



People—staff and volunteers—are the human chlorophyll that transforms land and plant collections into the beauty of a botanic garden, and thoughts and ideas into meaningful programs. The Regional Parks Botanic Garden is deep in the green of this special sort of human capital, with a veritable abundance of exceptional volunteers and staff. In this issue of *Manzanita*, we celebrate a few of these inspirational individuals, as we share some of their garden-centric contributions and accomplishments.

—Bart O'Brien

First There Were Field Trips, Then There Were *Friends* by Allison Kidder



Pattie Litton

Glenn Keator's first Taxonomy Master Class visited the Eastern Sierra in early August, 2015. Here students follow Glenn up Rock Creek, a destination northwest of Bishop and west of Tom's Place.

With this *Manzanita* issue's focus on the importance of volunteers and their contributions to the day-to-day functioning of the garden, here we celebrate some memories from field trips past and present, from all corners of the state. Field trips have been a central part of the garden's community and conservation efforts since the *Friends* formed in 1996, drawing together people interested in plants, curious to learn more, and willing to share adventures with new friends.

Collection outings have been an integral part of garden business since its inception in the early 1940s, when garden staff regularly ventured into the state's hinterlands to collect specimens for the garden (always with required permits, of course). These early trips were focused, strategic operations, not open to docents and the general public.

During those earlier days, the California Academy of Sciences, Strybing Arboretum, and CNPS were the main places in the Bay Area where people could sign up for field trip forays into California's wildlands to seek out native plants in their natural communities. Field trips ranged from the deserts in the south to the redwoods and Siskiyou regions in the north. Often Dr. Glenn Keator was the fearless leader, famous for setting a quick pace to spy the next botanical treasure.

In fact, it was Glenn Keator who originally approached Garden Director Steve Edwards about starting a docent training program for the garden in 1995. Glenn offered the first docent training class that same year, and several docents from Glenn's second docent training class in 1996 created the *Friends* organization, which eventually included a board of directors, an

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MANZANITA

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Members receive *Manzanita*, a quarterly publication of the *Friends*, as well as discounts on classes and field trips offered by the *Friends* and early admission to the garden's plant sales. The nurseries listed below sell native plants and offer discounts to *Friends* members.

Annie's Annuals and Perennials (510-215-3301),
740 Market Avenue, Richmond, www.anniesannuals.com

Bay Natives (415-287-6755), 10 Cargo Way, San Francisco,
www.baynatives.com

Berkeley Horticultural Nursery (510-526-4704),
1310 McGee Avenue, Berkeley, www.berkeleyhort.com

California Flora Nursery (707-528-8813), Somers & D Streets,
Fulton (north of Santa Rosa), www.calfloranursery.com

Central Coast Wilds (831-459-0655), 336 Golf Club Drive,
Santa Cruz, www.centralcoastwilds.com (please call before visiting)

East Bay Nursery (510-845-6490), 2332 San Pablo Avenue,
Berkeley, www.eastbaynursery.com

Larner Seeds (415-868-9407), 235 Grove Road, Bolinas,
www.larnerseeds.com

Mostly Natives Nursery (415-663-8835), 54 B Street, Unit D,
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Native Revival Nursery (831-684-1811), 2600 Mar Vista Drive, Aptos,
www.native revival.com

Friends members gain free admission to participating gardens through the American Horticultural Society's Reciprocal Admissions Program (<http://ahs.org/gardening-programs/rap/find>). Contact the individual garden to verify this benefit.

MEMBERSHIP

Your membership in the *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden supports the important work of the garden in educational programs, conservation, and horticultural experimentation. Funds raised by the *Friends* help provide long-term financial security for the garden as well as new facilities and programs.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

General

- \$50 Individual
- \$30 Limited Income/Student
- \$75 Family/Dual

General Membership Plus

- (Includes subscription to *The Four Seasons*, the garden's annual journal)
- \$75 Individual Plus
 - \$55 Limited Income/Student Plus
 - \$100 Family Plus

Special Garden Friend

- (Includes subscription to *The Four Seasons*)
- \$125 California Poppy
 - \$250 Buckwheat
 - \$500 Ceanothus
 - \$1000 *Manzanita*

Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden

Advisory Council

Glenn Keator, Chair	Neil Havlik
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Janet Cobb	Mary and Lew Reid
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<i>Director:</i>	Bart O'Brien
<i>Supervisor:</i>	Liz Bittner
<i>Gardeners:</i>	Theo Fitandis, Don Fuller, Michael Uhler
<i>Senior Office Assistant:</i>	Ashika Narayan
<i>Interpretive Student Aides:</i>	Kiamara Ludwig Chris McCarron

GIFTS: Donations to the *Friends* are welcome and may be designated for special projects or given in honor of or in memory of someone.

ENDOWMENT: Contributions to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden Endowment Fund assist in providing financial security for the garden.

Please make all checks payable to the Regional Parks Foundation; note whether for *Friends* membership, gift, or Endowment Fund; and send to:

Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden
c/o Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley, CA 94708-2396.

The Board of the *Friends* generally meets at the Visitor Center in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden the second Wednesday of the month at 10:00 AM. All members are welcome. Call ahead to verify meeting date and time.

