During the summer, going for a walk in the Garden calls for a little more planning than in the fall or spring. It’s often hot, and while our plants may not look as appealing, I always find that even in summer, flowers are blooming and the shades of green soften the view. While the plant life shifts into survival mode, the animals spring to life. Maybe the squirrels are working harder to find their next meal. What it comes down to is that there is always something new to enjoy at CalBG.

As your new Volunteer President, I want to begin by thanking Marla White for her remarkable effort to keep us all connected this past year. Marla kept us current with the Garden and with events in the Southland. We all hope that this year will be better, but for now, we need to exercise patience as we chart new COVID territories. This pause presents an opportunity to rethink what we do, while looking ahead to a rebuilding year.

When I retired from teaching at Upland High School I wanted to volunteer, and RSABG was just the right fit. The Garden offered a variety of ways to serve and the commitment was flexible. I started working the events, then became a Nature Interpreter, now renamed Garden Guides. The classes prepared me for my tours, and I found a real camaraderie among my fellow guides. The best reward has been spending time with children in our Garden. It’s easy to overlook how exciting it is to see a lizard, but in the eyes of a child these four-legged speedsters are indeed a wonder. Going forward, I plan to explore all the areas our Volunteers serve to see how we support the work at CalBG.

It’s September, and we’d like to plan our Fall Quarterly Luncheon and get started in the Garden. Due to the recent COVID surge, however, this along with so much else is in limbo. Please stay tuned.

Enjoy your summer, and I will see you on the pathways.

—Lynn
Hello faithful volunteers:

I can’t tell you how sorry I am that we are still — or rather, again — dealing with this virus. When Oak Notes went on summer vacation, the situation was looking pretty good: all of us who are able were fully vaccinated and we were just beginning to feel that things had the potential to return to some semblance of normal. Unfortunately, COVID had some tricks up its metaphorical sleeve and we are now back in the thick of it.

But before I elaborate more about the virus, first let me recognize your out-going officers, with an emphasis on Marla White. Marla has done a magnificent job of trying to keep ‘all things volunteer’ going as the virus has raged around us. THANK YOU, Marla! You are a true hero in my eyes! Turning to the future, I know I speak for all of the staff in saying that we very much look forward to working with your new officer team under the leadership of Lynn Miller. Hopefully we will return to some semblance of normal while Lynn is at the helm.

Back to the COVID situation in the time of ‘delta’: here at the Garden, the only change that we have made since the vengeful arrival of ‘delta’ is to go back to mandatory masking indoors in all but private offices. Of course, this absolutely includes volunteers who work indoors. The change mainly impacts volunteers in the herbarium and library. Very wisely, the staff leads in those areas (i.e., Irene Holiman and Mare Nazaire) had been bringing volunteers back in very carefully and in low densities. With masks back on, we are continuing to operate in this way. I very much appreciate your cooperation in re-masking up. I have actually become quite comfortable behind my mask but I know that, for some others, it feels very burdensome and I am grateful for your cooperation — and for not blaming it on us!

What happened while Oak Notes was on summer vacation? The joint meeting of the Advisory Council and the Board of Trustees took place — unfortunately by Zoom. Exciting news is that we have new Advisors (four) and Trustees (two). New advisors include Janice Tsuma, who was a very active volunteer until she and her husband Alan relocated to San Clemente a couple of years ago. Janice has a very special relationship with our Garden, including with a grove of oaks out in the communities. I am counting on her being able to visit her oaks when the Advisors are able to meet in person (hopefully soon!). Also elected as an official — rather than ex officio — Advisor at the June meeting was Marla White. I am grateful to Marla for her continued willingness to serve the Garden. Many of you will remember that this joint meeting of our volunteer leaders has for many years been followed by the celebratory event at which we honor volunteers by wining and dining you. NOT this year, unfortunately, but we will hope for next.

I hope that you all enjoyed our Magical Mondays events. The Advancement office has been very pensive about the fact that we have more than a thousand new member households over the last year, yet are not able to offer them much in the way of programming. Magical Mondays have been lovely — live music in two venues, food (catered by As You
Like It), drinks, friends — and well attended. We are attentive to the success of these events, with an eye toward future events that might be similarly modeled.

