



THE PAINTBRUSH

Fall 2007 Newsletter

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER (<http://www.cnps-sgm.org/>)
 California Native Plant Society (<http://www.cnps.org/>)

CALENDAR

Everyone—member or nonmember—is welcome at all chapter events.

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Thu., Sep. 27, 7:00/7:30 p.m. Chapter Meeting, <i>Tejon-Tehachapi Park: A Vision for California's Newest Park</i>	7
Sat., Oct. 6, 9:00/10:00 a.m. NEW: Mountain Plant Walk at Chillao	7
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Thu., Oct. 25, 7:00/7:30 p.m. Chapter Meeting, <i>Rick Fisher Will Present a Program on Horticulture</i>	7
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Sat., Nov. 10, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Under the Oaks VII, Our Chapter's 2007 Plant Sale	7
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Sat., Dec. 1, 9:00/10:00 a.m. NEW: Mountain Plant Walk at Chillao	7
Sun., Dec. 9, 9:00 a.m. Eaton Canyon Plant Walk	7

33rd Annual

Southern California Botanists Symposium

Borderless Botany: Current Border Issues in Southern California
 October 20, 2007

Ruby Gerontology Center,

California State University, Fullerton

Early Registration \$35.00 (due by October 5.)
 \$45.00 at the door. The symposium fee includes a one-year membership in SCB. With that you will receive 6 issues of *Leaflets* and 2 issues of *Crossosoma*. More information at

DISCOVERY

By Gabi McLean

As a youngster, I dreamed of adventure in far away places, exploring unknown wild lands. The books I was devouring sparked in me the image of facing exciting great challenges and horrific obstacles that I would overcome and, in the end, make great discoveries. The dreams of a child!

I was reminded of my dreams this season when I “discovered” not one, but several species of plants that were not new to science, not even new to our local botanic experts, but new to me, the child that is still dreaming of wild lands and great discoveries. The wild lands where I found those plants were not far away but here in “our backyard”, the San Gabriel Mountains. The challenges and horrific obstacles that needed to be overcome were not by me but by those very plants whose existence I discovered in this dreadfully dry year of 2007. Despite the record drought, there was a spring with new growth, with flowers and fruits, with color and hope. Not opulent growth, not abundance of color, but nevertheless, here they were, the unnoticed, unbeknownst, undiscovered, among the familiar friends. I just had to look!

On a survey excursion into the San Dimas Experimental Forest (SDEF) at the end of March, we found several bundles of long, narrow leaves of a monocot, with a fold or two like an accordion. We had no clue what that could be and when we saw a developing flower stalk, decided to come back in a couple of weeks to check it out. In subsequent visits in April and May, we discovered that those almost 2-foot-tall flower stalks were from the Star Lily, *Zigadenus fremontii*, a plant that we had seen once on a CNPS field trip in Harford Springs in Riverside County. At that time, there was an abundance of rain, an abundance of flowers, and the plants were accordingly full and healthy. Our specimen in the SDEF showed severe signs of stress this year but they were there, several of them flowering and, we hoped, setting fruit.



Zigadenus fremontii, Star Lily

© Gabi McLean

At the May survey into the SDEF, at a rocky, south-facing outcrop,

**QUESTIONS?
ASK A BOARD MEMBER**

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**WE THANK
BONTERRA CONSULTING**
for printing our newsletter.

BonTerra Consulting, with offices in Pasadena, Costa Mesa and Temecula, provides environmental planning, biological surveys, natural resources management, and city and regional planning services to their public and private sector clients. Their website is <http://www.bonterraconsulting.com>.

**BECOME AN ANGELES NATIONAL
FOREST VOLUNTEER NATURALIST**

Come to an informational meeting on Saturday, October 27, 2007, at 1:00 pm at the new San Gabriel Gateway on Highway 39, Azusa/San Gabriel Canyon Road, a few miles north of the 210 Foothill Freeway. The purpose is to provide locally-trained naturalists to answer questions and to lead nature walks at ANF locations.

