

Oak Notes

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Kathleen Noll, Volunteer President

On October 8, our volunteers attended the first enrichment program of the year with Dr. Naomi Fraga, Director of Conservation at California Botanic Garden. Naomi provided a comprehensive overview of CalBG's conservation mission, from its historical roots to its current and future initiatives. It was invigorating to learn how the Garden serves as a cornerstone for research and education on climate change and habitat recovery. CalBG not only trains future scientists in the field and through its living collection, it also provides urban and suburban residents with a vital connection to nature. Our Garden Guides experience this firsthand with student school tours and through our popular workshops and classes where the production nursery shows the community how to grow native plants. Making plants with your very hands!



It's finally the season for brilliant, beautiful planting! The round illumination of the harvest moon truly sets the mood for planting season. On October 11 and 12, the Grow Native Nursery was filled with a fantastic inventory of plants, seeds, and the people who love them. Scores of volunteers assisted with preparation for the opening day of the Grow Native Nursery. The place was

buzzing with enthusiasm, with customers lining up for both the member sale and the subsequent public sale. There was delicious coffee in various seasonal preparations and unique flavors for sale. This steered folks to our volunteer bake sale for pairings of cookies, muffins, and an incredible variety of treats. Attendees also shopped for the gorgeous Native Designs art of kokedama and festoon wreaths that replaced our traditional grapevine wreaths. The beauty and creativity of our volunteers know no bounds. Our fundraising efforts were a great success, with a grand total of \$950 on Saturday.

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.

Our volunteers soon had another opportunity to shine on October 17 and 18 for one of the Garden's most popular events, *Things That Go Bump in the Night*. This family-friendly experience was held over two evenings as the community explored the nocturnal worlds of plants and animals. Our wonderfully creative staff and volunteers set up and guided the intentional activity stations with bugs, birds, mammals, and . . . plants. Still, my favorite is *The World-Famous Spider Show*. Who knew that spider life could be so funny?

Community spaces are more important now than ever, and our Garden is for **everyone**! Touching soil, planting seeds, sitting quietly, watching the Towhees and scrub jays in the fall light are ways of savoring the beauty of the season and reminding us of the wonders of planet earth. This November, I am grateful for our entire Garden community and for some time off to spend with loved ones. As a gentle reminder, the Garden will be open "Green Friday," making it a perfect place to enjoy some fresh air with visiting friends and family.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director

Hello Volunteers!

Sincere thanks to those of you whom we are seeing a lot of these days! Notably, I saw quite a few of you here bright and early on Saturday (GNN-launch day) and also on Sunday (pretty busy too!). THANKS! As we often say, we could not do this without you. AND we are now—as I write—looking straight at *Things that Go Bump in the Night*. Many of you will have volunteered for that wonderfully fun event by the time you are reading *Oak Notes*. It warms the hearts of the staff in charge of these events to have such strong support from our volunteers! You greatly enhance the experience for our guests and support our efforts to offer terrific content in a friendly, welcoming and safe environment.

Enjoy the article in this issue of *Oak Notes* about Barbara Booth and her immense contributions to the Garden. By virtue of her hard work and her generosity, she has made a very real difference at CalBG! We are all immensely grateful. Please take a ride up Barbara's elevator sometime soon—the view from the third floor is rather spectacular. Tours are available—just ask!

We have now had the first serious winter storm of the changing season—a strong one! Almost 2" of rain at the Garden. That is pretty remarkable for October as many of you are well aware. Our horticulture staff has done a great job over the summer keeping many areas of our Garden still looking pretty darned good through the many weeks and months of no rain. Now it is all washed off and will green up.

Watch for the first of our native plants that will respond to the rain. Some of our manzanitas will be among them as they have pre-formed flower buds. When you are in/around the main building check the nice manzanitas that are behind the building in the planter area with the big California buckeye. They are often the first to flower in my experience.

Also keep an eye on the California fuchsias as they begin to go out of flower. Those plants always amaze me when they burst into flower after weeks and weeks of heat and no rain. The hummingbirds certainly rejoice! The transition from CA fuchsias to fall flowering manzanitas marks the calendar turning from late summer to fall. As interesting as fall colors I might argue, if not as photogenic! What will the rest of our wet season bring? Only time will tell of course.

