

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

# MANZANITA



Volume 19, Numbers 1 & 2 • Published by the Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden • Winter/Spring 2015



Southeast-facing view of the Botanic Garden site and the head of Wildcat Creek between San Pablo Ridge (left) and Frowning Ridge (right) in 1901  
Source: The Berkeley Hills: A Detail of Coast Range Geology. Andrew C. Lawson and Charles Palache. *Bulletin of the Department of Geology*, University of California Press, 1902.

*On January 1, 1940, following several years of preparation, founding director Jim Roof began work on establishing a botanic garden in the heart of Tilden Park. Over the next three years, at times with the help of several hundred workers from the WPA, Roof oversaw the creation of many of the core elements of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden as we know it today: the mountain meadow, the redwood grove, the Channel Island section, and more. Three-quarters of a century later, under the stewardship of Roof, three subsequent directors, and many dedicated staff and volunteers, the garden has evolved to become the jewel it is today. This special issue of Manzanita celebrates our beautiful garden and all those who have nurtured it through the years.*

Northeast-facing view of the garden in 2013

Stephen Joseph, [www.stephenjosephphoto.com](http://www.stephenjosephphoto.com)



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Your membership in the *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden supports the important work of the garden in educational programs, conservation, and horticultural experimentation. Funds raised by the *Friends* help provide long-term financial security for the garden as well as new facilities and programs.

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**ENDOWMENT:** Contributions to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden Endowment Fund assist in providing financial security for the garden.

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*Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden  
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The Board of the *Friends* generally meets at the Visitor Center in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden the second Wednesday of the month at 10:00 AM. All members are welcome. Call ahead to verify meeting date and time.

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**REGIONAL PARKS  
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**East Bay**   
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# A Small Botanic Garden with Many Groves of Trees

by Bart O'Brien, Garden Director

Given the Botanic Garden's relatively small size, it is surprising that there are several mass plantings of trees. These groves visually dominate the garden and lend it a sense of cohesiveness that is achieved by few botanic gardens this size. (Most smaller botanic gardens tend to display only one or two trees of any particular species.) Our garden has four particularly effective groves of large evergreen coniferous trees: Santa Lucia firs (*Abies bracteata*), Torrey pines (*Pinus torreyana* ssp. *insularis*), coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), and Sierra big trees (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). However, the most visually compelling and unifying plantings of trees in our Botanic Garden are the extensive groves of the deciduous quaking aspens (*Populus tremuloides*)—one of the garden's most unexpected success stories.

How and why did these plantings come to be here? All of these collections date back to the very early years of the garden. The earliest of these groves is still one of the smallest—our southeastern-most grove of aspens was planted in 1937. The most illuminating reason for our many groves is found in Bert Johnson's article on James Roof in this issue of *Manzanita*: Roof was at heart a forester and liked the appearance of forests more than individual trees. Our two redwood groves (*Sequoia sempervirens* and *Sequoiadendron giganteum*) will be discussed in an upcoming issue of *Manzanita*.

## Santa Lucia Fir

*Abies bracteata* (D. Don) Poit.

Regional Parks Botanic Garden (RPBG) accession 1938.001 (originally Santa Lucia section accession #1): Our plants are found in two groves in Santa Lucia section beds 208 (containing nine mature trees) and 213 (containing two mature trees and several young seedlings).

A pack-sack of cones collected by James Roof in August of 1938 from near the summit of Cone Peak at 5,000 feet elevation in the Santa Lucia Mountains, Los Padres National Forest, Monterey County, was the source of the seeds sown on September 17, 1938, which generated our plants. Roof had made seed collecting trips to obtain this rare fir in 1935, 1936, and 1937 without success due to seed parasitism by a seed chalcid wasp of the genus *Megastigmus* (Wolf 1967) and the production of hollow seeds from self-pollination (Ledig, Hodgskiss, and Johnson 2006). In August of 1938 the trees produced viable seeds, and Roof was finally able to obtain seeds of this exceptionally beautiful conifer. He grew the seedlings and young

Bart O'Brien



Santa Lucia firs (*Abies bracteata*) in Botanic Garden bed 208

saplings in containers for nine years before Contra Costa Hills Club volunteers planted them in two groves in the garden on Arbor Day (March 7) 1947.



When the Marble Cone fire of 1977 burned 175,000 acres in the Santa Lucia Mountains and killed many of the firs, foresters were able to collect quantities of good seed from trees in the Botanic Garden.

A little over two months later, on May 22, 1947, the Reverend Laurance L. Cross of the Northbrae Community Church in Berkeley dedicated the planting of two trees in the upper grove's center as a memorial to Captain Robert N. Beardslee, copilot, who lost his life in a military plane crash on a high mountain of Leyte Island in the Philippines on November 29, 1946. Helping to plant those two trees at the ceremony were the family and friends of Captain Beardslee. Subsequently, the entire upper grove of Santa Lucia firs in bed 208 was designated as the Robert N. Beardslee Memorial Grove.

Our trees produced their first cones with viable seeds in September 1960, when they were 22 years old, or as Roof wrote, "22 years from seed to seed." It is highly likely that the existing double row of Santa Lucia firs planted along Golf Course Road are from the same 1938 seed collection, though this is not known with certainty.

Two of California's most impressive early plant collectors, Thomas Coulter and David Douglas, first collected botanical specimens of the Santa Lucia fir within a few months of one another, with Coulter obtaining his material first, in late 1831. It took nearly four years for both sets of specimens to get to two different plant specialists and publishers in England, and both relatively quickly published this spectacular new conifer independently—again within a few months of one another—in 1836. The specimens were identified as *Pinus bracteata* by David Don in *Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* based on Coulter's collection, and as *Pinus venusta* by collector David Douglas via William Jackson Hooker's *Companion to the Botanical Magazine*. David Don's publication appeared in print first, so it is his species epithet "*bracteata*" that is used today. Nine years later, in 1845, botanist Pierre Antoine Poiteau correctly placed this plant in the genus *Abies*, so the currently accepted scientific name for the Santa Lucia fir is *Abies bracteata* (D. Don) Poit.

As Walter Knight (1988) observed, "Only California nutmeg (*Torreya californica*) has such sharp leaves among the trees of the state." Indeed, the Santa Lucia fir is the only living member of the *Abies* subgenus *Pseudotorreya* (Hickel) Toledo, and has no close living relatives among the living true firs. I will not be surprised if, at some point in the future, Santa Lucia fir is removed from the genus *Abies* and placed in its own genus due to its otherwise unique (among *Abies*) suite of characteristics: long pointed buds; sharp-pointed, stiff, relatively broad needle-like leaves; stomata only on the undersides of the leaves; and long exerted bracts on the seed cones. Recent studies (Ledig, Hodgskiss, and Johnson 2006) have shown that there is little genetic diversity present in this relictual species, but the populations at Cone Peak and Big Sur contain all presently known alleles (alleles are different versions of the same gene at the same location on a chromosome and are an accepted mode of assessing genetic diversity in a population).

Fossils of Santa Lucia fir (described as *Abies scherii* Axelrod and so named because there is currently no accepted means for synonymizing fossil plant names with living plant names) are known from western Nevada and have been dated back to the middle and late Miocene, 13.5 million years before pres-

ent. These fossil plants inhabited a similar, but more species-rich, ecosystem to that found in the upper reaches of the Santa Lucia Mountains today. The *Abies scherrii* fossils were found with *Quercus hannibalii* fossils, and *Q. hannibalii* is thought to be essentially the same as the canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*) of today. The habitat of the Santa Lucia Mountains where the firs are found has been characterized as the canyon live oak phase of mixed evergreen forest.

Although Santa Lucia firs typically inhabit steep rocky slopes, ridges, and peaks in the Santa Lucia Mountains where they can receive over 100 inches of annual rainfall, these trees also happen to be one of the world's most drought-adapted firs (there is only one other fir, the Grecian or Greek fir, *Abies cephalonica*, that is similarly adapted to dry conditions). This choice conifer is rarely seen in California gardens, as it is slow to develop, rarely available, and most California growers and homeowners are simply too impatient. That is truly unfortunate, as the Santa Lucia fir is one of the most strikingly beautiful trees in the world. We do offer limited quantities of this most unusual fir at nearly all of our plant sales.

### Santa Rosa Island Torrey Pine

*Pinus torreyana* Parry ex Carrière ssp. *insularis*  
J.R. Haller

RPBG accession 1938.004 (originally Channel Island section accession #34): Our plants create one large grove in Channel Island section bed 315, occupying the garden's land just inside the perimeter fence between Wildcat Canyon Road and the original office at the back of the garden.

Seeds were collected in 1938 from Santa Rosa Island, Santa Barbara County, and were presented as a gift to the Botanic Garden from Mr. Louis J. Drnovich, a graduate in forestry from UC Berkeley and formerly of the Los Angeles County Board of Forestry (until 1941). Later, as a captain in the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II, Lou Drnovich lost his life on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, at H-Hour on D-Day (June 6, 1944) while removing underwater mines in preparation for the liberation of France.

On October 31, 1940, 22 young pines were planted at the far end of the Channel Island section, all around the then-new original garden office. At the time the trees were planted from five-gallon cans, they measured 48 inches tall. Mrs. Marion Copley reported that they produced their first cones when they were 27 years old, in September 1965. The seeds were viable, and a seedling was noted in 1967. Currently, there are nine mature specimens in this grove. I suspect that the trees planted across Wildcat



Torrey pine (*Pinus torreyana* ssp. *insularis*) from Santa Rosa Island growing in the Botanic Garden

Canyon Road and uphill from the Botanic Garden's Channel Island and Southern California sections were part of this same accession, but there is no proof of this.

Torrey pine was named in 1855 by mountaineer and botanist Charles Christopher Parry to honor the famed botanist John Torrey (1796-1873). Among Torrey's many claims to fame are the facts that he was the first to name and describe both *Carpenteria* and *Fremontodendron* (among many other plants) and that he was both mentor and friend to Asa Gray (1810-1888), the preeminent North American botanist of his era. The subspecies *insularis* remained un-



The garden's largest grove of quaking aspens (*Populus tremuloides*)

described until 1986—a full 130 years later—when botanist John Haller of UC Santa Barbara published his findings in the journal *Systematic Botany*.

One hundred seventy-five miles separate the two subspecies of Torrey pines, with subspecies *insularis* found only on Santa Rosa Island and subspecies *torreyana* found only at Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve along the immediate coast in San Diego, between La Jolla and Del Mar. Walter Knight (1988) reports estimates of 6,000 trees at the San Diego site and 1,500 trees on Santa Rosa Island. Torrey pines are Tertiary relict species; they (or their close fossil relatives) once grew as far north as northern Oregon in the Oligocene and Miocene (*Flora of North America*, Vol. 2, 1993).

