

The
Matilija

The Newsletter of California Botanic Garden



Spring 2026



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California Botanic Garden is dedicated to advancing knowledge, conservation, and appreciation of California Native Plants.



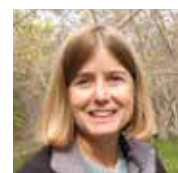
Welcome to the spring 2026 issue of *The Matilija*! I am excited to bring you the great articles that you will find on these pages, complete with captivating photos!

I am sometimes jealous of our horticulture staff! They spend more time out in the Garden than anyone else and they get to know their areas—inclusive of the plants and animals—well. They are driven by horticultural knowledge and keen senses of aesthetics to improve and beautify their areas, and they are driven by a love of native plants to showcase them well. Our colleagues who tend the California Plant Communities area are directly channeling our founder Susanna Bixby Bryant who was determined that part of her native plant garden would showcase plants together with those they occur with in nature. The many experts with whom Susanna consulted seem to have been entirely befuddled as to why she wanted to do this—they were accustomed to the more formal traditions of botanic gardens. Nonetheless she persisted, and we celebrate her “wild garden” every day here!

Our current team of horticulturists also works marvelously well together and is able to tackle some pretty ambitious projects like the new dry stream that runs to the N/ NW from the base of the ramp down to the communities area and the Children's Woodland. I hope that those of you who visit often have enjoyed watching these new areas take form. We are all excited to be developing a feature at CalBG for kids that is consistent with our native plant mission. We want to be part of the effort to re-connect children to the natural world, to offer them alternatives to screens and organized play with playthings made by humans, and to prime their creativity and appreciation for nature.

As you read the article on the work of our master's students, some of you may be learning for the first time that CalBG has a graduate program! As part of our mission to “advance knowledge, conservation and appreciation of California native plants,” we train graduate students who contribute significantly to botanical research and plant conservation efforts. Most of our master's students undertake floristics projects, beginning with identifying an area (almost always in the southern half of California or adjacent Nevada) that remains poorly known in terms of the plants that occur there. They then spend the next two to three years thoroughly exploring their area and collecting to document plant diversity there. It is routine for our students to at least double the plants known to occur at their site. It is likewise routine for them to discover new county records of plants not previously known to occur in that particular area. State records are not at all uncommon. Along the way, the students also focus specifically on rare plants, often making a conservation seed collection from such a plant. Frequently, work on rare plants turns into a published conservation plan for that plant. These are plans that are designed to assist land managers by proposing concrete management steps toward securing the future of the plant.

What do these students do when they complete their degrees? Some go on to enroll in a Ph.D. program here or elsewhere but others are quickly snapped up for permanent jobs. Matthew Yamamoto, featured in the article, is already at work for the state park system. Others work for the California Native Plant Society or institutions like The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Still others work for biological consulting companies. In sum, the skills that they acquire while working on their master's degrees prepare them well for professional lives devoted to plants and conservation!



Lucinda A. McDade
Lucinda A. McDade, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Judith B. Friend Director of Research

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On the cover:

California Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) in bloom at CalBG
(photo by Carrie Rosema).

Above:

Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia* sp.) (photo by Martha Clark)

Below:

Rufous Hummingbird at CalBG (photo by Ray Cardinas)



California Botanic Garden is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums



Garden Connections:

Horticulture Staff's Favorite Plants and Places at CalBG

Take a tour of California Botanic Garden with the staff members who know it best! CalBG's Horticulture team spends more time with our Living Collection than anyone else. In this feature they share the special connections, experiences, and memories that the Garden's grounds evoke.

Visit the CalBG Admissions Kiosk to grab a map of these featured locations!



Jensen Talmo enjoying the expansive views and unusual plants in the western section of the California Plant Communities (photo by Carrie Rosema). Fluffy the Scrub Jay visiting Jensen's cart (photo by Jensen Talmo).

Jensen Talmo

Garden zone tended: West Communities

Length of time at CalBG: 2 years

The West Communities trail is my favorite spot. It reminds me of hiking the Mt. Wilson trail in Sierra Madre. The smells remind me of my childhood hikes with Mother and adventures with my friends. Some mornings, you may find me sitting on a log having my coffee while enjoying the sunrise. I have made two wonderful friends along this trail: a coyote whom we have named "Petra," and a Scrub Jay named "Fluffy."

Petra often comes over to see what I'm doing, maintaining a distance no shorter than about 20 ft. We both take a look at each other, as if greeting one another and acknowledging each other's presence. Sometimes, she even follows me around a bit while I water the new plants. If I sit, she sits as well. Most of the time, however, it's just a brief "hello."

Fluffy, on the other hand, is a bit more bold and mischievous. She will jump right into the puddle of water in the wells that I make around the new plants as I'm still watering! She even lets me squirt her with the hose. Other times, I might be resting in the shade of my cart and she will rummage through the back, pull out an acorn, and fly off. And of course, she will return, looking for more. I have numerous photos of her perching on my steering wheel while I'm sitting in the cart.



Jennifer Chebahtah connecting with poppies in the Mesa Gardens at CalBG (photo by Carrie Rosema). Chebahtah's poppy field in 2023 (photo by Jeff Oakley).

