This past year was extraordinary by almost any measure. The world spun into economic crisis. California had yet another drought year, and most local water districts instituted mandatory conservation measures by the end of the year. The news media barraged the public with stories of the water crisis. The public heard…and many turned to the Water Conservation Garden for help.

For the Garden, it was a record year of responding to the public - on the grounds, at events, in classes and tours. We held two staff retreats to come up with new and more efficient ways of serving increasingly concerned visitors. And, all the while, our fundraising efforts yielded far less than previous years, bringing us to a long range planning process designed to bring us greater financial stability.

Visitors, Tours and Classes:
The Garden experienced a 46% increase in visitors over the previous year, serving nearly 52,000 people. There was a 325% increase in tour participants. Many of these were children on tours with our new educator, Ms. Smarty Plants. Others came for regularly scheduled weekend tours, or for special group tours for homeowners’ association boards, landscape company employees, public parks staff, garden club members, and other groups. Still others came for our newly instituted “special access” tours on the Verbeck Shuttle, or for our “Ask the Horticulturist” tours. In all, 9,097 people came to the Garden on organized tours.

Many others came for classes – more than 2,000 people attended a class at the Garden this year. We listened to what our visitors were asking for, and created “Bye Bye Grass I and II” with horticulturist Nan Sterman. We also telescoped this class into a one-stop class on lawn removal called “Toss the Turf.” Our popular “Ask the Designer” programs at events became a monthly workshop. Each month, we offered between six and twelve classes. We instituted “stimulus pricing” rates; two-for-one class fees for family members.

Then we took our programs on the road. We created workshops for homeowner associations, and took them to eight different off-site locations. We offered our most popular classes at Quail Botanical Gardens in Encinitas. In fact, we served over 100,000 people with our off-site programs and displays at locations like the Spring and Fall Home/ Garden Shows in Del Mar, and corporate “green days.”

Events:
The Garden has gained a reputation as an excellent site for public events, for good reason. Our beautiful exhibits were the backdrop for our three major educational events; the Spring Garden Festival, the Water Smart Gardening Festival, and the Spring Plant Sale. These events brought more than 11,000 people to the Garden. We are celebrating our 10th birthday in 2009, and we honored our founders, the Helix and Otay Water Districts and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, at a ceremony during the Spring Garden Festival.

We opened two new exhibits in 2008-2009, the Dorcas Utter Memorial Sensory Garden, and the Meadow Exhibit. The opening ceremony for the latter was also the California Friendly Landscape Contest Awards Ceremony, an important way to honor the legions of San Diegans who are changing the look and water use of our region, yard by yard. (continued, page 2)
Annual Report, continued

We were also proud to host the Cox Conserves Heroes kickoff program, SDG&E’s LED light exchange, tours and social mixers associated with two important events at Cuyamaca College; the third Water Conservation Summit, and the first annual Sustainability Conference. SDG&E’s beautiful LED lights also lit up the Garden for a special holiday event.

In addition, numerous private events were held at the garden each month, providing us with much needed rental income.

Information Sources:

As we strove to serve the needs of the public, it became clear that our web site should be upgraded to become a resource center for people seeking water smart landscaping help, as well as a source of information about the Garden and its programs. We simply couldn’t give callers the amount of information that each sought on an individual basis. To deal with the increasing demands on Garden staff and docents for help and advice, we instituted three important information resources this year; the updated web site, the “Water Smart Pipeline,” and the “Nifty 50” brochure.

The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust funded our new helpline with well-known horticulturist Nan Sterman. The “Pipeline” is open Tuesday mornings and Thursdays afternoons to callers with questions about water smart gardening. The “Nifty 50” brochure was created by a committee of nurserymen, public garden horticulturists, and a horticulturist in private practice. The group managed to agree on 50 plants that are beautiful, relatively easy to find, suitable for most small yards, easy to maintain, and, of course, water smart. The San Diego County Water Authority designed and produced this beautiful brochure.

