

Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Betsy MacLaren, Volunteer President

With the start of the holiday season, there are many opportunities to come together with family, friends, and other acquaintances to share some quality time. We had such an opportunity here at the Garden on Wednesday, November 1, when many volunteers and a few Garden staff gathered together in the California Courtyard. The 4 to 6 p.m. time was perfect as we enjoyed mild weather, light hors d'oeuvres along with beer, wine or La Croix waters, and good conversation. The lovely centerpieces artistically crafted by the Native Designs team were raffled off towards the end as well as five gift cards. I heard many positive comments about the late afternoon "soirée" after it was over. We'll plan to do it again in the spring, and I hope you can come!

Now is the time to sign up to volunteer for the upcoming Luminaria Nights. Luminaria will be held for five nights on December 8, 9, 10, 15 and 16. Last year the four-night event was sold out, so an extra date was added this year to accommodate as many people as possible who want to attend these special nights. Please check out the possible volunteer slots on Volgistics or VicNet.

Luminaria provided me with my first opportunity to volunteer after I went through the orientation class in 2015. I remember that night so well for a couple of reasons. I signed up to light the candles in the bags along the walkways, and while waiting for it to get dark enough to do so, I sat next to two other new volunteers, Dorcia and John Bradley. We struck up a conversation and that initial encounter turned into a friendship, especially with Dorcia, as we found ourselves in the same watercolor art class, and then she invited me to be part of her book club. When it got dark enough to light the candles, I made my way around Faye's Meadow, up the ramp, and northerly along the mesa path. It was quiet and dark and full of magic as I made my way. In the distance I could see candles being lit by another volunteer as we made our way towards each other. It's hard to describe how peaceful it was. I hope you will consider experiencing this magic as well.

—Betsy

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the OAK NOTES is the **15th** the month **prior** to publication. Thank you for your prompt submission!

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



FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director**

Sunset Social, Infrastructure Projects and on to Luminaria!

It was terrific to see so many of you at the Volunteers' Sunset Social! Perfect weather, refreshing drinks and snacks, and excellent company: what could be better? Kudos to your leadership group—Betsy MacLaren and her team, including the hospitality committee—for pulling all of that together. I hope that we are able to schedule another Sunset Social in the spring, once the later sunsets have returned.

Thanks to so many volunteers who helped with planting the new *Bird and Butterfly Garden*! It was terrific to see volunteers and staff working together to plant hundreds of plants in quite short order. It was a perfect day for it—heavy marine layer to the point of drizzling and, needless to say, quite cool. We have a few more things to plant and are actively working on signage. I was in that area just a day or two after the big planting session and was intrigued to see how much the birds already love the area. Birds of several species were flitting among the new plants, thoroughly investigating their new habitat.

We have recently gotten a great deal accomplished here at our Garden, although not all of it readily meets the eye. Have you noticed the new roof on the horticulture building? I thought not! And I am positive that no one noticed that the water entry points on both the west and east sides of the Library annex that caused SO many problems during our incredible rain year of 2022–2023 have been fixed. Not very charismatic projects, but both incredibly important. Probably quite a few of you have noticed the new storage area north of maintenance. We have just had lighting installed in the units and they will be moved into soon, likely with quite a bit of help from volunteers. Also underway is a project that is an

important part of our overall goal to increase growing space in our nursery area. In Garden parlance, “lower lower shade” has been brought up to the same level as “lower shade” which will enable us to dramatically expand bench space soon (I am not kidding about these names—they are descriptive if not elegant). The GNN will also benefit from this project as its floor space is extended to the south. Exciting!