## Quaking Aspen

*Populus tremuloides* Michx.

The Regional Parks Botanic Garden has three accessions of quaking aspens that date from 1937, 1940, and 1949.

RPBG accession 1937.007 (originally Sierran section accession #256): Currently, our plants are in Sierran section bed 619. Collected along Interstate 80 (Donner Pass Highway) near the Placer County hamlets of Cisco and Kingvale Park at about 6,100 feet elevation in 1937 by the California Forest and Range Experiment Station.

The trees were planted in May 1941 in the south Sierran meadow where it merges into the Botanic Garden's Shasta-Klamath section. This, the oldest and the smallest of our quaking aspen groves, is composed of elegant, tall, thin trees that have thicker, taller trunks.

RPBG accession 1940.045 (originally Sierran section accession #106): Currently, our plants form large colonies covering Sierran section beds 615, 617, 621, 623, 630, and 631, as well as along the northwestern edge of the pond.

Seeds were collected at 7,200 feet elevation on the east side of Sonora Pass, Toiyabe National Forest, Mono County, and were grown in containers in September 1937. The subsequent young trees were planted in the garden in April and July in 1940. Groups were originally planted in the northwest end of the alpine meadow west of the promontory. This is the visually dominant planting of quaking aspens in the garden. Roof writes that this is “the typical east side form of quaking aspen.”

RPBG accession 1949.027 (originally Sierran section accession #107): Currently, our plants are in Sierran section bed 647. Collected at 7,500 feet elevation at Horse Corral Meadow, Kings Canyon National Park, Fresno County. U.S. Forest Service #7377.

A gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raffi Bedayan (later Bedayn) of Moraga. Raffi Bedayan was an early and active member of the Sierra Club's Rock Climbing Section and was one of the participants on the first Sierra Club “Knapsack” high mountain trip in 1938 (the first recorded backpacking trip). He later manufactured the Bedayn aluminum carabiners used in mountain climbing.

On March 29, 1949, it was recorded that 14 of these aspens were planted at the path at the northeast corner of the Juniper Lodge by James Roof and Bob Owen. Roof writes that this is “the typical west side form of quaking aspen.” The individual trunks of this collection are quite small and exhibit a particularly thin, gnarled appearance. Though a few of the stems reach nearly ten feet tall, the majority are much shorter, making them ideal candidates for

smaller rock gardens—though they do sucker quite freely. Our collection was underlain with weed cloth fabric that was installed many years ago but was removed in 2014. It will be interesting to see how these plants respond to having full access to soil; they may grow larger.

To paraphrase the recent treatment from *Flora of North America* (Vol. 7, 2010), quaking aspen is the most widely distributed tree in North America and is known from throughout the continent (including the following Mexican states: Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, and south to Hidalgo and the state of Mexico), with the following exceptions. It is not found in the Canadian state of Nunavut, nor is it found in Greenland. In the U.S., it is not found in the following southeastern states: Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. At the southern portions of their range, quaking aspens are considered Pleistocene relicts—small populations left behind in favored locations that tend to be cooler, moister, and higher than the surrounding increasingly hotter and drier territory.

Quaking aspens, like all other species of *Populus*, normally produce only single-sexed flowers on a plant. The sex of the plants in the Botanic Garden's collection has not been recorded. Quaking aspens spread, often vigorously, by underground root suckers, with female plants generally spreading faster than males. One of the world's largest living organisms is Pando (Latin for "I spread"), a single male clone of quaking aspen found one mile southwest of Fish Lake on Route 25 in Utah. Pando covers 106 acres, has over 40,000 living trunks, and has an estimated weight of 13,000,000 pounds, making it the heaviest known organism on Earth. The average age of one of its trunks is 130 years, but as a single entity, estimates of its age range from 80,000 up to 1,000,000 years. In 2014, and inspired in part by Pando, quaking aspen became the official state tree of Utah, replacing the Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*).

The Regional Parks Botanic Garden was the first to successfully grow and display these denizens of high mountains and cold northern latitudes in the cool, coastal, low-elevation Berkeley Hills. Roof wrote in 1959, "Until these aspen groves were successful, no one knew much about aspen culture in the Bay Area.... Quaking aspen has a bad habit that will not endear it to home gardeners. It puts out suckers freely and vigorously—into lawns and paths for twelve or fifteen feet around. An aspen group in cultivation needs to be isolated in a place where it can be kept in bounds. We work a little (not too strenuously) to keep our groups where they belong. People who aren't willing to work a little on aspen root suckers don't deserve aspen groves. These groups give our meadows their most distinctive mountain aspect."

While our plants do not display the bright white trunks and golden fall color that they exhibit in the wild, they are nonetheless supremely evocative of many a time well spent in the high Sierra. The fluttering (or quaking) of aspen leaves is due to the fact that each leaf has a flattened petiole (leaf stalk) that is attached perpendicularly to its leaf blade. This unusual arrangement allows the leaves to move with even the slightest breeze and creates the most soothing sound heard in the high mountains of the west. 🌿

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***Steve Edwards began working***

*in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in 1970, at the tender age of 19, and retired in 2013 after serving as the garden's director for 31 years. In January of this year, he strolled around the garden, reminiscing about his time there and sharing stories from the garden's history. Here are excerpts from his reminiscences.*

Al Seneres



Retired Garden Director Steve Edwards in the late 1980s

**Discovering the Garden and Jim Roof**

I discovered this garden in 1968 or 1969. I was just driving around the park; it was, I guess, my senior year in high school. And I didn't know this was here! I walked into the garden, and I saw right away all sorts of conifers that I had learned in the Sierra Nevada—I was really into conifers. And there was a

grove of Jeffrey pines, young ones only 20 or 30 feet tall, at the top of what is now the Sea Bluff section. (Things have changed a lot since then.) I was so astonished that Jeffrey pines could grow here that I was in a state of elation, and I almost ran around the garden, almost jumping from plant to plant because I was so excited. It was breathtaking to me to see what was growing here.

Because of my passion for cacti and succulents, I really wanted to work at the University of California Botanical Garden. They said, "We'd love to have you but, sorry, we can only take University of California students. Why don't you see a guy named Jim Roof at that garden up the hill?" Which coincidentally I had just discovered.

So I went up there looking for Jim, and I encountered him right there on the Sea Bluff. (I can still picture Jim standing in various exact spots all around the garden.) I walked up to him: He had his baseball cap on, and he was watering. I said, "Hi, I'm looking for Jim Roof." He replied, "What do you want to talk to that [expletive] for? He's in Alaska."

So I said, "I think you must be Jim Roof." He didn't answer me. Then I told him how much I wanted to work here and told him I was into conifers. He said, "Oh!" and took his hat off and put it over the label for a limber pine [*Pinus flexilis*], a young limber pine. Then he said, "Okay, what's this?" And I said, "Um, *Pinus monticola*?" Which is about as close as you could get. It was a really good guess. And I think he was sufficiently impressed by that to know that I had some sense of what I was doing. He ultimately told me he wanted me to work at the Botanic Garden the next summer.

It was very hard to work with Roof because he had two sides: He was very, very tough on people who worked for him, but on the other hand, he was the best storyteller I ever knew, and he was a genius. He was very inspiring, a great conservationist. And I wanted to be inspired by a person like that. Even if it was hard to work with him—and we had to part ways in time—I wouldn't trade away what I got from Jim Roof for anything.

For me, the garden has always been haunted by Jim. All the time I was director, for 31 years, I felt his presence every day. Every day. And I always thought, "What would Jim think of this?" And "How did he do this?" The obstacles he had to deal with in making this garden happen were prodigious. He is a person of legend; he deserves to be a person of legend because of what he overcame.



### Early Plantings

Jim started *tabula rasa*: There was nothing here. There was a pig sty where the pond is now. And there was a sign in the creek that said “Private Property: Keep Out” when he first visited the site. He always said he was proud that it went from a place with a private property sign to a place with a botanic garden, where we welcome your kids to come down and play in the creek. Jim said that.

He used thousands of plants from the huge Forest Service nurseries in Berkeley to plant the garden, including mother plants, rare specimens, and seed stock in 50-gallon drums. I remember him saying he planted the hills outside the garden with big groups of convicts. He'd have 100 men, and each one would carry three saplings to plant. They planted the pines up there [slope east of garden]: Monterey pines, ponderosa pines, and Coulter pines. But he said that when he first came to Tilden in the 1930s, artists were setting up their easels at the Brazilian Room and painting San Pablo Ridge [on the east side of the garden], which was open grassland covered with flowers, a patchwork quilt of color. He always regretted planting trees up there because he contributed to the loss of those wildflower displays.

### Floods

Among the obstacles Jim had to face—besides starting from nothing—were horrible floods during some tremendous rain years in the '40s, '50s, and '60s. The flood water would come up over the bridge down here [at the junction between the Shasta-Klamath, Valley-Foothill, and Sierra Nevada sections] and up over that adjacent lawn. Picture this whole basin filled with roaring, rushing, brown, seething, roiling water. And the noise!

He'd come back after a big storm, and huge parts of the garden would be washed down into Lake Anza. Then he'd spend the next year or two trying to put back together what had been lost. That's why the creek walls are rocked and mortared: The unnatural turf of the golf course above the garden does not let water soak in very well, and it rushes off. The rushing water comes roaring down into this creek, and then it goes into the culvert, which concentrates it and increases its velocity so it just roars out into the garden. If the walls aren't protected, you lose a big chunk of the garden.

### After the War

In 1942, after having been, he thought, framed and drafted and nearly sent off to New Guinea, where American forces faced some of the bloodiest fighting in World War II, Jim was pulled at the last



San Clemente Island area, one of eight Channel Island units comprising the original Garden of the Channel Island Plants, circa 1941



Jim Roof inspecting storm damage to the main culvert that channels Wildcat Creek under Wildcat Canyon Road and into the Botanic Garden

minute and put in the camouflage corps in Europe. When he got back in 1946, he deliberated for two months about whether he should come back and take this job on again. There was 15-foot-high poison oak covering much of the garden along with big oak and bay laurel saplings and coyote bush. The thousands and thousands of plants that came from

the Forest Service were mostly gone. The District wasn't offering him any help, and they were keeping him at his pre-war salary, whereas everybody else got raises.

