



UCRBG Newsletter

What's So Special About Ginkgo?

By Norm Ellstrand



Ginkgo fan-shaped leaf

seed-bearing plant whose seeds are not borne in fruits); just like giant sequoias, pines, and cycads, it produces cones not flowers. With broad, fan-shaped leaves featuring radiating dichotomous venation, ginkgo is unique among the modern gymnosperms. The leaf is often split part way into two lobes; hence the species name "biloba".

Horseshoe crab, duck-billed platypus, and armadillo are all considered living fossils. "Living fossil" refers to a species that has remained unchanged from its ancient ancestors, usually representing the sole surviving lineage of a once diverse group. Among plants, *Ginkgo biloba* (commonly called ginkgo or maidenhair tree) fits that definition perfectly. With no close extant relatives, the modern ginkgo is essentially identical to fossils from the mid-Jurassic period, about 170 million years ago. That's right; these trees that we now cherish as ornamentals lived side-by-side with a variety of dinosaurs from those in the Jurassic to different ones in the Cretaceous period. Indeed, about 20 million years passed before ginkgo trees could enjoy the first birds landing on their branches. And much later still did ginkgos witness the rise of the first flowering plants.

Much as it may resemble flowering plants, *Ginkgo biloba* doesn't produce flowers or fruits. It's a gymnosperm (a



Reduced female cones

Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

Another thing that makes *Ginkgo biloba* special is that it is a dioecious species. "Dioecy" refers to species that have separate sexes expressed in separate individuals. While dioecy is common for the vast majority of animal species, it is rare for plants. Only about 10% of plant species are dioecious. Well-known examples include hops, cannabis, kiwifruit, date palm, and the vast majority of the willow family. In the case of ginkgo, mature male trees produce pollen-bearing cones. Mature female trees produce two ovules at the end of a stalk (essentially, a reduced female cone) that, if wind-pollinated, produce a seed or two covered with a fleshy membrane. When these fruit-

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Director's Report - Dr. Jodie Holt



We are so appreciative of our supporters, especially in challenging times. While we receive generous financial and in-kind support from CNAS, we raise over half of our operating budget through generous donations, memberships, volunteerism, and revenue generation. Over the last few years this non-UCR support has enabled us to hire

more staff to make greater progress on garden and landscape maintenance as well as to launch new gardens, display areas, and initiatives that would not have been possible otherwise.

As a result of this generosity, we have been able to free up our earned revenue from plant and merchandise sales, meeting room rentals, photoshoots, and events to invest in long-deferred maintenance on our buildings, including fumigation, roof repair and replacement, and stucco repair and painting, projects that are understandably not appealing to donors. Thank you to all our supporters for enabling these improvements!

Our mission is to create a nature oasis that serves as a place of enrichment, learning, and enjoyment of the natural world. To continue this journey, it is essential that we achieve financial sustainability to stabilize our budget against an uncertain economy, rising costs, and state cuts to the UC. To this end we plan to implement an admission fee in the next few months that will put us on parity with nearly all gardens in southern California. We will ensure that the fee is affordable as well as free to Friends members, students, and children. We hope the response is as positive as it has been to our voluntary admission donation.

A review of other botanic gardens of comparable ownership and size also revealed that we lag in size of our membership, which is a valuable source of ongoing support. With the help of the CNAS Development and UCR's Creative Design teams, we recently launched a comprehensive membership campaign. In addition to the many benefits of membership, admission will be free to Friends at all levels, so make sure you are current. To renew, or join if you are not a Friend, just go to our website, gardens.ucr.edu, select the "Become a Member" link, and follow the prompts. Note that the "Giving" link accepts donations to one of our funds, but membership is only available at the Member link.

Please join our loyal community of supporters as a Friend of the Gardens and enjoy great benefits. More importantly, you will be a part of UCR's oldest support group (45 years strong!) and invest in our team as we pursue transformational goals, including completing a new Display House, renovating the Iris Garden, and creating an interpretive signage program.

