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## History of the Californian Area *Creating a California Aesthetic*

*Editor's Note: This double issue of the Newsletter features the California Area of the Garden in recognition of horticulturist Roger Raiche's retirement in June 2003.*

The University of California Botanical Garden is divided into nine major biogeographical areas. At about 14.5 acres, the California Area is the largest. Benefiting from relatively easy access to native flora and a history of active collecting, it also contains the largest number of unique accessions.

The California flora has long been an important focus of the Garden. According to several written histories, when the Garden was established on the main campus in 1890, the two collection areas were economic and native Californian plants. Collections of these plants were utilized in the earliest botany teaching programs of the university. In the 1920's when the Garden was moved to Strawberry Canyon onto the site of the Stutt Dairy Ranch, then Curator and later Director T. Harper Goodspeed proposed a novel method of organization. Until that time most botanical gardens had been arranged around taxonomic or economic themes. Goodspeed directed landscape design Professor T. Gregg to create a garden organized around geographic affinity, emphasizing South American, African and native Californian collections.



Photo by J. Williams

*Western azalea (Rhododendron occidentale) is featured in the Serpentine Plant Communities Display.*

While California natives were always a significant component of the Garden, it was not until the hire of Harry Roberts in the 1950's that the Californian Area really began to flourish. Most of the oldest plants in the section date to that era, with an unknown number having been donated by the noted horticulturist Louis Edmunds from his native plant nursery in Danville.

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## CALIFORNIAN AREA *(continued from page 1)*

Wayne Roderick, who went on to become the director of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park, was the driving force in the section from the early sixties to 1976. Wayne began to shape the area as we know it today, adding an alpine bed, vernal pool, freshwater marsh, chaparral, and bulb collection.

His collection of native bulbs was internationally recognized as one of the best in the world, and he increased the diversity of the collection enormously.

The Mather Redwood Grove on the north side of Centennial Drive was added to the Californian Area in the early seventies. Planted in the 30's along with much of the rest of the canyon, the Grove was developed with understory plantings to evoke the feeling of a natural redwood woodland.

Kurt Zadnik took over the Area in 1979 and stayed through 1996. During this period Director Robert Ornduff amplified the focus on developing plant communities that could be used to support university classes taught by himself and others.

Roger Raiche joined the staff in 1981. It is difficult to quantify Roger's impact on the Californian Area, because simply put, most of what we see there today is attributable to him. Of the current living accessions in California, Roger collected 71 percent, either alone or in association with others. Over his career Roger contributed 4,783 accessions to the Garden. In addition to creating a massive influx of plant material reflecting his insatiable passion for the California

flora, Roger oversaw the expansion of boundaries and overall growth of the area. Roderick's bulb beds were renovated and expanded in 1981, the alpine bed was rebuilt in 1989, and the serpentine bed, Roger's particular favorite, was reconstructed and expanded in 1992.

In over twenty years at the Garden, Roger assembled an outstanding collection and knit it together in a beautiful manner. Here Roger explains it best when he speaks about the California aesthetic that he worked so hard to create: "In an area devoted to Californian native plants I feel it is imperative to suggest nature. It is a heightened nature we present, as if this were a garden carved out of some idealized Santa Lucian potrero, with labels conveniently provided to enhance our knowledge. But it has the feel of nature: the relaxed, comforting experience of plants growing well together,

bound by inscrutable yet immutable laws; a balance of thousands of interacting factors. This aesthetic has been successful, not only in the vast number of plants we've been able to display for the public, but also by the unsolicited testimonials we've received from visitors, thanking us for an experience that gave them enormous pleasure."

Following Roger's retirement this year, Horticulturist Nathan Smith, who began working with Roger in 2000, took up the challenge of maintaining and developing this unique Garden resource. The area continues to be used heavily as a teaching resource, with over 900 Biology 1B students utilizing the habitat displays each year. Docent tours focus on a number of topics, with traditional uses of plants by California's Native Americans being the most highly in demand by local school groups.

