A few weeks ago, I stopped by the GNN to purchase some blue-eyed grass. There is something whimsical about these little blue flowers that catches my fancy. Today, their stems are stretched out, and on the end of each, buds are ready to pop open. Sometimes it’s the smallest things in life that bring us so much joy.

April was Wildflower Month at CalBG, but with the late rains and sunshine, we can look forward to a colorful May. Many of you helped with the April 1st poetry event. Guests enjoyed poetry readings, a chance to write a poem, and the day ended with a wildflower-inspired cocktail hour. Thank you for making our visitors feel welcomed to a creative day in nature.

On April 9th, we gathered for our Spring Quarterly Meeting and Luncheon. Native Designs created the beautiful CalBG wildflower table arrangements, and the Hospitality Committee organized the luncheon. The staff joined us, and all the tables were buzzing with conversation. Lucinda updated us on new kiosk plans, and more efficient storage in the greenhouse area is on the way. Mare Nazaire announced that the Herbarium could use more volunteers, and the kiosk needs help on the weekends. We welcomed Ken Otto, the new Research Librarian, and Lucinda’s new executive assistant and Botany Program coordinator, Grace Stewart. Betsy MacLaren created an Enrichment Survey, then collected the numerous volunteer responses. Several volunteers want to join the committee, and we encourage more to help. Covid has put this important volunteer perk on hold, but if we can continue the programs four times a year, it will be a good start.

In addition to the Enrichment Committee, I encourage you to serve on the Hospitality, Visitor Education, Library, and Public Relations committees. We

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers Needed to serve on the Executive Board for next year. The open positions are VP, Secretary. Committee Chair openings are: PR, Enrichment, Personnel, Co-chair for Hospitality, Co-chair for Visitor Education.
welcome your input. Also, watch your email for volunteer announcements.

**Upcoming:**
May 7th, Garden Gala  
May 14th Mother’s Day in the Garden  
June 9th Year-end Volunteer meeting

Be sure to check the Garden website for news, activities, and classes.

Thank you for giving your time to CalBG, and enjoy the wildflowers.

—Lynn

**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Lucinda McDade,  
CalBG Executive Director

**Hello Volunteers!**
As I write, it seems that spring has finally genuinely arrived (but I am not putting away my lighter winter jacket just yet). WHAT a winter we have had – twice as much rain as normal (36” at our house around the corner from the Garden) and also remarkably and consistently chilly to downright cold. I’ve said often that I feel that I’ve worn ‘piece-of-winter-clothing X’ as many times over this winter as in the last 16 winters that I’ve spent in Claremont put together. Of course, that gives you some insight into the replacement rate of my winter wardrobe!

Compared to many other parts of our state, we fared pretty well in the face of the more than two dozen atmospheric rivers that poured on us. However, we did experience:

- Minor damage due to run-off on the grounds.
- Our maintenance road has been nearly destroyed by water flowing from the Pedley Treatment plant (W of Chapparal School), all the way across the Bernard Field Station (BFS), under the fence between the BFS and the Garden just E of the Forest Pavilion and from there down the maintenance road as a trout-worthy stream. Videos available!
- The roof over the west wing of the Admin Building which we already knew to leak in major storms did so in spades. It has been “fixed” but it leaked again in the light rain that we experienced in the second week of April: we’ll have to have the roofers try again.
- Major water infiltration into the basement below the library plus labs annex to the north of the Admin Building, presumably as a result of the soil all around the basement being absolutely sodden. Once the soil dries out, we will be doing some excavating to reveal, dry out and then reseal the places where the infiltration occurred. Especially those of you who work in the herbarium: say thank you and we appreciate you to Mare! For a couple days, she was here every three hours to empty buckets.
- Power shorted out to the outlets around the seat wall at the CA Courtyard probably owing to entirely sodden soil. Our regular electrician will be on it once the area dries.