Behind the scenes, senior staff have been engaged in a strategic planning process. I hope to share this with you either at one of your leadership meetings or one of your quarterly meetings when it is ready. Doing this exercise has led us to look back at our mission statement. The current version is far too long and has everything in it but the kitchen sink. I am hopeful that we will be able to revise and streamline it and achieve consensus in adopting it. Stay tuned!

For the next few months, we will be going ahead with the kind of low density, uncrowded programming that we have been doing since we reopened in late May of 2020. Unfortunately, this means no “Bump in the Night,” a favorite of mine and, probably, yours too. However, we are looking at smaller ‘events’ with elements of bump. In fact, the entire month of October may well be ‘Bump month,’ with details TBA.

I hope to have better news for you soon with regard to COVID. Meanwhile, please stay safe! Your Garden needs you!

Visit our Visitor Experience Coordinator Danielle Wildasinn

Hello everyone! I hope you all enjoyed some summer rest. Over the summer, the Garden continued our themed educational months—Butterfly Month in June and Tree Month in August! Visitors enjoyed activity sheets, classes, and tours that coordinated with each month’s theme.

Thank you to Community Education Coordinator Kristen Barker who designed and led the programming for the themed educational months. These months were adapted to deliver similar content to the in-person, family friendly educational events that were offered in the past. Kristen left the Garden in mid-August to pursue a new job opportunity in the Edible Garden at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles! Kristen gracefully stepped up and stewarded the adaptation of CalBG’s Community Education classes and programming in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. She delivered Community Education programming under difficult circumstances.

New Volunteer Treasurer by Betsy MacLaren

I’m looking forward to being the new treasurer for our volunteer organization. I became a member of CalBG in July, 2011. In September of 2014 I attended the Garden orientation to become a volunteer.

I’ve lived in California all my life except for a five-year stint in Colorado when I was in my 30s. I moved to Claremont in 1993. Although I obtained an Elementary Teaching Credential after college, I ended up going to nursing school for my RN and enjoyed a career that spanned 36 years. My mom had been a nurse, so she and I were both happy that I followed in her footsteps. I retired from Methodist Hospital in Arcadia two years ago.

I have one son, Ryan, who is married to Jen. They live in Rancho Cucamonga with my two grandchildren, Megan and Samantha who are 15 and 13, and two rescue dogs.

I am so happy to serve the volunteers in a Board capacity. I have always liked working with numbers, even to the point of doing my own taxes. I have volunteered through AARP as a certified tax preparer for eight years, an opportunity that has been rewarding in many ways. Not only am I able to help people prepare their taxes, I have made several good friends among my fellow tax preparers.

Thank you for this opportunity!
Education classes live on Zoom including horticulture classes taught by Garden staff, botany lectures, art workshops, plus Taste Wild 2 and the Arrange Wild series webinars. Kristen collaborated with the instructors on class content and organized a variety of coordinating kits for participant pick-up. She shared her drawing talents by illustrating and gathering content for last November’s Bump activity booklet, the Clayfornia sculpture scavenger hunt, and various activity sheets for families to explore the Garden for our Bird, Wildflower, Butterfly, and Tree Months. Recently, she offered small in-person walking tours led by Garden staff and very popular weekly yoga classes. Kristen has been consistently working with the Visitor Education Committee to prepare our Garden Guides for the eventual return of school tours. I am so grateful to have worked with Kristen during this strange time and I will miss her! Join us in wishing her the best of luck in her future!

The Admissions Kiosk welcomed a new Visitor Experience Associate in May.

Please join me in welcoming Lauryn Le! Lauryn is a student at Cal Poly Pomona where she studies zoology. As always, please stop by and say hi when you see an unfamiliar face.

A Busy Summer of Planning for the Visitor Education Committee

by Katy Douglass

This summer a sub-group of the Visitor Education Committee has been hard at work transforming two of the Garden’s two-hour tours, Adaptation and Survival and Web of Life, into shorter one to one-and-a-half-hour tours. These tour changes came about to address safety concerns brought on by the COVID 19 pandemic. Our objective was to maintain the integrity and interest level of the two-hour tours, while keeping both Garden Guides and students safe. In the end, we found a way to merge and enhance the structure and format of both the existing one- and two-hour tours.

