As I write this message, the first weekend of Luminaria Nights has come and gone. Once again, the Garden revealed its magical side in the darkness with the soft lighting of candles lining many of the pathways. On Sunday night a great horned owl was spotted perched high in one of the tall trees by the California Courtyard. Was he listening to the band playing there? Children and adults visited our volunteer table near the band where we sold packages of cookies, brownies, and hot cider as well as packages of mistletoe, wreaths, and other items made by volunteers. This continues to be one of our best fundraisers. Thank you to all who volunteered to take on the numerous roles required to make the Nights a success.

The Volunteer Board is looking for ways to increase the involvement of volunteers in the various opportunities that support the Garden. There are so many ways to be supportive, from helping out at events, scheduling hours in certain departments (such as the herbarium, library, nursery, etc.), leading school tours as a Garden Guide, serving on a committee, and/or helping out on the grounds. Are there barriers that make it a challenge for you to become a volunteer? Please let us know how we can make it easy for you to experience the fulfillment of providing your time and talents to the Garden. You can e-mail me at bmaclaren@calbg.org or Patty España at pespana@calbg.org with your thoughts and suggestions.

The days are shorter, cooler, and winter is just around the corner. Now is a great time to see the Garden in its quieter “winter coat.” I hope you will take advantage of spending some time walking the pathways. Perhaps you’ll get lucky and see and hear the great horned owl that made its presence known to us on that Sunday night.

—Betsy
Hello Volunteers! Can you believe that 2023 is nearly over? I surely cannot but the inexorable transition to 2024 does not really care whether I am ready for it or not!

I know that Thanksgiving is past but I still feel that we are in the season of thanks. Thanks to all of you volunteers for helping out with Luminaria! It has been wonderful—and heart-warming for the staff—to have you here among us all five nights. I love to watch and interact with those of you who take serious ownership for your assignments. A couple of you who managed parking were pros!

We did a lot of new things this year—food truck, turning the Courtyard into a major hub of event action, using the Outdoor Classroom (and new Bird and Butterfly Garden area) for events, five nights including one Sunday. We had a members-only special evening (the first Friday): did you enjoy that? The musicians included some old friends and some new. We welcome your feedback on all of this. Lauren is nothing if not brave when it comes to trying new things, which also means that we are constantly evaluating and any and all feedback is welcome!

I also want to thank so many of you for helping with our staff Solstice Lunch celebration. Your kindness in providing gifts and “support” items (e.g., gift bags) in honor of the staff touches my heart! It is deeply appreciated and we love you too. Not to mention those of you who have helped with earlier celebrations over this year—Peter Evans’ retirement party comes to mind. You volunteers made that giant carrot cake possible! Really, I cannot thank you enough for all that you do.

As we head into the cool dark days of December and on into the New Year, you will continue to see projects underway on the grounds. One of these days soon, the greenhouse remodel and rehab project will be complete and we will have that area of parking and asphalt driveway back for general use. Next, we are just about to sign a contract with the firm that will build the elevator plus restroom annex on the back of the Admin building for us. Many of you will know that we must do that—achieve a certain degree of compliance with the ADA—in order to undertake the project to expand the enclosed space in the Admin building for our herbarium. We really want to be able to welcome guests (and volunteers and staff!) with disabilities more graciously to our three-story building from the 1950s. AND we really MUST increase space for our critically important herbarium: it is perilously close to full.

Next will come the new entryway plaza: new kiosk, indoor gift shop, lots of shade and restrooms! If you have not seen the model/design, stop by the next time

A Very Happy January Birthday to:
Matthias Beke Beverly Pemberton
Laura Burt Morris Powazek
Khadi Diallo Linda Prendergast
Susan Gregory Melissa Smith
Patricia Hoppe Paul Standerfer
Mellena Leong-Pearson Katina Vlastos
Mari Nishitani

From the Director
Lucinda McDade, CalBG Executive Director
you are on site—I love to show it off. It is going to be welcoming, comfortable and functional for staff, and fun. And just imagine having easy-to-find restrooms near the entrance where they should be! We are raising money for that project as I write, and any and all contributions are welcome.

Happiest of holidays to all of you. In these troubled and troubling times, please be kind, supportive and understanding of the people in your lives. See you in the New Year!

