

# LASCA LEAVES



Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

## GARDEN SHOW 1983

THE STANDARD and floral garden displays at the third annual fall garden show at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum were impressive again this year, but the statistics were even more striking. GARDEN SHOW 1983 not only

covered one-third more area than previous shows, but this year attracted about 30,000 people compared to 11,000 visitors last year.

An early indication that GARDEN SHOW 1983 would prove to be one of the most successful major shows of the decade came during the sale of tickets to the preview party on

the evening of Oct. 21. Compared with about 800 in 1982, 3,000 representatives from the plant industry, California Arboretum Foundation members and guests came for an advance look at the 50 standard and floral garden displays and a chance to shop at the 80 trade mart booths this year.



Best of Show award went to Stewart's Orchids for this patio setting of orchids and flags from 18 different nations that illustrates the GARDEN SHOW 1983 theme, "The World in California Gardens." (Photos by Wm. Aplin)



When the show first opened to the public on the morning of Oct. 22, people waiting for tickets stretched past the entrance pool and east as far as Baldwin Avenue. While the staff sold tickets to present visitors, the telephones rang constantly as others asked for directions to the Arboretum. Many of these firsttime visitors were responding to the wide coverage GARDEN SHOW 1983 received from the news media. Interest aroused by feature articles in *Sunset* magazine and the *Los Angeles Times Home* magazine that appeared before the show opened was reinforced during the show by

other newspaper articles and radio and television announcements.

So Southern Californians flocked to the Arboretum to admire garden settings planted with tree ferns or cactus and flowers clustered in monochromatic splendor or swirled up and around Ionian columns. Some people shopped for lacy garden furniture and unusual plants while others ambled through the huge trade tent watching demonstrations of garden cultivators and hydroponic gardening.

Then, after a last look at displays like the international collection of orchids that won the Best of Show

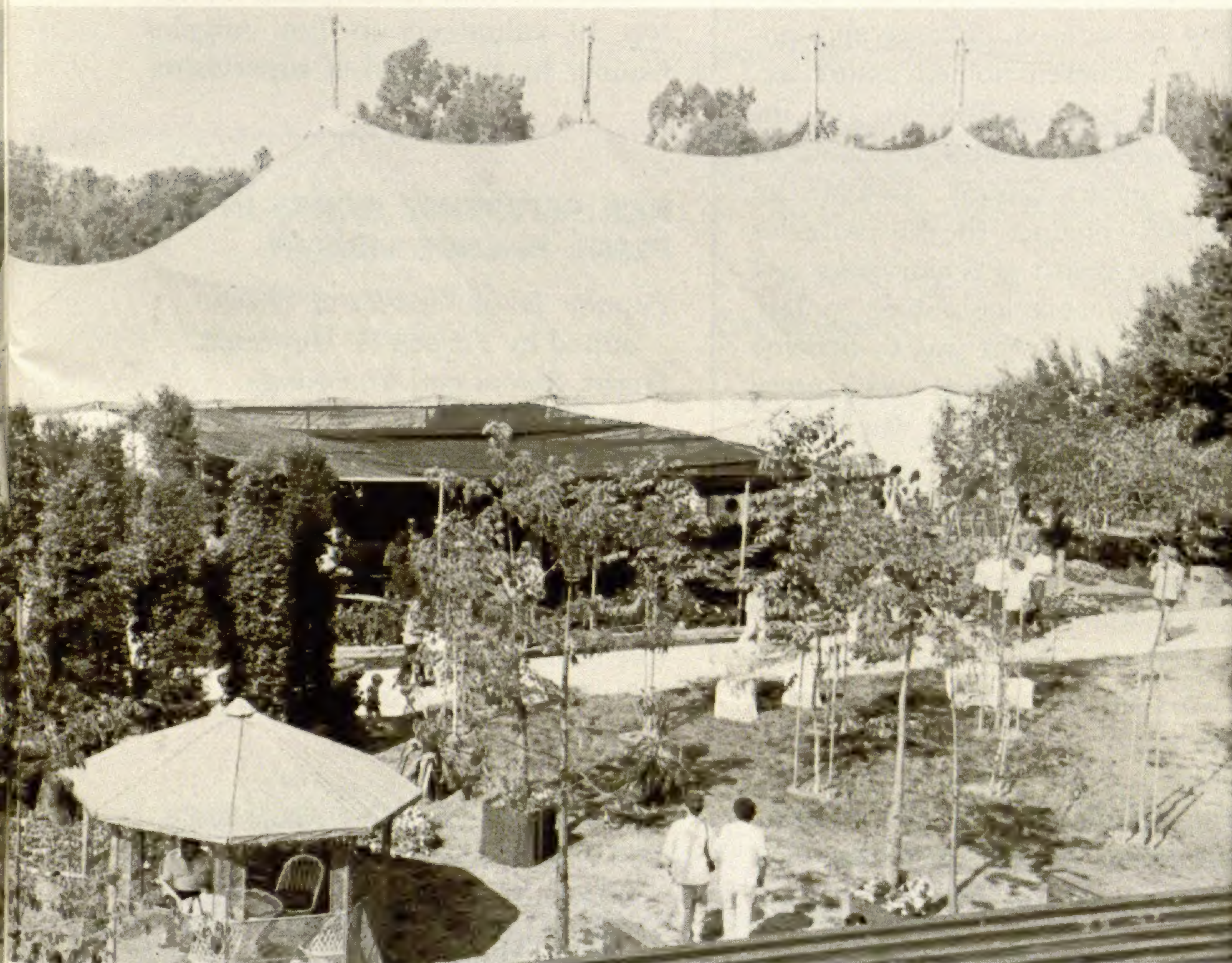
award for Stewart's Nursery, many people took leisurely walks out into the Arboretum grounds. Besides attracting new visitors, the Arboretum benefitted in other ways. The number of visitors to the Plant Science Library almost doubled during GARDEN SHOW 1983 week. Joan DeFato, librarian, reported that an average of 23 people used the library each day compared with an average daily attendance of 15 persons in the same period last year.

