From the President
Lynn Miller, Volunteer President

It’s April and time for Wildflower Month in the Garden—and what a glorious array of color! It’s a time to go for a stroll in the Garden and take in the revived plant life, the flowers, birds, squirrels, and even the lizards. Please note that the new hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday. Also, be sure to look at the Garden website if you are interested in springtime opportunities such as: poetry, art and yoga classes, bird walks, and more.

Thank you to all who came out to harvest grapevines and to those who twisted them into wreaths. We celebrated our work with a hearty lunch of stuffed baked potatoes, salads, nibbles, and drinks. Kudos to Linda Prendergast for setting up the grapevine harvest and to Susan Starr, Anne Odgers, and the Hospitality Committee for organizing our lunch.

Mark your calendars for our Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon on Friday, April 11th. Our intrepid hospitality team is lining up a tasty fare for all to enjoy. Come find out what the volunteers are doing, and stay for lunch.

I want to take a moment to thank Julie Scheuermann, who is serving as our interim volunteer liaison. As a volunteer herself, Julie is keenly aware of what volunteers need, and her follow-through is unbeatable. Please be sure to read her email announcements via Lauren Stoebel regarding volunteer opportunities and Volgistics.

We are still looking for volunteers to offer their time and talent to our Board and our committees. This is a rewarding, learning experience, so if you know of someone to recommend, or maybe you would like to give a little more time to CalBG, just reply to me by email. Thank you!

Volunteer Bits and Bobs:
• The Volunteer Library is now open Tuesday through Friday.
• The recently ordered logo wear is in and most items have been delivered.
• Nametags are on order.
• The AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) donated by the Volunteer Organization have arrived.

**Upcoming Dates:**
**Thursday, April 6, Noon:** Volunteer Board meeting  
**Tuesday, April 11, 11:30:** Volunteer Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon  
**Sunday, May 7:** Forever California Garden Gala

Thank you for your dedication to CalBG and enjoy the wildflowers!

—Lynn

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**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Lucinda McDade,  
CalBG Executive Director

**Grape vines, wreaths, superblooms, and water wisdom**

Greetings volunteers! It was terrific to see so many of you out for the great annual grape vine harvest and wreath making event on St. Patrick’s Day! The vines were in perfect condition — well hydrated from our amazing winter of rains. After winding many of the vines into the shape of wreaths, the group (plus quite a few staff) feasted on baked potatoes and each other’s company. Quite the jolly work day and celebration on a day of glorious weather (for a change).

Speaking of rain— we have been getting lots of questions about whether or not we will have a superbloom this year. Having just driven over to 29 Palms and Joshua Tree National Park, I can tell you that the bloom is spotty across our deserts. Remarkably, some areas (e.g., near Amboy Crater) look as if they have had no rain at all. Other areas are beginning to look magnificent and it is clear that we will have at least a patchy superbloom. I am excited for our conservation crews and for our graduate students who will very likely have very productive field seasons - especially gratifying after our years of ugly drought.

At the same time, as we contemplate views of flower covered hill sides, Garden staff have embarked on an effort to educate the public about the ethics of flower peeping. You may remember that the superbloom of 2019 led to such a massive number of visitors and such terrible behavior that Walker Canyon near Lake Elsinore was entirely closed to the public. Visitors had clogged the roads, parked haphazardly (including on the flowers), picked the flowers, created social trails through the flowers, sat among the flowers, and documented it all via photos shared over social media. Not good. Up at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve, the crowning horror of the 2019 superbloom was when a chartered helicopter was landed right in the flowers (don’t believe me? Google it!).

Led by our Director of Conservation Programs, Naomi Fraga, we are trying to get the word out regarding flower viewing etiquette.  
#Don’tDoomTheBloom! You all know the basics: don’t pick the flowers, don’t walk off trails, don’t park cars on top of flowers on the edge of the road. Model good behavior and consider how to spread the word. Each flower picked, crushed or broken is a flower that the next visitor will not get to see and — more importantly — will not make seeds to stock the next superbloom.