For more information, call Steve Segreto at the USFS Mt Baldy Visitor Center at 909 982 2829 or email Jane Strong at info@sgmha.org, or visit <http://sgmha.org/naturalist.html>.

a stand of dark green shrubs caught my eye. The healthy green stood out against the surrounding dry grassland and withering perennials. From afar, I guessed Scrub Oak or *Ceanothus*. I made my way to this island of green through the rather rough terrain and was rewarded with the discovery of many piercing-pink flowers whose shape put this shrub clearly into the Pea family. In all my hikes in the San Gabriels, I had never seen this plant—so obvious, so beautiful, and so resilient: the Chaparral Pea, *Pickeringia montana*. Once identified, we realized that we encountered this plant once before, in northern California near Clear Lake, but never in our local mountains.



Pickeringia montana,
Chaparral Pea
© Gabi McLean

Our third discovery started with an e-mail inquiry I received, together with a photo of leaves and flowers, asking what that plant was, found at Mt. Hawkins. I didn't recognize the plant and I was short on time to conduct the necessary research, which is hard to do on the basis of photographs only. Then the inquirer gave me her guess that it might be a *Draba* species, but she was not certain. A couple of days later, an e-mail from long-time hiker and naturalist Bob Cates showed a photo of apparently the same species, only identified as "cushiony plant", found near Windy Gap. At that time, my interest was piqued, overriding any other time constraints. I had to go out there and find that tiny, pretty little thing myself! In the hot August sun, we drove up to Islip Saddle and started up the trail towards Islip campground and Windy Gap. Past the campground, on the way towards Mr. Hawkins, we did find this hairy rosette of succulent looking leaves. Only dry remnants of flowers remained; and all of the plants were limited to only one location.



Draba corrugata,
© Gabi McLean

But then, I discovered a small one, only about 4 inches tall, that still had a flower stalk with a couple of blossoms. They were so small, it took a magnifying glass to see the details. It also seemed that some animal had chewed up the stalks. Vegetation had been so scarce this year; it was surprising to me that any green plants were left at all. With the help of others, we concluded that this was *Draba corrugata* even though the flowers did not seem to have any petals left.

This space is not big enough to tell of all the discoveries I made on the outings I mentioned here. Many more plants struck my fancy, some that we were able to identify and some that we were not. One thing is sure, though, there are plenty of things to discover yet—plants, animals, rock formations, lichens, and other natural happenings. I am glad I didn't forget my dreams—there are still wild lands out there and discoveries to be made. Hope you'll get out there, too, and explore and enjoy our beautiful San Gabriel Mountains.

Gabi Mclean can be contacted at 626-966-0580 or gabi.mclean@verizon.net.

AN UNUSUAL FIND

By Graham Bothwell

Botanically interesting discoveries are not what one expects in a suburban back yard. But in August 2005 I noticed several specimens of an unusual plant, up to about six inches tall, on an otherwise bare section of ground in the middle of a very hot summer. We are at the western end of Pasadena, part way up the San Rafael Hills, adjacent to a hillside that has never been built on. Although our small part of the hill is cleared, here was a good example of original chaparral vegetation apparently creeping into the yard.

While I took photographs, it wasn't until recently that I sought assistance with identification through fellow CNPS chapter members Gabi and Cliff McLean, and Mickey Long. They quickly identified the plant as an *Orobanche*, or Broomrape, but the species was not clear. At Mickey's suggestion, I contacted Steve

Boyd, Curator of the Herbarium at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (RSABG).

One of Steve's colleagues, Naomi Fraga, forwarded my enquiry to Alison Colwell, a botanist with the U.S.

Geological Survey at Yosemite Field Station in El Portal, CA, whose long-standing personal hobby is the study of *Orobanche*. Steve and Alison provided me with a wealth of truly fascinating information, the kernel of which I'll attempt to share with you here.

The plant I found is *Orobanche parishii*. It grows in chaparral and seems to bloom mainly from late May to August. The flower is characteristically yellow with brick-red stripes inside the corolla. Alison has been doing taxonomic work on *Orobanche parishii*, and considers that the plant I found is a member of an undescribed subspecies reported, up to now, from Riverside County to San Diego County. She feels it is an important find because it has been so rarely seen.