These are the heart of what makes us an effective teaching facility. We could have the best classes in the United States, but they would never be as good as they are without the Garden as a laboratory.

We installed the new Sensory Garden and Meadow Exhibit, as mentioned earlier. The former is a lovely tribute to Dorcas Utter, the Garden’s first docent trainer, who worked at the garden every weekend, despite her visual impairment, and recognized more plants than most of us even without her sight. The Meadow Exhibit uses low water use grasses to demonstrate a very appealing alternative to turf.

A lot of smaller projects went on in 2008-2009, as well. The soil exhibit was refurbished; the kiosk watering can was turned into our Education Department (there is a notable lack of office space at the garden); the “Transition Landscape” (an intermediate step between grass and an ideal water smart landscape) was planned. New plant material was added everywhere, giving visitors more color and choices. The irrigation system was continually improved. And when water restrictions hit, we turned off all of our water features. Although our own water district, Otay, did not require it, we want to model the most stringent regulations in the area.

Public Relations:

The Garden continued to enjoy an excellent profile. In April, Sunset Magazine named us one of the “Top Ten Gardens in the West.” Many staff members were interviewed for television news programs, and our new horticulturist, Paul Redeker, was featured on a KPBS YouTube clip about watering tips that can still be seen from our home page. Cox Cablevision’s “We Stand 4” ran our public service announcements most of the year. We were pleased to hear that Otay Water District found that nearly...
half of their ratepayers who visit the Garden make changes in their landscape as a result of that visit. Similarly, a master’s thesis researched at the Garden showed that 51% of visitors said that they had made water wise landscaping changes as a result of their visit(s).

**Fundraising:**
The news in this area was mixed. While we had some successes, our sponsorship income was less than half of that of the previous year, and our “Garden Partner” corporate member program brought in just over half of what we were able to achieve in 2007-2008. There is no doubt that we felt the effects of the economic crisis.

Nonetheless, we were able to bring in $58,000 for a shade structure for our amphitheater, a project to be realized the next fiscal year. The Friends of the Garden, especially Bill Verbeck, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors were the main donors.

We were pleased that our donation box showed a 73% increase in donations, despite the recession. Of course, we were gratified by all of the generous people who contributed memberships, other donations, and in-kind services. They are listed in this report, and we thank every single one of them for their support.

**Finances:**
As mentioned, the economic downturn affected the Garden, as it did so many other organizations. As the pie charts show, we did need to take money from our reserves for operations for the first time. The good news is that we expected to use $65,000, and we used $28,823 instead. We became proactive and entered a planning process designed to promote long term financial stability in uncertain economic times.

**The Planning Process:**
We’d like to give special thanks to the San Diego County Water Authority and to consultant Lance Decker, who led us through a several month long strategic planning process, culminating in a “business enterprise plan.” The results of the plan will be the tale of the next fiscal year, but it has led us to a total structural reorganization that will, we believe, be very good for the long term health of the Garden. In 2011, the Friends of the Water Conservation Garden will have contracted with the Joint Powers Authority to govern and operate the Garden. This arrangement is designed to provide the Garden with the stability of water agency funding with the flexibility and fundraising abilities of a traditional nonprofit board. The year 2010 will be a major transition year, as the Garden builds a new fundraising board, hires a development director, and puts together the agreement between the Joint Powers Authority and the Friends of the Garden. The Garden is well known as a water conservation leader; with this step, we are again providing leadership by coming up with a hybrid operation that should bring us the best of both worlds – that of the public water agencies and the private sector.

**People in the Garden:**
Everything else palls in importance next to our wonderful staff, docents, volunteers, Friends Board, and Joint Powers Authority Board.

As with our donors, fortunately there are too many people to list here. They are listed elsewhere in this report. In 2008-2009, we welcomed Paul Redeker as our new Horticulture and Facilities Manager, and Pam Meisner, “Ms. Smarty Plants,” as our new Program Assistant.

