

Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Kathleen Knoll, Volunteer President

Welcome to the new volunteer year.

I love the Garden, and as someone who enjoys volunteering, this isn't my first experience in a public garden. On a chilly Saturday in February 2011, I found myself learning about root division propagation in a unique four-acre garden near my home in Seattle. Our volunteer task that day was to propagate geraniums for an upcoming Mother's Day plant sale.

During the potting session led by Dr. Arthur R. Kruckeberg, founder of Kruckeberg Botanic Garden, I mentioned that my family would be relocating to Redlands, California, later that summer. I also shared how much I would miss volunteering and learning at this special place. Art immediately responded, "On the way to Redlands, be sure to visit Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont. It's all native plants, and you will find it to be wonderful!"

Leaving Seattle was bittersweet, but Art's recommendation inspired me to seek out a new botanical community. I packed up, headed south, and visited CalBG the following week. It was clear that Art wasn't kidding—the energy and warmth I felt during my visit to the Garden convinced me that this was the right place for our family. The community surrounding CalBG was welcoming, and the Garden's vibrant plant collections and educational programs following the rhythm of the seasons, made my transition from newcomer to volunteer seamless.

As your new volunteer president, I am excited about the months ahead. I thank past president Betsy MacLaren for her leadership, vision, and for keeping everyone connected over the past two years. Betsy helped make our volunteer activities fresh, memorable, and fun. Looking forward, I am eager to share activities that promote relaxation, emotional balance, and plenty of fun. I am especially excited to welcome new volunteers and continue supporting the Garden's outstanding events and programming and connect with each of you as we embark on another rewarding volunteer year together.

The deadline for articles to be submitted for the OAK NOTES is the **15th** of 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.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY: KATHLEEN KNOLL, VOLUNTEER PRESIDENT

Originally from Eugene, Oregon, but raised in Portland, I graduated from Lewis and Clark College with a BA in Media Studies. My career has taken me from publishing assistant in Washington, DC to coordinating volunteers and events for organizations such as the California Botanic Garden and the British Embassy.

I began volunteering at the Garden in 2012, helping at seasonal events. After several years as a volunteer, I joined the staff as volunteer coordinator, a role I deeply enjoyed until stepping away from the Garden in 2021. In 2024, I returned to volunteering, supporting Native Designs and the Herbarium Workroom. Over the years, I've held roles ranging from nursery assistant in GNN to Garden Guide, each enriching my experience and perspective.

The most rewarding part of both working and volunteering in the Garden has been the camaraderie and friendships I've formed with the wonderful staff and fellow volunteers in this

multitudinous organization. Together, we share memorable moments—such as pulling peplus in spring, braiding cordage, and lively discussions in the Herbarium Workroom—all while deepening our knowledge of plants, sustainability, and natural history.

Volunteers are truly the heart of what makes CalBG so special. There is something for everyone in this Garden, whether your passion is people, place, or plants! Deep down, I'm a plant person; I love growing them and sitting with them. Some of my favorite plants are the *Cercocarpus traskiae*, also known as Catalina Island mountain-mahogany and *Stipa pulchra* (purple needlegrass), both of which remind me of the Garden's beauty and resilience. Beyond plants, I enjoy needlecraft, cooking, and outdoor cooking excursions.

I look forward to continuing to grow alongside this vibrant community and welcoming new faces to our Garden family.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director

Hello Volunteers!

Right about now, I always think that *Oak Notes* should consider staying on vacation for another month. As we all know, September is really still very much summer in our part of California. Some of our hottest weather seems to happen in the first half of that month. Of course, who knows what will happen this year given that most of July was remarkably gentle. After a few very hot days in early August, we again drifted into a patch of quite nice weather and, as I write, we've just had several days of very welcome morning marine layer. We will most assuredly take it!

After last summer's brutal and unstoppable heat, this is a welcome relief.

We have had a very busy summer here at CalBG as many of you know. Quite a few of you volunteered for one event or the other over the summer. *Except* for the early August movie night that featured the documentary about the redwoods, all of our events benefited from the quite gentle summer weather that has characterized a lot of the summer so far! The result has been—again, thus far! —a good summer for CalBG's bottom line. Just one easy-to-digest example: last summer, in July of 2024, our Poppy Shop at the entrance lost \$300. This July, 2025, Poppy Shop cleared \$3700 in profit.

