

Oak Notes

Volume 44
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September 2026

NEWSLETTER OF THE CALIFORNIA BOTANIC GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathleen Noll, Volunteer President
Photos by Kathleen Noll

Sharing is Caring!

It's been a great summer for the Garden and for social media sharing across our community. While so much social media is nonsense, it has been a treat to stay connected to CalBG this season. Thank you to the Garden's social media team for their meaningful and creative content. I have thoroughly enjoyed the updates on the Garden's summer offerings, the California Native Plant Conservation Initiative posts and photos of field surveys, the horticulture team series featuring favorite plants and places in the Garden, and the sights and sounds of plant propagation in the Production Nursery. The habitats, animals, and plant updates are fantastic to see!

I also appreciate our volunteers sharing their home gardens and travels. Seeing your adventures and the progress made in our gardens during these warm months has been a true joy. Your updates mean the world to us all.

Last month, I had the pleasure of visiting the uplifting Elton Vineyard Garden in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Founded in 1983, this gorgeous 1.5-acre estate is filled with stunning landscaped boulders, native plants, and fanciful art pieces. Immersing myself in that vibrant Pacific Northwest greenery was so inspiring and memorable!

The deadline for articles to be submitted for *OAK NOTES* is the **15th** of the month **prior** to publication. Thank you for your prompt submission!



Looking through all your photos has been such a convenient and inspiring way to share our summer experiences. I feel recharged and reinvigorated for our upcoming volunteer season and all the native-plant-oriented events we have planned for late summer and autumn. Thank you for your incredible dedication to our California Botanic Garden community.

A reminder, the Volunteer Quarterly Luncheon and Meeting, “**Fall Back into the Gardens,**” will be held on Thursday, September 24 at 11:30 a.m. Tram service to the Forest Pavilion will begin at 11:00 a.m. Please note that this is a potluck event, and attendees are invited to bring a dish to share.

I can’t wait to see you all in the Garden very soon!



FROM THE DIRECTOR
Lucinda McDade,
CalBG Executive Director

About this time every year, I am amazed that Oak Notes does not stay out longer on its summer vacation: it is *still* summer. But, OK, here goes. This article is organized as “things that have happened while ON was on vacation.”

We will start with the **Children’s Woodland** area which I know is close to the hearts of a lot of our volunteers. There are overhead fans in the outdoor classroom! The frame for the kids’ hut structure is on site and will be installed out there when it is closer to planting time (we’ll be planting multiple species of native vines around it). We have a plan for the nest and it is going to be quite a spectacular thing—a real work of art! Google “Jayson Fann” to see some of his work. The current plan calls for this to happen in September and it will necessitate closing the Woodland for a few days. The artist is also to construct the little library structure that will let us have book resources out there for kids and their adults. More improvements to the Mesa restrooms coming soon, but note that they already have external doors that actually *close*!

Moving next to another topic that many of you will be enthusiastic about: we have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with The Gabrieleno Tongva Tribal Council**. We have been working with these neighbors for more than 20 years including when they helped to launch the Acorn Festival way back in the early 2000s. It was a lovely signing ceremony led off by the Tongva singing a welcome song. After remarks (Board Chair Cindy Walkenbach and me for the Garden, Chief Anthony Morales and two tribe members for the Tongva) and the actual signing, we adjourned to sage tea, mesquite cookies and sage shortbread: delicious. With this MOU now in place, we can move forward on a number of initiatives with clarity and confidence that what we are doing is consistent with the wishes of our tribal partners.