Meanwhile we are inching ever closer to two projects that WILL readily meet your eyes. First, the small addition to the Science & Admin building that will house an elevator and two, real, ADA-friendly restrooms. This will let us provide access to the second and third floors to visitors (and staff) who cannot manage stairs—whether temporarily or permanently. The ADA restrooms will be a vast improvement over what is currently available in the building to serve the needs of the disability community. They will, of course, also serve everyone else. AND a real boon is that we will be able to make them accessible to guests even when we really do not want guests in the main parts of the building (e.g., after hours, weekends, when there are few



A Very Happy December Birthday to:

Mariana Acevedo	Patricia Hessenflow
Angela Alam	Susan Lominski
Barbara Booth	Lisa McCarter
Judy Bryson	Arlene Medina
Emily Cardinas	Alice Oglesby
Grace Clark	Marisa Persaud
Nadja Cole	Yvonne Wilson
Hal Croulet	Deborah Woo
Rich Griffin	

to no staff present). Because the elevator will be lockable, as will the door into the main part of the building, we will be able to leave the annex—with its restrooms—open. Once we have completed this project, we turn our sights to Phase 2 of the herbarium expansion project.

The second, highly visible project is, of course, the entry plaza—I know many of you are excited about that, as am I. Many of you have seen the model; if you have not and would like to, please let me know! I love showing it off. We should have construction documents quite soon and that will enable us to get bids for actually building the project.

I wish that the new entryway plaza was going to be done in time for Luminaria, but as you all know, our Luminaria Nights event is coming very soon to a Garden near us. Please volunteer! We will need all of you to pull this off! The event sold out every night last year and it will be even more spectacular this year. Please plan to volunteer *and* to attend. And please bring your friends and family.

Wishing everyone a safe, peaceful and delicious Thanksgiving!

—Lucinda

STUDENTS RETURN TO CALBG

by Marla White

School children have returned to the Garden with most 1.5-hour Thursday tours filled for the entire year. Upper grade tours (3rd to 5th grades) focus on the Web of Life or Adaptation & Survival in four typical habitat settings found throughout the CalBG mesa and alluvial areas. The four habitats visited are: riparian, redwoods, oak woodland, and desert. These tours are aligned to the California Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

One-hour tours for students Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through 2nd grade are also focused on the NGSS. Eye Spy (TK), Who Lives Here? (K), How Does the Garden Grow? (1st grade),

and Diversity University (2nd grade) are focused features for younger grades.



Photo caption: Garden Guide Rich Griffin shares barn owl adaptations and ecosystem connections in the Palm Oasis with some 3rd graders.

All students engage with each program and their Garden Guide by using most of their senses to answer standards-based questions in the various habitats. No tasting on our tours.

Volunteers who might be interested in joining the Garden Guides should contact Jennifer Scerra (jscerra@calbg.org). A training class is expected to begin this winter. In the meantime, feel free to contact Jennifer and shadow one of our Fabulous Garden Guides and spend some time with children excited to explore our native plants in their natural settings.

NOTES FROM THE ADVANCEMENT OFFICE

by Jen Pizzolo and Kady Sebastian

As we approach the end of the year, we have exciting updates from our Advancement Office that we're thrilled to share with you.

In the spirit of giving and sharing the wonders of our Garden with others, we're delighted to announce a special promotion for gift memberships. From now until the end of the year, you can receive \$10 off when you purchase a gift membership for your friends, family, or loved ones. Simply use the promo code "THANKFUL" when you check out, mention the code on the phone, or in person at the kiosk.



Luminaria Nights at California Botanic Garden is a holiday tradition that invites community members to stroll garden pathways illuminated with real candlelit luminarias and other holiday lights. It is one of the most enchanting and beloved events on our calendar! Tickets are still available to purchase online for all five nights. If you are an Acorn or Family Plus Member and purchase a ticket for the members-only night, December 8th, you will be invited to an exclusive reception. This intimate gathering is our way of expressing our gratitude for our Acorn and Family Plus members and their steadfast commitment to our Garden. Not an Acorn or Family Plus member? Call the Advancement office today at 909-625-8767 x258.

As we look back on this year's accomplishments, we are reminded of how vital your support is to our mission. To ensure that our Garden continues to flourish and grow, we're launching our end-of-the-year Garden Fund appeal. The Garden Fund provides unrestricted support to sustain our vital core programs: research, education, and conservation, as well as the living collection on our 86 acres here in Claremont. Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a meaningful impact.

Your dedication to California Botanic Garden is truly inspiring, and we can't thank you enough for all that you do! We encourage you to take advantage of the gift membership promo code, attend our exclusive Luminaria Nights reception if you are an Acorn or Family Plus member, and contribute to our end-of-

the-year Garden Fund appeal. With your continued support, we look forward to a bright and beautiful future for our beloved Garden.

