

THE GARDEN

A newsletter for staff & volunteers

This week

- Message from Ari
- Brandi's Message: Eat Weeds!
- What Part of a Plant Are You Eating?
- A DEB Update
- Eric's Blooms
- Garden Photos



Grevillea 'Peaches and Cream'

Garden Angels

The SDBG Gardening Angels are up and running and looking to assist anyone who might need a little help with grocery shopping. The Angels are located all over the county and they are just waiting to lend a hand.

You might need just a few items, but even a full Costco run is possible. If you don't need us today that's great but if, in the future, you need a helping hand we're here to help!

Greetings all! I was fortunate to venture back into the Garden this week and see all of the blooms and beauty it offers. I was even able to sneak a few photos, like the one above. To take a moment to stroll through the Garden felt great and seemed to be good for the soul.

We are all hard at work developing plans and protocols for our eventual reopening. With many detailed aspects to consider, we are focused on safety procedures and our Horticulture staff has been digging in to present the Garden's best face.

Ari presents important information on our reopening ... please take a look. We hope you all are well and secure.

A Message from Ari Novy, PhD

President & CEO

Dear SDBG Staff and Volunteers,

The past 8 weeks have truly been extraordinary. We have witnessed a global pandemic that may prove to be the most serious global disease since the 1918 Spanish Flu. Many countries, including our own, have struggled to contain it and the human and economic toll are almost unfathomable. Our best weapon so far is social distancing, the simple act of decreasing through distance the disease's transmissibility to other humans. As such, the State and County authorities closed all but essential business activity in the County almost 8 weeks ago, forcing the Garden to close just as we turned 50 years old. In San Diego County, we have been successful enough with this strategy that public health officials are allowing some businesses to reopen, with significant operating restrictions. We have been eagerly awaiting word from authorities that we can open, and working on new operating plans to safeguard your safety when we can open.

I am pleased to announce that we are very close to finalizing reopening procedures based on directives from Federal, State, County and City government. While I do not yet have an exact date that we will be able to open, we are increasingly confident that we will be able to start a phased reopening within the next few weeks. We are currently preparing to bring most of our employees back on site to reconfigure our operations so that we can meet the new social distancing requirements imposed by authorities for a facility of our type. The exact details will be forthcoming, but when we do open please expect significant differences in our operations. For the time being, we will not be permitted to have festivals, events, classes or even guided tours. The Children's gardens and most indoor spaces will remain closed. Visitors will eventually be able to enter the Garden, but will have to wear masks and maintain 6-foot separation from others (excluding their own family) at all times.