Moving to the **graduate program**: we will have graduated four master’s students in 2026 as of late August. Some of you attended Mathew Yamamoto’s seminar back in January when he led off this parade of master’s degrees. Mathew studied the McGee Creek watershed in the Sierra Nevada not too far south of Mammoth. Next came Mia Manfredi who took a detailed look at the genetics of a desert sage that occurs around Death Valley and then leaps quite a bit to the south to occur near Amboy. Hers is a fascinating study using up-to-date genetic methods as well as a study of good old-fashioned plant structures. Mia defended her master’s thesis on the same day as Garrett Goodrich. Garrett undertook a floristic survey of the plants of the Boulder Creek watershed near Sequoia National Park. And lastly, in mid-August, Rachel Tageant defended her thesis: a study of the plants of the Owens River headwaters. Importantly, all of these students’ work significantly advanced what we know about the plants of their areas, adding hundreds of species and also county records. This is mission-critical work at California Botanic Garden.

Next to the **restrooms at the nursery**...most of you will know that these double as restrooms for the arriving public as they are the closest to the entrance. I think we can agree that they were not in very good shape. Some of this was related to wear and tear: the

floor tiles were practically worn through. And some of it was related to perplexing things done at the time they were constructed (so far as we know). I don't know that anyone has ever seen sinks as strange—or as strangely placed—as those that were in those restrooms. Our hardworking maintenance staff also complained that they were impossible to clean. I will just invite you to have a look, and I promise that you will agree that the new sinks are infinitely better. By the time you are reading this, the concrete floor will be ground smooth and polished, and ceramic baseboard will be installed. Significant decisions about this project center on ease of cleaning. Have a look!

Moving to **Visitor Engagement**, our colleagues there have worked hard to design public events over the summer to keep people coming over what is our slow season of the year. Family friendly movies and some form of concert have taken place each of the summer months including some quite creative programming (specialty cocktails and dance music! Little Shop of Horrors!). The weather has not been cooperative this year, especially since the “July Fry” set in. Happily, the Forest Pavilion is shaded and as cool as it gets on a summer evening!

And lastly, our Advancement staff have continued their tradition of **early mornings for members** with a day in each of June, July, August & September opening at 7 a.m. and offering free coffee and tea to members. Hope to see you here in September! These are *very* popular with the parking lot half full by the time the early hour ends. Advancement staff stay at the entrance until 10 a.m., continuing to provide a friendly greeting and complimentary beverage to other early visitors. These special mornings are appreciated by all and have yielded quite a few requests that we open earlier than 8 a.m. during the heat of the summer. We welcome your thoughts on that topic!

That is a little bit of what happened while Oak Notes was on holiday! I hope that all of you have had very nice holidays—whether trips to somewhere exotic or staycations—and will be recharged to start the full season of activities here at CalBG that benefit greatly from your help and support. Onward into the fall!

RECEPTION & ORIENTATION

by Patty Espana, photos by Grace Stewart



Our Volunteer Appreciation Reception in June was a very special event. It was wonderful to see so many familiar and new faces gathered in the Forest Pavilion enjoying a lovely evening. There were quite a lot of acknowledgements and recognitions to present this year. To start, two volunteers who topped the charts with





their hours this past year were Rachael Wilkerson and Tom White. You might say they gave us all an aspiration. Our grand tradition of handing out Service Awards to those with landmark years continued, luckily a lot of the recipients were on hand to accept their pins.

The special presentations were the highlight of the evening. Ashlee presented a ceramic vase made by Chip to Herb Boss to honor his Associate status. Herb joined the CalBG volunteers in 2009 and has been a valuable asset ever since. Mare presented David Gish with a beautiful framed mounted specimen for his years working in the Herbarium. He was given Emeritus Status to acknowledge his time as a Treasurer on the Volunteer Board. Along with being an officer, David served on the Board in other capacities as well. He and his wife Louise delivered the *Oak Notes* newsletters as editors for many years.

Marla White, who has been a fixture and powerhouse at CalBG in a short amount of time, is stepping away from the Board and Committee duties. While she will still be a big presence, we thought it only natural to give her a special honor. Jennifer was on hand to present her with a prototype of a future paver we will be adding to our Garden paths in her honor.