FOR INFORMATION:

About the *Friends* and membership: 510-544-3169,
info@nativeplants.org
About becoming a garden volunteer or docent: 510-544-3169

•
www.nativeplants.org



Joe Dahl

Islay Ridge, Santa Cruz Island, July 2009. This is the main ridge road that runs along the south side of the island. We saw ironwood groves in the shadier canyons, island redberry (*Rhamnus pirifolia*), and beautiful colonies of Santa Cruz Island wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*).

advisory council, several publications including the quarterly *Manzanita*, a website, classes, workshops, and, indeed, field trips. These early efforts led to the incredibly successful volunteer, education, and community outreach programs that we provide at the garden today. For many, the *Friends* organization has served as a font of friendships and connection, and many active docents will declare that one of the primary ways this community has bonded has been through its field trips.

At the center of it all has been Glenn Keator, the initiator with endless drive to get people out in the field to witness, learn about, and appreciate California's unique flora. "I've been leading field trips almost all my life—garden-sponsored field trips were a natural continuation of what I've been doing for years and years and years." Glenn's extensive knowledge of the state's nooks and crannies has developed over many years but was kick-started by outings with his friend, colleague, and the garden's former director, Wayne Roderick. "Wayne knew Northern California particularly well, especially bulbs, that was his real love, and he knew where all the special bulbs were. When I was in grad school, I got acquainted with Wayne, and he invited me to go on field trips with him to all the special places he knew."

Often garden staff co-led docent field trips with Glenn so they could share their knowledge about

the area with docents and take the opportunity to collect specimens for the garden. Recently-retired Garden Supervisor Joe Dahl started co-leading trips with Glenn in the 1990s—their combined and far-ranging knowledge still drives their searches to collect specimens and find interesting things to share with field trip attendees. "Glenn and I would often go up a day or two early to scope things out and do some collecting. Then we'd let the group know that I was going to stop here and there along the way and collect plants with permits," said Joe.

And Glenn shares, "On many occasions these were days of adventure. For example, on one occasion we'll never forget, I was trying to locate the rare marsh skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*), a skullcap that grows by wet ditches and other wet habitats. After scouring the road where it was said to grow and failing to find it, we decided to follow a nearby side road to a neighboring lake, just to see what it was like. And that's how we discovered Orr Lake, a huge shallow lake backed by snow-covered Mt. Shasta, with rare aquatic plants like Schreber's watershield (*Brasenia schreberi*) and the marsh skullcap. We have since taken people there whenever possible."

But searching for plants and finding ideal spots for future field trips isn't all fun and games. Often one is following someone's scribbled notes or hazy recollections of where to find a plant in very remote areas. Glenn shares a story about

My Latest Trip up the Smith River

by Joe Dahl

Transcribed from an interview with Joe Dahl by Allison Kidder, December 30, 2017

On a recent trip to the Smith River—the last official trip I did for the *Friends*—Glenn and I looked for a particular azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*) that I’ve wanted to collect for a long, long time, ever since I first saw it. The flower color is amazing, pink and white with a yellow throat, and the leaves are a deep, deep green. We were driving a long loop along the Smith River and thought we were pretty much at the end of good botanical sightings, so we’re thinking about heading back to town. Then I saw something out of the corner of my eye—pink flowers coming out of an azalea—and wondering what it was, I slammed on the brakes. Fortunately, Glenn was wearing his seat belt, or he probably would have gone through the windshield. As I walked over I kept thinking, “This can’t be the azalea. This can’t be the azalea. This can’t be the azalea.” And then I reached the plant and realized, “Yes, these are azalea blossoms, and yes, this is the azalea.”



Klamath manzanita (*Arctostaphylos klamathensis*)

an outing with Joe to find the rare Klamath manzanita (*Arctostaphylos klamathensis*). The type locality was supposed to be the Scott Mountain summit. “Despite scouring the area, we saw no sign of any manzanita but the common green-leaf manzanita (*A. patula*) and the ground-cover pinemat manzanita (*A. nevadensis*). We finally concluded that either we were blind, or something had happened to this population, and we more or less forgot about it.

Then, on a totally different back road near the Russian Wilderness area, I spied a manzanita on an open rocky knoll that fit the description of *A. klamathensis*, this despite the fact that no one had ever found it there. Serendipity? Who knows?”

Given his extensive tours around California, does Glenn have any favorite places? “Cook and Green Pass, absolutely, just south of the Oregon border and north of the Klamath River in the Siskiyou Mountains. That area brings together plants from the Sierra, the Cascades, and the northern Coast Ranges, so it has great diversity. That’s why it’s such a special place, especially for conifers, orchids, ferns, all kinds of things. Probably over half the orchids in the state are up there.”

Of course, with so many field trips over the years, there have been occasional mishaps: people getting lost, unplanned road detours, unexpected inclement weather, car accidents, illness, you name it. On the last day of a field trip near the Yolla Bolly Mountains someone lost car keys in a large meadow, but eventually the car keys were found, and everyone was able to drive home. Glenn has learned that when leading field trips, it’s important to be flexible and ready for just about anything. “One of my earliest field trips was to Cone Peak in the Santa Lucia Mountains—there was a woman on this trip who was planning to hike in high heels!” But through all these adventures the field trip spirit perseveres, and the garden community grows that much stronger by meeting challenges together.