Orobanche lacks chlorophyll, and is parasitic upon other plants, attaching itself to shallow roots; it essentially has no root system of its own. When not flowering, the plant is entirely underground. North American *Orobanche* are able to parasitize only a limited range of hosts. *Hazardia squarrosa* (Sawtooth Goldenbush) is the usually reported host for this variant of *Orobanche parishii*, but this *Orobanche* is also reported on other perennials in the *Asteraceae*, including *Lessingia filaginifolia* (Silver Carpet, also known as *Corethrogyne filaginifolia*.) It so happens



Orobanche parishii, adjacent to *Lessingia filaginifolia* (left). Close-up of the *Orobanche parishii* flower (right).

that the *Orobanche* plants I found were adjacent to a *Lessingia filaginifolia*, a small shrub that I had planted a few years previously. I wondered whether the *Orobanche* might have arrived in the pot with the *Lessingia*; however, I am told that is extremely unlikely. Alison says that the minute seeds of the *Orobanche* were already in the soil, and those attractive, well-watered *Lessingia* roots just happened to grow by. Perhaps the *Lessingia*'s root growth was assisted by the above-average rainfall that we received in the preceding winter—54 inches at our house.

Steve Boyd, LeRoy Gross, Valerie Soza, and Naomi Fraga at RSABG are working on a flora of the Verdugo Mountains region, including the San Rafael Hills where our house is located, to be published as a paper in the RSABG's scientific journal *Aliso*. (If there is sufficient interest, it may be reprinted later as a stand-alone publication, perhaps in an expanded form, as occurred with Steve's Liebre Mountains flora some years ago, in the RSABG Occasional Publications series.)

Steve told me that they have documented *Orobanche bulbosa* from the Verdugo Mountains, and *Orobanche californica* var. *fuedgei* from just outside the area in La Crescenta, but have no



Photos 2005-2007 © Graham Bothwell

records of *Orobanche parishii* from the region. I did not collect a specimen of the plant, and so my find cannot be included in the main list for the range. On the other hand, it can be cited in the "Excluded Taxa" section, with reference to being reported based on photographic evidence and awaiting confirmation through a voucher specimen.

You can be sure that I'll be watching carefully to see whether this *Orobanche parishii* appears again in future years. If it does, I'll be inviting the RSABG to collect a specimen. I'll also be exploring the area more closely. I'm told it's not impossible that there could be a few other *Orobanche* plants around on some other hosts. *Orobanche* are never numerous, but they bloom in the heat of summer in brushy areas at a time when there are few other wildflowers in bloom, with even fewer people out looking for them.

My thanks to Alison and Steve for giving permission to share the information they had so kindly and enthusiastically included in our email exchanges.

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING CORNER

By Barbara Eisenstein

As Horticulture Outreach Coordinator at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, I receive many interesting questions about garden care for California native plants. In this continuing series I share a few of these questions and answers with you. If you have a question of your own, please email at rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu, or phone me at 909-624-0838.

Q: I want to remove my lawn and start a native garden. What is the best way to do this?

A: Last spring I sent an email survey on lawn removal to the RSABG Garden Hotline Email Group (email me if you would like to be added to this list, rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu). I asked people who had removed their lawns, how they went about it, what method(s) they used, how it worked, what the biggest problems were, and whether they would do it the same way again.

The results were interesting. Most people just dug out their lawns. The next most common method was the use of chemical herbicides, Roundup in particular. Some just took their lawns off life-support and waited. Others solarized, laying plastic sheets on their damp turf and allowing the sun to do its work. A few used the lasagna method, laying cardboard sheets on the grass, covering it with mulch, wetting it down and allowing the whole thing to decompose over time.

Everyone seemed fairly satisfied with what they did and most said they would do it again. Diggers complained about the labor involved. One chemical warrior expressed remorse. Several noted that the return of Bermuda grass and nutsedge was problematic.

In my yard, over the past ten years I have attacked areas of turf in a variety of ways. I have dug out grass, hired someone else to dig it out, withdrawn life support, and am now trying the lasagna method.

