Spring, 2010

The Bulb Garden

~Gardening with Bulbs ~

Volume 9, Issue 2

What's Inside...

The Genus *Bomarea* in the San Francisco Bay Area

Don Mahoney

Don Mahoney is Horticultural Manager at the San Francisco Botanical Garden (Strybing Arboretum). At home he grows many bulbs, especially Gladiolus, Lachenalia*, and* Calochortus. *Other favorite plants are salvias, aloes, "living stones," and succulents. He believes in a no-spray, ecological approach to growing bulbs. Check out the SFBG web site at www.SFBotanicalGarden.org. — Ed.*

Here at the San Francisco Botanical Garden (SFBG) we are fortunate to have a cool frost-free climate where cloud forest plants thrive if given extra water in our dry mediterranean summers. *Bomarea*, in the Alstroemeria family, is a tuberous-rooted genus that thrives in cloud forest conditions. It has nine chromosomes, which distinguishes it from *Alstroemeria*, the other main genus in the family, which has eight chromosomes.

***Bomarea acutifolia* in the San Francisco Botanical Garden's cloud forest garden. Photograph by Carlos Rendon.**

Bomareas are usually twining or vinelike and come from wet environments from Mexico to Peru, while alstoemerias come from more diverse habitats, including deserts and occur only in South America.

Bomareas by the Bay

This article will discuss how the SFBG cultivates bomareas outdoors in the Bay Area. Our experience is more reminiscent of how they grow in the wild and is often somewhat different from what we read online. For us, the plants are very evergreen and there are flowers to be seen every month of the year, although the peak bloom is summer into fall. Many sources refer to them as deciduous.

Over the years many clones can develop into large clumps with dozens to even hundreds of stems arising at once. Each individual stem eventually terminates in a flower, much like a true lily, and then that stem sets seed and dies. It may take more than one year for a stem to bloom.

In the meantime, new stems are already many feet tall and are replacing

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Bulbs from Year-Round Rainfall Regions

Alberto Castillo

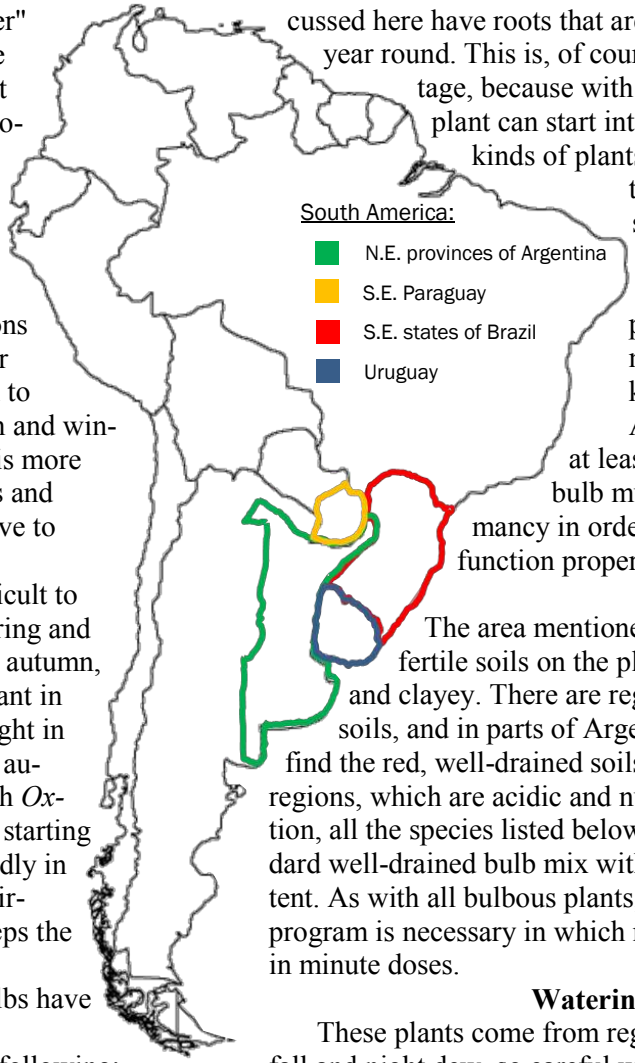
J. Alberto Castillo is a chemist and works as a Horticulture Professor. His bulb collection is the first private botanical garden in Argentina (appointed in 1986) and is the largest in Latin America (where, our readers will recall, the seasons are reversed). He researches propagation under cultivation and has traveled widely over South America. — Ed.