Looking to the near future. 2026's New Volunteer Orientation will take place on 2 consecutive Saturday mornings, September 19 & 26. It will be the best chance to learn all there is to know about CalBG, with tours and presentations. Truly an event not to miss! Any new volunteers should have received your invitations by now, please RSVP soon, if you haven't already done so.

GARDEN GUIDE BREAKFAST AND TRAINING, FALL 2026

by Sally Hy

Welcome back, Garden Guides! Touring season is right around the corner, beginning in October. To kick-off the season, we will have our annual Garden Guide Breakfast in the Outdoor Classroom on Thursday, September 17, 2026 from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. This will be a great time to catch up with other Guides after the summer break and learn more about the upcoming touring season. An RSVP link was sent to your emails, so please let me know if you did not receive it.

Are you interested in becoming a Garden Guide? The Community Education Department is looking for volunteers to enroll in the upcoming Garden Guide Training courses this Fall, 2026! These classes will build on your knowledge of our native plants and lead you through the interpretive work our Garden Guides do for tours, school programs, and other educational events and activities.

Training is free for all CalBG volunteers. Whether or not you decide "garden guiding" is the right fit for you, all volunteers are welcomed to any of the training sessions. Do you want to learn more about the Garden, gain some skills and practice in public speaking, and/or expand your knowledge of botany, conservation, and ecology? If so, please email Patty Nueva España, Volunteer Coordinator, at pespana@calbg.org and sign up for the Fall 2026 Garden Guide Training email list. Once you are on the list, keep an eye out for an email from the Education Department on specific dates and times of the class.

A SPECIAL VISIT TO THE CHILDREN'S WOODLAND

by Wanda Ewing, photos by Bre Feters and Ren Ewing

Our family recently visited the Garden to view the newly installed memorial paver honoring our husband, father, and grandfather, Ed Ewing, and it was especially meaningful to return to a place that meant so much to him. Ed was a woodworker and



had lovingly restored several of the benches at the Garden. Seeing his name along the shaded path, there among the trees, felt like a beautiful connection to his work and the Garden community.



We also had the chance to explore the new Children's Woodland, and the grandchildren had a wonderful time. We created a timed obstacle course, weaving through the hollow tree, climbing over the wooden steps, and navigating across logs. The balancing sticks kept them happily

challenged for quite a while. Our grandson felt accomplished and stated, "I'm a balancing Genius with a capital G." They also loved watching little creatures come to drink from the rock fountain. After all that activity, the hammock beneath the shade of the oak trees provided the perfect place to slow down and relax.

It was a lovely visit for our family, and a place where children can explore, play, and connect with nature, while also offering a meaningful space to remember someone who helped care for the Garden.

BARNARD FIELD STATION WALK

Article and photos by Marla White

Thirty-seven volunteers participated in a walk and cart ride with Pomona College Professor Marty Meyers, Director of the Robert J. Bernard Biological Field Station. The field station habitat is primarily coastal sage scrub, "Riversidian" alluvial fan scrub, live oak forest, and grassland. The 86-acre facility also includes an artificial lake with surrounding riparian woodland and several created vernal pools. Dr. Meyers provided a wonderfully informative and entertaining tour for the CalBG Volunteers.



The group entered through the secret passage behind the horticulture buildings and into the dense, diverse habitat. The tour included the native-plant landscaped and repurposed hospital grounds and a



A Very Happy September Birthday to:

Lorraine Aflague	Claudina Evans
Win Aldrich	Milly Itzhak
Heidi Arch	Alan Jack
Donna Bedell	Terri Ludwig
Brenda Bolinger	Judy Maciariello
Herbert Boss	Dean McHenry
Patricia Brooks	Ann Morgan
Megan Bui	Kathleen Mulligan
Tanji Vei Byram	Samantha Oceguela
Abby Chernila	Daniel Sambrano
Linda DesMarais	Mike Smith
Vanessa Dickens	Susan Spradley

hike through student research areas. We spotted a number of birds, witnessed a bobcat crossing, and toured the “phake lake” research area.