I am learning that the best method depends on the type of grass, whether it is in sun or shade, and what will be planted in the new garden. It is easier to rid oneself of Bermuda in the shade than the sun. Taking it off life support in shady areas will probably work better than in the sun where Bermuda can survive on virtually nothing.

If you expect to plant a ground cover, you really, really want to get rid of the weeds because they will be very difficult to control when you have to pick them out of

the new plantings. Whatever method you use, Bermuda, nutsedge, oxalis and other weeds will probably require some ongoing removal.

Check the RSABG website (www.rsabg.org) for the lawn survey and results. You can find this in the section on Gardening with Native Plants: Gardening Tips: Lawn Removal. If you would like to add your comments, send them to me. I will recompile the results periodically.



Riparian Meadow at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in the spring, Photo by: B. Eisenstein, 2006

Q: What native plants substitute well for turf?

A: This is a very difficult question. I really don't know of any native plants that behave quite like turf. After all, turf is big money and lots of work has gone into creating varieties that are green all year, dense, and can take abuse. I think a better answer to this is to reduce your lawn area to the amount you really need, remembering that public parks are great places to play catch and run around.

Still, there are some native plants that make nice low ground covers. A mix of gramma grass *Bouteloua gracilis* and buffalo grass *Buchloe dactyloides* is an interesting, partially native turf. Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium* 'Rosea', can also be used as a turf substitute (see Lummis House in Los Angeles). It can take limited foot traffic but will not provide a durable walking or play surface. Clustered field sedge, *Carex praegracilis*, is another native turf substitute. This looks more like a dense, dark lawn, but it requires water, though probably less than traditional turf grasses.

Recycled concrete, flagstone, decomposed granite or other inorganic surfaces can also be used for a low maintenance garden area that takes foot traffic. Permeable, inorganic surfaces reduce urban runoff that is responsible for coastal pollution.

SALT FROM ISLANDS AND FROM DESERTS

By Mark F. Acuña

In the final days of summer and at the hottest time of the year, clear blue skies and deep warm nights offer rare summer beauty. The Tongva, the indigenous people of the Los Angeles Basin, called this time “Cucuat,” the brown and sear month. The hills, valleys and canyons are still alive with good food. But we must look carefully, for the plant people* are hiding in the shade. The last days of summer “Aw.ró.reh.vay” sent the Tongva food gatherers even farther afield than normal. Some ventured out to the edges of the desert, the great “Wah.wah.weet” beyond “Hidakapu” (the San Gabriel Mountains) or down to the edges of the “Moomaht”, the sea. Some even ventured out to the “Wehe. momtes.ashoongas.wow,” the Mountains that go down to the Sea (our Channel Islands).

What was the search? Salt and especially in the plants known as “Kasil” or more commonly “Ungarr”.

Botanically they were looking for *Atriplex*, Saltbush. Tongva diet used two species: *A. canescens* and *A. californica*. *A. lentiformis* was a difficult plant found in the alkaline desert wastes. Few Tongva ventured that far out from the wonderland of “Tovangar,” the Los Angeles Basin. But Tongva traders braved the desert lands.

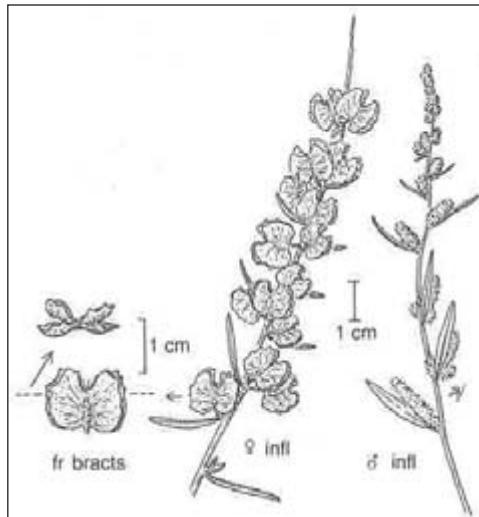
Fresh leaves of Kasil/Ungarr were eaten raw or boiled with other foods to add flavor. On rare occasions when *A. lentiformis* was traded from the Chemehuevi and the Kumitaraxam (the present day Cahuilla) the seeds were mixed with Chia to form cakes and stored for future use, a rare commodity. The trade plants (flowers, stems, and leaves) were crushed and steamed for nasal congestion, and a tea was made from the leaves to relieve stomach pain.

