

IN THE SHADE GARDEN



LOTUSLAND NEWSLETTER

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Librarians Visit Lotusland

LOTUSLAND hosted a picnic lunch and tour of the gardens for librarians from botanic gardens and arboreta throughout the United States and Canada who were in Santa Barbara April 13, 14, and 15 to attend the annual conference of the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries. Sponsoring the events of the conference were V.L.T. Gardner Books and Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Public Programs Assistant Janet Eastman, who oversees the library collections at the foundation, represented Lotusland at the meetings and fields trips right here in our own backyard. Though all participants came from similar beautiful places, each was impressed by the grounds and intrigued by the story of the woman who created them.

A Generous Gift

PETER TRENT has generously contributed to Ganna Walska Lotusland in memory of his grandfather, Theodore Kalil. Mr. Kalil was a neighbor of Lotusland on Riven Rock Road and was the source of many different plants for the new Shade Garden. In particular, the wonderful and unusual yellow clivia and *Chamaedorea costaricana* were donated by Mr. Kalil. Many Belgian clivia were also donated by Mr. Kalil and are planted in the Shade Garden and entrance to the Olive Allée.



Wm B. Dewey

meandering paths diverge and reunite

WHETHER YOUR VISIT to Lotusland occurs in the cool, foggy mornings or the warm, sunny afternoons of Santa Barbara's summer months, the Shade Garden will delight you with its lush greenery. Often referred to as the Fern Garden, the meandering paths diverge and reunite among beds filled with over one hundred different species and varieties of ferns. More than fifty species and cultivars of *Begonia* as well as palms, bananas, *Impatiens* and a host of other shade-loving plants complete the tropical effect.

The original garden, designed by William Paylen in 1968, lies to the south of the swimming pool. Large boulders were placed in the shade of the native California live oaks surrounded by plantings of ferns and begonias. A ground cover of baby's tears (*Soleirolia soleirolii*) blankets the open spaces between plants. The central portion of this area has re-

cently been renovated as a result of the loss of one of the mature oaks. Specimen plantings of Australian tree ferns (*Sphaeropteris cooperi*) were installed to shade the understory plants and a *Ficus rubiginosa* planted to replace the oak tree.

In 1987 the garden was extended to the east, again under the direction of Mr. Paylen. Here the general theme of ferns and begonias is continued along with the addition of many other plants suited to the deep shade of the oaks. Throughout the garden visitors are encouraged to look up and notice giant balls of staghorn fern (*Platycerium bifurcatum*) as well as many other epiphytic orchids, ferns and bromeliads which have been placed on the branches and trunks of the trees.

Between the two arms of the shade garden lies the Moorish design swimming pool which provides a stunning contrast

Shade Garden—continued on page 2

ROBIN PRIMICH, multifaceted docent and scientist

PERHAPS it should not seem unusual to find a South African volunteer among the many South African plants at Lotusland, but to find one like Robin Primich is amazing and fortunate. He has introduced Lotusland to hundreds of visitors through his docent activities, played a major role in curation of the aloe collection, taught classes for the docents and Friends of Lotusland and serves on Lotusland's Building and Grounds Committee.

If Dr. Primich's volunteer involvement at Lotusland seems multifaceted, it is truly a mirror of the man himself. Born in 1927 in Boksburg, near Johannesburg, South Africa, Robin studied at various schools in Johannesburg, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from the University of Witwatersrand. Following service with the 6th South African Armoured Division in Italy during World War II, Robin studied on a scholarship at City & Guilds College of Imperial College of Science and Technology at the University of London, completing a Ph.D. in electrical engineering in 1954. His doctoral work in microwaves led to a career in defense research involving radar, first for the Canadian government. He and his wife, Hazel, an accomplished artist and also a native of South Africa, moved to Montecito in 1961 when Robin began



Robin Primich in his home away from home.
Photo: Steven Timbrook.

working for what is now Delco Electronics in Goleta.

Robin designed the landscaping for their home, with an emphasis on mass plantings of South African annuals and perennials. Following his retirement from Delco in 1982, Robin had more time to spend on his life-long interest in plants. Seeking to increase the diversity of plants in his garden, especially South African bulbs, he contacted Dr. Harold Koopewitz, Director of the University of California at Irvine Arboretum, after seeing an article on the Arboretum's African plant collections in *Sunset* magazine. Dr. Koopewitz, also a native of South Africa, turned out to have attended the same high school as Hazel Primich. The common interest of Drs. Primich and Koopewitz in South African plants led to an invitation for Robin to

join the Board of Directors of the UC Irvine Arboretum, a position he still holds.

While designing and overseeing construction of his new house in Montecito, just a few blocks from Lotusland, Robin joined the Lotusland docents in 1988 as a respite from the intense activity at home. Always one to be at the forefront of any activity he takes up, he quickly went from a student in docent training to independent study. His interest in South African plants led in 1991 to a focus on Lotusland's aloe collection, which was in need of mapping and identification.