Jennifer Chebahtah

Garden zone tended: North Mesa

Length of time at CalBG: 4 years

I've always had an affinity for our iconic California Golden Poppies, *Eschscholzia californica*. The color is so unique and captivating. I have joyful memories as a child of seeing the poppies bloom on my grandparents' land in the hills of Riverside, on roadsides, and in freeway medians. Sadly, I think it's pretty rare to see them pop up in developed areas these days.

In autumn at the Garden the horticulture staff prepares special areas for the spring wildflower blooms. Fall of 2022, I was giddy from having access to so many seeds and so much space! I wanted to create a mini super bloom in my area so I distributed TONS of poppy seeds in a warm, sunny spot in the northwest corner of my section, near an area we call Thorne Circle. By spring of 2023, we received record amounts of rainfall and my poppy field burst with gray-green foliage. As the longer days and warmer weather came, the poppies exploded into a field of radiant golden-orange flowers! The color was so dense and striking that you could see it from the West Path, drawing visitors over to Thorne Circle to take photos with and admire our gorgeous state flower.

Spring of 2024 yielded a decent bloom, but 2025 was lackluster. This past fall, in an effort to revive the poppy bloom, I distributed a thick layer of mulch and heavily reseeded the poppy field. I'm hoping for another spectacular bloom this year!

Natalia Jimenez

Garden zone tended: Northeast Communities

Length of time at CalBG: 2 years

The windy loop trail through the community beds is unpaved and holds my favorite section of the Garden. Down the slope coming from the bathrooms on the Mesa, pass under the pergola structure, cross the dotted green line on the pavement and you will find yourself walking through an archway made of Interior Live Oak (*Quercus wislizeni*) branches that leads you to a shady grove. Make a right onto the dirt trail and you will have found the entrance to my paradise. The sparsely leaved branches of the oaks let through a perfect glittering of dappled sun that spills onto the ground all around you. There's a special place in my heart reserved for this area; besides its natural beauty, it's a place where I am reminded of how far I have come and how much I have grown throughout my time here at the Garden. When I first started this job, this is where the horticulturist before me spent the most time sharing her experiences and giving me advice about the section I would be in charge of. I remember feeling overwhelmed and tentative about my new position as she described how to organize all of my responsibilities. Now, two years later, when I spend time here I feel a little tug of appreciation and pride. It's a comfort to think that all who visit here are making their own precious memories that help them appreciate these trees and this trail as much as I do.



Natalia Jimenez wandering in her "hidden" oasis in the California Plant Communities (photos by Carrie Rosema).

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Emily Sweet

Garden zone tended: North Garden, Trustees Oak Grove, Children's Woodland
Length of time at CalBG: 1.5 years

Coming down north of the mesa and just west of the new dry stream bed, 4 large Chaparral Whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*) put on a beautiful show in early spring. This transition zone from the mesa gardens into the communities is a special spot to me because it is not usually traversed by Garden visitors. Yet, every year these large ceanothus bushes put on a grand display with their lilac blooms. Throughout the year, these *Ceanothus* stand out from other California native plants with their white bark and light green/grey foliage. As the cold, wet winter comes to an end, the Chaparral Whitethorn provides a much needed source of pollen and nectar for native bees, moths, and butterflies. In early spring as you look closely at a delicate cluster of flowers, the low hum of pollinators can be heard across these 4 large shrubs. This usually quiet corner of the Garden is filled with life in spring as all sorts of wildlife seem to appreciate it. *Ceanothus leucodermis* is abundant in our local foothills. Outside of the Garden, you can find this *Ceanothus* in coastal and inland mountains from Baja California to the Sierra Nevada foothills in chaparral habitat. This area continues to be full of special surprises for me. I'm looking forward to its bloom in spring and hoping to see some new visitors stop by to enjoy as well.



The delicate light blue blooms of Emily Sweet's favorite Chaparral Whitethorn bushes (photos by Carrie Rosema).



James Reed's quiet Channel Islands oasis in the California Plant Communities (photos by Carrie Rosema).

James Reed

Garden role: Plant Records Manager
Length of time at CalBG: 8 years

The southern portion of the Channel Islands area in the Communities is my favorite area of the Garden. Entered from the southwestern edge and following the community trail, it opens into a quiet, private retreat beneath Channel Islands canopy and understory. MacDonald's Oak (*Quercus x macdonaldii*) and Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus*) frame the path, while Catalina Currant (*Ribes viburnifolium*) hugs the margins. The centerpiece, however, is a mature Santa Cruz Island Ironwood (*Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *aspleniifolius*) growing alongside the trail. Collected on Santa Cruz Island in 1958 and planted in 1960, this tree displays exceptional health and a magnificent form.

Additional species found here include Summer Holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *planifolia*), Channel Island Bush Poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*), and California Rockflower (*Crossosoma californica*). The diversity of Channel Islands plants creates a striking contrast with the surrounding beds, but what makes this area truly special is the density of the plantings and the peaceful sense of solitude they create. Whether visited alone or with a friend, this space does not disappoint.