As always, you can read more about these exciting initiatives and more on our website, this Newsletter, eNews, and social media. Please send your comments and suggestions to me at bgdirector@ucr.edu.

Jodie

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College of Natural & Agricultural Sciences

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Male pollen-bearing cones
Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

like structures fall they become messy and smelly. The foul odor, created primarily by butyric acid, has been likened to that of rancid butter, rotting meat, or vomit.

Not surprisingly, ginkgo buyers favor male trees over female trees. It is not possible to determine whether a tree is female or male until maturity; ginkgo, like most dioecious plants, doesn't have sex chromosomes. However, the plant can be propagated by cuttings, and thus trees of a specific sex can be obtained from nurseries.

The current distribution of "wild" *Ginkgo biloba* is not entirely clear. By the time humans evolved the ginkgo's range had shrunk from a worldwide distribution to a limited area in Central China. At present, some Chinese populations are deemed "semi-wild" and are composed of old trees with very low genetic diversity. Those populations are posited to have been planted, clonally propagated, and tended by Chinese monks for thousands of years. Other more remote populations along disturbed stream banks have even older trees and are genetically highly diverse. These may represent the only truly wild populations of *Ginkgo biloba*. Not surprisingly, wild populations of ginkgo are considered "Endangered" by the IUCN Red List.

This is a case where humans have redistributed a species slowly drifting towards extinction to its previous distribution around the world. Ginkgos make handsome deciduous trees, turning bright yellow in the fall before dropping their leaves. Ginkgo is a source of popular nutritional supplements, based on leaf extracts. However, health benefits are yet to be confirmed by clinical evidence. Raw or roasted, its seeds are considered toxic to humans if excessively consumed.

The next time you see a *Ginkgo biloba*, look twice. Remember, this isn't just any tree. Its direct ancestors rubbed shoulders with dinosaurs. Realize that all of the surrounding broad-leaved trees evolved at least 30 million years after the first ginkgo came to life. Check out whether you can determine if it is a male or female tree. Consider that its recent tiny range has exploded under human care. There's a lot that's special about ginkgo.

You can see mature *Ginkgo biloba* trees in the Temperate Deciduous Forest area of the Botanic Gardens and a younger female tree by the upper restrooms.



Ginkgo seeds in fleshy membranes
Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons

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Around the Gardens

Bird Walk

By Nancy Cullen

The first Bird Walk of the year was held on April 6th at 7:00 am. We modified the event this time to have a later 7:00 am start and provided coffee and granola bars for participants as they arrived. Over 30 different bird species were seen that morning. A bird list is available on ebird.org. We want to thank our Lead Birders including Michele Felix-Derbandiker and her twin daughters, Jenny Iyer, David Rankin, and Norman Ellstrand and his wife Tracy Kahn, who made the Bird Walk a wonderful family experience. We also want to thank those early-bird volunteers who assisted in the setup, Ellie Singer, Bob Cullen, and Lauren Chudner. Guests took home a free sample of “No-Mess” birdseed donated by Wild Birds Unlimited. We hope to add another bird walk to the calendar soon.



Early birders looking for birds as the sun comes up



Photo credit: Ellie Singer

Grapevine Succulent Workshop

By Pam Ferre

On March 8th the Botanic Gardens hosted a grapevine succulent planter workshop. UC Master Gardener Linda Powell provided step-by-step instructions on how to create beautiful and unique planters which can be enjoyed at home. Thank you to Karen Fleisher for organizing this event. Visit the website to learn about upcoming events at gardens.ucr.edu! We hope to see you here.