We also strongly suggest creating your own superbloom by scattering seeds purchased from a reputable source (e.g., our own GNN). Here at CalBG, horticulturist Laura Christianson has done just that, especially in areas to the NE of the Administration Building: visit often to check out what is flowering. I noted lots of baby blue eyes

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The turtles are returning from a winter’s brumation. Can spring be far behind? Photo by Nedra Grubel
(Nemophila) and tidy tips (Layia) the last time I walked out in that direction. Also consider visiting places that are a bit off the beaten track. There are too many of us here in southern California to congregate in just a few areas. Take the less traveled road and find your own superbloom!

I would also like to ask that you help those who are relatively uninformed to understand that a year of remarkable rains does not mean that we are out of the woods in terms of long-term trends and droughts. Among other things, we do not yet know how the Colorado River will fare this year and whether the vitally important reservoirs along it will be fully replenished (as have many California reservoirs). We can not forget about using water wisely and we must continue doing all that we can to live within our water means. No, you should not re-install your turf, nor reverse any of the water saving measures that we've all implemented! These measures will position us well for the future.

And on into spring, volunteers! Thanks as always for all that you do for the Garden. You certainly make our world a better place even as you bring joy and satisfaction to your lives – and smiles of appreciation all around among the staff!

Meet the CalBG Horticulture Staff

Oak Notes is currently featuring CalBG’s Horticulture Staff. In this issue, we introduce Alex Reyes, Horticulture Intern. If you see him in his work area, say “Hello!”

Horticultural Intern
Alex Reyes

As a child, I was always drawn to the natural world and all things green and brown, from my brown skin, to the brown soil from which green plants sprouted. A captive of nature, I credit my grandmother and mother. They instilled the power of plants as medicine in me using them as curanderas to perform cleanings, rituals, and rites.

With the passing of my grandmother, much of her ethnobotanical knowledge (and delicious recipes) continues to thrive in her descendants, like me! However, I sought to seek answers to this medicine, this sacred knowledge. Questions such as, “How it worked, why it worked, and more importantly, how did they know?” came to mind.

As an adult, reconnecting with my culture became incredibly important for me. Earth-tones are still some of my favorite hues, and the magnitude and variations by which plants manipulate and adapt are astonishing. Colors, tastes, odors, textures, and all my interactions with fruits, vegetables, flowers, and medicine endlessly spark my curiosity.

This led me to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where I concentrated on Environmental Horticulture Science. Throughout my undergraduate program I had many opportunities with great professors, wholesome communities, and peers. With the program’s extensive curriculum and the school’s “Learn by doing/hands-on” work ethic, I received the training and education needed to answer my questions. However, it was just the beginning for me!

A Very Happy April Birthday to:

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I believe everyone could benefit from research. I believe that, especially in ethnobotany, this can be done appropriately: with understanding, patience, and a lot of work. Sustainable, plant-based alternatives, are potentially a viable source of medicines, and more. Like my professor of weed science, Dr. Steinmaus, would say, “It’s only a matter of time before chemicals stop working. Weeds will dominate the world.” I believe sustainability and conservation will be unconditional factors to prioritize as we proceed into an uncertain future.

I hope to inspire a love of horticulture in others and continue to nurture plants and my own roots, too! Currently, you can find me caring for the container garden and the northern community sections.

**Volunteer Library Reopening**

The volunteer library will be reopening on a regular basis. It should be unlocked Tuesday through Friday during the day. Please feel free to stop by and check out a book, or just browse. Many new books have been added since the doors were locked in 2020. For those of you new to the Garden, the door to the library is located on the northeast end of the administration building. Thank you to Jennifer Scerra, who has agreed to unlock the door daily. Enjoy the library.

**Bryophytes (Mosses and allies)**

_by Steve Bryant_

This is a polyphyletic group of nonvascular plants, but each of the three groups listed below is monophyletic. They reproduce by spores, and the easily visible plants are haploid gametophytes.