A. canescens leaves and stems were crushed, mixed with saliva, and spread on ant bites. *A. californica* has long roots, which were pounded to make soap. The three species overlap in blossom time: *A. canescens* and *A. californica*, April to November; *A. lentiformis*, August to October.

A. canescens can be found on common dry slopes, in flats and washes below 7,000 feet, Juniper-Pinyon Woodland, coastal strand, valley grasslands, cismontane valleys, and out to the alkali sinks, and creosote bush scrub of our deserts. *A. californica* is found on sea bluffs, sandy coastlands, coastal strands, salt marshes, and sage scrub, and on most of the Channel Islands.

* The “plant people” are the plants themselves. The Tongva saw all life forms as “people” Thus in the hot and sear times, the small, the little, the delicate “plant people” look for and hide in the shade. So to find them, we must “look carefully.”

Mark F. Acuña is a Gabrieleno-Tongva Elder and can be contacted at facuna1@verizon.net.



Four-wing Saltbush, *Atriplex canescens*
From *The Jepson Manual* (1993)

CHECK OUT OUR REDESIGNED WEBSITE at <http://cnps-sgm.org>

Web Editor Graham Bothwell provides a wealth of information and wants your help in doing more. Please use the [Contact Us](#) link on the [Our Chapter](#) page to send your suggestions for making the site more useful to you and to the general public.

An example of the information to be found there is *Sources of native plants for the San Gabriel Mountains chapter area*. Use the [Native Plant Gardening](#) link and you will see the following sources as well as brief descriptions of what they offer, and links to their websites. They're all in California.

Our Chapter's Annual Plant Sale

- Saturday, November 10, 2007, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Eaton Canyon Nature Center

Botanic Gardens

- Fullerton Arboretum, Fullerton
- Quail Botanical Gardens, Encinitas
- Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont

Retail Nurseries

- Las Pilitas Nursery, Escondido and Santa Margarita
- Matilija Nursery, Moorpark
- The Theodore Payne Foundation, Sun Valley
- Tree of Life Nursery, San Juan Capistrano

Wholesale Nurseries

- El Nativo Growers, Inc., Azusa
- Mockingbird Nursery, Riverside
- Native Sons, Inc., Arroyo Grande
- San Marcos Growers, Santa Barbara

Seeds and Books by Mail Order

- Albright Seed Company, Carpinteria
- Lerner Seeds, Bolinas
- S&S Seeds, Carpinteria
- SeedHunt.com, Freedom
- The Theodore Payne Foundation, Sun Valley

Odds and Ends

- Free online garden design by zip code using software provided by Las Pilitas returns a plant list suitable for your area.

VIEWING TIP

The photos that appear in this newsletter look much better in color. You can view them in color in the newsletter archive on our website at <http://cnps-sgm.org/newsletters.html>.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

William Fitzpatrick Charles Strawter
Mary MacMichael Robert Washington

These additions raise our chapter membership to 198.

NEW BEGINNINGS

By Graham Bothwell

It's with great pleasure that we welcome Norman Ackerman to the editorial team for *The Paintbrush*. We were at a point where key members of the team had other duties taking their time, and so it was timely that Norm volunteered to assist with the editorial work, especially the layout.

Norm was an Environmental Engineer with the L.A. County Sanitation Districts. Several years after retiring from the Districts he joined the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy—a sibling of the more well-known Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy—where he picked up necessary computer skills and became their half-time webmaster.

We hope you like the freshness of the new layout that Norm is bringing to *The Paintbrush* and which is intended to improve the overall readability. Feedback from readers suggests there are many people who look forward to each issue, so it's important that we strive to bring new ideas into our publication.

To round out the editorial team, we continue to have Tom Hood working on newsletter articles, and Andrea Edwards assisting with printing and mailing.