Please join me in welcoming three new colleagues:

- Grace Stewart, Executive Assistant and Botany Program Coordinator
- Ken Otto, Librarian & Archivist
- Nathan Peterson, Community Education Coordinator

I am very excited to welcome all three of these new colleagues: it feels wonderful to be returning to a more normal level of staffing. Please join me in welcoming all three, and stop by to say hello. Ken is parttime and you will find him in the library Tu-Wed-Th, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Once he gets just a little more oriented, he will be ready to work with new volunteers. (As an FYI, staffing in the library also includes Vanessa Ashworth who is here all day on WED and FR). Nathan is parttime also. I don’t have a bead on his schedule yet (he just started late last week as I write) and those of you who work with school tours and community education will likely have a bead on it before I do as you will be working closely with Nathan. Additionally, “THANKS!” to Julie Scheuermann for her superb work in the volunteer office!

The Garden looks glorious! Do not let a week pass without planning an extensive walk here. SO many areas are gorgeous but I especially want to recommend the area NW of the Admin building.
where horticulturist Laura Christianson has created a true wildflower pallet. Visit often to see different species come into flower at different times across our spring season. And don’t neglect the communities which are aflame with flowers!

I had such a nice time at your quarterly luncheon on the 13th and isn’t the Forest Pavilion the perfect location for it? It is so very nice to be getting back to something approximating normal. Speaking of which, as I said at the luncheon, we are unlocking the east door of the Administration building during normal working hours now. I ask that you not broadcast this as it is to be used by trusted insiders like yourselves who know where they are headed once in the building. We do not have a receptionist and will be unable to manage unauthorized guests. Also: after the June 28th meeting of the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Council, there will be a reception to thank all active volunteers – emphasis on you, but also the Advisors and Trustees. Details to follow!

Meanwhile, let us try to savor every minute of this special ‘no drought for once’ spring! Enjoy the brilliant greens, evidence of robust growth and brilliant flower colors of our native plants! Thank you as always for all that you do!

**Are You A Decorative Painter?**

*by Linda Prendergast, Native Designs*

If you attended the April Volunteer Luncheon, you heard President Lynn Miller say Native Designs is looking for something to sell at the Fall Plant Sale in addition to the grapevine wreaths. One idea is decoratively painted birdhouses. We are seeking artists who have painting talent and can design and paint pre-fabricated wooden birdhouses for indoor or outdoor use. We will provide the birdhouse—you provide the expertise. If you can help, please contact Linda Prendergast via e-mail at LJ.Prendergast2325@gmail.com

**Herbarium Seeking Additional Volunteers by Rhay Flores**

Our Herbarium workroom is seeking additional volunteers to help mount our specimens! Volunteer specimen preparers handle dried plants, arrange them on an archival sheet, and apply archival glue. Our Herbarium also hosts regular enrichment activities for volunteers including quarterly presentations from Garden staff or students, and bimonthly demo camps to continually improve our mounting skills. If you’re interested in learning more about botany and the history of our collections, and in connecting with our community here at the California Botanic Garden Herbarium, then you'll want to join us as a volunteer!

*We are looking for volunteers to join us for three-hour shifts on Tuesday afternoons or in the morning on Thursdays or Fridays. Contact Rhay Flores, at rflores@rsabg.org to learn more.*

What we do at the CalBG Herbarium:

**Obtain Specimens**—We receive deposits of dried plant specimens from a botanist, student, or another institution;

**Mount Specimens**—Volunteers use archival-quality materials to glue plant specimens onto herbarium sheets;

**Process Specimens**—Mounted specimens go through our workflows of imaging, databasing, and curating; and
Preserve Specimens—Specimens are then preserved in our Herbarium and can last for hundreds of years, to be used for research or other scientific applications.

**GETTING THE WORD OUT ABOUT CALBG**

by Lauren Weintraub Stoebel

**PR/Outreach Volunteer Opportunities**

It’s time to spread the word about California Botanic Garden! If you love CalBG and its classes, events, tours, and research/conservation efforts, then staff members and our volunteer PR committee urge you to try volunteering for a PR/outreach event and/or getting involved behind-the-scenes with the committee.