Field trips provide instructors and attendees alike with fond memories and increased awareness of California flora. Accordingly, Glenn is always willing to share good memories of the many field trips he’s led over the years. “One of the most wonderful memories was, after visiting Santa Cruz Island one year, we took Highway 33 to an area north of Ojai. There had been a fire, and we found the most fabulous display of mariposa-tulips (*Calochortus venustus*) I’d ever seen. There were all these color forms. It was just amazing.” 🌸

Allison Green Kidder has been a docent and a member of the Manzanita editorial committee at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden since 2017. She has a deep interest in natural history and California native plants and has a PhD in plant ecology from UC Berkeley.

Doug Wirtz



The view from one of the ridges on the King Swett Ranch, Solano County, Solano Land Trust

Docent Enrichment at King Ranch, a Solano Land Trust Property

by Maggie Ingalls

As a volunteer with the Solano Land Trust and a Regional Parks Botanic Garden docent, I offered to lead a tour to the Frog Pond restoration site at King Ranch. I also planned to take the docents to the top of the hill above the pond, where there is often a good show of spring wildflowers. The hill provides one of the best views across the Suisun Marsh to Mount Diablo. I chose April 7, 2017, hoping to catch the wildflower show. This date was good for wildflowers, but it was also in the middle of a very rainy spring. The weather forecast for April 7 called for a 30 percent chance of showers in the region. I decided not to postpone the hike since there were a series of storms coming, and a future rain date had a good chance of being just as wet. Twenty docents signed up for the trip. The morning of April 7 started out cloudy, but the rain didn't begin until about 15 minutes before the start time. Then it poured. Most of the party decided to turn back. Twenty minutes later, the rain ended. My husband, David, and I led an intrepid group of four docents to view the restoration site. By the time the group drove up the hill, the sun was shining!

The Frog Pond restoration at King Ranch has several goals. One is to provide upland habitat for the red-legged frog, which is on the Endangered Species list due to invasive species and habitat loss. This frog can survive California's dry summers by entering a dormant state (called estivation) while hidden in small mammal burrows or moist leaf litter. Another goal of the Frog Pond restoration is to supply native plants for several species of butterflies, such as the callippe silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria callippe* subsp. *callippe*).

Restoration began in 2007 when half the pond was fenced off to protect the shoreline from the cattle that graze seasonally on the property. Initially the pond was almost bare of vegetation due to cattle grazing—there were only a couple of willows and some poison oak. The first tree plantings were done in 2008 by Vallejo High School students. I took on the site in 2010, organizing a small group of volunteers to plant suitable natives, cage them for protection against cattle predation, and water them through the first year. Among the new plantings now thriving are 21 buckeyes, 5 blue oaks, 5 coast live oaks, 6 valley oaks, and 1 canyon live oak. Some shrubs have also been planted: elderberry, toyon, coffeeberry and California rose. Rushes and cattails have returned to the riparian areas, and so has spring-seep monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*). Mugwort and California aster have been successfully added. This restored landscape is now perfect for docent field trips—it provides a fascinating example of the benefits and limitations of habitat restoration projects.

A party! The *Manzanita* editorial committee invited a dozen-plus founding members of the *Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden* to a lunch at the home of long-time docent Greti Séquin in the hopes of recording stories about the early days of the Friends. Our guests took turns reminiscing about how they happened to get involved with the garden in the first place. For many the bottom line was: through Glenn Keator, of course! Some had attended one of Glenn's botany classes at Strybing Arboretum (now the San Francisco Botanical Garden), Merritt College in Oakland, College of Marin in Kentfield, or the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Others met Glenn on one of the many field trips he led to Santa Cruz Island, Baja, Anza Borrego, or some other beautiful botanic hot spot. Many folks who met Glenn elsewhere followed him to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden and never looked back. He has always had a way of inspiring his students to learn more.

