

Lasca Leaves



Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

Mildred E. Mathias
Botanical Garden

THIS DEPARTMENT is happy to add its salute to the UCLA Board of Regents for naming the university's eight-acre botanical garden after its longtime director, Dr. Mildred E. Mathias. The honor was accorded Dr. Mathias last January in recognition of her 24 years at the university as professor of botany, service as head of the botany department, 18 years as director of the garden, authorship of numerous books in her field, the leadership she has given to many professional organizations, and the national reputation she has earned as a leading authority on botanical taxonomy.

The Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden, as it is now known, is primarily a teaching resource that is also open to the public. Located in the southeast corner of the UCLA campus, it contains some 3,500 plant species including a number of outstanding specimens of flowering trees.

At the Arboretum, Dr. Mathias is a well-known friend, supporter, and advisor. Old hands at the garden will remember that she started her long association in 1950 when she became a member of the editorial committee of *Lasca Leaves*. Shortly after, she became a member of the California Arboretum Foundation Board of Trustees and remains today an honorary board member.



Dr. Mildred E. Mathias

It is commonly known in the profession that botanical gardens are seldom named for a person and almost never for a person who is living. It was understandable, then, that one of Dr. Mathias' first comments on being notified of the honor was, "But I'm still alive!" Not only alive but very active, although formally retired. She is chairman of the UCLA Natural Land and Water Reserves advisory committee, executive director of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, and each year conducts field trips to various areas outside the country, most recently to Costa Rica, the Amazon, and the South Pacific.

Arbor Day

AS IT HAS for the past several years, the County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens gave a thousand trees to a thousand L.A. County schools last March 7 as part of its contribution to the observance of Arbor Day. Almost as many packets of teacher resource material were distributed to science curricula coordinators in the 53 participating school districts in the county.

Assembling the packets and growing the trees was and is no small job. Arboretum Superintendent John Provine, who is in charge of the growing program, said: "It took 18 months and a careful watering and feeding program at the Arboretum for this year's trees — *Callistemon* 'Red Cascade,' a new Arboretum introduction — to grow from cuttings in 3-inch pots to 10-foot specimens in 5-gallon cans."

Practically every school receiving a tree had a planting ceremony, the students digging the hole, preparing the soil, and otherwise following the planting directions supplied in the resource packet. Members of the Arboretum's Las Voluntarias undertook the job of assembling the packets which contained a history of Arbor Day, suggested program ideas for its observance, information concerning conservation and the value of plants, brief illustrated articles about the uses and character of



Some of the 1,000 Callistemon 'Red Cascade' grown at the Arboretum over a period of 18 months before being distributed to county schools for their commemorative Arbor Day programs March 7.

Photo by Don Dimond

wood, water as a resource, our forests, and, lastly, an educational puzzle for youngsters to work out.

The Arboretum has been using its resources to foster the ideas of Arbor Day for 15 years. At one time, schools brought students to one of the Department's gardens for a commemorative ceremony which ended with each student being given a seedling tree in a procedure that more and more began to resemble a bargain-basement rush. In 1972, the Department redirected its Arbor Day program to the present school-centered observances, a change that resulted in a greater number of students concentrating more on the real values of Arbor Day and less on the acquisition of a free tree. Commenting on the change which he had instigated, Francis Ching, department director, noted that "we want to make the best effort we can

in helping students increase their awareness and understanding of the social values in planting trees and conserving our natural resources by doing this in their community."

South Coast Payment

AT THE GROUND-BREAKING ceremony for the building of the administrative center at South Coast Botanic Garden nearly four years ago, the president of the South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation, Paul Saffo, presented County Supervisor James Hayes, in whose district the garden is located, with a check for \$20,000. The check represented the Foundation's tangible expression of appreciation for the County's having undertaken the long-planned-for construction. The Foundation further made a pledge to contribute \$200,000 over the next five years toward the cost of the project.

Last January, the Foundation's current president, Helen Pickett, sent Supervisor Hayes a payment of \$10,000, leaving \$158,000 still due. The payment would have been larger, she said, except that at the same time she also sent a check of \$9,000 to County Arboreta and Botanic Gardens Director Francis Ching as a contribution toward the operating costs of South Coast, suffering like the other two Department gardens from budget austerities resulting from Proposition 13.

Raising these sums, says President Pickett, has not been easy. The money has come principally from donations and from Foundation-sponsored special events. But, she says, new fund-raising plans are being developed that are expected to make it possible for the Foundation to discharge the obligation it has assumed pretty much on schedule.



1979. "Arbor day." *Garden* 3(3), 1–2.

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