Wondering what these types of volunteer opportunities involve? Outreach events can range from tabling at one of the nearby colleges to encourage students to visit CalBG, to running a booth at a street fair to get the word out about CA native plants and CalBG, to stewarding more education-focused interactive activities at locations from festivals, to the LA County Fair. Ample guidance and training are provided when necessary and staff members are often in attendance at larger events. Volunteers can also provide feedback and input about outreach activities and the best way to educate and connect with event attendees.

The volunteer PR committee was under the dedicated leadership of volunteer Dorcia Bradley for many years. Now that Dorcia has moved out of the area, the committee is looking for new members and leadership. The PR committee is involved in outreach and marketing efforts at the Garden in many ways, and providing essential support to staff. Opportunities might include outreach events, marketing support, or calling and welcoming new CalBG members. The committee is having its first meeting of the year as this issue of Oak Notes goes to press, but new members are welcome at any time.

If you’re interested in getting involved with the PR Committee or have questions about outreach volunteering, please contact lstoebel@calbg.org.

**PHOTOS FROM THE POETRY FEST**

by Lauren Stoebel

CalBG welcomed the start of Wildflower Month and Poetry Month with A Garden of Verses Poetry
Festival on April 1, 2023. Poets and visitors alike were graced with a lovely day of sunshine and spring blooms at poetry stations throughout the Mesa. (Photos by Lauren Stoebel and Marla White.)

Herbarium Updates
Endings & Beginnings for Herbarium Interns
by Rhay Flores

Left to Right: Ixchel Maston (she/her), Ivy Jordan (she/her), Stephanie Quintanilla (she/her), Maheen Khan (she/her), Karrie Chung (she/her)

The Herbarium recently said goodbye to our interns, who joined us to work on various NSF-funded projects. They digitized specimens from all over the world, assisted in data entry efforts, and helped curate specimens as needed. One of our interns, Maheen Khan, joined our curatorial staff and will continue to assist with the Herbarium’s many projects. Say hello to Maheen if you see her in the workroom! Another intern, Ivy Jordan, has moved on to the Seed Conservation internship here at the Garden where she’ll learn all about field work, seed collection, and conservation efforts in southern California.

We’re also in the process of reviewing new intern candidates to continue working on the aforementioned projects. We’re always excited to offer these learning opportunities and to welcome new community members!

An Inside Look at CalBG’s Seed Banking Program
by Cheryl Birker, Seed Conservation Program Manager

Tucked away in a small building of the horticulture complex sits a room filled with chest freezers, each one housing millions of tiny living organisms. If you’ve been at the Garden for a while you’ve probably heard about this room, which we call the California Seed Bank. This is the largest seed bank dedicated to conserving California’s native flora. But what exactly goes into conserving a species through seed banking? Let’s follow the journey of a single collection from the wild to the freezers and beyond.

This is Winter’s sunflower, Helianthus winteri. One might think it looks a lot like the common Helianthus annus and it certainly does, only
distinguishable by its woody trunk, year-round blooming, and a few other small morphological differences. Unlike its widespread relative, \textit{H. winteri} is a narrow endemic, only occurring in a handful of populations in the western Sierra Nevada foothills. Prior to 2021, this species was not conserved in any off-site collection, so CalBG’s conservation team went into the field armed with a field notebook, plant press, and paper bags.

In June 2021, CalBG staff secured permits, surveyed a population of \textit{H. winteri}, collected ripe seeds from fifty individuals in paper bags, an herbarium specimen, and then returned to the Garden.

A portion of the seeds were sent to a national seed bank in Colorado as a security measure, and the rest kept in heat-sealed foil packets in our freezers. This collection is now a safety net for this rare sunflower. If anything happens to the wild population, these seeds can be reintroduced, even after hundreds of years.

Regular testing for viability

But the story doesn’t end there. We periodically test the germination of stored seeds to ensure their viability for future use. As a byproduct of this testing, we have seedlings that can be used in our living collection. If you’d like to visit \textit{Helianthus winteri}, there are some plants just east of the admissions kiosk.