Director of Horticulture Ashlee Armstrong and I spent much of that first winter storm on the road to the Getty Villa in Malibu for a meeting about fire safety and preparedness. It was a pretty awful drive, but the meeting was highly useful. What the folks at the Getty experienced during the Pacific Palisades fire was a literal and metaphorical trial by fire. At CalBG, a lot of our attention has been on preparing to manage indoor fires (think: laboratories). BUT, we will be adding some passages to our Emergency Preparedness manual and giving a bit of extra attention to our perimeter. In the last dozen years or so, the Bernard Field Station has caught fire twice, a

house on Radcliffe burned very close to our wall, and the golf course burned most recently. We will hope and intend that the fire department knocks such fires quickly, but missteps happen and we need to be prepared.

I will leave you with that cheery thought and look forward to sharing Garden events and experiences with all of you in the near future!

MEET THE NEW NURSERY MANAGER, FRANK OBREGÓN



Hello to all the California Botanic Garden volunteers and everyone else reading this month's *Oak Notes*! My name is Frank Obregón—I am the new Nursery Manager at CalBG and am both excited and grateful to be working here. I was hired in early

August and though new, my experiences with the staff members, volunteers, and the Garden itself have been positive and encouraging.

I consider myself a life-long plantsman and a “professional plant nerd.” I eat, sleep, and breathe all things plant-related! I have led a circuitous, “non-traditional” route to get here. Among my experiences, I have been a gardener for Disneyland, a site manager for an 80-foot-tall vertical garden, a semi-professional carnivorous plant breeder, and a “good ol’ fashioned” lawn-mowing residential gardener. I have always had an affinity for the outdoors and all things nature related, but my life changed when my grandmother, Juanita Anthony, gifted me a Venus Flytrap for my 10th birthday. This gift sparked an enduring love affair with carnivorous plants, plant science, and horticulture.

Following high school, I attended Long Beach City College's Horticulture program led by Prof. Jorge Ochoa. At LBCC I was able to grow and legitimize my horticultural skills. My “big break” came after I graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with a BS in Plant Science and was hired by Director David Bare of Descanso Gardens to run their nursery and propagation facilities. I thrived in this new opportunity to do what I loved, professionally. I turned the Descanso nursery into a more impactful plant production facility than it had been in

decades. I reestablished breeding programs that had been effectively abandoned for 50+ years, and implemented a new focus on native plant propagation and conservation.

After about five years of managing the Descanso nursery, and witnessing ecological destruction and habitat degradation in my beloved local foothills, I wanted to focus my energy on a more science-based, conservation-minded nursery career. I seized the opportunity to join CalBG and lead its nursery into the future, and thank both Naomi and the incumbent nursery staff for trusting me to manage their projects, plants, and facilities.

When I'm not managing the CalBG nursery, I'm usually exploring the Southern California mountain ranges. I'm an avid outdoorsman and enjoy fishing, backpacking, etc. I also enjoy cooking for my beautiful partner Alejandra, playing pickup basketball, making homebrewed beer, and obsessing over my personal plant collection. Life is good and I'm excited to be at CalBG. Drop into the nursery and chat with me anytime!

VOLUNTEER AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Kit Leung



Hi, I'm Kit Leung, and I'm excited to serve as the Volunteer Board Secretary at California Botanic Garden. I first got involved as a volunteer because I wanted to spend more time learning about California's amazing native plants and landscapes, while also

giving back to a community that cares deeply about conservation and sustainability. Being part of the volunteer board has given me the chance to support the Garden's mission of promoting botany, conservation, and horticulture—and to help strengthen the volunteer community that makes so much of this possible.

Outside of my role at CalBG, I'm also a UC Master Gardener and California Naturalist. I love teaching about topics like vermicomposting, pest management, and sustainable gardening practices, and I'm especially passionate about creating spaces where

people can connect with nature and learn from the environment around them.

When I'm not in the garden, I work in healthcare as Senior Director of Pharmacy Networks & Strategy at CarelonRx. I also mentor young professionals and co-founded an Asian Business Resource Group at my company to support leadership development and community engagement.

VOLUNTEER ENRICHMENT by Marla White

October kicked-off the occasional Enrichment series for CalBG volunteers. Naomi S. Fraga, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Programs, California Botanic Garden, shared her thoughts in her talk, *Out of the Wild and Into the Garden: CalBG's Role in Plant Conservation*.