*Liverworts:* ~120 CA species. The thallose (leafy) liverworts are to me the most recognizable. They look like small green leaves closely appressed to the substrate. Several species, including the common (especially in potted plants) *Marchantia polymorpha*, have “gemma cups,” that hold “gemmae,” tiny tissue discs that wash out and germinate into new haploid plants (image of liverworts in a potted plant at GNN).

*Hornworts:* ~8 CA species. Sometimes superficially similar to liverworts. Their common name refers to the tall narrow sporophytes that continually grow from the top of the plant and are unique to hornworts.

*Mosses:* ~595 similar-looking CA species. Of these, ~23 are *Sphagnum* species that grow in very wet areas. Some *Sphagnum* species, dried, are used for fuel (peat) and in horticulture. Moss sporophytes look like a club on top of a stem on top of the green gametophyte (image of moss in a potted plant at GNN).

*Lichens (a symbiosis, not just a plant)*

*Lichens:* ~1,900 CA species, compared to 5,000 to 6,000 vascular plant species. Lichens are usually a symbiosis of an alga and (new research) two types of fungi. Mostly found in harsh environments, they are estimated to cover 7% of the earth’s surface. In SoCal, some lichens grow on at least partially shaded rocks (image) or bricks. Other forms festoon trees and may resemble Spanish Moss (pineapple family). Of
these, *Ramalina menziesii* is the California State Lichen (below right). A common lichen in our local mountains is *Letharia vulpina*, the bright-green Wolf Lichen (below left) that grows on the shady side of tree trunks.

Hoary old adage: Some fungi took a lichen to an alga; the fungi built the house; the alga makes the food. Even though their relationship is on the rocks, they’ve decided to stick together.

**Image Credits:**


**Books of the Month**
by Joan Sweeney, Volunteer Library Committee

**A Book of Salvias:**

Salvias, or sages, are the largest genus in the mint (Lamiaceae) family. Here at the California Botanic Garden, we are most familiar with the species native to California. They thrive in our rocky soil and summer-dry climate and attract birds, butterflies and other pollinators. As I write this, there are twelve varieties of sage plants in the inventory of the Grow Native Nursery. Many of them are hybrids. Salvias hybridize in the wild and under the care of Garden workers, creating new species of plants.

There are about nine hundred species of salvias, at least 235 other genera, and a total of more than 7,500 species in the mint family. Most of these plants have aromatic leaves and include herbs used in cooking, such as true mint, rosemary, and thyme. Some plants also have medicinal uses. Peppermint tea can soothe an upset stomach. The Latin name “Salvia” derives from *salvere*, meaning to heal or save.

It is possible to find information online about these plants and many gardening books include sections about them. Two books available in the Volunteer Library focus on them.

Betsey Clebsch, an “amateur botanist and horticulturalist,” was inspired to write about salvias by the plants in her garden in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco. She selected one hundred salvias from around the world and listed them alphabetically. Each entry in *A Book of Salvias* includes a description of the plant, its history, and how to cultivate it.

**Mints:**

Barbara Perry Lawton was manager of publications at the Missouri Botanical Garden and the author of several gardening books. The opening chapter in *Mints: A Family of Herbs and Ornamentals* explores the “history and lore” of mints—how ancient and modern people have used them and where they’ve appeared in literature. Both books are illustrated with color photographs and line drawings.
It was a beautiful day for pruning grapevines and making wreaths! Under the careful guidance of Grounds Manager Jerod Nokturne and his horticulture crew, we made short work of the vines on the east fence and further north by maintenance. When all was said-and-done, we made 15 small wreaths, 27 large wreaths, and four grapevine hearts.
You are invited to join us for our Spring 2023 CalBG Volunteer Luncheon and Quarterly Meeting

11:30 AM Tuesday, April 11, 2023
Forest Pavilion
Tram begins at 11:00 AM

Drawing for Prizes!
Luncheon will be provided.

Please wear your name badge.
Staff are welcome!