ENRICHMENT AND FIELD TRIPS ARE BACK!

by Betsy MacLaren

Many of us remember the monthly enrichment presentations that were offered before the pandemic. These one-hour talks were usually held in the Sycamore room at noontime, and featured a speaker with an interesting topic to share with volunteers and staff (and friends you might like to invite). Thanks to Shaunna Gygli (chairperson) and her committee members, we are starting the talks again on Wednesday, December 13, at noon in the Horticulture Classroom (on the lower level by the gravel parking area).

The committee has arranged for the Director of Horticulture, Ashlee Armstrong, to speak on the topic, "What Volunteers should know about the CalBG Horticulture Program." Ashlee knows the Garden inside and out, and will provide interesting information about what our Garden is all about, and how her team manages the 86 acres that comprise it.

You are welcome to bring a bag lunch. Cookies will be provided. There may be some walking involved if Ashlee takes us on a tour.

Please consider joining us for the first of our revitalized enrichment programs (and more to follow on a monthly basis)!

DECEMBER IN THE GARDEN

by Laura Christianson

In her book, *The Landscaping Ideas of Jays*, Judith Larner Lowry sums up winter's gradual approach by stating, "...I relax into these calm yet luscious hues and into California's flowing seasonal changes, knowing I am in good hands. I won't be bored, and I also won't freeze to death."



December in the Garden does occasionally bring about our first freeze of the year, but despite this, Lowry's words do justice to the Garden's

continued crawl towards winter. The first rains of the year bring about new, bright green growth on some of our southern California shrubs breaking their summer dormancy and bringing a freshness to the Garden. Many of the *Arctostaphylos* species (manzanitas) begin to bloom in abundance. On the mesa, north of the "Silent Sentinel" statue is a walkway lined with mature manzanita cultivars including 'Austin Griffith', 'Howard McMinn', 'Sunset', and 'Sentinel' that display hundreds of blooms in varying size, density, color, and timing. A walk out to the communities, specifically west of the Joshua trees, displays our largest *Arctostaphylos* species, the Big berry manzanitas, now cared for by Horticulturist Rio Fernandez.



Ribes (currants) stun in the North Garden near the Majestic Oak and on the mesa, creating pendant-like displays of

pink, reds, and whites. These easy-to-grow winter-blooming shrubs provide fountains of color and a critical source of food for over-wintering Hummingbird species. White continues to be the color of the month in the blossoms of *Ceanothus*

crassifolius blooming throughout the Garden. Finally, the Garden's grasses are having a moment with the late fall sun bouncing off their seed heads and shimmering in the afternoon winds.

In your own gardens, December continues to be a good wildflower-sowing month. Weeding is essential this time of year to reduce an explosion of unwanted growth as we turn towards spring. Perhaps most importantly, December provides a good time to grab a blanket, a glass of wine, and enjoy our Garden with the knowledge we are one of the few who can do so this time of year.

FROM THE KIOSK by Kara Kranzky



The Holiday Season is here! That means holiday shopping. Whether you have just started or need those last-minute gifts, consider checking some items off your list by shopping at the California Botanic Garden Poppy Shop. We will have an array of items for the Season. Everything from stocking stuffers to beautiful light-up holiday lanterns. Keep an eye

out for all our festive and fun holiday home accents and accessories. Light up the Luminaria Nights with a light-up holiday necklace and earrings or a fun seasonal headband! As the weather chills look for our CalBG beanies, sweatshirts, and other winter apparel for your stroll through the Garden. Maybe a CalBG mug to enjoy some hot tea with some local Temecula Valley honey available at the shop? Stop by and see what's new on your next visit. Find some great gifts for yourself or others, all while supporting the Garden!