No newsletter would be successful unless it reflects what readers like to see, so please share with us your observations about this publication. These words written by former editor Kathy LaShure in the first edition that she produced, in September of 1996, are still apt: "If any of you have information you'd like to share with other native plant lovers—a favorite hike, success or failure in growing a particular plant, etc.—I'd be glad to include it. If you don't think of yourself as a writer, call and tell me about it and I'll do the writing. You might also have a question for one of our resident experts." In this case, of course, please contact Norm, Tom, or Andrea (contact information in the Ask a Board Member section on page 2.)

Our hearty thanks go out to our editorial team, and to the many contributors, for their splendid work. And a special welcome to Norman!

Postscript from Norm: Some of you may find it worthwhile to check the website of the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (<http://rmc.ca.gov>) for a couple of reasons:

- *I compile a weekly digest of environmental news stories that appear in several local newspapers.*
- *The Conservancy will be awarding approximately \$63 million from State bond funds in grants for open space, water-related, and environmental education projects in its territory over the next few years. Its territory is eastern L.A. County and western Orange County. (Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden was among those that received grants in a previous round of awards.)*

AN EDITORIAL

By Norman Ackerman

I'm new to this job, so I don't know if this is the first editorial to appear in *The Paintbrush*. But instead of expressing an opinion, I'm asking favors of you, the readers.

Almost everyone is familiar with the La Brea Tarpits in Hancock Park in Los Angeles. Fewer know about the adjacent Page Museum which houses the fossils of mastodons, ground sloths and sabertoothed cats. Even fewer have heard of the nearby Pleistocene or Ice-Age Garden. The garden's native plantings are based on seeds and plant fragments from 25,000 years ago that were found in the tarpits.



A Pleistocene Garden mural (Deep Canyon Ecosystem)

Photo by Norman Ackerman

visited the garden recently for the first time and spoke to Margi Bertram, Manager of Education at the Page Museum. She's in charge of the garden, but has a single volunteer, 1 or 2 days/week, to maintain the garden—which is about the size of a typical home lot. She needs more volunteers and would like to add Chaparral to the garden's other three ecosystems. **Visit the garden and, if you feel motivated, phone Margi at 323-857-6300, x112 or email her at mbertram@tarpits.org to volunteer.**

I learned about the Pleistocene Garden only a few weeks ago. This prompted me to ask my fellow board members if any of them knew of a list of local, public, native plant gardens. The board promptly designated me to compile that list. My list currently consists of the Pleistocene Garden, Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Theodore Payne Foundation and Descanso Gardens. (Descanso's California Garden is far from the entrance, at the top of a hill.) **Send your additions to the list to me at editor@cnps-sgm.org.**

If you have an editorial, it follows that you should also have letters to the editor. Here's your chance to tell us your likes, dislikes, complaints and suggestions, or even to write an article or help with running the chapter. **Email your letter-to-the-editor to me at editor@cnps-sgm.org.**

JOIN CNPS NOW!

Complete the adjacent form and mail it to
California Native Plant Society
2707 K Street, Suite 1
Sacramento, CA 95816-5113

or phone (916) 447-2677.

CNPS is Dedicated to the Preservation of California's Native Flora. The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission

of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants, and to conserve them and their natural habitats, through education, science, horticulture and advocacy.

Membership is open to all. Membership includes the quarterly journal *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin*, which gives statewide news and announcements of Society activities and conservation issues, and our chapter newsletter, *The Paintbrush*. Dues are tax deductible.

Learn to understand California's unique flora and help to preserve this rich heritage for future generations.

* Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
* Address1 _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I'd like to affiliate with San Gabriel Mountains Chapter	
* Address2 _____	Membership Category	
* City _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$45	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor: \$600
* State _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Family, Group, or Library: \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> Mariposa Lily: \$1500
* Zip _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Lover: \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Student, Retired,
Telephone (work) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron: \$300	Limited Income \$25
Telephone (home) _____	Payment Information	
Email _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____	
* Indicates required information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my credit card for \$ _____	
	<input type="checkbox"/> VISA	<input type="checkbox"/> Master Card
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	Card Number _____	
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