



LOTUSLAND

NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS ♦ VOLUME 21 NO. 4 ♦ FALL 2012

Exceptional Plants

BY VIRGINIA HAYES, PAUL MILLS AND GWEN STAUFFER

THE BOTANICAL GEM we know as Ganna Walska Lotusland began in 1882 with the ambitious plant collecting by nurseryman Ralph Kinton Stevens. His passion for plants, and his curiosity about plant adaptation, inspired him to gather as many different plant species from around the world as seemed likely to establish themselves in the hospitable climate of Santa Barbara. We attribute our oldest plant specimens—some of them rare and all of them spectacular—to Stevens' obsession.

Ganna Walska became equally obsessed with plants when she moved to the Montecito estate she eventually called Lotusland. By nature a collector, Madame Walska gave up all other previous collecting interests to amass a huge diversity of plant species for the creation of a unique and singular garden. Her earnest and prolific collecting habits, at a time when the world's plant species were plentiful and seemingly endless, has ultimately provided safe refuge and an important scientific repository for numerous plant species that have become exceedingly rare due to the dramatic loss of wild populations in only a few decades.

This year, Lotusland held its first ever plant auction event. Given Lotusland's extraordinary plant collections, it is fitting that this inaugural plant sale featured rare, unusual and very special plants. It also gathered together some of our area's most knowledgeable plant and garden design experts. Many of the plants in the auction were propagations from Lotusland's plants; reproduction of plants in the collection for distribution and replacement in the garden is an ongoing activity. Some of the rare and exceptional plants that were featured have interesting stories. They may be

propagations from early introductions to Santa Barbara, newly described species of plants from around the globe, or plants of conservation value whose native populations have been severely reduced. Here are some of those stories.

Palms were some of the early exotic plants to have been introduced to Santa Barbara and are some of the oldest plants in the collections at Lotusland, dating to Ralph Kinton Stevens' time. Stevens and the renowned Italian horticulturist, Francesco Franceschi, introduced many palms to Santa Barbara including *Brahea nitida*, a species of Mexican fan palm that is still relatively uncommon in cultivation. The one large specimen of this plant at Lotusland is believed to be one of the largest in the United States. The retired Director of the Huntington Botanical Gardens, Myron Kimnach, writes, "I identified two old palms—one at Lotusland and one at the Gillespie estate in Montecito—as *B. nitida*, and they probably were from Franceschi's

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PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA HAYES

A new generation of fan palms is being raised in the Lotusland nursery courtesy of the prolific seed production of this rare *Brahea nitida*.

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Mission Statement

We preserve and enhance the unique, historic estate of Madame Ganna Walska, care for and improve its collections, and develop its conservation and horticulture programs, so they educate us, inspire us, and advance our understanding and appreciation of the importance of plants in our lives and in the life of the planet.

Continued from page 1

nursery. I don't know of any older *B. nitida*'s in the USA." Lotusland staff collected seeds to grow a new generation of this beautiful palm. One of these young plants was sold in the silent auction for \$45.

Growing on steep cliffs in the mountainous grasslands of the border region of South Africa and Swaziland is a cycad with a tenuous hold on survival — *Encephalartos heenanii*. This cycad has a very limited distribution, and habitat degradation and over-collecting have taken a toll on this species. It may now be more numerous in gardens than in the wild. Plants such as *Encephalartos heenanii* find refuge at Lotusland, which acts as an insurance policy against extinction. At the end of 2010, to the excitement of Lotusland staff, a female *E. heenanii* developed a cone. Pollen of the same species was acquired from Loran Whitelock (cycad collector and source of many of Madame Walska's original cycads), and the cone was pollinated multiple times in early March 2011. The seed was harvested and cleaned on September 16, 2011. According to Whitelock, this is the first time seed of this species of cycad has been produced in the United States. Seeds were sown on January 27, 2012 and the first germinated on February 20.



When the female cone of *Encephalartos heenanii* was fertile, pollen was introduced through small openings between the cone scales.

After spirited bidding, one lucky live auction bidder won the privilege, for \$1,000, to grow this exceedingly rare plant in his collection. The remaining plants will be held for future planting, propagation and distribution to other botanical institutions, helping to further ensure the continuing existence of this species.