Dr. Fraga provided an overview of CalBG's growing conservation and restoration programs, including several projects that highlighted CalBG's unique role in biodiversity conservation. At CalBG we are working to save endangered plant species from extinction through monitoring, research, horticulture,



(L-R) Committee Members: Betsy MacLaren, Kathleen Noll, Naomi Fraga (speaker), Marla White, Shaunna Gygli, Patricia Hessenflow, Dennis Frankeberger and Steve Bryant (missing).

Upcoming Enrichment presentations on selected Wednesdays in the Sycamore Room:

December 10: Suzanne Thompson, Pomona Valley Bird Alliance "Eyes & Ears on Burrowing Owls: Project"

February 11: Donna Bedell, Wildflowers

April 8: Travis Columbus, Vernal Pools

June 10: Chris Lappin, Local Herpetology

NEW VOLUNTEER POSITION: by Elaine Brown

Visitor Engagement is excited to announce the revival of the kiosk volunteer position! As part of our goal of engaging more deeply with Garden visitors, we will be rolling out the occasional discovery table on busy days. With this interactive table, we hope to get Garden visitors more excited about native plants and the role they play in our ecosystems. Primary tasks associated with this volunteer role will include: welcoming guests to the Garden, answering questions, providing directions, giving recommendations based on what *you* enjoy in the Garden, and watching over the Poppy Shop sales floor on busy days.



A Very Happy November Birthday to:

Amir Abou Khatar	Patty Nueva España
Amy Baumann	Anne Odgers
Fred Brooks	Jan Pierce
Betty Butler	Joan Presecan
Donna Chadwick	Barbara Quarton
Aria Deleon	Alex Reyes
Mia Espinosa	Jean Rosewall
Louise Gish	Dean Shimek
Virginia Herd	Seanna Tygard
Jennifer Hu	Tom White
Chris Ilgen	Franz Windegger
Rene Loof	

Our kiosk team is looking forward to working more closely with our volunteers to engage the public and create memorable and impactful experiences for the Garden's guests. Please let us know if this sounds interesting to you! All levels of Garden and native plant knowledge are welcome, and training will be provided.

MEET THE VISITOR ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, ELAINE BROWN



Hello!

My name is Elaine Brown and I've been working as the Visitor Engagement Manager at CalBG for nearly a year and a half. My main duties are managing the kiosk staff and assisting with our Garden events.

I became interested in native plants and animals after searching for a hiking group to go outside with when I used to work in B2B sales and was in an office all day. I stumbled across Pasadena's Sierra Club, which met at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center every month, and ended up volunteering often with the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Associates. For several years I volunteered with ECNCA. During this time I served as an Instagram manager, docent, scout walk coordinator, newsletter contributor, and board member (membership chair). Needless to say, I am passionate about volunteering and am very interested in the unique partnership that develops between staff and volunteers.

During my time here, I have worked on creating a more engaging kiosk experience, both for my staff and our Garden guests. With the support of other staff at the Garden, we cleaned up the kiosk and made it a little more comfortable during the summer months. My goals for this coming year are to continue making the kiosk more festive, to provide my staff with more resources to learn about plants and the Garden, to better connect with our

volunteers, and to engage more deeply with our community. I hope to interact with our volunteers much more this year! Feel free to say hi—my office is the first on the left when you enter the admin. building through the east entrance.

BARBARA BOOTH: TAKING US TO THE NEXT LEVEL by Jessica Wetzel

CalBG is able to achieve our mission in large part due to the time and treasure of passionate people who share our commitment to California's Native Flora. Longtime volunteer and CalBG benefactor, Barbara Booth, is most definitely passionate! For 19 years, the Herbarium has benefited from her speed and skill mounting specimens. Since her first shift in the Herbarium workroom, Barbara has mounted over 46,064 plants, which are now available to science and will be for hundreds of years! Her work is invaluable, as the Herbarium continually has a backlog of specimens to mount due to our prolific researchers and graduate students.

Not only does Barbara donate countless hours of her time to mounting specimens, she also chooses the Herbarium as a vehicle for her philanthropic giving. Barbara has purchased hundreds of rolls of high-quality tin foil, donated and prepared countless rolls of wax paper, brought in newspapers for shipping, and has purchased new plant presses and straps. Beyond donations of supplies needed to keep the workroom going, Barbara is a major contributor to large fundraising endeavors at CalBG. The Garden's most recent capital project, the addition of ADA restrooms and an elevator to the Administration and Sciences building, was made possible in large part by Barbara's generosity.