If you are interested in assisting at the Bernard Field Station, please contact Marty via email Wallace.Meyer@pomona.edu. Volunteers remove introduced weeds and invasive brush, clear trails, assist with ecological monitoring, and carry out other activities that facilitate study and research at the field station.

2026 GARDEN GIFT

by Kathleen Noll,
photo by Ashlee Armstrong



Thank you! The Horticulture Team at CalBG is already putting the pole chainsaw to work, thanks to the donation for the annual Garden Gift by the

Volunteer Organization. Jared Nokturne and Emily Sweet pictured here making the cut.

INTRODUCTION TO NURSERY STAFF

by Tom White

Plants are grown in the Production Nursery for the Garden’s Living Collection and for the Grow Native Nursery. Three employees currently work in the Production Nursery. An autobiography from Riley Holmes appeared in a previous issue of *Oak Notes*. One update from that article is that Riley is now the Production Nursery Coordinator. This issue contains autobiographies from the other two members of the Production Nursery: Analisa Ayers and Patrick Dyer.



Hello, California Botanic Garden *Oak Notes* readers! I’m Analisa Ayers, one of the Production Nursery Technicians here at CalBG. I have been working here for a little over a year now, and I am very grateful to work alongside other passionate and wonderful people. I have learned a lot from when I first started here at the Garden, and I continue to learn and see more beauty every day.

I got my roots in botany and plants from my time spent in California State Fullerton's Ecology and Evolutionary Biology program. While in my undergrad at Cal State Fullerton, I spent most of my time working at the Herbarium on campus, and in my Fish Physiology lab. This work introduced me to plant families, fun nerdy GIS techniques, and good ol' traditional lab work. In addition to this I got to work under great professors such as Dr. Der, and Dr. Sandquist, who led our classes on amazing collection trips and hikes. These opportunities made me realize that botany hiking is mainly taking photos of plants and crouching in the dirt.

Outside of work I like to hike, and I am always looking for new trails to try. I just started fishing, and am proud to say that I've caught a single fish! My life outside of nature mainly consists of cooking, reading classic literature, going to concerts, and making lots of coffee. Overall, I am so happy to work with plants, to touch grass, and to see butterflies, rainbows and flowers daily.



Hello! My name is Patrick Dyer, and I am the new part-time addition to the Production Nursery. Growing up in Pasadena, I was very fortunate to live near incredible hiking trails and nature preserves that sparked a lifelong hunger for knowledge of our natural world. The San Gabriel

Mountains and Mojave Desert are where you'll typically find me in my free time, and it's been very exciting to work with many of the plants you can find in those diverse ecosystems.

Native plants really started to catch my attention in my late teens and early twenties, when I was spending a lot of time solo hiking. I kept wondering what things were and how everything was related, and when I discovered iNaturalist I got sucked down the rabbit hole. It very quickly became an obsession and

eventually connected me with others that had similar interests. Learning from friends has been the most helpful aspect of my journey.

Environmental conservation has become a big part of my life, and I love helping where I can with projects that work to protect natural spaces in Los Angeles and our neighboring counties. I find it extremely important for the public to have easy access to these amenities. There is a fantastic community of local residents and organizations throughout Southern California working hard to save what is left and restore what has been lost.

My ultimate career goal is to one day own my own native plant nursery where I can work on large-scale restoration projects and help introduce more unique species to the nursery trade. Working in the Production Nursery is the perfect job to learn all the skills I will need to be successful in my own future endeavors. There is constant fun in this position and I feel very fortunate to come home every day having learned something new.

