



NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

President: Kathleen Noll
Vice President:
Christine Zukowski
Treasurer: Rachael Wilkerson
Secretary: Kit Leung
Volunteer Coordinator:
Patty España
Goals & Evaluations:
Betsy MacLaren
Volunteer Personnel:
Judy Moffet
Volunteer Library:
Amy Baumann
Enrichment & Field Trips:
Marla White
Hospitality: Susan Starr
Horticulture & Research:
Tom White
Visitor Experience:
Co-Chairs: Virginia Herd
and Lynn Miller
Community Outreach:
Heidi Arch
Native Designs: Co-Chairs:
Linda Prendergast and
Kathleen Noll
Oak Notes Editor:
Patricia Brooks
Copy Editor: Fred Brooks
Publisher: Carole Aldrich
Web Publisher: Jennifer
Scerra and Lauren Stobel



FROM THE PRESIDENT Kathleen Noll, Volunteer President

As our country approaches its 250th birthday amid a complex and shocking news cycle, we can depend on the California Botanic Garden as a sanctuary. It remains a place of peace where nature leads, rooted in community, solidarity, and a spirit of welcoming. And, in spring, it's really special.

California Botanic Garden is proud to fulfill our mission to inform, inspire, and educate the public about our state's native plants at the upcoming Native Plant Festival on March 28. This is a "peak" seasonal setting at the Garden, and this specific event brings the community together to celebrate the sustainability and resiliency of the native plant species and ecosystems unique to the California Floristic Province.

The festival offers inspiration to those looking to begin restoration efforts in their own home gardens—as many of us as volunteers have—as well as opportunities to connect with the public about the integral role CalBG plays in wildlands restoration and conservation.

In the spirit of nurturing our community, I am pleased to introduce a new project in the March edition of *Oak Notes*. As we look toward CalBG's centennial in 2027, we are launching the Volunteer Organization Archive Project. Our objective is to honor and preserve the history of our organization while fostering deeper connections for volunteers within the Volunteer Library.

Located on the east side of the administration building next to the Sycamore Room, many of you know the library exists, but it is important to highlight that this is a designated space created specifically for you, our volunteers. Since 1986, this space has been home to a wonderful collection of lending library books, journals, and reference materials and still serves as a

Erratum: In the October 2025 issue of *Oak Notes*, photos taken of the Herbarium volunteers should have been attributed to Mare Nazaire, Herbarium Curator.

Permission to use the above "erratum" received from Mare on 8 February 2026.

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.

primary meeting hub for our volunteer board and committees.

The Volunteer Board's goal is to enhance the library with a pleasing environment that builds organizational capacity, and with not only books and native plant/natural history resources, but also provides a true respite from daily volunteer activities. As we transition from forty years of physical binders, we are seeking notable records and photographs from the past to celebrate the Garden's 100th birthday. By archiving these materials, we are making room for new resources, ensuring our organization stays current, and creating space for fresh ideas as the volunteer organization grows and evolves.

If you are interested in assisting with this project this spring and beyond, please look for Patty's email of volunteer opportunities.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director**

Hello volunteers! As I write, the annual Family Bird Festival has wrapped up and the last of the guests—*many* families with small ones—are making their way out. Spectacular day! Thanks to all of you volunteers who were here to help make it possible. Bird Fest really takes a village. I hope that many of you appreciated the humor in the choice of food trucks... If you missed it, just ask and we will fill you in.

I hope that most of you are aware of what a terrific job Patty Nueva España is doing as our staff liaison for the volunteer program. Among other things, under her leadership, recruiting has really taken off! Volunteers, that means that you have new colleagues who need to be welcomed and brought into the fold so that they feel welcomed, completely at home, and in very good company, embraced by your wonderfully warm and supportive community. Truly their effectiveness will be enhanced by offering them the embrace of the volunteer organization and of many individual volunteers.

Patty has also led us through a revision of the volunteers' Standards of Conduct. It is well—best practices in fact—to lay these out clearly for everyone, even if it is not rocket science! In parallel, these standards have been revisited and updated for everyone here at CalBG—from volunteers to staff to trustees! It is vital that we all conduct ourselves with the Garden's best interests close to mind.

