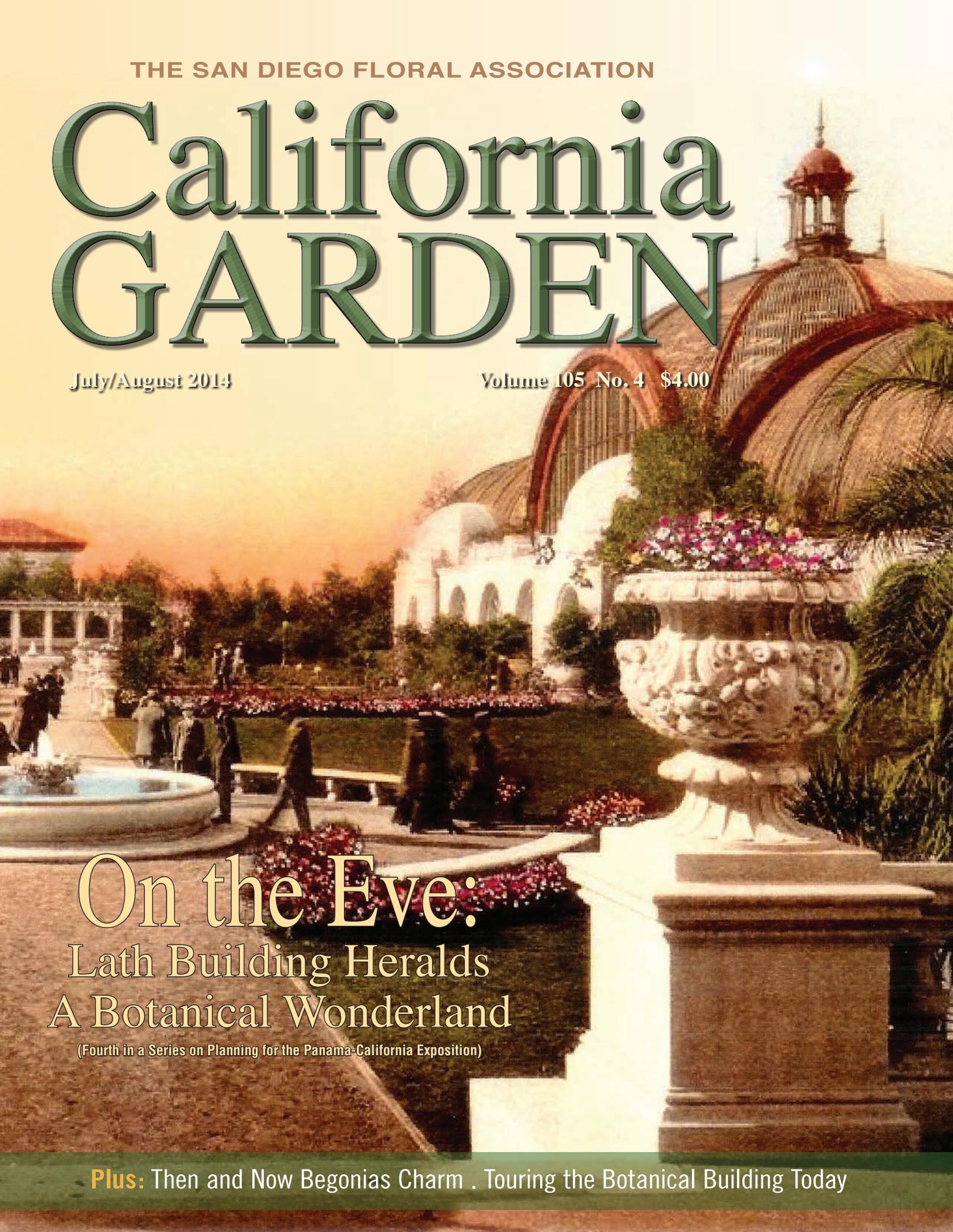


THE SAN DIEGO FLORAL ASSOCIATION

# California GARDEN

July/August 2014

Volume 105 No. 4 \$4.00



## On the Eve:

### Lath Building Heralds A Botanical Wonderland

(Fourth in a Series on Planning for the Panama-California Exposition)

**Plus:** Then and Now Begonias Charm . Touring the Botanical Building Today



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#### ON THE COVER

**The Botanical Building is on the right of this westward view of the Panama-California Exposition. Cropped postcard from the collection of Vonn Marie May**

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# California GARDEN

THE MAGAZINE FOR HANDS-ON GARDENERS AND FLORAL DESIGNERS  
July/August 2014, Volume 105, Number 4

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# President's Letter

Hello Floral Members,

My introduction to San Diego Floral began with a birthday subscription to the *California Garden* magazine some 20 years ago. My move from a reader to volunteer began with a request for computer help on a renewal notice. From there I took another step onto the SDFA board as a director and now here I am.

As president, my goal is to continue Floral's past successful work in promoting the knowledge and appreciation of horticulture and floriculture in the San Diego region.

The most important part of the Floral Association is its volunteers. You members who volunteer your time and expertise in many areas make all the special events possible - and outstanding. These events include guest speakers, December Nights, garden tours, floral-related classes, daily office staffing that allows our library to be open to the public, and much more.

With the coming 2015 Centennial Celebration in Balboa Park, we will need many volunteers for our six major events. I hope you will find the time and energy to help with at least one of them.

San Diego Floral association is an organization managed and supported by volunteers. We are looking forward to more active involvement from our membership - to help us build a bigger, better, more effective and efficient Floral Association so we may continue to serve our affiliates and our communities.

Bonnie Gebhardt  
President



Photo: Rachel Cobb

Volunteers and SDFA Board Members Kay Harry and Cheryl Gaidmore help out during a recent garden tour.

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## FLORAL NEWS

### First University Heights Garden Tour Delights Visitors

**A**fter several days of sweltering temperatures, a cool breeze and a hint of “May Gray” were very welcome on Saturday morning, May 17, as San Diego Floral Association’s annual historic garden tour kicked off in Old Trolley Barn Park in University Heights.

The pleasant weather encouraged some hardy garden tour patrons to walk the entire route, while others enjoyed biking from garden to garden. Whatever the mode of transportation, visitors arrived in numbers and liked what they saw. Pride of ownership and individuality were notable in the eight very different home gardens on this tour. A few garden tour veterans said SDFA offered the best tour they had experienced this season. Those completely new to University Heights found that they had made an agreeable discovery.

Garden tour tri-chairs Kay Harry, Cheryl Gaidmore and Sondi Arndt thanked the garden marketplace vendors and expressed their gratitude to the University Heights community for welcoming San Diego Floral Association into the neighborhood and for providing high levels of cooperation and support. We would also like to thank the 55 volunteers that were garden greeters, ticket sellers, and served in many other capacities. Without them a garden tour would not be possible.— *Nancy Carol Carter*



A strategically located deck offers views over Buchanan Canyon



Cobblestones frame raised beds and a lily pond in one garden



A visitor yields to temptation on this inviting deck



Young entrepreneurs capitalize on neighborhood garden tour traffic

Photos: Nancy Carol Carter



# SAN DIEGO FLORAL ASSOCIATION

## FLORAL NEWS

### New Slate of SDFA Officers Installed

A mellow San Diego evening was the setting for San Diego Floral's traditional summer dinner on the patio of the Casa del Prado on June 18. At the following general meeting new officers were elected and formally installed by horticulturist Lucy Warren, former editor of *California Garden*. New to the SDFA Board are Robin Baker, Marian Beecroft, Suzanne Johnson, Laurie Lee and Linda Lawley.

### Meet Bonnie Gebhardt, New SDFA President

The Floral Association's new president brings a record of teaching, management experience and public service to the organization. With graduate degrees from Cal Poly Pomona and San Diego State University, Bonnie Gebhardt taught math, science, physical education, English and reading classes in local high schools. For more than a decade she was both the English Department Chair and English Language Learner Coordinator at El Cajon Valley High School.

In retirement, Gebhardt has turned her long-term interest in training and showing dogs into a public service program for Lakeside youth. Participants in the 4-H Dog Project learn how to train and show their dogs. She indulges a life-long interest in gardening, inspired by a grandfather and her parents, and has traveled and camped extensively, scuba diving and snorkeling along the way.

SDFA's new president learned about our organization when she received a birthday gift subscription to *California Garden*. Her first involvement came when she answered a call for volunteers to assist in the production of the *California Garden Centennial Compilation*—the 2009 book commemorating 100 years of SDFA's flagship publication. Subsequently, Bonnie Gebhardt has been actively involved in Association activities, notably as a member of the Board of Directors and the expert Copy Editor of *California Garden*.

SDFA's plans for active participation in the historic 2015 celebration of Balboa Park promise a challenging and demanding term for Bonnie Gebhardt, but she has already recognized the critical role of volunteers. "I would like to thank three wonderful people who really stepped out this year to help San Diego Floral move forward," she recently said. "Barbara Martin, Abby Esty and Kathy Esty are Super Volunteers." – *Nancy Carol Carter*

### SDFA Honors Student With Roland & Ethel Hoyt Scholarship

The San Diego Floral Association presented its 2014 Scholarship to one local horticulture student. Cristina Underhill received a \$1,000 award to continue her studies at Cuyamaca College in the Horticulture Department.

The Floral Association scholarships further the organization's educational mission and honor Roland and Ethel Hoyt who were active members of the San Diego Floral Association for many years. A generous memorial gift from their sons helps to support the Floral Association scholarship fund.

Roland Hoyt, a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, lived and worked in San Diego until his death in 1968. Landscape designs for the Salk Institute, Mission Bay Park and Presidio Park are among his important projects. He served as editor of *California Garden* and authored a classic reference book, *Ornamental Plants for Subtropical Regions*. Ethel Hoyt was a talented home gardener and floral arranger. She encouraged education in floral design and helped establish the Floral Association's Flower Arrangers Guild. Ethel Hoyt was one of the first nationally accredited flower show judges. – *Bonnie Gebhardt*



Bonnie Gebhardt (left) and Christina Underhill

# NOW IS THE TIME

As the hottest months of the year approach, take steps to keep plants healthy and homes safe, while enjoying lazy days outside.

## Gardening Checklist

### July

- Maintain a thick layer of mulch around plants to hold in moisture and suppress weeds.
- Harvest edibles regularly to enjoy produce at its peak. Remove any that fall to the ground to discourage pests.
- Pick pears when still hard to the touch since they ripen off the tree.
- Deadhead and lightly feed summer annuals to keep them flowering.
- Create a defensible space around your home in case of wildfires. Plan an exit strategy.

### August

- Order bulbs now for the best selection. Store in a cool, dry, dark place until planting time in fall.
- Monitor irrigation performance, making repairs and alterations as needed to prevent water waste.
- Grow mint in a container and harvest to flavor summer coolers.
- Peruse seed catalogs for cool-season vegetables and flowers. Vow to try something new.
- Prune fruit trees when current crop is finished to maintain desired height and shape.

## DROUGHT-TOLERANT PLANTS

### Cactus and Succulents

Laura & Don Starr, The Grateful Shed

- Check for aphids and whiteflies, and remove either manually, with water, or with horticultural oils. The UC Cooperative Extension website, [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu), has good advice on pests.
- While cacti appreciate direct summer sun, it can be stressful, especially inland, so avoid placing them in full south-facing sun and use a light shade-cloth if needed.
- Black plastic pots increase soil temperatures around sensitive roots.
- Acclimatize nursery plants to their location gradually to avoid sunburned leaves (indicated by black or tan splotches).
- Established landscape cacti do not need water, but container plants, even if drought tolerant, should be well watered to flush out salts residue from the roots. Water early in the day to avoid sunburn on leaves.
- Aphids and mealy bugs can be controlled by hosing off plants with a direct spray of water.
- Keep containers weed-free by hand pulling or using commercial-size tweezers.
- Native dudleyas are dormant now, so do not water them. If necessary, move to a shady, cooler spot, and wait.
- Small holes in fleshy leaves can indicate birds pecking them for moisture during extreme heat. Netting or a bird bath in your yard will deter them.
- Succulents in containers are decorative and interesting in outdoor living spaces, especially if grouped together. Cuttings tied with raffia make pretty place settings at an outdoor table.

## Native Plants

John Noble, Coastal Sage Gardening

- Let your natives go into summer dormancy.
- Many established natives need little or no summer water but most are happier being watered once or twice a month. A hose spray that washes leaves clean works better than an in-ground drip system.
- Prune overgrown shrubs from pathways.
- Reduce fire risk, by lacing out any dead wood on perennials, shrubs or trees such as toyon, lemonade berry, sumac and oak. Cut down or compost the dead annuals and grasses.
- Lightly mulch all bare soil areas.

## EDIBLES

### Herbs

Charlotte Tenney & San Diego Herb Club Members

- Native sages and Mediterranean plants, such as lavender and rosemary, are dormant at this time of year, so need little water. Continue with regular watering for meadow and marsh-type herbs. This task is easier if they are grouped together and well mulched.
- Harvest scented geranium leaves to dry for tea, to make scented sugars or honeys, or to line a baking pan for a crunchy crust on a cake.
- Make lemonade from the lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) by soaking a handful of the sticky berries in a quart of water. Add sweetener, such as agave syrup, for a refreshing and healthful drink.

- Spanish and English lavender make wonderful herbal wreaths for gifts. Just bind the stems to a circular base with floral tape and let dry.
- Use any remaining basil for pesto sauce. Blend a cup of chopped fresh basil leaves with a cup of walnuts, fresh garlic to taste, and half a cup of virgin olive oil. Parcel into serving-size plastic bags and freeze.
- Make a sun tea from borage, mint, or lemon balm.
- Rub lemon balm or sweet Annie (*Artemisia*) into the skin for a natural insect repellent. Use caution because some folks are allergic to sweet Annie.

## Fruit Trees And Vines

Vincent Lazaneo, Urban Horticulture Advisor, Emeritus,  
UC Cooperative Extension

- Monitor soil moisture within the root zone and irrigate when soil begins to dry at a depth of 3-4 inches.
- Periodically apply enough water to leach salts below the plant roots (2-3 feet deep).
- Support tree limbs that have a heavy fruit load.
- Begin harvesting fruit as soon as it begins to ripen.
- Remove all fruit that is damaged or on the ground to discourage green fruit beetles and other scavengers.
- Prune out shoots killed by fire blight on pear, apple, quince and loquat, making cuts at least 12 inches below the infected tissue. Disinfect pruning shears between cuts.
- Avoid ant infestations by wrapping a strip of heavy paper around the trunk and applying a sticky barrier like Tanglefoot. Periodically wash foliage with a forceful spray of water to promote biological control of spider mites, aphids, whiteflies, scale and other insects.
- Inspect new leaves for signs of zinc and iron deficiency (yellowing between the veins) and apply micronutrient spray as needed.
- Prune out blackberry and raspberry canes that have borne fruit.
- Watch for diaprepes root weevil damage on citrus and other woody plants. To see photos of the pest and damage visit: [www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov) and enter “Diaprepes” in the search box.

## Vegetables

Vincent Lazaneo, Urban Horticulture Advisor, Emeritus,  
UC Cooperative Extension

- Make last planting of warm-season vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, corn, beans and summer squash) in July for fall harvest.
- Plant seed of cole crops (cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower) in August for winter harvest.
- Cover seeds with floating row covers to protect young plants from insects.
- Withhold water from rhubarb and artichoke and allow plants to go dormant until fall.
- To control corn earworm, apply Carbaryl (Sevin) or Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) when silk first emerges, then every three days until silk turns brown.

- Learn more about vegetable gardening at <http://vric.ucdavis.edu>.