One plant family that is closely related to the agaves has several bizarre species with swollen stems, which botanists refer to as a caudex, and grass-like foliage. *Calibanus hookeri* is only one of two species in its genus and grows in the southern part of the Chihuahuan desert in north central Mexico. Its caudices can reach truly monumental proportions rivaling the profile of a Volkswagen "Beetle," according to Charlie Glass who was among a party of botanists to rediscover this species in the 1960s before coming to work at Lotusland in 1972. *Beaucarnea recurvata*, known as the ponytail palm, has an enlarged base many feet in diameter, but also makes a significant trunk that can reach 20 feet in height. Both of these species are dioecious, meaning the pollen-producing flowers (male) occur on separate plants from the seed-bearing plants (female). In Mexico, these two species would never have the chance to mate as they occur hundreds of miles apart, but at Lotusland a female



Weird and wonderful, this hybrid shows characteristics of each of its parents: *Calibanus hookeri* and *Beaucarnea recurvata*.



Aloe 'Hercules' is truly herculean. It is the offspring of two tree aloes: *Aloe barberae* and *Aloe dichotoma*.

Calibanus that was planted by Glass was apparently close enough to a male *Beaucarnea* to achieve a fertile union. Seed collected from the *Calibanus* was sown, and the resulting seedlings showed abnormalities that suggested they were not the pure species. A few of the resulting plants were planted in the cycad garden and grew there for more than 25 years. They have greater base diameters than any *Beaucarnea*, but also formed short trunks and multiple branches. As the cycad collection grew, Lotusland staff relocated some of these interesting hybrids to make room for expansion of the cycad collection, and one of them was potted for sale at the recent auction. It garnered a winning bid of \$6,000.

Two spectacular tree aloe specimens were also auctioned. *Aloe tongaensis* has been in the horticultural trade for years, sold under the name 'Medusa,' but was always considered to be a com-

pact variant of the well-known *Aloe barberae*. In 2011, it was finally formally described as a separate species from Mozambique. Aloes outside their native habitats (and sometimes within them) hybridize easily. The late Bill Baker, who was well-known for hybridizing bromeliads, produced a stunning aloe hybrid between *Aloe barberae* and *Aloe dichotoma* that he named 'Hercules.' It improves on the vigor of *A. dichotoma* with thicker branches and retains the beautiful smooth bark of that species while growing faster and taller like its *A. barberae* parent. Enough interest was generated among bidders to garner \$475 for the *A. tongaensis* and \$1,200 for the *A. 'Hercules.'*

To see photos and to learn more about our plant auction, please see page 6. We hope this will begin a new tradition of sharing and celebrating Lotusland's passion and curiosity for plants.

Director's Letter

PLANTS FUEL LIFE on Earth by tapping the sun's energy, and all life on Earth depends on plants. So why do most people tend to appreciate animals so much more than plants? That question was asked by botanist-educators James Wandersee of Louisiana State University and Elizabeth Schussler of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. After years of research, in 1998 they introduced the term "Plant Blindness" and launched an educational campaign whose rallying cry is "Prevent Plant Blindness."

Defined broadly, plant blindness is "the inability to see or notice the plants in one's own environment, leading to the inability to recognize the importance of plants in the biosphere and in human affairs." It also comprises an "inability to appreciate the aesthetic and unique biological features" of plants and "the misguided, anthropocentric ranking of plants as inferior to animals, leading to the erroneous conclusion that they are unworthy of human consideration."

The problem is, if most people don't pay attention to plants and the fundamental role they play in maintaining life, society isn't likely to agree that plant conservation is among humanity's most crucial issues, much less support

plant science research and education. Even now, massive tracts of plant habitat are destroyed annually, and one in eight plant species is threatened with extinction, while the plant-dependent human population continues to grow.

What causes plant blindness? Beyond human "zoo-chauvinistic" biases, Wandersee and Schussler argue that the primary contributor is the nature of the human visual information-processing system. They cite findings by other researchers who calculated that, each second, human eyes generate more than 10 million bits of data for visual processing, but the brain extracts only about 40 bits and fully processes only the 16 bits that reach our conscious attention. Put simply, the human brain is hard-wired to search for movement, conspicuous colors and patterns, known objects, and objects that are potential threats. Since plants are static, blend in with the background and don't eat humans, they generally don't get visual attention. With so much visual information bombarding our eyes, plants are easy to ignore.

To help prevent plant blindness, Wandersee and Schussler created educational tools for teachers and students. They advocate more plant mentors to



LEA ANNA DROWN

Gwen Stauffer

give young people experience growing plants, and they praise the role of botanical gardens in public education. "Our research shows that having a plant mentor in one's life makes a pivotal difference in whether one notices, appreciates, seeks to understand and cultivates plants," Wandersee says. "Without informal and formal horticultural and botanical education—such as mentors and botanical gardens provide—one is not likely to care about plants or to realize that all life depends on plants."

Thank you to our members and donors, whose support helps Lotusland fight plant blindness!