I am excited for the grapevine harvest! Those vines have had a spectacular couple of years and have quite some extra biomass that they can give up to support you volunteers in crafting seasonal celebratory items. I love that our horticulture staff will be working right alongside you on this project—some of them are nearly as crafty as you are!

I hope that you are eagerly watching as the new Children's Woodland takes shape. It is really a project that captures imaginations and invites participation. I am very excited about the "pre-play" session on the 6th of March when we are inviting the children of staff and close friends to come and show us how kids will play at the Woodland. We anticipate making some adjustments!



A Very Happy March Birthday to:

Ciani Bell	Nancy Osgood
Lisa Donnell	Logan Reichel
Charles Gale	Mike Reizman
Christopher Johnston	Gloria Slosberg
Barbara Junisbai	Michelle Small
Mark Kay	Joan Sweeney
Kaushiki Menon	Sharon Thompson
Lynn Miller	Hartmut Wisch
Arlene Noreen	

Thinking a bit farther out, we are also beginning to get excited about the Garden's centennial. 1927 marks the somewhat informal year in which the Garden began to operate as an official entity (Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden) at the Orange County site. Our legal founding papers, the Trust Indenture, dates back to 1934 and so we may have two centennials! Some of you (I hope many of you) remember John and Dorcia Bradley who left us a few years ago for their grandchildren in the midwest. John had pored through the archives relevant to the founding of the Garden and he felt strongly that 1927 was the right date to celebrate. John: I hope you are reading this! We are doing it!

A lot of our celebration will involve putting a centennial spin on everything that happens during the year. We *won't* do a second, centennial gala in May, but in May, we will throw a major fundraiser to celebrate the centennial. We will likely stamp every herbarium specimen accessioned during 2027 with a commemorative centennial message. There are so

many things we can and will do to celebrate 100 years!

Think about it: it is pretty darned amazing that Susanna was able to turn her dream into a reality down in the OC. It is equally amazing that the Garden survived Susanna's death and took shape here in Claremont. 100 years! We have a lot to celebrate!

Super bloom? Winter has returned and the cool temperatures and rain will help to slow down and lengthen the wildflower season. I hope you can all get out and enjoy it!

Onward into spring! Hope to see you on the paths at CalBG soon!

MEMORIAL, JOAN PRESECAN by Lucinda McDade

I was so sad to learn of Joan Presecan's passing! I have been at the Garden for very close to 20 years and I feel that I've known Joan for most of that and thus for quite a while! Regardless of how well I thought

CALBG VOLUNTEERS ENRICHMENT SPEAKER SERIES



**Andy Gygli,
Wildlife Biologist**

The Physiology and Natural History of the Black-Footed Ferret, Wednesday March 11, 2026 at Noon in the Sycamore Room

(This will be a Video Conference where guests may ask questions of our Wyoming-based speaker.)

Andy Gygli is a wildlife biologist who has worked from the Canadian border in Idaho to the Mexican border in Arizona. While a herpetologist by training, Andy has worked with a variety of nongame wildlife ranging from slugs and bugs to mustelids. Currently Andy is the statewide Small

Carnivore Biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, where he focuses on Canada lynx, river otters, wolverines, and black-footed ferrets.



The black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) is the only ferret native to North America and one of the most endangered species on the continent. Its nocturnal and fossorial behavior creates intriguing challenges in observation and study, also making managing the species uniquely difficult. In this talk, Andy will discuss the physiology



and natural history of the ferret, its relationship with humans, and ongoing recovery efforts.

that I knew her, I knew only the tip of the iceberg of her life experiences and accomplishments. I did not know that she was such a dedicated science educator—although her dedicated volunteer work as a Nature Interpreter/Garden Guide certainly provided hints of that. I had no idea that she was instrumental in founding the Vivian Webb school, including developing cutting-edge lab exercises to study DNA. I actually did not know that she had served on the Claremont school board.

I did know about her greatly appreciated volunteer work at the Garden as a Nature Interpreter and knew that she was a valued member of our vibrant community of volunteers. I also knew that she was an intrepid member of the Claremont Senior Bike Group—even after experiencing a fairly terrific fall and not insignificant injuries. But she was tough! She got herself healed up and got back on the bike again!