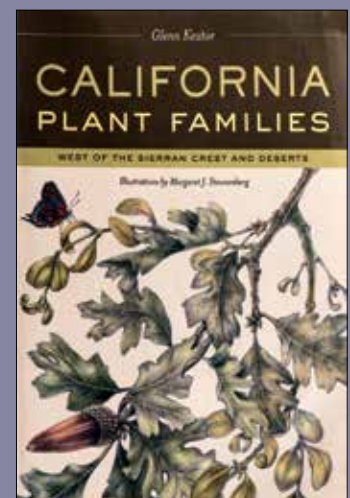
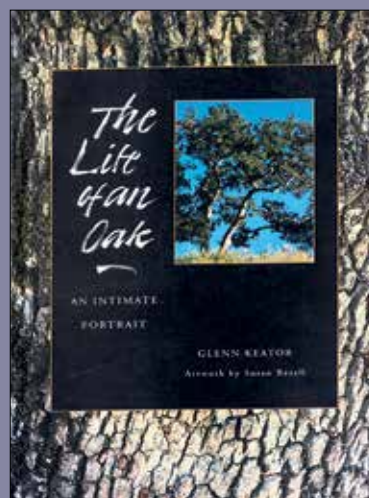
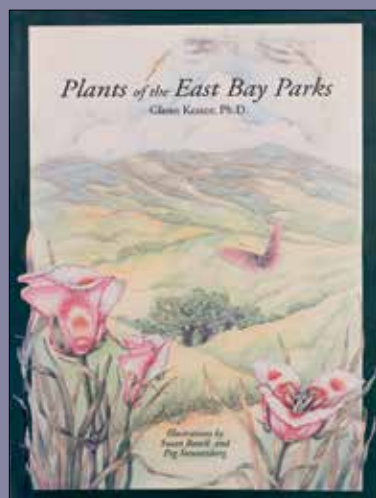
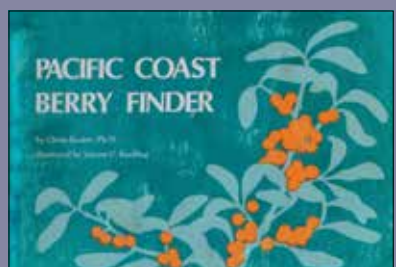
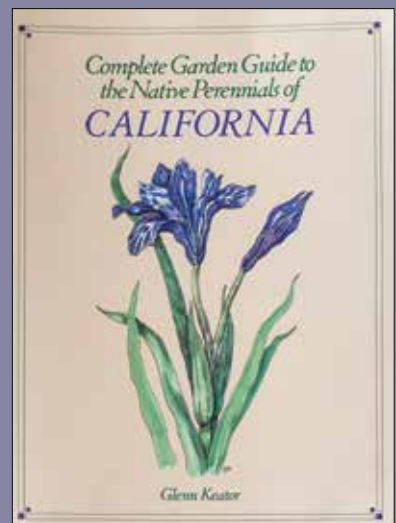
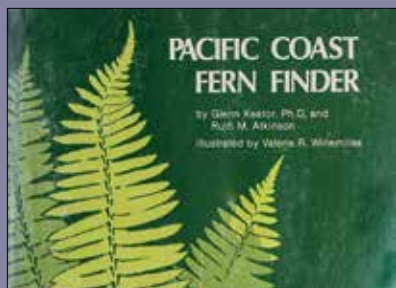
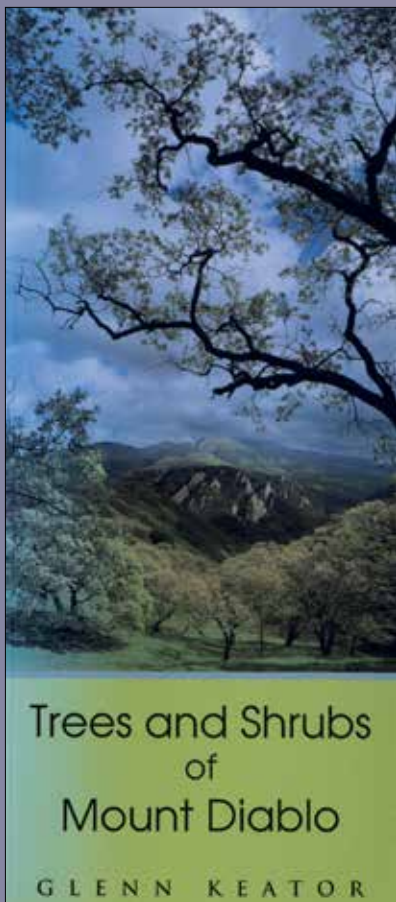
Glenn can take credit for creating the docent program at the garden. He has taught all or the lion's share of every docent training course since the beginning of the program in 1995! Here is how the docent program came about: Having first-hand knowledge of the docent program at Strybing, one day Glenn asked Steve Edwards (the director of the garden at the time) if he had ever considered docent training. Steve said no. But a month or

two later, Steve came around: "I thought about your suggestion. Why don't we do it?" After the second docent class in 1996, Glenn suggested to his students that the garden needed a *Friends* organization, and Katherine Greenberg, Jean Ateljevich, and a few others took the ball and ran with it.

Glenn's interest in plants began in his childhood backyard in Alameda, California. Glenn was raised by four doting adults: his parents and two grandmothers. Glenn's father brought home beautiful rocks collected, a couple at a time, on family camping trips; he built rock walls, a fish pond, a waterfall, and other garden features in the backyard. As gardener-in-chief, Glenn's grandmother carefully controlled horticultural duties; Glenn was allowed to help only after she began to slow down. Now Glenn maintains his own beautiful garden at his home in Berkeley—it is chock-full of several hundred species of Mediterranean plants from all over the world.

Glenn earned his BA at UC Santa Barbara and his PhD in botany at UC Berkeley and began his career teaching botany at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado before returning to the Bay Area. Of course, you say, Glenn studied plants. But Glenn has many talents and considered other majors, especially languages. He wondered if he could even make a living in botany. He has always been interested in music, has perfect pitch (according to neurologist and author Oliver Sachs,

Here is a sample, by no means complete, of the books that Glenn has written. Book cover photos by Arlyn Christopherson



As a botanical novice, new to California, I had the good fortune to attend Glenn Keator's ten-month Master Taxonomy Class on California Native Plants in 2015. Glenn combined classroom lectures on the major California plant families with field trips to places that showed me why the world keeps falling in love with California: Abbotts Lagoon, Mt. Shasta, the Klamaths, the Eastern Sierra, Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. Diablo. Glenn led us off the beaten track to find native plants whose exact locations are inscribed in the internal GPS of his deep botanical scholarship and decades in the field. Each step of the way Glenn gave us his view of life, through the lens of California's astonishing landscapes.

—Beth Dupin

researchers estimate the occurrence of perfect pitch to be one in 10,000 people), and played classical piano and sang. I asked Glenn why his Spanish accent sounds so authentic (hearing Glenn say the word *chuparosa*, for example, is like taking a quick trip to Ensenada); the answer, again, is that perfect-pitch ear. Listen to Glenn lecture or read aloud a passage from one of his many books, you'll hear that almost flawless way he has of constructing sentences and developing ideas, as if he were writing music.