## Landscape Trees

Robin Y. Rivet, ISA Certified Arborist/Urban Forester

- Tree leaves may appear wilted on hot afternoons, but some species naturally cup their foliage to protect from sunscald, so re-check in the morning.
- Mulching the drip lines of trees conserves moisture, but keep mulch 3-4 inches away from trunks.
- When weather is hot, dry and windy, check soil with a moisture probe to prevent overwatering.
- Avoid tree trunks when watering with a sprinkler and saturate the soil to a depth of two feet occasionally.
- Pick up and discard early summer leaf drop from native sycamores suffering from anthracnose (fungal organism that attacks developing leaves).
- Don't water oak trees during the summer as this may encourage oak root fungus.
- Conifers usually require little or no pruning, but if live branches need cutting, be sure to do it when sap flow is less active at the beginning of the dormant period.
- Summer warmth helps eucalyptus pruning cuts heal – but don't over prune.
- Never prune more than 25 percent off any tree, and do not top trees.

## FAVORITE FLOWERS

### Bulbs

Jill Fielder, [www.easytogrowbulbs.com](http://www.easytogrowbulbs.com)

- Giant white squill is a rare and unforgettable Mediterranean import that thrives in California. It is impervious to predation, and prefers sunny dry sites. Expect a dramatic, gigantic, ivory flower spike in July and August.
- Dig overgrown, crowded, spring-blooming bulbs while they are dormant and replant in new areas.
- Harvest and enjoy the garlic that you planted early last winter. Try sautéing it with fresh greens, sprinkled with grated Parmesan.

### Camellias

Sharon Lee, San Diego Camellia Society

- In July, fertilize for the third and last time for the year – to remember dates, think of St. Patrick's Day, Memorial Day, and July 4th.
- Mix a fertilizer of 1 part blood meal to 5 parts cottonseed meal. Use 1 tablespoon for a gallon-sized plant and up to 2 cups for large in-ground plants.
- Add chelated iron, and/or use a pre-mixed camellia/azalea fertilizer, following prescribed application rates. If you missed the first application, start feeding now.

NOW IS THE TIME

# Plant Profile: Grown-up Grasses

By Mary James

For decades, grass was something cows grazed and your dad mowed. But no more. Ornamental grasses have exploded on the gardening scene, catching the eyes of designers, growers and homeowners with their beauty and versatility.

No one appreciates them more – or knows them better – than California’s grass guru, John Greenlee. Nursery owner, designer and author of two award-winning books (*The American Meadow Garden*), Greenlee helped spark the ornamental grass revolution that shows no sign of ebbing.

Today, he says, more and better choices – especially for hot San Diego gardens – abound, whether adding softness to sculptural succulents, candy color to a cottage garden or a bold exclamation point in a perennial border.

Here are some of his favorites and how to use them. Look for them in independent nurseries or mail order from High Country Gardens ([www.highcountrygardens.com](http://www.highcountrygardens.com)).

## ‘Blond Ambition’ Blue Grama Grass

(*Bouteloua gracilis*)

Chartreuse flowers age to “blond” on two-foot stiff stems above tufts of fine gray-green foliage. Held like flags, the flowers seem “to hover like a cloud of insects,” Greenlee says. Short dormant period; drought tolerant.

**Uses:** Substitute for Mexican feather grass, now considered invasive; low ground cover; drifts in a meadow; lawn substitute; container specimen.



Photo: High Country Gardens

‘Blond Ambition’ Blue Grama Grass

## ‘White Cloud’ Muhly Grass

(*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

This clone of the popular purple muhly grass creates a dazzling froth of pure white flowers, as if a cloud had dropped into the garden. Four feet tall and wide with silvery gray foliage, it blooms in fall atop arching stems. Especially striking when backlit.

**Uses:** Back of the border screen; all-white garden; substitute for unruly pampas grass; dramatic mass planting.

## ‘Pink Flamingo’ Muhly Grass

This narrow upright hybrid is “really flamingo pink,” Greenlee says. “Bullet-proof” late summer-fall bloomer hoists feather-like flowers on strong green stems up to five feet tall. Heat lover; drought tolerant.

**Uses:** Any place that needs a fan of strong color; border backdrop; against heat-reflecting walls; small gardens; mass planting where backlit; tall specimen in container planting.

## Vetiver

(*Vetiveria zizanioides*)

Native to India and cultivated for its roots’ fragrant oil, this tall, non-flowering grass is prized for shiny bronzy-green leaves that “blush” red in the winter. Drought tolerant, it thrives from coast to desert. Four-six feet tall.

**Uses:** Fall color; erosion control on slopes; massed to form hedge, hide chain-link fence.

## Bamboo Muhly

(*Muhlenbergia dumosa*)

When flowers bloom in spring throughout its ferny, bright green foliage, this grass turns “the color of foam on a root beer float,” Greenlee says. Arching leaves on imposing plant four-five feet tall and wide. Tolerates bright, dry shade.

**Uses:** Specimen in border or container; softness in succulent garden or xeriscape; substitute for bamboo; underplanting for trees.

## Wright’s Dropseed

(*Sporobolus wrightii*)

This Southwest native grass boasts handsome gray-green foliage, pale pink flower plumes in summer and bold clumps three to six feet high and wide. Tolerates alkaline soil and coastal conditions.

**Uses:** Meadow focal points or en masse; pampas grass substitute

- While camellias are not water-hungry, they don't like to dry out. Water regularly to avoid bud drop during bloom season, with occasional deep watering to flush accumulated salts.
- Mulch plants to conserve water and keep the shallow roots moist, but keep the mulch at least 2 inches away from the trunk.
- Hose off aphids, and watch out for other insects. Check out organic pest solutions at your local nursery or the Master Gardener hotline.

## Geraniums (*Pelargoniums*)

Jim Zencik, San Diego Geranium Society

- Avoid unnecessary pruning but continue to remove dead, old, or damaged leaves.
- Watch for geranium rust in high humidity locales. Deadhead soon as blooms pass their peak.
- Water in the cool times of day, but avoid wetting foliage and flowers. The regal geraniums (like Martha Washingtons) will stop blooming if they dry out.
- Use a good commercial fertilizer every two weeks at one-third to one-half of the label recommendation. Gro-Power type fertilizers, with time-released nitrogen that lessens the risk of burning the plant, need only be applied once every 3-6 months. Be sure to keep plants moist when applying these products.
- A systemic insecticide will control budworm that can eventually bore into plant stems and cause rot, fungus or death. Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) can be sprayed every seven days. Follow manufacturers' recommendations for other products to provide continuous protection.
- Rotate plants to keep them well shaped, full of blooms and protect from sun damage.

## Iris

Katharina Notarianni, San Diego Iris Society

- In cooler areas, dig overcrowded clumps of iris and divide rhizomes for sharing and replanting. Since it may take two years for replanted iris to bloom, consider digging half a clump at a time to ensure some flowers next year.
- In hotter areas, wait for cooler days to divide iris, especially if you are digging Louisiana iris.
- Trim the roots of rhizomes to an inch, and the leaves to six inches. If the rhizomes are kept in a cool, dry, storage area, they can remain out of the ground for 3 weeks or more.
- Add amendments such as fertilizer, peat moss, compost, gypsum, and new soil before replanting in the same area. For new beds, rototill the soil and wait a week before planting rhizomes.
- Leave the top ¼-inch of the rhizome above the soil line when replanting to prevent rot and to allow sun and air to reach the plant.
- Water established beds to keep irises flourishing. New beds will require more water, but do not overwater.
- Some re-blooming iris flower from July to February. Vigorous plants require additional fertilizer and watering, but if they

have gone dormant from the heat, wait until September to apply fertilizer.

- Potted irises should be repotted with fresh potting soil mix.



Photo: Rachel Cobb

Orchid Display at the Botanical Building in Balboa Park.

## Orchids

Bruce Berg, President, San Diego County Orchid Society

- Give your orchids more water and fertilizer now and mist when it gets really hot. Use the "weakly/weekly" method of fertilizing (¼ of the recommended monthly amount of fertilizer once a week).
- Cymbidiums especially need extra water and fertilizer this time of year to ensure spiking in November. They also need bright, filtered light.
- Check plants for insect infestations. Add some systemic fertilizer to your watering scheme to deter them. Scale or mealy bugs are controlled by spraying with water, or wiping down effected area with q-tips soaked in alcohol.
- Come to the San Diego Orchid Society Show and Sale on July 19 and 20 at Casa del Prado in Balboa Park. Details are on the Society website at [www.sdorchids.com](http://www.sdorchids.com).

## Roses

Roger English, San Diego Rose Society

- Water at least three times a week and more often if temperatures exceed 84 degrees Fahrenheit. In very hot weather, roses lose water faster from their leaves than they can take it up from their roots, resulting in wilting.
- Deadhead summer blooms. Prune roses at an outward facing five-leaflet leaf, cutting the stem far enough down to support the next rose.
- In hot weather, roses also consume food faster, but when temperatures are above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, growth slows down so less food is needed. Follow package directions on fertilizer.
- For beautiful fall blooms, prune the upper one-third of plants in mid to late August.

# SPECIALTY PLANTS

## African Violets

Barbara Conrad, Carlsbad African Violet Society

- Be sure to disinfect pots when you transplant or change soil.
- Avoid "tight centers" by checking for excessive fertilizer or insects. Try putting a plastic bag with a small hole for air over the plant to create a greenhouse effect for several weeks if you have a problem.
- In hot weather, mist plants with very warm water and blot the centers dry.
- Check for long petioles, which indicate the plant is not getting enough light.
- Watch out for powdery mildew. Rinse affected leaves, rubbing lightly under warm running water, then pat dry. Try to provide more air circulation to prevent another outbreak.

## Begonias

Michael Ludwig, American Begonia Society,  
Margaret Lee Branch

- Inspect plants during growing season and remove spent flowers, especially on tuberous varieties.
- Repot plants as needed, increasing pot size only by about 1-inch on all sides of the root ball.
- Start cuttings from prunings and repot cuttings rooted earlier in the year.
- Check for pests and diseases regularly and treat quickly, as warm temperatures can increase problems.
- Continue feeding with high bloom fertilizer for tuberous begonias and a balanced one for other begonia types.

## Bromeliads

Andy Siekkinen, San Diego Bromeliad Society

- Continue watering by spraying throughout the summer according to the weather conditions. Make sure not to over-water the potting media, because bromeliads do not like soggy roots.
- Protect plants from sunburn by keeping them under filtered sunlight. Shade cloth or other light-permeable material is effective, and helps plants develop a nice shape and bright color.
- To keep snails and slugs away from bromeliads, remove nearby debris and spread wood ashes around it.
- Bromeliads are a prolific plant and their inflorescences last for several weeks or months. New plants can easily be made from the pups appearing along side the main plant. They are hardy and don't require much care.

## Epiphyllums

Jerry Moreau, President and Curator of Epiphyllum Collection  
Safari Park, San Diego Epiphyllum Society  
([www.sandiegoepi.org](http://www.sandiegoepi.org))

- Repot plants that are overcrowded, split in the middle, or are not thriving. Start new plants from cuttings during the warm weather, to establish new growth.
- Plants need filtered sunlight and good air circulation. Keep epiphyllums out of direct summer sun.
- Remove spent blooms and unwanted "apples" (a seed pod that forms at the base of a flower) to conserve the plant's vitality.
- Water hybrids during the hot summer months and spray or mist occasionally. Do not allow soil to dry out.
- Continue pest and disease prevention regimes. Use summer horticultural oils for scale. Bait for slugs and snails.
- Fertilize regularly for new growth.

## Ferns

Kathie Russell, San Diego Fern Society

- Summer is growing season for most ferns, so water adequately and group plants to keep up the humidity. Remember that ferns need good drainage.
- Keep removing old fronds.
- Fertilize with slow release pellets or half-strength, high-nitrogen liquid fertilizer.
- Wash off or wipe off whiteflies, aphids, thrips and scale. Remove snails and slugs. Use the least toxic methods of pest control.
- Collect and sow spores.
- Protect your plants from full sun, unless you have one of the few varieties that thrive in sunlight.

## Plumeria

Kim Schultz, Southern California Plumeria Society

- Fertilize growing plants once a month with a low nitrogen/high phosphorous fertilizer, using one tablespoon per gallon pot.
- When no moisture is present in the top two inches of a pot, water until it runs out the bottom. Never let plumerias sit in standing water and do not use saucers under pots.
- During very hot days, spray the entire plant to strengthen pot-grown plumeria stems.
- Check newly planted cuttings for roots. If the plant is not rooting, then cut off any rot and try again.
- Place nylon netting over seedpods to capture seeds when pods open.
- Place in full sun.

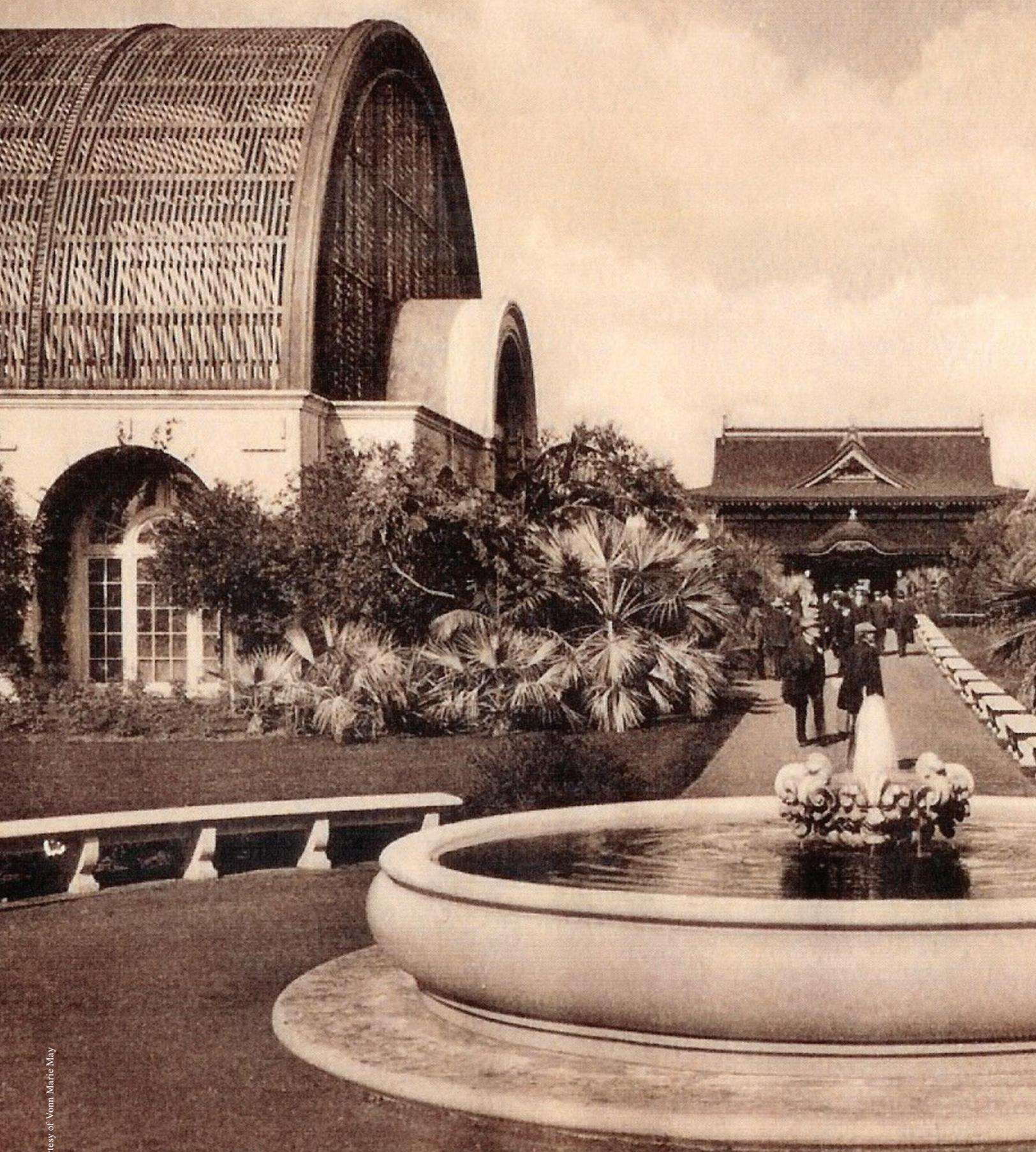


Photo: Courtesy of Yvonne Marie May

The 1916 Guidebook included this rare view to the north that shows the Botanical Building and Japanese Tea Pavilion.