It was a great honor to meet her three daughters who talk about being taken on camping trips and encouraged to engage in outdoor creative play of the

exact sort that we will be developing at the Children's Woodland at CalBG. It is her daughters' wish that we remember Joan here at the new Children's Woodland by naming the vine-covered shelter/play space after her. They invite all of us to join in making a gift to honor Joan and to keep her memory alive and strong at our new area for children.

We will miss you Joan! You have made the world a better place; your legacy lives on here at California Botanic Garden!

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIME! by **Patty Nueva España, Volunteer Program Coordinator**

Posting Your Hours

Did you know if you attend a Volunteer Quarterly Luncheon, the time spent sharing your delicious salad and visiting with fellow volunteers is worthy of volunteer service; it is technically a meeting, after all. Also, if you are a member of one of our wonderful volunteer committees, attending a committee meeting

NATIVE PLANT FESTIVAL RETURNS FOR A SECOND YEAR! by **Lauren Weintraub Stoebel, Photos by Carrie Rosema**



After a blockbuster first year with nearly 2000 visitors, CalBG and Sustainable Claremont's Native Plant Festival will be back for a second outing on Saturday, March 28th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Like last year, the event will feature booths from dozens of community partners, landscapers, and artisans, plus musical performances, crafts and

story time, gardening workshops, behind the scenes tours, and talks and panels. "Plant Fest" is an amazing opportunity to both bring our close community deeper into a conversation about how they can get involved in native plant gardening and conservation, and to introduce brand new visitors to the Garden and the joys of native plants!

Native Plant Festival, like all of our other larger events, can't happen without CalBG's dedicated crew of volunteers. At the event, volunteers will help welcome and orient visitors, lead crafts and read stories, drive trams and direct traffic, and so much more. Even if you don't normally work at large events, we hope you'll check out available shifts in Volgistics and join us for a joyful day full of native plant love! Volunteer shifts only cover half of the event, so you'll still have time to check out all of the amazing booths and activities before or after you help out. See you at the Festival!

is also time served as a volunteer with CalBG. There are so many opportunities to be a part of this great Volunteer Organization, and I see so many of you putting in the hours, yet you don't take the time to post them. These hours are not only a great connection with the organization, your service benefits CalBG in the form of grants awarded to the Garden. Your representation is a testament to the volunteer organization and a plus for you as well. Yet some of you don't post your hours.

I know that some volunteers struggle with our VicNet system. It isn't perfect and problems sometime come up, but if you contact me, I can always alert the system's "help team." They have always responded to my questions. If you are still uncomfortable logging into the system, just send your hours served to me and I will post them for you. Or stop by my office and I will walk you through the process. If you are going to do the time, then it is important to record the time!

Volunteers Standards of Conduct

By now, the Volunteer Standards of Conduct have been sent to all of you. I added a signature portion to this latest version to underscore the importance of your consideration and understanding of them. These Standards are more inclusive than previous versions and you need to be aware of them. If you have not done so already, please sign and return the form to me. My thanks to those of you who have.

**COMMUNITY
OUTREACH CHAIR**



Hello Volunteers,
My name is Heidi Arch and I am now serving as chair of the Community Outreach Committee. I live in the beautiful city of Claremont and have two grown children and six grandchildren. With a BA in English and an MA in Education, I taught elementary school for the Baldwin Park Unified School District. I retired 15 years ago, found my new vocation—volunteering, and have been a CalBG volunteer for two years. It brings me such joy to work alongside a group of very nice staff and co-volunteers. If you would like to join

in on the fun and help at community events, don't hesitate to let Patty Nueva España, Lauren Stoebel, or myself know.

T-SHIRTS
by Kara Kranzky, Retail Operations
Coordinator



New T-shirts—Conserving and Celebrating California Native Plants—here and now available! In long sleeves, color navy; and short sleeves, colors lime, lavender, black, and sand. Shirt sizes range from small to 2XL. While supplies last. Get yours at the Poppy Shop!