With warmest regards,
Gwen L. Stauffer

LotusFest

LOTUSFEST, the annual celebration of this garden's namesake, took place on July 14, the peak of the blooming season. On this beautiful summer day, guests enjoyed the afternoon in the garden sampling premium wines showcased by some of Santa Barbara's finest vintners. Guests were served delectable hors d'oeuvres while

listening to the smooth jazz performed by **The Undecided Trio**. The art of Japanese flower arranging, Ikebana, was demonstrated by Lotusland volunteer Valerie Halverson while lotus lore galore was on display in the pavilion. The event culminated with a drawing for the winning raffle ticket for a basket brimming with select wines and Garden

Shop delights. Lotusland thanks these vintners for making our afternoon such a success: **Brander Vineyard**, **Carina Cellars**, **Cinco Locos**, **Daniel Gehrs Wines**, **Jaffurs Wine Cellars**, **Kenneth Volk Vineyards**, **Riverbench Vineyard and Winery**, **Santa Barbara Winery**, **Sierra Madre Vineyard**, **Toucan Wines** and **Whitcraft Winery**.



Erin Gomez and Stephanie Mutz poured a variety of wines from Whitcraft Winery.



George Primbs from Cinco Locos was one of the generous vintners who participated in LotusFest.



Carla Guarisco and Matt Brady from Jaffurs Wine Cellars poured for appreciative guests.



Stan Shaner, representing Kenneth Volk Vineyards, pours for Lotusland trustee Connie Percy and her husband John.



Brander Vineyard, represented by Robin Davidson and Julie Hayak, was one of the many vintners that donated wine.



Doug Timewell of Toucan Wines with guest Richard Tentler, who won the raffle for a basket of delicious wine and treasures from our Garden Shop.



A demonstration and display of Ikebana, the art of Japanese flower arranging, is a popular part of our annual LotusFest.



It was a perfect day for LotusFest guests to see the lotuses in full bloom in the Japanese and water gardens.



George Burtneff, Lotusland's Executive Director, Gwen Stauffer, and David Hardee from Carina Cellars chatted while sampling wines.

COLLECTIONS NEWS

Tillandsia xerographica

IN JULY, an enthusiastic and delighted visitor from Guatemala asked her docent if Lotusland's bromeliad collection had a specimen of one of her favorite national plants, *Tillandsia xerographica*. On the day of her visit, no one was available to definitively answer her query, but the answer was, ultimately, no. Through the generosity of that dedicated docent, Lori Meschler, and the gardener in charge of the bromeliads, Mike Furner, a lovely plant of this unique species is now on display.

Because of its beautiful shape and size, this air plant (often called the King of air plants) has long been sought after and collected from its native habitats in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador, and is now protected by listing on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species. Plants take from 12 to 18 years to mature and flower. Nursery production of the plants is possible, but the species is slow-growing and, like many other bromeliads, the mother plant dies once it flowers, producing one to three offshoots that can be harvested and grown. Lotusland's plant



VIRGINIA HAYES

Tillandsia xerographica grows epiphytically on the highest branches of trees in the dry forest regions of Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

was seed-grown by a licensed nursery in Guatemala and exported with all the correct permits, so it can be responsibly

displayed to highlight the threat to these plants in the wild.

—Virginia Hayes

CLOSING NOVEMBER 10

The Plant Hunters: Botanical Illustrations from the 16th to 19th Centuries



COURTESY PHOTO

DON'T MISS this exquisite—and very popular—exhibition in Lotusland's historic pavilion.

The Plant Hunters is a collaboration with Arader Galleries in San Francisco, and all of the illustrations are for sale, with a portion of proceeds going to Lotusland.

Members can see this beautiful collection of botanical illustrations on a self-guided tour or as part of a docent-guided tour.

Although members always visit free, reservations are required and may be made by calling 805.969.9990.

Gift Membership

Gift memberships are a great idea for business associates, friends or your holiday party hosts.

You can give free, unlimited admission for a year—plus lots of other benefits—to an Individual for \$75 or to a Family for \$125...and your gift is tax deductible! We also sell individual Guest Admission

Passes, valid for one year, for \$35 each. Please contact Member Services at 805.969.3767 x120.

Exceptional Plants: Lotusland Auction and Sale

LOTUSLAND HELD its first ever live plant auction and sale on September 8. As anticipated it was not your ordinary plant sale—there were smiles all around as plant fanciers took home choice specimens. The three silent auction tables were full of beguiling plants from rare bromeliads to new varieties of agaves to palms propagated from Lotusland's collection. The highlight of the event was a spirited live auction during which 17 very rare, very special plants were auctioned off. Jeff Chemnick provided lively commentary as he cajoled bidders into making higher bids. With the choice plants and garden books offered during a silent auction, there were 101 items in all. A successful raffle also saw a happy winner take home a beautiful *Begonia* 'Lotusland' plus a valuable gift certificate. Guests also enjoyed specialty cocktails, wine, beer and sumptuous hors d'oeuvres.

