Curator’s Corner
Dear Friends of the Garden,

Few other miracles of nature complement the delicate and ephemeral beauty of flowers as do butterflies. Here at the Vallarta Botanical Garden, October is our peak month for butterfly observation and enjoyment and is when we find them in greater abundance and diversity than any other time of the year. This magical moment at the tail end of the rainy season is when our forests are still lush and humid yet without the threat of torrential rains upon fragile butterfly wings.

We hope you make it up here to take in this spectacle firsthand. From the ubiquitous monarchs and swallowtails to strictly tropical inhabitants with their often bizarre combinations of color and patterns, there is no shortage of these marvelous jewels of the insect world flitting across the landscape. A personal favorite are the more seldom seen giant white morpho “guardian angel” butterflies that seem to effortlessly float through the forests.

Maybe you’ll be inspired to outfit your own home garden into a butterfly paradise. If so, think about planting an attractive assortment of color and a constant new crop of flowering plants. Another helpful pointer is to install butterfly “puddlers” – shallowly buried containers (plastic ones are the least expensive and most durable) filled with sand that is kept damp. Butterflies frequent these much more than bird feeders, which often attract their most dangerous of avian predators. Whenever we take the time to care for nature, the rewards that come back to us are always much greater than the energies we expend.

Warmest regards from the Garden,
Bob Price, Founder and Curator, VBG
Gentleness, self-sacrifice and generosity are the exclusive possession of no one race or religion.
– Mahatma Gandhi
The Vallarta Botanical Garden is already known as a place of calm, solace, and healing of body, mind and soul. Now its leaders have laid plans to set aside a special sanctum within the garden’s grounds to provide a secluded setting for undisturbed contemplation, meditation or prayer – a place in which the seeds for international peace can be sown and cultivated – an International Peace Garden.

Like never before, the future of our world and its inhabitants depends on people coming together to work out peaceful solutions for our collective challenges. We can all play a part in this and shape the world we live in. One way towards accomplishing this is to set aside places dedicated for such actions. Outdoor spaces filled with natural beauty are especially appropriate as these landscapes restore the soul and create the perfect settings for purposeful reflection towards positive change.

The Vallarta Botanical Garden’s new International Peace Garden will adorn the slope that rises toward the entrance to the recently completed multi-faith chapel, Nuestra Señora del Jardín (Our Lady of the Garden). It will feature plants of the Mediterranean and the Holy Land along with Mexican wildflowers. The intention is to use plants to acknowledge the geographical region that gave birth to several of the leading world religions and to grow these together in harmony with each other and with Mexico’s lovely native species as well.
A combination of shade and sun will make the International Peace Garden an inviting usable space throughout the year for activities from educational programming and family enjoyment to quiet meditation. Access ramps are included for persons with disabilities and tiered benches may allow the space to later be used as theater seating for open-air concerts and performances. It will be a welcoming place for people of all backgrounds to come together in harmony with nature and focus on our collective power to make this world a better place.

The International Peace Garden Foundation, in participation with the mayors of Puerto Vallarta and Cabo Corrientes, just announced the designation of this project as Mexico’s official International Peace Garden and a ceremony is scheduled to bestow this special status on February 16, 2017. While this designation is certain to bring great notoriety to the Garden and the Puerto Vallarta region as a welcoming destination dedicated to international peace and friendship, it brings no direct funding. The Vallarta Botanical Garden’s goal is to raise a minimum of $1,100,000 MXN. We’ve still got a long way to go in funding this project, but the vision can stay strong through your support!
Yes, I’d like to help support the Vallarta Botanical Garden build our new International Peace Garden!

☐ Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift.

or

☐ I made my gift by credit card payment on the Garden’s website www.vbgardens.org.

or

I pledge to send my tax-deductible gift prior to the close of fundraising for this project (November 1, 2016) in the amount of:

☐ $1,000 MXN  ☐ $2,500 MXN  ☐ $5,000 MXN  ☐ $10,000 MXN

☐ $50,000 MXN  ☐ $100,000 MXN  ☐ Other ____________________

☐ $2,000,000 MXN

Full underwriting of the project and initiation of an endowment for its legacy. The gift of full underwriting of the International Peace Garden is eligible for recognition with a permanent named dedication plaque in the International Peace Garden and special recognition in the garden’s official dedication ceremony on February 16, 2017 (2 - 4 pm).

Please see back page of The Leaflet for tax-deductible giving options or write to info@vbgardens.org with any questions.