Tera Johnson

Garden zone tended: Northern Communities
Length of time at CalBG: 1.5 years

When I'm working outside and feel the first drops of rain, I'll always find my way to the Mexican Blue Palms (*Brahea armata*). The sound of rain tapping against the fronds is so layered and musical, while the breeze that rolls through creates a soft shhh that ebbs and flows just like the ocean. It's absolutely magical, especially when you're surrounded by 40 specimens, many of which stand over 20 feet. These palms were grown from seed collected in Baja California in 1991, then planted in 2000. Among the group of horticulture staff and scientists that helped collect was Jaime Romero. You'll find his name on the plaque nearby, honoring his 35 years of service at the Garden. Jaime was born in Mexico City and brought such a deep knowledge and respect for native plants. It's a beautiful reminder that California native plants aren't defined by borders or state lines, but by a shared ecology, and Baja California is an essential part of that story. I've only been at the Garden for about a year and a half and still have so much more to learn. I'm so grateful for those who came before me, particularly Jaime when I stand among the palms. His legacy lives on in the sound and movement of the grove, and in how his work continues to shape this space.



Tera Johnson exploring the dramatic Mexican Blue Palms in the California Plant Communities (photos by Carrie Rosema).



Jackeline Gonzalez celebrating the Joshua Tree woodland in the California Plant Communities (photos by Carrie Rosema).

Jackeline Gonzalez

Garden zone tended:
Southwest Communities
Length of time at CalBG: Brand new!

I am Mexican American and grew up visiting ranches in Mexico, where I was always surrounded by agaves. The gratitude I feel to be here is immeasurable. I care for the Joshua Tree woodland and several other areas. One of the reasons I love my work is the spiritual connection I feel with the Joshua Trees. Throughout different times in my life, I have visited the Joshua Trees to find comfort, and in many ways, they have taken care of me. Now, the roles feel reversed—I have the privilege of caring for them. I look forward to getting to know and connecting with the rest of the plants in my section.

Spotlight on Volunteers

California Botanic Garden's volunteers are a key part of our Garden community. They're an essential part of almost all of the Garden's work, from mounting herbarium specimens to weeding Living Collection beds to propagating restoration plants to educating school children about native plants and much more. This passionate crew helps make it happen! Volunteers come from all kinds of backgrounds and start working with us for many different reasons. We'd like to introduce you to two volunteers and some of the work and rewards they pursue here at CalBG.

Interested in joining our volunteer community? Email pespana@calbg.org for more info.

Aiden Alcalá | CalBG Volunteer Since 2025

What areas/activities do you volunteer in at CalBG?

I volunteer in four different areas, including the grounds crew, the production nursery, the Grow Native Nursery, and I've helped out with special events such as Luminaria Nights and Bump in the Night. I primarily find myself working with Riley Holmes in the production nursery and grounds crew with Richard Davis.

What drew you to volunteering at the Garden?

I've always been curious about nature and conservation. As my interest in conservation science grew, I stumbled upon the California Botanic Garden. Three years later, the month after high school graduation, I started volunteering. I aim to involve myself in a conservation-oriented career field in the future. With little to do during the summer, I wanted to surround myself with a community dedicated to conservation and ecology.

Tell us about a fun memory or two from your time volunteering.

I was working grounds crew on a warm Wednesday morning in August, and when we all took a break, I remember Jared and Chip (Horticulturists) offering pruned grapes in the Cultivar Garden. It was like a grape party; we were all gathered underneath the grapevine, pruning grapes, and talking about different grape cultivars!

What is something you've learned while volunteering?

I've learned how to identify invasive species commonly found in the area, such as Claspig Heliotrope (*Heliotropium amplexicaule*), spotted spurge, and Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*). Looking at the bigger picture, I came to realize that much of the grounds at this Garden is an ongoing restoration project because you really can't just eradicate the invasive plants, but it's about maintaining and protecting our plant communities.

Aiden Alcalá at work in the Production Nursery (photo by Patty Espana).

Deb Woo | CalBG Volunteer Since 2017



Deb Woo (left) on a field trip with Hester Bell (right) (photo courtesy of Deb Woo).

What areas/activities do you volunteer in at CalBG?

I presently volunteer in the Herbarium where I perform data entry and prepare labels for specimens, as well as assist with special projects as needed. In the past I have performed data entry for the Library and extensively photographed plants, critters, exhibits, and events around the Garden for Visitor Engagement.

What drew you to volunteering at the Garden?

As retirement approached, I looked for opportunities to contribute my time and experience to "pay it forward." I

enjoy being outdoors in nature, have a background in science, and was interested in California native plants. CalBG seemed like it might be a good fit. After getting to meet students, staff, and volunteers and finding them welcoming, down-to-earth, and engaged, I knew I had found the right place.

Tell us about a fun memory or two from your time volunteering.

A fond memory is of accompanying research associate Hester Bell on a field trip to collect specimens at her research site in Death Valley. Hester was generous and patient in sharing her knowledge and experience, and a camaraderie quickly formed. The hands-on experience filled in gaps in my understanding of how specimens are processed upstream of the data entry that I perform in the Herbarium.

What is something you've learned while volunteering?

In the plant communities, I took several close-up photos of a large (~2") blue-black wasp with dark orange wings on a milkweed. Later, I learned the insect was a tarantula hawk and that if provoked it can deliver one of the most painful of all insect stings! Milkweed is one of its favorite nectaring plants and the wasps are an important pollinator. Their aposematic coloration is a warning signal to predators to avoid dangerous or unpalatable prey.