We are deeply grateful for the generous donations of plants and other auction items that helped make this

event possible. We also appreciate the support and participation of our colleagues and volunteers in making this event a fabulous success. All proceeds from the sale support the ongoing critical care of Lotusland's plant collections. —Virginia Hayes

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DONORS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT

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The three silent auction tables were full of choice specimens and surrounded by hopeful bidders.



Executive Director Gwen Stauffer welcomed guests and introduced Jeff Chemnick, who auctioned 17 very rare and special plants.



Plants in many plant families form swollen stems called caudices. These two, *Ibervillea sonorae* and *Fockea edulis*, were sought after in the live auction.



After some spirited bidding, Connie Pearcy and her husband, John, went home with a rare *Calibanus* x *Beaucarnia*.

Ooh La La Lotusland!

OOH LA LA LOTUSLAND was a celebration of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, where Madame Ganna Walska made her home during those decades, and the party was *magnifique*! This was the era of Hemingway, Picasso, Freud, Gertrude Stein, Cole Porter, Stravinsky, Art Deco, Surrealism and so much more! Madame Walska owned the famed Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, renowned as a venue for experimental and contemporary music and dance, which she donated to the city of Paris in 1970.

We appreciate the generous support of our major Sponsors—Larry and Patricia Durham, Rich and Luci Janssen in memory of Suzanne Caron, Connie and John Percy, Joanne Pearson, Leslie Ridley-Tree and Silverhorn Jewelers—and our Sustainers—Cal-a-Vie, Patricia Chidlaw, Arthur R. Gaudi, Carla Hahn, I.D.O. Events, Inc., Kind World Foundation and The Little One Foundation.

A big thank you to Sotheby's for underwriting the cost of the event invitation and providing their fabulous auctioneer Eliza Osborne, and Trillium Enterprises for underwriting the cost of the event program. Creative Committee Co-chairs Lizzie Peus and Crystal Wyatt, along with their clever committee members—Debbie Baldwin, Nydia Cardot, Jill Chase, Lisa Couvillion, Anne Dewey, Jennie Grube, Tamara Jensen, Emily Jones, Dawn Lafitte, Jill Levinson, Jillian Muller, Sandi Nicholson, Debby Peterson, Eileen Rasmussen, Laura Shelburne, Daryl

Stegall, Courtney Tentler, Caroline Thompson and Michele White—did a wonderful job of capturing the essence of life in Paris during these two boisterous decades!

As stylish guests strolled down the main drive, they were left breathless watching a couple's high-energy tribute to the social dances of the era, the Folies Bergère-style showgirls under the bunya-bunya tree, and a quartet of beautiful ballet dancers performing the classical *Pas de Quatre* in the newly renovated blue garden. The bromeliad garden was the location of a truly crazed Parisian man hanging from a tree shouting compliments—and some non-compliments—at guests, while a Parisian artist quickly drew portraits of guests, which were never perfect and consequently he tossed them! A bubbly surprise awaited guests in the theatre garden where the most amazing Josephine Baker impersonator—complete with the famous banana costume—sang and danced to songs from the 20s and 30s with the unflappable Gil Rosas tickling the keys of a white baby grand piano. All this and a “bubbly bar” complete with oodles and oodles of bubbles floating over the garden and the guests! State Street Ballet provided all the talented dancers.

Then, imagine the guests' surprise as they entered the main lawn and encountered the 30-foot-high Eiffel Tower! No Parisian party would be complete without an arrogant—but



PHOTOS BY ROE ANN WHITE

Creative, energetic committee co-chairs Lizzie Peus and Crystal Wyatt and the talented committee members did a wonderful job of planning this fabulous event, the most successful in Lotusland's history!

helpful—*maître de* and a French photographer setting up his huge bellows camera to “snap” images of unsuspecting guests! A trio of incredible caterers created the hors d'oeuvres, dinner and dessert—Duo Catering and Events, Wine Cask and Renaud's Patisserie & Bistro, respectively.