Linda Powell instructing the class



Maryetta Ferre & her beautiful succulent planter

Spring 2025 Pop-up Shops

By Nancy Cullen

April 6 Pop-up Shop

Our April Pop-up Shop immediately followed the Bird Walk so it was a very busy Sunday. Due to the walk we had shoppers onsite already at the start of the sale. This sale was added to the calendar later than usual with less advertising but we found ourselves with a large inventory of sale-ready plants. We offered a wonderful variety of plants for sale including California natives, succulents, shrubs, hanging plants, house plants, and potted succulent mini gardens. We also had UCRBG merchandise available featuring new items like our long sleeve tees, lanyards, and new totes too. Many visitors stopped by and were excited to shop. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers who helped with setting up, helping customers during the sale, and cleaning up afterwards, Linda Carter, Nancy Prokopchuk, Kay Force, Scott and Michelle Lofquist, and Norma Larson.

May 4 Pop-up Shop

The May sale had much anticipation from our guests. The early morning rain posed safety concerns on our steep trails and slippery bridges and steps, so we limited the public to the entrance area and meeting room so the sale could go on! With help from our dedicated volunteers, we set up for the Pop-up Shop on tables under EZ-ups and in the meeting room, while our BEES staff cashiers were cozy and dry inside the gatehouse. We had visitors from as far as Victorville and Fullerton coming to the sale and families with carts walking up from Parking Lots 10 and 13. Laura made several trips back to the nursery to collect more plants to fill the disappearing stock on the tables. A few of the plants were likely Mother's Day gifts. Stay tuned for announcements of our next Pop-up Shop, hopefully in early fall. A special thanks goes to Greg and Rosemary Neal, Nancy Prokopchuk, Norma Larson, Linda Carter, and Scott and Michelle Lofquist who volunteered their time and came in the rain to set up and assisted throughout the sale.



A constant flow of people shopping for plants



A customer shops for BG branded merchandise



Blooming iris were a big seller

Summer Sunday Events

Join us on the 1st and 3rd Sundays for activities for the whole family.

Master Gardener Docents are present in the Butterfly Garden from 9 am - 12 pm to answer questions, point out caterpillars and eggs, and give advice on gardening for butterflies.

Docents are stationed at the redwoods from 10 am - 12 pm to share their knowledge about the Gardens and answer questions.

Storytime with Teresa on the 1st Sundays at 10 am in Alder Canyon.

Origami with Michelle on the 1st Sundays from 11 am - 1 pm in Alder Canyon



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STORYTIME IN THE GARDENS
MAY - OCTOBER
1ST SUNDAYS OF THE MONTH
ALDER CANYON-
TEMPERATE DECIDUOUS FOREST
10:00 AM
AGES 3-6 WITH SUPERVISION

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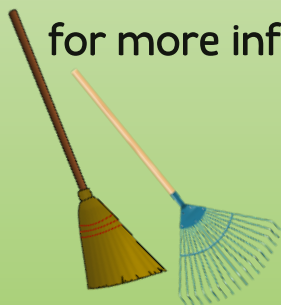
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Butterfly Corner

Desert Black Swallowtail

Article and photo by Ann Platzer

On May 6, 2023, we joined a field trip with the Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter of the California Native Plant Society at the Puma Canyon Ecological Reserve, Pinon Hills. It was lunchtime and we all stopped to have a snack and relax. As we were admiring the view a lone large yellow and black swallowtail, the Desert Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes coloro*, landed very briefly on a bush close to us and I took a dorsal photo of it (see photo) before it flew off. The specimen has a lot of black with broad yellow bands. The forward yellow marginal spots are rounded. The wingspan is three to four inches. The population in southwestern California is primarily this yellow form.

