), and *Heracleum maximum* (Cow Parsnip).

Apocynaceae: Probably all species; this family, including the milkweeds, contains cardiac glycosides. *Nerium* (*oleander*, a non-native) is especially poisonous.



Aristolochiaceae: *Aristolochia* contains aristolochic acids, which are mutagenic, carcinogenic, and nephrotoxic.

Asteraceae: at least several, including *Achillea*.

Cucurbitaceae: many, especially the seeds of *Marah*.

Equisetaceae: *Equisetum*, and many other horsetail rushes contain thiaminase, which destroys thiamine (Vitamin B1).

Ericaceae: Many genera, including *Rhododendron occidentale* (Western azalea), contain neurotoxins. Do not eat honey from *Rhododendron* flowers—so-called “mad honey.”

Euphorbiaceae: probably most



Fabaceae: Many have poisonous seeds and sometimes vegetative parts, including *Astragalus* (loco weed) and *Lupinus*.

Fagaceae: many tannins, especially in fruits (e.g., acorns)

Iridaceae: *Iris*, and other genera

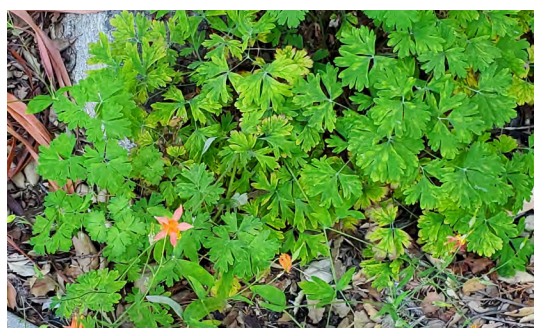
Liliaceae: probably most genera (especially toxic to cats)

Melanthiaceae: most, including *Toxicoscordion* (Death Camas), [formerly *Zigadenus*], with seven spp. in CA, and *Veratrum* (corn lily, false-hellbore)



Paeoniaceae: *Paeonia californica* and other peonies reputedly GI toxic

Plantaginaceae: *Digitalis* (naturalized)



Ranunculaceae: probably all, including *Aquilegia*, *Delphinium* (pictured above), and especially *Aconitum* (Wolfbane) and *Actaea* (Baneberry)

Rosaceae: *Heteromeles arbutifolia* (Toyon), and many others, contain cyanogenic glycosides, especially in seeds, leaves, and unripe fruit.

Sapindaceae: Seeds and other parts of *Aesculus californica* (Buckeye) are poisonous due to saponins.



Solanaceae: all, including *Datura* (pictured left) and *Nicotiana*, with the exception of some fruit cultivars (tomato, tomatillo) and tubers (potato)

Taxaceae: all parts of *Taxus* (Yew)

Viburnaceae: *Sambucus* (Elderberry), though fully ripe berries may not be so poisonous

Viscaceae: *Phoradendron* (mistletoe) can cause gastrointestinal poisoning.

In short, unless you fully know what you are doing, eat plants from the grocery store.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

by Amy Baumann



Ancestor Approved
Intertribal Stories for Kids,
edited by Cynthia Leitich
Smith. Heartbeat Imprint
of Harper Collins
Publishing, 2021.

Leitich Smith's book is a collection of stories and poetry that share the experiences of Native families from across the continent. Families from many Nations gather at the Dance for Mother Earth powwow in Ann Arbor, Michigan and share stories of the strength of community and Native pride. The uplifting stories provide points of reflection for all children. The stories remind us that we are all different but also very much the same. The 18 stories included in the book offer insight into friendship, resilience, and hope. The journeys provide a glimpse into contemporary Native life. The anthology is intended for children ages 9 to 12. It is an appropriate book for young people to read independently. It would also be a special book for a parent or grandparent to read with a child.

WATERWISE COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

photos by Carrie Rosema

