

Information Services

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THE PLANT SCIENCE LIBRARY & PLANT INFORMATION SERVICES

One of the information sources available at The Arboretum is the Plant Science Library. Started as a staff library in 1948, it is now a public reference library. So the first thing to know is that it exists and the second is that it is open to anyone who cares to use it.

Our holdings reflect the plantings on the grounds (Australian and South African plants, herbs and other useful plants, roses, perennials) along with gardening and garden design as well as a touch of California history, birds and other natural history.

How would *you* find this library useful? Do you have a garden design labeled with names you don't know? Want to know what a plant is used for? Need a botanical name instead of the common name or vice versa? Common names of plants lead down interesting paths because a bluebell in one place is an entirely different plant in another. A lady called about a Spanish name and we found it in a Mexican book. When she came in, however, she said that our plant was not her plant. She went on to say that in Puerto Rico it grows like a weed. Sure enough, her plant was in a book on Puerto Rican weeds. Designers come to see pictures when working on projects such as designing a tea set using a wisteria theme or designing a carpet using the foliage of Australian plants. Movie studios request details of trees or vines so they can build them.

Newer resources include a CD-ROM version of *Index Kewensis*, useful in

checking botanical names and finding countries of origin without searching through 22 volumes of indexing. We also have a subscription to an Internet database, Plant Information Online from the Anderson Horticultural Library. This puts together two of their publications: *Source List of Plants and Seeds*, and index of catalogs, and *Flora*, an index of color illustrations with botanical names. It is searchable by botanical name, common name and variety name.

Plant Information had its origins with George Spaulding, the first superintendent at The Arboretum. When he stepped down as superintendent, he continued answering questions from an office in the Education Building. In later years, reorganization and changes in staffing led to volunteers fielding the questions and referring them to various members of the staff. Ultimately, a full-time staff person was again hired to provide information and now there are two, David Lofgren and Frank McDonough. In addition to their own knowledge, they have access to two Ph.D.'s and the library. The volunteers continue to assist and regularly meet for training sessions.

The questions we answer may involve plant identification, culture, diseases or pests and recommendations for specific landscape needs. Sometimes two neighbors with a horticultural dispute will call us. We try to help each one in



turn, giving the correct information to each side regardless of the merits of their case. Plant Information does not help just individuals. Nurseries, arborists, cities, Caltrans, County departments (such as Sheriff, Public Works and Parks and Recreation), pharmaceutical manufacturers and virtually anyone who has a horticultural problem can get our ear.

On one memorable occasion a Caltrans employee in charge of the landscaping of a freeway interchange brought in a swatch of rotting ice plant. He said, "I have 20 acres of rotting ice plants." When asked why it was so wet, he replied, "The contractor who put in the cuttings told me to water it every other day. My boss told me, 'It looks sick. Do something. So I started watering every day.' Nobody told him, but he was supposed to water only until the cuttings took root."

PLANT SCIENCE LIBRARY

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9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturday

PLANT INFORMATION

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DeFato, Joan. 1993. "Information services." *Arboretum News* 1998-1999:winter, 6.

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