— Chris Carmichael



*An early view of the Alpine Fell-field. Design by Ron Lutsko, Jr. with rock work by Philip Johnson and plant selection by Roger Raiche and Kurt Zadnik.*

Photo by H. Forbes

## Educational Uses of the Californian Area

**D**iverse educational programming utilizes our Californian Area collection. Annually, the collection provides the foundation experience in California ecological diversity for 900 biology major students taking Biology 1B, the second semester of introductory biology at Cal. Many of these students have never traveled around California and have no first hand knowledge of California plant communities. The Garden's scientific collection and its plantings make their textbook information real. Other campus departments, including geology, landscape architecture, plant pathology, and creative writing, visit the Californian Area as an essential part of their curricula. Classes from many other colleges and universities in the area including San Francisco and Sonoma State Universities, Mills College, Merritt College and St. Mary's College, utilize our California collection to illustrate their courses.

Each year several thousand elementary and middle school students discover the diversity of California habitats while participating in the California Habitats docent-led tour. On this tour students compare the color, texture, orientation and size of leaves, soil composition, plant sizes and shapes as they visit different plant communities in the Californian Area. At tour activity stations, students experience California habitats and plants including feeling serpentine rocks and tasting opuntia jelly. In another extremely popular tour focusing on California Indian uses of native plants, students discover many uses of the soap root, how elderberry is used in rituals and for dye, how manzanita is used in drinks, and how cattail is used for matting, boats, food and absorbent padding for a baby on its cradle board. Twenty-three plants are fea-



Photo by J. Williams

*Coreopsis gigantea* in Bed 6B, a signature plant in this Channel Island habitat planting, delights visitors (Yes! They really are Dr. Seuss-like plants!). Seedlings will be available at the Fall Plant Sale.

tured in the tour.

Our marvelous California collection of plants are featured in diverse programming for adults or the general public through the Garden's seasonal self-guided tour brochures, special classes such as the California Plant Communities and California Spring Wildflower Walk presented by area horticulturists Nathan Smith and Roger Raiche and the Ferns and Fern Allies workshop presented by the Jepson Herbarium. We hope you will explore this, our largest collection of the Garden, and our region's botanical and ethnobotanical heritage.

— Jenny White

## ENDOWMENTS FOR THE CALIFORNIAN AREA

Endowments for the Garden help to maintain specific areas of the Garden and to maintain the Garden itself in perpetuity. Although the returns from endowments vary with the economic times, the fact is that the Garden's endowments are integral to our economic stability and strength through the years.

The goal of establishing an endowment for each area remains a

Garden priority. At present the Californian Area is supported by the California Endowment and the Henry Hilzinger Endowment.

Endowment income makes it possible for the Garden to undertake projects for which other funding is unavailable. The renovation of the Channel Island beds in the Californian Area of the Garden has been a very exciting process for horti-

culturist Nathan Smith. An essential part of the process was his trip to San Nicolas Island off the coast of southern California to collect seeds and cuttings. This trip served to bring the project into focus for him and he went to work rehabilitating the beds upon his return. He also added to his already considerable knowledge of the plant habitats of the islands.

— Janet Williams



# Roger Raiche

## *Plantsman Extraordinaire*

**R**oger Raiche was fortunate as a young boy to have a gardening role model in his father, Raymond. The senior Mr. Raiche taught Roger basic gardening skills in seed sowing, pruning, and weeding, and by the age of eight Roger had his own gardening space at the family home.

A two year stint at Cornell in Architecture and Art History convinced Roger to further explore career options. He left college and joined together with several friends to open a communal living situation near Ithaca. During his six years there, Roger continued to expand his gardening and agriculture skills with flower, vegetable, and herb gardens and an orchard in support of the store they ran for income. It was one of the first whole-grain bakeries/natural foods stores in the area. Roger also developed a personal garden, inspiring him to learn the local native plants with help from visits to Cornell Plantations, the library, and in natural areas nearby. While a student at Cornell he took an introductory botany course, but other than that has had no formal training in plant identification or botany.