But he decided to take it on, and I think that was a really courageous decision. And what a great one for the state of California and the Park District, because he was a genius. He created this garden, this is his design. We're just elaborating, playing out, filling in, perfecting Jim's design.



Original visitor center designed by Jim Roof under construction by the garden staff in 1963. This structure was removed and later replaced with the current building.

Jim worked alone for a few months on that poison oak and everything else until the District sent in a former Marine named Kermit Michel. Jim described being right over here where the noble fir grove was, in a giant jungle of poison oak. Kermit Michel started at the bottom hacking up through it, while Jim started at the top, and when they met in the middle, Kermit Michel said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

### Jim Roof's Collections

The 1950s were the great collecting years for the garden. I call them the collecting years because when Jim came back after the war, he had to clean up the garden, and then he had to start all over.

His collecting trips were legendary. And it was after the war that the sections of the garden were established as they are now. Jim wanted people to have a sense of walking in a place that was like what they'd see in the wild. But Jim was the only one who collected. All of us on the crew wanted

to collect, but Jim seemed to resent it. Once in a while he'd send one of us. I was just a kid from Saint Mary's when one day he said, "Hey, Steve, would you take the truck and go over to such and such a place on the back side of Mount Tamalpais and get me some seed of *Clarkia gracilis*?" Wow! I was in heaven! I couldn't believe it—that somebody would pay me to do that!

### Building the First Visitor Center

Jim wanted to have a visitor center here, but he didn't trust anyone from the outside coming in and intruding on the way he liked to do things. So he built it himself with the garden crew. He used local basalt rock, probably from the quarry up Big Spring Canyon. We have some pictures of it: They had the walls up, the rafters in, the windows framed, the doors framed, but the building had no foundation. William Penn Mott, then the new General Manager of the Park District, found out about the visitor center after it was already built with no foundation. Mott looked at it and was horrified, and ordered that it be taken down. Roof refused, which ultimately led him to be fired for insubordination. [He was subsequently reinstated.]

### Wayne Roderick: Cultivating the Crew

Jim's successor was Wayne Roderick, who started here in 1976 after being in charge of the native section at the UC Botanical Garden. Jim was a botanical horticulturist. Wayne, although botanically oriented, came from the horticultural community—his family had been owners of a nursery up in Petaluma—and he was a real plantsman. He was a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, and he was one of the great bulb growers in the world.

When he came to the garden, there was a huge change because all of a sudden Wayne wanted everybody to collect, to be involved. He was into cultivating the crew; he wanted to grow us like you'd grow plants. Where Jim was a plant person, Wayne was a people person, and he sent us out into the field on collecting trips for the garden. The same thing continued when I was director. Wayne also introduced us to sites in the field that he or early botanists had discovered that were brand new to us. He introduced us to Mines Road and Del Puerto Canyon, and he took us to Cedar Lake and Mount Eddy and Cook and Green Pass.

### The Wayne Roderick Lectures

The Park District built the present Visitor Center during Jim Roof's tenure on the site of his original building, but Jim hated that new building. My



Garden Director Wayne Roderick

understanding after the fact is that when Wayne was hired, management said, “We want you to use that building, and we want you to establish a lecture series.” So Wayne started a lecture series from scratch. I think at first it might have had an audience of maybe 10 people, but a lot of times there’d be just two people in there. And they’d be the same two people: this nice retired couple from east of the hills. Wayne would do all the work of getting everything ready and do his research for his lecture, and he’d get out there and give his lecture for two people. Then it was three, and then a month later it was four. It gradually caught on, and then it was 30.

Es Anderson, who was the leader of all the volunteers for a while, wanted to name something after Wayne Roderick while he was still alive. She came and asked me—I was the young director at that point—what we should name after him. I said, “Well, why don’t we name something that’s really dynamic, not just some dumb building with boring architecture that somebody’s going to knock down or remodel, but something that’s going to be perpetual and really, really cherished. Let’s name the

lecture series after him, like the Huxley Lectures or the Darwin Lectures, or something like that. So that’s what we did, and we invited a group of really distinguished horticulturists and botanists, people who revered Wayne, to come and give the inaugural Wayne Roderick Lecture Series the first year it was named.

### Rock Work

Jim built rock walls. He did rock paths. And he did some little rows of rocks making terraces in beds, but he didn’t do any real rock gardens that mimic rock outcrops in the field. Wayne had built the granite outcrop at the UC Botanical Garden, and he inspired us to build the granite mound here. That was our first big rock garden, designed to look like a naturalistic bedrock outcrop. After that we really

John S. Hartz



Current Visitor Center building and stone work along the creek in the early 1970s



North-facing view of the original Redwood Garden in November 1941. The redwood trees survived Jim Roof's absence during WWII and are now nearly 150 feet tall.

Jim Roof in a south-facing view of the Ferndale section of the garden along Wildcat Creek in November 1941. The small building was relocated to the garden from Norway's ski lodge exhibit at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island.



went into rock work in a big way. I had a geological background and was building rock outcrops personally with my own hands along with everybody else.

### Loving the Job

The Wayne Roderick Lectures were really important to me, and that was probably the most fulfilling part of my job. Editing and writing for *The Four Seasons* was also very rewarding. How many people on Earth, in their lives, get a chance to have a job that has even one of those pieces? I'm just incredibly lucky. And on top of that, the crew here is so wonderful, and the volunteers here are so wonderful.

### Contributions of Others

I am given credit for the docent program and the *Friends* organization because I was director, but actually they began with Glenn Keator's idea. He had been working with docent programs for a long time, and he came to me one year and said, "Why don't we start a docent program here?" I said, "That's an

interesting idea," probably scared of it because it's a lot more responsibility and a lot more work. So I said, "Let me think about it." And about five years later, it hit me, "You know, it's really stupid that we don't have a docent program; think of all the things we could do." And then two or three years after we started our docent program, the docents came to me and said, "How about if we start a friends organization?"

Before I took this job, a very wise man who was my mentor said to me, "You know, it may be scary, but if you just wait in that position, all good things will flow to you." And that's what happened. The good things are still flowing, the garden is thriving.

### What's Special about the Garden

In a botanic garden—rather than just a garden—everything is wild collected and everything is in a museum accession system. A lot of information goes with each accession [plant collection]: where it was collected, by whom, when, and usually what the ge-

Steve Edwards



Jack Muzatko presenting a 3D slide show in the garden's Wayne Roderick Lecture Series, January 30, 2010

“...if a garden is finished, it's not a garden. It's just a landscape architect's dream...”

ology is, the substrate, the soil, what the associates are, and then the history of the plant so far in the garden. It's not mandatory that plants be wild collected to be a botanic garden, but it's preferable. And it's that pedigree of good tracking through a really good museum accession system that is the most critical. This is important because it allows investigators or researchers who want to come and use the plants to know where they came from and to find out whether they are authentic representatives of what grows in the wild.

The crew at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden has lavished so much care on making this the most beautifully designed garden they possibly could, beginning with Jim Roof. A lot of thought goes into the placement of every plant: You're looking at perspectives, you're looking at what the plant is going to develop into, how

everything relates. And I think the result is an unbelievably beautiful garden given that we're restricted to using only California native plants and given that we're restricted to this particular site. We don't have a big mountain range standing behind us the way Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and Santa Barbara Botanic Garden do. We have to do it all with a backdrop of a hill that's not very interesting and has a lot of exotic trees planted on it. We just do it with the beauty of the garden itself.

Taxonomically, we have the best collection of California native plants in existence (though the other botanic gardens' collections are really great). And we have specialty collections that are distinctive and superior: our bulb collection, our conifer collection, our manzanita collection, our native perennial grass collection, and so on.

This is also the only garden of significant size that has as its central focus the plants of the Sierra Nevada in California. That was a decision Jim Roof made because he loved the Sierra so much and because it turns out we can grow many Sierran plants. The garden is planted in ecological-geographic regions, which also restricts what we can do because we can only plant certain plants in certain places, sometimes instead of where they'll do best. I don't think any other garden has carried off as well as we have the division of plants into natural geographic regions of California.

### Garden Philosophy

The amount of work here is just colossal, and you can never get caught up. And as I said all throughout my career, if a garden is finished, it's not a garden. It's just a landscape architect's dream, it's not a garden.

Gardens have cycles; there are cycles in any organization. There have been multiple rounds of major budget cuts in the Park District because of the state's fiscal woes. Then things would get a little bit better, then they'd get worse again. The garden's budget isn't what it should be now, but thanks to the *Friends*, thanks to the plant sale, we're in extraordinarily good shape. So it was providential that Glenn came and said, "Why don't we start a docent program?" and it was providential that some of the docents said, "Why don't we make a friends program?" Because they in many ways are doing the same thing that the first friends group did when the garden was threatened in 1965: They're saving the garden. They're keeping the garden safe. This isn't some motto, this isn't some truism or flippant remark. This is the real deal. They are saving the garden, and boy, we know it. 🌿

Bob Case



Steve Edwards at Pinnacles National Monument in 2009



Above: Northwest-facing view of Wildcat Creek and the Juniper Lodge building in 1970

Below: A similar view in 2015



Rosie Andrews

# The Botanic Garden Controversy of 1965 and the Founding of CNPS

by Jerry Kent

The Regional Parks Botanic Garden was created in 1940 by James Roof using California native plants he had collected and propagated while working for Charles Kraebel at the California Forest and Range Experiment Station Nursery in Berkeley. Howard McMinn, professor of botany at Mills College and botany consultant for the East Bay Regional Park District, knew of Roof's work and pressed for a Northern California botanic garden to complement gardens in Southern California. McMinn was selected to head the committee that found the perfect site in Tilden Regional Park, and then he arranged for the Park District to hire Roof to create the garden using stock and rare plants from Kraebel's nursery in Berkeley.

The Park District's first four parks, including the Botanic Garden, were developed over a six-year period between 1936 and 1942, largely with CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and WPA (Works Progress Administration) labor and federal funds. During World War II, Roof and most other park employees were drafted, leaving the two-year-old garden abandoned until he returned to rescue surviving plants that had been overgrown with weeds. Long stretches of backbreaking work and extensive collection from the wild were required to re-establish



William Penn Mott, Jr. Photo courtesy Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room



East Bay Regional Park District General Manager Richard Walpole in 1950

and maintain the garden's plant collection through the 1940s and '50s with limited funding and staff. General Manager Richard Walpole, Roof's friend and boss, presided over the Park District's six post-war parks and a workforce of fifty men until 1960.

