The January 21st windstorm wreaked havoc throughout the Garden, and though we miss the many trees lost, we gained areas of light and opportunity. April is Wildflower Month at CalBG, and this year they arrived in full celebration. Nature played games with us this year, but our wildflowers triumphed. A sign on the east path of the Mesa reminds walkers of the Garden’s sensory nature, and when I was there last week. I enjoyed birds cheerfully singing and wildflowers blooming with color and sweet aromas. It really was a joyful moment.

Thanks to all who expressed an interest in serving on a committee next year. Joining a volunteer committee is enriching because we work with others who share our interests. This year is ending soon; but you may still join a committee. The Volunteer Board will reach out again in the fall, so think about how you could help next year.

Good news! More areas of the Garden are opening up for Volunteers. The Herbarium will add more help and we need more Garden Guides. If interested, please contact Amanda Behnke.

Linda Prendergast, chair of Native Designs, said the Native Designs book, California in a Vase, was featured at the LA Times Book Festival on April 23–24. Congratulations to our talented Designers!

You may not know that Volunteers have a Public Relations committee, but we do, and they have been making follow-up calls to new CalBG members a few months after they’ve joined the Garden. Dorcia Bradley, committee chair, says the responses have been favorable. My thanks to those who are making these important calls.

Logo wear is ordered and should be here soon. We cannot thank Betsy MacLaren enough for keeping track of the 70-plus orders.

Save the Date: On Wednesday, June 1st at 11:30, we will hold our year-end Annual Meeting and Luncheon. We can review Garden activities, elect next year’s Board officers, and talk about possibilities for the coming year.
Thank you for giving your time to CalBG, be well, and take time to walk in the Garden.

Wildflower Tram Tour, photo by Marla White

—Lynn

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Lucinda McDade, CalBG Executive Director

Greetings faithful volunteers!

I suspect that you share my feeling that we are on the cusp of getting back to some semblance of normal. It has been great to see so many of you in the herbarium and mounting the stairs to the library! And thanks to those of you who have continued to volunteer out on the grounds, in some cases almost throughout the two long years of COVID. We have recruited a lot of new volunteers during COVID but really had no place to put them to work except on the grounds. Of course, we DO need a lot of volunteers on the grounds but, with things returning to normal, we can think about recruiting into other duties as well. Sadly, we have lost a not insignificant number of wonderful volunteers over the last couple of years. For all of these reasons, it is time to focus on building the volunteer program.

Towards jumpstarting the program, we are planning to do a volunteer training session in June. This will be, first, for our volunteers who are new since March of 2020 and who have had no real orientation to CalBG. I imagine that you join me in feeling that volunteers benefit from getting a reasonably thorough introduction to all that we do here and that is the sort of orientation that we are planning.

Once we see how many of our ‘already-in-service’ volunteers are able to participate in the orientation sessions, we will decide whether to recruit further.

We anticipate another such training event in the fall and will definitely be recruiting at that time. Know people who want to volunteer? Send them our way!

We also hope to move on to Garden Guide training as we look to be prepared for something approximating a normal school year starting next fall. Your volunteer leadership sent out a lovely message looking to recruit new Garden Guides and we will pile on to that excellent start.

Meanwhile, onward into the warm season while we hope for another couple of decent rains before the summer dry down. Thanks, volunteers, for all that you do, including for keeping yourselves safe!

Bench Refurbishing

Repair and refurbishing continue on benches in throughout the Garden. Thanks to Shaunn Gygli and Amanda Behnke for their recent work in the Native Garden. Stop by, sit, and enjoy the spring, Volunteers.
Native Americans used both plant and animal fibers to weave various items. Indians of the Northwest Coast gathered wool from mountain goats to spin and weave. Conversely, there were no native animals in California with fur fibers long enough to be useful until the Spanish brought sheep. But the people of the Great Basin and California had an abundance of rabbits and wove spectacular capes and blankets from their pelts. They were soft, warm, and furry on the front and back. However, rabbit fur is too short to spin and the pelts are too small to be of much use without using an ingenious method. If you’re talking to kids, ask them how a 15-foot rope or cord could be made from a small animal skin. You might demonstrate by cutting a piece of paper into a spiral. When cut into a 1-inch-wide spiral, each skin can make a 10-to-15-foot strip that naturally folds in on itself, forming a furry cord. The Indians took 40 to 100 pelts that were scraped and dried but not tanned to make a cape or blanket. First, a staked ground loom, or standing loom, was made (see photos). The warp (the vertical element) was of yucca, milkweed, or other plant fiber. The weft (horizontal element) was the twisted rabbit cordage. Using the twine method (over, under, over, under), the woven blankets were furry on both sides.

These blankets and capes were much prized and a sign of wealth. To me, they are another example of the amazing, inventive technology of the Native Americans.

**A Baker’s Dozen of Native Flowers**

*by Steve Bryant*

**Annuals:**

*Castilleja exerta* (Purple Owl’s-Clover). To 45 cm tall, 10+ cm wide. Small narrow leaves, purplish bracts; tiny purplish flowers often with lighter tips.

*Claytonia* (formerly *Montia*) *perfoliata* (Miner’s Lettuce). To 0.3 m tall and wide. Young leaves lanceolate, mature leaves circular with tiny white flowers in center. Leaves said to be edible.