Give Every Month – Become a Garden “GEM”

Dividing your contributions to the Vallarta Botanical Garden into monthly payments can help you better budget your annual giving and allows us a dependable monthly income to carry the Garden through the slower times of the year. A new Give Every Month “GEM” page is now up on the Garden’s website www.vbgardens.org for you to begin this kind of contribution today.

Commemorative Cantera Benches

Would you like to honor or memorialize someone with a permanent cantera bench at the Vallarta Botanical Garden? Benches are finished with beautiful hand-painted ceramic tiles. We can help you create a custom design with text and images of your choice. Prices are at $7,000 USD for a Banca Real (Regal Bench) and $5,000 USD for a Banca Distintiva (Distinctive Bench). Dividing this up into payments over the course of three years is a commitment of only $194 or $139 USD per month. These gifts qualify for tax deductible contributions in Mexico, the US, and Canada. Interested? Great! Please visit our website or call 322 223 6182 and ask to speak to the Garden’s Executive Director, Neil Gerlowski or Membership Coordinator, Michaela Flores.

Your Legacy Lives on at the VBG

Including the Vallarta Botanical Garden in your wills, trusts, and estate planning is an investment in the long-term viability of this important natural sanctuary for Puerto Vallarta and the exquisite flora of Mexico and world tropics. A member of the Garden’s Legacy Committee would be happy to talk to you about the best options for optimizing your philanthropic potential and further blessing a community. Please write to info@vbgardens.org.
Beautiful Gifts From a Dedicated Team
By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Tucked away in the Institute of Biology of the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) is a laboratory staffed by a dedicated team of miracle workers. Week after week they labor away at reproducing vast reserves of some of the most threatened of Mexican plants. Orchids, cactus, crasulaceas, and agaves are just a few of the most prominently represented plant families within their facilities. But they don’t just grow these plants; staff at the UNAM’s botanical garden display these for their tens of thousands of annual visitors to study and enjoy. Many of the plants also go to the UNAM’s unique plant adoption program that is converting thousands of citizens into conscientious stewards of their nation’s natural resources.

Recently, the Vallarta Botanical Garden contacted orchid growers throughout the country in search of Stanhopea tigrina, one of the species especially requested by a natural history unit of the British Broadcast Company (BBC) for their filming on our grounds of orchids and orchid bees. Our friends from the UNAM were the only ones from our contacts who had plants on hand at the time of the request and very generously gave us several. While most of those we received will require years of development before they first flower, their contribution to our collection was most gratefully accepted. We are very appreciative of their spirit of collaboration and generosity. With partners like our friends at the UNAM, our collective power to conserve Mexico’s rich, yet often fragile resources becomes much greater than if we chose to try working at it alone.
Stanhopea tigrina

Orchid of the Month

*Stanhopea tigrina* Bateman ex Lindl.

By Alejandra Flores Argüelles

*Stanhopea tigrina* is, without a doubt, an example of the most extraordinary of orchids, with intense colors, giant size, powerful fragrance and an incredible ability to attract orchid lovers. It’s known colloquially as *toritos* (little bulls—Spanish), *vaquitas* (little cows—Spanish), or *coatzontecomaxóchitl* (flower in the form of a serpent head—Nahuatl). Additionally, it forms part of the logo of the *Asociación Mexicana de Orquideología, A.C.* (Mexican Society of Orchid Study, Civil Association).

This orchid is endemic to Mexico along the eastern Sierra Madres from Tamaulipas to Chiapas. It inhabits the cloud forests of these mountains growing from trees or rocks and flowering from July through August. It produces up to two flowers as large as 18 cm in diameter which are fleshy and colored in brilliant yellow and deep purple tones and pollinated by Euglosine bees.

Deforestation and illegal commercial activities have caused this plant to be categorized by the Mexican federal government as threatened (NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010). However, there are programs to propagate this plant *in vitro* for their conservation. The Vallarta Botanical Garden is proud to offer several examples within its collection, most of which were kindly donated by the tissue culture laboratory of the biological institute within Mexico’s national autonomous university (*Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México* or UNAM).
One of the most iconic birds of the Vallarta region, and the neotropics, for that matter, is the aptly-named Groove-billed Ani, though most people overlook them. It’s what I refer to as the “bad rap for black birds syndrome,” where just because they lack flashy colors, some birds, including this one, are often ignored, and even disparaged, by us humans. Well, maybe we humans should look again! For one thing, Anis aren’t even black. When lighting conditions are advantageous, especially in filtered overcast light, their hackled feathering can be strikingly iridescent, with a bluish sheen.
Anis are very social cuckoos, and far from boring. Their enormous, grooved bills are especially adapted to extract an amazingly diverse diet from their environment. They will devour just about anything they can overpower, especially insects, but will depredate a diverse lineup of prey, ranging from ants to snakes to frogs to katydids, and even blood-engorged ticks, which they pick off of cattle and other ungulates. For this very reason their close relative, the Smooth-billed Ani, was introduced into Ecuador’s Islas Galapagos.

