President: Lynn Miller  
Vice President: Yvonne Wilson  
Treasurer: Betsy MacLaren  
Secretary: Barbara Shelley  
Goals & Evaluations: Marla White  
Volunteer Personnel: No Chair  
Volunteer Library: Amy Baumann  
Enrichment & Field Trips: No Chair  
Hospitality: Co Chairs Susan Starr and Anne Odgers  
Horticulture & Research: Tom White  
Visitor Education: Co Chairs: Ann Morgan and Katy Douglass  
Public Relations: Dorcia Bradley  
Native Designs: Linda Prendergast  
Oak Notes  
Editor: Patricia Brooks  
Copy Editor: Fred Brooks  
Publisher: Carole Aldrich  
Web Publisher: Ming Posa  

FROM THE PRESIDENT  
Lynn Miller, Volunteer President  

While winter ushers in chilly temps, its shortened days mean more darkness. Throughout history, people have celebrated this time as a season of lights. Whether the lights come in brilliant electronic displays synchronized to music, or are the humblest of all—the simple votive—they help us to see in the dark. During the holidays, we squeezed more into our days than we ever thought possible. Then and now, it’s time for a stroll around the Garden and take a calming deep breath.

On December 7th, we had a terrific Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Holiday Party. We enjoyed lasagna, and the volunteers added the sides, salads, and desserts. We honored Steve Bryant for all his informative Oak Notes articles about native plants, and we welcomed three key staff members who have moved on from CalBG: Brenda Bollinger, Kathleen Noll, and Karina Chappell. Each made a difference in our lives, and it was good to share the afternoon with them in the Forest Pavilion.

Much to our surprise, we learned that Ming Posa, Executive Assistant and Botany Program Coordinator, has accepted a position at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Ming is exceptional. When she took over as Volunteer Manager, we, too, learned how remarkable she is. She’s not only organized and prompt, she is gracious. We will miss her and wish her every success as she takes this next step. We also hope she stays warm!  

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the February 2023 issue of Oak Notes is Sunday, January 15. Thank you for your prompt submission!  

Volgistics reminder: Please submit your monthly volunteer hours to Volgistics. Every volunteer minute counts.
By now our own light show, Luminaria Nights, is a fond memory. Every night the Garden was full of happy visitors. Three venues offered music, visitors took in the lights, they enjoyed a fire pit, and the volunteers sold hot cider and cookies. It was a festive four nights and a beautiful tradition. Kudos to all the staff who planned, organized, and set up this special event, and a thanks to all the volunteers who braved the cold to make each night a memorable evening.

The year 2022 was busy, and thank you for your patience as we slowly, yet safely, returned to the Garden. I hope to see you soon, and wish you a Happy and Healthy 2023!

Stay well.

—Lynn

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade, CalBG Executive Director

Greetings volunteers! I have so enjoyed seeing and working with many of you in this season of Luminaria. When I complemented Lauren Stoebel on how well the first weekend of Luminaria had gone, she answered that she was just grateful to be working with such a great group of volunteers, staff and students who know what they are doing, do what they said they would do, and fulfill their commitments while needing very little managing (much less micromanaging). That’s us, right? AND we enjoy each other’s company and have fun while working at whatever it is. I think that this mindset and ‘way of working’ is contagious. Almost all new volunteers, staff and students catch on right away, as do many of our guests!

As 2022 is drawing to a close (how did that happen?), I begin to think of the things that I have been grateful for this year including, of course, the CalBG volunteer corps, as just noted. A few more:

• I am very grateful that it has already rained more than 8” this winter wet season (and I am hoping — hoping — that the first months of 2023 are not a replay of 2022 during which we had so little rain). Also, while we are talking about weather: thanks but no thanks to windstorms, please!

• I am grateful that the uptick in Covid with which we began 2022 did not turn out to be any worse that it was. On the other hand, many of us managed to catch the thing this year and, as we end the year, we seem back to ‘normal’ with regard to colds, flu and the other pestilential infirmities that normally plague our winters. You will continue to see me wearing my mask indoors for a while! Please get your vaccinations!

• I am grateful to our horticulture staff for all that they did in the aftermath of the horrid windstorm back in late January. It is difficult to work at full capacity when you are mourning, and yet they did. Thanks also to the weed crew and maintenance staff who helped enormously in the first days as we struggled with the worst of the downed trees. Volunteer (and Trustee) Rick Davis was here as if a staff member working on clean-up — and mourning — through those days and weeks.

