



February 2018 Forget me Nots

Dear Members,

I am so excited to see you and your husbands and friends all jazzed up on February 10th!

We are going to have a super fun evening – big thanks to Barb Boster and Ruth Fortune for this very special event.

On a more serious note, I know you have all been following, with great concern, the horrific mudslides that have taken many lives in the Santa Barbara/Montecito areas.

Through our Zone XII Chair, Lindsay Dodge, we heard from Susanne Tobey, President of the Santa Barbara Garden Club. She wants us to know “a number of their club members have lost their homes and everyone in the town has been evacuated. They do not know when they will be able to return as there are presently no community services available. Susanne is in the process of setting up an email/ texting tree to connect with all her club members, as they are scattered in alternate housing arrangements throughout the area.”

We have invited our Santa Barbara friends to our February general meeting with Piedmont. We hope those members staying in the area will attend. In the meantime, please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

Warmly,
Cathleen

Orinda Garden Club presents

A Modern Evening
...AND ALL
THAT JAZZ

array of cocktail/wine choices
hearty appetizers
sensational jazz entertainment

February 10 2018
6:30 to 10:00
Metro, Lafayette

\$60 per person (including one drink)
Come as one or bring one or more guests

rsvp immediately
check to OGC, Box 34, Orinda or PayPal

February Joint General Meeting with Piedmont at Orinda Country Club
Thursday, February 22nd.

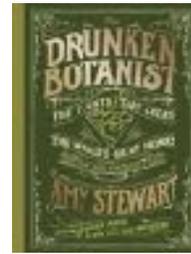


World famous designer John Greenlee will share his love affair with Meadows and Grasses. Members of both clubs will gather at OCC at 9:30am (come early), meet separately at 10:00am & reconvene for the program. All are encouraged to enjoy a Cobb Salad, a beverage & dessert on the Terrace after the meeting. Advance Reservations and payment are required, even for OCC members, by February 14. Pay on [the website](#) or send check made out to OGC should be sent to Dona Snow at [10 Heather Lane, Orinda](#)

March General Meeting at Orinda Country Club

Wednesday, March 22nd, 3:30 Social, 4:00 Meeting, 5:00 Speaker

Every great drink starts with a plant! Author and veteran Orinda Garden Club Speaker Amy Stewart will share the botanical roots of your favorite cocktails and her book "The Drunken Botanist." You are welcome to invite your spouse or another guest and enjoy a signature cocktail after the presentation. Keep the party going by staying for Orinda Nights dinner on the Terrace. Reservations can be made with Jennifer at the front desk [\(925\) 254-4314](tel:925-254-4314); space is limited so please plan ahead. Non country club members can pay by check the night of the dinner. Jackets required for gentlemen.



Membership

It is that time of year to think about potential OGC New Members. Please think about your friends and acquaintances who would be interested in joining our fun, dynamic, industrious and engaging group!

Each candidate needs a sponsor, cosponsor, and two supporting letters. The material needs to be in by March 15.

Emailing to me is fine.

Julie O'Melveny

omelveny@comcast.net

925-928-9724

History Corner

“Like Mother like Daughter”

Jeanne McCormick joined OGC in 1978. She held almost all offices except President. She wanted to be free to travel with her husband. Her friends sponsored her daughter, Janet Riley in 1993. At that time, Janet was almost the only member in her age group in the OGC, and her mom Jeanne suggested she sponsor her friends and so she did! Janet became OGC President in 2013. She was named the 2018 Orinda Citizen of the Year and will be celebrated on March 11, 2018. Her mom Jeanne is very proud of Janet but not surprised as she has always been a great leader since before grammar school. There are other mother-daughter teams in the OGC such as Bev Webb (President in 1980,) and Pam Wiley, Gail Emmons and Lisa Hallahan, Dayna Taylor and Erin Grey, Karin Carroll and Sandra Holland, Betty Argabright and Ann Seclow, Judy Cortese and Julie O'Melveny, Virginia Rees and Claudia Conger, Mercy Forsburg, June Cunningham AND Jean Rowe. How fun to keep Orinda Garden Club in the family!



Ruth Bancroft

Teacher, Scientist, Artist and creator of Bancroft Gardens



Ruth Bancroft was made an honorary member of OGC in 2008.
She died at the age of 109.



The Ruth Bancroft Garden

Walnut Creek, California

Arriving at this Walnut Creek preserve, we see the creator's name gracing the Garden's wall. She was teacher, artist, and dedicated scientist.

Ruth Bancroft's passion for plants dates back to her childhood in Berkeley. After moving to Walnut Creek, she became fascinated with water-conserving plants and amassed a huge collecting of potted succulents. (2) After tending her garden for over 40 years, she died at 109 years of age.

In 1972, at the age of 64, Ruth enlisted Lester Hawkins to design the layout of her 3.5 acre (gifted to her by her husband) dry garden. With an educational background in architecture and teaching she proceeded to arrange, plant and educate herself and others for as long as she lived. Through trial and error, she discovered how to use succulents in the landscape and how to protect the tender plants from winter rains and the occasional freeze. She created dynamic planting combinations by using contrasting textures, forms and colors. (2) The Garden is internationally renowned as much for its striking architectural design as it is for its world class plant collection and rare hybrids. The current buzz word in today's gardening environment is "sustainability". You will see this Garden as a striking model.