Though they may superficially resemble grackles in size and shape, their enormous, grooved bills and zygodactylous feet (where two toes point forward and two backward) give their cuckoo-centric lineage away. Only parrots, woodpeckers, cuckoos, and some owls have zygodactyl feet, an adaptation to an arboreal (tree-dwelling) lifestyle, though unlike most cuckoos, anis are quite terrestrial in their habits. Roadrunners are the only other notable exception.

Some cuckoos are brood parasitic—especially in the eastern hemisphere—meaning they lay their eggs in other birds’ nests, and the host raises the young. Somehow the resultant progeny know they are cuckoos, and the life cycle repeats itself. Our Anis however have absolutely no interest in brood parasitism. Instead, they take the opposite tack, where the whole flock—which may consist of up to five pairs—makes one nest, places all their eggs in it, and participates in incubation and tending of the young. Even the males take part in this unique reproductive strategy known as “Joint nesting plural breeding.” Only the two other ani species (the aforementioned Smooth-billed and Greater) along with the Guira Cuckoo of South America, utilize this reproductive strategy; “plural” because two or more females may be involved, and “joint” because they all lay their eggs in one basket, so to speak!

Endearingly, an entire flock of anis may even snuggle up and sleep together. On cooler mornings or after a rain, they can be seen tightly lined up on a single limb, all sunning themselves—wings fully spread—to absorb the sun’s warming rays, and/or to irradiate pesky ectoparasites, such as mites and lice, etc.

Some estimates put the population of Groove-billed Anis at more than two million birds, and they range from South America to the southwestern United States. Around 40% of the population occurs in Mexico alone, though only 4% ranges across the border into the southwest United States, primarily in south Texas during the warmer months, where they are local, usually uncommon and quite seasonal, at best.

They are only occasional visitors to the Vallarta Botanical Garden, probably because there is so much intact natural habitat, which is not their first preference! Nearby El Tuito and Puerto Vallarta, however, play host to numerous Groove-billed Anis, much to the delight of visiting birders, where these primitive-looking birds can be seen comically frolicking in a wide variety of perturbed habitats, ranging from scrubby roadsides, to the edges of golf courses, cattle pastures, and even suburban backyards, where their comical antics will entertain the observant watcher!

Would you like to make birding history in Puerto Vallarta and the Banderas Bay?

The Vallarta Botanical Garden is just one of dozens of amazing local birding hotspots within the count circle of the annual Puerto Vallarta / Bahía de Banderas Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This project, organized by the Audubon Society, is the longest running and most important citizen science project in the world. Now is not too early to schedule your participation for the 2016 Christmas Bird Count scheduled for December 17th. Just beforehand, on December 10th, the VBG will hold their Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico for participants to prepare for their adventures in scouting and observations the following week.

Over 200 species have been counted within the Puerto Vallarta CBC in past events, but over 100 additional species are documented to occur at this time within our region. That means participants are so far only documenting about two-thirds of the avian diversity that abounds during the day of the count. Additional prepared participants and a better coordination of efforts could result in placing Puerto Vallarta as a top contender for the number one CBC circle in North America. These efforts will not only boost the ecotourism appeal of Puerto Vallarta, but also serve to better document and protect our rich natural biodiversity. Interested? Please write to birdingadventures@mac.com or educadorambiental@vbgardens.org for more information.
The species *Magnolia rzedowskiana* (Magnoliaceae), known commonly as *Eloxóchitl* (corn flower) or *flor de mayo* (May flower), is endemic to the mountain cloud forests of Mexico’s Sierra Madre Oriental. At the present, its populations are distributed in a discontinuous fashion (isolated) and fragmented in various localities within the states of Hidalgo, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí and Veracruz. Inhabitants of towns surrounding the cloud forests in Hidalgo appreciate the great size and beauty of the flowers of this tree species with which they prepare infusions which are useful in traditional medicine for treating cardiac problems or calming the nerves. Due to human activities and the fragmentation and reduction of their habitat the scarce wild populations of *M. rzedowskiana* are rapidly disappearing, and in some places the only existing plants are cultivated individuals. It is noteworthy that this species was described in 2015, so there is little information about their phenology, population structure and regeneration capacity. In accordance with the criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the species should be included in the category of “critically endangered.” Because of this, the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo is developing lines of research to better understand their biological characteristics.