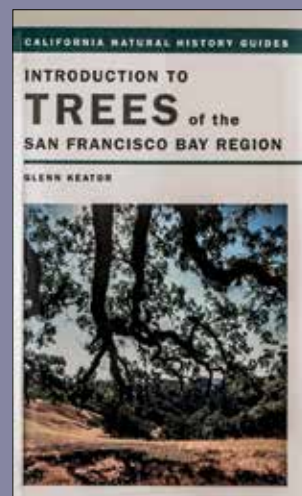
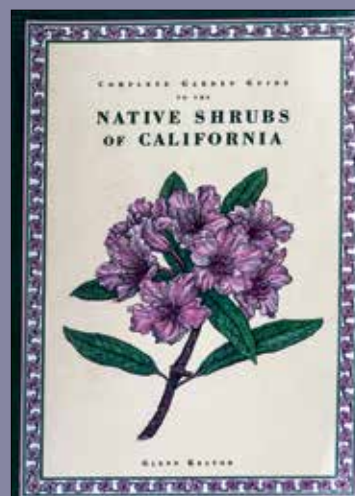
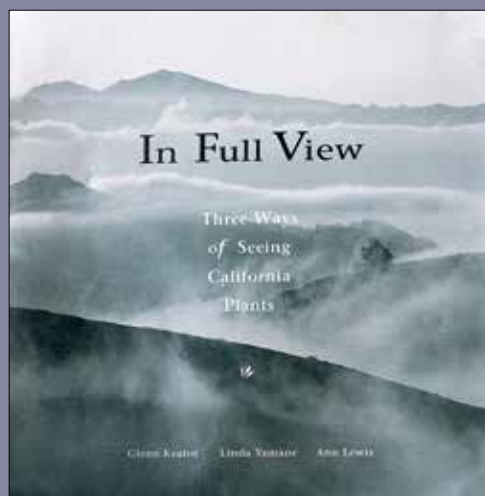
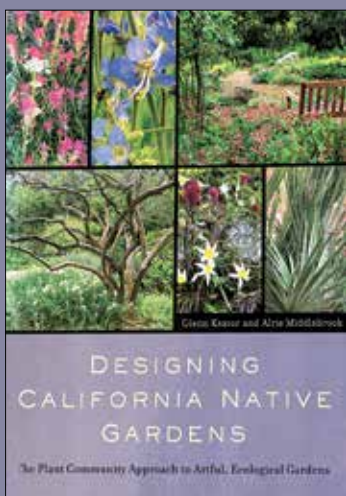
Glenn has written over a dozen books—several, such as *California Plant Families: West of the Sierran Crest and Deserts* and *Plants of the East Bay Parks*, are seminal works in the field. He is working on a new book about flowers: their history, evolution, and pollination. Watch for a preview of this endeavor in the 2018 spring issue of *Manzanita*. Glenn continues to offer workshops and field trips for the Botanic Garden. He remains a continuing source of inspiration for all things botanical. 🌱

Pattie Litton has been a volunteer at the Botanic Garden since she took the docent training in 2012. She leads public and school tours and serves on the docent steering committee. She is coeditor, along with Arlyn Christopherson, of the Manzanita.



Wen Hsu

Glenn points out the characters of a rock dudleya (*Dudleya saxosa*) on a field trip to Anza Borrego.



Rosie Andrews



May Chen



Clockwise from top left:
Glenn Keator and Jo McCondochie wave from
the garden Visitor Center.

Glenn explains characters of mountain
mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*) on a
field trip to Anza Borrego.

Glenn and his students examine chamise
(*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) on Mt. Diablo.



Rosie Andrews

I was fortunate to have Glenn Keator as instructor in my docent training class in 2016. His love of plants was contagious. He suggested that docent tours should convey to garden visitors a sense of wonder and curiosity that extends beyond the usual features of botany, ecology, and adaptation.

Glenn taught us that the name of each plant usually tells something interesting about its characteristics, the original collector, or the person to whom the plant was dedicated. I remember Glenn telling us why the genus *Lupinus* refers to wolf: because early observers thought that lupines robbed other plants of nutrients. However, in fact, lupines dominate on poor soils through their capacity to fix nitrogen.

And for whom is Eastwood's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*) named? As the herbarium curator at the California Academy of Sciences, Alice Eastwood (1859-1953) saved numerous type specimens when fire broke out after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. You can admire her portrait in the Visitor Center and find our own *A. glandulosa* specimen near the shed at the north end of the Southern California/Desert section.

Each week Glenn took us to a different section of the garden and introduced us to famous names in botany: the Englishman Thomas Nuttall, curator of the Harvard Botanic Gardens; Dr. Eschscholz, Estonian surgeon and botanist whose difficult-to-spell name was given to our California poppy; and David Douglas from Scotland who collected extensively and died mysteriously in Hawaii.

So, when I lead tours for adults I sometimes mention the derivation of a plant's name to stimulate interest and curiosity about plants in the garden. And when I do, I say to myself: "Thank you, Glenn!" To further this interest, I suggest you check out the link to California Plant Names at <http://www.calflora.net/botanicalnames/>.