This first phase of the Herbarium Expansion Project paves the way for increasing the space available for housing specimens. The collection is nearing capacity at present. In addition to allowing staff to move specimens and supplies easily between the Herbarium's three floors, the new elevator also

allowed Barbara to visit the Herbarium collection for the first time! She took her inaugural ride on the elevator in October of 2025 with Garden staff and some of her fellow Herbarium workroom volunteers before enjoying a celebration luncheon. This was a proud moment for Barbara and a very special milestone for CalBG! Cheers to Barbara's generosity and commitment. Through her donations of both time and treasure, she is most definitely taking us to the next level.



Barbara cutting the ribbon on the new elevator before her inaugural ride with CalBG's Executive Director, Lucinda McDade. Photo Credit: Jessica Wetzel



Barbara Booth with her dedication plaque beside the new elevator. Photo Credit: Cindy Walkenbach



Barbara Booth rides the elevator with fellow volunteers Janice Tsuma, Grace Clark, and Sharon Thompson, CalBG Board Chair, Cindy Walkenbach, and CalBG Executive Director, Lucinda McDade. Photo Credit: Jessica Wetzel



Lucinda McDade toasts Barbara's vision and generosity at a small luncheon in her honor on October 1, 2025. Photo Credit: Cindy Walkenbach



Barbara Booth (third from left) rides the elevator with fellow volunteers Grace Clark (left) Janice Tsuma (second from left) and Executive Director Lucinda McDade (right). Photo Credit: Cindy Walkenbach



CALLIANDRA by Steve Bryant

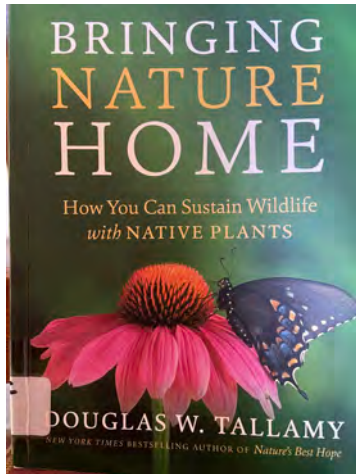


Calliandra is a subtropical genus in the bean family (Fabaceae), with about 140 spp. Two of these are generally grown in SoCal: *C. eriophylla*, native to the SE deserts, and *C. californica*, native to Baja. The filaments (male flower parts) are the most noticeable part of *Calliandra* flowers, so it was named “beautiful male” from the Greek κάλλος (kallos = beautiful) and ἀνδρὸς (andros = male). *C. californica* grows to 4+ m tall and wide, but the very hard wood can be pruned at any time to any desired shape. The plant may grow most of the year and has finely divided, usually-evergreen leaves that are larger in moist soil.

The flowers are a ~3 cm cluster of bright red and are much visited by bees and hummingbirds, as well as the small Lycaenid butterfly *Leptotus marina* (Marine Blue, referring to the shade of the blue, not its habitat), which uses the buds as larval food. Argentine ants are often associated with these larvae, and may protect these larvae in return, perhaps, for a sweetish exudate as in aphids. Chemical and acoustic signaling has also been shown between ants and Lycaenidae [The Ecology and Evolution of Ant Association in the Lycaenidae (Lepidoptera). Pierce, et. al 2002. *Ann. Rev. Entomol.* 47:733–71]. Brownish seed pods follow the flowers and explosively dehisce to release small blackish seeds, which may germinate in moister areas. Easy to grow, *C. californica* blooms much of year in full sun to part shade, and with little to no water (though it will grow faster and bloom more with summer water). It is hardy to below -5°C , windproof (mine only lost some flowers and leaves in the ~100-mph winds on 06-07 Jan. 2005, with no damage to the wood). It is pollinator friendly with stunning red flowers and is prunable—one of my absolute favorites! *C. eriophylla* is a smaller, paler version of the above, growing to 1 m+ tall and wide. The flowers are a 2 cm cluster of pink and white filaments. Hardy to at least -15°C . It also attracts pollinators, and makes a pretty planting nearly opposite the Percy Everett Memorial Garden.