Sales in the Gift Shop also increased significantly, according to Norma Johanson, manager. Sales cannot be compared exactly with the same period last year because they have been rising steadily since the Gift Shop moved into a larger, more conspicuous location in June. Nevertheless, Ms. Johanson estimated that sales were from two and one-half to three times greater than during the same period last year.

Public response to the show has encouraged sponsors to further enlarge and refine plans for GARDEN SHOW 1984.









## RUTH MARY LARSON ELECTED PRESIDENT OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS

AS NEWLY ELECTED president of the Board of Governors, Ruth Mary (Mrs. Leland) Larson expects to broaden her involvement to include all four of the gardens operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

Mrs. Larson has served a total of nine years on the board, acting as liaison between the gardens and the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. Each county supervisor appoints three members to the Board of Governors, who in turn, keep him informed regarding the feeling about the gardens among county residents.

"But now as president, I think I have an obligation to get to know each garden and work at a volun-



Ruth Mary Larson

teer event there," she said. "The support group at each garden is so different as far as personalities are concerned."

The county-wide perspective is considerably more ambitious than her goals when Mrs. Larson first joined Las Voluntarias as a school field trip leader in 1968. "I joined because I thought maybe I could learn something. At that time, most of the school groups were from the inner city. I began to think that if I could awaken an interest in nature in just one of the children, I would have accomplished something," she said.

Now she will continue promoting the continued existence of the gardens by reminding the county supervisors of the need for public gardens as proven by attendance and the number of volunteer hours given by people in the community. "The kind of atmosphere provided by the gardens improve the quality of life in Los Angeles County," Mrs. Larson concluded.

Mrs. Larson is past president of the California Arboretum Foundation and Las Voluntarias y Ayudantes. In June, 1983, she was honored as Volunteer of the Year at the Arboretum and named one of the top 10 volunteers in Los Angeles County by the board of supervisors.

### IN MEMORIAM

WITHIN A PERIOD of a few weeks last fall, the Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens lost two supporters who had helped bring into being Los Angeles County's unique system of public botanic gardens.

On Oct. 18, Helen (Mrs. Samuel) Ayres Jr. died at 89 years of age, and on Nov. 2 former county supervisor John Anson Ford died five weeks after his 100th birthday.

Mrs. Ayres traveled extensively with her husband, bringing back to their adopted state the firm conviction that plants from other sub-tropical or tropical climates could add color to the Southern California landscape. The Arboretum they helped establish as an experimental testing ground for these exotic plants became the nucleus for what is probably the only system of botanic gardens operated by a county in the United States.

Mr. Ford was a Los Angeles County Supervisor for 24 years during the period of explosive growth between 1934 and 1958. His far-sighted policies and political acumen helped assure access to gardens and the arts for the millions of new residents of Los Angeles County. In 1947, he helped convince the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the California legislature to buy the land for what was to become the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. Later, he was largely responsible for the county's acquisition of Descanso Gardens when Manchester Boddy's camellia gardens were threatened with subdivision.

Our sadness at the passing of two such extraordinary friends is tempered by the knowledge that during their lifetimes they saw the gardens that they helped establish flourish beyond their most optimistic expectations.