All would change quickly when William Penn Mott, Jr. was hired in 1962 as the Park District's fourth general manager. Mott was already well known in park circles, and his first order of business was to reorganize every aspect of the District's operations. He hired new department heads and talented support staff and dramatically expanded the number of regional parks to serve a rapidly growing population in Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Mott had just finished a complete renovation of Oakland's parks before coming to the Park District and planned to do the same at Tilden, the District's 2,000-acre flagship park. By May of 1964, Mott had commissioned four citizen advisory committees (interpretation, golf, botanic garden, and overall park) to review and upgrade Tilden's programs and public facilities. The interpretive and golf groups moved forward without difficulty. But Mott and his staff would not



find it easy to work with Roof, a self-taught botanist, horticulturist, conservationist, and pioneer California native plant garden director who considered himself to be the true “park” man at the District. Mott had degrees in landscape architecture and planning, was employed by the National Park Service for seven years, and served for 16 years as Oakland’s superintendent of parks. Yet Roof labeled Mott a city “recreation” man and was not going to be intimidated when Mott began to deal with Botanic Garden issues.

The makings of a full-blown controversy began to surface in 1964 when the garden advisory group split into two opposing camps. The Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden advocated expanding Tilden’s six-acre botanic garden and prepared detailed recommendations for its improvement. A small splinter Native Parks group advocated retaining but not expanding the Tilden garden and also establishing a 400-acre Ecological Study Reserve in Anthony Chabot Regional Park, similar in concept to Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Southern California. Ironically, the two camps included leading members of the state’s prestigious California Botanical Society and California Horticultural Society.

Mott supported the Chabot project because he felt the Tilden garden was too small and a larger garden would contain a more complete native plant collection that could be properly planned for use and maintenance. As usual for projects throughout his career, Mott urged his staff and the advisory groups to “think big.” However, it soon became clear that the Friends group would oppose all aspects of the Chabot Ecological Study Reserve because Mott intended to move plants from the Tilden garden to help start the Chabot Reserve, with a new director hired at Chabot

to manage both gardens and a diminished role for both the Tilden garden and Roof. Headlines in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* editions of August 5 and 6, 1964, warned, “Botanic Garden of Tilden Park, Center of Heated Controversy” and “Citizens Mobilize to Protect Botanic Garden in Tilden Park.”

Specific details of the Friends and Native Parks proposals became clear when Rimo Bacigalupi, curator of the Jepson Herbarium at UC Berkeley, member of the California Botanical Society board, and chairman of the Friends group, sent a letter to Robert Gordon Sproul, East Bay Regional Park District board president, on June 2, 1964, with “tentative suggestions” for both the existing six-acre garden and a proposed five-acre extension. Owen Pearce, editor of the *California Horticultural Journal*, past president of the California Horticultural Society, and chairman of the splinter Native Parks group, informed the board that his group’s final report on the Chabot Ecological Study Reserve would be completed for presentation on December 15, 1964.

Botanic Garden planning issues took a back seat during the winter of 1964–1965 because Mott accepted a consultancy with the Australian government to provide advice about parks in the capital city of Canberra. However, Mott and District staff had been involved in continuing disputes with Roof about operational, aesthetic, and safety issues at the garden that all came to a head in February of 1965, when Mott was in Australia. Roof received his 25-year service pin and then ten days later a letter of termination because of alleged insubordination. The headline of March 3, 1965, in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* was “Botanic Garden Furor Erupts: Director Fired.”

A Save the Garden committee, which included many members of the Friends group, quickly organized to save both Roof and the Tilden garden. Lobbying at the District board level was intense, with active media attention focused on the board’s upcoming April 6 meeting. After hearing well-organized public comments, the board adopted a resolution “to not destroy, remove, or diminish the size or quality of the existing California Native Plant Garden at Tilden, and that Roof remains director pending a hearing by Mott.” The *Berkeley Daily Gazette* headline the next day declared that the preservation of the Tilden Botanic Garden promised by the Park District board was a victory for local critics.

Mott had been determined to fire Roof but was convinced by Richard Trudeau, Park District public relations chief, and Dick Moore, Alameda County district attorney, that the charges in the letter of termination could not be sustained in the face of such strong public support for both Roof and the garden. Mott



Oakland Tribune, April 1, 1965

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## Thoughts on the Seventy-fifth *by Beverly Lane*

Tilden's Botanic Garden is one of several unique parts of the East Bay Regional Park District's original park. Tilden provides a myriad of park delights to visitors, with offerings well known in the East Bay and beyond. The Carousel, tree-adorned golf course, train rides, Environmental Education Center, Little Farm, distinctive picnic areas—all have their fans.

To me the Botanic Garden sits at the top of this list. It may not draw the children who march with celery in hand to the Little Farm and love the train rides, but it offers something compelling and peerless to those interested in nature. To examine and enjoy California's diverse plants while wending your way through the garden's paths is an unrivaled experience. What is this flower? How does that plant survive in the Bay Area's environment? Why a rock garden? How do docents remember the scientific names? Questions abound and usually answers are available.

Its storied history is another feature. Founding Director James Roof was an extraordinary person (almost a cult figure according to my friend Jean Siri, who never minced words) whose knowledge and personality left its mark far beyond his time. The confrontations between Roof and General Manager William Penn Mott, Jr.—with advocates weighing in from several directions at some wild Board meetings—reverberate today. This sixties clash meant several things. Today's Botanic Garden has a footprint that is tiny compared with what it might have been had Mott's vision been accomplished. But its location in the storied Tilden Park is unrivaled, and we know that the challenges of space will always be part of garden planning. The clash also resulted in a new organization, the California Native Plant Society, whose dedication, knowledge, and energy has immeasurably enriched the East Bay and California.

The *Friends'* support and the Botanic Garden managers' willingness to have volunteers nurture and interpret the garden have provided an extraordinary opportunity for visitors to learn and appreciate our native plants. As we look to the future, improvements in the garden and garden facilities should be viewed as both exciting and inevitable.

Congratulations on your diamond anniversary.

*Beverly Lane has been an elected member of the East Bay Regional Park District Board of Directors for 20 years and has served as President of the Board three times. She is also a local historian, published author, columnist, curator of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, and former mayor of the Town of Danville.*





CNPS meeting in 1966. Clockwise from upper left: August Frugé, Jim Roof, Alice Howard, Clyde Robin, Mary Wohlers, Paul Zinke (back to camera). Photo by Erwin Strohmaier; *Fremontia* 18(4) p. 7, reprinted courtesy of the California Native Plant Society

reluctantly reinstated Roof during a five-hour grievance hearing on April 7 and developed guidelines to improve the garden.

On May 11 the Park District board's designated garden subcommittee of Marlin Haley, George Roeding, Jr., and Fred Blumberg conducted a hearing attended by 100 people at the Brazilian Room in Tilden Park to accept further public comment on the Botanic Garden controversy. Dr. Leo Brewer, who was the chair of the Save the Garden Committee, a UC Berkeley chemistry professor, division head at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, and an avid native plant gardener, submitted comments and a detailed report covering current and proposed botanic garden activities in the Regional Parks. The newly formed Contra Costa Garden Committee, led by Joyce Burr, and the Citizens Committee for Tilden Park, led by Marion Copley, provided additional testimony supporting Roof and urging the District to retain and improve the Tilden garden. The people who fought for the garden valued its existing beauty and diversity, and they realized that the best place for it was in Tilden Park, near the university. The momentum had clearly swung in favor of the garden at Tilden and away from the Chabot Ecological Study Reserve proposal.

With victory in sight, 45 founding members of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), many of whom were members of the groups working to save the garden, filed incorporation papers on August 12, 1965, and opened an office in Berkeley. Watson "Mac" Laetsch, UC Professor of Botany, was elected CNPS's first president. Jenny Fleming, a Save the Garden Committee member and founding member of CNPS, described the excitement about founding CNPS in her oral history: "[Following the Park District board's resolution to keep the Tilden garden intact and reinstate Roof], the people were feeling very exhilarated with a strong sense of accomplishment—we were patting ourselves on the back

enthusiastically. But there was also a little drop in adrenaline. We had done it! We had achieved it. Our fun of getting together—was it going to be over? I don't know who said it, and this is not a direct quote, but someone said something to the effect that we seem to know how to get things done. What do we fight for next? I don't know who it was who said, 'You know, there is no native plant society in California, and there are in many other states. Maybe we should start one.' So we did."

On December 28, 1965, the report of the Park District board's Special Committee on East Bay Regional Park District Botanic Gardens was completed and presented to the full board. Their report included 14 specific recommendations, beginning with creating an upgraded garden master plan and a five-year financing and development plan, and clarifying that the responsibility for planting and maintenance of the Botanic Garden would be the sole responsibility of its director.

Mary Ellen (Perry) Butler covered the entire garden controversy for the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* in 1965. Later, while writing *Prophet of the Parks: The Story of William Penn Mott, Jr.*, she came to the conclusion that Mott got along well with his employees at all of the agencies he managed. But Roof was an exception to the rule. The entire Botanic Garden controversy was unsettling for those involved, but Mott rarely dwelled on a setback for long.

He was able to absorb disappointment and move on, which he did when Governor Ronald Reagan asked him to become director of California's State Parks agency. Mott resigned his position at the Park District on February 28, 1967, to serve two terms as State Parks director in Sacramento. He later held director positions at the Oakland Zoo, the Town of Moraga, and eventually the National Park Service. The botanic garden controversy was a minor event in Mott's 56-year unmatched career leading major city, regional, state, and national park systems.

Of all the primary participants in the controversy, only Roof remained at the Park District beyond 1968. He ended his 36-year career at the garden in 1976 as one of this state's most important botanic garden directors, natural history writers, captivating storytellers, and gifted California native plant horticulturists.

Thirty-nine years later, the Regional Parks Botanic Garden is a California native plant treasure that has continued to flourish under the care of succeeding directors Wayne Roderick, Steve Edwards, and currently Bart O'Brien. The East Bay Regional Park District, re-energized by Mott in 1962, now manages a unique system of 65 regional parks totaling over 119,000 acres, with 90 percent of its parkland acres providing open space habitat for an amazing variety of native plant and animal species. And, of course, CNPS has become one of the state's major citizen-led environmental organizations, with nearly 10,000 members in 34 chapters around the state dedicated to the preservation of California's native flora. 🌿

*Jerry Kent worked for the East Bay Regional Park District for 41 years, retiring as Assistant General Manager of Operations in 2003. He is currently involved in several environmental organizations and is a weekly volunteer at the Park District Archives.*



## The Founding of the *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden

by Katherine Greenberg, *Founding President*

It might have happened in the 1960s when a friends group formed to save the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, but it didn't. Encouraged by their success in saving the garden, members of that original group of friends went on to found the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). For the next three decades there was no organization dedicated to supporting the Botanic Garden.