Rainfall and seasons

Years ago I read an English book whose author had laboriously researched the precipitation statistics for different regions of South America and had accordingly deduced the "proper" seasons of growth for several native bulbs. Actually, the seasons of plant growth and dormancy were the opposite of his deductions. Why so? Because the amounts of rainfall and that of water available to the plants are not necessarily the same. In the regions discussed here, broadly speaking, the warmer seasons receive more rainfall than the cooler ones, yet the soils are moist enough to support plant growth during autumn and winter. In late spring and summer rain is more abundant, but the high temperatures and greater evaporation are not conducive to plant growth.

This pattern may be a little difficult to understand: Rainfall is higher in spring and summer, yet the plants are active in autumn, winter, and spring and totally dormant in summer. As it becomes cooler at night in the last weeks of summer and early autumn, the plants become active, with *Oxalis*, *Rhodophiala*, and *Habranthus* starting to flower. Foliage then appears rapidly in all bulbous plants and, if rainfall is irregular, the abundant night dew keeps the plants in good condition.

The regions in which native bulbs have a winter-growth/ summer-dormant cycle include the following: in Brazil, the states of Parana, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul (highlighted in red); all of Uruguay (highlighted in blue); the southeastern parts of Paraguay (highlighted in yellow); and in Argentina, the provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Rios, Corrientes, Santa Fe, Chaco, and Misiones (highlighted in green).



One can find a few species in these regions that grow under the opposite cycle (winter-dormant), but these seem to be opportunistic species that evolved in the regions of summer rainfall in South America and migrated south over the ages.

Perennial roots

Because we have long read that a difficult period in bulb cultivation is when the bulbs are dormant and accidental watering could make them rot, it may sound odd that there exist bulbous plants that actually need occasional watering while dormant to keep their perennial roots alive. Most of the bulbous species discussed here have roots that are fleshy and alive the year round. This is, of course, a biological advantage, because with an active root system a plant can start into growth before other kinds of plants nearby and make better use of available space. If they lose their roots, these plants take time and energy to replace them and might not flower. This is well known in the family Amaryllidaceae, where at least one living root per bulb must survive during dormancy in order to have the plant function properly and flower.

Soils

The area mentioned has some of the most fertile soils on the planet: rich, alkaline, and clayey. There are regions with more sandy soils, and in parts of Argentina and Brazil we find the red, well-drained soils typical of tropical regions, which are acidic and nutrient-poor. In cultivation, all the species listed below grow well in a standard well-drained bulb mix with a high mineral content. As with all bulbous plants, a proper fertilizing program is necessary in which nutrients are supplied in minute doses.

Watering

These plants come from regions with ample rainfall and night dew, so careful watering is not so critical, provided the drainage is excellent. One good soaking every ten days or so, if there is no natural rainfall or the plants are growing under cover, is adequate. Most important is that the plants must be periodically watered while dormant. It is impossible to

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Bulbs from Year-Round Rainfall Regions (cont'd)

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suggest the frequency, as this depends on local conditions. The moisture must be very slight—just enough to keep the roots from drying completely. In cool climates, keeping the soil soaked in summer will keep it too cool and may prevent the formation of flower buds.

Seed treatment

In the plants discussed, the seed in nature is either (1) dropped on moist soil where it germinates without delay, or (2) dropped on moist soil to germinate the following year. Keeping such seed under the normal method of storage—in paper packets with cool (or warm), dry conditions until autumn planting time—can (and in most cases will) kill it. This explains why eastern South American species are not more widely grown. If not stored under proper seed bank conditions, the seeds must be sown upon receipt and watered from time to time until they germinate at the season when they would in nature (normally autumn). This will give them the same conditions they enjoy in the wild: contact with soil moistened by rainfall or dew the year round. Total dehydration will kill the embryo. This applies whether the seeds are sown in the same hemisphere where harvested or in the opposite hemisphere.