**UPCOMING VOLUNTEER
ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES**
by Marla White

- April 8:** Travis Columbus (CalBG), Vernal Pools lecture
 - May 13:** Field trip to Bernard Field Station at 9:30 a.m., Marty Meyer (Pomona College)
 - TBD:** Field Trip, Burrowing Owl Project with Suzanne Thompson, Pomona Valley Bird Alliance, Chaffey College in Chino
 - June 10:** Kris Lappin, Cal Poly Herpetology (tentative)
 - June 20 (Sat):** Friends of the L A. River field trip
- If you are interested in attending any of the field trips, please send your specific commitment to Patty España, Volunteer Manager (pespana@calbg.org), so that we may prepare for the group activity.

PALO VERDES

by Steve Bryant



Parkinsonia, or Palo Verde, contains 12 or so spp., including *P. florida* (Blue Palo Verde), *P. microphylla* (Little-leaved or Foothills Palo Verde), and *P. aculeata* (Mexican Palo Verde). *P. florida* grows throughout our lower deserts, has short stiff prickles, and covers itself

with yellow flowers in the spring. *P. microphylla* is found in Imperial Co. and along the Colorado River; is common in Arizona, has very small leaves, spine-tipped branches, and pale-yellow flowers. *P. aculeata* is a Mexican sp. widely naturalized in SoCal; it has thorns, long pendant leaves, and yellow flowers with a distinct reddish spot. Our spp. of *Parkinsonia* usually grow into small (~7 m) trees with rather soft wood and are used in landscaping for their dappled shade and flower display, though their armature may make them unsuitable for some uses. In 1979, a grad. school friend of mine, Mark Dimmitt, was working at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. He collected seeds from a hybrid of *P. microphylla* and *P. aculeata* and grew them. One seedling grew into a superior tree and was found to be a cross of *P. florida* with the hybrid. Mark named this cultivar ‘Desert Museum’ (photo), expecting the Museum to pursue a plant patent. They did not, but by then it was too late for Mark himself to patent the plant (Dimmitt, *pers comm.*). The outstanding feature of ‘Desert Museum’ is its lack of armature—neither spines nor prickles. It has the excellent floral display of *P. florida* (even when young), and the fast growth of *P. aculeata* (up to 2 m per year when young). The growth slows with age and the lower bark may turn brown.

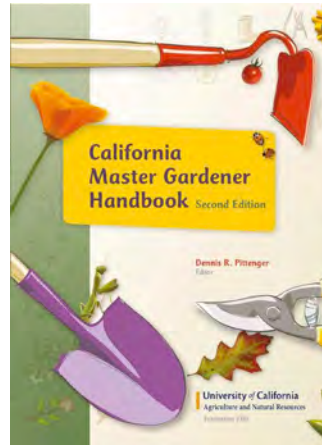


During flowering, the ground beneath the tree is yellow with dropped flowers (photo) and bees, especially *Xylocopa* (Carpenter Bees), are

attracted to them. The major problem with ‘Desert Museum’ is that it is not windproof. All the trees in my yard in Alta Loma have been broken or at least partially uprooted by high winds. Even two trees we had growing in Riverside were partially blown over by less powerful winds.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

by Kit Leung, Master Gardener



California Master Gardener Handbook, Second Edition, Random House, New York 2024, 382pp.

If you have spent time in the California Botanic Garden library recently, you may have noticed a new addition: a chunky, bright green, 5-lb, 2-inch-thick book that looks like it could double as a doorstop during a Santa Ana windstorm. I am talking about the *California Master Gardener Handbook*, which was generously donated to our library by fellow volunteer Steve Bryant.

When I graduated from the University of California Master Gardener program in 2019, I knew I still had much to learn despite having read a large portion of this handbook and completing the volunteer training program. Time and time again I kept coming back to this text as my go-to resource for my home gardening questions and to help substantiate information and tips from online resources and social media influencers. This handbook was like having a direct line to a team of experts when I could not ask for advice in person.

The true value of this book came when I helped create a garden at my son’s school. The handbook was a critical resource that helped me understand how to effectively build up soil health, manage weeds and pests, and apply fertilizers. The handbook also covers

a wide variety of other topics such as houseplants, lawns, landscape plants, vegetable and fruit tree gardening, garden design, and diagnosing plant problems.