A promotional poster for the Native Plant Festival at California Botanic Garden. The poster features a large green leaf graphic with the text "Native Plant Festival" in a stylized font. Below this, it says "AT CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN". To the right, a yellow box contains the event details: "SATURDAY MARCH 28 10 AM - 3 PM". Below that, it says "Free Garden Admission! Garden open from 8 AM to 6 PM." At the bottom, there is a QR code and the text "A Day of Learning & Connection: Native Plant Landscaping Info, Community Exhibitors, Workshops & Panels, Live Music, Crafts & Storytime, Food & Drink, Raffle Prizes, and much more!" and "More Info & Tickets at www.CalBG.org". The background of the poster shows a desert landscape with mountains and a Joshua tree.

A Snapshot in Time: Data and Discoveries through Floristics

By Mia Manfredi, MS Student in Botany

Master's student Chloe Novak holding the first ever collection of Death Valley Monkeyflower (*Diplacus rupicola*) in the state of Nevada, collected during a floristic inventory of her study site in Nye County (photo by Chloe Novak).



“For my [master’s] research, I took many backpacking trips, but my first...was cross country, hiking up to a ridgeline,” says Dr. Naomi Fraga, Director of Conservation Programs and Associate Professor in the botany graduate program at California Botanic Garden. Looking back on the floristic study she conducted for her master’s degree in the Owen’s Peak Eastern Watershed, she continues, “by the time we got up to the top of the ridgeline, it was dark so we got ready to sleep and it was hard for me to see my surroundings.” She was sleeping under the stars without a tent, commonly called “cowboy camping,” which made the surprise she woke up to even more magical: “I found that we set up camp near a huge field of onion, and I was surrounded by them... Of course, I collected the onion!” This onion turned out to be Burlew’s Onion (*Allium burlewii*), a species endemic to granitic, high elevation slopes in southwestern California.

Discoveries like this one are common during floristic research, a field with a rich history at California Botanic Garden. Floristics at CalBG includes the foundational work of Dr. Philip Munz (Director of the Garden from 1946 to 1960) who authored *A Flora of Southern California* and *A California Flora*. Dr. Robert Thorne (Curator of the Garden herbarium from 1962 to 1987) and his graduate students also conducted extensive projects in our local mountains and in Baja California. Many master’s students at the Garden conduct floristic studies for their theses (an opportunity that is becoming increasingly rare in plant focused graduate programs), and several current faculty members and staff botanists including Dr. Mare Nazaire, Dr. Naomi Fraga, and Dr. Travis Columbus are experienced floristic researchers. Floristic studies are integral to research, graduate education, and conservation at California Botanic Garden.

What is a Flora or Floristic Study?

Dr. Mare Nazaire, Herbarium Curator and Assistant Professor of the botany graduate program, who is currently carrying out a floristic study in Red Rock Canyon State Park, describes a flora as “an inventory of all the plants in a given area,” in essence, “a snapshot in time of the diversity there.” Naomi Fraga likes to describe floristics as “the study of plant geography” since this kind of work “contribute[s] to our broader knowledge of plants in space and time, or what occurs where at a given time.” While every floristic project will have unique goals specific to the study site and/or the researcher conducting the project, the backbone remains the same: produce a list of all the plants that grow within the boundaries of the study site. Collections of pressed specimens of all those plants are then stored in an herbarium to serve as evidence of the biodiversity that existed in the study site at the time of the study.

Doing a floristic study is hard work! Before fieldwork can even begin, researchers must obtain all necessary permits and permissions to conduct the study and collect herbarium specimens from the landowners and managing agencies for their study site. Researchers must also be carefully trained in ethical specimen collecting procedures to ensure that collecting doesn’t threaten local plant populations or cause other ecological damage. Long days in the field with significant amounts of time spent off-trail and on rough terrain in all types of weather conditions are usually necessary to capture the full suite of diversity that exists in an area. The work doesn’t end when field season is over either. Usually, a floristic researcher will collect a thousand to several thousand herbarium specimens over the duration of their project, which then must be painstakingly examined and identified using dichotomous keys and other guides. Floras also often include other types of data in addition to the checklist of plants that occur at the study site that must also be compiled. These data may include descriptions of the vegetation types or plant communities that occur in the area, maps of the underlying geology and a description of the geologic history of the site, climate data, and the human history of the site.

There are two main “end” products of a floristic study. One is a published “flora” which includes an annotated checklist of all the plant species that were found during the duration of the study as well as information on the study site. The second is the set of herbarium specimens generated as part of the study. The results of a floristics research project may also be used in the production of field guides, manuals, and dichotomous keys for identifying the plants of a given area. Many floras, especially larger scale ones, include botanical illustrations and/or photographs of some or all of the plants included which may emphasize certain characteristics useful for identification.



Top: Master's student Matthew Yamamoto carrying plant specimens that he collected out of the backcountry of his study site in Mono County. (Photo by Matthew Yamamoto).

Middle: A week's worth of plant specimens on a campground picnic table collected by master's student Matthew Yamamoto in his Mono County study site. (Photo by Matthew Yamamoto).