After dinner, Executive Director Gwen Stauffer welcomed guests and thanked our generous donors and talented event committee. She briefly spoke about the importance of preserving the garden and introduced our wonderful auctioneer who cajoled and sweet-talked the audience into bidding higher for each of the six unique items. They included a photography workshop with *National Geographic* editor and photographer Bill Allen; a vertical wine tasting of delicious Whitcraft chardonnays at San Ysidro Ranch; an incredibly beautiful and haunting painting *Midnight in the Cactus Garden*, Lotusland by renowned contemporary landscape painter Patricia Chidlaw, beautifully framed by C. Kirkegaard; and the always wildly popular “Dinner for Ten.” The *pièce de résistance* was the earrings inspired by a pair owned by Madame Walska and created by Silverhorn Jewelers. The earrings were bravura and the bidding was intense! The auction culminated with an unforgettable trip to Paris that included a stay in a luxurious private residence, next to the prestigious Champs-Élysées, and a Connoisseur Membership with Indagare luxury travel company. And the lucky raffle winner will enjoy a three-night stay for two at the famous Cal-a-Vie spa in San Diego.

Continued on page 8



Patricia and Doug Aiken (LEFT) were the successful bidders for Patricia Chidlaw's (CENTER) exquisite painting *Midnight in the Cactus Garden*, Lotusland, framed by C. Kirkegaard. Patricia's husband, Bob Sponsel, is behind her. Chris Kirkegaard and his guest, Catherine Gee, are on the right.



Twins Joey and Jany Pearson (l-r) enjoyed the wonderful entertainment from showgirls to a quartet of ballet dancers. Joey is a Lotusland Trustee.



Lora Pavilak, Gloria Radeff, Jim Pavilak, and Jillian and Pete Muller enjoyed their Parisian experience. Jillian is a member of the event committee.

Continued from page 7

Following the lively live auction, we were honored to hear from recent participants in Lotusland's Fourth Grade Outreach Program, Verity Allen, a fourth grade teacher, and Esmeralda Gonzales, a recent fourth grade student from Harding School. They did a terrific job of sharing their enthusiasm for this outstanding program, and the audience responded by donating more than \$47,000 to help fund it, which included a matching donation from board president Larry Durham and his wife Patricia.

Ooh La La Lotusland was a rollicking triumph and the most successful fundraiser in Lotusland's history! We wish to give our heartfelt thanks to all of the following generous supporters of *Ooh La La Lotusland*. —Anne Dewey

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Carole Ridding, Rich and Luci Janssen, and Michael Ridding. Luci is wearing the dazzling earrings, created and donated by Silverhorn Jewelers for the auction. The design was inspired by a pair in Madame Walska's collection.

RICK CARTER



Pam Lewis provided elegant Parisian ambience with Lee Neill's French poodle, Spirit.



Geoff and Kim Crane with Kelley and Bruce Giffin. Giffin & Crane sponsored the 30-foot-high Eiffel Tower.



Fourth grade teacher Verity Allen and student Esmeralda Gonzales shared their enthusiasm for Lotusland's 4th Grade Outreach Program as Board member Mason Farrell encouraged guests to help fund it—the audience donated \$47,000!



High bidders won a full-day photo adventure with world-renowned photographer Bill Allen, pictured with (l-r) Executive Director Gwen Stauffer and Tipper Gore.

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State Street Ballet provided marvelous dancers including an amazing Josephine Baker impersonator.

Horticultural Happenings

SUSTAINABLE PLANT HEALTHCARE SUMMER INTERN ALYSSA CROFFORD

IT WASN'T UNTIL I finally got into the car to drive to Santa Barbara that my nerves set in. It was hard to tell if I was more nervous or excited, but that question was answered quickly when I finally arrived at the staff entrance gate of Lotusland. A huge smile stretched across my face as I drove in and gazed to my left at the fruit orchard and giant palm trees in the distance. I was shown to my room in the Green Cottage and, immediately after setting down my baggage, I went out to explore the garden and see what was in store for the next 10 weeks of my life.

My time here at Lotusland has been truly incredible and has really changed my outlook on my future and on gardening as a whole. When I arrived at the grounds, I was greeted with open arms from every single member of the staff, and everyone made me feel very welcome. I had the opportunity to work with each gardener and then directly with the Plant Healthcare Coordinator, Corey Welles. I have spent the past four years of my life studying Environmental Horticulture at Cal Poly State University San Luis Obispo, and this has by far been the best and most hands-on learning experience yet. This program has really helped me transition from the textbook-filled scholastic lifestyle to the applied world of public gardens. This internship has exponentially increased my interest in a career in public horticulture and has also raised my awareness about the need for sustainable gardening.