The information in this handbook is supported by University of California faculty and researcher publications. The handbook has been a cornerstone for Master Gardener volunteer training, serving as a resource to over 34,000 volunteers and across 50 California counties. I use this book almost like a dictionary or textbook when I have gardening questions, or I like to go back to it to refresh my knowledge and learning. Since it is now officially part of our library thanks to Steve, I highly recommend giving it a thumb-through as a seasoned gardener or as someone who is interested in home gardening. Just be sure to lift using your legs and not your back because we want you healthy for your next volunteer shift!

CALBG VOLUNTEER EVENTS MARCH–MAY 2026

March 1: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

March 3: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

March 4: Yoga in the Garden 9:30 a.m. (registration required)

March 7 & 8: Introduction to Bryophytes (mosses, liverworts & hornworts) Class 9:00 a.m. (registration required)

March 8: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

March 11: Yoga in the Garden 9:30 a.m. (registration required)

March 11: Volunteer Enrichment: Andy Gygli, Wildlife Biologist on The Physiology and Natural History of the Black-Footed Ferret, noon Sycamore Room

March 17: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

March 20: Yoga in the Garden, noon (registration required)

March 21: Soil Science Class 9:00 a.m. (registration required)

March 25: Volunteer Quarterly Lunch & Business Meeting 11:30 a.m.

March 27: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

March 28: CalBG Native Plant Festival 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. + Free Admission Day

April 4: Poetry Day in the Garden

April 5: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

April 7: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

April 8: Volunteer Enrichment: Travis Columbus on Vernal Pools, noon Sycamore Room

April 9: Joy in the Garden Youth Community Art Exhibition in the Sage Gallery

April 10 & 11: Opening of the Children's Woodland at CalBG

April 12: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

April 21: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

April 24: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

May 3: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

May 3: Forever California Spring Fundraising Gala
May 5: Run for Fun Monthly Meetup 6:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

May 10: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

May 13: Volunteer Enrichment: Field Trip to Robert J. Bernard Biological Field Station with Marty Meyer 9:30 a.m.

May 19: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

May 29: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

YOU ARE INVITED

New Volunteer Mixer

MEET YOUR FELLOW VOLUNTEERS
LEARN ABOUT FUN AND INTERESTING
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE GARDEN

LIGHT BREAKFAST PROVIDED

SAY HELLO TO SOME
NATIVE PLANT FRIENDS
ON A CASUAL WALK

CALBG
JOHNSON'S OVAL

START TIME
9AM

7 MARCH

SPRING VOLUNTEER LUNCHEON & BUSINESS MEETING



**Wednesday, March 25 at 11:30 in the Forest Pavilion
Tram starts at 11:00 a.m. Please note date change!**

***Bring your favorite main dish, salad, dessert, or hors d'oeuvres to share!
Don't forget your name badge. Staff welcome too! See you there.***

GARDEN GUIDES

by Marla White

Garden Guides are vital, dedicated members of the CalBG Volunteer Organization. Our school programs are aligned with Next Generation Science Standards for Grades K–12. The TK tour is supported by the California Preschool/TK Learning Foundations. Teachers are able to download a pre-visit information packet, see a brief video of the Garden, and tour specific program overviews with teacher materials from our website at <https://www.calbg.org/events-programs/school-tours>.

The Cost: \$6 per child/\$7 per chaperone with a minimum of 10 students and maximum of 40 students.

Our four lower-elementary walking tours and activities are available on Tuesdays.

- It's Alive!—Transitional Kindergarten (1 hr.)
- The Big Green Machine: Plants & Their Ecosystems—Kindergarten (1 hr.)

- Plantastic! What Makes a Plant, a Plant—1st grade (1.25 hrs.)
- Surviving & Thriving: Pollination and Seed Dispersal—2nd grade (1.25 hrs.)

The upper elementary tours are available on Thursdays and include:

- Web of Life: The Study of Ecological Relationships and Diversity of Life—3rd & 4th grades
- Adaptation & Survival: A Quest for Success—5th & 6th grades

Middle & High School Tours are also offered based on specific classroom topics requested.

We also offer tours for homeschools and adult groups on an arranged basis.

The Garden Guides are under the direction of Jennifer Scerra (Assistant Director of Visitor Engagement for Community Education) and Sally Hy (Community Education Coordinator).



Sally Hy Welcomes Harvey Mudd College Parents



FAMILY BIRD FEST

Photos by Andy Torres