—John A. Helms

Botanic Garden Supervisor Joe Dahl Retires *by Glenn Keator*



The garden staff celebrates: (left to right) Chris McCarron, Joe Dahl, Ashika Narayan, Carole Dahl, Theo Fitanides, Kiamara Ludwig, Liz Bittner.

I first got to know Joe on a trip to Santa Cruz Island, a trip I was leading to introduce participants to the island's wealth of beautiful plants, including many garden-worthy endemics. Joe was initially uncomfortable about collecting for the garden in front of the participants and afraid that I would not approve. But he soon learned that I'm all about collecting for the sake of educating the public, and he was heartened by my egging him on to collect all sorts of plant material. By the end of our excursion, we had become good friends and had a bounty of booty. (Please note that all of this and subsequent collections have been carefully done under permits.) Since that time Joe and I have done numerous field trips to collect for the garden, including many more to Santa Cruz Island. Fund-raising trips have been combined with collecting trips for garden staff to places like the White Mountains and Klamath Mountains, where Joe and I were co-leaders, which greatly helped in expediting trip logistics.

Joe has become very knowledgeable about California's flora having, over the years, been mentored by people like Wayne Roderick, whom he truly admired. Wayne introduced Joe to many of his favorite haunts for rare plants, taking him on field trips to places

like Cook and Green Pass in the Siskiyou Mountains. Joe honed his puckish sense of humor with Wayne, who loved to tease people he liked, so Joe had a sweatshirt made for Wayne with the message "World's Most Miserable Bastard." Wayne wore that sweatshirt everywhere.

Joe's great devotion to locating favorite rare plants, most of which he's been successful in finding and introducing to the garden, has led to adventures I've shared with him, such as our search for black crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), which hugs coastal rock cliffs near Oregon, and the fire-following Baker's globe mallow (*Iliamna bakeri*) of the high desert to the northeast of Mt. Shasta. We are still searching for the lovely groundcover bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*), whose recorded locales thus far have failed to bring results. Joe and I will continue into the future botanizing and collecting for the garden.

Joe grew up in Walnut Creek with two brothers—one now living in Oakley, the other on an island in Puget Sound—and a sister in Wisconsin. His teen years were highly influenced by the Lindsay Wildlife Experience (formerly Lindsay Wildlife Museum) in Walnut Creek, an organization in the East Bay that rescues and rehabilitates



Joe's most recent masterpiece: the new serpentine bog in the Shasta/Klamath section of the garden. In bloom are *Penstemon azureus*, Siskiyou monardella (*Monardella purpurea*), waxy cone-flower (*Rudbeckia glaucescens*) and tinker's penny (*Hypericum anagalloides*). The large clump in the middle of the bed is a very special plant, false dogbane (*Trautvetteria carolinensis* var. *occidentalis*), in this photo just past its prime and in seed.

Inset photo of false dogbane by Aaron Schusteff.

injured animals. His first experience hooked him—he got to play with a couple of bear cubs! Another favorite duty was rescuing raptors of all kinds. Lindsay Wildlife fostered his love for the out-of-doors and wild animals, especially snakes and lizards, and he lived an exciting life on legendary field trips, especially to California's deserts. I believe it is this early influence that led Joe to his life's work. For many years, this interest had him

raising various snakes in the basement of his residence!

Joe met his wife, Carole, while working at Black Diamond Mines Regional Park where Carole was a naturalist; they were married in 1996. Joe assumed the role, with Carole, of caring for his disabled stepson Kevin, and helped raise Carole's daughter Heather, who now has a successful business in Colorado after earning an advanced degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Joe loves to hike in desert climates and belonged for many years to a group that made an annual pilgrimage to the Grand Canyon; the group reserved room at the bottom of the canyon whenever it was available, going anytime from spring through fall. Sometimes the group hiked all the way from the south rim to the north rim. Sadly, the group changed when the leader retired, and Joe no longer makes his favorite annual trek.

His professional botanical life at the garden started many years ago when Joe worked first as a temp, then later as a full-time gardener under Al Seneres, his original garden supervisor. When I first got to know Joe, he was a gardener whose beat included the Desert and Sea Bluff sections. When Al retired, Joe applied for the supervisor position, a role that has been challenging and at times stressful, but eased by Joe's ability to get along with everyone.

One of Joe's favorite accomplishments at the garden was creating a mound in the Desert section for growing plants, like Munz's cholla (*Cylindropuntia munzii*), that need perfect drainage. Joe learned the art of placing rocks from former supervisor Seneres. Today, the mound serves as testament to creating optimum conditions for growing desert plants.

Another important accomplishment for Joe was digitizing data on plant collections, allowing access to a world of important information over the many years of accessioning plants for the garden. These records allow gardeners to learn when plants have been brought in and from where, and sometimes with notes, why the plants either failed or flourished.

Joe's last accomplishment in the garden was creating a serpentine bog display in the Shasta-Klamath section near the Visitor Center. Not only did he place all the beautiful serpentine rocks himself, but he also designed niches for a wide array of special plants, many from northern California, that he found on collecting trips. One

Bart O'Brien



Is Joe contemplating his imminent retirement?

of the most dramatic examples is the lovely and rare California lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium californicum*), which can be seen blooming in late spring.