## On the Eve: Part 4

# A ‘Botanical Garden Blossoms’

## Robinson’s Lath House and the Focus on San Diego’s Botanical Wealth

By Vonn Marie May

Set back from El Prado, Balboa Park’s main pedestrian walkway, the Botanical Building commands the space in which it rests. Unknowing visitors capture its visual elegance in photographs, and then move on to other interests.

Little is known about the how and why of the building’s presence or its origins. More importantly, few know that it once represented the *axis mundi* of all things botanical in San Diego.

To understand how and why requires a bit of time travel back to when the city inserted itself into celebrations planned around completion of the Panama Canal.

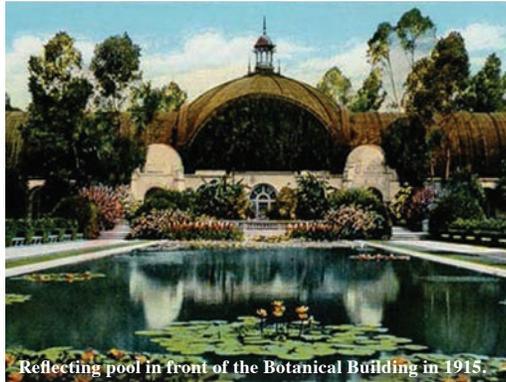
The federal government had sanctioned San Francisco as official host for the 1915 Panama *Pacific* Exposition to celebrate the Canal opening. But by 1910, San Diego secured the right to host a concurrent—auxiliary—exposition. The upstart city with its natural harbor reckoned it was the first American port-of-call north of the Canal and pressed forward, getting on with the show!

Two primary themes would emerge out of San Diego’s 1915 Panama-California Exposition: the popularization of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and its many style variations, and the promotion of horticulture, agriculture and floriculture as viable regional industries. Both themes were a perfect fit for San Diego and redefined its civic identity thereafter.

Despite immense botanical activity in neighboring Los Angeles, San Diego was awarded the opportunity to demonstrate to the world all aspects of botanical commerce. That opportunity would extend through a second year, 1916, when San Diego was allowed to include the word ‘International’ in its banner, *The 1915-1916 Panama-California International Exposition*.

### Visions of a Botanic Garden

In the late 19th and early 20th century, much of southern California participated in the sweeping introduction and adaptation of exotic (non-native) horticulture. The greening of semi-arid coastal desert lands proved to be a challenge, but it was offset by a mild climate and the discrete use of irrigation. During this period, the California Horticultural Society, the Southern California Horticultural Society, the Southern California Floral Society, and the San Diego Floral Association, to name a few



Reflecting pool in front of the Botanical Building in 1915.

Postcard courtesy of Nancy Carol Carter

robust organizations, were established. All could trace their origins to the Victorian era of global plant collection and study.

A botanical theme for the exposition was espoused by one of California’s (and San Diego’s) most noted floriculturists, Alfred D. Robinson. In historian Victoria Padilla’s book, *Southern California Gardens*, the author wrote:

*Without peer in the professional field was Alfred D. Robinson of San Diego,*

*whose Rosecroft Begonia Gardens in Point Loma were adjudged by both Liberty Hyde Bailey and David Fairchild as containing the finest begonias to be grown anywhere in the world. Founder of the San Diego Floral Association and for ten years editor of its publication, The California Garden, Robinson was one of the most active plantmen in southern California.*

It was in *California Garden* magazine that Robinson found his voice for aesthetic and civic matters. He was editor of the magazine for its first formative decade, 1907-1917, and championed the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century city beautiful movement through horticulture. His brainchild, the San Diego Floral Association, co-founded with pioneer horticulturalist Kate O. Sessions, maintained a membership of noted civic patrons as well as plant enthusiasts. Floral was essentially the first who’s who organization of civic interest, predating other citizen groups well into the 1920s.

One of Robinson’s most deeply held desires, and one he strongly editorialized for, was establishment of a permanent southern California botanical garden. As enlightened as the concept may have been, unfortunately the idea never gained traction. But with the completion of the Panama Canal and subsequent talk of expositions in California suddenly, grand-scale ideas seemed possible.

However, the vigorous momentum of exposition politics caused Robinson to capitulate quietly, change course and call for a botanical garden to be an integral part of San Diego’s exposition. As a recognized authority on civic beautification, the Chamber of Commerce involved Robinson in the early planning stages, which ensured the inclusion of his botanical garden concept, albeit temporary. Fortuitously, the term “garden” became the overriding theme for the entire exposition grounds.

Robinson envisioned—dreamed—of a permanent open-air

“lath house” botanical building as a central feature. Based on his work at Rosecroft Gardens, his nationally renowned home and nursery, he was acutely aware of the needs of certain subtropical species. He created a method of protection—a micro-climate of sorts—specifically for his precious begonias. This led him to be a leading exponent of wood lath houses for the protection of sun-sensitive plants. In *California Garden* he wrote:

*The sun shining through the lath makes a gridiron on the path. The stripes of shadow and sunlight change places every five minutes and this is why laths must run north and south, otherwise the sunlight travels down instead of across the opening. I would justify . . . that with few exceptions, the begonia family does not belong in a greenhouse. It wants filtered sunlight and temperate weather with a fair degree of moisture; it dislikes heat almost more than cold.*

## A Work of Art

A stellar team of architects, engineers and fair promoters began the process of site planning and the production of architectural renderings. Exposition lead architect Bertram Goodhue and fellow architect Carleton Winslow laid out the ground plan based on classical design principles of bi-axial symmetry. Both men were trained at premier architectural schools, Columbia University in New York and the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, respectively. Groundbreaking started in 1911 and with less than four years to design, build and plant the grounds, master landscape architect, Paul Thiene and former park superintendent of the City of Los Angeles, John G. Morley, took the reins.

As the exposition design team developed architectural sketches, the resultant design for the Botanical Building was more a work of art and venue for botanical display than a functional facility as Robinson had hoped. Regardless, from the onset it was Goodhue’s intention that the California Tower and Quadrangle, La Puente Cabrillo Bridge, Spreckels’ Organ Pavilion and the Botanical Building would be permanent icons that would live past the ephemeral exhibition in a lushly landscaped public garden.

In stark contrast to the opaque white stucco of surrounding buildings, the Botanical Building when completed was transparent with redwood lath that resembled a mesh-like fabric. The design was credited to Carleton Winslow who used a semi-dark redwood lath (running north/south) as the primary material supported by structural steel. Undoubtedly, it became a regional California expression, yet is drawn from the sensibilities of Victorian English conservatories that displayed the latest collections of exotic plants from distant lands.

Its form consisted of a 60-foot high central dome capped with a stylized cupola, and flanked by two linear barrel wings for a total length of approximately 250 feet and width of 75 feet. The entire length of the building was grounded in an ornate white stucco “blind arcade” with two domed entries and several large recessed palladian-style windows. This detail rendered the entire piece compatible with the Exposition’s architectural theme.

To further accentuate the front elevation, two reflecting pools were added to the foreground. Placid water reflecting pools were

a design device borrowed from the Moorish gardens of Spain. They afforded abstract reflections of the subject architecture and the ever-changing formation of clouds. *La Laguna de las Flores*, also called *La Laguna de Espejo* (mirror), was separated from its smaller companion *La Lagunita* by a balustrade bridge-like walk. The larger *La Laguna* measured some 200 feet long by 45 feet wide, extending to El Prado, the main pedestrian artery for the Exposition. Its beauty and serenity would seemingly beckon those perambulating by, a respite from the maddening crowds of the Isthmus and the pigeon-dominated central axis of El Prado and Explanada in the Plaza de Panama.

## Showcase for Exotics

In the overall Botanical Garden, as it became known, the Botanical Building was the central piece of an ensemble which included an adjoining glass greenhouse, reflecting pools, traditional fountains, ample seating, a large vine-covered pergola, and a Japanese Tea House, all framed by the exquisite façades of adjacent architecture. Architects often refer to the un-built areas between buildings as negative space. In the Botanical Garden, et al., the landscape components *positively* captured the imagination of fair goers.

The botanical showcase inside the building followed the Victorian impulse of “the more exotic, the better.” Plants were collected and artfully arranged by landscape superintendent Paul Thiene. Amassed from regional nurseries as early as 1912, subtropical plants were brought to the site and transplanted. Selections included a range of exotic palms, bamboos, banana trees, aralias, anthuriums, ferns, towering queen palms, philodendrons, ficus spp., and many other qualifying specimens. Hanging baskets of ferns and vines dropped from the ceiling and small songbirds were tucked away in birdcages.

There is scant pictorial evidence regarding the adjoining glass greenhouse extending from the north elevation of the Botanical Building. According to the official exposition map, it was quite large measuring approximately 120 feet long by 50 feet wide, more than half the size of the main building. The only access was through the Botanical Building. Fair visitors would saunter through the subtropical open-air exhibits then proceed into a “hothouse” sensory experience and view equatorial tropical specimens. City Parks’ superintendent John Morley noted the quantity and rapid maturity of plants in the greenhouse and suggested at the close of the exposition in 1916 that a larger greenhouse be built.

Aquatic species – water lilies, lotuses, water hyacinths, water poppies and water irises – were on display as well. An elaborate heated water system circulated through and under the building keeping a sustained tropical temperature for the showcase complex but in particular *La Laguna* and *La Lagunita* reflecting pools.

The Botanical Garden of the exposition was also intended to be the entry point to a large open expanse of land to the north that paralleled the Isthmus Zone. Comprised of model farms, orchards and citrus groves, the Little Landers Farm Exhibit and the Lipton Tea Pavilion, all were strategically designed for maximum botanical promotion.

## Criticism and Loss

In 1916, two books on the exposition were published: *The Architecture and Gardens of the San Diego Exposition* by Bertram Goodhue, and *The San Diego Garden Fair* by UC Berkeley fine arts professor Eugen Neuhaus. Goodhue's account, with contributions by Carleton Winslow, delivered enchanting historical contexts from which the architecture and gardens derived meaning. Each element was described and photographically documented.

The Neuhaus book was a detailed visual reconnaissance of those same elements with some of the best photographs ever produced. His effusive appreciation for the "floral wealth" of the exposition grounds was notable. However, when he arrived at the Botanical Building his enthusiasm came to a screeching halt, as he wrote:

*A Botanical Building in San Diego is a joke. I cannot help it. A climate which will produce Poinsettias, the tender Bignonias, the Begonia, and the Bougainvillea in such profusion outdoors surely needs no sheltered buildings to produce an array of flowers, which seemed as if confined in a hospital for observation.*

His reaction, or possibly over reaction, was an unfortunate display of ignorance as to the needs of recently introduced plants from all continents of the world. Yet his protest lives on in a very important publication. If only Robinson had been there, at the entry, to welcome him and gently explain the very reason for the Botanical Building's presence. One can only dream.

What we have inherited from the inspired dream of Englishman Alfred D. Robinson and the mastery of Bertram Goodhue, Carleton Winslow, Paul Thiene and John Morley and of course a legion of other contributors testifies to the extraordinary botanical capabilities of San Diego County and those pioneers who were captivated by its potential.

What we have also witnessed is the incremental demise

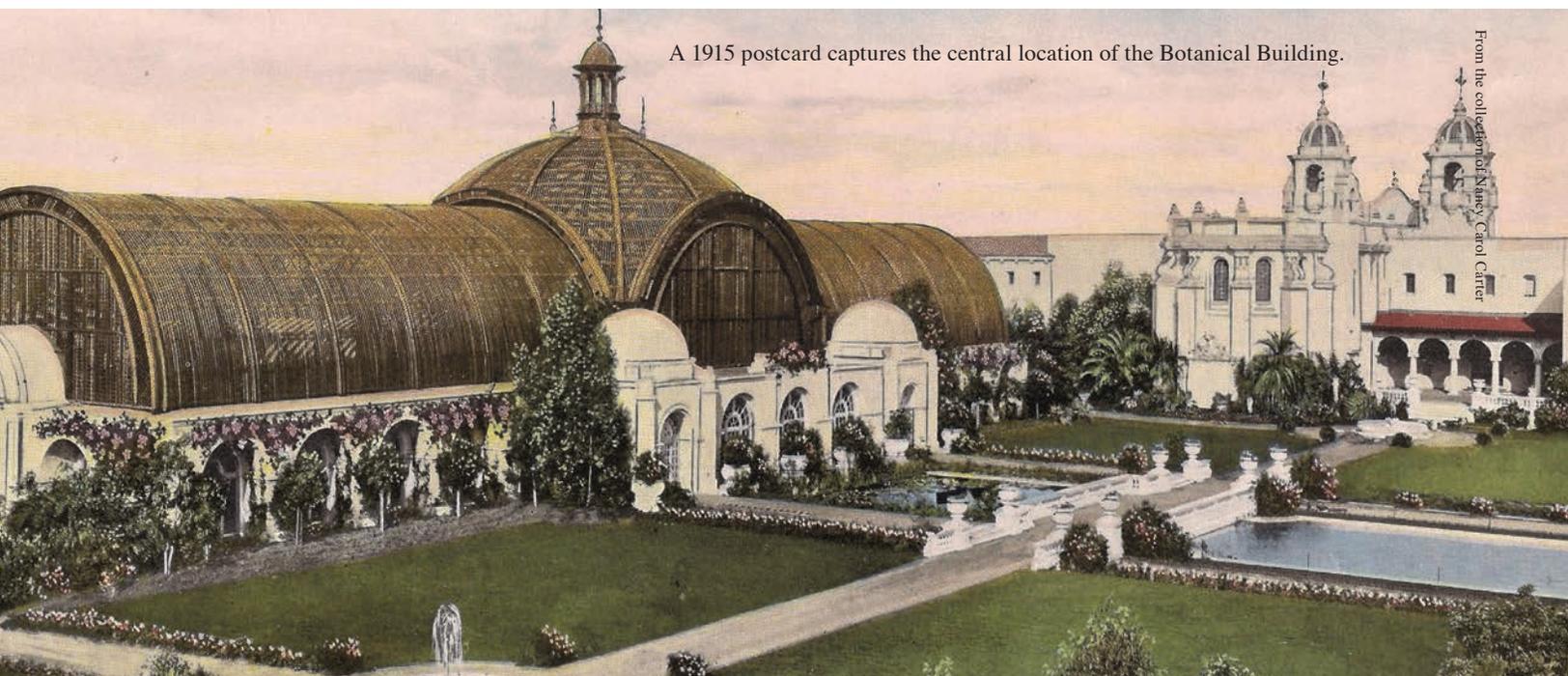
of historical artifacts, e.g., the complete removal of the glass greenhouse; the removal and limitation of the classical stucco blind arcade of the Botanical Building; the loss of the beautiful Pergola at the west end of the main walk; the loss of the Home Economy building (at the location of the Timken Museum), the reconstruction of the Food Products building, now the Casa del Prado Theater (the west elevation is anything but true to the original); and finally the loss of the Japanese Tea Pavilion.