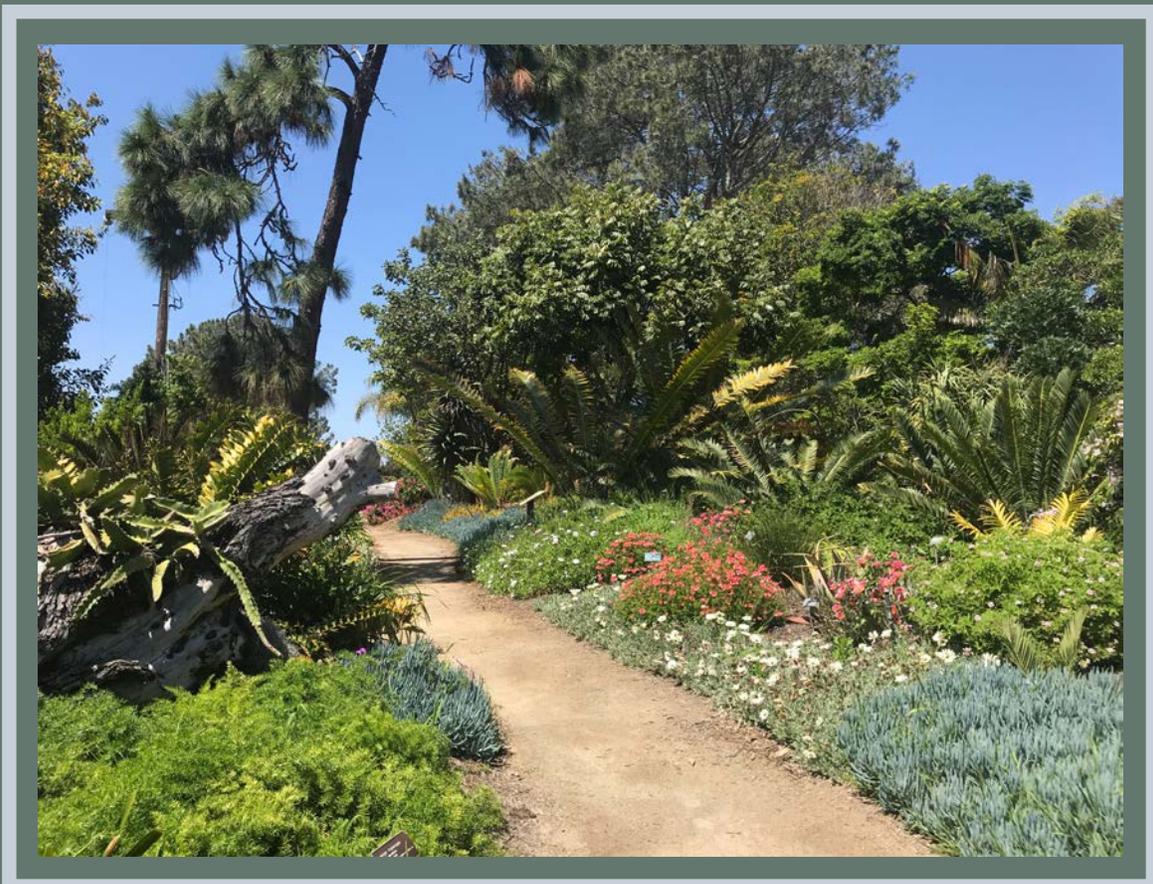
The experience of working at the Garden, both for staff and volunteers, will be vastly different. We will be required to limit the number of staff and volunteers and provide training and greater levels of direction to all on site. We will also be reconfiguring ticketing and membership entrances to minimize contact between visitors and Welcome Center associates and enabling new systems, like timed-ticketing, to give us more control of the exact number of visitors in the Garden at any one time. Despite these changes, the Garden will still be the tranquil oasis of botanical wonder we've all grown to love. Your health and safety are our first priority and we will make sure you can enjoy the Garden and safeguard your well-being at all times.

This is a challenging time for the Garden. Our revenue has all but dried up in the past two months. We have received some membership renewals and donations, and we are deeply grateful for all who continue to support us. But the financial reality has had serious implications. Earlier this week, we let five of our staff go in order to put us in a more sustainable financial position. This was a heartbreaking decision as these individuals were all valued and cherished colleagues. In addition to these staff cuts, our senior-most staff have taken a pay reduction. I have taken a pay reduction of 40%. We will continue to do what is necessary to maintain the long term sustainability of the Garden.

We all love the Garden and we will all do whatever it takes to make sure the Garden remains your place of delight and solace, which you can visit safely, and will be here for your grandchildren.

I'm so excited that we are inching closer to welcoming you all back to the Garden. As we embark on this experiment to reopen the Garden under unique conditions, we will be eager for your feedback. We will listen and adjust so that the Garden can remain a special place for all of us through good days, bad days and everything in between.

Thank you,
Ari



Weeds

If You Can't Beat 'em, Eat 'em

By Brandi Eide



This year's rains brought forth many healthy stands of weeds, but after speaking with Tony Gurnoe, Director of Horticulture, he shed some light on the matter.

He told me that last spring there were more weeds in the Garden than he'd ever seen, and staff and volunteers descended with a great effort to eradicate most of them. Their heroic job of weeding and mulching helped to reduce the weed seed bank in the soil, and this year's rain likely germinated much of what remained.

Weeding is a never ending task for gardeners the world around. However, those who have tended the same area for years know that today's work yields tomorrow's reward and removing weeds before they go to seed drastically reduces work in the years to come.

This year we aren't able to have the help of our incredible volunteers in keeping weeds at bay, but our staff continues to work hard at their removal as they tend to and beautify the Garden.

I hope some of you enjoy eating many of our SoCal weeds as much as I do. Pulling weeds is far more pleasant with a resulting healthy snack, and you can call it harvesting instead of weeding!