Bottom: A wild burro attempting to steal master's student Chloe Novak's plant specimens in Nevada (photo by Chloe Novak).

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Many Paths to Understanding Biodiversity

No two floras are exactly the same despite often sharing similar goals. The scope of floristic projects varies widely from a few square miles to entire mountain ranges, counties, or states. They also vary widely in time scales, from projects conducted over a few months or a single year to decades-long undertakings. Some floras focus on a specific category of plants (e.g., vascular or non-vascular plants), some researchers are driven by the desire to document the rare plants of an area, and projects in areas that are particularly threatened by human impacts often include significant documentation of the threats observed.

Mare says that many sites are chosen because they are “botanical black holes” which are areas where little botanical collection has occurred in the past, resulting in a gap in our knowledge of what grows there. But researchers also choose to conduct re-surveys in areas that have been well documented in the past. Master’s student Rachel Tageant took this approach, picking her study site in the Owens River Headwaters area in Mono County, an area previously studied by other botanists, because she was particularly interested in “how landscapes and plant diversity change over time.” Other researchers are driven to catalog the diversity in areas that are under imminent threat due to climate change, resource extraction, or other land use change. This was the driving force behind master’s student Chloe Novak’s choice to conduct a flora of the Amargosa River Headwaters in Nye County, Nevada, where both resource extraction and climate change pose substantial threats to the plant life.

A Springboard to Further Research

The importance of floristic studies, not only to the mission of California Botanic Garden, but to the discipline of botany as a whole, can’t be overstated. For example, the herbarium specimens produced during a floristic study are vital to our understanding of plant diversity and provide important data for future research by other scholars. They provide invaluable data on what that diversity looks like, where it occurs, and when it occurred there. These specimens often document new diversity previously not known to exist in the area, and even plants that are new to science!

Researchers working on floras are constantly documenting new, rare, or otherwise interesting plants or occurrences of plants. Matthew Yamamoto, a master’s student graduating this spring who completed a flora of the McGee Creek watershed in Mono County, says that these unusual finds



*An unusual and noteworthy color morph of Sierra Columbine (*Aquilegia pubescens*), which usually has cream-colored flowers in master’s student Matthew Yamamoto’s study site in Mono County. (Photo by Matthew Yamamoto)*

helped him really “appreciate how much we don’t know.” For example, on a beautiful, sunny Fourth of July holiday in 2024 Matthew was climbing up a steep scree slope when he “was treated to some beautiful red and then white columbines” and thought to himself, “wouldn’t it be funny if I saw some blue columbines as well? I had to rub my eyes to make sure I wasn’t dreaming when later that day I stumbled on a patch of blue-ish purple-flowered [Columbines] (*Aquilegia*)!” According to Matthew, blue Columbines are very rare, “considered almost mythical in the Sierra Nevada...and no one really knows exactly what they are and why they are that color, but knowing where they grow and collecting specimens can open avenues for genetics work to address these questions.”

Garrett Goodrich, a current master’s student conducting a flora in the vicinity of Rock Creek in Sequoia National



*Master’s student Garrett Goodrich showing off an exciting collection of Grass-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton gramineus*) in the Jennie Lakes Wilderness (photo by Emily Franz).*



*Master’s student Chloe Novak making a collection of Tufted Evening-primrose (*Oenothera cespitosa*) in her study site in Nye County, Nevada (photo by Peri Lee Pipkin).*

Forest, says one of their favorite outcomes of a flora are the questions they raise beyond what plants are growing in a given area because “knowing what plants grow where allows us to ask bigger questions.” Whether those questions stem from an existing description of a particular species not quite matching what is observed in the field, the discovery of a new population of a species disjunct from its known range, or observations of plants occurring in one very specific habitat or soil type, floras are constantly generating questions that require further research. Other graduate students in the program are investigating several of these questions now!

Floras for Conservation

The data collected during floristic studies is also essential for conservation work. CalBG graduate student Chloe Novak says that conservation is the driving force of her floristic research. She emphasizes that “we can’t protect what we don’t know exists.” Floras provide important data on the location of rare plant occurrences, their extent, habitat characteristics, and threat levels. Rachel Tageant agrees that this information provided by floras “forms the building blocks for conservation efforts, environmental management, and understanding the impacts of climate change.” Observing rare plants in the field is the only way

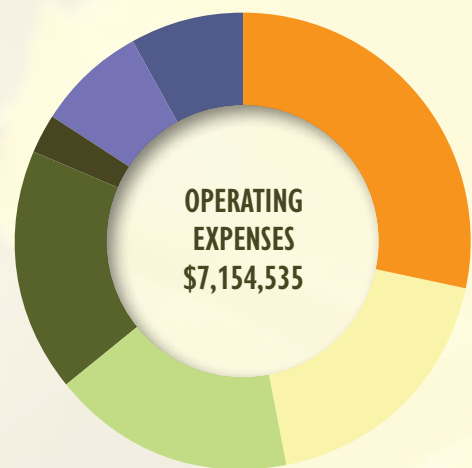
to know where and under what conditions they exist, and to identify new or existing threats to their well-being. Naomi Fraga emphasizes that floristic studies are “key for advancing assessments for change through time, especially in the face of a changing climate, and other anthropogenic threats such as mining and development.” The data provided by floras are incredibly valuable in informing future rare plant surveys, threat assessments, conservation genetic studies, conservation seed collections, and most other conservation work.