Changes made to the tour kept the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards intact while creating vertical articulation across grade levels. This means each grade-level tour will build on the vocabulary and concepts from previous tours from transitional kindergarten through fifth grade. Since both the one-hour and new one-and-a-half-hour tour will have similar formats, this will also allow Garden Guides that normally do the one-hour tours to easily adapt to the slightly longer tour format.

The VEC Committee will meet in August to discuss these new changes, as well as figure out where things may be headed in the fall. The committee is planning on meeting with Garden Guides in early September to unveil the one-and-a-half-hour tours, get feedback, and plan for the upcoming school tour year.

First Day Back: Voices of Volunteers Returning

by Patricia Brooks

It had been over a year since I entered the CalBG Administration Building. On the way to my volunteer station in the Herbarium I had to traverse the hallway past the offices and classroom. As I walked by masked staff, that hallway seemed narrower than before. But the Herbarium staff had instituted many safety protocols that set my mind at ease. Once in the Herbarium, things looked familiar but I didn’t know what do! How do I set up? What tools do I need? The blank mounting paper stared up at me asking to be filled: with what I asked? Thankfully, the Herbarium staff had prepared an orientation. It triggered past experiences in my brain and muscle
memory took over. Now, after a few volunteer shifts and more excellent orientation sessions, I feel more comfortable and am working faster. What the future holds I do not know. When I finished my shift at the beginning of the pandemic, I never dreamed it would be a year before I could return. Now I take time to cherish each volunteer shift, each specimen, and each interaction with the CalBG staff.

**Impressions on Returning to the Herbarium**

by David and Louise Gish

After looking forward to coming back for so long, Louise and I were thrilled to return to the Herbarium on a bi-weekly basis in June. We were very glad that Mare and Erin had developed training sessions for the first several times as I was amazed at how “rusty” I had become after all those months away, and we also learned new and improved mounting requirements. The atmosphere is very quiet in the workroom with only the two of us there—we miss the others in the Tuesday group, but it is so nice to be able to chat with some of the staff again—sure did miss you all!

Would you like to share your first day back? *Oak Notes* invites other volunteers to share their experiences. Contact Patricia at pbrooks2409@gmail.com.

**California’s Fabulous Fabs—Trees**

by Steve Bryant

California is rich in the family Fabaceae and many require no supplemental water once established in SoCal gardens. I will cover my favorite trees, shrubs, and subshrubs/herbs in successive articles. For more photos, see [https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/flora/](https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/flora/), [www.calflora.org](http://www.calflora.org) or through Jepson [https://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/eflora](https://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/eflora).

Plants are usually less than 15 m tall, many armed, can be trained as large shrubs or as trees. Attract honeybees in flower and can be messy when fruits drop. All but *Olneya* bloom when 2 to 3 m tall.

**Amorpha fruticosa, A. californica**: unarmed, deciduous, scented foliage. Purple and yellow racemes of small flowers. Host for California Dog-Face butterfly (*Zerene eurydice*).

**Cercis occidentalis** (Western Redbud): unarmed, deciduous, large leaves in summer. Many magenta blooms on bare branches in spring. Volunteers freely.

**Olneya tesota** (Desert Ironwood): slow growing, very well armed. Mature trees covered with pink blossoms in spring or summer. Wood very dense—the trunks of dead trees may stand upright for decades.

**Prosopis glandulosa** (Honey Mesquite), *P. pubescens* (Screwbean Mesquite): deciduous, spiny, fairly rapid growth, deeply rooted. Racemes of small yellow flowers. Can be trimmed so branches above head...
height. *Prosopis* fruits made into flour by indigenous peoples.

*Parkinsonia microphylla* (Yellow Palo Verde), *P. florida* (Blue Palo Verde): *P. microphylla* has sharp branch tips, *P. florida* is thorny. The hybrid cultivar Desert Museum (unarmed) most commonly grown in SoCal. Subject to wind damage in cultivation, especially the cultivar. All covered with flowers around May, producing a yellow carpet under the tree. Flowers attract carpenter bees (*Xylocopa* spp.).