Few know that the historic preservation movement in San Diego was born in Balboa Park. This is a park so beloved that it awakened a community toward the preservation of a defining moment in this city's history embodied in the remnants of the dream city—the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition.

*—Vonn Marie May, a native San Diegan, is a California landscape historian. She has written and consulted on histories of the Marston Garden, Mills College, UC Berkeley and many other notable landscapes around the state.*

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A 1915 postcard captures the central location of the Botanical Building.

From the collection of Nancy Carol Carter



Photo: Rachel Cobb

The Botanical Building today.

# Botanical Building: A Timeline

By Nancy Carol Carter

**September 1909** – The Panama-California Exposition Corporation formed.

**August 1911** – Alfred D. Robinson describes an “Exposition Dream” in various publications, suggesting a large lath house and glass house, surrounded by gardens, as a permanent Balboa Park feature. San Diego Floral Association and others embrace the idea enthusiastically.

**January 1915** – The Panama-California Exposition opens with “the largest lath structure in the world,” 250 feet long, 75 feet wide and 60 feet tall structure designed by architect Carleton Winslow with assistance from Frank P. Allen, Jr. and Thomas Hunter. Exposition landscaper Paul G. Thiene creates a memorable display of exotic plants in the “Lath Palace” and the glass house extension at the rear of the building.

**1917** – During World War I the Navy occupies Balboa Park. The larger pond in front of the Botanical Building is lined with cement and used to teach sailors to swim.

**1924** – Plant stock is enhanced and repairs are made to the Botanical Building.

**1935** – Visitors to the California Pacific International Exposition again enjoy displays of exotic plants in the lath structure now identified as the “Botanical Building.”

**1942** – Balboa Park becomes the Navy’s Camp Kidd during World War II. The larger pond in front of the Botanical Building is

increased in depth and resurfaced for use as a rehabilitation pool by patients recovering in Park hospital facilities. The Botanical Building deteriorates and is vandalized.

**1944** – The City of San Diego ponders the demolition of the Botanical Building when the Navy leaves Balboa Park.

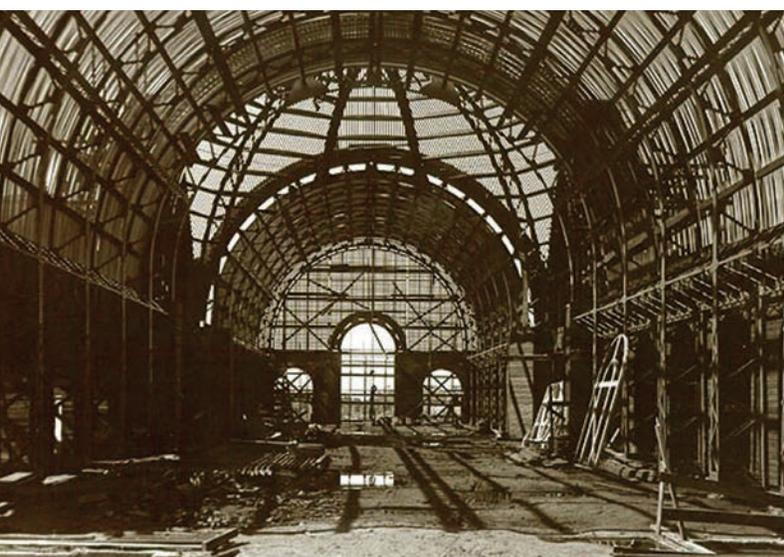
**1946** – The Navy pays to restore Balboa Park buildings to their pre-war condition. Claiming no use of the Botanical Building, no funds for its restoration are provided. Underfunded attempts to restore the Botanical Building ponds are made and they are briefly opened for fly-fishing casting practice.

**1947** – Plans for the restoration of the Botanical Building are drawn up but not implemented.

**1949** – The Botanical Building is condemned as an unsafe structure and closed.

**May 1955** – Without attribution, a San Diego neighborhood newspaper misstates the history of the Botanical Building, calling it a former Santa Fe train station. The error enters local lore and is reprinted as fact for years to come. The same article describes the closed, dilapidated and vandalized Botanical Building an eyesore, although surviving plants in the building are still tended by park staff who hope the building will be saved.

**March 1959** – Following 10 years of closure, the Botanical Building reopens after a major renovation that changes the historic look of the building. The arched stucco arcades extending



Construction of the Botanical Building, circa 1914.



Sailors learning to swim in World War I-era in Botanical Building pond.

from each side of the entrance and the mullioned windows at the entrance are removed. The glass house extending from the back of the building demolished. The *San Diego Union* repeats the Santa Fe rail station myth in its story on the reopening. The plant collection is restored and enhanced with public donations over the next two years.

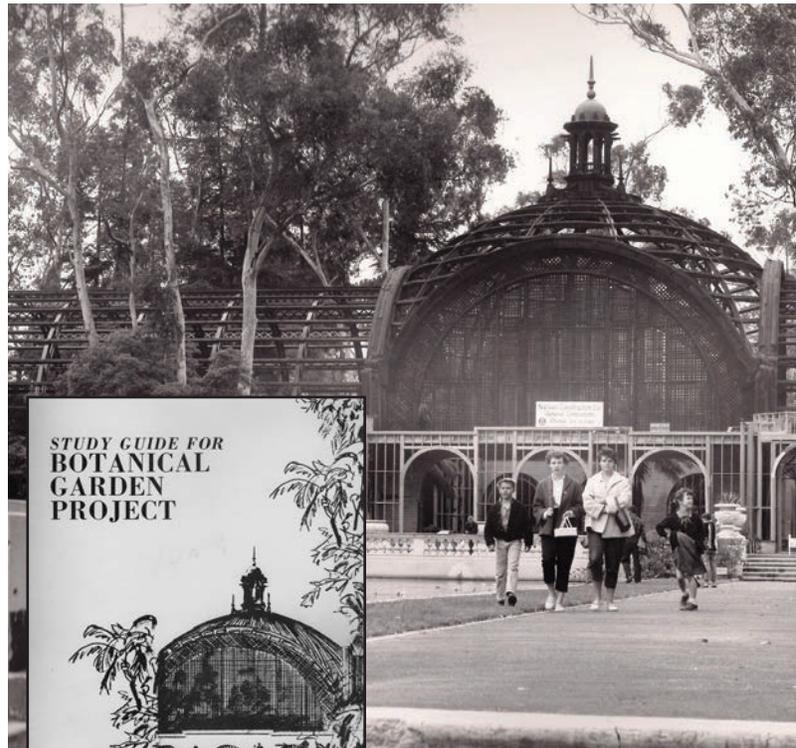
**1962** – A botany study garden is established in one corner of the Botanical Building and the *Botanical Garden Project Study Guide* is published by the San Diego County Department of Education.

**1964** – Robert M. Golden renovates the bridge balustrade dividing the two ponds in front of the Botanical Building.

**1966** – Drainage and pathways within the Botanical Building are improved without completely closing off public access.

**1967** – The Committee of 100 is established with a dedication to the “preservation of Balboa Park’s Spanish Colonial architecture.” Botanical Building plants are estimated to have a value of \$55,470. The *San Diego Union* refines the story of the Botanical Building as a former railway station by reporting that the steel arch supports used in the construction had originally been fabricated for a railway station.

**August 1972** – The Alfred D. Robinson Branch of the American Begonia Society celebrates its 30th anniversary by dedicating a permanent Robinson Begonia Garden at the east end of the Botanical Building.



Botanical Building under construction in the late 1950s

**February 1975** – A Balboa Park nursery supervisor perpetuates a myth by telling a newspaper reporter that the Botanical Building “originally was supposed to be a station where trains turned around.”

**December 1986** – The Botanical Building is decked out with a display of massed poinsettia plants by City Beautiful of San Diego, establishing a cherished annual tradition.

**February 1993** – A two-month closing of the Botanical Building for renovations to its metal framework is announced. When the closing extends to more than one year, unsubstantiated rumors of a Botanical Building demolition sweep through San Diego. The plant collection numbers 1,200.

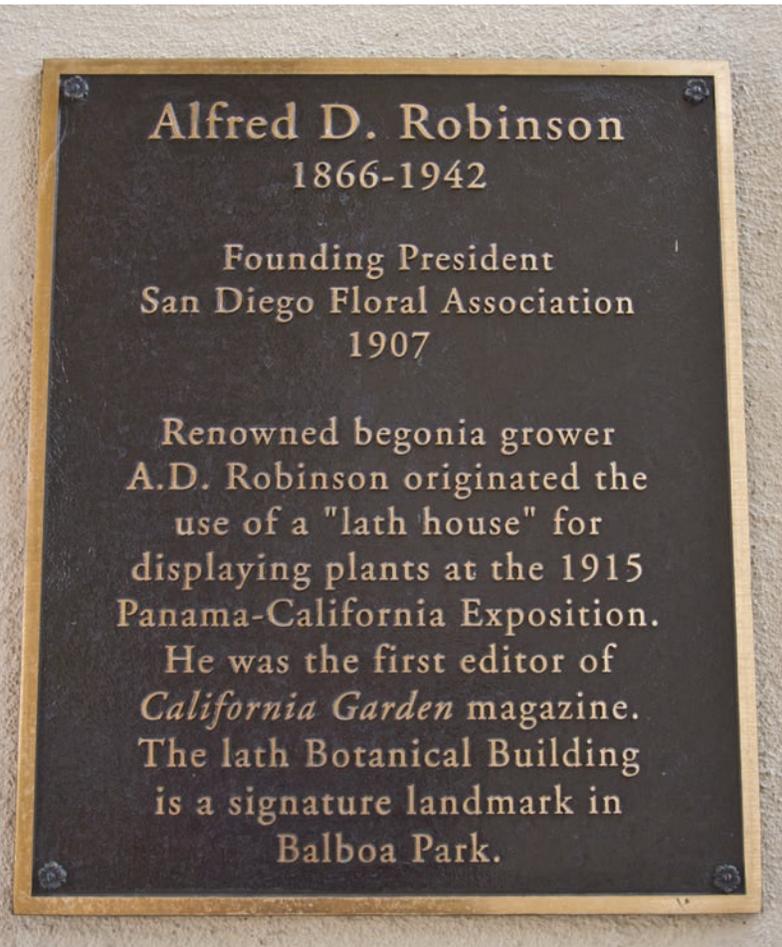
**November 1994** – A Grand Opening of the Botanical Building is celebrated after an unexpectedly long period of renovation.

**1995** – A new bio-filtration system using donated labor and materials is installed in the ponds (now officially designated the Upper and Lower Lily Ponds) in front of the Botanical Building.

**February 1997** – A full inventory list of Botanical Building plants is compiled by park staff.

**1999** – Balboa Park, including the Botanical Building, gets a new advocate when the Friends of Balboa Park is established with the mission to “preserve Balboa Park’s legacy for future generations through park-wide projects.”

**September 2001** – San Diego Park and Recreation Department closes the Botanical Building for a major renovation. Structural steel will be reinforced and 12 miles of redwood lath will be replaced. Some of the buildings 2,100 plants can be protected



during construction, but the rarest plants are removed to the Balboa Park nursery.

**May 2002** – A Grand Reopening Celebration of the newly renovated Botanical Building is held.

**April 2003** – San Diego Floral Association petitions the City of San Diego to rename the Botanical Building in honor of Alfred D. Robinson, a founder and first president of the Association (1907), the founding editor of *California Garden* magazine (1909) and the inspiration for a lath garden structure in Balboa Park.

**August 2003** – San Diego Floral Association’s effort to rename the Botanical Building is rebuffed in a Park and Recreation Department letter stating that it would be inappropriate to single out Alfred D. Robinson from the many San Diegans whose dreams “became a reality in the 1915 Panama-California Exposition.”

**2004** – Balboa Park horticulturist Kathy Puplava, with the support of City Beautiful of San Diego, initiates a process to gain museum accreditation for the Botanical Building. Accreditation by the American Association of Museums is expected to raise the profile of the Botanical Building as a destination and open new funding streams. City Beautiful begins the many steps of the Museum Accreditation Program (MAP).

**April 2005** – San Diego Floral Association installs a bronze plaque inside Botanical Building. It reads: “In Memoriam | Alfred D. Robinson | 1866-1942 | Founding president of the San Diego Floral Association, 1907 | Renowned begonia grower A. D. Robinson originated the use of a lath house for display of plants at the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. He was the first editor of *California Garden Magazine* (published continuously since 1909). The lath Botanical Building, a signature landmark in Balboa Park, continues to showcase exotic and seasonal plants.”

**November 2006** – A Museum Accreditation Program (MAP) surveyor visits the Botanical Building to make recommendations on preparing the accreditation application.

**2007** – The mission of the Botanical Building is formalized for the MAP museum accreditation application. With a collection of 2,000 plants, the mission is: “To conserve and preserve historic resources and living collections in a public garden.”

**Spring 2009** – The Easter Lily Display reaches a milestone with the 50<sup>th</sup> annual installation in the Botanical Building.

**2009** – City Beautiful relinquishes its non-profit status and with memorandums of understanding transfers two Botanical Building endeavors to Friends of Balboa Park: funding and responsibility for the annual Poinsettia Display and the MAP accreditation application process.

**Spring 2010** – Friends of Balboa Park, in partnership with the Park and Recreation Department, affirms its commitment to pursue museum accreditation for the Botanical Building.

**2011** – The Balboa Park Conservancy is incorporated with the mission “To serve as a steward of Balboa Park by preserving and enhancing its natural beauty, historic character, and community orientation for the benefit of future generations.”

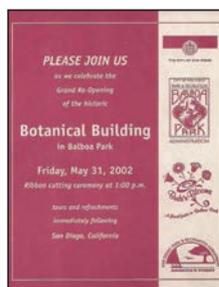


Poinsettia displays are an annual holiday event in the Botanical Building.



**December 2011** – The Poinsettia Display in the Botanical Building celebrates a silver anniversary—25 years of annual Christmas flowers.

**August 2012** – San Diego is shocked by vandalism and damage to the Botanical Building’s large lily pond when social media promotion draws an unruly crowd of up to 2,000 into the park for a midnight water fight. A public appeal raises thousands of dollars to repair and improve the pond and replace the lily planting boxes.



**2013** – The Balboa Park Conservancy announces plans to raise \$3 million to renovate the Botanical Building as its inaugural capital project in Balboa Park.



One of the most popular seasonal displays showcases cymbidium orchids.

# Growing Possibilities

Plants inside the Botanical Building today inspire gardeners, students and visitors

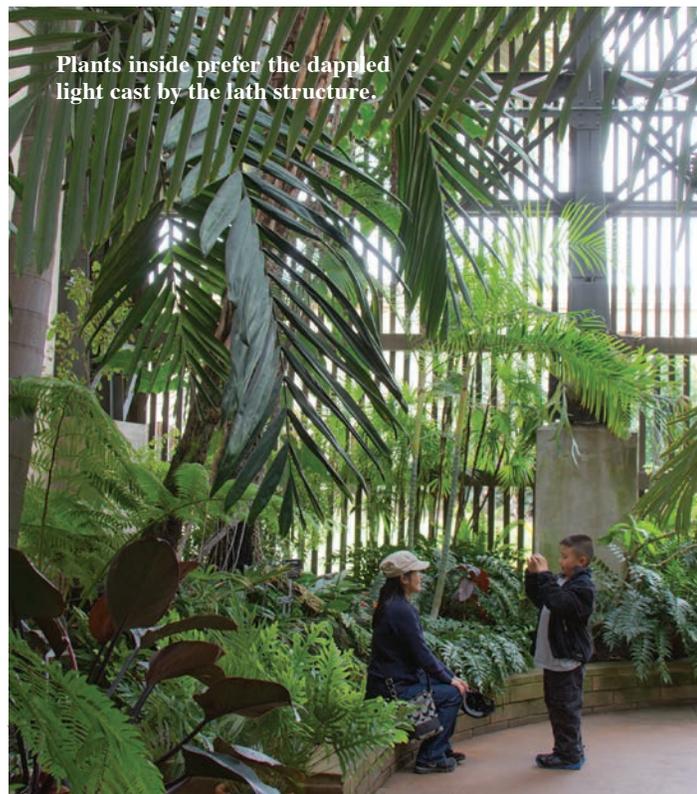
Story by Mary James, Photos by Rachel Cobb

One hundred years after its opening for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, the Botanical Building in Balboa Park remains on a mission: To demonstrate San Diego's remarkable climate for horticulture via a collection of exotic plants that thrive here.