In 1978 Roger moved to San Francisco, where he worked for friends with landscape businesses. He was amazed at the hugely different landscape and native plant palette of the West Coast, and set about learning new plants with zeal. He spent many hours at Strybing Arboretum, on field trips with the North American Rock Garden Society and with the California Horticultural Society. He especially recalls field trips to the Tahoe region, including the Desolation Wilderness, led by the late Gladys Smith (author of *A Flora of the Tahoe Basin and Region*).

Roger was hired at Berkeley Horticultural Nursery in sales, and then in propagation, where he continued to meet

other plant enthusiasts. At that time, commercial nursery staff were allowed to take cuttings of plants in the Garden for their propagation stock, and it was while doing this Roger met then garden manager Daniel Campbell. Both men were also active in the California Horticultural Society. Campbell hired Roger at his first opportunity (in 1980) for a

half-time watering job. Within six months Roger was hired on full-time with responsibility for what is now the Crops of the World Garden, the former orchard (now part of the South American Area), and for the Eastern North American Area.

Roger's fascination, some would say obsession, with native plants brought him to the attention of systematic botanists throughout the Bay Area. One early association was with Walter and Irja Knight, two of the several authors of *A Flora of Sonoma County*. Roger collected all sorts of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*) samples and brought them to Walter for identification. Mr. Knight deposited many of these samples in the herbarium at the California Academy of Sciences. When I joined the Garden staff in 1988 I convinced Roger that his specimens should be housed in the Jepson Herbarium on campus. Labeling his many field collections will help occupy some of Roger's retirement years!

By 1981 Roger was assigned to work half-time in the Californian Area under the supervision of Kurt Zadnik. From then until near retirement Roger worked in the Californian Area and for many years in the Eastern North American Area.

He spent nearly every weekend traveling the roads and trails in California exploring the native flora and scenery. He developed an intense interest in serpentine-endemic species and plant communities. It was during these weekend forays that he came across the mariposa lily now named for



Photo by R. Anderson

Roger Raiche during the 1992 dedication of the Serpentine Plant Communities Display.

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him, The Cedar's fairy-lantern (*Calochortus raichei*), as well as Raiche's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos stanfordiana* ssp. *raichei*), and Raiche's red ribbons (*Clarkia concinna* ssp. *raichei*). He brought each of these specimens to the attention of botanical experts, who then named them in recognition of his finds. New species and subspecies continue to be discovered and recognized in California. Roger has played a signifi-



Photo by H. Forbes

Roger collecting cones of Brewer spruce (*Picea breweriana*) for the seed exchange program.



Photo by H. Forbes

Roger collecting mountain dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) for the seed exchange program

cant role in these discoveries and has a well-earned reputation for being an excellent field botanist in northern California. In support of protecting the native flora, Roger filled out field survey forms for rare species for the California Department of Fish & Game. Staff there inform me they always look forward to Roger's surveys, as he waxes poetically about the species and their habitats in each one.

By the late 1980s Kurt Zadnik's responsibilities changed to focus more on the greenhouse succulent plants and supervisory responsibility for the Californian Area was turned over to Roger. Kurt continued to assist in the Californian Area, including field collections for the Garden's biennial seed exchange list. I feel fortunate to have been a participant in these biennial forays with Roger and Kurt, receiving an introduction to many areas and plants new to me. Roger's regular weekend forays paid off for the seed exchange list, as he was able to direct us to many sites of particular botanical interest.

In 1997 Roger co-founded a landscape design and install business with his partner David McCrory. The success of Planet Horticulture Inc. encouraged Roger to reduce his hours to half-time at the Garden in 1998, where he continued in the Californian Area and also designed the tree boxes in the entrance area until his retirement on June 30th.

— Holly Forbes