***CALOCEDRUS* SP.**

by Steve Bryant



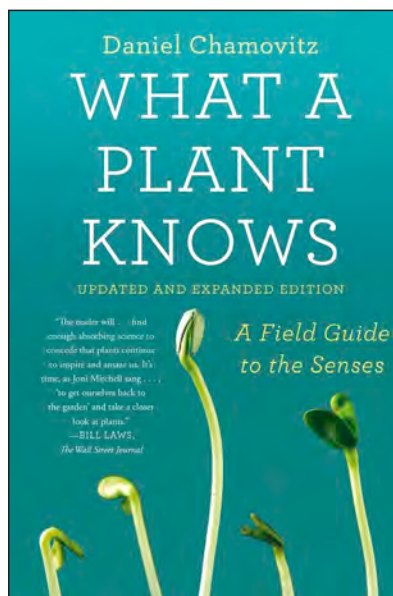
The incense cedar, *Calocedrus decurrens* (formerly *Libocedrus d.*) is widespread between 2000–8000' in CA, except in the desert. To 200' tall and evergreen, with scaly bark when young and shaggy bark in maturity, it has a pleasant fragrance in warm weather.



Incense cedar has rather flat leaves and leaflets, with ~1" cones that are not a landscape problem. Branches on a mature tree may be long and sometimes nearly perpendicular to the trunk with the outer length drooping (hence, "decurrens"). It is rather easy to climb if one doesn't mind the sap, since lower branches on full-sun trees remain on the tree and lose their inner leaves. Fast growing, it can be 35' tall in 20 years from a 1-gallon start. It makes a wonderful cut tree for holidays: fragrant, fast-growing, and reluctant to drop leaves even if one forgets to water it. About 25 years ago, I planted a row of 12 trees, and after 5 years, I cut one down each year for a holiday tree; for the larger, later-harvested ones, I used just the top of the tree, as they were up to 12' tall. In my yard, the trees have been windproof to 100 mph when even my mesquites were partially uprooted. The tree grows faster with some summer water, but once established (4–6' tall), it doesn't actually require summer water. It is not particular about soil and can grow in shade when small. As for almost all natives, plant in November for best results. When I had to take out my largest one, I had it cut up and then let dry for a year: it made very nice firewood. Pruned branches don't readily resprout from the base, so generally once pruned, once done. The roots of incense cedars anastomose (grow together), so nutrients and other chemicals may be exchanged among trees. A mistletoe species (*Phoradendron juniperinum*) specializes on incense cedar and junipers. In my opinion, it is the best tall evergreen for any non-desert location in SoCal, and urban SoCal would be a better place had people planted incense cedar instead of the alien deodar cedar.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Chris Ilgen, Volunteer Library Committee



What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses, Updated and Expanded Edition by Daniel Chamovitz. Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2017. 224pp.

The author begins, "If you are looking for an argument that plants are just like us, you won't find it here." To quote, "In each chapter the author highlights a human sense and its analogous plant behavior." Chapters include "what a plant sees, smells, tastes, feels, hears, and remembers."

For example, Chamovitz cites a case of plants "tasting" with an experiment by the scientist, Novoplansky, using a split-root design. Novoplansky and his research group treat a plant with a mannitol solution that is toxic, inducing plants to close their stomata. They show that a treated plant "communicates" protective behavior to the pots of adjacent non-treated plants.

Chamovitz is an informed scientist. He illustrates points with excellent illustrations, walking the reader through key experiments in support of his arguments. Can humans interpret tropisms as steps in evolution that can hardly be ignored? Read for yourself to decide. It is an entertaining book well worth the short time required to read it.

This book is available for check out from the Volunteer Library.

CALBG VOLUNTEER EVENTS SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER

September 5: Identification & Harvesting Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge Class, 10:00 a.m. (registration required)

September 6: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk hosted by Pomona Valley Bird Alliance, 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

September 12: Ink in the Garden Class, 10:00 a.m. (registration required)

September 13: California Biodiversity Day (FREE ADMISSION DAY) 8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.

September 13: Silent Reading Club Meetup 1:00 p.m. (please RSVP)

September 15: Family Story Time 9:00 a.m. (please RSVP)

September 19: New Volunteer Orientation Part I, 9:00 a.m.

September 22: September Member Morning, 7:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m. Member-only hours and free coffee or tea.