It wasn't until 1996 that a group of docents from Glenn Keator's second docent training class came up with the idea that the garden should have a friends organization to provide ongoing support. Garden Director Steve Edwards agreed, and after meeting for months to form a board, draft bylaws, and create a membership brochure, the *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden were ready to start offering memberships in 1997.

Our aim was to "make a difference" by taking on projects in the garden that otherwise would not have been funded, such as renovation of the pond and improved paths. We invited a group of distinguished native plant horticulturists, including Bart O'Brien and Wayne Roderick, to join our Advisory Council, with Glenn Keator as chairman. Noted botanical illustrator Peg Steunenberg created an enduring logo for the *Friends*.

We published the inaugural issue of our quarterly newsletter *Manzanita* in the summer of 1997, featuring the genus *Arctostaphylos*. We soon launched a website, nativeplants.org, as well as a program of classes and workshops. We also organized several native plant symposia.

With additional support from the Regional Parks Foundation and CNPS, our membership grew rapidly over the first few years.

Founding board members included Katherine Greenberg (president), Es Anderson, Jeanne Ateljevich (*Manzanita* editor), Tom Bradner (treasurer), Josie Crawford, Janet Herben, Jo McCondochie, Pat McRae, Sue Rosenthal (secretary), Patrice Hanlon Spencer, Carrie Sprague, and Celia Zavatsky.

Steve Edwards, our Advisor Glenn Keator, and former Garden Director Wayne Roderick attended our monthly board meetings. Garden volunteer Jenny Fleming, a founding member of CNPS, became our liaison to the East Bay chapter. Their contributions were enormous.

It was exciting to be part of such a dynamic and dedicated group, and I was honored to serve as president for the first four years. Although I am now a member of the *Friends'* Advisory Council, some of the original board members are still actively involved. The *Friends* continue to make a difference through their many projects and programs in support of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden. 🌿

*Katherine Greenberg is an award winning garden designer and author of numerous articles as well as the second edition of the native gardening classic Growing California Native Plants. Katherine served as founding president of the Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden and is now a member of the Friends' Advisory Council. She is also a past president of the Mediterranean Garden Society and Pacific Horticulture Society, and is currently a board member of the UC Botanical Garden. Her website is www.katherine-greenberg.com.*



Saxon Holt



Photos by Al Seneres



Bert Johnson and Gene Choi in a swarm of ladybugs that filled the garden on June 30, 1991

When I was 20, I fell for a tree in Jim Roof's garden and found my life's work. That was the spring of 1972, and I was a student in Dr. Fred Tarp's Nature Study course at Contra Costa College. On a class field trip to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, a beautiful noble fir (*Abies nobilis*, now called *A. procera*) caught my eye in the Shasta-Klamath section. I was smitten by the tree and its beautiful surroundings, and I decided on the spot that I had to work there.

Within a week I was back at the garden seeking out the crew and asking, "How do I get to work here?" Gardener Greg Whipple directed me to speak to "Big Daddy," Garden Director James Roof. I found him sitting on a little bench in the shade of the bigcone spruce, wiping his forehead on that hot day. When I asked, "Are you James Roof?" he replied, "Yeah, that's what some people call me. What's up?" I told him I loved nature, loved native plants, and really wanted to work in the garden. In typical fashion he said, "Oh, everybody likes native plants." So I sat there quietly and waited. Eventually he looked at me and said, "Okay, sounds good to me. How about starting tomorrow? Be here at 9 o'clock sharp."

So I began volunteering in the Botanic Garden in June of 1972, working two full days a week all through that summer, fall, and winter. From the minute I started, I felt the magic of the garden and continued to feel it through more than 30 years working there. In my first four years, 1972 through 1976, Jim took me under his wing and taught me more about native plants than anyone has in all the years since.

### James B. Roof, the Person

James Roof was made of real flesh, blood, and bones like us all, and like us all he had a good side and a not-so-good side. But he always appeared to me as sort of a godlike figure. Jim was a very patient and deep thinker, and he was usually right about most things. The man was simply brilliant, quite unlike anybody I had ever met before.

Although reputable horticulturists have judged him harshly, Jim was one of the best plantsmen I knew. He successfully grew many of the so-called "ungrowable" plant species in California, even with his archaic methods of growing without the benefit of rooting hormones, heating mats, and the like. Don't forget that he previously had been an ace Forest Service propagator.

Many people have also criticized Jim for planting “poor-quality” trees in the Botanic Garden. In the fledgling garden Jim began to create in the early 1940s, he spent the better part of his time laying out the paths and infrastructure. Much of the original tree stock used in planting the garden was container-grown Forest Service nursery stock. As the garden was being constructed, much of this tree stock inevitably became root bound from being held in containers too long, and unfortunately much of it would begin to fail many years later. Jim likely knew about this, but his primary focus was on completing the garden’s infrastructure.

Another criticism I have often heard is that Jim planted his trees too close together in the Botanic Garden. I had correctly surmised when I first met Jim that he intentionally planted trees close together in order to create a forest effect. Jim was also attempting to capitalize on the limited acreage of the garden, so he tended to consolidate his tree plantings. The Botanic Garden was actually planted and designed on a smaller scale, just as the buildings, paths, and nurseries were constructed on a smaller scale. Our small Botanic Garden scale is comparable in a way to the miniature trains that run at the top of South Park Drive in Tilden Park: Both are fitting for small acreage.

### Field Trips with Jim

I was in the field with Jim about a dozen times, and each of those trips was both precious and memorable.

#### Cook and Green Pass

At the beginning of a field trip to Cook and Green Pass in the Siskiyou Mountains of Northern California, my objective was to meet Jim in the town of Hamburg. In the vicinity of Weitchpec, I encountered a work crew of convicts that had stopped all traffic for several hours while a new roadway was being blasted with explosives. I told them it was urgent that I get through. With some persuasion (in the form of a six-pack of beer), they let me through, but I paid the price for that stubborn insistence. I don’t blame them for what happened next, only myself.

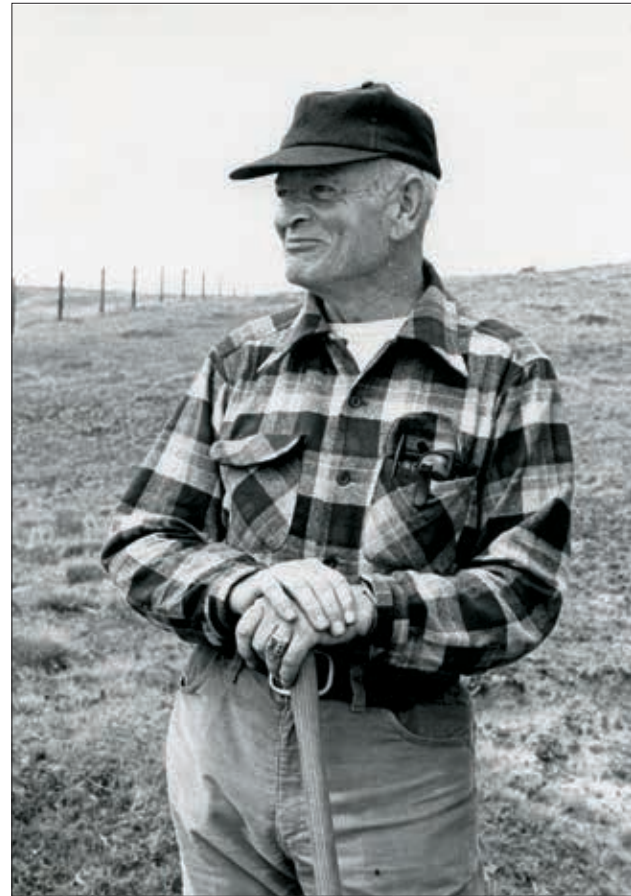
As I drove down the highway, I heard a loud explosion on the slope above me. Suddenly, a tumbling pile of loose rocks and boulders came towards me and my 1969 VW Beetle. One large boulder, about the size of a small beach ball, hit the underside of my car and bent the steering damper. To meet Jim, I would have to limp my nearly undrivable car into Hamburg the following day. Angry with myself, I decided to spend the night camping in Happy Camp before continuing on to Hamburg.

As nightfall approached, I was relaxing at a picnic table when I noticed two sets of glowing yellow eyes staring back at me from near the creek. I nearly jumped out of my skin. The beam from my flashlight disclosed that the eyes belonged to wolves, which I only later learned were domesticated pet wolves owned by somebody in town. In any case, I was more than ready to leave Happy Camp the next morning.

I met Jim in Hamburg, parked my nearly disabled car, and hopped into Jim’s VW bus along with my camping gear. We then headed up the road towards Cook and Green Pass, where we experienced the incredibly diverse botany of the region. But all around were countless piles of black bear dung, especially in the vicinity of Horsetail Falls, where Jim parked. Sometime later, Jim provided dinner, which consisted of a can of sardines with cheese and crackers. After dinner, Jim suggested we get some shuteye, so I got my sleeping bag, pillow, and flashlight out of his car and found a place to bed down at Horsetail Falls, right along the road. The next thing I heard was Jim saying, “See you in the morning.” To my surprise, he started up his VW bus and disappeared up the road.

Where he parked I do not know. But there I was alone in the dark, scared by the thought of all the bear dung around and the sardine oil Jim had drained onto the ground not too far from where I would be sleeping. I slept poorly to say the least. The next morning, Jim’s bus rounded the corner and parked near me. Jim cheerfully wished me a good morning and asked me if I was hungry.

I never had the nerve to ask Jim why he drove off and left me there that night, but the rest of the trip was wonderful. We filled our canteens with spring water from a small creek flowing on the leeward side of Cook and Green Pass, just beyond the flat where the rare Sadler oak (*Quercus sadleriana*) grew. We also saw Brewer spruce (*Picea breweriana*), lewisias, rhododendrons, and lots of manzanitas and conifers. It was a good trip in spite of the many ordeals.