Floristics remains an important part of the work being done here at California Botanic Garden as a catalyst for further research, as a vital information source for conservation, and as an active field of study in and of itself. The floristic work done at the Garden has launched dozens of careers in conservation and research and helped conserve rare plants and important habitats across the state, but has also proven that there is so much more diversity left to document in California and beyond. There are so many more areas to explore, new plants to find, interesting occurrences to document, and so many floras that need to be done! Floristic studies at California Botanic Garden are an important part of its legacy as a renowned botanical education and research institution, its current research programs, and its continuing work as a protector of California native plant diversity.

Financials

Fiscal Year 2025, July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

California Botanic Garden is proud to report another year of strong support from generous foundations, individual donors, partners, members, and volunteers that enable our mission to advance knowledge, conservation, and appreciation of California's native flora.



OPERATING EXPENSES (LEFT)

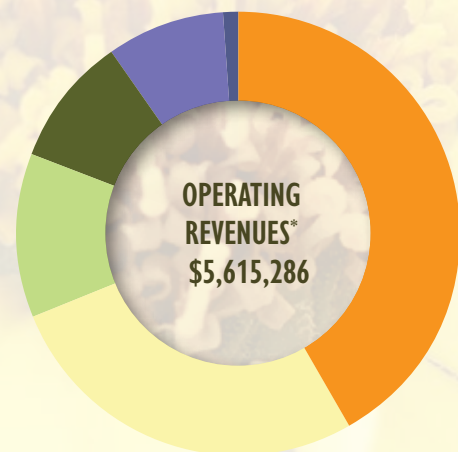
Conservation Program	\$1,876,251
Administration & Maintenance	\$ 1,231,353
Horticulture	\$1,150,447
Research, Library & Herbarium	\$ 1,138,528
Visitor & Auxiliary Services	\$717,173
Membership & Development	\$524,082
Graduate & Community Education	\$516,701

OPERATING REVENUES (RIGHT)

Government Contracts & Grants	\$2,353,811
Charitable Contributions	\$1,521,454
Membership & Admission	\$678,599
Gift Shop, Rental Income & Event Fees	\$526,345
Non-government Contracts	\$478,925
Education	\$56,152

Endowment Utilization	\$1,098,000
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*Operating revenues do not include endowment utilization, interest and dividends, realized and unrealized gains in investments, and restricted contributions for land, buildings and equipment.



A NEW ADVENTURE AWAITS!

THE Children's Woodland

at CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN

GRAND OPENING

FRIDAY & SATURDAY APRIL 10 & 11, 2026
10 AM - 3 PM

Freeform nature play in the Woodland
Storytime
Crafts
Guided Walks
Joy in the Garden Youth Art Exhibit

All activities are free with admission to the Garden and free for Garden Members.

Special thanks to The Brabson Family Foundation for its generous support of the Children's Woodland at CalBG, helping to inspire young members of our community to connect with native plants, animals, and outdoor play for generations to come.

Passion Projects

By Jessica Wetzel, Director of Advancement

California Botanic Garden started nearly 100 years ago as a passion project. When much of the horticulture world was focused on ornamental gardens, CalBG's founder, Susanna Bixby Bryant, was passionate about southern California native landscapes. Recognizing the threats rapid development posed to native plants in southern California, she dedicated her time and resources to the research and conservation of native species. Susanna's efforts were not motivated by profit or personal gain, but rather by the intrinsic value she saw in the flora of her native California. Today, California Botanic Garden is fortunate to have many passionate people who share Susanna's vision and take on their own passion projects in partnership with CalBG staff.



Scott and Vali with CalBG's Director of Horticulture, Ashlee Armstrong, examining potential bubbling rocks and discussing their unique geologic features (photo by Jessica Wetzel).

Scott, Vali, and Sophie: Building Connections to the Garden Through Play

When Scott Paterson and Vali Memeti heard about the planned Children's Woodland at CalBG, they were excited to follow along with the progress. When the opportunity arose for children to help plant in the Woodland, they became part of the progress. Scott and Vali's daughter, Sophie, excitedly joined CalBG's horticulture team to install the initial planting for a sensory garden. Seeing their daughter's enthusiasm for the project inspired Scott and Vali to continue their involvement.

As educators, geologists, nature lovers, and parents, the idea of a bubbling rock water feature at the center of the Woodland seemed to be the perfect way for them to support the project. Not only did Scott and Vali generously fund the interactive water feature, they also lent their expertise to the project. From helping to select the "perfect rocks" to establishing their chemical composition and age, Scott and Vali's contribution to the Children's Woodland will be both fun and educational for youth and adults alike: "We felt that the CalBG would benefit from additional opportunities for children. And Sophie and her friends have always enjoyed water play and exploring rocks and gardens."

Follow along with the Children's Woodland progress by visiting the site, just north of the Bird and Butterfly Garden, down the hill and to the east as you enter the California Plant Communities. Enjoy the new interactive water feature and celebrate this new chapter during the Woodland's opening weekend April 10th & 11th, 2026!

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Rick, center right, with the "Wednesday Work Crew" putting in hours in the Living Collection during the Pandemic (photo by Rick Davis).