Like Exposition crowds of yesteryear, visitors today to the redwood lath and steel structure at the far edge of the Lily Pond are wowed by the collection of unusual, rare and endangered specimen plants, some many decades old. Add the delights of educational exhibits and seasonal displays ranging from Easter lilies to Christmas poinsettias, and it's easy to see why the Botanical Building is still a popular attraction for residents as well.

Unlike others within the park, plants housed under the building's dome prefer dappled light cast by the lath structure and towering palms that emulates the "understory" of tropical forests. More than 1,200 species from some 40 families thrive in this setting, ranging from true tropicals like heliconias and anthuriums to temperate climate shade-lovers like camellias, coral bells and begonias.

Earlier this year, Ansen Caires, Balboa Park nursery supervisor, walked visitors around the 13,500-hundred-square-foot enclosure, as his staff busily groomed exhibits on view by the public, including many students, everyday but Thursdays. Another chore is watering, still done by hand.



Plants inside prefer the dappled light cast by the lath structure.



Cycads in the Botanical Building's collections are favorites with collectors and school children.

The evolution of displays in the building is only loosely chronicled. A popular feature of both the 1915 and 1935 expositions, the building was used by the military during World War II, then locked and abandoned in 1945. Plants that survived did so without care, Caires says, while features such as an attached glasshouse were removed or perished from neglect.

In 1959, the building was reopened after a major renovation renewed the structure and focused exhibits on tropical and semi-tropical plants hardy through San Diego seasons. (Since the lath is open, the building is not climate controlled and experiences daily temperature fluctuations.) Thirty-seven years later, the building closed for two years while the lath was refurbished and plantings were updated. (More renovations are planned, see Page 21.)

"We've always walked a line between the aesthetic and educational," Caires says. "We have a fantastic collection of plants that we hope gets people interested in horticulture and shows them some of what we can grow in San Diego. Signs provide nuggets of information about plant groups, as well as specific plants."

"We also do a mix of permanent plants, seasonal exhibits and filler plants for color and interest," he continues. "My motto is always, 'Make it pretty.'"

Step through the building's double doors and turn left to view a few of the plants that date back to the mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the *Dracaena* bed are two – a New Zealand tree fern and the rare Mexico-native pacaya palm (*Chamaedorea tepejilote*), both residents of the building for more than three decades. Nearby is a Hawaiian palm (*Pritchardia hillebrandii*), now at risk because of habitat destruction.

Skirting them and the bed across the walkway are ferns that thrive in these low-light conditions, including a 6-foot-tall bird's nest fern now 20 years old. "It's really hard to do flowers in this part of the building," Caires points out.

Nestled among the ferns is a visitor favorite, the showy red-flowered 'Freddie' begonia. More begonias, a mix of rex, tuberous and cane varieties, fill a bed at the other end of the building along the south wall. All harken back to Exposition days and the building's major proponent, Alfred D. Robinson, who also was a passionate begonia collector and grower.

Beds against the building's east wall are shadowed by adjacent buildings and tall trees. Plants residing here answer "yes" to Caires' question, "Can it grow in the dark?" Among them is a climbing fern using a "living totem," the trunk of a demised palm, to rise toward light. Look carefully around the building to spot a half dozen other totems hoisting light-hungry plants skyward.

Another attention grabber nearby is a clumping sugar palm from Taiwan (*Arenga engleri*). "When it flowers," Caires says, "the scent is like Tang. Visitors don't expect that fragrance to be coming from a palm."

Tucked in the building's northeast corner is the first of several educational exhibits - a selection of plants important economically in tropical countries. Among them are coffee and banana, and spices like ginger, cardamom and allspice. "Kids really like this section," says Caires, who may move this collection to a brighter spot in the building.

Visiting school children also are drawn to the building's cycads because of their history reaching back to the dinosaur era. Adult fans of these pricy plants marvel at rare specimens, 75 to 150-years old, some of which aren't collected and sold any longer. Among them is an *Encephalartos villosus* from South Africa and the *Dioon* cycad native to Mexico and Central America.

Nearby is a scented garden where school children scratch and

#### A collection of staghorn ferns is mounted on one wall.



A scented garden is among the building's educational displays.

sniff fragrant pelargoniums, mint and other herbs, and perfume-favorite perennials like lavender. Kids also can't resist the carnivorous plant bog, with bug-eating denizens from around the world, including a tropical pitcher plant (*Nepenthes*) that drowns prey in fluid collected in its tubular flowers.

While standing here, look skyward to view another rarity clinging to the roof. The giant dutchman's pipevine (*Aristolochia gigantea*) bears huge heart-shaped flowers in summer. "People think they look like bats," Caires says.

Another oddity nearby is the 20-year-old *Ficus auriculata* or Roxburgh fig. It bears fruit clusters on its trunk, a process known as cauliflory.

This section of the building is home to many seasonal displays, including one of cymbidium orchids that is always a crowd pleaser. Caires is hoping to revive a once annual chrysanthemum showcase and is mulling a Halloween festival of black-flowered and foliage plants.

Light brightens in the west end of the building, where a greater abundance of flowering plants thrive, ranging from calla lilies, anthuriums, and ginger lilies (*Hedychium*) to big-leaved begonias, heliconias, pineapples and a few "volunteer" impatiens. A variety of tillandsias, draped across driftwood, are displayed



This tall bird's nest fern is more than 20 years old.

here too, as are mounted staghorn ferns that march across the building's west wall.

In this area two of the oldest palms, both at least 50 years old. One is a *Phoenix robusta* native to India and a source of date sugar and a multi-trunk variegated ladyfinger palm (*Rhapis excels*) very popular in Japan.

Also planted here is a *Deppea splendens* 'Augusten', named for the botanist who first collected it in Mexico in 1972 from a grove that subsequently fell to development. A nearby fishtail palm climbs more than 70 feet to almost brush the ceiling with its fronds.

Throughout the building are a number of plants familiar to local gardeners who have seen them thrive outdoors in tropical gardens or indoors as houseplants. Some like the yellow-flowered clivia and variegated clown fig were considered rare when planted here but subsequently moved into commerce and home gardens.

Caires strives to keep the collection fresh, editing to keep rampant growers in check, adding new plants and reviving others in the Balboa Park Nursery, also the source of seasonal plants. "We're always building on our history, reflecting our heritage as we go forward," he says.

## 'Rehabilitation and Restoration' Ahead for the Botanical Building Balboa Park Conservancy Picks Iconic Structure for Its Inaugural Capital Project

In searching for its first major project, the Balboa Park Conservancy did not have to look further than the aging lath of the Botanical Building. Formed in 2010, the Balboa Park Conservancy is a non-profit organization responsible for raising funds, developing public-private partnerships and collaborating with Balboa Park stakeholders to implement capital projects and address deferred maintenance throughout the Park.

The Conservancy is a partner of the City of San Diego which exercises ultimate control over Balboa Park. It has agreed in its work to be guided by the current Balboa Park Master Plan and Precise Plan. The Conservancy aims to preserve Balboa Park as a place for residents and visitors to enjoy safely and freely.

After wide consultation, the Conservancy announced in 2013 that its inaugural capital project in Balboa Park will be the rehabilitation and restoration of the Botanical Building.

The Conservancy noted that years of severe constraints in public funding have impacted the building's appearance and infrastructure.

The Botanical Building is in "Poor" condition, according to the Facility Condition Index, a benchmark used to compare the relative condition of public facilities. Additionally, past work on the Botanical Building has altered the original appearance and features of the 1915 structure.

To bring the Botanical Building back to its original splendor and enhance its place as a centerpiece within Balboa Park, the Conservancy has launched a \$3 million fundraising campaign.

*—This article was sourced from the Balboa Park Conservancy Website and contains direct quotations from the information posted at [www.balboapark.org/conservancy](http://www.balboapark.org/conservancy).*

# Meet Alfred D. Robinson

## The Creator of Rosecroft and 'Lath House Father' Spurred City-wide Beautification

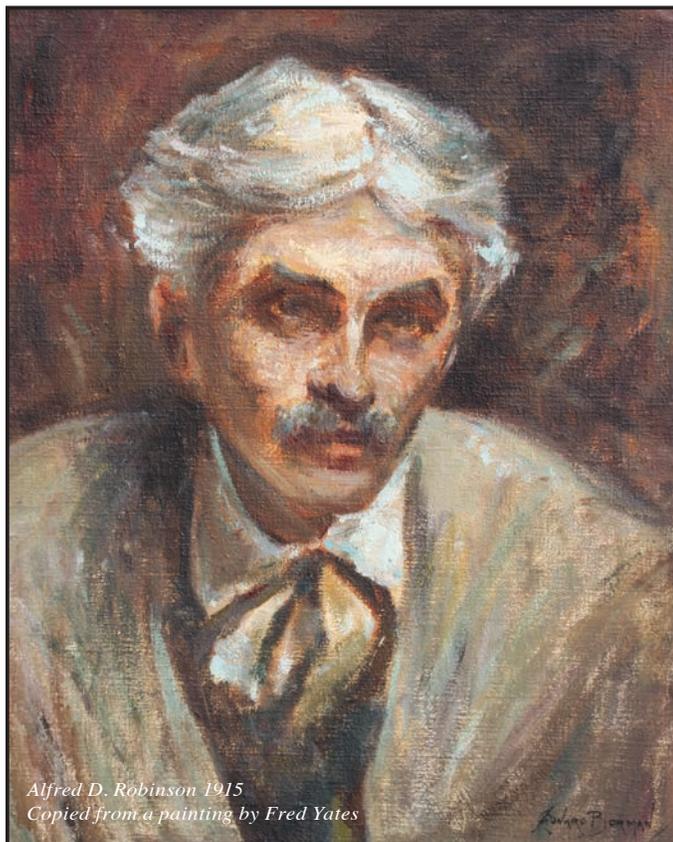
By Nancy Carol Carter

When Alfred D. Robinson settled in San Diego, he was far from his origins in the east of England. He was born into a long line of Robinsons in the small market town of Watton, Norfolk, in 1866. He was the fifth of 10 children. The town was pre-Roman and Robinson was christened in a church dating from the 13th century. His father was a solicitor who also served as the Clerk for County Magistrates and as Clerk to the Commissioner of Taxes.

At age 14, Robinson was a boarding student at the Bedford Country School in Kempston, near his family home. The length of his formal education at this private school or elsewhere is unclear. One source reports that Robinson studied for the ministry, but was drawn to the United States by romantic notions of cattle ranching in the American west. Passenger records show him arriving in New York from Liverpool in March 1894 at age 28. He may, however, have first come in 1888. He gave this date for his emigration on a later passport application. Quickly disenchanted with cowboy life, Robinson made his way to Santa Ana, California. He was naturalized as a United States citizen in Orange County on August 27, 1894.

In 1895 Robinson married Marion James Duncan and claimed a place in San Francisco society on the coattails of Marian's financially successful father and his wife Charlotte. Marion's mother died, leaving the widower Hillarion Duncan to share his home near Golden Gate Park in San Francisco with daughter Marion and son-in-law Alfred D. Robinson. In 1901, Marion's father also died. His will named her as the sole heir of his estate. Late in that year she gave birth to the Robinson's first child, Larona.

The Robinsons decided to move to San Diego after attending a series of lectures by Katherine Tingley who was in San Francisco to raise money and to find colonists for her Point Loma utopian Theosophical Society settlement. Marion Robinson made a generous donation to name a Lomaland building after her parents.



### Family Tragedies and a New Home

In October 1902, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Mr. and Mrs. Alfred D. Robinson had left for their new home, Santosa del Mar, on Point Loma. In accordance with Theosophical mandate, they enrolled the infant Larona in Lomaland's Raja Yoga School. The children lived in and were permitted minimal contact with their parents.

When Robinson received word that his father was ill, he and Marion traveled to England in 1905. They also toured Spain and Switzerland, and spent a month in both Nice and Paris. The trip was cut short when the Robinsons learned from friends that their daughter was unhappy and unwell. Upon their return,

a frail and decidedly undereducated Larona was removed from the boarding school. When she subsequently died at age nine, Robinson was full of remorse for abandoning the care of his child to the Theosophists. Ties with Madam Tingley were broken and Robinson wrote a poignant memoir of his daughter.

A second daughter, Charlotte, was born in 1908. A few years later, the Robinsons hired architect Emmor Brooke Weaver to plan a new home for them. Although best known for his Prairie-inspired redwood craftsman houses, the Robinsons asked Weaver for a design inspired by their visit to the Mediterranean coast. Weaver obliged with an elegantly formal Italian Renaissance villa, completed in 1912 and named Rosecroft.

The Robinsons had gardened avidly since arriving in San Diego and eagerly began decorating their home and landscaping the surrounding 10 acres. After just six years, however, Marion died. In 1918, the 51 year-old Robinson was left to raise nine-year old Charlotte on his own. Four years later, Robinson married Charlotte's governess and fathered five more children. Stately Rosecroft was revitalized from a quiet place of mourning to a noisy and lively playground for Robinson's second family. Annie

Robinson shared her husband's interest in horticulture and became a solid partner in the begonia business established at the estate.

## Rosecroft Begonia Gardens

From the date of his marriage to an heiress, Alfred D. Robinson did not work in a conventional job. Yet, he was enterprising and busy throughout his life and generated some revenue from his cherished avocations of gardening and raising exotic chickens. San Diego's climate offered him an ideal workshop. Roses initially were a strong interest, and then dahlias became a favorite. He eventually gravitated to the culture and breeding of begonias, an endeavor that put Rosecroft on the floriculture map and earned Alfred D. Robinson his place in horticulture history.

Robinson had the time, patience and scientific aptitude to perfect the growing of superlative begonias. He found that a lath house filled with greenery made an ideal home for these plants. On the grounds of his estate, he built a huge lath house covering thousands of square feet. It was an outdoor entertainment and living space, as well as his botanical laboratory. As a sideline, his many published writings promoting the use of lath houses earned him the title "father of the lath house." He is still quoted today on the subject.

Robinson developed more than 100 new begonia hybrids. This work, along with his writing and speaking, built a national and international reputation. It was his suggestion that transformed a California begonia group into the American Begonia Society (which still awards a medal in Robinson's name). The Robinsons further spread the name of Rosecroft Begonia Gardens by sending out attractive sales catalogs and occasionally advertising nationally.

He traded knowledge and plant specimens with a wide network of growers. Famous horticulturalists visiting San Diego always found their way to Rosecroft, sometimes under escort by nursery owner Kate O. Sessions, a great friend of the Robinson family. She took plant explorer and United States Department of Agriculture official David Fairchild there in 1919. He had viewed plants the world over, but called the begonias at Rosecroft "the loveliest things" he had ever seen and the "finest begonias grown anywhere in the world."