### NEW REFERENCE WORKS IN THE PLANT SCIENCE LIBRARY

- Popular Encyclopedia of Plants*  
edited by Vernon H. Heywood
- Herbs, Spices and Flavorings*  
by Tom Stobart
- Building an Ark: Tools for the Preservation of Natural Diversity through Land Protection*  
by Phillip H. Hoose
- Flora de Gran Canaria, Volume IV: Los Subarbustos*  
by Mary Anne Kunkel and Guenther Kunkel
- Ecology of Desert Organisms*  
by Gideon Louw and Mary Seely
- The Englishman's Garden*  
edited by Alvilde Lees-Milne and Rosemary Verey



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By Suzanne L. Granger

# Lasca Herbarium



**A**N IMPORTANT resource on the grounds of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, relatively unknown and seldom used except by persons in the Research Division, is the Lasca Herbarium. Unlike parks, whose function is purely recreational, botanic gardens are outdoor laboratories — museums of living plants. The working garden is made up of three parts, a living plant collection, a botanical library and a herbarium. The primary task of our herbarium is the documentation of the Arboretum's diverse living collection. Just as an art museum must have evidence to document its claim that a painting is the work of a particular artist, a botanic garden must also prove that a plant on the grounds really is a representative of a particular species. Without this accurate identification, a plant is worthless for scientific purposes.

Basically, a herbarium can also be considered a special kind of library, one devoted to plants rather than books. This library is a collection of dried plants that have been identified, pressed flat, glued onto stiff paper, labeled, catalogued and filed in cases according to a system of classification. Our filing system



*Librarian Joan DeFato, left, and taxonomist James Bauml work together as she locates a reference in a botanic key that he can compare with a herbarium specimen and an unidentified plant sample. (Photos by James Johnson)*





The author collects flowers from a tree in the Australian section.

conforms to the nomenclature in *Hortus Third*, the standard reference for horticulturists and gardeners. Species are filed within a genus, and the genera arranged into families, which are then filed according to alphabetical order.

The plant families on the grounds, and, therefore, in the herbarium, cover a wide portion of the botanic spectrum because Los Angeles County represents a unique growing situation where both tropical and temperate zone plants flourish. Unlike a garden in Hawaii or Canada, for example, the herbarium does not specialize in either exclusively tender or hardy plants. Instead, it includes representatives of both types.

The correctly identified specimens

in the Herbarium collection are especially important for re-identifying and relabeling plants on the grounds when accession tags are lost. These tags are small strips of embossed aluminum bearing, along with other information, the history of each plant in the Arboretum. The first two numbers on the top line indicate the year the plant arrived here followed by a single letter which records the original form in which it joined the collection: S for seed, C for cutting or P for plant. The last set of numbers on the top line refers back to the year noted by the first number and indicates the plant's position in the sequence of acquisitions that year. For instance, the *Banksia serrata* carrying an accession tag with the code 83-S-1037



Volunteer Janet (Mrs. W. D.) Pennycook, left, snips a fresh plant sample as Carolyn (Mrs. Donald) Toomb records information that will be included on the finished herbarium voucher.



came into the collection in 1983 as a seed and was the 1,037th plant acquired by the Arboretum this year.

The Lasca Herbarium contains about 17,000 mounted specimens representing 220 plant families from all over the world. Most serve as reference material, but some are special collections with other uses. Among the latter is a collection of common poisonous plants. A complete complement of reference specimens reduces errors in identification, especially important in cases where a child has eaten plant material and become ill. In such a situation, the Los Angeles County Medical Association's Poison Information Center may ask our taxonomist to identify the suspect plant by comparing often fragmentary samples with herbarium specimens. Precise identification of the plant could be lifesaving because doctors must know the specific poison the plant contains to determine appropriate treatment. In the past six months, the research staff has responded to almost 200 calls from the Poison Information Center, doctors, hospitals and even veterinarians who needed immediate help in determining whether a plant was responsible for poisoning symptoms and, if so, the name and toxic chemicals it may contain.

Herbarium specimens are also invaluable for providing an agreed upon standard for comparison when samples of unknown plants are brought in by the public for identification. The herbarium specimen, therefore, must be a typical representative of its species. A specimen with fruit that is either larger or smaller than the norm, for instance, would mislead researchers who might have a plant of the same species but with fruit at the opposite end of the size range. Ideally, each herbarium specimen was collected either in its natural habitat or soon after it arrived here. With this pris-

tine example to use for comparison, researchers can document any physiological changes the plant may make over a period of time as it adjusts to local growing conditions.