Jim Roof at Point Reyes in 1980



## Kelly Lake

I accompanied Jim to a place called Kelly Lake, a small, beautiful mountain lake north of Happy Camp in Siskiyou County. As I recall, we saw hybrid firs there that appeared to be *Abies grandis* × *A. concolor*, as well as snowplant (*Sarcodes sanguinea*) and red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), so different from our local pink-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum*). At the wet margin of Kelly Lake, Jim began to dig up and wrap in burlap a plant of western serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*). Jim did not collect with permits, and if they had been required, he likely would have ignored them anyway. As Jim and I began to burlap the excavated plant, a couple of young hikers approached us, and the young woman angrily asked Jim, “What the hell are you doing digging up that plant?”

Jim first hesitated, rolled his eyes, and then responded, “I am a native plant professional, and I don’t need your advice or your approval of what I am doing here.” The shocked and horrified woman became livid and threatened to call the police. Jim then more thoroughly explained his role in the Botanic Garden and how this plant was important to the garden’s collection. The speech was flawless. Anybody hearing it would have given Jim complete approval for what he had done. Indeed, that’s what the hikers did and shortly thereafter left with smiles on their faces, both promising to visit the Botanic Garden at some future date.

This sort of thing happened on more than one occasion while I was in Jim’s company. He often had a way of first making enemies and then turning them into newfound friends.

## In the Garden with Jim Weeding and Cement Work

During my first year of volunteering at the garden (1972), I did major weeding, watering, and cement work with the crew. In those days, there was no visitor center in the Botanic Garden. The only building where the crew could congregate was the Lodge in the center of the garden. At that time, the Lodge exterior was finished with old, knotty redwood. The interior of the Lodge was very small and cramped, with cement-rock benches and shelves. There was no insulation, so it was a cold and damp place in the winter. The crew often congregated in the Lodge in the morning, heating up black coffee on an old single-burner Coleman stove. The potting shed in the rear of the Lodge resembled a horse corral, with dirt floors, open sides, and a leaky roof that always needed repair.

We used to make our own custom potting soil mix, starting with the loamy soil we graded and removed during path construction in the Channel Island section and adding Olympic sand and peat moss. It was a heavy soil mix, but it worked surprisingly well for many container-grown plants. At that time, there were no plastic nursery pots, so we grew our plants in recycled fruit cans we got for free from restaurants in Emeryville. We had to punch drainage holes in the bottoms of those cans with an old-fashioned can opener.

The weed problems in the Botanic Garden were horrendous back then. In the spring and early summer, the crew would fill the

Brewer spruce (*Picea breweriana*) in the garden’s Shasta-Klamath section



truck bed with weeds, brush clippings, and trimmed tree branches until it was so full the cab was nearly engulfed by the overhanging bulge and burden of plant debris. Gardener Greg Whipple and I would often ride on top of those bulging loads en route to empty the truck, using our legs to lever and push the plant debris down a steep slope behind the Botanic Garden. That dump site served as a giant mulch pile, with much of the plant material eventually rotting and breaking down by itself. In those days, we didn't haul our vegetation to a green waste dumpster for commercial composting as we do today.

There were times that Jim would take shortcuts with weed problems and torch off some of the worst weed-infested plots in the garden. I remember a couple of times when Jim calmly lit off some of the slope areas infested with dry wild oats in the Channel Island section. The flames quickly raced up the slope to the cyclone fence, where the road and the fence acted as a natural firebreak. Even though Jim had a hose and shutoff nozzle in his hand in case the fire got away, the crew watched in both silence and horror as the fire rushed and crackled up the slope, spewing white smoke. Jim was actually quite careful during these fire-starting episodes, and he was trained in firefighting from his earlier days with the Forest Service. But I do think he took pleasure in both alarming and exciting those who were watching.

In the afternoons during the summer and fall, the crew did a lot of cement work in the garden, usually constructing flagstone paths, bridge piers, or mortared rock walls. Greg Whipple, gardener Jack Stratford, and I usually mixed the cement and gathered and carried the rock, while garden supervisor Al Seneres and Jim did the rock work. In those days, the big bridge crossing Wildcat Creek had no railings, and Greg and I would literally run wheelbarrow loads of sand, cement, and rock across that span. There were many times when the wheelbarrow and I nearly went over the edge of the bridge. Although the bridge was much more charming and quaint without the railings, safety concerns eventually won over.

During these afternoon "cement sessions" of rock work in the garden, Jim would tell the crew incredible stories about people and plants either associated with the garden or not. It didn't matter: All of his stories were fascinating. Jim was a storehouse of wonderful tales, and we all loved to hear them. Of course, Jim always did all the talking, and we always did all the listening.

### Jim's Garden Collections

When it came to plant collecting, Jim Roof was a master of planning. He usually built the plant bed, then collected the plant. Most people I know tend to reverse that order, first collecting the plant, then trying to find a place to plant it. Jim was very knowledgeable about where to search for and collect what he called the best forms of plant species. Jim often used botanical terms such as "dwarf," "giant," "blue," "columnar," "decumbent and spreading," and so forth to describe both color and shape of plants he encountered in the field.

Jim recognized and added many horticultural forms of plant species to the garden's collection and was forever seeking the most "growable" forms.

Albert "Kayo" Harris & Associates



The biggest bridge in the garden without railings or decorative rock facing in 1959

For example, Jim recognized that there were many different forms of white fir (*Abies concolor*). He collected a form of white fir from Meeks Bay at Lake Tahoe that displayed beautiful, sweeping branches, hoping that such a form would maintain itself in garden cultivation. There was also a blue-leaved form of white fir he selected from Mount Pinos and grew in the garden. Jim told me white firs often lose their lower branches in cultivation, so he was always looking for forms that would hold them. It was his hope that the Meeks Bay and Mount Pinos forms would do so. Unfortunately, neither did for long. Jim also relished a particularly low and prostrate form of dwarf juniper from Point Saint George in Crescent City. He later described this juniper as the

smallest known conifer in California during an interview with a journalist from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Jim was a forerunner in recognizing and popularizing forms of plant species in his Botanic Garden. This “Roofian” tradition continues today, as our entire staff is constantly on the search for better and more growable forms of plants.

The most difficult plants to grow are those from the Sierra Nevada. Nearly all species of Sierran pines and firs are largely ungrowable, as are most other Sierran conifers. The same holds

true for most Sierran shrubs, including nearly all of the Sierran species of manzanita, *Ceanothus*, and *Rhamnus*. About the only reliably growable plants from the Sierra are some of the riparian trees and shrubs.

The great majority of California’s annual wildflowers are also often ungrowable in cultivation. This overwhelming failure of so many of California’s native plants was largely discovered through the many decades of Jim Roof’s trials and errors and successes and failures in his attempts to grow natives. The lesson to be learned

*“...much of the native flora of California is often very tenuous and difficult to sustain in artificial environments, including botanic gardens. This is why it is so critically important to preserve native plants in their native habitats.”*



is that much of the native flora of California is often very tenuous and difficult to sustain in artificial environments, including botanic gardens. This is why it is so critically important to preserve native plants in their native habitats.

This conservation ethic is yet another of the incredibly important contributions and teachings Jim Roof left for us to recognize. The greatest horticultural successes in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden are mostly plants found in our coastal region. One of the garden’s most successful acquisitions was the collection of coast redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) from Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in coastal Humboldt County. It seems that Jim had secured some of the finest redwood stock in the world, as his redwood seed collections from Prairie Creek have performed magnificently in this garden. Many of these trees are now approaching 150 feet in height, with many of their trunks three or more feet in diameter. These trees are still infants, born from seeds planted in 1940.

Jim was an exceptional plant ecologist, a great teacher and speaker, and a compassionate and generous person. He was my mentor: He elevated my passion for plants more than anyone else, and my time with him set the direction for the rest of my life. 🌿

*Bert Johnson began working at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in 1972 and retired in 2011 after more than three decades as a gardener there. His continuing passion for natives was inspired and nurtured by James Roof, the garden’s first director.*

One of the 75-year-old trees in the garden’s Redwood section  
Photo by Emerald Canary

## Some of My Times with Wayne *by Joe Dahl*

Wayne Roderick was an exceptional man. He was well known internationally as a bulb expert and horticulturalist. In fact, he was so well respected there are several species of California native plants named in his honor: *Ceanothus roderickii* (Pine Hill ceanothus), *Erythronium citrinum* var. *roderickii* (Roderick's fawn lily), and *Fritillaria roderickii* (Roderick's fritillary).

Wayne was also a champion of environmental causes, including getting the botanically diverse area around Cedar Lake in the Klamath Mountains protected from logging so we can all still enjoy a spectacular array of natives in a very small area today. Not only are there a number of genera and species of the Ericaceae and Pinaceae concentrated at Cedar Lake, but the lake itself holds a number of species of aquatic plants that are not often found all together in one place.

Wayne was a lifelong educator who introduced countless numbers of people to our special flora. In his last few years he made many, many trips to the White Mountains, volunteering to collect and press plant specimens for the Visitor Center at Schulman Grove to educate visitors.

But to me what made Wayne even more exceptional than *what* he was was *who* he was. Wayne was that person you are extremely lucky to encounter once in your lifetime. He was warm, honest (at times almost brutally honest, but in a tactful and respectful way that never offended) and easily accessible. He was also fun loving and playful, with a wonderful self-effacing sense of humor that always kept things light. Don't get me wrong—Wayne could dish it out, but never, ever in a rude or disrespectful way.

When I was first getting to know Wayne and didn't yet understand him, he would often give me these little verbal digs that I was never quite sure how to respond to. Some of my hesitation came from the knowledge of just what an influential figure Wayne was in horticulture and how he was respected as such worldwide. I have to admit—I was a little intimidated by him. Finally I came to the conclusion that this was crazy, and I was determined not to take his comments lying down any more. I was going to have to start giving it right back to him.

One day, as we were preparing for the plant sale, Wayne gave me what I considered the perfect opportunity to give him a little jab back, and I took it. I walked away laughing, leaving Wayne staring after me speechless. Anyone who knew Wayne will understand that didn't happen often. After a while, I came to the

realization that my comment could be construed as wildly inappropriate, that I didn't really know Wayne well enough to make it, and that I never, ever should have said it at that point in my relationship with him. I went back and found Wayne still working where I had



Wayne Roderick in the White Mountains in 2001

left him earlier. I began to fumble my way through an apology while he fixed me with a blank stare. When I was finally done stammering my way through a very awkward apology and had been feeling about six inches tall for what seemed like an eternity, Wayne responded. I was expecting to be read the riot act—I was sure I had transgressed some unwritten law and now I was really going to have pay for my transgression. Then came the reaction: He just broke out in laughter! It really was the last response I expected. He then proceeded to tell me that he loved that kind of banter and wished more people would engage him in that kind of back and forth. He also confessed that he really enjoyed watching me squirm through my apology and had been having a very difficult time keeping a straight face. At that moment I realized that Wayne only gave a hard time to people he liked. From that point on Wayne and I were great friends and relentless with our remarks to each other.