September 24: Volunteer Quarterly Luncheon & Meeting, 11:30 a.m. Forest Pavilion (please bring a dish to share)

September 25: Yarn in the Yuccas: Fiber Arts Monthly Meetup 1:30 p.m. (please RSVP)

September 26: New Volunteer Orientation Part II, 9:00 a.m.

September 27: Native Designs Brunch & Grapevine Wreath Workshop Set-up, 9:30 a.m.

September 28 – September 30: Grapevine Wreath Workshop, 9:30 a.m.–noon, 12:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m., (sign-up in VicNet)

October 2: Things That Go Bump in the Night, 5:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m., (sign-up in VicNet)

October 3: Things That Go Bump in the Night, 5:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m., (sign-up in VicNet)

October 4: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk hosted by Pomona Valley Bird Alliance, 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

October 10: GNN Opening Day 8:00 a.m., (sign-up in VicNet)

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

October 14: Volunteer Enrichment Program with Maria Montag, President of Friends of California Condors presentation, “California Condors: Back from the Brink” at noon

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

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

November 1: First Sunday Family Friendly Bird Walk hosted by Pomona Valley Bird Alliance, 8:00 a.m. (registration required)

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

November 14: Nerd Out in the Garden, 5:00 p.m. (sign-up VicNet)

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

November 26: Garden Closed

November 27: Green Friday

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

HOSPITALITY

Photos by Susan Starr



FRIENDS OF THE LOS ANGELES RIVER (FOLAR) FIELD TRIP

**Photos by Linda Clement and
Betsy MacLaren**

On Saturday, June 20, 16 CalBG volunteers and friends went on a field trip to the Los Angeles River. We met at 9 o'clock at the Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park in Los Angeles. The walk was led by one of the Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR) environmental educators, Dan Mott. After being equipped with binoculars, we set out for a one-hour walk along the "Glendale Narrows" soft bottom

section of the river. Dan gave us a brief history and pointed out birds, other animals, and native plants. We saw a green heron, a blue heron, egrets, a mother mallard duck with her eight ducklings, and a hawk. The walk was incredibly informative and entertaining.

At least three more field trips are being planned for 2026 and 2027 by the volunteer Enrichment/Field Trips Committee. Watch for flyers and notices in *Oak Notes* and in emails. We hope you can join us!



You Are Invited To
**FALL BACK INTO
THE GARDENS**

Volunteer Luncheon and Business Meeting

Thursday, September 24th

Forest Pavilion – 11:30

Tram Starts at 11:00

Bring your favorite main dish,
salad, dessert or hors d'oeuvres to share
(we especially appreciate
main dishes and salads)

Staff Invited

Fun to get together again

See you there



**California
Botanic
Garden**



New Volunteer Orientation

**FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS
of CALBG**

What You'll Learn:

How volunteers support CalBG

- ✓ Play a vital role in the mission of the Garden to advance knowledge, conservation, and appreciation of California Native Plants.
- ✓ Gain valuable knowledge and receive hands-on experience through association with professionals in research, horticulture, and education.
- ✓ Make new friends and gain new social and enrichment opportunities with other native plant enthusiasts.
- ✓ Get practical experience and take your home garden / natural habitat to the next level.

Event Details:

September 19 & 26

9:00 am - noon

**California Botanic Garden
1500 N College Ave
Claremont, CA 91711**

**RSVP:
pespana@calbg.org**

**Patty Nueva España
Volunteer Coordinator**



(909) 625-8767



calbg.org



California Botanic Garden presents

Things That Go **BUMP** *in the Night*

October 2 & 3, 2026, 5:30 - 9 PM

Nighttime fun at the Garden returns in October. Bring your flashlight and explore the nocturnal world of plants and animals. Enjoy interactive activities, connect with live animals, make creepy crawly crafts, and grab dinner at a food truck.



1500 N. College Ave., Claremont, CA 91711. For tickets and more information go to calbg.org