LUMINARIA NIGHTS RETURNS: COME JOIN IN THE FUN!

by Lauren Weintraub Stoebel



CalBG's popular Winter Lights event is back this year and better than ever. In addition to our usual luminaria and string-light-lined

paths and live music performances, this year's event will feature: a Members Only Preview Night on Friday December 8th, lights and music celebrating CalBG's brand new Bird & Butterfly Garden, a food truck and bar each night, and two new illuminated art installations only on view during Luminaria Nights. Luminaria Nights not only celebrates the beauty of our native plant gardens in the winter evening hours, it also draws in thousands of new visitors to CalBG and raises essential funds for our Visitor Experience and Community Education programs.

Volunteers are an essential part of the whole Luminaria Nights process, from lighting and blowing out candles to serving as welcoming faces guiding our visitors from place to place. If you haven't signed up to help out at Luminaria Nights, we need your help! Each shift only requires working for part of the evening, and each Luminaria Nights volunteer receives a comp ticket as a "thank you" for their help, so it's the perfect opportunity to invite a friend or family member join you for a stroll before or after your shift. Check out Volgistics today for available shifts, and if you have any questions or doubts, feel free to contact Lauren (lstoebel@calbg.org) or Patty (pespana@calbg.org). Hope to see you all there!

LUMINARIA NIGHTS Patty Nueva Espana, Volunteer Program Coordinator

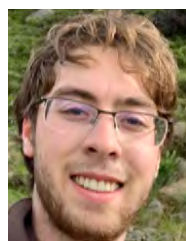
One of the most endearing and anticipated events of the Garden is fast approaching. Luminaria Nights will take place this year on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, December 8, 9, and 10, and then the following Friday and Saturday, December 15 and 16. For five evenings the Garden paths around the Forest Pavilion and the Outdoor Classroom will be sparkling with lights and alive with music. It is an enchanting and unforgettable experience for all who attend. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have already signed up to help with this multi-night event; it is encouraging to see how many of you are ready to fill a spot. I do hope that more of our volunteers consider signing up. With this many nights, we really could use more help with the second shift. See you there.

Upcoming Volunteer Orientation

How many of you remember attending your volunteer orientation? Getting the chance to gather with your fellow recruits, learning about the history of the Garden, and touring some of the facilities you don't often get to see? There was no better way to learn what volunteer opportunities were available to you and how much the Garden had to offer. I bet there are a few of you who have not

had the chance to experience these things through the volunteer orientation program. The truth is, due to the pandemic we haven't conducted any serious orientations in the last four years. Well, we are planning to change that by bringing back the informative and enlightening Volunteer Orientation Program. The first scheduled session will take place on two consecutive Saturday mornings, January 27 and February 3, 2024. These will give any new volunteers who have not gone through the process a chance to really get to know the Garden. Please save the dates and I look forward to seeing you there. There will be more information to follow.

MEET THE CALBG GRADUATE STUDENTS!



**Charles Boissavy,
Ph.D. Student**

Hello, I'm Charles Boissavy and I'm a new Ph.D. student at California Botanic Garden. I grew up in the L.A. area where I frequently ventured to places inside and outside the

city to immerse myself in the California wildlife. I visited various botanic gardens, exploring the nature trails in Palos Verdes, and hiking up the Santa Monica Mountains. Since I was little, I have been fascinated with learning why things are the way they are today. Seeing the vast diversity of plant life, I want to understand the process of evolution and how it explains the diversity of life we see today. My fascination with floral diversity led me to pursue a Bachelor's in Biology at Oberlin College. When I was home, I volunteered at the South Coast Botanic Garden where I helped maintain plant communities and participated in community assistance at the gardens. During my senior year at Oberlin College, I investigated the evolutionary relationships between certain *Phacelia* species to see how many times the adaptation to living in gypsum soils emerged. I came to California Botanic Garden to do further research exploring adaptations of plants to different environments.

My research at CalBG involves looking into the diversity among the varieties of naked buckwheat (*Eriogonum nudum*), island buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande*), and related species. Naked buckwheat has 14 currently recognized varieties with varying soil-type preferences and flower colors across the California Floristic Province and somewhat beyond. Island buckwheat lives on the California Channel Islands and in Baja California; most varieties have white flowers but one has vibrant red flowers—the famous red-flowered buckwheat. My Ph.D. project is to study the diversification of soil adaption and flower color traits between the varieties of these two species and their closest relatives. I am excited to look into how these plants have adapted to the various ecosystems of California and what we can learn from them!



