

NEWSLETTER

December 2021

COVID 19 UPDATE

The Main Garden remains open from sunrise to sunset every day. The Kids' Adventure Garden and adjoining plant sales area are now open with limitations. Plants are for sale in the Main Garden Nursery Wednesdays from 9-noon. We have a limited supply of plants in the Kids' Adventure Garden, which is now open on Sundays from 11-3 pm. **The Garden closes after rains, muddy conditions, high winds and fire danger.** We recommend you continue to wear masks and practice social distancing.



Volunteer Jean Maxwell Welcomes Visitors to the Main Nursery

The propagation team is currently propagating *Salvia spathacca* (Hummingbird Sage) along with *Leonotis leonurus*, (Lion's Tail), *Salvia discolor* (Andean Sage) and *Asclepias curassavica* (Tropical Milkweed)





The Marshall Report

For the first time in many years, CVBG is partnering with the U.C. Cooperative Extension Master Gardener program of Ventura County to provide a hands-on project for the trainee class of 2022. These projects are designed to give Master Gardener trainees some practical experience to complement their classroom learning.

The CVBG project will be the new Salvia Garden that is just up-hill from the existing Salvia Garden that has become less and less successful as trees in that garden have grown and out-competed the salvias (root competition as well as shade). Trainees will be expected to create a map of the new space, research suitable salvias, propose a plant list, develop and propose a placement plan, research plant sources, plant the salvias and do the initial nurturing. The area has been newly supplied with irrigation, so we're ready to start. The formal initiation of the project will be January 11th. Four trainees (Monica Barton, Nancy Taylor Walker, Richard Shu, and Martina Banev) have selected this as their hands-on-project, and board member Steve Davis has agreed to serve as mentor and subject matter expert. He will approve plant lists, sources and placement plans.

The Ventura Master Gardener program is reputed to be one of the best in the state, so it is an honor for the garden to be able to partner with the program to provide this learning opportunity to a cohort of trainees who will become future volunteers at CVBG or elsewhere.

Planting Update

By Steve Davis

Now that the grant irrigation projects are finished, planting has started. Emphasis will be on the new planting areas, but the existing gardens will not be neglected. Thanks to the intrepid propagation team, we have over 100 plants in the nursery that are ready for installation. Our 100 plant order from El Nativo has been delivered. Janet Wall has donated an *Araucaria* plus some hard to get natives including *Prunus lyonii*, *Quercus tomentella*, *Juglans californica* (grown from local seeds rescued from a local construction site,) *Yucca brevifolia* and *Dendromecon harfordii*. See the photo of a struggling Moreton Bay Chestnut that Janet and Jim Cyr relocated to the Nursery for some rehabilitation before being relocated to the Australian section. In the spring the Salvia garden will be expanded to a sunny location with new planting as a Master Gardener project. Fall and Winter will be a busy time.



Frogs, Luck and Trash

By Carl Zhu, PhD

Many of our frequent hikers have noticed that there are little frogs everywhere along the creek (<https://flic.kr/p/2mgLK5s>). One of the hikers who lives nearby even told us that he has not seen that many frogs since he was a child, and now, he is over 60!

“Hard work” is an understatement. During the three years of our garden’s creek restoration program, students from local high schools, Oak Park, Santa Susana, Thousand Oaks, and Westlake High School, trapped over 18,000 crayfish, picked up hundreds of pounds of trash, and planted numerous native plants along the creek (<https://flic.kr/p/2jtbMtr>). However, their incredible work was not enough to bring the frogs you see hopping around your feet. This hard work is also accompanied by incredible luck.

To restore the native frog population, one important task is to remove their invasive predator: crayfish. As our students set up traps and pulled out crayfish over the years, they also measured their growth, recorded and mapped out crayfish counts with GIS technology. What they concluded soon after was discouraging: the crayfish are too prevalent to trap, and reestablishing the frog population would take a long time..... But fortunately, they managed to grasp a stroke of luck.

The students keep detailed records to map crayfish growth and trapping data with ArcGIS. They noticed that there are a few locations in the creek where trapping brought crayfish populations down much lower than other places. It didn’t take them too long to realize the jackpot of information they had learned - the creek’s topography actually isolates the crayfish's movement in certain locations. The creek can be considered as a series of disjointed little ponds! The students quickly modified their trapping method. They went to survey the creek and identified ideal locations, focusing efforts in only trapping crayfish in those spots. The result is drastic!