—Lucinda

**Acorn and Family Plus Reception at Luminaria Nights**

by Jen Pizzolo and Kady Sebastian, Advancement Office, photos by Tanner-Sebastian Photography

Luminaria Nights at California Botanic Garden is one of the most anticipated and celebrated events in all of Claremont, and this year was no exception! The Advancement Office would like to thank all the volunteers who helped at Luminaria, with a special thank you to those who helped at the reception for Acorn and Family Plus members on Luminaria's opening night.

The Acorn and Family Plus reception at Luminaria is always a fun event, but this year was even more special than usual. On December 8, 2023, the Lewis Family Forest Pavilion became a winter wonderland. CalBG’s Native Designs donated beautiful candle centerpieces and a giant festive wreath. Two event sponsors stepped up to help create this distinctive celebration—Saca’s Mediterranean Cuisine and Evolve Distillery. Saca’s owners, Bruno and Nathalie Windegger, brought a wonderful pairing of appetizers and desserts, then stayed to meet and greet all of our guests! Evolve Distillery donated their signature spiced rum to cap off our hot beverage station, and like last year, musician Ray McNamara kept the party going all night long with his melodious steel drums.

This annual Luminaria reception is our way of saying thank you to those members who choose to support the Garden with a higher level of membership. If you would ever like to upgrade your membership, or upgrade a friend or family member’s membership as a gift, please reach out to the Advancement Office and we would be happy to assist.

Once again, thank you to all of CalBG’s wonderful volunteers for all you do to support California Botanic Garden. We hope you all have a joyful holiday season, and here’s to a happy and healthy 2024!
**ENRICHMENT OFFERING IN JANUARY**
**by Betsy MacLaren**

The second in our series of Enrichment offerings will be given in January. Steve Bryant will be talking on the topic “Monarchs and Milkweeds” on Wednesday, January 10, at noon in the Hort. Classroom (by the gravel lot). Steve is one of our volunteers with extensive knowledge of both the monarch butterfly and the plant that is its sole host. Please plan to attend his informative talk, and feel free to bring a bag lunch. Sugar cookies will be provided for dessert.

We had good attendance at the first Enrichment offering on Wednesday, December 13. Ashlee Armstrong, Director of Horticulture, gave a very interesting presentation about plantings in the Garden, especially new plantings. She then took us on a walking tour of the areas she had told us about. It was a great start to the renewal of our Enrichment series!

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**
**by Patty Nueva España, Volunteer Program Coordinator**

I would like to wish all of you volunteers a happy and peaceful New Year. Before we look forward to 2024, I want to take a moment and review the year 2023.

In February we saw the return of the Family Bird Festival for the first time since 2020, a fun way to start a new year. On St. Patrick’s Day several of the volunteers joined the horticulture staff and Native Designs in the Grapevine Harvest and Potato Feed. In addition to giving the Garden’s grapevines a much-needed trim, there was enough material to create an unprecedented number of wreaths to sell at the fall plant sale. Spring saw the reopening of the Volunteer Library after a long hiatus, with the opportunity to peruse a few of the new books on the shelves. The volunteers had two chances to get together and socialize at the Garden for the first time in a long time. Once at a Volunteer Appreciation Evening in June, and again at a Sunset Social in November, with both evenings bringing out smiles and comradery. Probably most exciting for us was the much-anticipated return of Things That Go Bump in the Night in October. So many people were very happy to have that event back at the Garden. Then only a week later, the Grow Native Nursery opened with a successful weekend plant sale. In December 2023, our annual Luminaria Nights grew from four to five nights, giving guests an chance to see the Garden in its illuminated glory. And to end the review on a high note, the Enrichment Committee Programs have returned and kicked off in December with a presentation of the Horticulture of CalBG by the Director of Horticulture, Ashlee Armstrong.

Now looking forward, we will start off the new year by bringing back Volunteer Orientation on January 27th and February 3rd. The Enrichment Committee has more presentations in the works for everyone to enjoy and it won’t be long until the Garden welcomes another Family Bird Festival. A good start to the new year.

**NICE WALKS RETURN**
**by Ann Morgan**

On December 11, about a dozen Garden Guides gathered for the first NICE Walk in several years. NICE is short for Nature Interpreter Continuing Education. NICE Walks were held several times a year. For this walk, graduate students Peri Lee Pipkin and Charles Boissavy had prepared an interesting and informative Pollinator Syndrome program. Garden Guides are generally quite knowledgeable about pollination, but pollinator syndrome was a new term for most of us—it describes flower characteristics or traits than may appeal to a particular type of pollinator. With a helpful handout and living examples throughout the Garden, Peri Lee and Charles pointed out features of flowers that attract various pollinators (hummingbirds, bees, etc.) and
the variety of fruit types produced (berries, pomes, legumes, etc.). Watch for information about future NICE Walks.