Joe welcomes retirement, which will allow him to spend more time with Carole and more time on other interests such as bird watching and woodworking. He also plans to go on more field trips to look for rare plants, which means I will be enjoying more excursions with my good friend. It has been a real pleasure hanging out with Joe, and I wish him the very best. 🌿

Glenn Keator is chair of the Friends Advisory Council. He is a popular instructor of botany and field trip leader in the Bay Area, and he teaches the docent training course at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden. He is the author of a number of books on native plants.

Joe Dahl



Looking for Santa Cruz Island bushmallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *nesioticus*), Christy Beach, Santa Cruz Island

Wen Hsu



Joe Dahl collects woolly groundsel (*Packera cana*) on a Friends field trip near Ship Mountain, Del Norte County.

Ron Clendenen: Propagator with Deep Roots *by Allison G. Kidder*

Bart O'Brien



On December 21, 2017, Ron and Rosemary Clendenen were awarded plaques in appreciation for their many years of service to the garden, especially as masterminds of the biannual plant sales.

If you visit the garden on a Tuesday morning, you will probably see a tall, soft-spoken man completely at home as he drifts down the paths looking intently at the plants as he walks, here and there clipping and stashing a stem cutting. This would be Ron Clendenen, and his choice of cuttings as he strolls along the paths is only partly serendipitous, for he, better than most, has a good idea of plants that are straightforward to propagate and make for a quick sale at the garden's biannual plant sales.

Ron has been wandering around gardens since he was shorter than a garden hoe. He grew up in Bakersfield, California, and sure enough, in order to garden in his first small plot of land in the family yard when he was about five years old, his mother had to saw off the top of the hoe so he could use it. He has gardened through his life. "No matter where I went I was growing stuff."

After earning a BA in chemical engineering from UC Berkeley, Ron worked at Livermore Lab for a couple of years before getting a PhD in chemical engineering from the University of Illinois,

Champaign-Urbana. He landed a job at Shell Oil Company and eventually ended up in Houston, Texas where he went to night law school to become a patent attorney, a position he held for over twenty years. Throughout these years gardening remained an important part of his life. "Even in Illinois I was taking care of the garden of the apartment I lived in for the person who owned it. Then in Texas I had a greenhouse for orchids and bromeliads." He also created his own pond habitat where he enjoyed growing water lilies.

It is not surprising, then, that after he moved back to California he was attracted to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden as a gardener, and not necessarily as a California native plant enthusiast. Even so, Ron seized the opportunity to learn more about native plants by taking a docent training course taught by Glenn Keator. "I saw an advertisement for Glenn's course on docent training," Ron said. "He'd already given one course and I may have taken the second or the third."

Ron has been a steady presence in the garden for about 20 years, and during that time he has served the garden in many roles. His longest position in the garden was serving as *Friends* treasurer for about 15 years, a position he felt suited his "engineering mentality." The exact number of years he spent in his many roles in the garden are somewhat fuzzy; he readily admits to happily relying on his wife, Rosemary, to remember everything. Ron was president of the *Friends* Board for a couple of years. Later, when he organized the classes offered by the garden for a few years, Ron enjoyed the perk of being able to attend every course. "I got to go to every course, which was nice. The courses are always good."

It was during the docent training course that he met the late Es Anderson, a dedicated garden volunteer who ran the plant sale for many years, and she suggested he help with plant sales. Although he had been giving docent tours in the garden, he found he wanted to have his hands on the plants and in the earth, so he took Es up on her invitation. "I was talking to her and she said, 'Fine, show up on Thursday,' so I showed up on Thursday. I've been doing the plant sale ever since." For over 15 years Ron has carefully trained dozens of volunteers how to propagate and raise plants for the sale and keep

them organized and labeled. Volunteers have learned they need to pay special attention when talking with Ron to catch his words of plant lore wisdom, spoken in a near-whisper reflective of his quiet manner. Ron's wife, Rosemary, usually accompanies Ron, tending to necessary details like regularly watering plant starts. But now that he's honed the efficiency of plant sale operations, Ron declares he is ready to turn over plant sales responsibility to someone new.

Allison Kidder



Arctostaphylos 'Ron Clendenen'

With such a long history of service to the garden, it is fitting that Ron's efforts were recently celebrated by naming a hybrid manzanita that voluntarily popped up in the garden. Originally affectionately called Amoeba by garden volunteers, this manzanita has a leaf shape typical of *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* but is thought to have hybridized with an unknown *Arctostaphylos* species, resulting in a plant that has a slightly more erect stature than *A. uva-ursi*. Garden Supervisor Joe Dahl submitted all the behind-the-scenes paperwork to officially name this new hybrid after Ron, so it will be *Arctostaphylos* 'Ron Clendenen'.

Ron deeply appreciates the aesthetics and beauty of the garden and the history of its formation and development. "To me the amazing thing is that this garden was not designed by a person with a landscape architect degree. It was designed by people who loved plants, went out into the wild to see how they grew, and tried to replicate what they saw." Ron is fond of the attention to detail in elements throughout the garden and continues to be impressed with recent

additions, such as the beautiful rockwork of the Desert section.

When asked if he has a favorite plant he gently demurred, but after a moment shared, "There's calico monkeyflower (*Diplacus* [*Mimulus*] *pictus*). The flower petals look like they've been etched with black lines, as if by hand. It's just exquisite." *Diplacus pictus* is native to the Bakersfield area and can be found in the raised beds near the greenhouse on the east side of the garden.

