

THE FUTURE ARBORETUM PLANT PALETTE

Where do we go from here?

Seven months have passed since the hurricane-force windstorm ravaged 235 trees at the Arboretum. Although our psyches may still be shaken, we must now ask, "Where do we go from here?" It is prudent to seek sage advice from the past when thinking about the future. Two years after the Arboretum was founded, R.J. Siebert, the first Director of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, wrote in the Arboretum journal, *Lasca Leaves*, 1(1): 1-2, 1950: "That exotic plants mean so much to the present landscape of southern California is not fully realized—nor is it fully realized that there is no institution here devoted to the study of these exotic cultivated plants as a whole."

Three years later, Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr., President of the Board of Trustees, California Arboretum Foundation, Inc., wrote the following in *Lasca Leaves*, 3(2):10 in 1953: "...I would say that the primary purpose in creating the Arboretum was to establish a botanic garden which would serve as a practical demonstration to all Southern California of the ornamental plants which can be successfully grown in this area, including both old and new introductions, to the end that more beauty will find its way into our gardens, our parks, and along our streets and about our public buildings."

These visions continue to provide valuable guidelines for the future plant palette of the Arboretum. In our early years, propagative material and plants (germplasm) were sought from all around the globe. Emphasis was subsequently focused on the five Mediterranean climate regions of the world (coastal California, mid-coastal Chile, Cape of South Africa, Mediterranean Basin and southwestern Australia). When successive years of drought occurred in the 1970s, combined with a burgeoning population and limited access to water, acquisition shifted to germplasm with greater drought tolerance.

Going forward, species selection will need to be done with some rigor because the new plants will be on public display for generations to come. The general guiding premise will continue on the acquisition of species from the Mediterranean climate areas of the world, while at the same time, placing emphasis on drought tolerance. Our plant record data are helping us to determine which species have survived in our climate, and from which regions of the



world to place continued relevance, as well as, new attention beyond areas of Mediterranean climate. Additionally, Southern California plant professionals will be asked to provide recommendations of species they feel warrant consideration because the species are new and need to be evaluated here, are underutilized in the landscape or are still noteworthy but are no longer available in the nursery trade.



Oposite page top: *Erythrina falcata* (Brazilian coral tree) at the Arboretum entrance. Below: Tim Phillips, Arboretum Superintendent, and Alex Silber, owner of Papaya Tree Nursery, plant a mango tree in the newly redesigned Garden for All Seasons.

Above: Fallen *Juglans nigra* (black walnut) and *Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican fan palm) in historical core after windstorm. Tim Phillips and Hank Hawkins, Arboretum gardener, prepare planting site for *Erythrina coralloides* (naked coral tree).

Acquisition and replacement of specimens will not be on a tree-for-tree basis except for critical focal points in the landscape. Rather, the best species will be selected for each location within the living collection. Only a limited number of specimens will come directly from commercial nursery sources. The vast majority of plant species at the Arboretum entered the collection as seeds, were grown into seedlings and subsequently planted in the landscape. Plants grown from seeds provide a tremendous diversity of morphological features and environmental adaptability. These plants also provide a more natural range of characteristics than clonal material from commercial sources. It is this diversity that provided a huge palette of plants from which many were selected for the Arboretum's plant introduction program from 1957 to 1991. Seeds and cuttings will be acquired from other botanical gardens, commercial wild-source companies and field collections.

Natural disasters, like the 2011 windstorm, are not unique or uncommon. They can include hail storms, snow storms, major temperature fluctuations, flooding, wild fires and more. In other parts of the country, disasters occur with some degree of regularity. They are often a blessing in disguise because they teach us about both the fragility and resiliency of life, and provide a tremendous opportunity to re-evaluate the emphases of a valuable living collection, like we have at the Arboretum. ●

—James E. Henrich is Curator of Living Collections at the Arboretum.

THE NEXT GENERATION

A significant number of new trees will be added in the fall, the best time to plant trees. In spring, the initial planting of trees included the following:

- *Agonis flexuosa* (peppermint tree)
- *Aloe plicatilis* x *A. bainesii* (tree aloe)
- *Cercis canadensis* var. *mexicana* (Mexican redbud)
- *Chamaerops humilis* 'Argentea' (silver European fan palm)
- *Erythrina coralloides*, *E. latissima*, *E. speciosa* var. *rosea* (coral trees)
- *Musa coccinea*, M. 'Cardaba', M. 'Dwarf Orinoco', M. 'Green Red', M. 'Ice Cream', M. 'Orinoco' (bananas)
- *Prunus campanulata* 'Okame' (Taiwan cherry)
- *Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan' (Japanese flowering cherry)
- *Prunus subhirtella* 'Pendula' (weeping rosebud cherry)
- *Quercus boissieri*, *Q. frainetto*, *Q. garryana*, *Q. greggii*, *Q. ithaburensis*, *Q. lobata*, *Q. phillyraeoides*, *Q. tomentella* (oaks)
- *Quercus engelmannii* (Engelmann oak)—first trees planted after the storm
- *Salix matsudana* 'Tortuosa' (corkscrew willow)
- Numerous fruit trees in the newly redesigned Garden for All Seasons

IF YOU WANT TO HELP...

Concerned individuals contacted the Arboretum within days of the windstorm disaster, offering to contribute money that would support acquisition of our next generation of plants. The Arboretum Tree Fund was established and more than \$72,000 have been received to date. Contact Brittany Fabeck at Brittany.Fabeck@arboretum.org if you wish to contribute or further deepen your commitment to the future of the Arboretum's living plant collections.



Henrich, James E. 2012. "The future Arboretum plant palette: where do we go from here?" *Exploring the arboretum : magazine for the members of the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden* 2012:summer/fall, 6–7.

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