## Founding Father

Robinson devoted time and money to the community of San Diego. He was at the Chamber of Commerce meeting when the idea of creating a committee to encourage civic beautification was aired. Robinson worried that a committee would be ineffective and suggested an entirely separate organization.

Thus, in 1907, he became one of the founders of the San Diego Floral Association and its first president. Two years later when the organization decided to start a magazine to further its mission of horticultural education, Robinson became the founding editor of *California Garden*. Its early volumes carry the unmistakable flavor of his humor and inimitable writing style.

Quietly diligent and wryly good-natured in his work for the Floral Association, Robinson led the new organization into what today would be called landscape preservation and environmental activism. The Floral Association attracted a large membership and became a force within the community. At the same time, he kept the educational mission front and center, helping new and longer-term San Diegans learn about gardening and the joys of beautifying their city by growing flowers and trees around their homes and in public spaces.

Robinson involved the Floral Association in planning for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition at Balboa Park with the aim of adding dignity, beauty and a green flair to San Diego's big coming out party. Robinson's editorial on his "exposition dream" of a large lath house to showcase the region's horticulture is credited with inspiring the Exposition's domed Botanical Building that still stands in Balboa Park.

Alfred D. Robinson was modest and self-effacing, but his volunteerism laid the groundwork and set an example that has propelled both the Floral Association and *California Garden* into their second century of existence. At Rosecroft, Robinson watched his children grow, bred begonias and happily perfected his gardens until age 75. He died in 1942.

*- Nancy Carol Carter is a San Diego Floral Association volunteer with a special interest in horticultural history. She also is associate editor of this magazine. A version of this biographical profile of A. D. Robinson was published in 2012.*

The Robinson family estate, Rosecroft, is a private residence today. The lath house Alfred Robinson built there is no longer standing.



# Making the Case

## Alfred D. Robinson on Lath Houses for San Diego Gardens

By Lee Somerville

Imagine entertaining friends on hot, dry San Diego afternoons in a shady outdoor sanctuary, lush with ferns and greenery. This was the vision that Alfred D. Robinson, one of the founders of the San Diego Floral Association, shared with early readers of *California Garden* in his regular column, “The Lath House.” From 1910 until the late 1920s, Robinson entertained and educated his readers, in his own inimitable style, on the advantages of the lath house, offering detailed instructions for home construction, maintenance, and use.

The concept of outdoor rooms, whether verandahs, sleeping porches, or garden areas, had become nationally popular during the early Arts and Crafts movement, when home architecture had undergone a dramatic shift, softening the barriers between the inside and outside of the home. But outdoor rooms did not necessarily provide shade for plants and people, especially in developing urban communities like San Diego, where newly-planted trees had not yet reached maturity. The lath house, constructed with inch-wide laths spaced one lath width apart, provided filtered shade and a light breeze that made it particularly suited for starting seedlings, growing shade-loving plants and even entertaining outdoors.

Robinson’s own interest had been piqued after a visit to Henry Huntington’s San Moreno ranch where a 350 foot-long lath house was home to thousands of healthy shade-loving flowers, trees, and shrubs. As a home gardener and new owner of Rosecroft, a 10-acre estate high above the canyons of Point Loma, Robinson immediately saw the potential of the lath house, which would provide shade and humidity for his new hobby (eventually a successful business) of propagating and hybridizing begonias.

### How to Build a Lath House

In February 1910, Robinson, who was editor of *California Garden*, published the first “Lath House” column, entitled “Get a Lath House.” He urged homeowners to invest in a “modest building costing less than \$20” that “can raise salad and fern for the table, or be a windbreak and shade for the baby, and . . . a charming afternoon tea resort.”

Robinson further expounded on the delightful earthy smell of the lath house with its “atmosphere of the woods and indigenous charm of native species.” He did not specify size, but in later writings, he indicated that a 20-by-20-foot area would be sufficient. He suggested a raised roof in the center of the lath house to allow for inclusion of taller plants such as palms.

The column apparently resulted in a host of queries, and the March issue of *California Garden* contained a more detailed description of lath house structure and use. He recommended



An old lath house is integrated into a modern Japanese-style garden in Point Loma.

redwood posts as the structural support of the building as they resisted rot, and an inside height of at least 10 feet for large plants. “The laths should be one width apart except on the side of the prevailing wind where a solid wall is recommended. Importantly, the overhead laths should run north to south to keep the shade moving alternately . . . The sun shines through the overhead laths, making a gridiron as it moves on its path. The stripes of shadow and sunlight change places every five minutes, providing . . . filtered sunlight and temperate weather with a fair degree of moisture.” He suggested using palm leaves or even canvas on the roof if the interior needed more shade.

For what to grow in the lath house, he recommended, at least for a start, ferns including varieties of *Nephrolepis*, *Woodwardia* and staghorns, as well as begonias and violets. Leaf mold (which was in plentiful supply in the woods around Julian) for the beds, plenty of moisture, and hanging baskets would create a natural effect. For the floor, crushed rock or tamped sand would work, but a cement floor would be ideal and last the longest. Frequent watering would ensure that the interior remained humid.

In June 1911, Robinson’s wife, Marion, wrote the lath house column “from a feminine standpoint,” suggesting suitable furniture for the “summer parlor,” which was used extensively at Rosecroft for family and visitors. Old maple chairs, rescued from the attic and painted a dull green worked well in her estimation, although bamboo furniture was more substantial, albeit more costly. A green-painted redwood table would complete the seating area, which should be fragrant with bergamot, mint, rosemary and jasmines.

## Evolving Ideas

San Diego Floral Association members eagerly joined the lath house fever, building their own in many shapes and sizes and reporting on their successes in *California Garden*. In the meantime, Robinson's enthusiasm and leadership had resulted in the development and eventual construction of the iconic Botanical Building in Balboa Park, one of the largest lath houses in the country, and a main attraction of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition.

Robinson continued his lath house column until 1926, ending with a six-part series that reviewed every aspect of lath house design and structure. He admitted that his ideas had evolved over the years. For example, he now realized that the direction and spacing of the roof laths was not as important as he had originally thought, and that in fact, certain varieties of begonias could be successfully grown outside. Robinson still believed that the lath house was a useful garden addition, but he recognized that more options were available to San Diego gardeners than in the early years of the 20th century.

## Rosecroft and Its Begonias

In the meantime, however, Rosecroft, its gardens, begonias and lath house flourished and thrived. Open to the public for two days of the week in August and September, it also was the favored location for the annual August meeting of the San Diego Floral Association, with 300-500 members strolling through the lath house and gardens each year. As Eloise Roorbach described in August 1922, "beneath the latticed roof of this famous lath house hovered the very spirit of the woodlands, the still cool refreshing greenness, dappled with gorgeous color so grateful to soul and body, so inspiring to poet or artist." Roorbach reported that the lath house was an 80-foot-square building, about 16 feet high with pathways leading in all directions. There were more than 10,000 plants including 200 varieties of begonias. "The lath house has given Californians an opportunity to enjoy a whole range of plants which until recently has been thought to be out of their power to grow. Mr. Robinson must be given credit for his work in lath house science. He has done the patient and expensive experiments necessary to determine the scope, power and limitations of this picturesque form of house, and has at all times given the public the benefit of his experiments."

At the August 1923 visit, Kate Sessions enthused: "never has this display been so fine; the tree-like begonias are taller, the low, fibrous varieties more bushy, their inflorescence more bountiful, the hanging basket, tuberous begonias more wonderful, and in greater quantity and variety of shape and color, the Rex begonias as their name implies, more magnificent, in size, color, variety, and vigor than ever before."

Robinson continued to be an enthusiastic gardener until his death in 1942 at the age of 75. While his achievements live on in the archives of *California Garden*, the home lath houses that he so strongly promoted have for the most part disappeared, casualties of age, weather and progress. The Marston House lath house was replicated in 1996 on its original site; its barrel roof and lath sides serve as a visual reminder of its original size and function.

But Robinson's most visible achievement is the enormous

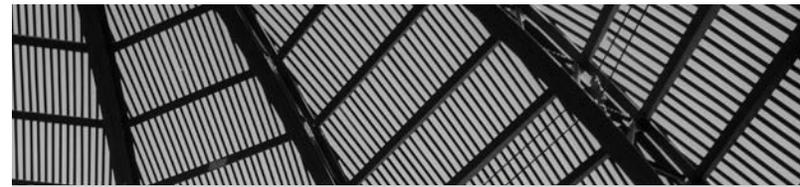
lath house, now known as the Botanical Building, in San Diego's Balboa Park. Without Robinson's passion and determination, this building would probably never have existed. Today he is remembered with a plaque that hangs in the entrance. He would be pleased that his vision has endured.

—Lee Somerville is a cultural landscape historian and gardener. She is the author of "Vintage Wisconsin Gardens: a History of Home Gardening."

## Further Reading:

*California Garden: Centennial Compilation 1909-2010*.  
San Diego: San Diego Floral Association, 2009.

*California Garden*, 1910, 1911, 1922, 1923



## San Diego Lath Houses Introduced to American Gardeners in 1922

San Diego's gardens "fairly dazzle the eye and certainly astonish the visitors," an article entitled "Tempering The Sunshine" reported in the 1922 issue of the nationally circulated *Garden Magazine*. The author was Eloise Roorbach, an artist, garden writer and architectural critic who captured early San Diego garden history.

Roorbach noted that, for added variety, Southern California gardeners were beginning to focus on plants that preferred shade and a cooler atmosphere, creating interest in the lath house. She found all shapes and sizes of lath houses in San Diego. Even a lath lean-to against a house offered a pleasant outdoor dining room, she wrote, but ill-designed lath structures could be unattractive unless "redeemed" with a covering of vines.

The article describes a large Point Loma lath house in the shape of a Greek cross. Each wing had a special soil for growing different plants. Roorbach offered special praise for the architect-designed lath house at Rosecroft, home of Alfred D. Robinson. It was built as a huge square with a raised dome at the center. Chairs, tables and hammocks were gathered under the dome. She described a dense planting of ferns, wisteria, hanging baskets and orchids, as well as 84 varieties of fibrous-rooted begonias and 32 of the Rex variety. A photograph of Kate Sessions standing in the Robinson lath house was published with the article.

The beguiling interior photograph of the Botanical Building in Balboa Park must have delighted readers from coast to coast. —Nancy Carol Carter

# The Dean of Begonias

By John Blocker

*I am not a botanist. I suspect that any pistil might hold me up. I am not a bit scientific, but I grow lots of begonias which meet with some applause from those who have card-indexed every part of a plant 'til it blushes when they approach. – Alfred D. Robinson in California Garden*

Alfred D. Robinson's collection of begonias at Rosecroft Begonia Gardens on Point Loma was "...widely acknowledged by many authorities to be the finest and most extensive in the world not excepting that at Kew Gardens, London," Helen W. King wrote in the July 28, 1929, *Los Angeles Times*. Visitors from around the world came to see the assortment of begonias Robinson had assembled. His collection included more than 500 distinct varieties. San Diego's climate and a capacious lath house provided matchless growing conditions.

Robinson's lathhouse harbored tiny begonias with leaves as delicate as fern fronds and giant Rex begonias with leaves two feet wide. Some were low growers, some medium-sized and some grew into shrubs almost the size of a small tree. He had begonias climbing up posts and others trailing from hanging baskets. Robinson believed that begonias varied more in shape and size than any other flowering plant.

His begonias flowered in every color except blue. Blended shades of yellow, pink and red, according to garden writer King, were "so subtle as to defy classification." The lath house also was filled with other flowering plants, including more than 225 varieties of fuchsia as well as many varieties of *Streptocarpus*, a member of the shade-loving *Gesneriaceae* family. A wisteria vine wove its way through the ceiling, its flowers hanging down like icicles.

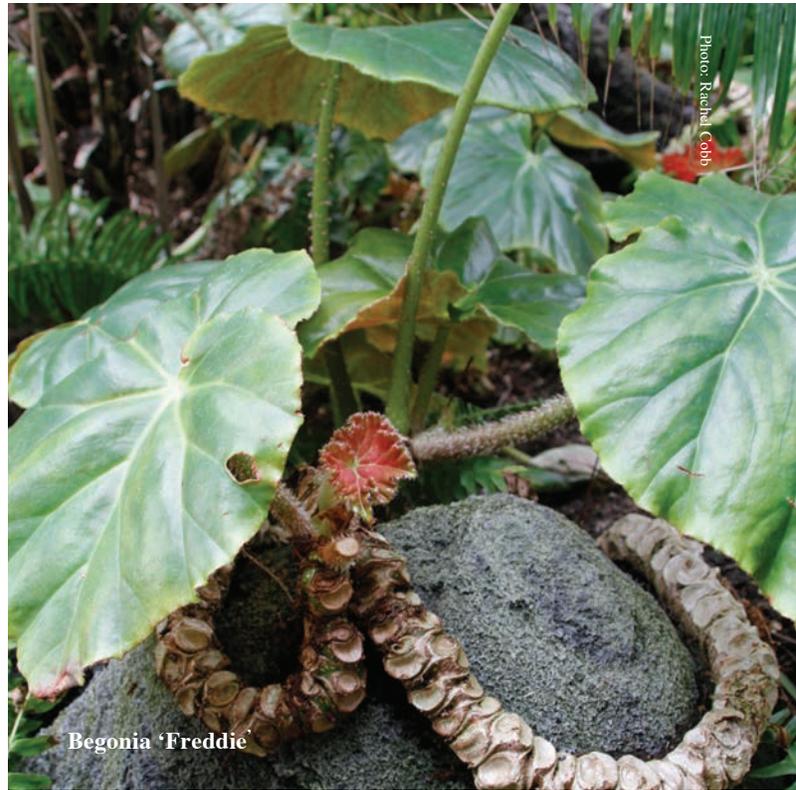
One of the nation's leading horticulturalists, Professor Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell University, made research trips to San Diego for his *Encyclopedia of Horticulture*. As to begonias, he observed that Robinson knew "...more about that particular flower than anyone else in the Western Hemisphere."

## Creating Rosecroft Begonia Gardens

Robinson moved from San Francisco to Ocean Beach in 1902. He bought property on Point Loma in 1903, and in 1912 the stately home in which he lived for the rest of his life was completed. His wife loved roses and named the property Rosecroft.

Working from his large lath house on the grounds of Rosecroft, Robinson collected begonia seed from all over the world. His collection contained varieties from India, Mexico and South America, including Brazil and Ecuador. He obtained plants from the noted Ventura nursery owner, Theodosia Burr Shepherd. He also traded plants with local growers, including Eva Kenworthy Gray from La Jolla, another well-known begonia expert.

Although Robinson had grown begonias since 1890, well



Begonia 'Freddie'

Photo: Rachel Cobb

before he moved to Point Loma, he did not begin selling them until the 1920s. The KOLZ Begonia Research Center, located in the hills south of College Grove Shopping Center in San Diego, has about 15 different sales catalogues produced by Robinson to advertise his plants. Catalogues were never printed with a date. Robinson produced updates only as needed. Each catalogue lists about 150 different begonia varieties for sale. Over the years, about 70 of the varieties he offered were his own hybridizations. He named some of his botanical creations after friends, including "K. O. Sessions," for San Diego's noted horticulturalist; and "Helen W. King," to honor the garden writer of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Robinson was not the usual commercial grower. His private wealth allowed him to indulge his interest in begonia breeding without having to heavily depend on sales. His lath house can be described as more pleasure palace than farmer's field. Winding paths snaked through his growing houses past a jungle of plants. At intervals rock steps covered with moss continued the trail. In the middle of one lath house, lounge chairs sat next to tables where Robinson took tea or played bridge with guests. A secret rock

grotto nearby was enclosed on all sides by ferns and accessible only through two narrow doorways.