I've been drinking nettle tea and cooking weed greens for months now, and I always encourage others to partake in my weed-eating habits. Be certain you can positively identify any plant before consuming, and do a bit of research. You'll easily know stinging nettle when you brush up against it. The sting doesn't last long, some even use it to treat joint pain, and the irritating trichomes cause no issue once the plant has wilted, been soaked, dried or cooked. It's also a larval food plant for many butterflies.

In most areas you can easily find at least one edible weed growing: New Zealand spinach, dandelion, miner's lettuce, soursop, wild radish, sow thistle, mallow, chickweed and mustards are often abundant locally. Some, like fennel and nasturtium, are also invasive here, so weed with an appetite while positively impacting the local ecosystem. Many of these plants are highly nutritious, as long as they aren't harvested from toxic soils or beside busy roads. So get outside, bring your trowel and a plate and look at weeding in a new light!

"A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows."
— Doug Larson



Urtica dioica, stinging nettle fresh, processing with gloves, drying for later use



What Part of a Plant Are You Eating?

Sarah Morgan Sickler, Education Manager

The Incredible Edibles garden is flourishing with all of the sunshine, producing a variety of springtime food. Large green leaves, long, sturdy stems, blooming flowers, juicy fruit, and thick, hairy roots: Have you ever thought about exactly what part of the plant you are eating for dinner?



You don't need to have a home garden to take a deeper look at the plants we eat. What incredible edibles like broccoli, kale, avocado or sweet potatoes are in your kitchen?

Use this week's 'Fun at Home' activity to discover what parts of the plant we eat and create your own picture using parts of plants found in your kitchen with this activity.

Enjoy!



What Part of a Plant Are You Eating?

Flowers

Flowers are the reproductive part of a plant. They grow from the stem. Flowers often have brightly colored petals and pollen that attract insects to them.

Examples of unopened flowers (buds) that we often eat are broccoli, romanesco cauliflower, and artichokes.

Fruit and Seeds

Once the flowers are pollinated by insects, edible, juicy fruit with hard seeds inside is formed. The purpose of the fruit is to attract animals and disperse the seeds. Once the seeds are on the ground, they will be able to grow into a new plant.

Examples of fruit that we eat are oranges, apples, tomatoes, and avocados. Some seeds that we eat are beans (like green beans and lentils) and nuts (like pecans and almonds).

Leaves

Leaves also grow from the stem of a plant and help collect the energy of the sun through the process of photosynthesis. They are green in color because of a chemical called chlorophyll inside of them that helps with this process.

Examples of leaves that we eat are kale, lettuce, basil, spinach, and cabbage.

Stems

Stems support a plant with their solid structure or by moving water from the roots and nutrients and energy around the plant. They can be above the ground, like celery, asparagus, or green onions, or below, as in potatoes and ginger.

Roots

Underground roots are important for helping a plant stay stable, collecting water for the rest of the plant, and holding extra nutrients and energy for the plant to use later. They may be large and fleshy or have hair-like parts.

A few roots that we eat are carrots, rutabaga, and radishes.

SDBGarden.org

San Diego BOTANIC GARDEN

Update from the Docent Executive Board



The DEB held our first Zoom meeting on April 14. Almost everyone was able to attend and we enjoyed seeing each other, if even remotely. Usually we would share our discussions at the May General Meeting, but since we could not meet, here's a brief summary:

The DEB talked about the hours' requirement for Docents in 2020, in light of the Garden's closure. We decided that sometime in the Fall, when things are clearer, we will adjust the 2020 hours requirement to reflect the closure as well as any limits on volunteer opportunities when the Garden re-opens, making exceptions as needed for individual circumstances.

The DEB also discussed ways we can all stay in touch with each other during the closure. We decided to create a private Facebook page for volunteers, trustees and staff, where we could share garden-related information. We have almost 100 members already! If you haven't joined and would like to do so, the link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/913838559086835/>

We are also hoping to present a remote program for our June General Meeting. More to come on that.

A small subcommittee is at work revising and updating the Society's Operating Regulations. They will continue their work and bring the revisions to a vote of the membership when we are able to all meet again.