Dormancy

Although the geophytes growing at the south of the region discussed here experience many slight and a few hard frosts and are quite hardy (*Ipheion uniflorum* is hardy to -24°C/-11.2°F), the summer is hot and long. The lack of the proper high temperatures during dormancy will make them skip a season or fail to flower. As one moves north, winters are milder, frost free; the plants will demand a greenhouse in colder climates. Conditions ideal for Cape species (minimum 4°C/39.2°F to 13 to 15° C/55.4 to 59°F) will suit most species, even those from the northernmost Brazilian borders of the year-round rainfall region. A long season of high temperature will be provided in summer.

Conservation

A number of these plants are in the Red List of Endangered Species, the main reason being the never-ending demand for new land for agriculture. Many will become extinct in the wild in the future. A serious secondary factor toward their disappearance is the use of glyphosate on genetically modified crops.

The plants

Here is a list by family of bulbous plants from the year-round rainfall regions of South America. These can be cultivated following the regime outlined above.

IRIDACEAE

Cypella: *C.herbertii* (and forms *brevicristata* and *wolfhuegeli*), *C. laxa, C. osteniana, C. exilis, C. armosa, C. hauthalii* (and ssp. *opalina*), *C.* (syn. *Kelissa*) *brasiliensis, C.* (syn. *Onira*) *unguiculata*, *C. coelestis, C. pabstiana, C. fucata*;

Herbertia: *H. lahue* ssp. *amoena, H. quareimana, H. crosae, H. pulchella, H. darwinii*;

Gelasine*: G. elongata* (*G. azurea*), *G. uruguaiensis* (and ssp. *orientalis*), *G. caerulea*;

Calydorea*: C. amabilis, C. azurea, C. alba, C. minima, C. approximata, C. crocoides*

AMARYLLIDACEAE

Hippeastrum: *H. reticulatum, H. papilio, H. aulicum, H. striatum, H. petiolatum*;

Habranthus*: H. tubispathus, H. brachyandrus, H. robustus, H. versicolor, H. estensis, H. martinezii, H.*

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Top: *Herbertia lahue* ssp. *amoena* (photo by Mary Sue Ittner) is also found in Texas, possibly introduced.

Middle: *Gelasine elongate* (photo by Bob Rutemoeller) can be as hardy as *Ipheion uniflorum*.

Bottom: *Gelasine uruguaiensis* (photo by Bob Rutemoeller) is a very rare species, in the Red List.

Bulbs from Year-Round Rainfall Regions (cont'd)

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*gracilifolius, H. barrosianus, H. carmineus, H. chacoensis, H. correntinus, H. pedunculosus (*syn. *H. teretifolius, H. juncifolius)*;
***Zephyranthes**: Zephyranthes candida, Z. minima, Z. mesochloa, Z. stellaris, Z. flavissima, Z.* (syn *Hayllockia*) *americana*

ALLIACEAE
Ipheion: *Ipheion uniflorum, I. sessile* (syn. *I. recurvifolium*), *I.* sp. 'Rolf Fiedler', *I. tweedianum*;
Nothoscordum: *Nothoscordum vittatum, N. felipponei* (syn. *Ipheion sellowianum*), *N. dialystemon, N. bivalve, N. osteni, N. hirtellum, N. bonariense, N, montevidense, N. nocturnum, N. estensis*

OXALIDACEAE: *Oxalis articulata, O. perdicaria* (syn. *O. mallobolba*), *O. sellowiana, O. brasiliensis, O. hispidula, O. lindneri, O. debilis, O. lasiopetala, O. bipartita*

RANUNCULACEAE: *Anemone decapetala*

HYPOXIDACEAE: *Hypoxis decumbens*

TROPAEOLACEAE: *Tropaeolum pentaphyllum*

The pampas species *Oxalis perdicaria* has been merged with the Mediterranean-climate Chilean *O. mallobolba*. This is unfortunate from point of view of cultivation, because growers assume these plants can be grown under the same conditions, but *O. perdicaria* in its two known forms grows in the wild in the year-round rainfall areas of South America mentioned above. *Oxalis obtusa* grows under a typical Mediterranean climate.