The JPA Board underwent major changes in 2008-2009. We were pleased to welcome the following new members: Jose Lopez as the representative from the Otay Water District; James Bowersox as the representative and Yen Tu as the alternate from the San Diego County Water Authority; Yen Tu as the representative from the City of San Diego; Maria Rubalcaba as the representative and Mark Rogers as the alternate from the Sweetwater Authority; and Kathleen Coates-Hedberg as the alternate from the Helix Water District.

Our Friends Group stood us in good stead, with 9 members; founding Board President Nora Jaeschke handed over the gavel to Vice President Michael Grisdale in May. We lost Nora in August of 2009, and it was a difficult loss indeed, but her memory lives on at the Garden, and we will try to honor her memory by becoming the best facility for conservation education that we can possibly be.

Finally, our wonderful docents and volunteers reported 9054 hours of service this year, an amount very likely underreported.

The Water Conservation Garden is a place, but it is also a collection of dedicated people who are using their talents, creativity, joy, and humor to change the culture of water use in this region. Those of us in the “inner circle” feel very fortunate to be able to do such important work with such fine people. We also feel very, very fortunate to have the support of all of the members, donors, and visitors who appreciate the mission of this garden.
2008-2009 Donors

2008 Fall Festival
Black & Veatch

Spring Garden Festival 2009
Barrett Engineered Pumps
Black & Veatch
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
MWH
R.B.F. Consulting
Rainbird
William A. Steen & Associates

Garden Partners
American Water-Western Region
Fallbrook Public Utility District
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Miramar Wholesale Nursery
Pardee Homes
Poseidon Resources
Ramona Municipal Water District
San Diego Gas & Electric

Unrestricted Donations
Jim Finnerty
Friends of the Water Conservation Garden
Jennifer Erwin/REI Matching
Miscellaneous Donors
New Way Landscape & Tree Service
Rancho San Diego Rotary
Westward Expos

In Kind Donations
Best, Best & Krieger
Bill and Norma Verbeck
Helen Cage
Joan Forbes
Greenlee Nursery, Inc.
Lowe’s
McGrath, Kay & Vince
Miramar Wholesale Nurseries
Mountain States Wholesale Nursery
RCP Block
Rancho Jojoba Nursery
Village Nurseries

Annual Campaign 2008
Anonymous
Sue Ellen Benson
Alan L. & Francis E. Cornell
Mary Eberhardt & Phil Hastings
Joan Forbes
Michael & Dinah Grisdale
Marilyn & Bud Hamilton
Meredith & Bob Hattrup
Joanna Ihnatowicz
Nora Jaeschke
Patty Mogavero
Chuck & Lynda Muse
Susan & Richard Namba
Darla & Lawrence O’Leary
Pacific Green Landscape
William & Bessie Pocklington
Robert Brown Landscape
Irrigation
Jan & Paul Tubiolo
William & Norma Verbeck
Richard Wright

Pipeline Fund
Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust

Amphitheater Fund
Friends of the Water Conservation Garden, including Bill and Norma Verbeck and the Linnie Cooper Foundation
San Diego County Board of Supervisors

Sustaining Members
Doug & Betsy Buckner
Mary Eberhardt & Phil Hastings
Keith & Denise Lewinger
Brad Monroe
Richard & Maureen Smith
Vic & Judy Vacquier
Mark & Anne Weston
Rua & Linda Petty
Katherine Nowak

Patron Members
Warren & Virginia Buckner
Marilyn & Bud Hamilton
Joanna Ihnatowicz
Fern Steiner
Richard Wright

Benefactor Members
John & Vickie Driver
Nora Jaeschke
San Diego Horticultural Society

Friends of the Water Conservation Garden Board
Mike Grisdale, President
Nora Jaeschke, Past President
Meredith Hattrup, Secretary/Treasurer
Marty Eberhardt, Vice President
Vickie Driver, Vice President
Jan Tubiolo, Vice President
Warren Buckner
Helen McBrady
Cynthia Cramer
Barbara French-Lee
Bill Verbeck
Cheryl Minshew

The Garden thanks all of its members!