ADULT BOOK OF THE MONTH

Barbara Quarton,
Volunteer Library Committee



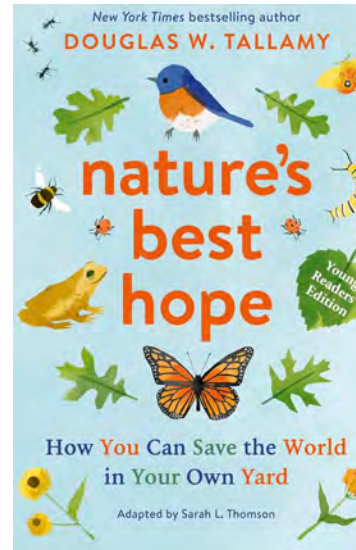
Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants by Douglas W. Tallamy. Hachette, New York, NY. 2007. 360 pp.

Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants is an urgent appeal to the hearts and hands of suburban gardeners: stop landscaping with alien plants that interfere with biodiversity and replace them with native species upon which insects and animals feed and thrive. Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, leans heavily on scientific studies but also embraces metaphor as he builds his arguments. For example, he refers to what some researchers have called the Jenga metaphor to explain the interconnectedness of species in the ecosystem. Having captured his readers' attention about the grave threat of alien species, Tallamy goes on to answer basic questions about how to make the shift to landscaping with natives, encouraging those who are new to native gardening and explaining the ways that even small changes to a garden are valuable. With stunning close-up photographs of native plants and animals and helpful appendices that list native plants by geographical region, Tallamy delivers not only a compelling message but also a road map for suburban gardeners who want to make a positive difference to our planet's long-term health. This book would make a great holiday gift!

Bringing Nature Home is available for check-out now in the Volunteer Library. Enjoy!

CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

Amy Baumann, Volunteer
Library Committee



Nature's Best Hope: How You Can Save the World in Your Own Yard: Young Readers' Edition by Douglas W. Tallamy, adapted by Sarah L. Thomson. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 2023. 256 pp.

Sarah L. Thomson has done a wonderful job of taking concepts from Tallamy's earlier conservation books and putting them into language easily comprehended by young readers. The book addresses subjects such as biodiversity, habitats, and ecosystems in terms that are both interesting and easy to understand. Thomson explains that though parks, preserves, and protected areas are important for saving wild places, they are not enough. The book provides inspiration for the development of "Homegrown National Parks." Per the author these backyard parks are a critical addition to conservation efforts. There are many tips as to how to create these homegrown areas starting with your own yard. The book is not specific to native plants and animals in Southern California. However, the suggestions are easily applicable to any area of the country. The book is intended for readers aged nine years old and up. I look forward to sharing with others the hope that is offered on the pages of *Nature's Best Hope*. It is an important book for young readers and it will definitely be included on my shopping list for the holidays.

GROW NATIVE NURSERY OPENING

All photos by Susan Starr and Carrie Rosema.



VOLUNTEER LUNCH

All photos by Susan Starr.



LUMINARIA NIGHTS RETURNS THIS DECEMBER!

by **Lauren Weintraub Stoebel**, Assistant
Director of Visitor Engagement for PR and Events

Each winter Luminaria Nights fills California Botanic Garden with the gentle glow of hundreds of candle-lit luminarias and the joyous and relaxing sounds of live music at three venues. This unique event draws thousands of community members into the Garden to celebrate and connect with friends and family, and it's also a big source of revenue supporting CalBG's educational and outreach programming.

Luminaria Nights is also a HUGE undertaking, and volunteers play an indispensable role in helping to create this magical experience and keep it safe for all of our visitors. From pre-event setup to monitoring pathways and venues to post-event cleanup, Visitor Engagement needs your help! As we add a third weekend to the event this year, we hope that volunteers will consider signing up on Volgistics for one or more of the Luminaria Nights shifts. In addition to the fun of working behind the scenes at a major event, Luminaria Nights volunteers also get one free ticket to the event (good for any night!) for each shift that they work, and dinner will be provided for all volunteers. If you have any questions about what shifts to sign up for at Luminaria Nights, please feel free to reach out to Patty or to me at lstoebel@calbg.org.

FALL/WINTER EVENTS

November 2: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

November 4: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 4:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

November 9: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

November 15: Class Celestial Watercolor 10:00 a.m. (registration required)

November 18: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

November 27: Thanksgiving Day – Garden Closed

November 28: Green Friday, Sustainable alternative to Black Friday

December 2: Run for Fun Monthly Running Meetup 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

December 3: Winter Luncheon 11:30 a.m.

