

DESCANSO GARDENS

The Descanso Gardens Guild, responsible for so many cultural events at Descanso Gardens, has provided visitors with an unusually varied bill of fare in recent weeks. Each presentation took place on the expanse of lawn near the entrance, giving an atmosphere much like that at Woodstock, New York, and other eastern pastoral sites of summer concerts. An art festival in early June brought together the works of some 75 Southern California artists expressed in conventional and unconventional media, the latter category including some stunning ceramic-on-stitchery, and art photography composed mainly of plant and bird time-shots. On July 22nd the Glendale Community Symphony Concert gave its second concert of the year at the Gardens, attracting an audience of over 3,000 people, a good part of whom heard the concert from vantage spots among the oaks where they had spread out their blankets. Earlier in the month the La Canada Players presented an evening performance of Jean Anouilh's "Antigone" to over 500 people, and on August 11 and 12 gave performances of five playlets for children.

HERBARIUM VOLUNTEERS

Not so much in the public eye as some other members of Las Voluntarias who work at the Arboretum, the herbarium volunteers are a key group who perform their special tasks in the quiet atmosphere of reference works and microscopes. Nancy Zabriskie, leader of the group and a longtime member of the California Arboretum Foundation, provided us with the following description of their work.

"What do two pretty young matrons, a great-grandmother, and a college stu-

dent have in common? Since they are among the members of Las Voluntarias and a few unaffiliated volunteers at the Arboretum, you would expect them to share a love of plants, but more particularly, because they share an interest in the form, structure, and infinite variety of living plants as well as the botanical language which describes them, they contribute many hours of work in the herbarium under the guidance of curator Jeannette Huber.

"The great-grandmother, who became known as 'Mama Flower' during an African safari from which she brought back seed for our neighbor institution, Huntington Gardens, has collected plant specimens from Alaska to the Arroyo Seco in Pasadena. At the Arboretum she has spent most of her time at the glue-table in the herbarium mounting dried, pressed specimens of ornamental plants collected by others, and filing finished herbarium sheets in the large, gray cabinets where they are kept for ready reference.

"The student spent a great deal of time on the Arboretum grounds this past spring collecting and pressing specimens of shrubs and trees in flower, making careful notes on size, color, date, location, and other pertinent data from which, after checking reference literature in the library, he wrote the labels which will accompany the specimens when they are mounted.

"The two young women come once a week, working together to curate a valuable old plant collection, confirming the identification of each specimen by examination under a microscope for characteristics of the flowers, fruits, stems and leaves for conformation to the appropriate technical descriptions as found by using the key in an authoritative flora of the region where the collection was made. In difficult cases they may need to check further by consulting monographs in botanical periodicals.

"Other tasks undertaken by members of Las Voluntarias working in the herbarium include the application of strong plastic to woody portions or to fruit, seeds, or large leaves which cannot be held down by glue alone; statistical work; helping with the inventory; and filing. This last activity requires more than just knowledge of the alphabet. On its label a specimen is named by genus and species, but the sheet must be put into the genus folder filed with others of its family. Therefore, one must locate the family the particular genus belongs in; then, if it is a new genus for this herbarium, a new folder must be labeled. If there is already a genus folder, the particular species may be filed alphabetically among the other species in that folder. It's nice if you already know the family, but the non-botanist usually needs to refer to our well-thumbed copy of Willis. A faulty memory can lose a *Catalpa* quickly and semi-permanently if it permits tucking elsewhere than into BIGNONIACEAE. Happily, families are arranged alphabetically, with a few exceptions such as the ferns, the conifers and the special weed collection.

"Inventorying involves listing each item of *Acacia*, for example, where it was collected, whether it was from a LASCA collection or an exchange, and how many sheets of each collection number we may have. One of the founding members of Las Voluntarias is engaged in this statistical work and even though she is a longtime gardener, has become impressed with the tremendous variety and the many variations of *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus*. A new project for her has been checking place-names against geographical locations on maps to pinpoint them in more detail for an as yet unmounted collection from Western Australia, a very large area. Because the Arboretum grows many Australian plants for trial, demonstration, and introduction, differences in

their native elevations and climates have a bearing on choices made among them.

"With increased public concern about the natural environment and the interest in edible weeds, poisonous plants, fire- or smog-resistant plants, and so forth, more taxpayers are bringing their questions to the office of the horticultural consultant. It is interesting and gratifying to be of occasional assistance in some problem involving plant identification. The herbarium is the reference tool by means of which we learn to do this. In this respect, and because it contains positive records of what grows on Arboretum grounds, the herbarium provides all of us members of Las Voluntarias who work there an education we could hardly find anywhere else."

EDUCATION

Although schools are generally no longer "out" for summer, fall is still the season when young and old alike renew their educational pursuits. It is also the time when educators introduce new courses and refurbish old ones. In the latter category are the fall schedules of youth and adult classes at the Arboretum, Descanso Gardens, and South Coast Botanic Garden. These are essentially basic classes in gardening, landscaping and botanical art for which there is a continuing demand. Two new classes added last year and repeated this year are a class in herbs and one covering poisonous plants of the area. Last fall a number of mini-courses were introduced at the Arboretum under the sponsorship of the California Arboretum Foundation. These proved so successful that the number of courses offered has been doubled for the 1973-74 season. They range from the relatively technical—Plant Physiology, Genetics and Plant Breeding—to such largely "how-to"



1973. "Herbarium volunteers." *Lasca leaves* 23, 96–97.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/130958>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/133185>

Holding Institution

Missouri Botanical Garden, Peter H. Raven Library

Sponsored by

Los Angeles Arboretum

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: The Arboretum Library at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.