*Phacelia minor, P. campanulata* (Canterbury Bells). Hairy annuals to 1 m tall, 0.5 m wide. *P. minor* has purple flowers, *P. campanulata* has blue flowers.

**Biennials:**

*Erysimum capitatum* (Western Wallflower). To 1+ m tall, 0.3 m wide. Small yellow to orange flowers. Biennial to perennial.

*Oenothera elata* (Tall Evening Primrose). 1st year rosette, 2nd year to 2 m tall and wide, branched, many bright yellow flowers to 8 cm diam. Flowers “pop” open about sunset. May perrenate.

**Perennials:**

*Aristolochia californica* (California Pipevine). Stems to 5+ m; can smother other plants. Poisonous, but host for Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly. Fungus-gnats pollinate flowers that look
like miniature Meerschaum pipes. Open fruit resembles a flower.

*Castilleja foliolarosa* (Wooly Paintbrush). To 0.6 m tall and wide. Wooly foliage; bright orange-red (occasionally yellow) bracts on inflorescences. Hemiparasitic on a wide variety of host plants.

*Delphinium parryi, D. cardinale, D. parryi* to 1 m, *D. cardinale* to 2+ m tall. *D. parryi* flowers blue to purple, *D. cardinale* bright scarlet. *D. cardinale* stunning in mass. Hybrids have flowers from very light pink to purple.


*Mentzelia laevicaulis* (Blazing Star). To 2 m tall, 1 m wide. Bright yellow star-shaped flowers to 8 cm wide. Leaves stick to clothing; sometimes an annual.

*Oenothera californica* (California Evening-Primrose). Gray foliage to 0.5 m tall; spreads widely underground. White flowers to 6 cm across, fading pink.

*Paeonia californica* (California Peony). To 0.5 m tall and 1 m wide. Divided leaves; 3–4-cm-wide, red brown flowers. Seeds resemble rat droppings.

*Penstemon spectabilis* (Showy Penstemon). To 1+ m tall and wide. This local species has blue-purple flowers in stunning masses. May need staking. Cultivation and acquisition: All need winter and spring water; *Aristolochia* best in shade with some summer water. Most available from specialists.

**Book of the Month**

Barbara Nakaoka, Volunteer Library Committee


Peter Wohlleben shares his knowledge of the science of how trees “feel and communicate” in this children’s book based on his New York Times bestseller *The Hidden Life of Trees*. You have heard that nature can teach us about life. Through the pages of this book, we are reminded about important parts of our lives and the life of nature. Here are just a few of those teachings:

- “Leaves breathe in and out—through their mouths, which they can open and shut.”
- “That’s why roots of a crooked tree quickly grow thicker near the trunk so they can support it. It’s like when you spread your feet apart a bit to get better balance.”
- “School starts for tree children when they’re about three feet tall.”
- “Is there a forest internet?” Trees are connected to each other through fungi.
“Are there farmers in the forest, too?” The ants tend to their livestock, the aphids, who love sugar juice. Trees do not like the aphids who suck the juice out of their leaves. That is where the ants come in handy and help out the trees.

“Do trees sweat in the summer?” “Beech trees don’t sweat through their skin—they release water through their leaves.”

Besides the interesting and fascinating information about trees, look for quizzes with the answers hidden upside down and in light print. And there are also “Try This” suggestions to get every reader involved. The author explains complex concepts in a language that is easily understood by children. The book could be an excellent resource for CalBG’s Garden Guides and a great book for a parent to read with his or her child. What better way to learn than together, immersed in discovery? Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest by Suzanne Simard. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2021. 368 pp.

Suzanne Simard was born and raised in British Columbia as part of a multigenerational logging family. Her early life inspired a deep interest in the trees of the forests and the underground networks that help them to grow and flourish. Her childhood fascination with the layers of the forest floor led to questions about why the seedlings of many trees planted to replace those commercially logged looked sickly and did not establish strong roots. Her family had logged trees for generations and the seedlings had always taken root. Simard’s studies revealed that trees are “in a web of interdependence, linked by a system of underground channels, where they perceive and connect and relate with an ancient intricacy and wisdom that can no longer be denied.” She found that when logging practices involved clear cutting and removal of ancient trees, including Mother Trees, there was limited support for struggling new seedlings to develop into healthy trees. Simard’s studies lead to profound discoveries about “biodiversity, carbon storage, and a myriad of ecological goods and services that underpin our life-support systems.”

Simard is a professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia. Finding the Mother Tree was included as one the Wall Street Journal’s Ten Best Books of the Year. It also received the Banff Mountain Book Competition’s grand prize and numerous other recognitions. Simard’s excellent scientific research of the forest and her powerful personal story make this a memoir difficult to put down. The book leaves the reader with a sense of hope and a desire to deepen their understanding of the amazing capacities of nature. Additional information is available through the Mother Tree Project.

---

**A Very Happy May Birthday to:**
- May Volunteer
- Birthdays
- Chuck Burt
- Lorne Caddick
- Paul Clarke
- Linda Clement
- Dennis Frankeberger
- Jeffrey Levy
- Stephen Simon
- Dawn Thielo
- Ray Wilson

The turtles are back in Benjamin Pond.
Blooming Flowers