*Psorothamnus spinosus* (Smoke Tree): tangles of small branches ending in thorns. Covered with small purple flowers in summer. From a distance, plant may look like a puff of gray smoke.

Cultivation and acquisition: *Cercis* and *Amorpha* may need summer water, others generally grow without supplemental water once established. *Cercis* and ‘Desert Museum’ often available, others from specialists.
Sometime around 1995, a branch of a *Carnegiea gigantea* [saguaro] with fruits attached was shot off by someone in the military who was on maneuvers in the Colorado Desert just west of the Colorado River in California. Specifics of the collection site are unknown, but the fruits may have come from a plant growing on or near the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (U.S. Navy and the U.S Marine Corps).

Suffice to say, those fruits found their way to then RSABG Nurseryman Mark Hooten, who propagated the seeds.

Last year, CalBG Nursery Manager Bryce Kunzel needed space in his area and the saguaros had been “hanging out” there for quite some time. Beginning in March 2020, a few plants were set out in the

The Saguaro installation team. L–R: Patisu Lambert, James Reed, Richard Davis. Not pictured is Peter Evans—someone had to take the pictures! (Photo, Peter Evans)

The Saguaro Grove in mid-June 2021 (Photo, Linda Lee Worlow).
Creosote Bush Scrub section of The Communities and by September a total of thirteen were in place.

Per Director of Horticulture Peter Evans, Horticulturalist Patisu Lambert “did the hard work of clearing dead and declining plant materials to prepare the area.” She was assisted by Trustee and dedicated Horticulture Volunteer Richard Davis, as well as another stalwart Hort Volunteer Betsy Zimmerman. The Saguaro Grove was installed by a team comprised of Patisu, Richard Davis, Peter Evans, and Plant Records Manager James Reed. Patisu added local river rock cobble to enhance the new installation (see photos).

*Carnegiea gigantea* (Englem.) Britton & Rose is a monotypic genus in the Cactaceae (Cactus family)—that is, *Carnegiea* is the sole genus and *gigantea* the sole species. Considered a shrub (stem succulent), saguaros are native to California and also found in Arizona and in Sonora, Mexico (https://www.calflora.org/app/taxon?crn=1657).

At the time of propagation twenty-six years ago, Mark Hooten lived in Perris, California, but for some time now has made his home in Ft. Myers, Florida. We caught up with him there to confirm the unusual collection “procedure.”

Patisu Lambert retired on June 18, 2021 after ten years of service to the Garden. The Hort staff gave her a swell send-off lunch. Patisu will spend her retirement in Arizona.

**Keir Morse, Graduate Student**

Hello! I’m a PhD student at the Garden and I’ve spent the past four years here studying the genus *Malacothamnus* (the bushmallows). I worked as a professional field botanist for many years before coming to the Garden. On these jobs I became very good at surveying for and identifying plants, but I always wanted to discover a new species to science and I was becoming increasingly interested in how to draw the lines between species, subspecies, and varieties.

Before starting my degree here, a friend and I delved into morphological analyses of a few confusing species of *Malacothamnus* including what we suspected may be a new species. These analyses worked really well and showed that we actually did have a new species, which we described as *Malacothamnus enigmaticus* (enigmatic bushmallow). I also learned that discovering a new species is way less glamorous if you have to do all the work yourself to prove it is distinct, but that didn’t stop me from investigating further.

There is some controversy regarding what species and varieties should be recognized in *Malacothamnus*. It’s your typical battle of lumpers vs. splitters, each having some valid points. Published treatments have between 11 and 28 different *Malacothamnus* recognized. One big issue with this genus is that many *Malacothamnus* that have a California Rare Plant Rank are not recognized in some recent treatments. If a rare species is lumped into a common species when it shouldn’t be and no longer recognized as distinct, it could lose protection and ultimately become extinct. Likewise, if it is split when it shouldn’t be, recognizing it as rare could take conservation resources away from other species that really do need protection. So, I decided to take on the entire genus and see if I could answer the questions of what should be recognized and how to tell them apart.