A Very Happy January Birthday to:

John Bradley
Laura Burt
Susan Gregory
George Hilder
Patricia Hoppe
Christine Langteau
Mellena Leong
Beverly Pemberton
Linda Prendergast
Ron Serven
Melissa Smith
Paul Standerfer
Zoe Vavrek
Katina Vlastos
Miles Wentworth
• The restaffing of our Visitor Experience Department has made me very grateful this year! Jennifer Scerra on the education front and Lauren Stoebel in public programs and PR make a terrific team, and have quietly but effectively gotten us entirely back into action. Under Jennifer’s leadership, we are back in the school tours business and back training new Garden Guides (among other things). Lauren took the lead on a brand new — incredibly timely — Waterwise Community Festival, plus Luminaria (the fourth and last night of which is happening as I write). All four nights of Luminaria have sold out. I hope you all know what a lovely venue the Forest Pavilion is for music!

• I want also to give a shout out to the musicians who entertained us on their wonderfully diverse recorders at the December volunteer luncheon — and who also entertained guests arriving for Luminaria on Friday the 16th. I think that the coyotes were entertained as well, as a couple of magnificent choruses were ‘sung’ while the musicians were playing.

• I am very grateful to all of you volunteers who have stayed with us through the entire, troubling, largely inactive, nearly three years of Covid, and to those of you who are newer and swinging into action. We are such a much stronger organization because of you!

• Deserving of special mention is Julie Scheuermann who has stepped up to serve as volunteer manager during an interregnum. Julie has already been helping enormously with volunteer ‘matters,’ is an expert on Volgistics and so is wonderfully gracious to work with! I am enormously grateful.

• I could go on and on in this vein but I am going to end this list of people and events for which I am especially grateful in 2022 by saying how immensely grateful I am to Ming Posa — and how sad I am that we are losing her. I could continue extensively about the ways in which Ming has been a 200% full partner and absolutely indispensable over the three and a half years that she has been with us, but I think you all already know that to be the case. So I will just say: thanks, Ming, for everything. We will miss you.

As we launch into 2023, join me in looking forward with eager anticipation to spring events (Bird Festival for the first time since 2020!). We will be recruiting new graduate students and new volunteers. We will be continuing our commitment to sustain and build an ever-greater California Botanic Garden! Meanwhile, as 2022 wanes, have a wonderful and safe holiday season!

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**The Grow Native Nursery Team**

by the Grow Native Nursery Manager, Mariana Ramirez Rodriguez

I first started at the Garden as a Plant Conservation Intern in the summer of 2019 then was hired on as a Production Nursery Technician in 2020. At
the beginning of 2022, I became the Grow Native Nursery Manager. I graduated from Cal Poly Pomona in Fall 2019 with an Environmental Biology degree.

I already had a fascination with nature but my experience during the Garden’s summer internship opened up a whole new world. I fell even more in love with nature and now more specifically with California native plants. I didn’t appreciate the native plants around me, just those native to higher elevations where the plants looked greener or “better.” Now, I appreciate and love them, especially those in the desert. Some of my favorites include: Scutellaria mexicana, Larrea tridentata, Atriplex hymenelytra, Salvia mohavenis, and Opuntia basilaris. It’s exciting to talk about these as the GNN manager to newcomers to native plants because I am broadening their knowledge, and hopefully their excitement, of native plants.

The GNN has a new member, Israel Ulloa, who started as the GNN Sales Associate right before the Fall Sale. Israel studied Computer Engineering at the University of California, Davis. After graduating, he found a passion in gardening that led to working at the GNN. He spends his free time painting, drawing, reading, and learning trumpet. Israel is also studying soil science through an online program to learn effective ways to farm without the use of insecticides, fungicides and other damaging additives used in modern agriculture. It’s a great pleasure having Israel work at the GNN. He has learned quite a lot in a short amount of time. People he has helped selecting plants for their future native yards have all been grateful for his knowledge.

It has been a full year of me being in charge of the GNN. It’s been challenging and stressful at times. But the support and encouragement from my colleagues and volunteers have been essential and heartwarming. Thank you to everyone who has helped at the GNN in any way! The GNN has been great since its opening this year and I’m sure it will continue to be so!

Native Basketry’s Role in Maintaining Tribal Traditions
by Shaunna Gygli

Native basketry is a combination of ancestral traditions and an expert knowledge of ecology, tribal history, and the arts. It plays a key role in maintaining California tribal culture. Currently, Native cultural diversity is linked to native plants in linguistics, terminology, historical food collection, festivals for harvesting plants, storytelling, dance, regalia, healing rituals, and traditional handicrafts such as basket making.