December 5: Luminaria Nights – Night I

December 6: Luminaria Nights – Night II

December 7: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

December 10: Volunteer Enrichment – Noon

December 12: Luminaria Nights – Night III

December 13: Luminaria Nights – Night IV

December 14: Silent Reading Club Monthly Meetup (please RSVP)

December 16: Family Story Time Monthly Meetup 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

December 19: Luminaria Nights – Night V

December 20: Luminaria Nights – Night VI

December 26: Garden Closed

December 26: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

January 1: Garden Closed

January 4: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

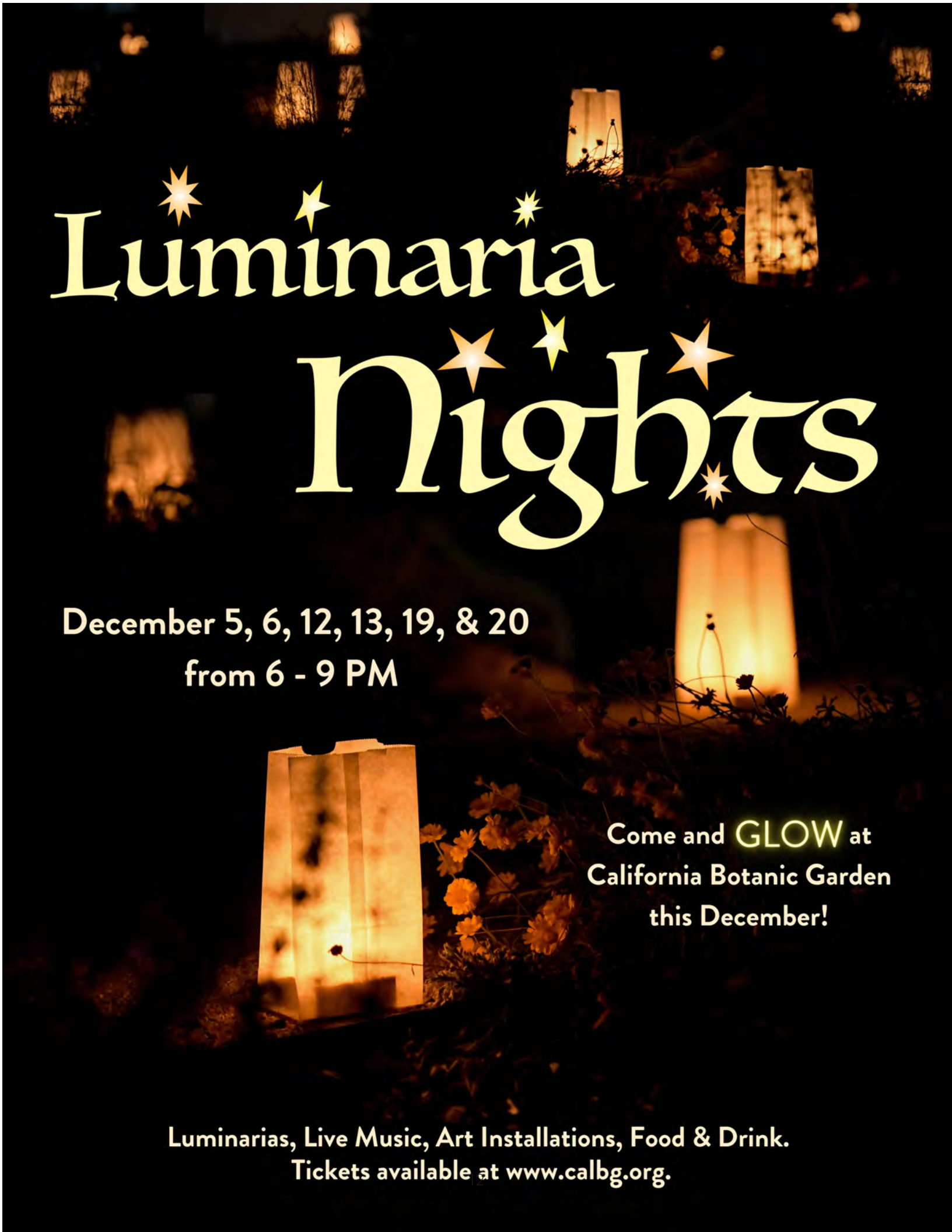
January 6: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 4:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

January 11: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

January 19: Martin Luther King, Jr Day

January 20: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

January 30: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)



Luminaria Nights

December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, & 20
from 6 - 9 PM

Come and GLOW at
California Botanic Garden
this December!

Luminarias, Live Music, Art Installations, Food & Drink.
Tickets available at www.calbg.org.