The Verbeck Shuttle, donated by Bill and Norma Verbeck, transports visitors around the Garden
In Memory of Nora Jaeschke
Marty Eberhardt

The Garden would like to dedicate this annual report to the memory of Nora Jaeschke. We lost Nora on August 26, 2009. She was the Founding President of Friends of the Water Conservation Garden, as well as a dear friend and mentor to many of us at the Garden. At Nora’s Celebration of Life held at the Garden, long-time Garden supporter Warren Buckner said of Nora, “If you met her, you liked her. If you got to know her, you loved her.”

Nora started what became the largest landscape maintenance company in San Diego by hiring three workers who were out of a job. She showed us all that keen business instincts can be combined with a deep sense of concern for our fellow humans. She also shared with us her incredible joie de vivre. “Fabulous” was Nora’s favorite word. We hereby celebrate a fabulous woman.

Docents & Volunteers
Ellie Aitken
Christine Alexander
Cheryl Angel
Maggie Barnett
Mryna Bateman
Thom Bates
Annette Baughman
Sue Bell
Sue Ellen Benson
Carol Brown
Helen Cage
Helen Cedeno
Sue Chambers
Vivian Charvat
Margo Clements
Lydia Combs
Jan Cousins
Linda Craddock
Cynthia Cramer
Claudia Dixon
Rosalie Dosik
Ellen Downing
Whitney Duenez
Blanche Duncan
Beverly Elliott
Tony Embrey
Zita Emerson
Jan Erwin
Marissa Evans
Leslie Filippi
Joan Forbes
Barbara French-Lee
Anita Galves
Pauline Garcia
Debby Hamann
Marilyn Hamilton
Midge Harder
Cynthia Harmer
Meredith Hattrup
Margaret Hollins
Joanna Ihnatowicz
Sherry Johnson
Mike Kauffman
Sharon Kind
John Kind
Sue King
Diane Krell-Bates
Sloane Laird
Mindi Lassman
Anne Mayer
Kris McCollough
Kay McGrath
Vince McGrath
Sylvia McKenzie
Sara Mousavi
Angie Murillo
Fran Nalu
Janna Owens
Larry Pachuta
Maria Paydar
Brien Prescott
Margaret Priske
Pat Richter
Mark Robertson
Nancy Rollins
Leah Rottke
Juliet Salsboto
Jean Scherschel
Katy Schwartz
Joan Singer
Gini Spencer
Linda Spinali
Jan Spooner
Carolyn Steuermann
Carol Stevens
Marty Sullivan
Joy Tapscott
Jan Tubiolo
Paul Tubiolo
Wendy vandenHelder
Jane Venghaus
Connie Via
Mimie Voth
Bill Waldrop
Joy Walsh
Weinberg Weinberg
Larry Wiens
Richard Wright

Docent Board
Cynthia Harmer, President
Larry Wiens, Vice President
Sloane Laird, Secretary
FRIENDS OF THE GARDEN
MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

Please make checks payable to the Friends of the Water Conservation Garden and send your enrollment with payment to The Water Conservation Garden, 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, CA 92019. You can also join at www.thegarden.org. For more information, call 619-660-0614 x10.

I would like to register at the level indicated:

- Student $20
- Basic $40
- Supporting $60
- Sustaining $120
- Patron $250
- Benefactor $500
- Conservationist $1000

- I would like to support the Garden with an additional donation of $_________.
- I am interested in becoming a Docent or Volunteer

Our Mission Statement:

“Promoting water conservation in the southern California landscape through excellent exhibits and programs that educate and inspire the public.”

Open 7 days a week from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Docent Tours; Sat. 10:30 am and Sun. 1:30pm.
Summer Hours: Tuesday-Sunday 9:00am to 4:00pm, Wednesday 9:00am to 7:00pm.