Invasive plants not only affect biodiversity but the culture of indigenous people.
1. They displace native basket materials such as redbud and deer grass.
2. They reduce the number and health of culturally important plants.
3. Plants with spines and thorns like star thistle, cocklebur, and stinging nettle are physical barriers to the harvesters.
4. Large populations of invasive plants destroy the character of sacred sites.
5. Widespread use of herbicides and resulting residue on native species, stunt their growth and cause deformities.
6. Basket weavers are exposed to toxic substances, creating health concerns.
7. There are also health concerns for those who receive or use cradle boards, rattles, baskets, musical instruments, regalia, and other crafts potentially contaminated by toxins.

In 1992 The California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) was organized to develop The Traditional Gathering Policy in consultation with tribal governments, U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. The policy covers culturally used non-timber plants, including agave, beargrass, redbud, sedge, sumac, willow, and yucca. Free use without permits may be granted for personal, community, and non-commercial uses. It
ensures access to gathering areas and that local land managers protect and enhance traditional plant populations. The policy incorporates traditional tribal management to restore, enhance, and promote ecosystem health.

Hopefully, through the efforts of CIBA, government agencies, native plant botanic gardens, and other like-minded organizations, biodiversity and tribal cultures will be defended.

**Meet the CalBG Horticulture Staff**

*Oak Notes* is currently featuring CalBG’s Horticulture Staff. In December, you met Ashlee Armstrong, Assistant Director of Horticulture, and Jared Nokturne, Grounds Manager. This issue introduces Jennifer Chebahtah and Laura Christianson, both Horticulturist. When you see them in their work area, say “Hello!”

**Horticulturist**

Jennifer Chebahtah

Like our plants, I am a California native, born and raised in Riverside. As a child, I spent lots of time with my grandparents, bird watching and gardening. I have a silly, distinct memory of proudly collecting and presenting my grandmother with a bouquet of sweet alyssum. After graduating from high school and falling into the restaurant industry for many years, I went back to school. I attended San Bernardino Valley College and fell in love with the elegance of biology. I later transferred to UC Santa Cruz where I was lucky enough to live, study, and work in the spectacular Coast Redwood Forest. One of the highlights of my time at UCSC was participating in an Arctic Ecology field course in frosty Sitka, Alaska, with a group of 20 incredible classmates and several dedicated professors and TAs. I’m so thankful I had the opportunity to dry-suit snorkel over a giant kelp forest in face-freezing waters and hike on an island in the Sitka Sound, home to a unique muskeg ecosystem. In the summer of 2020, I received my Bachelor’s degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. I started working at the Garden in March 2022 as a horticulture intern. I am now a full-time horticulturist and can be found caring for the North Mesa. This area borders the gorgeous Native Designs Garden and includes a swath of beautiful redwoods, the Cultivar Garden, and the Trustees’ Oak Grove. My favorite things about working here are being around like-minded people, seeing the wildlife, and feeling more in tune with seasonal changes. I am also a member of the Comanche Nation Tribe from present-day Oklahoma. My work here has helped me become more attuned to how my body and brain are meant to live without technology. When I’m not working, I read, crochet, hike, or maintain a container garden on my small balcony.

**Horticulture Staff**

Laura Christianson

Greetings! My name is Laura Christianson and I am one of the CalBG horticulturists on staff. Specifically, I help take care of the South Mesa.

I originally hail from Bismarck, North Dakota, but moved to California about twelve years ago. My route to California native plant horticulture was not necessarily linear but an adventure all the same. I pursued marine biology and environmental science in my undergraduate education which took me all over California, and even culminated in a month-long research program in Sitka, Alaska with fellow horticulturist Jennifer Chebahtah. I became Advanced Scuba Certified, and volunteered both as an instructional scuba aide, and as an Animal Care Personnel with the Pacific Marine Mammal Center helping rescue and rehabilitate sick and injured marine mammals. In addition, I worked...
with the Beltran Lab at UC Santa Cruz to assist in undergraduate research on elephant seal migrations and diving behavior using stable isotope analysis of seal whiskers.