We were happy to meet the request of the Vallarta Botanical Garden’s director, Neil Gerlowski, to receive a few plants that we have cultivated from seeds collected in the wild by people from the communities. During the recent 20th Congress of Mexican Botany in Mexico city we were able to meet with Mr. Gerlowski and hand off four small plants that we hope will serve as ambassadors of *M. rzedowskiana* in the Vallarta Region and can help provide *ex-situ* collection resources for potential future restoration of wild populations in Hidalgo and our surrounding states.
Tai Chi at the Vallarta Botanical Garden

While here helping at the Garden as a volunteer, recently retired past president of the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden, Greg Nace, has offered to teach Tai Chi classes. Greg has been studying this form of meditative movement for forty years. His teachers have included respected Masters Dee Chao and David Chin.

Tai Chi Ch’uan is a martial art, meditative practice and a physical exercise to improve health, balance and wellness. It strengthens and conditions tendons, ligaments and muscles and improves body awareness to make it less prone to falls or injuries. The practice of Tai Chi focuses the mind, reduces stress, and increases stamina.

Course fee: $1,400 MXN
Course fee with member discount: $1,000 MXN
For a twice a week, four week series:

October - November 2016

We start at 8 am at the Garden!

These hour-long sessions of Tai Chi will be introducing the Guang P’ing form. This form consists of 64 postures introduced into the west by Sifu Kou Lien-Ying in the early 1960’s. This style of Tai Chi emphasizes the balance of slow and quick with hard and soft movements to increase power, flexibility, health and fitness. During the four-weeks, students will learn the first 16 postures to establish a foundation and basis for continued independent practice.
Complex biogeographical history

When the landmasses of North and South America first made contact roughly 3 million years ago, and became joined by the Isthmus of Panama, a transition zone with a rich mixture of fauna and flora originated. This unique zone is a belt stretching from coast to coast over today’s Mexico. Banderas Bay is lying on the belt’s western extreme.

Great variety of habitats

The region’s diverse geography inevitably translates into a great variety of habitats. These are home to an astonishing number of plant and animal species.

High level of endemism

A large portion of local species of animals and plants are endemic, not to be found anywhere else on the planet.

Every day presence of iconic animal species

Any observant resident or traveller can spot many iconic wild animals around the bay area. Magnificent frigatebirds, Brown pelicans, Bottlenose dolphins and Green macaws are local residents. Humpback whales and Olive Ridley sea turtles visit during their annual migrations. Look around you and you will spot dozens more species every day.

This mobile app is based on the content, scope and photographs of your favorite local printed Field Guide - the VIVA NATURA.

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Your mobile outdoor companion!
Itinerant Art Exhibition — Birds and Their Habitats

Our feathered friends capture the imagination like few other animals on the planet. As beautiful as they are to see silhouetted against the sky, they’re even more fascinating to understand in the context of their natural environment where their services to our forests in pollination and seed dispersal are essential to maintaining a healthy balance of plant diversity.

Seeing these birds through the eyes of artists can help us appreciate them even more. Their forms, textures, colors, and habits can be frozen in film and canvas to allow for the kind of focus not possible in fleeting glimpses as they flutter through branches and bushes in the wild woods.

On September 22nd we celebrated a very well received opening of the exhibit at the Peter Gray Art Museum of the University of Guadalajara’s local “CUC” campus. Artists, organizers, supporters, university students, and the general public were all delighted with an opportunity to enjoy art, socialize, and learn about the fascinating birdlife of Western Mexico. If you haven’t yet had a chance to see these works of art firsthand, there’s still time to catch it either at the university’s museum or one of the other scheduled locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Itinerant Art Exhibition — Birds and Their Habitats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Host</strong></td>
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<td>Peter Gray Art Museum / UDG CUC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galerías Vallarta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vallarta Botanical Garden</td>
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<td>Puerto Vallarta’s City Hall</td>
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VBG Education & Volunteer Program

Garden volunteers where a crucial part of making the “Birds and Their Habitats” art exhibition into a reality. We’d like to especially thank volunteers Mansur Kiadeh and Nancy Holland with their help in coordinating printing and delivering art to the Peter Gray Art Museum where Héctor Díaz Santos and his team did a wonderful job installing it.

The VBG also welcomes new volunteers Marie Garcia and Efrain Vázquez to the team. Please introduce yourself to these new faces upon your next visit to the Garden.