Great things are happening on the education and volunteer fronts as we are in the middle of Garden Guide training and just about to launch general volunteer orientation/training. One of my favorite things that we do at CalBG is welcoming new

volunteers and giving them nearly full run of all that we do at CalBG. If you don't know what an herbarium is and have never seen one, how can you know that your dream volunteer gig is contributing to the curation of one of the largest and most important herbaria in North America? Our new volunteers will soon know and be able to decide for themselves how they want to engage with our Garden.

I invite you to take special note of the *Matilija* magazine for CalBG members that will soon be in your hands. It will include multiple great articles about happenings at the Garden, including news of CalBG's Board of Trustees. As of the new fiscal year, July 1, we have added four new trustees. Building and nurturing the Board of Trustees is one of the most important jobs my office does: that is how critical they are to our success!

Although it is only *barely* the second half of August as I write, the full force of fall activities will soon be on us. Specifically, in early October, we will open the

Grow Native Nursery for the sales season—I hope to see many of you at the launch! We are all excited to see what the still-new GNN manager, Laura Christianson, has in store for us! Hard on the heels of the GNN launch will be our wonderful “Things that Go Bump in the Night” event. Always a favorite, Bump will benefit this year from some new things that Jennifer Scerra and her staff have lined up for us! It will, as always, be a wonderful event that—as veteran volunteers know—really benefits from the participation of a lot of volunteers. Again: hope to see a LOT of you there!

The emergence of *Oak Notes* from its summer vacation (or maybe it's been hibernating?) coincides with the shortening of the days and brings the first signs of the changing seasons. I hope that all of you will renew your enthusiasm for engaging with the beauty that is CalBG and the terrific events and programs that we offer to our community.

ENRICHMENT PRESENTATION: BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA by Betsy MacLaren

On Wednesday, June 11, Brian Elliott, a longtime member of CalBG and the Pomona Valley Audubon, gave a one-hour talk on “Birds of California that are Often Taken for Granted.” There was a full house in the Lenz classroom to learn about various birds and hear their calls, birds whose ranges are either exclusively or mainly in California. Brian also talked about several free bird apps, including *e-Bird*, which allows the user to record sightings and sounds of birds anywhere in the world. Other apps such as *Merlin Bird ID*, can be used to identify birds by sound or photo. We are planning to have Brian return next year for another of his interesting and humorous enrichment talks.

SEPTEMBER SEEDS TOUR by Sally Hy

The Community Education Department is introducing new themed-tours to our public program offerings. Our latest themed-tour was in June for Pollinator Month, which focused on pollinators and



A Very Happy September Birthday to:

Ruti Abrashkin	Alan Jack
Lorraine Aflague	Terri Ludwig
Raquel Alba	Judy Maciariello
Win Aldrich	Dean McHenry
Heidi Arch	Ann Morgan
Donna Bedell	Kathleen Mulligan
Brenda Bollinger	Fran Neu
Herbert Boss	Mayo Ou
Patricia Brooks	Daniel Sambrano
Tanji Vei Byram	Mike Smith
Linda DesMarais	Susan Spradley
Claudina Evans	George Zhang
Amanda Failla	Juliana Zolfo
Milly Itzhak	

their special relationships with our native plants. The pollinator tours were very well-received and we're doing it all again in September with a new theme!



For the month of September, we are celebrating seeds! These tours will be offered in the early mornings of September 26th and 27th with both a walking and tram option led by our amazing volunteer Garden Guides. Visitors on the tour will learn all about what seeds can tell us about

the life of the plant and how it interacts with other living and nonliving things in its habitat. We are so grateful for all our Guides and the enthusiasm they bring to our public tours. We wouldn't be able to offer such programming without them!



NEW HERBARIUM COLLECTIONS MANAGER by Annica Wu

Hi! My name is Annica Wu and I started in mid-July as the new Herbarium Collections Manager! Previously, I was at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo where I received my bachelor's degree in Plant Science with a concentration in Horticulture. I also worked at the Hoover Herbarium (OBI) for four years. I trained and managed over 20 volunteers and interns, and taught a mounting class to over 70 students. Further, I have interned at the Huntington Botanical Garden and the Morton Arboretum.