Wayne would often refer to me as a “miserable bastard” (among a variety of other things). It seemed

Joe Dahl



Wayne Roderick in the field in 1961

then only natural to me that Wayne should have a title of his own. After some thought I settled on his new title and set out to have a sweatshirt made for him so everyone would know his status. I wanted to have it in time to give it to him at a symposium we were going to attend together at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

One morning before heading over to the symposium for a day of lectures in a packed auditorium, I told Wayne that I had a gift for him. I handed him the bag. He took it and turned slightly away from me so he could see better by the light coming in through the hotel window. I watched over his shoulder as he removed the folded sweatshirt from the bag. Still turned away from me he unfolded it so he could see the large, bold font across the chest of his new sweatshirt that proudly proclaimed his new title of “World’s Most Miserable Bastard.” And then he

didn’t move...and he still didn’t move, just looking at the sweatshirt for what seemed an eternity. All I could think was, “Last time I got lucky, this time I really did go too far.” Finally, his shoulders began to shake and he turned to me, showing an ear-to-ear grin. He whipped off the sweatshirt he was wearing, dove into the one I had just given him, and announced it was time to go to the symposium. I had no idea he would actually wear it!

The trip to the symposium was a several-block-long walk alongside streets choked with morning commuter traffic. Wayne made the day for a lot of those poor people stuck in their cars that morning. I can’t begin to tell you how many people I saw go from a scowl to a grin when they saw Wayne in that sweatshirt. I wondered how many conversations there were at various work sites about “the guy I saw on my way to work this morning.” Wayne loved that sweatshirt and wore it virtually every day for the rest of his life. He delighted in the reactions he got to the sweatshirt in public places. That was Wayne; he liked to make people laugh.

After Wayne passed, I found out from the executor of his will that among Wayne’s last wishes was that he be cremated wearing the sweatshirt.

I was very touched, and I’m sure that somewhere he’s still making people laugh.

A few years earlier, right after I became the supervisor at the garden, then-director Steve Edwards approached me and said Wayne had announced to him that he was going to take me out into the field to show me some of his favorite plant-hunting haunts. We had a great time together over the course of that week. Wayne took me to areas around the Smith River, and among the many things he showed me was a California butterwort seep (*Pinguicula macroceras* var. *macroceras*). We took Patrick’s Creek Road to the hamlet of O’Brien, looking at the spectacular serpentine flora along the way. This was the first time I had ever seen brook trillium (*Pseudotrillium rivale*) outside the garden. We drove from there down toward the town of Happy Camp, where Wayne showed me ground cones (*Kopsiopsis strobilacea*).

As he drove (and he insisted on driving the entire trip so I could focus on seeing the country we were travelling through), Wayne was constantly pointing out roads leading off to areas that I “needed to see sometime” faster than I could write them down. Wayne took me to Cook and Green Pass, we drove along the Klamath and Scott Rivers. We went to Scott Mountain and from there to Mt. Eddy. That was the first time I had been out in the field with Wayne for anything more than a day trip, and I was very impressed by how he seemed as comfortable out at night, sleeping on the ground, as he was on a stage in front of a huge crowd.

One winter Wayne, Varon Smith, my wife Carole, and I decided to take a week and go to a part of the desert near the Salton Sea that none of us had been to before. It is an area east of the Salton Sea that is accessible by an old, former toll road from the 1850s used by miners to go from the gold fields of California to the newer strikes found in Arizona. The road still mostly follows along its original route and is maintained as access to the Chocolate Mountains Gunnery Range. It also provides good access to both the Chuckwalla and Orocopia mountain ranges.

One of the plants we wanted to see was the Munz cholla (*Opuntia munzii*). At that time it was not recognized in the *Jepson Manual* as a distinct species but was considered a hybrid between silver cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*) and teddy bear cholla (*Opuntia bigelovii*). The thing that intrigued us was the description of its size. It was reported to be able to reach twelve feet or more in height, and this was something we all wanted to see. After a long day’s drive and with dusk falling, we finally reached the

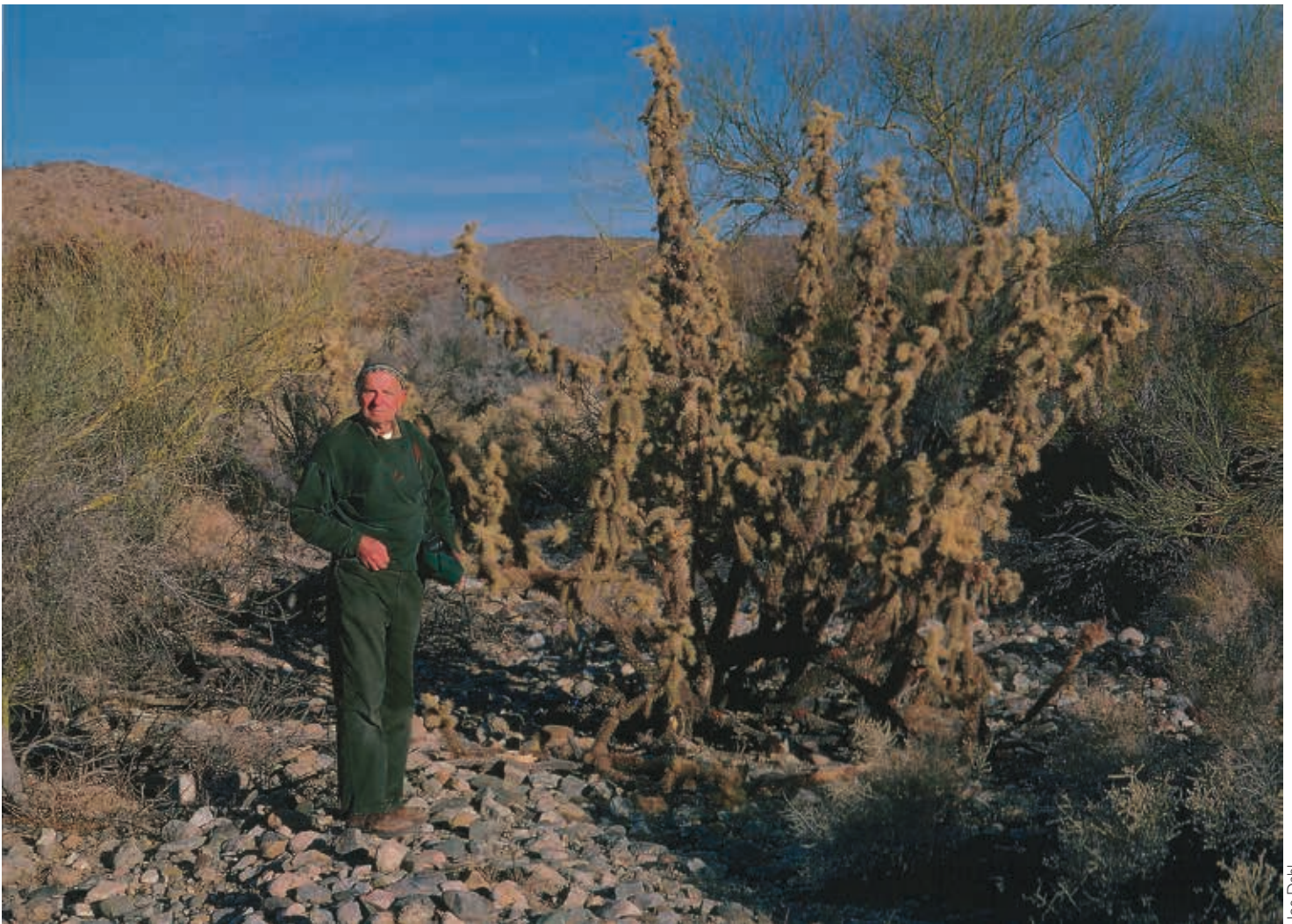
approximate location we had for the cactus. We weren't seeing anything more than about five feet tall, and since none of us had seen the plant before, we weren't allowing ourselves to be convinced we had found it. As it was almost dark, we found a good place to camp and all turned in for the night.

The next morning we awoke to find that we had actually set up camp on the edge of a "forest" of Munz cholla. One in particular caught my eye, and I asked Wayne to stand next to it for scale in the photo I wanted to take. It was an impressive plant, easily twice as tall as Wayne. Wayne of course feigned disgust and indignation at the prospect of being used as a model. I told him I wanted to be sure I had a photo of the two most spiny and bristly characters in the area side by side. I have a copy of that photo in my office, and every time I look at it I have to smile. It is classic Wayne, having a wonderful time but having to act like he is being put out by helping me.

I was fortunate enough to go on a number of other trips with Wayne over the years. He was always great company, and I will always have fond memories of those trips and the time I spent with him. I have never again met anyone like him, and I expect I never will. I will never forget his warmth and kindness and the way he accepted everyone for who they are. Wayne was always extremely generous, and no one ever left his house hungry or without at least one plant.

Wayne was truly one of a kind. I am indeed fortunate that I was able to spend as much time as I did with him and that he considered me a friend. Anyone who knew Wayne certainly had their life enriched by the experience. I know I did. 🌵

*Joe Dahl is the supervisor of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden. He has been involved with the garden since the late 1980s and has conducted field work throughout the state to bring new plants into the garden's collection.*



Wayne Roderick with a 12-plus-foot-tall Munz cholla (*Opuntia munzii*)

Joe Dahl

## Regional Parks Botanic Garden: More than a Collection of Beautiful California Native Plants *by Glenn Keator, PhD*



Rosie Andrews

Glenn Keator with a class at Ellery Lake

While those familiar with botanic gardens know their important role in preserving, presenting, and maintaining a collection of plants—something the Regional Parks Botanic Garden does in spades—there’s more to it than that. I’m referring to the personal and personnel side of the equation, a group of dedicated gardeners and volunteers who not only maintain the garden but present an all-important interface between the garden and its visitors.

When I first started visiting the garden many years ago, I was struck by its potential to educate and inform visitors, so I approached then-director Steve Edwards about starting a docent program. Docents provide a bridge between visitors and plant collections by giving tours that highlight the garden. That was my first interaction with garden staff, and we established a program that has continued ever since, graduating a whole cadre of volunteers dedicated to disseminat-

ing information to the general public and to school groups. In my opinion, reaching out to children is one of the most important aspects of education, a way of inculcating the excitement and importance of plants and the natural environment, and hopefully providing a way of encouraging a conservation ethic for life.