While pursuing marine biology, however, I found myself spending more of my free time reading and learning about horticulture and native plants. Like many others, I had originally started gardening without knowing what I was doing, but when I discovered The Humane Gardener by Nancy Lawson, something clicked. Around this same time my parents gifted me Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac, and Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Braiding Sweetgrass. These three books quietly undid my years of planning for a career in marine biology, as I found myself becoming fascinated with the idea of helping biodiversity in our own yards and communities rather than on a boat in the middle of the ocean. Ultimately, I switched degrees and graduated in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

On the South Mesa, I’m currently excited about our recently seeded wildflower beds, an upcoming renovation project around Silent Sentinel, and the terraced-bed revamp in front of the Administration building. Please come check it out and say hi if you’re in the area!

**Book of the Month**

Gene Baumann, Volunteer Library Committee


About 25 years ago David Milarch, a Michigan nurseryman, had a near-death experience. As a result, he felt an urgency to clone the largest and oldest of each tree species. The quest to find and save as many tree species as possible is called the Champion Tree Project. It is chronicled by Jim Robbins in a journalistic manner that is at turns hopeful, sad, and strange. Considerable science is imparted as the narrative proceeds to chronicle the efforts to clone 15 species of trees including: white oak, bristlecone pine, dawn redwood, stinking cedar, Sitka spruce and sequoia.

Mr. Robbins offers the following rationale for this immense project: “What we have lost by mowing down the forests around the world is far more than big trees. We’ve squandered the genetic fitness of future forests…the great irreplaceable trove of DNA that had been shaped and strengthened over millennia by surviving drought, disease, pestilence, heat, and cold—the genetic memory—was also gone. The DNA that may be best suited for the tree’s journey into an uncertain future on a warming planet has all but vanished…” Thus, the Champion Tree Project not only locates and clones trees, it also tasks growers in a variety of different geographic and climatic areas to grow these cloned seedlings and reintroduce them back into forests.

To date, hundreds of tree species have been cloned and reintroduced into forests in the US and Europe. Additional and updated information on the Champion Tree Project is available at ancienttreearchive.org.

This book can be checked out from the Volunteer Library, which will be open on the first Tuesday of each month beginning January 3, 2023 from 9:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

**Potentially Invasive California Natives**

by Steve Bryant

Even our California native plants can get out of control, by runners, rampant growth, or by seed. Cultural conditions play a large role in which plants get out of control. *Asclepias fascicularis*, for instance, is very invasive in my heavy soil, but a bit difficult to keep going in the alluvial areas. Listed are some
plants that, in my own gardens, have occasionally gotten out of control.

**Plants that can spread widely underground:**

Romneya coulteri and Oenothera californica—beautiful, but can spread rapidly and deeply, going under sidewalks and block walls

Asclepias fascicularis and Pluchea serica—rapid spread in heavy, moist soil, but not as rapid in drier alluvium

Achillea millefolium and Eriodictyon crassifolium—spreads rapidly, even in alluvial soils, especially when moist

Epilobium canum—perhaps not as fast to spread as others listed

**Plants that can spread widely aboveground:**

Cucurbitaceae—Any of our three species of Cucurbita can spread to cover large areas; C. foetidissima is the largest and most local. Brandegea bigelovii (below left) can, with time, climb over and smother a medium-sized tree. Marah (below right)

C. foetidissima is the largest and most local. Brandegea bigelovii (below left) can, with time, climb over and smother a medium-sized tree. Marah (below right)

can cover a small shrub.

Aristolochia californica—spreads above- or slightly below-ground; runners can be 7 m long. Can also

enshroud trees and shrubs (but is a host plant for Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly).

**Plants that may spread (too) readily from seed:**

Abutilon palmeri

Argemone—may remain in a seed bank for many years

Bloomeria crocea—spreads by seed and cormlets

Boerhavia coccinea—deep tap root, even on a small plant

Claytonia perfoliata—only spreads in moist soil

Dieteria — pretty gold and purple flowers, but copious seed

Dipterostemon capitatus—spreads readily by seed; also by cormlets

Encelia farinosa

Epilobium brachycarpum

Eriogonum fasciculatum and E. elongatum

Eschscholzia californica—can take over a whole yard; an annual, but often perennates

Helianthus annus

Lupinus—local spp., especially L. truncatus

Mentzelia laevicaulis

Oenothera elata

Palafaxia arida—this desert plant also grows readily in our area

Penstemon spectabilis – acres were bulldozed to make the 210 Fwy.

Peritoma arborea

Phacelia minor

Poaceae (some: Aristida, for instance)

Salvia mellifera

Sphaeralcea ambigu
Luminaria Nights
photos by Carrie Rosema, Lauren Stoebel, and Susan Starr.