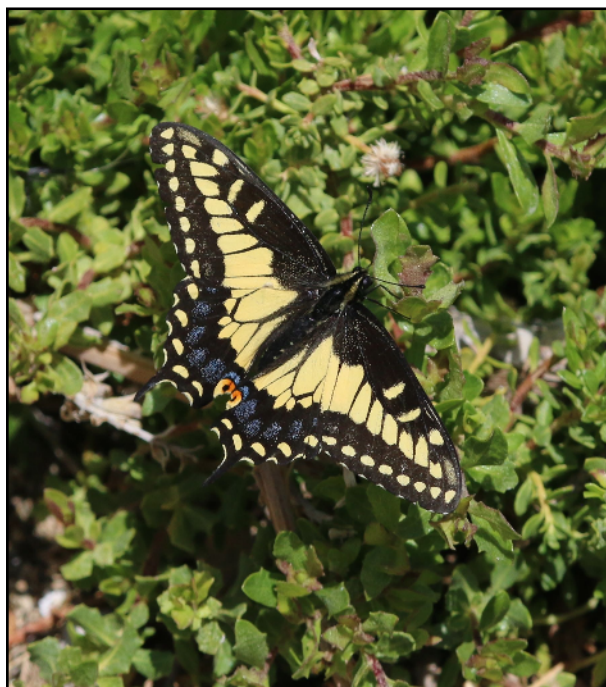
The females lay round yellowish eggs singly often on the underside of food plant leaves. The main food plant is *Thamnosma montana*, turpentine broom; however, other food plants include *Cymopterus panamintensis*, desert carrot, and *Tauschia parishii*, Parish's umbrellawort. The eggs take about a week to hatch depending on the local temperature. The eggs appear black the day before hatching into caterpillars. Young caterpillars mimic bird droppings. Then as they age, black and white banding with orange dots appear. There are two to three broods a year and flight times are from February to October.

As their name implies, the habitat is in the desert, especially along washes. They are common in Southern California, and after a summer thunderstorm or good winter rain there can be quite an autumn flight of these striking butterflies; conversely, during drought conditions the pupae can delay emergence for several years.

The adult butterfly is said to be addicted to the red flowers of chuparosa, *Justica californica*.

HAPPY BUTTERFLY GARDENING

AP



Dorsal view

Thanks to Dr. Gordon Pratt for verifying the identification of this butterfly and for Edward Platzer for editing this article.

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Butterfly Garden

Docents available in the
Butterfly Garden
1st & 3rd Sundays,
9am-12pm, April-October

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Project Updates

Article and photos by Miguel Estrada

While I usually share updates on the many exciting projects happening throughout the Gardens, it's important to remember that our work extends far beyond these visible developments. At the heart of everything we do is a deep commitment to the care and wellbeing of the thousands of plants that make up our living collection. When a new challenge arises, especially one that puts any part of the collection at risk, we act decisively to protect and preserve the health of the Gardens.



Fallen branches of the sycamore tree

While not every tree attacked by the shot hole borer will die, those that survive can still support the beetle's population, creating ongoing risk for more vulnerable species. Unfortunately, our collection includes both types of host trees: those that can survive an attack and those that cannot. In response, we are actively mobilizing to protect the most susceptible species in our care. This effort includes vigilant monitoring for signs of infestation, removing and properly disposing of heavily infested branches, using systemic insecticides and fungicides to protect trees that are being attacked, and, when necessary, removing entire specimens to prevent them from becoming breeding grounds for the beetles.

Even as we take proactive steps to protect the most vulnerable specimens in our collection, I'm saddened to share that we will be removing one of the tallest sycamores in Alder Canyon. This towering tree, planted in 1962, has long been a striking presence in the landscape, rising high above the surrounding vegetation and offering shade, beauty, and habitat for decades. Its removal is not a decision we take lightly, but unfortunately, the extent of infestation, disease, and dieback has made it a necessary step to safeguard the health of the surrounding trees and to prevent the further spread of the invasive shot hole borer. Many fallen branches have also made it a safety risk. When you visit be sure to avoid any areas we have blocked off with caution tape for safety reasons while you watch our progress in caring for our valuable trees.