If you have a chance to walk in the communities in January, keep an eye out for blooming *Xylococcus bicolor*, mission manzanita, a beautiful, long-lived tree native to Southern California. These trees can be found on the community’s foot-trail just west of the Joshua Trees. Look for their distinctive red bark, and listen for the sudden torrent of hummingbirds. A stroll on the green loop trail north of the Torrey Pines will also guide you past a small grove of *Arbutus menziesii*, Pacific Madrone (pictured below), weighed down with delightful orange berries.

**January in the Garden**

by Laura Christianson

As of writing this article, we have received just shy of five inches of rain, including that from Hurricane Hilary this past August. In comparison, by January 3rd of last year we had received over ten inches of rain. Needless to say, it is getting trickier to predict what the plants will be doing in January should our current dry, warm weather continue! There may be rain in the forecast however, so we can keep our fingers crossed for a nice, damp winter.

In the past couple of months, the horticulture team at CalBG has undergone some staff changes. We said a sad goodbye to Horticulturist Rowan Steffey who heads up to Humboldt County, but a cheerful hello to Karen Castañeda who will now be taking over the North Garden and part of the Communities. In addition, our Horticulture Intern, Jocelyn Carrasquero, will also be joining us full time in the Communities, along with Rio Fernandez and Alex Reyes. This brings the total number of horticulturists for that area up to four—a first in over ten years! Together, these horticulturists will manage over 56 acres.

In your own gardens this month, January is a good time to start pruning back shrubs and flowers that have been in seed over the fall. This will have provided wildlife time to forage seeds and will give the shrubs a nice clean look during the winter rains. Deciduous trees can also be pruned once their branches are bare. Lastly, California natives in containers can be lightly fertilized with slow-release organic fertilizer.
Bird & Butterfly Garden
by Tom White

On a cool drizzly day in October, the grounds crew volunteers were privileged to be able to assist the horticulture staff with planting in the Bird and Butterfly Garden. Upon arriving at the site that morning, it was great to see a considerable number of plants in pots arranged in the locations where they were to be planted.

Purple needle grass (*Stipa pulchra*) was particularly gratifying to plant. Amazingly, its roots can grow to a depth of sixteen feet. It is also California’s official state grass. Another grass planted in the Bird and Butterfly Garden was California muhly (*Muhlenbergia californica*), which is in the same genus as the more commonly planted deergrass (*M. rigens*). This planting of California muhly is extra special since it is a new species in the Garden and also due to the fact that California muhly’s limited distribution in the wild includes our local San Gabriel Mountains.

The large variety of milkweed species will be a draw for butterflies. The newly planted milkweeds include narrow leaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*), California milkweed (*A. californica*), white stemmed milkweed (*A. albicans*), desert milkweed (*A. erosa*), and skeleton milkweed (*A. subulata*). This is likely the highest concentration of milkweed species in the entire Garden.

The red and orange tubular flowers will attract hummingbirds. Scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) will start blooming in spring. As we move into the summer and fall, Catalina fuchsia (*Epilobium ‘Catalina’*) will be one of the superstars of the area with their orange-red flowers. Catalina fuchsia is one of the tallest, if not the tallest, California fuchsia cultivar. Another attraction for hummingbirds will be cardinal monkey flower (*Erythranthe cardinalis*). Cardinal monkey flower is associated with wet areas and is located around the water feature in the Bird and Butterfly Garden.

All of the horticulture tasks around the Garden are enjoyable to work on but putting new plants in the ground (whether at CalBG or in the home garden) is particularly gratifying. Birds, butterflies, and humans will enjoy this area for years to come.

My Favorite Local Chaparral Plants
by Steve Bryant

Chaparral is a Mediterranean-climate biome, characterized by a cool moist season and a hot dry season. Chaparral plants are typically woody, sclerophyllous (hard-leaved) evergreen shrubs at elevations of ~600 m—1,200 m. Chaparral vegetation occurs statewide, with San Diego County having >400,000 ha. Typical plant genera include *Adenostoma, Arctostaphylos, Ceanothus, Cercocarpus, Dendromecon, Ehrendorferia, Garrya, Heteromeles, Lonicera, Prunus, Quercus, and Rhus*; these plants, especially *Adenostoma sparsifolium*, may form almost impenetrable thickets.