Photographing aloe blooms

With the information Robin gained during the last three blooming seasons, he has been able to identify nearly all of the plants in the aloe collection. In addition he has photographed each species as it has come into bloom, a reference collection of photographs that will be invaluable in future periodic inventories and in staff and docent training. Working with Corey Welles, the aloe gardener, and Virginia Hayes, the Curator of the Living Collection, Robin is producing a report that will assess the condition of the collection, make suggestions for horticultural improvement, and serve as a background document for docents who wish to learn more about aloes.

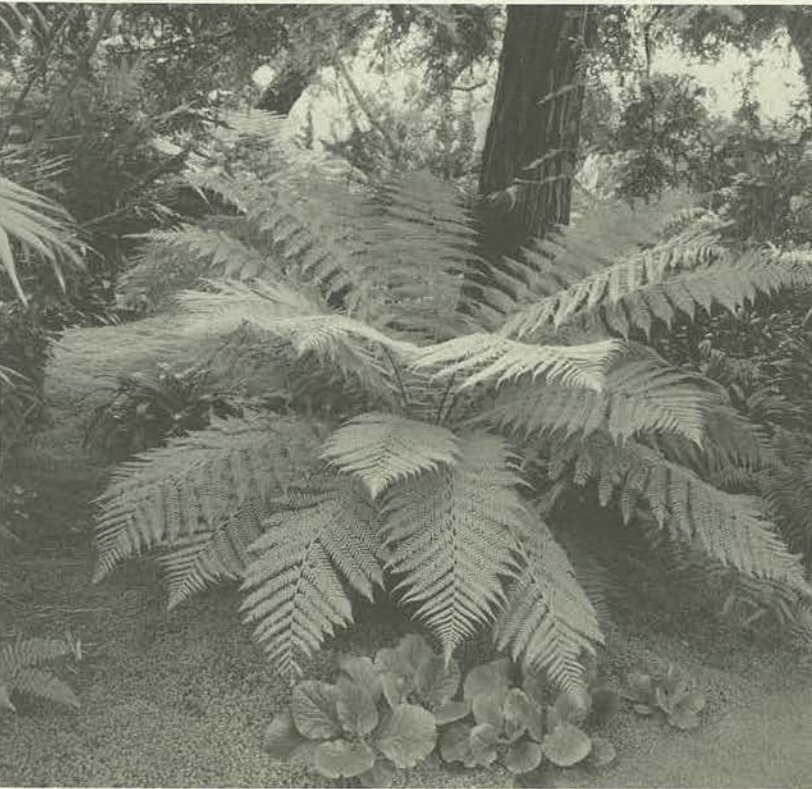
In 1993 Robin was invited to join Lotusland's Building & Grounds Committee, the group that makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding any proposed project that could affect the appearance and plant collections of Lotusland. Through his careful research and thoughtful consideration, Dr. Primich has already made valuable contributions to this committee. Lotusland is very pleased to have such a dedicated and knowledgeable volunteer.

—Steven Timbrook

SHADE: continued from page 1

to the surrounding greenery. Flanking the pool is a white sand beach dotted with giant *Tridacna* clam shells. Some of the shells, as well as pockets in the flagstone wall behind the beach, are planted with gray-leafed succulents. Blue-green Deodar cedars, a lofty backdrop, tower behind the pool. A stone bench at one end of the pool area encourages the viewer to rest and enjoy the refreshing scene and mountain vistas beyond.

—Virginia Hayes



Wm. B. Dewey

Garden Close-Ups

Tree ferns hide their fronds "Down Under"

Australian tree fern (*Sphaeropteris cooperi*) nestles into the shade garden understory plantings along with baby's tears and *Bergenia*.

Lotus leaves catch the sun

Pearls of morning dew collect on the leaves of the sacred lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) in Lotusland's famed water gardens.



Wm. B. Dewey

Living Clock Update

In 1955, as 600 delegates to the National Shade Tree convention looked on, Madame Walska unveiled what was then believed to be the world's largest living clock. Designed by Ralph Stevens and measuring 25 feet in diameter, its aluminum framework was originally covered entirely in cacti and succulents. The hands were composed of bishop's cap, a Mexican dwarf cactus, and the Roman numerals were formed of *Euphorbia obesa*, a fat, squat, South African succulent, and then outlined in crushed glass of blue-green and gold. Under each numeral was a sign of the zodiac in forged copper 24 inches in diameter. The medallions were made by a Danish craftsman, Gunnar Thielst, who was Madame Walska's head gardener at the time. This portion was planted in dark green rosettes of *Aeonium*. The final and outer ring was planted with blue-gray *Senecio mandraliscae* and edged with a six-inch border of blue-green glass chips. The heavy duty electric motor and reinforced aluminum framework were made in St. Louis.