The list above comprises all the species I have seen in the wild. There are a few others that have never been found in nature (*Cypella discolor*, for instance) or that are known only from herbariums (*Cypella lapidosa*, still to be confirmed as a "good" species). The plant that was described as *Tristagma peregrinans* has never been found. Unfortunately, someone in Australia tried to make ends meet and decided *Ipheion* sp. 'Rolf Fiedler' and *T. peregrinans* are the same; there is a clear drawing of the latter that shows differences between the two, most noticeably the bulb shapes, which are completely distinct. If *T. peregrinans* is ever found, all the present evidence suggests it also belongs to the winter-growing/ summer-dormant pattern.

Top: *Habranthus tubispathus*, photo by Nhu Nguyen. At least a dozen variants are in cultivation.

Middle: *Zephyranthes candida* (photo by Bob Rutemoeller) is a marsh plant that can grow in the deepest shade.

Bottom: *Nothoscordum dialystemon* (photo by Bob Rutemoeller) always has eight tepals.

The Genus *Bomarea* in the San Francisco Bay Area (cont'd)

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the monocarpic finished stems. Most species we grow twine through shrubs or are attached by wire to tree trunks and reach 6 to 15 feet in height. The leaves are resupinate, meaning the petiole twists at the base so the bottom of the leaf faces upright. In our experience the clones with the largest leaves have the largest flowers.

For the last decade or so researchers have been revising the genus a section at a time. This was badly needed because the last revision was done in 1888. Hofreiter and Tillich in Germany have recently published a number of papers on the genus. Seventy-five binominals were recognized in 1888 and this number increased to 280 in modern times. These authors currently reduce the number of species to 133. They report field studies in Peru revealed a high degree of variability within populations. This, along with recent DNA analysis, has led them to conclude that the genus is undergoing rapid and recent evolution.

Counterclockwise from top: *Bomarea petrea* and *Bomarea acutifola*, both grown by Diana Chapman and photographed by Susan Hayek; *Bomarea hirtella* grown in the University of California, Berkeley Botanical Garden, photo by Carlos Rendon.

At the botanical garden we have planted 11 species and numerous unnamed clones over the years. The earliest planting we have that still exists is a *Bomarea acutifola* that we planted in 1988 from wild-collected seed from Chiapas, Mexico. This clone has reseeded sparingly in the garden. It is a vigorous vine with umbels 4 to 5 inches across with 30 to 40 flowers per umbel. The one-inch flowers are predominantly red with orange tints and yellow tips. Our clones have somewhat narrow pointed leaves and have made an extensive stand with dozens of stems. Some transplanted seedlings in less watered areas are alive but not as vigorous.

We have two separate clones of *Bomarea hirtella*, also from Mexico. Our original clone has smaller, more numerous flowers than our second clone from UC Berkeley Botanical Garden (3/4" vs. 1"). Both have pink flowers with chartreuse green tips. The Berkeley clone is vigorous, while our original clone has never gotten large.

We have one clone of *Bomarea petrea* planted in 1997 from the Berkeley Botanical Garden, which has developed into our largest plant in the garden, with 100 stems occupying a space 12' x 12'. It has medium orange-red flowers the same size as *B. acutifolia* and is distinguished from that plant by its lack of yellow tips.

Bomarea caldasii is by far the showiest species in the garden. We have three clones in the ground, two with medium orange flowers and one with yellow to gold flowers. These have individual large flowers over an inch long in gigantic umbels the size of a basketball. The leaves are nearly an inch wide. The plants send up only two or three new stems a year and these can take up to two years to bloom. It's frequently photographed because it is so showy.

Bomarea distichifolia is a recent acquisition. It is from wet areas in the Ecuadorean cloud forest and is a nonvining species to 18". The handsome leaves are glaucous beneath. The flowers are orange and small but have blue pollen. The upright-facing seedpods are also small (pea-size) and are red-orange in our clone. A clone available from Seedhunt in Freedom, California, has yellow-orange fruit.