Photos: (left) Inflorescence of naked buckwheat by Travis Columbus; (right) Red-flowered buckwheat by Charles Boissavy.

THE REST OF THE POPPY FAMILY by Steve Bryant

Of the 15 genera in Papaveraceae listed in Jepson, I covered *Eschscholzia* last month. For the rest, I list only those reasonably likely to be seen on walks around SoCal.

Argemone munita (Prickly!! Poppy): sap yellow, widespread; *A. corymbosa* sap orange, Mohave Desert. These plants and their white flowers are similar to—though smaller and *much* pricklier than—*Romneya*. Nice in nature, but I regret having planted them in my garden.

Canbya candida (White Pygmy-Poppy): a small caespitose plant with whitish flowers and petals <5 mm long; Antelope Valley to China Lake.

Dendromecon harfordii (Island Tree Poppy): plant with stems to 6 m, bright yellow flowers, long bloom, island endemic. The mainland sp., *D. rigida* (Tree or Bush Poppy), grows up to 3 m, with narrower leaves, and tends to be a fire-follower; coastal-ish and Sierra Nevada. Many near Mormon Rocks.



Ehrendorferia chrysantha (Golden Ear Drops): much of inland SoCal, north to the Bay area, often a fire-follower. Shrub to 2 m, divided foliage, small yellow head-with-horns-shaped flowers, but erect instead of drooping. Many near Mormon Rocks.

Fumaria officinalis (Fumitory): up to 0.5 m tall, with divided leaves almost like *Eschscholzia*. It has red/purple flowers and grows coastally from the Bay Area south.

Meconella denticulata (Smallflower Fairy-poppy): local mountains and foothills; tiny, white-flowered plant hardly looks like a poppy except for the fruit, which is similar in shape to *Eschscholzia*.

Papaver heterophyllum (Wind Poppy): annual 0.3 m tall with orange flowers on long stems; found in cismontane CA south of Vallejo. *Papaver californicum* (Fire Poppy) differs slightly from *P. heterophyllum*. The Opium Poppy, *P. somniferum*, the source of poppy seed and opium, can be 2 m tall, with 20 cm flowers that vary in color, but usually contain red.



This species has naturalized along much of the CA coast and in Gold Country.



Platystemon californicus (Cream-cups): From nodding buds, this 30 cm tall hairy plant produces white or yellowish flowers up to 4 cm with many exerted stamens. In most of cismontane CA.

Romneya coulteri (Matilija Poppy): sepals glabrous, huge (up to 25 cm) “fried-egg” flowers, primarily Santa Ana Mountains. *Romneya trichocalyx* has appressed, hairy sepals, smaller flowers, and is found primarily in northern Ventura and south-central San Diego counties.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Joan Sweeney, Volunteer
Library Committee



She Heard the Birds: The Story of Florence Merriam Bailey, Pioneering Nature Activist. Written and illustrated by Andrea D'Aquino. Princeton Architectural Press, New York. 2022. 38 pp.

Author and illustrator Andrea D'Aquino uses hand-painted collages to

convey the beauty of birds as she tells the story of Florence Merriam Bailey, a little girl “who lived many years ago” and was fascinated by birds. She continued to study birds, and when she grew up she began to write books, including one of the first field guides to American birds. In her guide she urged using

binoculars to see birds up close and alive. She used other tools as well, including a camera, a notebook and pencils, and her own eyes and ears. To learn about birds “meant being quiet—listening waiting and watching.”

Florence “taught people how to observe birds in nature.” Because of her, “the world became safer for the birds and more beautiful for us all.”

The publisher suggests an audience age of 5 to 8 years for this picture book. For younger children, it would be helpful for an adult to read it aloud. All ages will enjoy the colorful, full-page illustrations.

In the back matter, the author gives more biographical information about Florence Merriam Bailey (1863–1948), one of the first nationally recognized female American ornithologists and an activist who organized chapters of the Audubon Society.

This book is available for checkout by Volunteers in the Volunteer library.



SUNSET SOCIAL

photos by Mara White