Come along. Let's take a tour.

Entering the Garden, we pass through an auspicious, round, wooden, green gazebo-like structure which Ruth's husband built in 1976. It's referred to as "Ruth's Folly." (4) We're getting excited to explore. But today the docent-lead tour is going to hit some highlights we might otherwise miss.

Our first stop is the centrally located pond. As we move about the different "rooms" of the Garden, the water element, as the study of feng shui guides, is of great importance. Flowing water helps us to let go of things we no longer need. Water reflects, provides movement, cools us on a hot day. It is added to the Garden design for a fuller appreciation of the diversity of habitat. The juxtaposition of the dry-loving plants and the body of water, while seemingly incongruous, happens all the time in nature. We learn that a two foot tall pinyon pine was planted aside the pool as visual anchor. (4) The tree yields edible nuts, which were a staple of the Native Americans. At the present it is a fully mature specimen and works wonders as a design element as well as providing shade and habitat for the myriad of wildlife benefitting from its canopy.

We approach a raised bed featuring the visage of a fully blooming **St. Catherine's lace** (*Eriogonum giganteum*), a large wild buckwheat which produces dense umbrella-like heads of tiny white flowers and is very attractive to bees as well. But we are told that not all of the plants of the Garden are natives to California. (3) Hailing from places as far as Africa, Arabia, Madagascar, the weaving of

distant cousins makes for a beautiful tapestry. Two tall eucalyptus from Australia frame the composition.

The land's use prior to Ruth's garden was a pear and walnut orchard. (4) Many years of irrigating the flat, compacted clay soil rendered the landscape unfriendly to a garden needing excellent drainage. Before any planting was begun the native soil was amended with organic matter. In the mid 1970's hundreds of tons of crushed rock and gravel from nearby Mt. Diablo were added to unify the designed landscape and make it look more natural. The undulating gravel mounds in beds provide visual interest and improve drainage, while also evoking the rocky landscape in which many of these plants would be found in the wild. (1) Huge boulders were added to construct a stage within which the plants were placed, eventually interacting and delighting visitors with their dialogue. Though the rock placement looks easy and natural, much time and pain-taking measure goes into staging these boulders, as much or more so than the vegetation nestled within.

We're taking a circuitous route as we make our way to the next point of interest. There are no built-up walkways or bender-board to delineate the various beds. Rather, there is a very natural feel to the Garden's floor which sees tumbling crushed rock spilling out over compacted quarry waste. (3)

Stopping at a large mound of cacti, the various are listed: the stout barrel cactus, the globular, the erect pillars of columnar. And closely related, the prickly pear, from the genus *Opuntia*. Of interest is the story of Ruth Bancroft, at 109 years and close to death, being given one of her favorite dishes, ice cream flavored with the syrup made from the flower of the prickly pear. (3) She was nourished by the fruits of her labors.

We stop by a bed featuring *Aeoneum*. Here we are told that Ruth was enamored by succulents, clipping articles about drought-resistant plants from early on. However, she did not acquire any until the 50's when she purchased a few hybrids at an estate sale of plant breeder Glenn Davidson. The *Aeoneum 'Glenn Davidson'*, in pots for many years, were planted in her acreage and are there to be seen today. (1)

Next stop: the **Century plant** or *Agave*. This plant saves all of its energy for flowering until the end of its life. When it blooms, a head produces a flowering stalk with hundreds of small blossoms on one tall spike. The plant sends up a shoot that can reach 30 feet. Flower stalks persist long after the bloom is finished, adding dramatic visual interest to the Garden. (1) Seeds raining down from the dried flowers ensure new life to come. (3)

A curiosity shows itself in the Garden.

The odd looking, swollen trunk of the **Queensland bottle tree**, *Brachychiton rupestris* is a fan favorite. It is one of many trees adapted to dry climates. This Australian native forms a bulbous trunk, with stored water, to use as its personal water tank. (1) For more enjoyable lessons read Johanna Silver's book, [The Bold, Dry Garden](#):

Lessons from The Ruth Bancroft Garden. It is engaging and informative and Marion Brenner's photography dazzles.

In 1972, a year after the initial planting of her entire collection, a freeze came that destroyed most of her plants. (Fortunately he *Aeoneum 'Glenn Davidson'* survived.)

Where most of us would throw our hands up and say, "I'm finished!", Ruth, undaunted persevered. She had wooden boxes with heavy plastic wrap built to protect the new installation. In addition, she built a long, curved, shade structure that was erected to protect the variety of plant that could not take extreme sun exposure or excessive amounts of water. (4) She was the consummate collector and the pragmatic protector; agreeable to adaptation and change. It also showed her patience and determination.