Rick Davis: A Vision of Accessibility for the Living Collection

Since his journey with California Botanic Garden began in 2012, Rick Davis has explored every avenue of volunteerism at the Garden, from lab work to board and committee service. Ultimately Rick found he could make the biggest impact for CalBG within the Living Collection, where he now works closely with the Horticulture team to lead fellow volunteers on countless projects across the Garden's 86 acres. During his time working in the Garden's Living Collection, Rick became aware of limitations in the pathways system leading out of the Forest Pavilion area through the North SoCal Gardens. "The crumbling material was uneven, and the indistinct path was hard to follow," Rick says.

Not one to lament a problem without presenting a solution, Rick took this aging pathway on as a passion project. He had a hand in every aspect of the resulting pathway renovation project, from its conception to its construction. Not only did Rick generously donate the funds needed to make his vision a reality, he galvanized support for the project, getting buy-in from Garden leadership and even including his sister and mother on the project as donors. The new pathway opened in April 2024 and has transformed the North SoCal Gardens, improving access to the extensive California Plant Communities section of CalBG. With the project complete, Rick continues to be a staple in the Living Collection and has dedicated continued funds to CalBG's horticulture operations through the Davis Family Foundation. He has also committed funds to the newly established Endowment for the Director of Horticulture.



Looking north along the new pathway. To the left is Sonia Q Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* 'Sonia Q'). Named for Rick's late wife, Sonia Quiles, this unique plant was discovered on their property in Mt. Baldy (photo by Rick Davis).

Visit the North SoCal Gardens and walk the fresh decomposed granite pathways by passing the Forest Pavilion following the pathway toward the California Plant Communities.

"The Garden is remembered in my will, but I wanted to try to do something during my life too. It took many years of donations to build up enough funds, but I reached the goal in 2025 with the construction of ADA bathrooms and an elevator for the Administration Building. I am both proud of this achievement and grateful for my relationship with the Garden and the people I've come to know here."

— BARBARA

Barbara Booth: Safeguarding California's Botanical History for Generations to Come

Since her first volunteer shift in the Herbarium workroom nearly 20 years ago, Barbara Booth has mounted over 46,000 plant specimens. As a weekly volunteer, Barbara became keenly aware of both the scientific importance of herbarium specimens and the space challenges associated with storing these specimens for scientific use. Thanks to CalBG's prolific researchers and skillful volunteers like Barbara who ensure their preservation, the Herbarium is nearing capacity and a major expansion is needed to add additional, specialized storage. Before any expansion can be realized, the Garden's midcentury Administration and Sciences Building needed to be modernized. Barbara's deep commitment and understanding of the importance of herbaria inspired her to lead the way on this much needed upgrade.

Through several large donations over the course of seven years, Barbara's generosity and vision made phase one of the Herbarium expansion possible. Her steadfast funding commitment helped CalBG make the case to the Ahmanson Foundation and the Ludwick Family Foundation for additional support and enabled the Garden to weather unexpected expenses during the construction. The completion of ADA restrooms and an elevator paves the way for the next stage of the herbarium expansion, creating potential for the growth this critical scientific resource needs to house its nearly 2 million specimens. In addition to allowing staff to move specimens and supplies easily between the Herbarium's three floors, the new elevator allowed Barbara to visit the Herbarium collection for the first time. She took her inaugural ride on the elevator in October of 2025, a proud moment for Barbara and a very special milestone for CalBG.