We have other species in our nursery, both in prepa-

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The Genus *Bomarea* in the San Francisco Bay Area (cont'd)

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ration for plant sale production and for planting in the gardens. These are all seed grown, many from Walter Teague, an expert in Ecuadorean plants, and from Carlos Rendon, who raises bomareas, passifloras, and lapegerias, both for us and for UC Berkeley. He has spectacular plants in his San Francisco garden and we hope to give cultivar names to several of his *Bomarea caldasii* clones as we build up enough numbers to share. One clone is particularly nice as it has very flared bicolor petals. Many of the clones seem to breed true. We suspect that hummingbirds are to blame when other seed lots show obvious hybridization. We are also growing several clones from Telos Bulbs for future planting in the botanical garden.

Top: *B. caldasii*, grown by Diana Chapman, photo by Susan Hayek. Right: A seedling of *B. caldasii* in front of Carlos Rendon's San Francisco home. Photos by Carlos Rendon.

Cultivation

When well positioned in the right soils, bomareas thrive outdoors in the San Francisco Bay Area. They need a well-drained, rich soil, much like true lilies. They appear to appreciate regular fertilizing. While often thought of as shade plants, here in the Bay Area they bloom better with substantial sunshine. This is similar to the ones I observed in Mexico where the roots were buried deep in vegetation along the roadsides but the stems stretched out into the sunshine where the flowers were visible.

We have lost a number of plants here at the gardens due to bad luck. Several plants were on trees that uprooted and the work crews destroyed the rootballs in the act of cleaning up the mess. We have lost some that were smothered by much more vigorous cloud forest plants. We lost some when gardeners retired and new gardeners destroyed the plants, not knowing what they were. We have not lost any to frost, although some have frosted to the ground and then come back.

Bomareas are easy container plants, although they fast outgrow a gallon container. In containers they are more susceptible to frost. In the big freeze of 1990, we had 50 one-gallon containers freeze solid. The area did not get above 32° F for 5 days; the lowest was 20° F. About half the pots regrew the next summer, so that says their roots are somewhat hardy. In normal winters, however, they are green and grow all winter. People who have bought them have reported losses to snails eating the just-emerging shoots, but we control that here at the garden. Occasionally, people report the plants have been too vigorous and have overgrown their small gardens. In some parts of Australia bomareas are on the invasive weed list and landowners are required by law to remove them. For us, they have never escaped into the wild.

Pruning the plants involves only removing finished stems since new stems will not resprout once cut and thus will never bloom.

Propagation

We propagate bomareas from division and from seed. Fresh wet seed germinates reliably but takes at least a month. Once dry, seed is hard to germinate. Division from plants in the ground has to be done carefully as the thin white tubers may be attached by a thread for some distance from the crown, and if no storage tubers are with the division they often will not grow. From containers this is easier because the threads are much shorter and it is easy to get tubers with the divisions.

Bomareas are truly wonderful, beautiful plants and have great potential for hybridizers to develop stronger clones. They are underused because few know about them and they are hard to find. They are a rewarding group and I am sure bomareas will be more popular in the future.

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Pilgrimage to the Irises

Nhu Nguyen

Although Nhu Nguyen says he is classified as a "mycologist," he maintains he really loves plants and he combines that passion with travel and photography. He is a graduate student at UC Berkeley and is also a painter. His work can be viewed on the web at www.flickr.com/photos/xerantheum. Point Reyes National Seashore is on the outer edge of Marin County. It's great for birding and botanizing. Go to www.nps.gov/pore for more information and directions.

