



Pro Natura Conservanda

San Luis Obispo

NEWS

Botanical Garden

A Publication of Friends of SLO Botanical Garden

Volume 19 ♦ March, 2009

Upcoming events

March 14

Program: Lotusland

- Virginia Hayes will discuss this unique Santa Barbara private garden.

Docent-led Garden tour: Learn how to Grow Mediterranean Climate Plants with Judy Jurji.

April 11

Program: Botany for Gardeners

- Matt Ritter

Spring Plant Sale

May 9

Montana de Oro District Garden Club Flower Show, "Mediterranean Influences"

A Garden Workshop

Creating Kitchen Gardens

Learn all about sustainable ways to spice up your landscape. There will be discussion and photos on how to incorporate edible elements into existing landscapes, followed by hands-on, raised-bed construction and planting.

Presented by: Todd Davidson, Sage Eco Gardens & Landscapes; Jordan Hosea, 'Ncredible Edibles, creating food forests; and Sharon Lovejoy, nationally known childrens' garden author.

When: Sunday, March 22

Where: Oak Glen Pavilion

Time: 1 to 4 p.m.

Cost: \$25/person, \$40/two (members - \$20/person, \$30/two)

Contact: Teresa Lees, Education Coordinator—tlees@slobg.org, 541-1400 ext-304

Saturday at the Garden – March 14



Aloe pond at Lotusland

A Curator's View of Lotusland

**Oak Glen Pavilion • 1 PM
\$5 (\$3 members)**

Lotusland began as the 37-acre estate of the late Madame Ganna Walska, the well known opera singer and socialite. She created a botanical display garden featuring tropical and sub-tropical exotic species. The Ganna Walska Lotusland Foundation, an educational non-profit she established to carry on her work after her death, now owns and operates the estate. Virginia Hayes, Curator of the Living Collection, will take us on a pictorial guided tour of the garden, during which we will learn about the garden itself and some of its amazing plant specimens.

Virginia Hayes is curator of the Living Collection, Ganna Walska Lotusland. Before coming to Lotusland, Virginia managed Santa Barbara Water Garden Nursery, specializing in aquatic plants. For her

*Master's degree she researched the unique floral characteristics of lotuses (*Nelumbo nucifera* and their variation in wild populations. Her writing has appeared in the Santa Barbara Independent, Montecito Magazine, and Pacific Horticulture magazine. She recently wrote a book titled The Gourmet Garden.*

Docent-led Garden Tour

**2 PM (following Lotusland program)
Free of charge**

How to Grow Mediterranean Climate Plants

Starting with an overview of the world's mediterranean climates, Judy Jurji will focus on choosing plants, watering, soil and topography needs, mulches, pest control, pruning and aesthetic placement decisions. In addition, Judy will discuss how she adapted to gardening on California's central coast after moving here from the Pacific Northwest.

Friends of San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden
3450 Dairy Creek Road
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Nonprofit
Organization
Permit #459

San Luis Obispo
California
93401



Our Ceanothus are Blooming!

The Garden has a collection of blue and lavender “California lilacs” (*Ceanothus* which are native to our region. They are in bloom now and their beauty more than repays a visit. See them on our Ceanothus Hill, where a variety of cultivars thrive on the slope below the greenhouse. While you’re here, take a walk around to see the other varieties throughout the Botanical Garden.

PLANT (PART) OF THE MONTH: *The Manzanita Flower*

FROM BILL SHEPARD

In March the Garden’s flower production has pretty well come to a halt. Most of our plants are just thinking about the coming season. However one plant pre-empts the show—the Manzanita, aka *Arctostaphylos*. This sturdy plant has been quietly minding its own business, growing gradually, unaffected by cold weather, drought, or any other bothersome conditions. Now it is putting on a show of spectacular blossoms. Not the biggest or showiest of flowers, they have their charm. The flowers occur in clusters of upside down tiny urns, measuring only about one quarter of an inch. Mainly pure white, some, such as the *A. pajarosensis*, are pink.

Flowers, however, are intended not for our admiration, but for the serious purpose of seed production for the next generation. Since their ancestors first stumbled upon the use of insects to improve their pollen distribution system, flowers have evolved some elaborate structures solely for the purpose of attracting



Arctostaphylos pajarosensis

now of both the *A. pajarosensis* and *A. Hood Mountain*. Come and see: help me solve the mystery of the pollinators.

pollinators. These include colorful petals, “runways” which lead to the stigma and pollen, and elaborately perfumed nectar. The blossoms may be huge, as in some lilies, round topped as in the daisy family (where, incidentally, there are hundreds of tiny flowers making up the center), tubular shaped, or, sometimes, almost miniscule, as if they didn’t really care about being pollinated. These shapes and sizes are often custom made to fit specific birds or insects.

The Manzanita flower, however, presents an enigma to me. How can an insect get into those tiny upside down urn-shapes? I haven’t been able to find the pollinator in my references. I have noticed though, that bees definitely congregate on the bloom clusters. I couldn’t see how they went about their business, but as long as they do the job, I will be happy. We have several *Arctostaphylos* in our garden blooming