My favorites include *Adenostoma sparsifolium* (Redshanks), a large shrub with shredding reddish bark, finely-divided scented foliage, and reasonably...
fast growing. Large, nearly pure stands exist in Riverside and San Diego Counties. *Arctostaphylos glauca* (Big Berry Manzanita) grows to 7 m tall, 5 m wide’, with red bark, white flowers, large fruits, and a striking silhouette when large. *Ceanothus crassifolius* (Hoaryleaf Ceanothus) is 3 m tall and wide, with scented white flowers and fruits in clusters.

*Garryan Child* (C) Barry Breckling

*Cercocarpus betuloides* (Birch-Leaved Mountain Mahogany) reaches 7 m tall by 4 m wide, small

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**Grapevine Harvest Announcement**

by Linda Prendergast

As you move into your 2024 Cesarian calendar, please record the date for the coming year’s

**Great Grapevine Harvest and Wreathmaking Event.**

With apologies to William Shakespeare, Beware the Ides of March!

The grapevine harvest, normally held on St. Patrick’s Day, will be held, on **Friday, March 15** (Also known as the Ides of March). More details will follow as we approach the date.
flowers. *Garrya elliptica* (Wavyleaf Silktassel) is 4 m tall and wide, dioecious; cultivar ‘James Roof’ is a male selection with extra-long tassels. *Heteromeles arbutifolia* (Toyon or California Holly) grows to 7 m tall, 4 m wide; a cultivar with yellow fruit is available. *Malosma laurina* (Laurel Sumac) grows to 7 m tall and wide with scented foliage. In cultivation, its wood may be weak (mine broke off below ground after two successive Santa Ana winds). *Prunus ilicifolia* (Hollyleaf Cherry) can reach 15 m tall and 7 m wide. White flowers precede oval fruits that, when ripe and black-colored, have a sweetish 1-mm-thick pulp and bitter skin. *Rhus ovata* (Sugarbush) grows to 10 m tall and wide, with tiny white flowers and nice foliage. It can be overwatered if one’s neighbor’s lawn sprinkler is misdirected.

None of these selections need supplemental water once established, though they may do better with water during a dry winter. Be careful with summer water. All can be pruned, though *Arctostaphylos* should be pruned by removing whole branches: a partially cut branch will often die. All the above can be pinched to encourage more shrubby growth.

**Books of the Month**

Joan Sweeney, Volunteer Library Committee

The *Jepson Desert Manual* is the “first comprehensive field guide focused on the native vascular plants of California’s southeastern deserts.” The style of the information it contains is adopted from earlier Jepson manuals and is “useful to professional as well as amateur botanists.” It was meant to be portable. The last print edition of the massive guide, *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California* was issued in 2012. Later updates are available online.


*California Plant Families* was designed for amateur and beginning professional botanists and focuses on the more common vascular plant families of cismontane California. This is the area from west of the Sierras to the Pacific Ocean and from the Oregon border to Baja California. The author’s style is informal and anecdotal. Both books are illustrated with line drawings.

These books were included in a donation Jean Beckner made to the California Botanic Garden. She was a former Librarian of the Honnold Library Special Collections and a longtime volunteer at the Garden. We are grateful for her generosity. Garden volunteers can find both books on the shelves labeled “Botany” in the Volunteer Library.
Volunteer Luncheon

Photos by Marla White.
A Luminaria Nights to Remember!

by Lauren Weintraub Stoebel, photos by Marla White and Tanner-Sebastian Photography

Lovely lights, good weather, incredible music, and good company—Luminaria Nights 2023 is in the books! As CalBG’s largest annual public event, Luminaria Nights brings thousands of community members into the Garden, including many first-time visitors. It’s also a beloved annual tradition for many long-time members. Of course, the good will and good times of this event wouldn’t be possible without a dedicated crew of event volunteers who step up to light candles, serve cookies and cider, welcome guests, and so much more. And an extra shout out to Native Designs, whose gorgeous giant wreaths got many admiring comments and created the perfect ambiance in the Forest Pavilion and the Johnson’s Oval gazebo. We’re so very grateful to each and every one of the fabulous folks who showed up with smiles and ready to create some winter magic in the Garden. Thank you for everything you do!