In the summer of 2021, I worked in the Nursery at the Huntington Botanical Garden. My main responsibilities were to inventory plants and seeds. I also carried out nursery management activities like weeding, sweeping, repotting, and propagation.

In the summer of 2023, I worked as a Global Genome Initiative Intern in the Huntington Botanical Garden Herbarium and Laboratory, in partnership with the U.S. Botanic Gardens and

Botanic Gardens Conservation International. My job was to locate key genera from the gardens using ArcGIS Field Maps, collect herbarium vouchers, mount and file the specimens, and extract DNA.

In the summer of 2024, I was an urban forestry intern at the Morton Arboretum where I spent two weeks in their Herbarium. I pulled specimens and organized a data set from a NACPEC expedition and also analyzed oak leaf trichomes for ongoing postdoctoral research on *Quercus macrocarpa* (Bur Oak) and its hybrids.

When I walked into the Hoover Herbarium for the first time four years ago as a volunteer, I immediately felt that my life had changed. Every specimen represented the collective efforts of researchers, students, volunteers, and all those committed to protecting and preserving plant diversity for future generations.

I have truly enjoyed my first month under the supervision of Dr. Mare Nazaire. Getting to know the volunteers and the staff at California Botanic Garden has been such a pleasure! In my free time I like to sing, paint, and sew dresses. I'm so excited to continue learning, growing, and contributing to this field I love!

BEADS, BEADS, BEADS! by Linda Prendergast

Native Designs is collecting beads to decorate the Kokedama balls they will sell at the Fall Plant Sale. What is a Kokedama ball you ask? It is a small plant (or cluster of succulent cuttings) planted in soil, wrapped in sphagnum moss, and wound with waxed string. Native Designers make decorative hangers for the Kokedamas using beads and findings. So, it is time to clean out your craft closet and purge all those beads! They can use old costume jewelry strands, too (no rubies, emeralds, or diamonds, please). Hobby Lobby sells strings of beads but wait until they are 40% off if you buy any. Also, if you are a thrift-store shopper, keep an eye out for beaded necklaces that we can deconstruct.

Leave your donations at the Kiosk anytime before September 15. And, as always, THANK YOU!

A VOLUNTEER RECEPTION

Patty Nueva España, Volunteer Program Coordinator, photos by Grace Stewart and Patty España



As a busy year at CalBG was about to wind down for the summer, several volunteers gathered in the Forest Pavilion for a Volunteer Appreciation Reception on Wednesday, June 25, 2025. This was an opportunity for the CalBG staff to honor

our volunteers and let them know how much they are appreciated. The evening was festive, the conversation lively, and the summer breezes were cool and light. Many enjoyed the food provided by The Taco Man. One highlight of the evening was a chance to honor John Biddle for his 45 years of volunteer service. His anniversary was actually last year, but as he was unable to attend that reception, better late than never I say! Happy to be able to acknowledge all of those years with so many of his peers. Additionally, these volunteers were acknowledged for hitting various volunteer milestones:



5 Year Volunteers: Dennis and Phoebe Frankeberger, Barbara Gentry, Patricia Hoppe, Anne Odgers.

10 Year Volunteers: Wanda Ewing, Betsy MacLaren, Lisa McCarter, Joan Sweeney.

15 Year Volunteers: Rich Griffin, Judy Maciarello, Kelly Swift.

20 Year Volunteers: Win Aldrich, Valerie Cressy, David and Louise Gish, Linda Prendergast.

Upcoming Events:

New Volunteer Orientation: Saturdays, September 6 & 13, 9 am–12 pm. New Volunteers will learn about all of the opportunities the Garden has to offer.

Volunteer Quarterly Luncheon & Meeting: Friday, October 3, 11:30 am. We hope all of our volunteers will join us at the Forest Pavilion for the first Luncheon of the season.

Grow Native Nursery Plant Sale: Saturday & Sunday October 11 & 12, 8 am–4 pm. Calling all volunteers, be ready to lend a hand at the Grand Opening of the GNN!!! There will also be an Acorn Member Pre-Sale on Wednesday, October 8.

Things That Go Bump in the Night: Friday & Saturday, October 17 & 18, 5:30–9 pm. CalBG's premier nighttime event, with the ultimate in interactive participation among the various exhibitors and our own volunteers. Hope to see you there!