Over the past few months, we've observed a decline in tree health, and even some tree deaths in the Alder Canyon and Deciduous Forest areas. After some investigation, we've identified an infestation of the invasive shot hole borer. These non-native beetles pose a serious threat in California, where they lack natural predators, have a broad host range, and introduce a harmful fungus that causes Fusarium dieback, a disease ultimately responsible for killing susceptible trees. (See the Fall 2020 Newsletter vol. 40 no. 3 for an article on the shot hole borer).

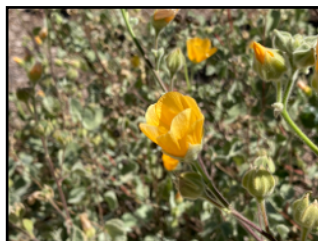


Fusarium dieback on the sycamore tree, *Platanus racemosa*

To see some of the plants in bloom please visit gardens.ucr.edu/information/bloom. The Rose Gardens and Butterfly Garden have many plants blooming this time of year.



Alstroemeria
"Peruvian lily"



Abutilon palmeri
"Palmer's Indian mallow"



Eriogonum giganteum
"St. Catherine's lace"



Rosa 'Neil Diamond'

Spotlight On Elinor Pond

By Janine Almanzor



Elinor Pond is a one-of-a-kind, behind the scenes volunteer. The Botanic Gardens gets nearly two hundred tour requests each year for schools, adults, garden clubs, scouts, and UCR students and staff, and every single tour request goes through Elinor. Her job is completely remote as she emails back and forth to set up docents for the tours. In April, Elinor took a much needed nine-day vacation, so I filled in for her as Docent Coordinator. After I spent about four hours one day solely on docent coordinating, I decided to highlight Elinor in the Spotlight article. I was the Docent Coordinator before I handed it over to Elinor in 2016 so I knew what to do, but we have a lot more tours than we did back then so it is much more work now!

Elinor first began volunteering at the Botanic Gardens in 2005. During that time, she was semi-retired and working at UCR doing research on avocados. Elinor helped with propagating plants and volunteering at many events including Primavera in the Gardens and Plant Sales. When she fully retired in 2013, Elinor devoted more time to the Gardens and helped in the office with the plant records. She also went through the docent training course in 2014 and led tours for several years. In 2016 she took on the responsibility of scheduling all the tours and finding docents for them. She

was also leading tours as needed until the pandemic shut down tours. Since then, Elinor has been remotely scheduling all the tours from her home, so she is really behind the scenes. Elinor's kind and gentle demeanor is perfect for the stressful job that not too many people would want to do. Elinor says, "It's a pleasurable job, but a bit stressful at times. I have incredible docents! I love it when the teachers send emails saying how much they learned and enjoyed the docents. It makes it all worthwhile." The many teachers, docents, and Botanic Gardens staff that interact with Elinor love working with her and appreciate the many hours she gives to support the docent program.



Janine Almanzor at the Bernheim Forest and Arboretum in Kentucky

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ahsgardening.org/gardening-programs/rap.

In the Works

By Botanic Gardens Staff

As summer approaches, we are hoping to get as much outdoor work completed as possible before the triple digit temperatures arrive and hinder our outdoor activity. Here are some of the projects and activities underway this season:

Gardens and Grounds:

- ▶ After a very successful Give Day where donations totaled over \$26,376, we now have the funds needed for completing the Display House and have begun construction.
- ▶ The Iris Garden has been given some much-needed clean-up. The pathways have been cleared, and the irises have been divided and replanted. Next up will be a donor-driven renovation into a seasonal color garden.
- ▶ A section in the Australia area has been cleaned up, and we fitted a new point-of-connection for the automatic irrigation system that we plan to install in summer; the new area will be planted in the fall.
- ▶ Dead bamboo in Palm Corner has been cleared.
- ▶ Several battery-operated controllers and valves have been added in Alder Canyon to help with summer irrigation and to move watering to the appropriate time of day.
- ▶ Five new hose bib timers have been added in the lower Rose Garden to work around the low flow problem.
- ▶ We have contracted the removal of a large sycamore and large limbs on two other sycamores, all of which were compromised by the invasive shot hole borer. Plans are underway to add new trees to Alder Canyon in the near future.
- ▶ With the help of the Entomology Department we installed monitoring stations for the shot hole borer to give us insight into how to respond better and protect our collection.
- ▶ The Native Bee Garden forage ground irrigation has been installed, and we plan to solarize the planting area in June.