I start my journey at the beginning of the 7.5-mile (12 km) Limantour Road in Point Reyes National Seashore, heading toward the ocean during the first week of spring. After passing through a small field, the road is quickly swallowed by a forest dominated by the extremely pungent California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*) mixed with beautiful coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). This evergreen forest gives shade and home to many understory fungi, plants, and animals and often tinges the air with the scent of laurel. The smooth road climbs steadily upward and soon vestiges of Bishop pines (*Pinus muricata*) appear. About halfway along, something alarming and artificial sweeps away the naturalness of the place. All the bay laurels, live oaks, and Douglas firs have disappeared, replaced by what appear to be monoculture stands of medium-sized pine trees of the same age. It looks as if these trees grew so thickly that they tried to choke each other out. What horrible forestry service person cut down the forest and planted just pine trees?

***Iris douglasiana* growing wild on the Point Reyes National Seashore. Photos by Nhu Nguyen.**

It turns out this was actually a natural event. Fifteen years ago in October 1995 the Vision Fire swallowed a great chunk of the park, the result of an illegal campfire. The previous large fire had occurred 69 years earlier. This blaze cleared out most standing trees. Soon afterward millions of Bishop pine seedlings sprouted and colonized the area. These trees are closed-cone pines that release their seeds only when there is enough heat to open the cones. They are extremely well adapted to areas with periodic fires. Now the trees are starting to thin themselves out in a race where only the strongest survives.

Drive down a steep slope, then climb up again, and the land magically opens. The trees have disappeared and are replaced by coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), forbs, and grasses. Suddenly I am on top of a ridge extending toward the ocean. To the left are green rolling hills and in the distance appears the glimmering light of the Pacific Ocean. Then purple flowers appear along the roadside — *Iris douglasiana*! The promise of many more is just minutes away!

And so the minutes pass. The sight of the ocean becomes clearer and the irises become more and more numerous. Here they elevate themselves above the natural green lawns that hug the hills. Their dark and tough foliage pierces the air and is softened only by their flowing purple petals. Patches after huge patches of irises cover the landscape with thousands of flowers wedged among them. This is iris euphoria!

The flowers are mostly of one color, but once in a while something darker and more intense pops up, then something else of such pale lilac that it appears almost white stands out even more. The clean and crisp ocean air drapes around the landscape as the bright sun provides what little warmth it can manage. The irises do not at all seem to be deterred by the cold wind and surely enjoy the sunshine. A short walk to the top of one hill and I find a perfect patch, in full view of the ocean and Drake's Beach. Hundreds of years ago Sir Francis Drake landed on these shores marked by hills that are cut away by the waves leaving white, sandy, almost vertical wounds. I can grow envious of these irises, living a simple life with a spectacular view of the blue ocean, surrounded by clean crisp air and glorious sunlight. It's time for me to leave, but there is no despair because next spring there will surely be another Pilgrimage to the Irises.

The (Almost) Pain-Free Workbench

Robin Hansen

Robin gardens in North Bend, Oregon, just east of the Pacific Ocean on a property sheltered by dunes and conifers (slightly colder and hotter than USDA zone 9). She grows and sells cyclamen and a few other Oregon native plants. To ask questions or request her plant list, send an email to robin@hansennursery.com. — Ed.

My workbench is probably the single most important tool in my greenhouse because I spend so much time working on it. It can also be the single most disorganized mess of the many I create and, consequently, the most frustrating part of this joyful business of growing plants. At the height of my frustration, my memories of a workshop on nursery ergonomics pop up to remind me just how important it is not only to keep my work area organized, but also to work without creating pain!

As time goes on, we all develop little whimpers or large groans as we work about our gardens. We don't have to develop some of these pains, or at least we can mitigate them, by working with awareness of how we're using our body in relation to our work areas. The repetitive movements we make and our body positions in relation to those movements must be considered each time we build a new work area.

Because I do try to work sensibly, I've experimented with various heights of workbenches until I've found one that keeps me comfortable for longish periods of time. Along with waist-high benches, the next important item is reach. A bench shouldn't be too deep, or reaching for items not only puts your body off balance, but it also strains your neck and head and eventually your back. Invariably, my benches have been of the "put it together cheap and quick" variety with concrete blocks and rectangular pieces of 5/8-inch to 3/4-inch plywood. They're easy to shim to level them, they can be moved quickly if needed, and they provide a smooth, firm working surface. Adding a two- or three-inch lip around three sides so soil and pots don't get pushed off is essential.