Alas, the clock no longer resembles these photos. The plants proved to be too heavy for the framework, and the clock plantings underwent several redesigns. Finally they were removed, and subsequently many of the Roman numerals and copper zodiac medallions were either stolen or damaged. The few medallions that remained after Madame Walska's death in 1984 were included in the auctions that raised the funds necessary for opening the garden to the public in 1993. Today, the clock still keeps accurate time but has little of its previous glamour.

We are delighted to report that one of the zodiac medallions was recently discovered in an antique store in Summerland by two Friends of Lotusland, Karen and Harry Kolb, who purchased the Scorpio (originally pictured in the photo



Lotusland Archives circa 1955

above, to the right of center). They have generously donated the Scorpio to Lotusland. Restoring Madame Walska's Living Clock to its original splendor as the center piece of the Topiary Garden is an important restoration project, and Lotusland is currently seeking a grant or donors to assist with the restoration. It may not be

feasible to actually put the original Scorpio outside in the elements, but it will be given a place of honor and used as a model for designing and recreating the other medallions as funding becomes available. Lotusland thanks the Kolbs for getting this "timely" project off to a great start!

—Anne Dewey



Lotusland Archives circa 1955

FRIENDS OF LOTUSLAND

We welcome new members who joined in February, March, April 1994

LEVEL I

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Anne D. Ackerman
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Scott Fuller
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Stephen Furnari
Setsuko F. Furuike
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Karen Gallow
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Rita Garabedian
Gail Gelles
Diane Gilchrist

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Randy Gilstrap
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Ruth and Richard Goldstein
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Ellen Hackman
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William Swan
Michael L. Swimmer
Hazel D. Tawney
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Caroline Woods
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P J Noon
Mrs. David T. Shiffman
Barbara Young

LEVEL IV

Mary Glyck Barbey

Ganna Walska Costumes to be Displayed in LA



Ganna Walska great success in Mme. Butterfly. Wore wonderful costumes.

—Le Gaulois, Paris, August 24

Let us praise her wonderful costumes which combine realism with high taste.

—Neue Freie Presse

LOS ANGELES County Museum of Art currently is displaying "In Celebration: 15 Years of Textile Acquisitions, 1979-1994." The exhibit runs through July 17, 1994. Four pieces which belonged to Madame Walska will be displayed. They include two of her hats, a tea-gown by Lucille and the famous Madame Butterfly costume. Tours are given every Wednesday and Saturday at 12 noon and last about 50 minutes. The second Wednesday of each month is free. For more information call LACMA at 213-857-6000.

Young Artists At Work



Steven Timbrook

Students from Cold Spring School's sixth grade art class find themselves distracted from their sketching by the wildlife next to Lotusland's water gardens.



Lotus: The Sacred Bean



Wm. B. Dewey

THE LOTUS, whose flowers, leaves, pods and seeds have been sacred symbols in Asian, Indian and Egyptian culture, will be the subject of a special class for Friends of Lotusland. Curator Virginia Hayes and Public Programs Assistant Janet Eastman will explore the myths and legends as well as the botanical and horticultural aspects of this fascinating genus.

In addition to the namesake lotus, Lotusland's water gardens hold a wide variety of cultivars of hardy and tropical water lilies.

Members will be introduced to these aquatic jewels, and a rainbow of color will be on display in the ponds.

Classes will be held at the height of the blooming season Friday and Saturday, August 12 and 13, from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. Space is limited to 25 members each day, so make your reservation soon. The class fee is \$6. To reserve space please fill in the coupon below and return it with your payment. Reservations will be made in the order coupons are received.

Ganna Walska Lotusland Registration Form Lotus: The Sacred Bean — August 12 & 13

Check one: _____ Friday, August 12, 1:30–4:00 p.m.
_____ Saturday, August 13, 1:30–4:00 p.m. _____ Number attending, \$6.00 per person \$ _____

Mail to Ganna Walska Lotusland, Attn: Members Events, 695 Ashley Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93108

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check Enclosed (payable to Ganna Walska Lotusland)
☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard Expiration Date _____

Card Number _____

Signature _____

Member Name _____

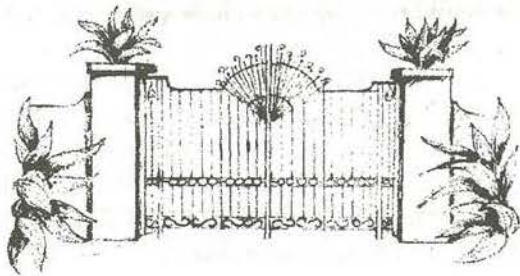
Address _____

Phone _____



Lotusland Volunteers Pick Citrus for AIDS CAP and Food Bank

Under the direction of Specialist Gardener Peter Schneider (back row—center), Lotusland volunteers picked 1600 pounds of oranges, tangerines and grapefruit from the Lotusland orchards and donated it to AIDS CAP and Food Bank of Santa Barbara County.



**Ganna Walska
Lotusland Foundation**

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