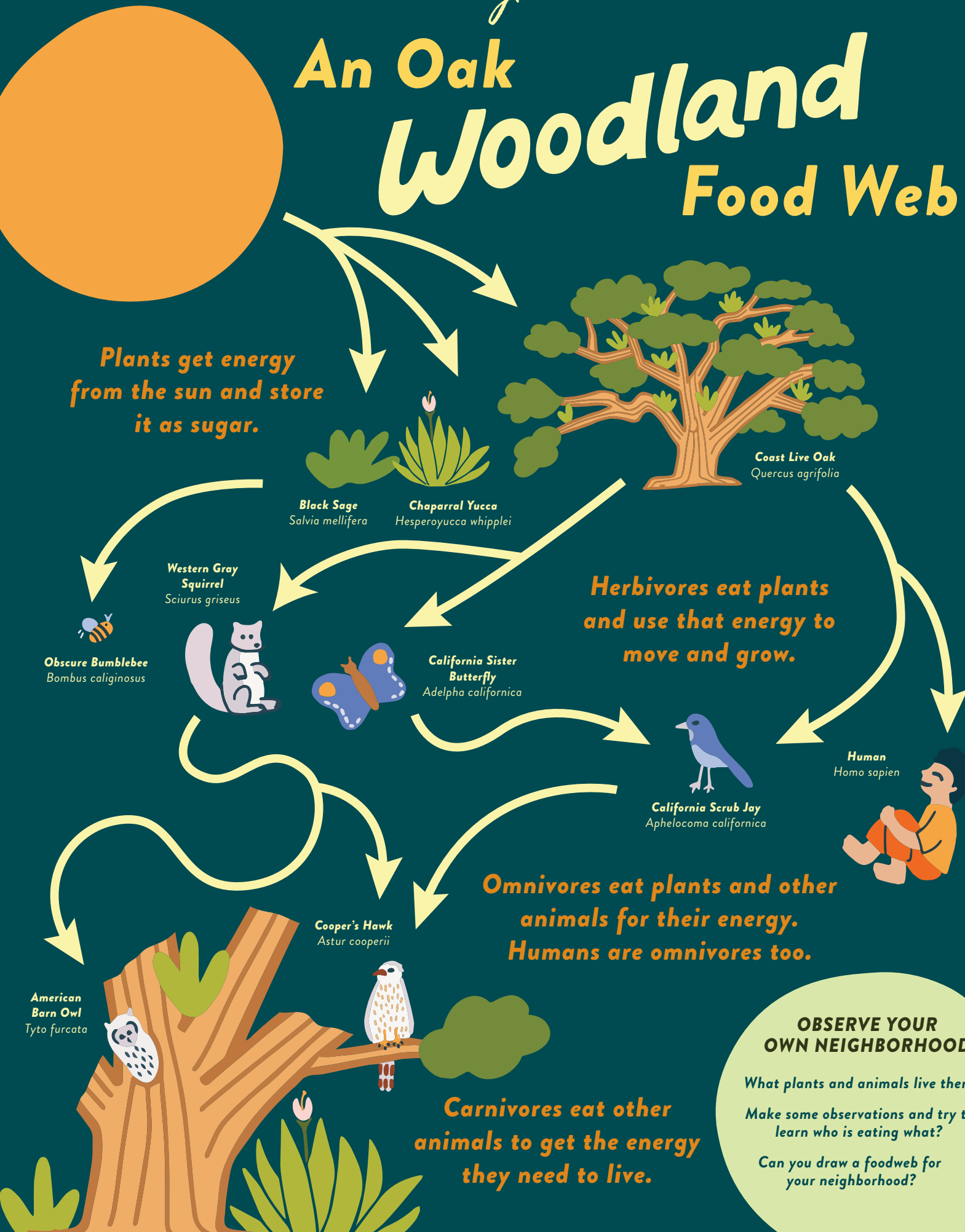
Top: Barbara mounting plant specimens in the herbarium (photo by Annica Wit).

Bottom: Barbara cutting the ribbon on the new elevator before her inaugural ride with CalBG's Executive Director, Lucinda McDade (photo by Jessica Wetzel).

To discuss your Garden passion project or to learn more about supporting specific projects or programs at California Botanic Garden, contact our Advancement Office at advancement@calbg.org or (909) 625-8767, ext. 222.

- Curiosity Corner -

An Oak Woodland Food Web



OBSERVE YOUR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD

- What plants and animals live there?
- Make some observations and try to learn who is eating what?
- Can you draw a foodweb for your neighborhood?

Coming Up at CalBG

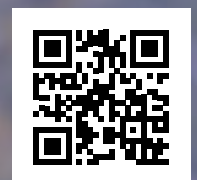
Spring and Summer are blooming with beauty and community in the Garden. Visit the Classes and Events page on our website for more information and tickets.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Native Plant Festival – Saturday, March 28**
Celebrate native plants and habitats at this free event including dozens of community partners and vendors, landscaping workshops, talks and panels, behind the scenes tours, musical performances, crafts and stories, and more!
- Garden of Verses – Saturday, April 4**
The Garden blooms with poetry readings and interactive nature poetry activities.
- Children’s Woodland Grand Opening – Friday & Saturday, April 10 & 11**
Explore and play in the Garden’s brand new children’s space, along with a youth art exhibit, storytime, crafts, and more.

SUMMER IN THE GARDEN

- Beat the heat with music and movies on select Thursday evenings!
- Cinema Botanica – June 11, July 9, August 6**
Nature themed films.
- Garden Groove – June 25, July 23, August 20**
An eclectic series of live musical performances.



Point your cell phone camera at the QR code to visit our website

ONGOING

- Yoga in the Garden**
Flow, stretch, and breathe, mornings, evenings, and weekends each month.
- Art in the Garden**
Monthly classes exploring creative and meditative visual interaction with nature.
- Gardening Classes**
Your regular opportunity to learn about native plant gardening from the experts at CalBG.
- Monthly Meetups**
Gather with your community to read, run, do fiber arts, and more at these free-with-admission/free-for-members hangouts.

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A Shared Vision. A Shared Legacy.

Members of the Susanna Bixby Bryant Council share the vision of the incredible woman it is named for: to preserve and protect California's incredible native plants for future generations. As a legacy giving community, its goal is to make a lasting impact at CalBG and demonstrate a commitment to advancing knowledge, conservation, and appreciation of California native plants.

Susanna Bixby Bryant Council Champagne Toast

CalBG honors the generosity and commitment of Council members annually with a champagne toast to the legacy we are building together. Save the date for this year's Susanna Bixby Bryant Champagne Toast on **Tuesday, June 16th, 2026.**

Contact us to learn more about joining the Susanna Bixby Bryant Council by committing to an estate gift, adding CalBG to an insurance policy, or including the Garden as a beneficiary on retirement accounts. Together we ensure this extraordinary garden thrives for generations to come. Reach out to advancement@calbg.org or (909) 625-8767 ext. 222 for more information.