Also consider orientation of the bench in relation to the sun, shade, and weather. A bench outside in the shade in summer is the best antidote for a hot greenhouse. But if your bench is in an unshaded greenhouse and you have nowhere outside that's as convenient, consider installing a piece of shadecloth over the work area. Location of the bench in relation to supplies is another consideration. Mine is near the end of the greenhouse closest to my stacks of pots and flats, with easy access to the soil mix pile.

You'll need plant labels, marking pens, scissors, forks, knives, spoons, dibbles, and other tools on your worktop. If you don't want them to disappear under the mound of potting soil as happens to me all too often, you'll have to do something with them. Plastic quart tubs that once contained honey or margarine work well, keeping the tools upright and easy to grab. I use numerous colors of labels so I put them in several two-inch rosepots in a container. There is also a small supply of various sizes of pots in the work area that is replenished frequently, along with plastic-lidded containers of fertilizers, rooting hormone, and sometimes a small bucket of granite turkey grit or pumice. Yes, my preference is always plastic containers, since living on the Oregon coast provides an instant recipe for rust. Plastic has only one bad habit: it eventually degrades when exposed to sunlight, but "eventually" is too far away to worry about.

Now that you're organized and working away, I'll offer one more tip. Don't stand in the same position for hours. Break up your tasks into small increments. Put a few shovels of potting soil on the workbench, work with a few pots and a few plants, then replenish your supplies. Take a break and have a drink of water or walk around. Remember, we're not into pain here—we're trying to avoid it! Whoever said "no pain, no gain" wasn't 60 and arthritic. . . .

Keep Us Updated!

A new directory of Pacific Bulb Society membership will go out this year. Would you like to make changes to your current entry? Has your phone number or snail mail or email address changed? Have you discovered a new passion and would you like to add that to your entry in the directory?

If you are not sure what your current listing looks like, contact Membership Chair Patricia Colville at patrylis@aol.com and she will send it to you. New members—check with Patty about your listing.

~Gardening with Bulbs ~

Board of Directors Meeting, August 2009

Treasurer Arnold Trachtenberg reported that our bank account remains steady as we meet all of our commitments to our members. Recurring expenses include newsletter printing, postage (rates are increasing), and reimbursement to Dell Sherk for BX expenses. The newsletters are running at about $925.00 for printing and delivery to him for distribution. Payments for BXs are timely for some members and others wait to send in five to six BX payments at one time. In general, we do not have a collection problem. Some members routinely send in two to three dollars extra, which Arnold lists as a contribution. We always appreciate these additional donations – thanks!

Welcoming new members is an especially important task. Arnold generally has 25 to 30 extra copies of the newsletter printed for new member fulfillment. He also sends new members a welcome packet that includes a membership directory, two copies of past issues of *The Bulb Garden*, and a $5.00 discount BX coupon.

Patty Colville says all directories are up to date, with 175 paid members and about 40 non-renewers from 2008. This is normal—we typically lose 35 to 40 and gain about the same.

One of our goals is ensuring that joining or rejoining PBS is as seamless as possible. Arnold has been coordinating with David Pilling to facilitate electronic payment of membership fees and BX purchases using Paypal. Dave is completing the final web site adjustments. It is at the testing stage and will go operational shortly.

Another of our goals is to increase the opportunities for members to socialize. Jane McGary and Diana Chapman are compiling a list of Oregon-California bulb botanizing sites and will submit the list to the email forum to see who might want to organize trips in small groups. Jane is organizing an informal PBS get-together at the NARGS meeting in July on the preconference day in Denver and is considering organizing a botanizing trip into the San Juan Mountains.

At Pam Slate's suggestion, the board agreed that renewal reminder postcards will be sent annually by the treasurer on or around December 1. If you still haven't renewed, now is the time!