HORTICULTURE DURING THE SUMMER

by Laura Christianson

Greetings Volunteers!

The Horticulture team and volunteers have taken advantage of every opportunity provided by the unseasonably cool temperatures this summer to work on various projects and create some exciting new spaces. In fact, you may see one new element in the Garden by the time this article goes to print.

A brand new "Pollinator Pathway" is being implemented on the Mesa, stretching from the Wildlife Pond all the way up to Emily's Reflecting Pond. This pathway will be adorned with beautiful, informative signage created by CalBG's former Botanic Illustrator, Louise Aceves. Her thoughtful designs describe the various ways plants on the path are pollinated, e.g., bee pollinated, bird pollinated, wind pollinated, etc., and invite guests to explore how our native plants and pollinators have co-evolved.

In addition, plant-ID signs are getting a facelift in the Garden. The Horticulture department procured a new laser engraver, so that new plant ID signs can be added throughout the Garden. The first to receive these sleek new signs will be the event-venue spaces, as well as the new Coastal Sage Scrub Garden in the communities. Speaking of the Coastal Sage Scrub Garden, the plants are filling in nicely and in fall a new set will join this area to continue the goal of showcasing our local flora.



The Horticulture team also worked this summer on clearing a new space for a future CalBG Children's Garden! This long-awaited

project is coming to fruition thanks to a grant awarded by The Brabson Family Foundation, and a dedicated team of staff. Research for the project got off to a fun start with a trip to Santa Barbara to learn about two successful children's gardens at the SB Botanic Garden and SB Natural History Museum.



The next stage of the process will be installing fencing around the area and adding design elements for children to explore and climb. Keep on a lookout for this garden to be transformed over the next year. It will be located on the slope

that leads from the Mesa to the Communities section!

OCOTILLO

by Steve Bryant



Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) is one of 11 species in the monogeneric family Fouquieriaceae. Also known as candlewood, "ocotl" is Nahuatl for "torch." Both names refer to

the long stems (canes) tipped with clusters of flame-red tubular flowers. Widely adapted, ocotillo grows in Southern CA deserts, southern and western AZ, central Baja, southern NV barely to Utah, and through western Texas to central Mexico. It is found in areas with at least occasional summer rain. Said by Calscape to tolerate temperatures to -7°C , some populations grow in areas of AZ, NM and TX that have lows around -20°C . Near Anza Borrego, up to 50 stems may grow from its base and be more than 6 m long, though often shorter elsewhere. The stems are semi-succulent with unbarbed spines up to 2 cm long. Flowering is thought to be timed to the spring hummingbird migration from Mexico to more northerly locations. The dried flowers have been used in herbal teas and fresh salads. The fruits are short tubes with a rounded end and contain snow-white flattened seeds that seem to be primarily wind dispersed. All *Fouquieria* produce two kinds of leaves: primary leaves on new growth have a hard midrib that eventually turns into a spine ("petiolar spine"), and secondary leaves that grow as clusters in the axils of the spines. Both kinds of leaves are sensitive to excessive moisture loss and will senesce in dry soil. Secondary leaves may die and regenerate several times a year (The "Doctor Who" of plant leaves) as the soil dries, and then is remoistened by rain. Growth is moderate, with canes lengthening from several cm to more than 30 cm. Fresh seeds germinate reasonably

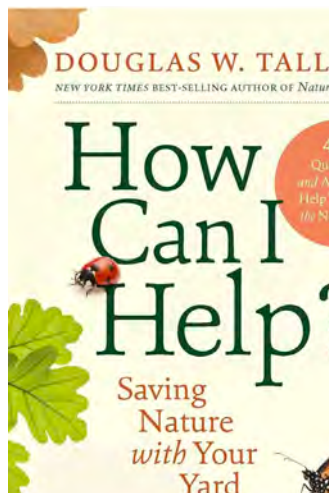


fast, and plants can be cloned by stem cuttings ("living fences" can be made this way). They are fairly easy to cultivate, given some summer

water. Ocotillo is one of the best hummingbird plants, with flowers high enough to apparently make the birds feel safe. (Some other spp. of *Fouquieria*, especially *F. diguetii* (southern Baja), flower nearly year-round in my gardens.)

