Water Smart Gardening Festival
By Elizabeth Ramos

The Garden’s annual California-Friendly Gardening Festival has a new name, and a new date. The Water Smart Gardening Festival will be held on Saturday, November 14, 2009 from 9am-3pm.

Despite the name change, you will continue to enjoy the same fabulous activities at this family-friendly event. For starters, a bounty of water smart plants will be on sale to help residents save water in the landscape, a necessary response to our arid region and the statewide water shortage. These plants will love being planted in our mild fall climate, establishing strong root systems that will allow them to put on their best show in the spring.

A lineup of speakers at the 2009 event will include Diana Lindsay, parabotanist for the San Diego Natural History Museum and author of Anza-Borrego A to Z: People, Places, and Things. Her presentation, entitled Indian Use of Local Desert Plants, includes a demonstration of how Native Americans prepared and used local plants to thrive in their desert communities, and a look at how Ghost Mountain homesteader Marshal South and his family survived for 17 years in what is now Anza-Borrego Desert State Park by adopting some of these plant practices.

Visitors with questions about water smart landscape design, plant care, composting, and other gardening mysteries will find answers when they “Ask the Experts”, a favorite feature of this annual event. Landscape designers will offer private, 20-minute consultations about home landscapes; Master Composters will reveal how easy it is to turn garden waste into gardener’s gold; and Master Gardeners will help you with whatever “bugs” your garden. Appointments for landscape design consultations should be made in advance by calling 619-660-0614 x10.

Education and entertainment for the younger set will be provided by Ms. Smarty Plants, who will explore how kids can care for mother Earth in the fun and engaging “Plantastic Show”. Throughout the day, kids can get their faces painted for free and make garden-inspired crafts at the children’s activity booth sponsored by local water agencies.

We look forward to seeing you and your family at the Water Smart Gardening Festival, where admission is free, and so is the ample parking. Please check our website, www.thegarden.org, for more program details as the Festival approaches.
Executive Director’s Report
by Marty Eberhardt

With the advent of a new fiscal year, our regular newsletter will now only be available online. This will help save trees, as well as money. However, we will continue to mail the classes and events calendar (unless you let us know you would prefer to access that online as well), as it is a handy reference. You’ll see that we have been busy scheduling classes to help you deal with the water crisis.

What a year this has been...and we’re barely halfway through it as I write. Throughout the spring, we heard the litany of reasons why water restrictions might be inevitable. By July 1, almost all of our local water districts had gone to mandatory water restrictions. And people flooded into the Garden....we had nearly 52,000 visitors last fiscal year. Classes and workshops like “A New California Garden” and “Ask the Designer” were filled to capacity. Flustered visitors wandered in, completely at a loss about how to start changing their landscapes. Our docents gave them tours and our teachers gave them tips. They looked at our garden and realized that maybe this drought situation was something they could work with, even use to create something beautiful.

Water rates will be going up this fall. We expect a greater influx of visitors as the weather cools and as water bills arrive in the mail. The Garden is here for you, and so is our web site, www.thegarden.org. Pick out the water smart plants you love while visiting our grounds, take a class, and don’t miss the fall festival. And take heart in knowing that changing your landscape can result in less maintenance, less cost, and a home or business to be proud of. One of our class titles says it all: “Toss the Turf...Less Grass, More Water, More Fun!”

Ms. Smarty-Plants Takes the Show on the Road

“MULCH! It is the most important thing to do when you plant! Tell your parents to FIX THE SPRINKLERS! You kids are going to change the world because we adults are just too old! You are going to change the world with your own two hands!”

Anyone who has visited the Garden during a school tour has heard these words from our own zany and exuberant Ms. Smarty-Plants. She educates children from all parts of San Diego County on our popular school tours. Letters we receive from these children make it clear our education program is working:

“Thank you for teaching us how to save water! I will not water my sidewalk. I will always remember.”

“Now I will take a shower for only 5 minutes!”

“I will never forget to put mulch around my plants!”

Children are the pipeline to their parents, so educating kids really pays off. Beginning this fall, Ms. Smarty-Plants will be presenting assembly programs at schools all over the County. In the current economic climate, bus transportation for field trips is difficult for many schools. The Garden’s solution is to take the program to the children.

The program will be aligned with California state standards and filled with entertaining water conservation information, enriched by Ms. Smarty-Plants’ special dose of magic. At the end of the assembly, children learn a song in American Sign Language about how they can change the world.

Assembly programs are 45 minutes long and cost $350.00 for the first assembly, and $75.00 for each additional presentation on the same day at the same site. For more information, or to reserve a visit from Ms. Smarty-Plants, contact her alter-ego Pam Meisner at 619-660-0614 x16.
Focus on a Species:
Moss Verbena: Verbena tenuisecta
by Paul Redeker

Moss Verbena. Sometimes called Verbena pulchella or Glandularia pulchella, this South American native is a drought-tolerant herbaceous ground cover that grows as a perennial in warm regions and as an annual in colder areas. It reaches a height of about 8 inches tall in full sun, and spreads its lacy, fine textured foliage to around 4 feet in width. Blooming from spring to summer, the tiny compound flowers of this Verbena come in hues of purple, plum, and white. It prefers a fast-draining soil but is very adaptable and can be propagated by terminal cuttings or seed.