Luck favors the prepared. The students hit on such incredible luck because they spent long hours wading through the water and trekking through poison oaks. They have come to know every bend and twist of the waterway. Many places bear the nicknames given by the kids, poison oak forest, no man’s land, rock bottom, tadpole heaven, big rock...

While trapping crayfish to restore native frog populations is challenging and fun, other work they did was pure exhaustion and heartbreak, which is picking up trash (<https://flic.kr/p/2mHoqsy>). By a rough count, the trash they collected amounted to hundreds of pounds, from items such as mattresses, blankets, chairs, batteries, dog feces bags... People might think tossing a small straw in the creek is not a big deal. It will surely be washed away, right? These kids can tell you, oftentimes this is not the case. Because our creek has low water flow, in some areas the water is only a few millimeters and trickles. A little straw can block the water way and starts to congregate waste around it. The result is a significant drop of the water oxygen level. The area around that little straw fouls up and becomes devoid of life. With a casual walk down to the creek you see watercress, yellow oleander, plantain, various types of native grasses, or perhaps baby sycamores and live oaks... none have been pruned and cared for. They grow wildly and die on their own terms..... Has anyone even bothered to care for this place? Ahh, next time, perhaps you might look around and see what is not there The invasive ash tree is not there; the rock is just bare rock, the graffiti is not there; the little plastic straw is not there,

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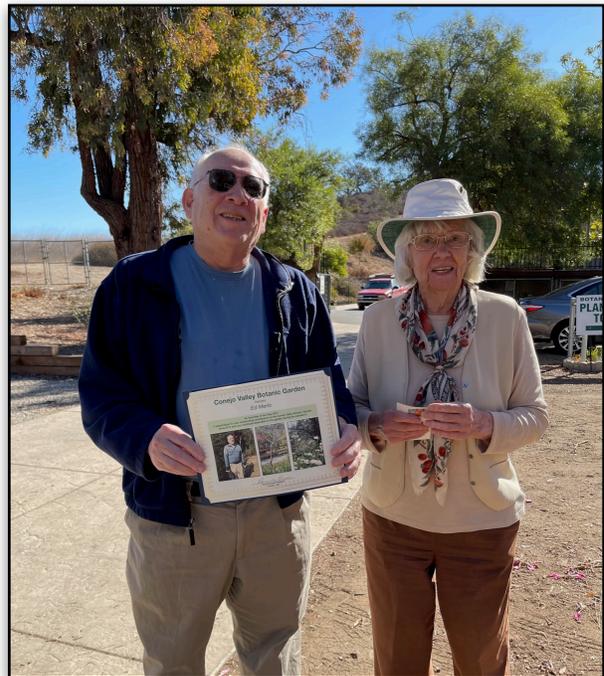
nor that threaded plastic bag ... In the middle of the city, to keep a place truly wild is a tough task. Our students have spent countless hours just doing that with admirable achievement.

Two Volunteers of the Year Awards, 2021

Due to the pandemic, we canceled the annual Volunteer of the Year Award Party, but President Beverly Brune, a few of the board members and volunteers were able to meet near the Main Garden Nursery in October to bestow the awards on two long time and multi-talented volunteers, Jay Lavi and Ed Merlo. Also in attendance were Sayli Churi, Jean Maxwell, Sandy Krutilek, Steve Davis, Marshall Monley, Jim Cyr and Janet Wall.



President Beverly Brune and Jay Lavi



President Beverly Brune and Ed Merlo

Conejo Valley Botanic Garden Recognition

The LA Times listed the Conejo Valley Botanic Garden in a recent article titled, **THE 16 MOST BEAUTIFUL AND INVITING PUBLIC GARDENS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**. A few other botanic gardens listed were Huntington Gardens, Descanso Gardens, Arlington Gardens in Pasadena, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Ventura Botanical Gardens and California Botanic Garden in Claremont.

Another article appeared in *Budget Travel Buff*, **THE 16 MOST BEAUTIFUL AND INVITING PUBLIC GARDENS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**, with a slightly different list.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made contributions over the many years!

Remembering two volunteers who recently passed

Barbara Song

Barbara Song was a large part of what made the Conejo Valley Botanic Garden what it is today. She started as a member of the Board of Directors in 1984 and kept her commitment and interest in high gear until the last few days of her life.

Barbara and the other volunteers dealt with some hard times in the early days when there were acres of land but few fences, no automatic sprinklers and shortage of funds. Despite all this, she continued to solve the problems and keep improvement going.

Her family was encouraged to join her. She and Garry could be found so many times working on the growth and upkeep of the garden. Barbara encouraged new volunteers and was always on hand to train and support them.