Robinson sold plants because he wanted to make his extraordinary assortment of begonias available to begonia enthusiasts, including botanical gardens, professional growers, collectors and flower-lovers of all types.

## Begonia Enthusiasts Organize

The California Begonia Society was founded in Long Beach in 1931. Robinson soon became an influential part of the organization. In 1934 he hosted a meeting at Rosecroft of more than 100 members. After a picnic lunch, Robinson suggested the name of the organization be changed to the American Begonia Society (ABS). He said that the knowledge and enthusiasm he had witnessed among the begonia growers should be shared with the rest of the nation. A motion was quickly made and passed, and the name was changed. This first Point Loma outing was greatly enjoyed and became an annual pilgrimage for the ABS.

Robinson regularly contributed articles to the ABS journal after its inception in 1934. In the July 1941 issue of the *Begonian*, he wrote: “Gardening is not the creation of one seasonal display, however wonderful it maybe, but the arranging for a succession of garden pictures, possible in this climate of Southern California, covering the entire year.” During that same year Robinson wrote articles for seven of the twelve *Begonian* issues, sharing knowledge he had gained during his 50 years of begonia growing.

Robinson died in February 1942. Alice Rainford, a friend and contemporary of Robinson and the long-time owner of a flower shop in San Diego, wrote his obituary for *California Garden*. “He was a fount of knowledge for all who were seeking to improve garden, city or roadside,” Rainford wrote, “and his spiritual insight enabled him to give that assistance in a manner that inspired all who knew him...locally, nationally, and internationally even his observations and sage pronouncements will be missed...wherever the gardening fraternity meets.”

## Memorializing Alfred D. Robinson

To honor the “Dean of Begonias,” as the American Begonia Society members called him, the Society created the Alfred D. Robinson Memorial Exhibit, a glasshouse display of living plants in Lincoln Park Los Angeles. Established in November 1942, the memorial exhibit was removed in 1945 when the park claimed the space for another purpose.

“The Alfred D. Robinson Medal” was created by the ABS in 1947 and is the highest award given to honor a begonia introduction. It is still awarded today.

After Robinson’s death, Rosecroft was the location of a November 1942 organizing meeting to create the Alfred D. Robinson Begonia Society, a branch of the ABS that would be active for many years. Local gardener and artist Alice Clark became the first president. Robinson had inspired her to grow begonias, although she became better known for her paintings of the flower. She self-published a collection of these paintings entitled *Begonia Portraits* in 1977, a book highly regarded in San Diego County by begonia lovers.

In 1943 Clark addressed the society’s new members at a

meeting at Rosecroft: “We are another product of the Rosecroft Gardens, created by A. D. Robinson. Let’s try to live up to the promise of that name. Enjoy this day here. See Rosecroft with your hearts as well as your minds and eyes. It may not always exist for us in reality as it does today, but the qualities that make it what it is – the vision and the patience to work out our dreams – are our heritage.”

*–John Blocker worked in the agricultural industry in San Diego for 31 years and has attended garden conferences and viewed gardens around the world during the past 20 years. From 1998 to 2008, he was on the board of the California Garden and Landscape History Society.*



## KOLZ Begonia Research Center, San Diego

After Carrie Karregeannes retired as the American Begonia Society nomenclature director, she began in 2002 to send her sizeable begonia archives to Michael Ludwig in San Diego. Thelma O’Reilly, a research companion of Karregeannes and long-time member of San Diego’s begonia community, had recommended Ludwig, a fellow enthusiast, as the recipient.

In 2005, Rudolf Ziesenhenné, another person who had spent his life growing and studying begonias, offered Ludwig his research collection while Ludwig was visiting his home in Santa Barbara. Ludwig filled his van with as much material as he could carry. Ziesenhenné died in October of that year. His family gave Ludwig the remaining material. Ludwig made many trips to Santa Barbara throughout 2006 and 2007 to bring the documents to San Diego.

Margaret Lee was another member of San Diego’s begonia community who spent a lifetime growing and studying begonias. Ludwig considers her one of his mentors. She died in January 2004.

In Fall 2005, Ludwig began remodeling a section of his garage to create a research space, complete with tables, files, bookcases and a photocopier. He included a small classroom to accommodate groups. The Margaret Lee Begonia Society meets there monthly. Ludwig is the group’s current president and hopes to revive the Alfred D. Robinson chapter this year.

On January 28, 2006, Ludwig opened the KOLZ (Karegeannes, O’Reilly, Ludwig/Lee, Ziesenhenné) Research Center to house the material he collected. He continues to receive donated material from other begonia authorities and organizations.

More information is at the KOLZ Center website: [www.kolzbeonia.com](http://www.kolzbeonia.com) – *John Blocker*

# Then and Now: Fairy-tale Begonias

By Aenne Carver

Once upon a time, begonias were finicky and best suited for a greenhouse or special windowsill. Gardeners sought lower maintenance, but they did not want to sacrifice the begonia's dramatic and abundant blooms. Voilà, hybridizers waved their magic wands over the old-fashioned begonia and turned them into more resilient, versatile plants. Today choose from many easy-care begonias with elegant, plentiful blooms thanks to magical, modern, breeding techniques.

## Begonias Long and Winding Road

Historically, gardeners in San Diego primarily grew Rex begonias and tuberous begonias. Currently, we have more choices. In this vast genus, most experts delineate three main types of begonias: (1) Fibrous or cane begonias (including wax and angel wing begonias), (2) Rhizomatous begonias with showy foliage and insignificant flowers, and (3) Tuberous begonias (the most common with large flowers reminiscent of exotic roses).

## Buried Tuberous Treasure

Tuberous begonias started their magical transformation in the 1970s, when the German company Benary introduced a variety called 'Nonstop' (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*). This begonia has smaller but more abundant flowers than the traditional tuberous begonia. 'Nonstop' varieties are easier to grow because they require less humidity and water. Additionally, 'Nonstop' begonias are more heat tolerant and have a longer flowering cycle. They are ideal for hanging baskets and you'll wind up with a giant cascading plant even in hot inland gardens.

For the best performance, tuberous begonias in general like fertilizer and afternoon shade. Like Sleeping Beauty, these tuberous begonias rest during the cool months. So, when their leaves begin to fade and the nights grow cold, dig up the tubers and store them in a cool, dry location. In the spring, these beauties wake with a kiss from the sun and water.

Beside for 'Nonstop' begonias, the 'Bonfire' series of tuberous begonias also have been touched with fairytale-like hybridization. Created by Anthony Tessellar, the famous Australian breeder, these begonias are a cross between the sun-tolerant *Begonia boliviensis* and the tuberous begonia. With masses of fiery orange flowers and robust growth, this begonia flourishes in full sun or in the shade. With Rapunzel-like speed, this begonia cascades from baskets or down a wall. Like most tuberous begonias, including 'Nonstop', 'Bonfire's burn brightest when container grown.

## The Regal Rex

Rhizomatous begonias (the ones with flamboyant leaves but insignificant flowers) were once relegated to indoors or fancy greenhouses; but in our mild climate, adventurous gardeners place them to overwinter outdoors in protected nooks. Some



Photo: Aenne Carver

imaginative San Diegans merely move them outside in the hot months, and then back indoors where they star as spectacular, winter houseplants. However you use these kingly Rex begonias, their exquisite leaves add texture and interest to a container or any planting.

Rex begonias are a bit like Goldilocks, since too much water or fertilizer quickly destroys a plant. Soggy soil leads to rot; yet being too dry causes the hairy leaves to shrivel.

## Easy Angelic Begonias

If caring for a begonia with "just so" requirements is daunting, then try a cane or angle wing begonia (*Begonia coccinea*) or a wax begonia (*Begonia semperforens*). Abracadabra – these begonias bloom practically year-round with little care in most areas of San Diego. Unfortunately, wax begonias have become overused in mall plantings. The new, more sun-tolerant versions deserve respect and a prominent spot in your garden.

Look for the 'Surefire' series of wax begonias since they are taller (12 to 24 inches) than the standard ones. Their undeniable charm is they don't stop blooming...ever! The entire 'Surefire' series blooms without deadheading despite hot winds and heat waves.

Angel wing begonias are known for their lustrous, wing-shaped leaves and delicate flowers. A local favorite is 'Irene Nuss' and it has pendulous clusters of pale pink to salmon colored flowers. On still mornings the blooms emit a bewitching scent reminiscent of jasmine mixed with violets. This begonia's stout canes can reach four feet tall. Surprisingly, this rugged angel is hardy down to 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

– Aenne Carver is a writer, workshop instructor and lecturer. Visit her web site, [www.thethriftygardener.com](http://www.thethriftygardener.com), to view her gardening and vegetarian cooking blogs.

# SDFA Calendar

A listing of the best gardening-related activities in the county for July/August 2014

## July Events

### July 1

#### SAN DIEGO COUNTY ORCHID SOCIETY MEETING

When: 6:30 p.m. Novice Meeting, Room 104

7:30 p.m. General Meeting, Room 101

Where: Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: [www.sdorchids.com](http://www.sdorchids.com)

#### SOGETSU SCHOOL OF IKEBANA SAN DIEGO BRANCH

When: 10:00 a.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: Hiroko Szechinski, 858-571-6137

### July 2

#### CHIRP FOR GARDEN WILDLIFE, INC. MEETING

All members are encouraged to attend our Summer Garden Party.

When: 6:30 p.m.

Where: TBA

More information: 619-445-8352, [www.chirp.org](http://www.chirp.org)

#### PALOMAR ORCHID SOCIETY MEETING

James Rose from Cal Orchids, Santa Barbara, will be this month's featured speaker.

When: 6:30 p.m. General Meeting

Where: The Gallery Room at Lake San Marcos, 1105 La Bonita Dr., San Marcos

More information: [www.palomarorchid.org](http://www.palomarorchid.org)

#### SAN DIEGO HERB CLUB MEETING

All members are encouraged to attend our potluck in the Trees for Health Garden.

When: 7:00 p.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information:

[www.thesandiegoherbclub.com](http://www.thesandiegoherbclub.com)

### July 8

#### SAN DIEGO GERANIUM SOCIETY MEETING

When: 7:00 p.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: 858-472-0540, [www.sdgeranium.org](http://www.sdgeranium.org)

#### SAN DIEGO NORTH COUNTY AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY MEETING

When: 10:30 a.m.

Where: Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., Vista

More information: 760-295-0484

### July 9

#### SAN DIEGO EPIPHYLLUM SOCIETY MEETING

When: 7:30 p.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: [www.sandiegoepi.org](http://www.sandiegoepi.org)

### July 10

#### IKENOBO CHAPTER OF SAN DIEGO MEETING

When: 9:30 a.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: 858-278-5689

### July 12

#### SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY MEETING

When: 10:00 a.m.

Where: Room 104, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: [www.bsi.org/webpages/san\\_diego.html](http://www.bsi.org/webpages/san_diego.html)

#### SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY MEETING

When: 1:00 p.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information: <http://sdccs.net>

### July 13

#### SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB, INC. MEETING

Jim Barrett will demonstrate making bonsai pots.

When: 9:00 a.m. Classes;

10:00 a.m. Meeting

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information:

[www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com](http://www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com)

#### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PLUMERIA SOCIETY MEETING

Learn about the selection and use of seedlings in grafting from Tex Norwood.

When: 1:00 p.m.

Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego

More information:

[www.socalplumeriasociety.com](http://www.socalplumeriasociety.com)

### July 14

#### SAN DIEGO HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEETING

Mike Atkinson will present a program on "Scent-sational Plumeria."

When: 6:00 p.m.

Where: Surfside Race Place, Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar

More information: [www.sdhort.org](http://www.sdhort.org)

### July 15

#### BONSAI AND BEYOND

When: 6:00 p.m. Potluck dinner;

7:00 p.m. Meeting

Where: Ecke Building, San Diego Botanic Garden, Encinitas

More information: Brenda Storey, 858-722-4970



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## Art in Bloom

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Friday – Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Opening Reception Friday, July 18, 4–6 p.m.

Spanish Village Art Center, Balboa Park  
1770 Village Place, San Diego, CA 92101

Art interpreted in flowers • Floral & art demos  
Live music • Refreshments available • FREE!

[www.svacartinbloom.blogspot.com](http://www.svacartinbloom.blogspot.com)

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY,  
SAN DIEGO CHAPTER MEETING  
Join us to learn about the native flora of  
San Diego County.  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101 or 104, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 760-434-5033,  
www.cnpsd.org

JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN OF  
SAN DIEGO  
Free admission for S.D. residents, active  
military and dependents with identification.  
When: 10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.  
Where: Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: www.niwa.org

### July 16

San Diego County Cymbidium Society  
When: 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Lake San Marcos Pavilion,  
1105 La Bonita Drive, San Marcos  
More information: 760-433-2544

### July 17

BERNARDO GARDENERS MEETING  
When: 1:00 p.m.  
Where: TBA  
More information:  
www.bernardogardeners.org

### July 18

• 3 DAYS  
SPANISH VILLAGE ARTS CENTER  
This free event interprets original artworks  
in floral designs. Art in Bloom features over  
40 art and floral vignettes to stimulate your  
senses and delight your creativity.  
When: 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Where: Spanish Arts Village, Balboa Park,  
San Diego  
More information:  
http://www.svacartinbloom.blogspot.com/

### July 21

SAN DIEGO ROSE SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: www.sdrosesociety.org

### July 22

SAN DIEGO COUNTY DAHLIA SOCIETY  
MEETING  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 858-672-2593

UCCE MASTER GARDENERS  
When: 9:30 a.m.—Noon  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: www.  
mastergardenerssandiego.org

### July 23

CALIFORNIA RARE FRUIT GROWERS,  
S. D. CHAPTER  
When: 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: www.crfgsandiego.org

### July 26

• 2 DAYS  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY ORCHID SOCIETY  
Admission is free to this summer show and  
plant sale.  
When: Saturday, Noon–5:00 p.m.;  
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101 Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego

## August Events

### August 2

• 2 DAYS  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY DAHLIA SOCIETY  
Admire the beauty and splendor of dahlias  
at The Dahlia Show.  
When: Saturday, Noon–4:00 p.m.;  
Sunday, 10:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: David Tooley,  
858-672-2593

### August 5

SAN DIEGO COUNTY ORCHID SOCIETY  
MEETING  
When: 6:30 p.m. Novice Meeting,  
Room 104  
7:30 p.m. General Meeting, Room 101  
Where: Casa del Prado, Balboa Park,  
San Diego  
More information: www.sdorchids.com

SOGETSU SCHOOL OF IKEBANA  
SAN DIEGO BRANCH  
When: 10:00 a.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: Hiroko Szechinski,  
858-571-6137

### August 6

CHIRP FOR GARDEN WILDLIFE, INC.  
MEETING  
CHIRP members will meet to enjoy a  
“Summer Garden Party.”  
When: 6:30 p.m.  
Where: TBA  
More information: 619-445-8352,  
www.chirp.org

PALOMAR ORCHID SOCIETY MEETING  
Visitors are welcome to hear Phyllis  
Prestia discuss Cynoches orchids  
When: 6:30 p.m. General Meeting  
Where: The Gallery Room at Lake San  
Marcos, 1105 La Bonita Dr., San Marcos  
More information: www.palomarorchid.org

### August 9

SAN DIEGO BROMELIAD SOCIETY  
MEETING  
When: 10:00 a.m.  
Where: Room 104, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
www.bsi.org/webpages/san\_diego.html

SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT  
SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 1:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: http://sdcss.net

### August 10

SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB, INC.  
MEETING  
Join us to hear Tom Elias present a  
program on penjing.  
When: 9:00 a.m. Classes;  
10:00 a.m. Meeting  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
www.sandiegobonsaiclub.com

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PLUMERIA  
SOCIETY MEETING  
Everyone is welcome to hear Richard  
Eggenberger address the group.  
When: 1:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
www.socalplumeriasociety.com  
Dark: Nov, Dec, Jan

### August 11

SAN DIEGO HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
MEETING  
Tom Piergrossi of Vintage Green Farms  
will discuss “New Tropicals for San Diego  
Gardeners.”  
When: 6:00 p.m.  
Where: Surfside Race Place,  
Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar  
More information: www.sdhort.org

### August 12

SAN DIEGO GERANIUM SOCIETY  
MEETING  
When: 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado,  
Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 858-472-0540,  
www.sdgeranium.org

SAN DIEGO NORTH COUNTY AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 10:30 a.m.  
Where: Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., Vista  
More information: 760-295-0484

#### August 13

SAN DIEGO EPIPHYLLUM SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: [www.sandiegoepi.org](http://www.sandiegoepi.org)

#### August 14

IKENOBO CHAPTER OF SAN DIEGO MEETING  
When: 9:30 a.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 858-278-5689

SAN DIEGO FERN SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
[www.sandiegofernsociety.com](http://www.sandiegofernsociety.com)

#### August 16

**• 2 Days**  
SAN DIEGO FERN SOCIETY  
Admission is free to the SDFS Plant Show and Sale.  
When: Saturday, Noon–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
[www.sandiegofernsociety.com](http://www.sandiegofernsociety.com)

#### August 19

BONSAI AND BEYOND  
When: 6:00 p.m. Potluck dinner; 7:00 p.m. Meeting  
Where: Ecke Building, San Diego Botanic Garden, Encinitas  
More information: Brenda Storey, 858-722-4970

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, SAN DIEGO CHAPTER MEETING  
Learn more about the use of native plants in gardens.  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101 or 104, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 760-434-5033, [www.cnpssd.org](http://www.cnpssd.org)

JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN OF SAN DIEGO  
Free admission for S.D. residents, active military and dependents with identification.  
When: 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Where: Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: [www.niwa.org](http://www.niwa.org)

#### August 20

SAN DIEGO CAMELLIA SOCIETY  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: Dean Turney, 760-942-1919  
January - April & November only

SAN DIEGO COUNTY CYMBIDIUM SOCIETY  
When: 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Lake San Marcos Pavilion, 1105 La Bonita Drive, San Marcos  
More information: 760-433-2544

#### August 23

**• 2 Days**  
BONSAI AND BEYOND  
Show and Sale  
When: Saturday, Noon–5:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 858-259-9598

#### August 26

SAN DIEGO COUNTY DAHLIA SOCIETY MEETING  
When: 7:30 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: 858-672-2593

UCCE Master Gardeners  
When: 9:30 a.m.–Noon  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: [www.mastergardenerssandiego.org](http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org)

#### August 27

CALIFORNIA RARE FRUIT GROWERS, S. D. CHAPTER  
When: 7:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information: [www.crfgsandiego.org](http://www.crfgsandiego.org)

#### August 30

**• 2 Days**  
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PLUMERIA SOCIETY  
Admission is free to the 15th annual Hawaiian Plumeria Festival, plant show and sale.  
When: 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Where: Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More information:  
<http://www.socalplumeriasociety.com>

## Gardening Classes

WATER CONSERVATION GARDEN CLASSES  
The Water Conservation Garden provides a number of entertaining, information-packed courses covering the most topical gardening topics and presented by skilled and knowledgeable experts. Please contact the Water Conservation Garden for program details and any applicable fees.  
When: Contact for program-specific times.  
Where: 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon  
More Information: [www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org), 619-660-0614, x10



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## Walks, Tours & Garden Events

### CNPS NATIVE PLANT WALK

Join landscape architect and member of the CNPS San Diego Chapter Kay Stewart for a two-hour, easy walk into Tecolote Canyon and back. Along the way you'll study and learn about the plants. This guided walk is free, but may be canceled due to inclement weather or poor trail conditions.

When: 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. first Sunday of the month

Where: Tecolote Canyon Nature Center, 5180 Tecolote Road, San Diego  
More Information: 858-581-9959,  
[www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/parks/teclte.shtml](http://www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/parks/teclte.shtml),

### SAN DIEGO BOTANIC GARDEN TOUR

Come and meet up at the Visitor's Center for a weekly tour of the San Diego Botanic Garden. No reservations required. Free with admission.

When: 10:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. every Saturday

Where: 230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas  
More Information: [www.sdbgarden.org](http://www.sdbgarden.org)

### SAN DIEGO BOTANIC GARDEN: CHILDREN'S EVENTS

The Hamilton Children's Garden offers a number of events specially designed to entertain and educate children and their caregivers. Please contact San Diego Botanic Garden for a complete listing of their scheduled events.

When: Ongoing—contact for program-specific times.

Where: 230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas  
More Information: [www.sdbgarden.org](http://www.sdbgarden.org)

### SOUTH BAY BOTANIC GARDEN

Garden experts and docents lead a Garden Walk and Talk. Park in lot E, you must purchase a college parking pass. A parking pass machine is located in parking lots F and G near the garden. The talk is free, however a \$3 per person donation to the garden is suggested.

When: 2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. every Saturday  
Where: Southwestern College, Chula Vista

### WATER CONSERVATION GARDEN TOUR

Enjoy a docent-led tour of the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College.

When: 10:30 a.m. every Saturday

Where: 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon  
More Information: [www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org)

### WATER CONSERVATION GARDEN SPECIAL Access Tour

Have trouble navigating the garden terrain? Explore the Garden from a comfortable shuttle with a Garden Docent.

This tour seats only 4-5 passengers.

Advanced reservations required, call 619-660-6841.

When: 9:30 a.m. every third Sunday

Where: 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon  
More Information: [www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org)

12755 Danielson Court  
Poway, CA 92064  
(858) 513-4900  
FAX (858) 513-4790  
Open 9-6, 7 days a week



3642 Enterprise Street  
San Diego, CA 92110  
(619) 224-8271  
FAX (619) 224-9067  
Open 8-5, 7 days a week

Free Garden Classes at both locations on Saturday mornings  
[www.walterandersen.com](http://www.walterandersen.com)

## Balboa Park Events

### SAN DIEGO ZOO

Visit the world famous San Diego Zoo for Plant Days and Orchid Odyssey.

When: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. third Friday of each month

Where: San Diego Zoo, 2920 Zoo Drive, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More Information: [www.sandiegozoo.com](http://www.sandiegozoo.com)

### SAN DIEGO JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

Enhance your well being with a visit to this Japanese-style garden. There is a \$4 fee for adults, \$2.50 fee for Seniors (55+), children and military with I.D.

When: 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday

Where: San Diego Japanese Friendship Garden, 2215 Pan American Road, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More Information: [www.niwa.org](http://www.niwa.org)

### BALBOA PARK DOCENT TOURS

Join volunteer guides on this free, history-oriented walk through Balboa Park.

When: 11:00 a.m. every Saturday  
Where: Balboa Park Visitor Center, 1549 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego  
More Information: [www.balboapark.org](http://www.balboapark.org)

### SAN DIEGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM CANYONEER WALKS

Join trained volunteer guides on a local canyon walks. There is a \$2 fee.

When: Times vary; check website for specific event details

Where: Locations vary; check website for specific event details

More Information: [www.sdnhm.org/education/naturalists-of-all-ages/canyoneer-hikes/](http://www.sdnhm.org/education/naturalists-of-all-ages/canyoneer-hikes/)

## In Season

Here are some items that you may find being sold from the stalls at your local Farmers' Market in July and August.

For more information on San Diego County Farmers' Markets, visit [www.sdfarmbureau.org](http://www.sdfarmbureau.org).

**July:** Avocados, basil, beets, blackberries, boysenberries, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, figs, grapefruit, grapes, green beans, guavas, herbs, lemons, limes, melons, onions, peaches, peppers, plums, potatoes, radishes, raspberries, scallions, summer squash, strawberries, sweet potatoes, tangelos, tomatoes, Valencia oranges and various cut flowers.

**August:** Apples, avocados, basil, blackberries, boysenberries, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, figs, grapefruit, grapes, green beans, guavas, herbs, lemons, limes, melons, onions, peaches, pears, peppers, plums, potatoes, raspberries, scallions, summer squash, strawberries, sweet potatoes, tangelos, tomatoes, Valencia oranges and various cut flowers.



## Contact Us!

Do you have an event, class or meeting that you'd like to let *California Garden* readers know about? If so, please email [sdfloral@gmail.com](mailto:sdfloral@gmail.com) or Denise Thompson at [EarthD@san.rr.com](mailto:EarthD@san.rr.com) with your group's name, the meeting date and time, meeting place, any applicable fees, event program and contact information. You may also submit the above information via regular mail, sent to Calendar Editor, San Diego Floral Association, 1650 El Prado Room 105, San Diego CA 92101. Space is limited, so please get in touch today to ensure inclusion! The deadline for the upcoming Sept./Oct. 2014 issue is July 10, 2014; the deadline for the Nov./Dec. 2014 issue is September 10, 2014.

# Asian Influenced Plant Art Show

Presented by  
**Bonsai and Beyond  
Society**

**August 23rd & 24th**  
10 AM to 4 PM  
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado  
Showroom 101



**For Additional Information**  
**(858) 255 9598**

San Diego Dahlia Society

## ANNUAL *Dahlia Show*

**Saturday. August 2**  
**Sunday. August 3**

*Amazing, reasonably priced bouquets  
sold near the end of each day.*

**BALBOA PARK**  
Casa del Prado, Rm. 101



### THE SAN DIEGO HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

MEETINGS 6 - 9 PM • EXCITING SPEAKERS  
MEMBERS FREE, NON-MEMBERS \$15

**EVERYONE WELCOME!**

*Surfside Race Place, Del Mar Fairgrounds*

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS JULY 14:

#### **Scent-sational Plumeria**

Plumeria expert, Mike Atkinson, shares his knowledge on growing and propagating the many varieties of plumerias that thrive in our Mediterranean climate.

#### AUGUST 11:

#### **New Tropicals for San Diego Gardens**

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Under the sponsorship of the Park & Recreation Department, City of San Diego, California

**Mission Statement: To promote the knowledge and appreciation of horticulture and floriculture in the San Diego region.**

## OBJECTIVES

1. To educate and encourage regional gardeners through lectures, classes, publications, scholarships and library resources.
2. To promote the use of regionally appropriate plants and gardening techniques, including natives and Mediterranean climate adapted plants.
3. To encourage, educate, and support floral design activities for personal and public display.
4. To advise and encourage leaders and the community in conservation and beautification of public and private spaces.  
To network and support plant-interested groups and societies

## GENERAL MEETINGS 2014

February 19 • April 16  
June 18

Dates are tentative. Please check the Web site, [www.sdfloal.org](http://www.sdfloal.org), to confirm.

Casa del Prado, Room 101  
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# From The Archives of California Garden

*With construction of the Panama-California Exposition just underway in 1911, SDFA president and California Garden editor Alfred D. Robinson shared his “exhibition dream” in a local newspaper. He imagined the “largest lath house ever projected as a pleasure resort.” The structure would have a central domed space 500 feet in diameter with “six great arms or aisles” reaching out from the center. Each extension would house a different plant family. Thousands of specimens would be displayed and every plant would be labeled. Music concerts within the lath house and the right lighting would make the space “entrancing.” The lath house would be the centerpiece of a new Balboa Park botanical garden. This unsigned article lends support to Robinson’s idea and suggests that the lath house should be an even larger structure than proposed.*  
~ Nancy Carol Carter

October 1911, Volume 2, Number 4

## That Lath-House: Shall We or Shall We Not?

[Unsigned]

Last month Alfred D. Robinson had a dream about an exposition lath house of unique arrangement and generous proportion which was the chief attraction at the Panama-California Exposition . . . . Some go so far as to say that this feature alone . . . would make the show worth while . . . . Many have painted their mental pictures in such lifelike colors that one could fairly hear the music of the band, and smell the plants and flowers, here and there catching a glimpse of the lath over which had crept the tinges of brown and green gathered from the dews and the sunshine from without, and the damp earth and growing plants within, until the house and the plants, the music, the birds and the odor seemed to have been there from the beginning of things.

Of course there are objections . . . . The Eiffel Tower and the Ferris Wheel were a little out of the ordinary in their day, and some in San Diego say this lath house would be to the Panama-California Exposition what the Ferris Wheel was to the only and original World’s Fair.

All other objections might be overcome, however, but what about the matter of getting the money to put it up? It might cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000. [Also, with exposition space already assigned] is it a good enough scheme to warrant cutting off a corner here and there, in order to permit [sic] of its consummation? Many who haven’t the spending of the money [sic] think it is.

Naturally *California Garden* is prejudiced in favor of the lath house proposition and sees no obstacle in the way of the project too great to overcome.

Here are the opinions of a few of our citizens. [The exposition’s Acting Director-General, J. W. Sefton, Jr. says], “A lath house shall be a permanent and beautiful ornament to the park and one of the great features of the Panama-California Exposition.”

[An unnamed interviewee said], “Why not? It strikes the exposition company in a soft spot, this suggestion of Robinson’s. There is no reason why, once built, it cannot become one of the most striking and beautiful features of the whole exposition. The only objection to your dream is that it is too small. Make the lath house just as large as architects and constructors will dare to build it . . . fill it with the rarest plants, vines and flowers that can be gathered together.”

# SAVE THE DATES

## San Diego Floral Association Centennial Events 2015



### Botanical Building Tours Date: throughout 2015

During this year-long centennial celebration, 45-minute docent-led tours showcase the origins, design and horticulture of Balboa Park's historic Botanical Building. Learn the fascinating story of English immigrant Alfred D. Robinson — the man who envisioned and proposed the construction of a botanical building for the 1915 Exposition.

### Flower Show Date: Spring 2015

Over one weekend in April of the centennial year, San Diego Floral Association and its partners stage a major flower show in the spirit of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The show's exhibits highlight San Diego's rich historic heritage in horticulture and celebrate changes in floriculture and design presentation through the decades 1910 to the present. An exhibit displays historic Balboa Park landscape photographs from collections of Park institutions.

### Historic Garden Tour Date: Spring 2015

San Diego Floral Association's tenth annual Historic Garden Tour is held May 16, 2015, as part of the Centennial celebration. This self-guided tour features beautiful gardens of historic landscape significance in the neighborhoods surrounding Balboa Park.

### Lecture Forum: The Panama-California Exposition and Cultural Landscape

**Date: October 2-4, 2015 • Speaker Event: Saturday, October 3, 2015** This lecture forum explores Balboa Park's evolving landscape from 1915 to the present and its wider influence. Participants learn about the cultural landscape of the area and how it reflects and is influenced by a changing society.

### Kate Sessions Birthday Celebration

**Date: November 7, 2015** Known as "The Mother of Balboa Park," Kate Sessions is recognized as an influential figure in Southern California landscape history. Join San Diego Floral for a gala celebration of Kate's 158th birthday! Share birthday cake, song, prizes and fun for all! Open and free to the public

### Festival of Trees

**Dates: December 5-6 2014 and December 4-5, 2015** A December Nights' tradition since 1979, Festival of Trees displays 30 fresh Noble fir trees, each decorated to the theme "Holiday Trees of 1915 and Beyond." Gingerbread cookies and exotic Protea flowers sold for holiday giving. Open and free to the public.



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