Moss Verbena can be found at the Water Conservation Garden in several places. It has persisted with a minimal amount of attention in the topiary exhibit where we give it a hand watering every couple of weeks. It definitely shows its appreciation there by rejuvenating its dark green foliage and displaying a new colorful show of flowers. A second grouping of the white variety can be found near the entrance of the garden. It only seemed right to transplant some of those plants to the white garden, where they have taken the transfer well. Finally, this summer, some new verbena plants have voluntarily seeded themselves into the wildflower exhibit where we have helped them flourish into brilliant purple bands of color.

If you decide you would like to incorporate Moss Verbena into your garden or home containers, check the label to make sure you are buying Moss Verbena. Verbena x hybrida, which bloom in brilliant colors of red, purple, pink, and white, are common in nurseries but they are not drought tolerant.

Docent Corner:
Joan Forbes
by Marty Eberhardt

The first time Joan Forbes visited the Garden, she decided she would volunteer here when she retired. The second time she came, she brought us a $500 check, “because water’s an issue and I want to put my money where my mouth is,” she said, and because she wanted her name on a commemorative brick in the Garden plaza. She joined the docent class in 2006, and quickly became indispensable.

Joan is a near-native, coming to San Diego when she was three, and graduating from Mission Bay High School and SDSU. She worked for the City of San Diego for forty years as an arts and crafts specialist, a sign maker, a carpentry apprentice and finally a journeyman carpenter. She has brought several other retired City employees into the Garden fold; many of them teach Kids’ Camp, our delightful summer program that uses Joan’s well-honed arts and crafts skills. Joan is also one of the affectionately termed “Succulent Ladies” who make lovely succulent wreaths to sell, and she handles cash at plant sales. Her group, headed by docent Barbara French-Lee, brings several thousand dollars to the Garden’s operating budget each year.

Joan says that since coming to the Garden, she has redone her front yard, and is starting on the back yard. She says “I want to continue coming here and having fun...and I want to get more of those bricks!”
Friends of the Garden
by Mike Grisdale

In this, my first letter to you as your new President, my most important priority is to express my appreciation to all of the active supporters of the Friends and the Garden. You are our most valuable asset. Thank you for all you do!

The last few months have been busy ones for the Friends, as we have been going through a new strategic planning process supported and assisted by the San Diego County Water Authority and its members. The process will not be completed until this fall, so it is too soon to determine what the final recommendations and plans will be. However, it is fair to say they will have a significant impact on the future of both the Friends and the Garden.

Here’s what our planning process has confirmed so far:

- The current Friends and Garden missions are right on target and increasingly relevant to today’s environment and economy;
- The Garden’s increasingly popular events, programs, and services are more and more vital as people become more willing to change behavior in order to sustain San Diego’s quality of life;
- Regional, national, and international recognition and appreciation of the Garden is fast-growing;
- Volunteers are valuable assets and more important than ever for Friends and Garden success;
- It is increasingly difficult to secure sustained individual and corporate funding for the Friends and the Garden in today’s economy;
- Current Friends and Garden organization and funding structures could benefit from simplification and streamlining.

However we move forward from here, it is important for all of us to remember that (a) the Friends and the Garden have far exceeded expectations over the past ten years thanks in large part to support from people like you and outstanding dedicated staff, docents, and volunteers; (b) the Friends’ and the Garden’s unique missions, programs, and services are more vital than ever to sustain our San Diego and regional Southern California quality of life in our increasingly water-hungry and critical environment.

Thank you for making all this possible! With your continuing help we’re confident we can do even better.

New Members
April - June 2009

Basic
Lisa Akens
Christina Barber
Jeanne Barkett
Alexis Barry
Sarah Brumfield
Joseph Camello
Peggy and Bob Chambers
Bonnie Cosgrove
Dawn Davis
Ana De Vedia
Patricia Fishtein
Mary Gyselbrecht
Pam Hamman
Donna Hinderle
Sherry M. Hughes
Edward Kane
Steve Kleinstuber
David Lawrence
Suzy Mahan
Mike Miller
Julie R. Moore
Barbarann Parker
Barbara Plute
Simeon Retz
Kimberly Pidgeon &
Robert Riley

Basic, cont.
Karen Skullerud
Mary Thornton Basic
Steve Thurston
Coral McFarland Thuet
Beatriz Tuyay
Robbie Walters
Saundra Wennhold
Robin Whiffen
Marti Wilmot

Student
Britta Kuhlow
Reed Martin

Supporting
San Carlos Garden Club
Donna & Jim Bowersox
Anthony Carr
Tricia Daley
Victor & Janice DeWitt
Kathleen Flores
Gloria Lasoff
Lee Lawless
Lorraine Schmidt
Mica Togami
Karen Zachary

The Garden class calendar is now printed separately. Become a Member to get a copy in your mailbox, or get it online at www.thegarden.org/calendar. You can also come by the Garden for a copy!
The Garden celebrates 10 Years of Water Conservation!

County Supervisor Dianne Jacob serves cake the the Garden’s 10th Birthday Party

A butterfly visits the Pride of Madeira, Echium candicans

Butterfly Bush, Buddleja alternifolia

Arroyo Lupine, Lupinus succulentus

Grevillea ‘Superb’

Scarlet Flax, Linum ‘Rubrum’

Maggie Piatt Walton, First Place winner of the 2009 Landscape Contest, Do-It-Yourself Category

Visitors enjoy the Dorcas Utter Memorial Sensory Garden