I spent my first five weeks here at Lotusland working with each different gardener and learning what it takes to maintain each garden. From pulling ivy in the Australian garden to feeding the lotuses in the water garden, everything was a learning experience. I really could not have asked for a better and more knowledgeable grounds crew to work with, and I want to thank each and every one of them for making my time here truly special. I especially enjoyed working in the bromeliad gardens, and I developed quite an interest in the

plants. It was really interesting to hear all of the stories and history that Mike Furner, the bromeliad gardener, has here at Lotusland, and his knowledge of the plants is inspiring. I also really enjoyed working in the Japanese garden and learning excellent pruning techniques. Greg Kitajima, the Japanese gardener, taught me so many important pruning practices that really are essential to maintaining a healthy and beautiful tree. These new skills have changed the way I look at landscape trees; I now look at trees and think about how a better cut could have been made or how the canopy needs to be opened more for light to penetrate. Each gardener taught me something different and provided me with knowledge that I will never forget.

Corey was on vacation when I first arrived. After he got back, we were fully immersed in plant healthcare, which is where most of my interests fall. It was really fascinating to learn and see the results of sustainable gardening practices and how they contribute to the pristine beauty of Lotusland. The strategically placed insectary plants around the property attract beneficial insects into the garden, and I got to see this in action and maintain these plants. I have learned about planting insectaries in my studies, but nothing compares to actually seeing it function. Hearing Corey tell stories about how the garden has transitioned from conventional to sustainable practices and seeing how the plants have thrived was especially eye opening. Furthermore, my experience at Lotusland has greatly expanded my knowledge of compost tea and its benefits. I brewed compost tea a couple times a week and then got to apply some as well. Corey was very knowledgeable and answered all my questions. I have learned so much more about the significance of soil biology and how the most important step in growing a healthy plant is having good soil filled with tons of beneficial microorganisms.

Overall, I could not have been happier to be chosen for this internship, and it was truly an amazing opportunity. I would like to thank each and every one of the staff members, especially



Alyssa Crofford

COREY WELLES

Corey Welles, Mike Iven, Paul Mills, Esau Ramirez, Virginia Hayes and Gwen Stauffer, for giving me such a pleasant and welcome feeling during my 10 weeks at Lotusland. I would also like to thank the John Percival and Mary C. Jefferson Endowment Fund for the financial support that provided me with the most wonderful and hands-on summer internship. —Alyssa Crofford

A REVIEW OF GARDEN RENOVATION PROJECTS

AS IT WAS BEFORE Ganna Walska passed away in 1984, there is almost always a project to improve or enhance the gardens at Lotusland in some stage of development or implementation. The recently completed blue garden renovation restored an iconic Lotusland garden that had become almost impossible to maintain because of poor cultural conditions. The renovation addressed those problems and in the process opened amazing new vistas. At this time, a Japanese garden renovation is in the early stages of the planning process, and needed work in the aloe garden will be considered soon. In retrospect, I'm reminded of some the other garden improvement projects completed since 1984. —Mike Iven

1985

Bromeliad garden renovation with Bill Paylen, designer.

1986

Renovation of the fern garden and installation of the fern garden extension to the east of the swimming pool with Bill Paylen, designer.

1990

Swimming pool and beach area renovation with Emmett Wemple, landscape architect.

1992

Australian garden installation with Sydney Baumgartner, landscape architect.

1994

Renovation of theater garden with Isabelle Greene, landscape architect.

1997

Main drive cactus renovation and removal of olive trees shading cacti.

1997

Insectary plantings and beginning of butterfly garden.

1998

Horticultural clock renovation.

1999–2003

Five-year cycad garden renovation to improve cultural conditions included soil replacement, stump removals, eucalyptus tree removals, sub-surface drainage installation, irrigation installation and pathway improvements.

2000

Main drive surface changed from 3/8" gravel to stabilized decomposed granite.

2001

Topiary garden renovation with Lori Ann David, designer.

2001

Japanese garden automatic irrigation system installed.

**2002**

New greenhouse replaces old dilapidated glass houses.

**2003**

Cactus garden installation. Cacti donated by Merritt Dunlap; design by Eric Nagelmann.

2005

Thinning/trimming of eucalyptus trees overhanging Sycamore Canyon Road.

2005 & 2010

Property wide storm runoff drainage system installed.

2007

Japanese pond silt removal project.

**2007**

Chamaedorea garden expansion for Hodel collection with advisor Don Hodel.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL IVEN

2008

Water stairs and cypress allée restoration/installation.

2011

Cycad garden planting bed renovation.