BOOK OF THE MONTH

by Gene Baumann,
Volunteer Library Committee



How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard by Douglas W. Tallamy.

Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 2025. 373 pp.

I often ask myself what else I might do to preserve and restore nature, leave a smaller carbon footprint, et cetera. Douglas Tallamy offers many practical ideas to this end, beginning with

local (back yard) interventions. He tackles questions commonly asked at his popular lectures and shares compelling and actionable answers that will help

gardeners and homeowners take the next step in their ecological journey. Topics include ecology, evolution, biodiversity, conservation, habitat restoration, native plants, invasive species, pest control, and supporting wildlife at home. This book is organized as a response to each of 499 questions frequently asked of Tallamy. The author is keenly aware that most people want to take part in conservation efforts yet often feel powerless and overwhelmed to do so as individuals. But, he insists, one person can make a difference, and details exactly how in this book. This is an excellent resource for backyard ecologists whether beginning or experienced.

Tallamy's previous book, *Nature's Best Hope*, made the New York Times Best-Selling Author list and is also a great resource.

How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard can be checked out from the Volunteer Library now.

FALL/WINTER EVENTS

September 6: New Volunteer Orientation

September 7: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk, 8:00am

September 12: "The Habit" Upland Fundraiser 10 am-10 pm

September 13: New Volunteer Orientation

September 14: Free Admission Day in The Garden—Biodiversity Day

September 20: Garden Guide Training

September 25: Garden Guide Breakfast, 9:00 am

September 27: Garden Guide Training

October 3: Fall Luncheon & Business Meeting, 11:30 am

October 4: Garden Guide Training

October 5: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk, 8:00 am

October 8: Volunteer Enrichment Program Noon — Dr. Naomi Fraga

October 8: Acorn Member GNN Pre-Sale

October 11: GNN Opening Day — Fall Plant Sale

October 14: Bump in the Night Volunteer Orientation

October 17: Bump in the Night—Night I

October 18: Bump in the Night—Night II

October 25: Claremont Village Venture

October 26: Majestic Oak Leadership Event

November 2: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk, 8:00 am

November 27: Thanksgiving Day — Garden Closed

November 28: Free Admission Day in The Garden — Green Friday

December 3: Winter Luncheon, 11:30 am plus Luminaria Nights Orientation

December 5: Luminaria Nights — Night 1

December 6: Luminaria Nights — Night 2

December 7: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk, 8:00am

December 10: Volunteer Enrichment Program, Noon

December 12: Luminaria Nights — Night 3

December 13: Luminaria Nights — Night 4

December 19: Luminaria Nights — Night 5

December 20: Luminaria Nights — Night 6

December 25: Garden Closed

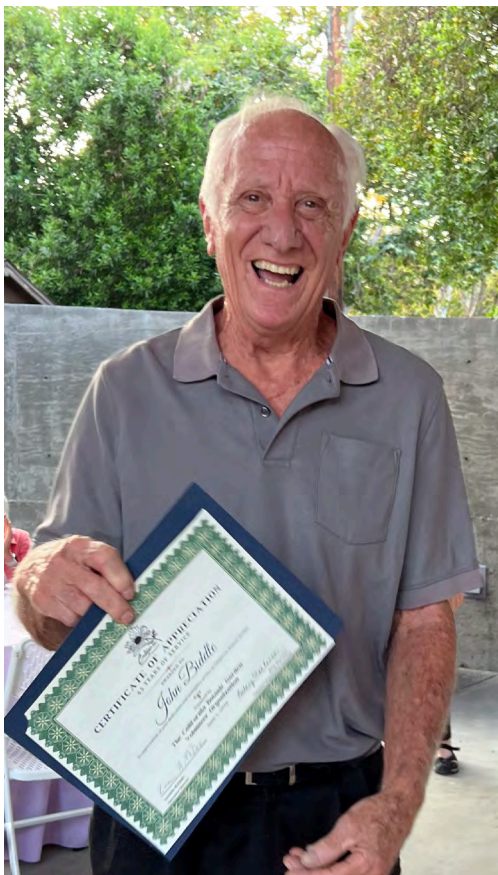
QUARTERLY LUNCHEON

All photos by Susan Starr.



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

All photos by Susan Starr and Marla White.



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