As time has gone on, my commitment to education has increased. We now have a friends group (*Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden*) who function purely on a volunteer basis to help preserve the garden, provide a wide array of courses, and support garden projects as well as make possible field trips for the gardeners to increase our collection.

That is one of the aspects of gardens I most admire: Gardens are never static. With the changes come challenges and the need for introducing new material from all over the state, something our gardeners do by traveling to special places with special plants to make these introductions possible. (Botanic gardens rely on

wild-collected material because they provide a basis for doing research and experiments on plants from their original environment.)

Speaking of staff, we have an excellent group of experienced gardeners (though we could use more), all of whom are devoted to our goal of growing natives from California's diverse ecosystems and all of whom are open to questions from the public and glad to help show people what we have to offer. (I've found many gardens where the staff members were basically only devoted to their roles and not to interfacing with visitors.)

I'm proud of how the *Friends* have helped to fund major projects like overhauling the pond, providing support for our new desert rock gardens with a grant from a local garden club, and funding myriad other, smaller projects. We devote ourselves to programs like docent training, plant courses and field trips, and much more, all without creating an expensive infrastructure to perpetuate the *Friends* the way many other gardens do. We have also put on several symposia geared towards educating the gardening public about the importance of native plants in gardens and landscapes.

In addition, publications like our quarterly newsletter *Manzanita*, our monthly e-newsletter, and *The Four Seasons*, the garden's annual botanical journal, provide more information on our native flora and associated concerns, three more great ways of expanding knowledge at home and learning about our native plants.

As I approach a time in my life where teaching at local colleges has become less important and more of a burden (for political reasons), I find more time and energy to carry on this educational goal about natives. Our *Friends* group now offers courses on subjects ranging from gardening basics and special gardening techniques to important plant groups, including their uses, propagation, and cultural requirements, as well as field trips from one end of the state to the other—mountains, seashore, forests, deserts, and more. I find these endeavors particularly satisfying because I—and the others who teach here—can tailor the courses to our own interests and thereby convey our love of the California flora.

I'm hopeful that our visitors will recognize and embrace this human interface with native plants and get behind our mission even more. We strive to be open, forthright, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about the role of our beautiful garden. Please don't forget we have a website, [nativeplants.org](http://nativeplants.org), which provides information, opportunities to participate as a volunteer, and educational programs. We're currently revising the website to make it even more user friendly and informative. Come by and visit us as the year progresses; you won't be disappointed.

Speaking of visits, the garden is always changing, and monthly visits demonstrate what the plants do through the year: when they bloom, when they're dormant, when they set seed, when they first appear above ground, and when their leaves change color. This regard for nature's changes embodies a study called phenology, and we hope soon to initiate a phenological study on key native species to increase our understanding of plant life cycles.

The garden's biannual plant sales, made possible by volunteers working to raise money for the garden, offer a wide variety of beautiful native plants for the home garden at reasonable prices and engage the plant-loving public. Our sales provide a range of plants seldom found in nurseries, and our knowledgeable volunteers convey growing tips and other important information to make a home native garden successful. One of the best-kept secrets is that we also offer an informal venue for buying native plants at our nursery every Thursday morning after the spring plant sale. And don't forget the seeds! Our Seedy Friends collect a wide array of native wildflower and shrub seeds, packaged and offered to visitors in our Visitor Center with the reasonable price of \$3 per packet.

Our Botanic Garden is the "other" garden in the East Bay hills, differing from the UC Botanical Garden by its specialization in natives from all over the state planted in aesthetically pleasing groupings, a work always in progress and always interesting any time of the year. ♻️

*Glenn Keator is a popular freelance instructor of botany in the Bay Area. He currently teaches, leads field trips, and provides docent instruction in botany for the Regional Parks Botanic Garden. He is the author of a number of books on native plants.*



Docent tour at the garden

Terry Smith

## The Future is Shady—and Sunny *by Bart O'Brien, Garden Director*

Steve Edwards



Large-flowered bush monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus* var. *grandiflorus*)

**T**he future of most gardens is shady—literally. Gardeners plant young trees and shrubs amongst showy annuals and perennials, and as time passes, there are more and larger woody plants and fewer wildflowers. Here at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, we have deliberately followed that trajectory in most of the northern half of the garden, but thankfully, also by diligent effort, the southern portions of the garden have retained their original sunnier dispositions.

The future of the Botanic Garden is bright: Plans are underway to fulfill earlier visions for the garden dating back to the 1972 Land Use Plan for Tilden Regional Park and the recent Measure WW passed by District voters in 2008. Both include a new visitor center for the Botanic Garden that will be located to the west, just beyond the existing garden border fence and across Anza View Drive. This new facility will be located in full sun and will expand the range of plants we are able to grow and display in our living collection.

In the meantime, what is on the Botanic Garden's more immediate horizon?

Steve Edwards



Sonoma sage (*Salvia sonomensis*) covers a slope in the garden's Valley-Foothill section.





Bart O'Brien

New rock garden for California Floristic Province plants from Baja California, Mexico. This new display, along with two larger new rock gardens for Southern California plants, was made possible by a generous gift from the Bonita Garden Club of Piedmont.

### **Additional garden area renovations and expansion.**

This past year, we were extremely fortunate to receive a large gift from the Bonita Garden Club that enabled us to completely rework three large areas of our Southern California section and provide dissecting microscopes for our staff. Construction was finished this past November, and we are now working diligently to populate these spectacular new rock gardens with both salvaged plants from the old beds and exciting new collections.

This year, we will complete construction of our long-gestating serpentine bog display. We will also be making some changes to the Channel Island area: removing some unaccessioned perimeter trees and shrubs that have created too much shade and root competition for the many smaller, desirable accessioned plant collections beneath them. I hope that before too many years pass by we will all be enjoying a new Sierran rock garden for plants that require cooler crevice

conditions (replacing the existing area between the coast redwood forest and the lawn south of the grove of Sierra big trees that is now too shaded and invaded by tree roots). A number of the manzanita beds need refurbishing, as the soil in many of these areas has become compacted and flattened over time, making them much less hospitable for growing our many manzanitas that demand excellent drainage, full sunlight, and good air circulation.

Eventually, I would like to see the garden's northwestern perimeter expanded to include what is currently an unattractive grove of *Eucalyptus globulus* that visually detracts from the otherwise all-native view to the northwest. By eliminating these non-native *Eucalyptus* trees and adding this acreage to the Botanic Garden, we would be able to expand our Pacific Rainforest collections and build a connecting path to the existing trail that dead-ends at our north fence line at the bottom of Wildcat Canyon.



The Botanic Garden's shady and beautiful Pacific Rainforest section

**More interactions between garden visitors and docents.** This year, I will be working with Sue Rosenthal to start a program of docent greeters at both garden entries on weekends to answer visitor questions and to engage visitors with specific seasonal highlights found in the Botanic Garden.

**More plants!** It is absolutely vital to the success and future of the Botanic Garden that we continue to add to the living collection through field collections. One of the most compelling aspects of growing California natives is that the full range of genetic variation of these plants is right here at our fingertips. There are often new or different populations of plant species that had previously been categorized as “ungrowable” at our garden, and we often have new or different garden niches and soils in which to grow them. Gardens are always growing and changing, and we as gardeners need to keep up with, and take advantage of, these changing conditions and opportunities.

**Changing lawns.** Euphemistically, James Roof referred to all of the Botanic Garden's lawns of exotic species as “meadows.” Look for some changes to at least some of these meadows over the coming few years as we experiment with a number of native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers to create visitor-friendly native meadows. These new plantings will provide the same services to our visitors as our existing lawns but will be native species that can thrive with less water and less mowing. The components of these new “meadows” will be part of our accessioned living collections of native plants.

**Facilities upgrades.** The garden's glasshouse needs renovations that will make it rodent proof and easier to clean and maintain as well as address some deferred maintenance issues (reglazing glass and replacing cracked or broken panes). The main office in the Visitor Center requires similar renovations that will allow for easier cleaning and much more effective filing systems and desk space organization. And,

to quote the Wayne Roderick dictum, “Storage, storage, storage!” We are always looking for more storage space and secure storage systems for the Botanic Garden’s many records and treasures.

**Plant conservation.** The garden has a comparatively long history of cultivating many globally and locally rare and endangered plants. Several taxa have even been successfully reintroduced back to their original sites using material (seeds and/or plants) from our collection. In at least two cases, our plantings have successfully established viable new populations of endangered species in the wild. We expect to take this activity to the next level by adding long-term seed banking to our field collecting activities with the California Plant Rescue (CaPR) consortium (look for more information on this effort in the next issue of *Manzanita*).

**The Botanic Garden’s community: Friends, docents, and volunteers.**

I, along with every member of the Botanic Garden’s staff, look forward to our continuing work with the docents, volunteers, and *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden to further develop, expand, and support the successful education and outreach programs and volunteer opportunities that would not be possible without their ongoing efforts: classes, lectures, field trips, docent training and enrichment programming, plant growing and propagation, plant sales, seed collecting and cleaning and sales, website and online presence (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, e-newsletter, etc.), school tours, weekend tours, publicity, gardening assistance, and last but not least printed publications (including *Manzanita*).

**Visitors and the public.** The Botanic Garden and the entire Park District exist at the will of the people of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone in the Botanic Garden’s community to appropriately protect, promote, and interpret the garden and its collections and other assets to everyone who comes through the garden’s gates. Additionally, we all serve as the garden’s ambassadors to those folks who otherwise may never directly experience it. Every person we come into contact with should know of our affiliation with the garden and learn something compelling about it.

How will all of this happen? After all, the Regional Parks Botanic Garden is just one of the 65 units comprising the East Bay Regional Park District. Even with the best set of plans and intentions, nothing will happen without the deep and

abiding dedication of all the Botanic Garden’s people and constituencies. This is where YOU, the reader, plant lover, visitor, volunteer, docent, *Friend*, supporter, and staff of the Botanic Garden have a critical role. Always let the District’s management and your elected District Directors know how much the Botanic Garden means to you! There are many other gardens, but within the East Bay Regional Park District there is only one botanic garden. With your loyal and committed support, and by working together, our Botanic Garden’s brightest future will be positively incandescent. ♻️



Steve Edwards

Shaw's agave (*Agave shawii* var. *shawii*) in bloom in the garden's Desert section



Wildcat Creek in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden

Stephen Joseph, [www.stephenjosephoto.com](http://www.stephenjosephoto.com)