Reminders:

The Vallarta Botanical Garden is pleased to provide complementary entry for educational programs for school groups with advanced reservations. Currently, these are only offered on Wednesdays. Requests for reservations may be delivered by email to educadorambiental@vbgardens.org and should be sent at least five days prior to the requested date of visitation. Requests for reservations are granted on a first come, first served basis and are subject to scheduling restrictions.

1 pm tours are offered daily from December through March and otherwise only when volunteers are available.
**Vallarta Botanical Garden’s Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td><strong>Peak Butterfly Season</strong> – Enjoy the month of the greatest butterfly abundance and variety (see page 1).</td>
<td>Included with entry</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Opening of the Art Exhibit, “Birds and Their Habitats” at Galerías Vallarta</strong> – See page 14 for more details.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td><strong>Thanksgiving (US)</strong> – Celebrate an American tradition in a tropical paradise. A special Thanksgiving Dinner is served from 11 am until 6 pm. Reservations are recommended but not required.</td>
<td>To be announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td><strong>Opening of the Art Exhibit, “Birds and Their Habitats” in the Vallarta Botanical Garden</strong> – See page 14 for more details.</td>
<td>Included with entry</td>
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*Some activities subject to change. The most current calendar, often with links to further event information, can be viewed at [www.vbgardens.org/calendar](http://www.vbgardens.org/calendar).*

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**Garden Hours**
- **Open 7 days/wk**
- **Open 6 days/wk**
- **Early “Bird” Opening**
- **Daily Guided Tour**

**9 am – 6 pm**
- for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March (except Christmas & New Year’s Day)
- 8 am every Thursday (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)
- 1 pm (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)
Occasionally I’ll hear from a visitor about loving how no one can reach them by cell or email when they travel to the Garden. Most people though just keep on asking, “When are you going to have wifi?!” I’m happy to announce that we finally have high speed and fairly reliable internet. It’s part of a big communication package that we took on in anticipation of our busiest winter season ever. It was a major infrastructure investment for us of over $200,000 pesos ($10,000 USD) and we still have nearly $80,000 pesos ($4,000 USD) left in equipment purchases, installations, and set up fees to achieve our full communications goal. The end result will be enough internet bandwidth to share with all of our garden visitors along with four phone lines to best serve our members, visitors, and the community. We can really use the extra help at a time of big expenses and few visitors, so please chip in if you can with your tax-deductible gift (Mexico, USA, Canada). It’s a great way to stay connected with the Garden and allow us to best stay connected with you. Ask for your wifi password upon your next visit!

Members: please always wear your membership card when visiting the Garden. This helps our staff and volunteers recognize you as members and offer valuable discounts on your Garden purchases and other important benefits.
We would like to acknowledge and thank the following supporters:

**BENEFACTORS**

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20 | The Leaflet
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If your name is missing or you find an error, please alert the Membership Coordinator, Michaela Flores: memberships@vbgardens.org. Thank you.

(S) = student   (I) = individual   ☠️ = deceased

We Also Thank the Following Foundations for Their Recent Support:
Your Donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden are Greatly Appreciated

**México**
- **Tax-deduction receipts** are available for donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden made through the Fundación Punta de Mita (FPM).
- **Please send an email earmarking your gift for the Vallarta Botanical Garden to**
  donaciones@fundacionpuntademita.org with a copy to info@vbgardens.org
- In this email please include your name, the date your gift was sent, and the amount of your gift.

**Checks may be mailed to:**
Fundación Punta de Mita, A.C.
Carretera Federal Libre 200 Km 18.05
Punta Mita, Nayarit, C.P. 63734 México.

**Wire transfers:**
Bank: Banamex
Account in Mexican Pesos (MXN):
Account in US Dollars (USD):

**Paypal:**
www.fundacionpuntademita.org/en/how-to-help

**Canada**
- Our educational programs qualify for **tax-deduction receipts** provided by The Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation (CCSHF)

**Cheques may be mailed to:**
Canadian Children’s Shelter of Hope Foundation
87 Lavinia Ave
Toronto, ON,
M6S 3H9
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Please write “VBG” for “Vallarta Botanical Gardens” on your cheques.

Alternatively, you may donate using a credit card through CanadaHelps.org (whose donation page is linked to the CCSHF website www.ccshf.ca) selecting the “Vallarta Botanical Gardens Fund.”

**USA**
- Our direct support 501(c)3, “Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C.” issues **tax-deduction receipts:**

**Checks may be mailed to:**
Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C.
759 North Campus Way
Davis, CA 95616

**Wire transfers / direct deposits are accepted:**
Please write to treasurer@vbgardens.org for routing and account numbers.

**Credit Card Payments:**
Call us w/ your card info: +52 322 223 6182

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