

The University Arboretum, Univ. of California, Davis

The University Arboretum is located on the Davis campus of the Univ. of California. It occupies about 100 acres along the banks of ancient Putah Creek and is close to the middle of the Great Central Valley of California. The prevailing climate closely resembles that of the Mediterranean region, with cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers in which a range of adapted plants will flourish. The extensive collections well illustrate the variety and brilliance of trees, shrubs, and perennials adapted to grow in such conditions.

On 29 Feb. 1936, the University Arboretum began with a planting day on the north channel of Putah Creek. A new south channel (now the Putah Creek Campus Reserve) was dug by the citizens of Davis to bypass flood waters in the late 1800s. Previous to that time, a rampaging Putah Creek would overflow its banks each spring to build up a rich alluvial soil. It was lined with cottonwood trees and valley oaks draped with long grape vines. This thicket was the home of the California grizzly bear, and spring floods enticed thousands of waterfowl.

Putah Creek was within the northernmost limit of the Spanish domain. One of the living valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) in the Foothill Native Section is thought to mark a corner of a Mexican land grant.

Today, the north fork of Putah Creek is fed locally by winter rains and from campus wells in the summer. The ancient oaks and poplars along its banks could not long survive without the still waters of today's creek. A nutritious flora of small algae support carp, catfish, and turtles. There is an abundance of ducks and geese, as well as species of swallows, herons, and grebes.

The picture on the cover, courtesy of the Office of Public Information, Univ. of California, Davis, was taken in March in the University Arboretum, Univ. of California, Davis, looking towards the east along Putah Creek. From left to right the trees and shrubs are *Quercus suber*, cork oak, in the far left behind a sierra alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*). Near both ends and beyond the bicycle and foot bridge are specimens of *Juglans hindsii*, northern California black walnut, often used as a rootstock for *J. regia*. The crowns of 2 Torrey pines (*Pinus torreyana*) can be seen in the middle of the picture, and pink-purple flowers cover a large shrub of western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*. *P. radiata*, Monterey pine is behind the redbud. Ground cover in the left-hand corner includes *Lonicera japonica* 'Halliana', Hall's Japanese honeysuckle, and *Myoporum parvifolium*, creeping boobialla.

Collections and gardens

The Shields Oak Grove stretches to the west. It occupies about 15 acres and has 70 species of oaks (both trees and shrubs) from many countries in the Northern Hemisphere. Some require water; others shun it. Scrubby oaks come from the desert border and chaparral of California; our valley oak vies with the Persian oak as the most magnificent of oaks.

California natives are prominent. They occur in most sections but are concentrated in the Mary Wattis Brown Garden, the Foothill, and the Desert sections. The lupines—*Ceanothus*, redbuds, and poppies—are most brilliant. There are also excellent examples of *Fremontodendron*, *Isomeris arborea*, *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, *Carpenteria californica*, and *Rhus*.

Mediterranean climate

Plants adapted to the Mediterranean-type climates of Europe, Africa, and Australia are well-represented. They are grouped in the Mediterranean and Exotic sections and the Eucalyptus and Acacia groves. Many species of *Hakea*, *Grevillea*, *Cistus*, *Genista*, *Cytisus*, *Rosmarinus*, *Lavandula*, and *Casuarina* are found in the first 2 sections.

There are some 70 species of *Eucalyptus*, ranging from large shrubs to the magnificent *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *E. viminalis*, *E. leucoxydon*, and *E. maculata*, which equal our oaks in grandeur.

There are 60 different species in the Acacia Section, from Africa and the Americas (with thorn) and Australia (thornless). Their flowers (a mass of yellow stamens) literally immerse visitors in early spring, although some are in bloom at any time of year. Species differ notably in growth form and leaf and pod shape.

While gymnosperms (mostly conifers) are widely distributed, they are grouped in 3 sections: the Redwood Grove, the Exotic Conifer Section, and Weier Alley.

The Redwood Grove, the largest grove outside of the coastal fog belt, has demonstrated that redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*), with some summer water, can do well in the Central Valley.

Representatives of exotic conifers include pines, junipers, and cedars from the eastern United States and many Northern Hemisphere countries. *Callitris* is from Australia and *Araucaria* from Argentina. *Ephedra* (gymnosperm but not conifer) comes from cool, dry regions.

Weier Alley is 2 rows of California conifers: pines, firs, and cypresses. The large

Torrey pines at the east end are the most towering trees in this part of the arboretum.

The west arboretum entrance is flanked by the Carolee Shields and Ruth Risdon Storer gardens. The former surrounds the gazebo and is planted with white-blooming shrubs, vines, and perennials. The Storer Garden features drought-tolerant shrubs and perennials requiring minimum upkeep in this climate. It has blossoms of many hues and foliage of many shades of green. It is colorful every season.

The University Arboretum serves the Davis campus and the public as an outdoor classroom—many plants are labeled—and as a source for teaching and research material much like a library or laboratory of living trees, shrubs, and other plants. It is also a park-like place of quite recreation with groves, lawns, paths, and lagoons for sailing, rowing, or fishing. Pamphlets about the collection may be purchased at the arboretum headquarters. Since there are no fences, it is open all year.

In August, just before the meeting of the XXII International Horticultural Congress, the University Arboretum will host the Western Regional meeting of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, 8–10 Aug. If you are interested in attending or participating in the AABGA meeting, write to Mary Burke, University Arboretum, Department of Environmental Design, Univ. of California, Davis, CA 95616.

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