I’ve expanded my morphological analyses to the whole genus, which has given pretty solid evidence that some of the lumping shouldn’t have happened. It also shows that there are definitely some confusing areas that need more evidence to decide if certain *Malacothamnus* should
or should not be recognized and, if so, whether they should be recognized as species or varieties. As additional evidence, I am also using DNA to try to clarify relationships between the morphological groups I found. The combined evidence will be used to justify which *Malacothamnus* I recognize in my own treatment and clarify how to tell them apart. This will hopefully be completed in the next year.

If you want to learn more, visit my website (www.keiriosity.com), which includes a link to my 2020 Southern California Botanists presentation on *Malacothamnus*.

---

**Book of the Month**

*Chris Ilgen, Volunteer Library Committee*

*How to Read Water: Clues and Patterns from Puddles to the Sea* by Tristan Gooley. The Experiment, 2016. 393 pp.

This book is written for fish, fishermen in their pursuit of fish, marine navigators, adventurers, artists, and all who are interested in the “sticky substance” (Gooley) that we call water. Composed of two hydrogen and one oxygen atom, Gooley, who modestly calls himself a naturalist, explains the basis for water’s behavior in terms that sometimes are best understood by physicists. Most of us will at least find a chapter of interest, beginning with Chapter 1, “Launching,” one of my favorite chapters. Once we understand why water doesn’t lie flat, we can proceed from a drop’s meniscus to puddles, ponds, rivers and
streams, lakes and the sea. Gooley also analyzes the color of water, the interaction between light and water, the sound of water, reading waves, the coast, the beach, currents and tides, water at night, ship watching, and rare and extraordinary behaviors. The epilogue, “Uncharted Water,” may suggest that science is just beginning to understanding this fascinating medium.

In learning water features, technical terms are defined. In fact, this could pass as a required textbook for a course titled “Hydrology 101.” The author explores topics such as: a stream or river thalweg (or identifying a thalweg relic on land), water’s flashiness, how to read water’s color, and the relationship between water and wind and water and weather. I didn’t read why we are able to swim in water, but it must be explained somewhere.

The chapter on streams and rivers is outstanding. These bodies of water meander, vary in depth, the amount of sun along the riverbanks, and the effect of boulders on the water’s passage. The meaning of “pure water” is defined. Streams and rivers can be read for the location of fish. Vegetation can be very different on each side, hence a role for botanists when studying these bodies of water.

Other books of interest by Gooley include *How to Read Nature* and *The Natural Navigator*.

*How to Read Water* will soon be in the Volunteer Library and circulate when the library reopens.

---

**DEDICATED OAK NOTES CONTRIBUTORS:**

Last year was challenging. Your creativity and devotion through Oak Notes provided a special connection between the volunteers and the Garden.

As we start a new year, it seems that challenge has become a common denominator for Oak Notes. As usual, we will send a call for submissions on the first of each month and a reminder on the tenth: all contributions are due on the fifteenth of the month prior to publication. We can’t wait to read your novel contributions.

If you are unable to meet the deadline and need extra time, please contact us. We need time to organize the articles and photos before the publication date. Please email all contributions to Patricia Brooks (pbrooks2409@gmail.com).

We look forward to your input. Thank you for your dedication to the Oak Notes newsletter and to the volunteers. The readers look forward to your interesting contributions.

As a guide to new contributors, please use the following as a basic format:

- Microsoft Word document
- Times New Roman, 12-pt. font
- Length: 350 words or less
- Due on or before the 15th of each month: Reminders on the first and tenth of the month prior to publication.
- Photos: high-resolution with credit to creator, if necessary.
- Scan the front cover of books as part of book reviews, if possible, and make sure they are not crooked.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia (pbrooks2409@gmail.com).

Thank you,
Fred and Patricia Brooks
Around the Garden

Top left: Linda Clement and Ili Lobaco
Top right: Bev and Allan Jack
Bottom left: Win and Carole Aldrich
Bottom right: Marla and Dan White
More Going’s on in the Garden
Top to bottom left: Judy Bryson in crafts, Lisa Layne in crafts, grapes, Frog in Benjamin Pond.
Top right: the Grills’ dance party (Photo by Lucinda McDade)
Bottom right: Cooper’s Hawk in the Percy Everett Garden