Historic Landscape Estates of Santa Barbara:

A REPRODUCTION OF ELIZABETH DE FOREST'S
ILLUSTRATED LECTURE TO THE
GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16 • 3:00 TO 5:30 PM

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Sydney Baumgartner's performance, in Elizabeth's "uniform" of cashmere sweater, pearls and denim jacket and in character, will cover prominent historic gardens, many of which no longer exist or are now divided into smaller estates, and discuss why Santa Barbara has long been considered a garden-lovers destination. Landscape architect Elizabeth de

Forest was Ms. Baumgartner's mentor, as well as her aunt by marriage.

Don't miss this informative and entertaining presentation. Light refreshments will be served.

Admission is free for Lotus Society members, \$25 for members and \$35 for the general public.

Please call 805.969.9990 to reserve a space.



COURTESY PHOTO

Charles Glass...In His Own Words

PART XII OF A SERIES OF EXCERPTS FROM HIS UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS WITH THE WORKING TITLE OF
EXPERIENCES OF 12 YEARS AS DIRECTOR OF LOTUSLAND: THE FABULOUS ESTATE OF MME. GANNA WALSKA

SINCE MME. WALSKA liked “big” she couldn’t see the rationale of maintaining or reducing the size of trees, “topping” them, so-to-speak. So the trees just kept getting bigger and shading the gardens more deeply all the time. It was not just the trees that kept getting taller. Never has anyone seen taller hedges than at Lotusland during this period. It got so that the gardeners who trimmed the hedges had to do so with the longest pole saws and pole-loppers atop the tallest ladders and still the hedges towered above their extended reach. She loved the mysterious quality these towering hedges gave the garden, and indeed, it was unique. The problem was, however, that most plants need light to grow and these enormous hedges cut off a good percentage of that light. The hedges got so big that they even shaded themselves too much, and each other, so that they themselves went downhill, losing their leaves and otherwise suffering from lack of light down below.

Because of these hedges it was an almost impossible task, for instance, to maintain a rose garden, which Mme. Walska wanted to do because it was there. Flowers, especially “conventional”

flowers were not really “her thing”. She preferred the exotic and bizarre. One outside laborer described the effect of the strange plant shapes at Lotusland such as the Agaves that seemed to be guarding the walls as “threatening and predatory”. Mme. Walska often said that she didn’t want in her garden what she used to wear on her chest, referring to the flowers she would have worn in her corsages when she attended the opera, for instance. She also said that she didn’t want to grow things that might be very pretty but that you could see in any attractive little garden, because she wanted to show people big, impressive, different things that they could not see anywhere else! I am sort of surprised that she even tried to maintain the formal Rose Garden at Lotusland, but then, it was there and she would never throw away or get rid of a living plant. For that matter, half the time she even saved the dead ones—for what she called her “Driftwood Garden”.

I tried for years with absolutely no success to get her to let me reduce the height of the hedges around the Rose Garden to allow in a little bit of much

needed sunlight. Then our poor, misfortunate gardener, Cuevas, who was entrusted with trimming most of the hedges, developed a very serious neck ailment, a virtual job disability from spending too much time with his head thrown back, trying to trim those towering hedges. At this point I put my foot down and insisted that we reduce the height of any hedge that was to be trimmed to no more than shoulder height of a gardener atop our tallest A-frame ladder. I was able to persuade Mme. Walska that our gardeners’ health was not an expendable resource! We had heavy equipment with extension “buckets” brought onto the estate so that the tree-men could get up high enough to bring these “mysterious” hedges down to manageable height! The hedges were mostly Pittosporum undulatum and I will probably never smell that lovely fragrance without thinking of Lotusland, especially in February and March when they flowered most profusely.

NEXT TIME

MORE STORIES FROM the Glass memoir.

—Excerpts edited by Virginia Hayes

Thank You to Our

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Help Make Lotusland's Wishes Come True

TO DONATE FUNDS for any of these items, please call Anne Dewey, Lotusland's Director of Development, at 805.969.3767, extension 105 or email her at adewey@lotusland.org. Thank you!

🌿 DIGITAL CAMERA

We need a camera on site so we can easily take advantage of great photo opportunities for general documentation, the newsletter and Facebook. \$275

🌿 RHODODENDRONS AND AZALEAS

It is time to refurbish the Japanese garden with 20 rhododendrons and azaleas. \$500

🌿 TERRA COTTA POTS

Four decorative terra cotta pots for the water garden. \$500 each

Volunteer Profile: Bill Gillette

RUST FUNGUS SLAYER

VIRGINIA HAYES



Bill Gillette

mentalists.” The article also said “...he plans to play golf and get involved as a volunteer with nonprofit agencies that spark his interest.” Fortunately for Lotusland, we are one of those agencies. Bill plays 18 holes of golf, walks 5 miles and then volunteers in the garden every Monday and Tuesday!