**Fleshy-leaved and Succulent Plants**

by Steve Bryant

California has several families of fleshy-leaved or succulent/semi-succulent plants. Some are listed below, and some, especially \textit{Yucca}, \textit{Agave}, \textit{Dudleya}, \textit{Sedum}, \textit{Fouquieria} and \textit{Nolina}, are sometimes available from specialists.

**Agavaceae** (agave family): \textit{Agave deserti} (Desert Agave), \textit{A. shawii} (Shaw Agave), \textit{A. utahensis} (Utah Agave), \textit{Yucca shidigera} (Mojave Yucca), \textit{Y. baccata} (Banana Yucca [from the short, fat, inflated fruits]), \textit{Y. brevifolia} (Joshua Tree), \textit{Hesperoyucca whipplei} (Chaparral Yucca, Our Lord’s Candle). \textit{Hesperoyucca} is monocarpic, as are individual rosettes of the agaves. All have spine-tipped leaves with large or small teeth on the leaf margins.

**Aizoaceae** (purslane or ice plant family):
\textit{Sesuvium verrucosum} (Sea-purslane, left), \textit{Trianthema portulacastrum} (Horse-purslane).

**Chenopodiaceae** (salt bush family): Alkaline and salt flat specialists. \textit{Salicornia} (Pickleweed—stem segments look like tiny
pickles), 5 spp. of Salicornia statewide, *S. pacifica* most common; *Allenrolfea occidentalis* (Iodine Bush, above), *Suaeda nigra* (Bush Seepweed).

**Crassulaceae** (jade plant family): *Dudleya* (Live-forever—26 spp.) and *Sedum* (Stonecrop—20 spp.) are the best-known native genera, and need part-to-most shade with at least cool-season water. Often found on slopes. *Dudleya multicaulis* (Many-stemmed Live-forever) and *D. pulverulenta* (Chalk Live-forever) are two of our local spp. The two SoCal spp. of Sedum are *S. niveum* (Snowy Stonecrop), found in the San Bernardino Mountains, and *S. album* (White Stonecrop).

**Fouquieraceae** (ocotillo or candlewood family): These are stem semi-succulents with 11 spp., mostly in Mexico. *Fouquieria splendens* (Ocotillo) is from the lower SoCal deserts and *F. columnaris* (Boojum) grows primarily in Baja.

**Portulacaceae** (moss-rose family): *Portulaca halimoides* (Desert Portulaca)—primarily in the Eastern Mojave between Highways I-10 and I-40.

**Ruscaceae** (butcher’s broom family): *Nolina* (Beargrass) are stem semi-succulents and include *N. parryi*, *N. cismontana* (Chaparral Nolina), and *N. bigelovii*. Leaves are without spiny tips, but their margins have small teeth that can give very bad “paper-cuts.”

**Sarcobataceae** (greasewood family): *Sarcobatus* (2 spp, 1 very rare). *S. vermiculatus* (Greasewood) found in eastern CA, mostly north of San Bernardino County.

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**Book of the Month**


On a training walk for Garden Guides at the California Botanic Garden, I learned that telling the story of a plant makes it more memorable and important to your audience. The author of this book, Matt Ritter, took that approach in this book. His goal is for readers to develop an appreciation of California’s diverse plant life by learning their names, natural histories, and relationships with other plants.

The book is divided into sections that relate to different habitats in California such as desert, forests, and shrublands. In each section there are pages describing plants from the area and photos. The descriptions include all types of plant life from the area such as wildflowers, trees, and shrubs. The plant descriptions include habitat maps, a general description of the plant, uses of the plant, relationships with other plants of the same area, and a pronunciation key for the scientific name of the plant. There is also a brief tree identification flow chart and guide to wildflowers, by color, in the back of the book.

As a Garden Guide, this book is an excellent resource for increasing the amount of information I can share about plants in the Garden. I did find that in habitats where there are numerous species of the same plant, more generalized species information is given, rather than a description of each member of the species.

A portion of the proceeds from this book benefits The California Native Plant Society and The Wildlands Conservancy.
Volunteer Quarterly Meeting
Photos by Marla White.