Activities and Events:

- ▶ Julia Mathews and Auggie Martinez, both UCR students, have joined the team as our Staff Stewards. Please come by and say hello. We also hired Colin Tran as the new student Curator's Assistant after Catherine Shannon moved on to a career-track job. Congrats to Catherine and thanks for your years of excellent work!
- ▶ We have new Botanic Gardens merchandise available - colorful lanyards, fans, long sleeve tees, restocked mugs, kneelers and tote bags.
- ▶ Pop-up Shops in April and May were met with visitors with carts and wagons ready to shop, rain or shine, and we had excellent sales. The next shop is planned for the fall once the weather is more amenable to planting.
- ▶ Master Gardener docents will be in the Butterfly Garden and by the redwoods on our open Sundays to answer questions.
- ▶ Storytime for children and their families is offered during summer on our first open Sundays of the month in Alder Canyon.
- ▶ Michelle Lofquist will have a table on the first Sundays of the month teaching origami to kids of all ages. You can also find her at the Steward table on Monday mornings.
- ▶ This spring has been very busy for our Docents leading tours for third graders through adults.



The Iris Garden after many hours of work



The bamboo area cleaned up



George Spiliotis (left) & Glenn De Hart at the Butterfly Garden table



Shot hole borer monitoring trap

WE APPRECIATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS. YOUR TIME AND TALENTS MAKE A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE AT THE BOTANIC GARDENS!



Michelle Lofquist as
Gardens Steward



Linda Carter helping at a
Twilight Tour



April Wilson (L) & Lee Bayer
Docents & "Rose Buds"



Steve Morgan working on the
plant records



Kay Force (L) & Claudia Clark
(R) ready to lead a tour



Daniel Weatherford works
in the lath house



Yvonne Wilczynski
helping at a Twilight Tour



Helga Forster working in the
Herb Garden



Barbara Gable - Long-time
Docent & Steward



Pam Elias helping with an
online plant sale



Pam Roose (L) & Helga
Stafford working in the
lath house



Nancy Prokopchuk at a
Pop-up Shop



Karen Fleisher (back) & Linda
Powell at a succulent class



Mike Cohen, our GIS
Consultant, getting
approved drone imagery



Carol Haftter & Heather
Nichols in the lath house



Georgia
Renne helps
as a Steward



(L to R) George Spiliotis, Hilary Brown,
& Rosemary Neal helping with an
online plant sale



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UCRBG Calendar of Events

*Art in
the Gardens*
vendor applications
accepted until 6/30/25.
[gardens.ucr.edu/
events/art_gardens](https://gardens.ucr.edu/events/art_gardens)

- Bimonthly **Volunteer Orientation**, Entrance, 9:30 am (1st Sunday & Tuesday)
- Bimonthly **Roaming Docents**, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm (1st & 3rd Sundays)
- Bimonthly **Butterfly Garden Information Table**, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm (1st & 3rd Sundays)
- Monthly **Walk & Learn at the Rose Garden**, 8:00 - 10:00 am (1st Tuesdays)
- Monthly **Children's Story Time**, 10:00 am (1st Sundays)
- Monthly **Origami with Michelle**, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm (1st Sundays)
- June 26 **Friend's Annual Meeting**, 5:00 - 6:30 pm

Please note: The UCRBG hours are Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 3:30 pm
and 1st and 3rd Sundays 8:00 am - 2:00 pm until further notice.
(Please check our website for closure dates)