We've had a chance to see, now, the connectedness of the Garden. No formal, straight edged motif here. Rosette shaped plants, towering gazebo, curving shelter structure, winding paths. Biometric forms are constantly repeated, the dappled light provided by the mature trees unifying all. We get a feeling that our own bodies are part of the Garden, absorbing all the energy from its beating heart, from all the thriving plants. Is it any wonder that Ruth, herself, had such longevity?

As we navigate our way through the Garden, we stop and look at the variety of color, texture and shape. This is a good time to rest on one of the many benches and quietly observe. Beyond the passion for horticulture, Ruth had an artistic eye. She used her plants as color swatches and arranged them as an artist would when creating a composition on canvas. Along with color, blending shapes and textures added endless interest. Then came the vertical component, lifting the eye and heightening the spirits. Whether using yuccas or palms or pines the anchors lend stability to the Garden's structure. We can see how the principles of planting an arrangement in a container transfer so readily to the placement of plants within the individual mounds in the Garden. "Thrillers, fillers and spillers." Plants that shoot skyward, plants that fill a large portion of the container below the uprights, and the plants that cascade over the lip of the pot. Seeing it as a three dimensional piece of art, a sculpture. As a docent might suggest to a visitor to an art museum, "Walk all around the sculpture; see it from all sides." The winding paths of the Garden sets us up for success as we experience the changing exposures thrilling us once again as we make the next turn.

A garden is planned, but nature takes over. Our tour guide points out some serendipity. A squirrel or bird planted a seed from a cactus into a pocket of a towering palm, a columnar arm rises parallel to the trunk and creates a humorous aside to our thoughts of order. Manzanita trees planted by Ruth which died years ago resurrect in the same place as a hybrid now called Manzanita 'Ruth Bancroft.' (3)

The Garden began to attract attention from gardeners, horticulturists, educators and the public. California had experienced a drought and the future looked grim for gardening.

By this time Ruth was coming to understand that her private garden had acquired a wider appeal and xeriscaping was now worth much more than she had ever imagined. (4) In 1988, Frank and Anne Cabot visited Ruth and were troubled to hear that there were no plans to preserve the Garden. They were inspired to form The Garden Conservancy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving significant American gardens. The Ruth Bancroft Garden was their very first project and was opened to the public in the early 1990s. (5) The mission is to preserve this outstanding garden and to continue to develop its collection of water-conserving plants for the education and enjoyment of the public. (2)

The docent left us with a couple of quotes to ponder:

“Ruth’s dry garden has matured into one of the most significant collections of succulents on the West Coast, and one of the most beautiful and distinctive gardens in North America.” Richard Turner/Pacific Horticulture

“The planting today provides a living archive of desert and dry climate plants, some disappearing from native habitats.” Joan Hockaday/Author and Horticulturist

This concludes the tour, but we are invited to return. Seasons show a variety of color change, but there is always something new and interesting to see. The new Ruth Bancroft Garden Visitor Center and Education Center is currently under construction. If you visit the San Francisco Bay Area, Walnut Creek is a short ride away. The trip is worth your while.

Credits:

- (1) Silver, Johanna (2016). The Bold, Dry Garden: Lessons from The Ruth Bancroft Garden. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press.
- (1) The Ruth Bancroft Garden, Inc. visitor pamphlet.
- (2) Ruth Bancroft Garden Guest Host, Stephen Lysaght.
- (3) The Bancroft Library at University of California at Berkeley, oral history.
- (4) The Garden Conservancy website.
- (5) Brian Kemble, Curator of The Ruth Bancroft Garden.

Submitted by Judy Shallat
Orinda Garden Club/Zone XII



OGC Calendar is now available on our website.
[Click here](#) to view the Orinda Garden Club Calendar

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Orinda Garden Club Calendar		
Valentines Day inspired flower arranging workshop @ All that Jazz	10am - 12pm	February 8, 2018 TBA
Holiday Party @ All that Jazz	6:30am - 10:30pm	February 10, 2018 Metro Lafayette, 3524 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette
Bouquets @ Lisa Stefan's	10:30am - 11:30am	February 12, 2018 109 Van Ripper Lane, Van Ripper Ln, Orinda
Deadline to Register for Annual Meeting Flower Show register at gca.marica.com	12pm - 1pm	February 15, 2018 online
Board Meeting @ Del Stephenson's	3:15pm - 4:45pm	February 15, 2018 14 St James Ct, Orinda
Joint General Meeting with Piedmont - John Greenlee on Mesa *9:30 Social, 10:00 Meeting, 11:00 Speaker	9:30am - 12pm	February 27, 2018 Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda
Bouquets	10:30am - 11:30am	March 12, 2018 TBA
Partners for Plants (P4P) carpool	12noon - 2:30pm	March 13, 2018 Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda
Board Meeting @ Laura Sawczuk's	3:15pm - 4:45pm	March 15, 2018 98 El Toyonal, Orinda
General Meeting: Author Amy Stewart on "The Drunken Botanist" 3:30 Social, 4:00 Meeting, 5:00 Speaker	3:30pm - 6pm	March 21, 2018 Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda
Bouquets @ Lisa Kovalic's	10:30am - 11:30am	March 19, 2018 10 Lombardy Lane