The value of any reference herbarium depends on whether or not its specimens, called vouchers, meet four requirements. First, the specimen should include flowers and fruit, stem and leaves and any underground parts if possible. Second, the label must include information on its form and shape when first located and where and when it was

collected. Characteristics such as color or succulence which could be lost during processing are noted, too. The material must also have been pressed and dried in an arrangement that shows both sides of the leaves and all the floral parts. Last, the specimen and its label must be securely glued to heavy, acid-free paper.

When carefully stored, these specimens remain useful indefinitely. Air-tight steel cases are adequate protection against mechanical injury and dust. Plant eating beetles are



*The fragment envelope attached to the righthand side of this Melia azedarach holds reproductive parts that may be removed for study under a microscope.*



the most critical threat because beetles hatching from eggs carried into the cases on an infected specimen could destroy an entire collection. As an assurance against such attack, all new specimens are placed in a freezer for 72 hours before being filed in the cases. Additional safeguards include periodic inspections and placing strips of felt soaked in a non-volatile poison around the inside face of each case.

As one of the few herbaria accessible to the public, the Herbarium collection is available for use by any interested person. The Herbarium is located in the Research Building at the northeastern end of the grounds and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

*Ms. Granger, a graduate of California Polytechnic University, Pomona, has been Lasca Herbarium curator since May of 1982.*



*Janet Pennycook checks the data recorded on the accession tag attached to a *Baekea virgata*.*

## DESCANSO GARDENS, La Canada

**JANUARY 2 through FEBRUARY 2 —**  
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Membership Art Show

**JANUARY 14 — 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Rose Pruning Demonstration  
George Lewis and staff

**FEBRUARY 11, 12 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Orchid Show

Southern California Orchid Society

**FEBRUARY 25, 26 —**

Sat. 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Sun. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Camellia Show

Southern California Camellia Council

**MARCH 17, 18 — Sat. 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Sun. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Daffodil Show

Southern California Daffodil Society

**MARCH 24 to APRIL 1 —**

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Spring Garden Show

*All events sponsored by the  
Descanso Gardens Guild*

## SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN, Palos Verdes Peninsula

**JANUARY 8 — 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Rose Pruning Demonstration  
South Coast Rose Society

**JANUARY 15 — noon to 4 p.m.**

Fruit Tree Pruning Demonstration  
Ed Hartnagel and staff

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 1984**

**JANUARY 22 — 2 p.m.**

Camellia and Azalea Culture  
Mazie Jean George

**JANUARY 28, 29 — Sat. 1 to 4:30 p.m.**

Sun. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Camellia Show

South Coast Camellia Society

**FEBRUARY 5 — 2 p.m.**

Lawn and Turf Culture

Charles Redding, teacher, Harbor C.C.

**FEBRUARY 12 — 2 p.m.**

Talk "Why Succulents?"

Stan Oleson, So. Coast Cactus &  
Succulent Society

**FEBRUARY 19 — 2 p.m.**

Talk "Exotic Ferns in the Open  
Garden"

John Myers, president, Shade Plant  
Society

**FEBRUARY 26 — 2 p.m.**

Fuchsia Pruning Demonstration  
Ida Drapkin

**MARCH 4 — 2 p.m.**

Houseplants Demonstration  
Kathy Andrell

**MARCH 11 — 2 p.m.**

Flower Arranging Demonstration  
Gordon Kimmel and Helen Gates

**MARCH 18 — 2 p.m.**

Talk "Orchids"  
Dr. Robert Streeter, South Bay  
Orchid Society

**MARCH 25 — 2 p.m.**

Talk "Dividing Perennials"

Shirley Bradley

*All events sponsored by the South  
Coast Botanic Garden Foundation*

## LOS ANGELES STATE & COUNTY ARBORETUM, Arcadia

**JANUARY 8 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Gladiolus Bulb Sale

So. Calif. Gladiolus Society

**JANUARY 28, 29 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Bonsai Show

Baikoen Kenkyukai Bonsai Society

**FEBRUARY 5 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Mushroom Show

Los Angeles Mycological Society

**FEBRUARY 11, 12 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Camellia Show

Temple City Camellia Society

**FEBRUARY 25, 26 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Fuchsia Lore Show

Southern California Fuchsia Society

**MARCH 10, 11 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Girl Scout Flower Show

Sierra Madres Girl Scout Council

**MARCH 24 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Environmental Education Fair

Hosted by L.A. County Arboretum

**MARCH 31, APRIL 1 —**

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Specialty Iris Show

Aril Society

*All events sponsored by the  
California Arboretum Foundation*