Back in the early 1980s, while working for the county, Bill got a call from Bruce Van Dyck, who worked for Madame Walska at the time. Bruce and Bill found rust fungus in Lotusland’s aloe garden—this was the first report of this disease in the United States. The fungus was on the leaves and affected one-third of the garden. Bruce and Bill worked with a specialist at UC Berkeley to come up with a plan, and it took about a year to completely eliminate the fungus from the garden. The process included digging up the infected plants. Doing so caused spores to be released, so all the plants were first sprayed to protect against reinfection. Infected plants were placed in plastic bags and buried at the Tajiguas landfill.

Madame did not like to see unexpected visitors and removing plants from her garden was a big no-no, so Bill never had a chance to meet her.

Bill grew up in Riverside County surrounded by citrus ranches and farms. He studied biology at Whittier College, where he met his wife, Barbara, and earned an MA in plant pathology at the University of Washington. Bill and Barbara have two sons, Tim and Collin, and are the proud owners of a 10-year-old labradoodle.

Grounds Staff Supervisor Esau Ramirez likes to move Bill around to different gardens. I caught up with Bill in the Japanese garden recently when he told me that every time he meets a staff member, he always gets a big thank-you and that “the recognition from the staff is remarkable.” He says they are always willing to teach him new things about each garden and explain why a task needs to be done. He really appreciates their efforts. The appreciation goes both ways, Bill.

—Kitty Thomassin

Membership Corner

MEMBERS SHOP AND SAVE AT PARTICIPATING NURSERY AND GARDEN SPECIALTY STORES

OUR LOTUSLAND MEMBERSHIP just got better—we added two new locations to our list of nurseries and garden specialty stores that give generous discounts to Lotusland members. Island Seed & Feed in Goleta now offers a 10% discount, and Mediterranean Antiques & Garden in Summerland gives a 20% discount, bringing the total

to 15 locations (see the following list). Don’t forget to bring your membership card when you shop, and some locations may also require proof of identification.

Visit our website, www.lotusland.org, for more detailed information including amount of discount, exclusions, address and operating hours.

Australian Native Plants
Baron Brothers Nursery
Botanik • Eye of the Day
Green Thumb Nursery (5 locations)
Island Seed & Feed
Island View Nursery
Knapp Nursery • Laguna Nursery
Mediterranean Antiques & Garden
Seaside Gardens

Twilight Time at Lotusland

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20 • 3:30 TO 6:00 PM

AS THE SEASONS CHANGE and the evenings grow longer, Lotusland masquerades in different colors and light. This dramatic backdrop provides the perfect opportunity to explore the garden later in the day. You may choose to self guide or go on a docent-led tour. Wine and light hors d’oeuvres will be served from 4:30 to 5:15 PM on the geranium terrace overlooking the main lawn. The cost is \$55 for members and \$65 for nonmembers. Don’t miss this chance to enjoy twilight at Lotusland! Please call 805.969.9990 to register.

Container Gardening Workshop

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3 • 9:30 TO 11:30 AM

CREATE A BEAUTIFUL planter at our Container Garden Workshop. Lotusland will provide all the materials needed for one planter, along with step-by-step instructions. This is the perfect opportunity to create something beautiful for your home—as well as some special holiday gifts.

The cost is \$45 for members and \$55 for nonmembers. Space is limited; please register early by calling 805.969.9990.

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Fall 2012 Member Events

MANY LOTUSLAND EVENTS are open to nonmembers, so please let your friends and neighbors know about the great activities we offer.

Through Saturday, November 10

*The Plant Hunters: Botanical
Illustrations from the 16th to the
19th Centuries*

See details on page 5.

Tuesday, October 16

*Historic Landscape Estates
of Santa Barbara*

3:00 TO 5:30 PM

See details on page 11. Please call
805.969.9990 to register.

Saturday, October 20

Twilight Time at Lotusland

3:30 TO 6:00 PM

See details on page 13. Please call
805.969.9990 to register.

Saturday, November 3

Container Gardening Workshop

9:30 TO 11:30 AM

See details on page 13. Please call
805.969.9990 to register.

Thursday, November 15

Last day of regular tours before
the garden is closed until Friday,
February 15.

Save the Date

Saturday, January 26

Aloe Outing

1:00 TO 3:30 PM

Save the date for our annual *Aloe
Outing* for members only. Details
will be in the winter *Newsletter for
Members*.

Tours

Tours are offered at 10:00 AM and
1:30 PM, Wednesday through Saturday.
Family Tours, available for groups
with children under age 10, are child
and parent friendly. They are separate
from regular adult tours. Please call
805.969.9990 for reservations.