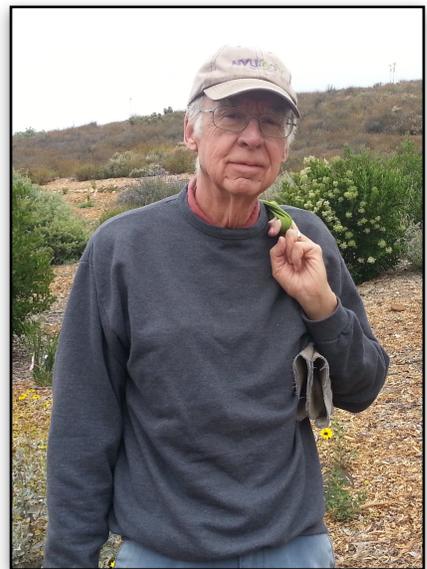
She was praised as the Volunteer of the Year along with her husband Garry in 1999.

Charlie Lucas

Charlie Lucas joined the Garden as a volunteer in 2011 and was honored as 2016 Volunteer of the Year at the annual October Volunteer Party. He would arrive in his big white truck, walk down to Sage Hill where the plants were waiting to be watered by hose, often 5 hoses connected.

New native plants were added which required constant watering the first year for survival. Charlie worked hard to make Sage Hill and the Garden a special place.

Both Barbara Song and Charlie Lucas will be dearly missed.



Music in the Garden

Jeff Turner-Graham grew up playing music. From the age of 9 he studied music in one form or another. He played drums and sang in rock/blues bands for many years. He started playing the acoustic guitar at the age of 19 in order to accompany himself as he played songs by James Taylor, Jackson Browne and Neil Young. This music also inspired him to make the move from Buffalo, New York to Santa Barbara, California when he was 20. He had visions of the “California lifestyle”!

Meanwhile, in Santa Barbara, California, Gail grew up playing classical piano and singing in choirs. Gail and Jeff, met, married and raised a family. And then, started a band! Not the usual order of things. Jeff likes to tell the story of his guitar. In 2016, Gail got a bonus at work and drove straight to a music store, where she bought a Gibson J45 guitar for Jeff. The beautiful, new guitar inspired Jeff and he became much more serious about being an accomplished guitarist.

After about a year, Gail got tired of being an observer and wanted to participate. So she bought an acoustic bass guitar...and RubySkye Music was born. After the passing of another year, Gail was playing the upright bass. Both Gail, and Jeff continue to grow and evolve as musicians. And they are enjoying playing music for friends, they hope to see you at an event soon.



There is short history on their website. <https://www.rubyskyemusic.com/rubyskye1991@gmail.com>



Happy Holiday Season



CVBG Volunteers Jingle Bell Hike

Standing L to R: Hampton Chiu,
Avanash Bahadur, Joseph
Scarpine, Mel Earley

Seated: Samantha Carnell,
William Carnell, Rose Dizon, Jay
Lavi & Daisy Chiu

Outside the photo: Anita Lazano,
Alex Dizon, Ken Matsuyama &
Chuck Shapiro

Become a New Member!

Your tax-deductible dues payment and/or Garden donation should be sent to:

**Conejo Valley
Botanic Garden**

400 W. Gainsborough Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Include your name, address,
Email and telephone number.

Annual membership

\$60 - Family
\$35 - Individual

As a member, you will receive our newsletter, updates on our openings and closures and invitations to special events and lectures.

With your membership card, receive special admission privileges at gardens listed on the **American Horticulture Society** website at www.ahsgardening.org/gardening-programs/rap.
(Some restrictions apply)

CONEJO VALLEY BOTANIC GARDEN

400 W. Gainsborough Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

Entrance

Gainsborough Rd, turn onto Jeauanine
Parking is at the end of the road

Officers

President - Beverly Brune
Vice President-Mel Earley
Secretary-Sandy Krutilek
Treasurer-Jim Allyn

Directors

Steve Davis
K. Marshall Monley
Joseph Scarpine
Carl Zhu, PhD

Newsletter Editor

Sandy Krutilek

Webmaster

Zoie Zhu

www.conejogarden.org

Carl Zhu & Alex Dizon

Flickr.com

The Flickr Garden photos are primarily due to the artful photography of Carl and Alex. Take a look at their website and sign up for up-to-date photos and information, including the new drone videos.

Conejo Valley Botanic Garden flickr.com

The Conejo Valley Botanic Garden is a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, cultivation and display of native and other water-conserving plants.