Volunteer of the Month recognitions were discussed; the DEB decided to suspend recognitions until we start meeting again. Trip Trio tours, educational tours, Docent training, garden beautification, and propagation are also on hold.

The 2020 Directory is printed and they will be distributed when reopening begins. Wishing everyone good health and good gardening.

Susan and Jeff

What's in Bloom at SDBG

By Eric Evans

Proposition: Early summer is here! Evidence: all those spring ephemerals are faded and early summer standbys are either showing buds or are full flower!

The Lawn Garden is an exuberant study in red as Peruvian Lilies (Alstromerias) begin their summer show, and the roses push their first flush of blooms! Repeat plantings of New Zealand Flax (Phormium tenax 'Sea Jade') and repeating maroon tones (here seen in Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy,' Canna x 'Australia', and Cordyline fruticosa) keep a diverse bed looking ebullient rather than chaotic.



Late in the afternoon, a Western Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) takes a few sips of nectar from a stand of Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) across from the Lawn House! Don't let your love of monarchs keep you from planting for the benefit of our amazing diversity of flashy local swallowtails! Consider planting our native Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and Cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii* or *trichocarpa*) in your own yard, if you have space, to attract these beauties!

Douglas Iris sees late spring into early summer in California Gardenscapes! Irises are familiar plants, and many are from diverse parts of the world, but Iris douglasiana hails from Central California up into Oregon. Check out that veining!





A native hybrid, this Foothill Beardtongue (*Penstemon* x *heterophyllus*) is called 'Margarita BOP,' and it sports otherworldly, alien tones of purple and iridescent blue in its petals, like something out of "Avatar"!

Depending on your area, these flowers make excellent forage for hummingbirds or native bees, and leaving the seedheads through the winter gives food for seed-eating birds!

An underknown gem, Forest Bell Bush (*Mackaya bella*) lives up to its epithet ("bella" is Latin for "pretty" or "elegant") in our South African Garden! It'll light up any dappled-shade area in late spring through early summer, and is easy to propagate by cutting!

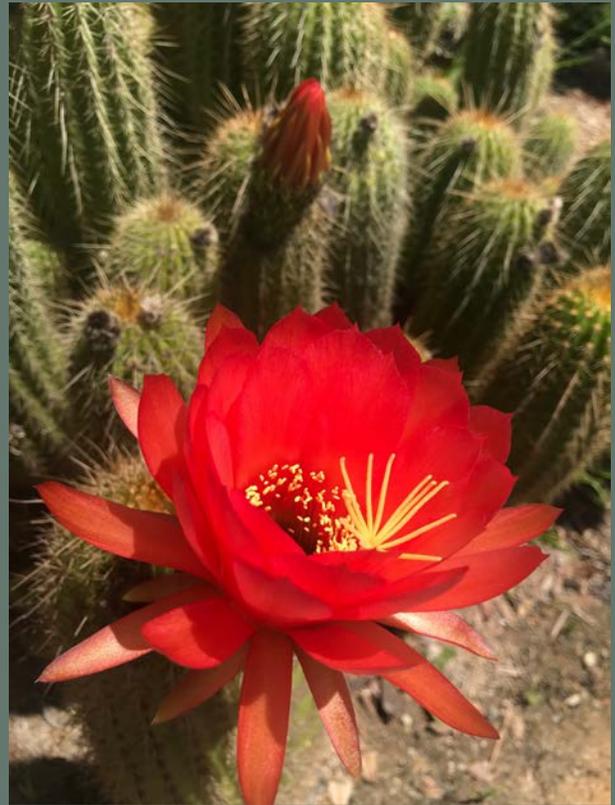


Garden Photos

by Brandi Eide



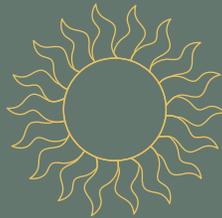
Brunfelsia pauciflora 'Floribunda'



Echinopsis cf. *huascha*



Borago officinalis & bee friend



Mammillaria parkinsonii



Gopher snake checking out the construction site. Ari and Brandi relocated it to the Fruit Garden and appointed it 'Critter-Controller-in-Chief.'

by Jill Gardner



Grevillea 'Long John'



Matilija poppy, Romneya coulteri



Horticulture & Facilities Buildings