For many people born in other parts of California, the garden is a way to connect with home. This is not lost on Ron. "If you look at one of the opuntias, the label says it was collected in Bakersfield, on a road about a mile from where we lived. It's like home." And just like one's familiarity with home, he's witnessed many changes in the garden over his 20 years of service. "Every time I wander around the garden, I see differences. I've watched a lot of plants grow into senescence and new plants take their place." Among other things, this is what keeps him coming back to the garden after all these years. "Every time I walk around the garden I see something new." 🌿

Allison Green Kidder has been a docent and a member of the Manzanita editorial committee at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden since 2017. She has a deep interest in natural history and California native plants and has a PhD in plant ecology from UC Berkeley.

Bart O'Brien



Ron and Rosemary (foreground) marshal resources in the Botanic Garden, preparing for an upcoming plant sale.

John Rusk, Botanic Garden Chronicler *by Alicia Springer*

Bart O'Brien



At a recent celebration in the potting shed attended by garden staff and volunteers, John Rusk happily accepted a plaque commemorating his many years of service to the garden.

Nearly every weekday for the past five years the “Regional Parks Botanic Garden Picture of the Day” has appeared on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn—the list of social media feeds keeps growing. The man behind this daily chronicle of blooms and seasons is John Rusk, photographer, editor, and longtime Botanic Garden volunteer. “I decided that showing the public what the garden contained was the best

way to promote it,” explains John, “so I just started walking around with my camera.”

John, wending his way along the garden’s paths and regions, is a familiar garden presence.

The photos that result from these strolls aren’t just eye-catching close-ups. As a collection, they are an invaluable cache of high-quality botanical images, accurately identified, available for Botanic Garden publications and the public at large to download from John’s online Flickr account.

“All my Flickr uploads have a Creative Commons license allowing unfettered use as long as I am credited,” John explains. “I also map my garden photos to their location in the garden.”

The posted photos and their linked trove of information are the product of John’s laborious efforts. “I take many photos, including photos of plant tags, during each of my walks. I select the best and process them using good photo editing software. As part of my Flickr upload, I add detailed taxonomic tags through iNaturalist and links to tidbits from Calflora, the USDA PLANTS database, and Jepson eFlora. I consider this documentation task essential, for we are a botanic garden whose duty is to educate the public. It is of course tedious work, but I have learned that the benefits are worth the effort.” John then disseminates his densely annotated images through his social media feeds and numerous related interest groups.

How did this shy, self-taught elder gentleman who considers himself “not much of a photographer and no more than an amateur-ish botanist” become the driver who nudged the Botanic Garden into the digital era? John Rusk grew up on an Indiana farm, “the curious child of curious, educated parents” who taught a love of nature. He joined the Navy in 1955, becoming a Storekeeper—a sort of global supply chain manager—and Master Chief Petty Officer over his 20-year Navy career. John and his wife lived in Berkeley for a spell in the ‘70s, spent ten years at Indiana University, while John earned BA and MA degrees in history, and returned to the Bay Area where he worked at a leasing company in San Francisco and morphed into a computer programmer “out of necessity because there was no one else to do it.”

Now the Botanic Garden fun starts. “I have had a lifetime interest in plants, and when I



Anise swallowtail larva (*Papilio zelicaon*) on yampah (*Perideridia kelloggii*)



Pacific bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*) now placed in the poppy family (Papaveraceae)



Jimson weed (*Datura wrightii*)

returned to California in 1986, I thought it might be a good idea to learn the names of the plants I was photographing.” He has had a camera by his side since his first Kodak Baby Brownie. “I joined the California Native Plant Society and began attending the Wayne Roderick lectures in 1990, always sitting on the right side of the auditorium in the outside chair with the éminence grise Wayne Roderick behind me for nearly every lecture for 15 years. I started volunteering as a plant propagator for both the California Native Plant Society and the garden when I could; once I retired in 1999, I missed very few volunteer workdays thereafter.”

John joined the *Friends* of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in 2002, serving for 13 years. “I was soon ‘volunteered’ to coordinate classes for the *Friends*, but it took me less than a week to realize I would be swamped in paperwork if things continued to run as they had. First came a photocopier, then creation of Word documents that could handle the simple arithmetic required to deposit funds and pay instructors. In other words, I had to drag registration out of the 19th century into the early 20th century before even dreaming of dragging things into the 21st century.” Luckily, as an old Navy man, John knew how to run a tight ship.

“About 2011,” he continues, “I was tapped as chair of a social media committee to improve the garden’s outreach. The first product was the monthly e-newsletter; I became editor by default since there was no one else to do it” (note the recurring theme). “When the *Friends* started a Facebook page, it fit into my thoughts of advertising the garden through plant pictures. I took over day-to-day Facebook operations about a year and a half ago, and the social media projects grew from there.”

Now this devoted friend of the Botanic Garden would like to hand over his social media tasks, as he did the editorship of the e-newsletter two years ago. “It’s time for fresh blood. But I plan on photographing the garden and posting pictures as long as I can. I have so many friends here—the nicest people in the world are plant people.”

One last question for John Rusk: What’s your favorite native plant genus? “My favorite subfamily of plants is the opuntiods. What can I say? I just like prickly things.” 🌵

Alicia Springer succeeded John Rusk as editor of the monthly Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden e-newsletter, a task she shares with coeditor Maggie Cutler.

John Rusk hard at work in the garden preparing for an upcoming plant sale



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Friends members only from 9-10AM