Year-End Treasurer's Report

BALANCE 1/1/2009		$23,881.44
INCOME		
U.S. members	$ 2,205.00	
Overseas members	$ 950.00	
Contributions	$ 85.00	
BX receipts	$ 4,161.37	
Investment results	$ 112.94	
TOTAL INCOME		$ 7,514.31
EXPENSES		
BX/SX Expense	$ (3,234.17)	
Board conference call	$ (277.38)	
Algardas honorarium	$ (250.00)	
Web site design	$ (200.00)	
Total publications	$(4,030.00)	
PayPal expense	$ (182.63)	
Postage	$ (977.81)	
Secretary expense	$ (20.32)	
TOTAL EXPENSES		$(9,172.31)
	NET CHANGE:	$(1,658.00)
BALANCE 12/31/2009		$ 22,223.44

Looking Back

Marguerite English

How we have grown! Our first issue of *The Bulb Garden* was published for Spring of 2002; it was four pages long. Jane McGary provided our first article, "The Useful Bulb Frame." (We reprinted that article recently after Jane updated it.) The treasurer's report noted: "For the quarter ending April 1, 2002, our treasury started with a balance of $0.00."

By the time we published issue 2 (Summer 2002) our membership had grown to 21 founding members. Dell Sherk was already organizing the seed and bulb exchange. He published his first offering in this newsletter. The forum was still in the "thinking about" stage. One article mentions an organizing meeting at Cathy Craig's house in April, where Paul Chapman (England), Bill Dijk (New Zealand), and Elizabeth Peters (Washington) were visitors. Mary Sue Ittner gave the initial presentation about her trip to South Africa, and Dylan Hannon showed slides of massonias and other bulbs. Our treasury had grown to $327.87, and the newsletter had grown to six pages.

There were no color photos in those initial newsletters. All our officers were volunteers, and we were already amazed at the interest being shown in the Pacific Bulb Society.

From My Point of View

Marguerite English

Marguerite English gardens in Descanso, California. Her busy days are filled with the work of starting her own business, so she eagerly seeks out her garden for a little solace. Here she shares the variety it provides during the change of seasons. — Ed.

In February my home mountains show a variety of faces. One day, it's pleasant enough to dig in the front

Cuyamaca Park on a rare snowy morning.
All photos by Marguerite English.

yard. The next day there is snow and chill. Our snow seldom lasts long. It usually melts by the second day. El Niño has filled the local creeks to overflowing, which bodes well for the possible end of our drought years. My creek runs only in these heavy rain years. Then there are the neighbors to consider: the deer, foxes, coyotes, snakes, squirrels, rabbits, and the mountain lion with last year's cubs. Squirrels, rabbits, and foxes have visited the property recently, but the others are still snoozing in their dens. The owl and hawks fly over my house on the hunt. I even saw a small covey of quail last week. I enjoy sitting in the (comparatively) warm plant room and watching the snow on the peak. The predator birds fly low over the skylights; the small birds stop by for water and a visit. I do love living here!

Dropping the focus from the nearby peak into my front yard, I see the daffodils just beginning to bloom. I have planted many of these over the years. The gophers never bother them and they are the first to show up before spring is even here. I think the one in the photo is 'Quail', one of the miniatures. It has moved here and there in the yard for several years and has long since lost its tag. I transplanted it again this year so it is closer to the front door. Its happy little face greets me every morning when I look out. My kids tease me that, while I seldom move furniture, my garden beds and planting plans are always in flux. The hyacinths are peeking out of their leafy sheathes, but

are not quite ready to commit. In addition, amazingly, a reblooming iris 'Marty Richards' just put out another bloom stalk. It hasn't stopped since fall! I added several other rebloomers to my iris collection last fall and hope they will increase the bloom time for irises. So far, they are still an experiment.

Stepping inside the greenhouse, you find a cluster of several bright orange bomareas on a tall trellis. They have several primroses at their feet but that doesn't seem to slow them down.

The *Dichorisandra thyrsiflora* that I mentioned last issue still has its long-lasting blooms, but they are nearly spent. This is an excellent greenhouse plant. It has been in bloom since November. All the camellias have fat buds and will be fully open soon.

A nearby container contains two *Veltheima bracteata* bulbs. The bloom on the larger plant opens more every day. This one is a showpiece!

Promising containers crowd all the benches. Most haven't even started blooming. January didn't have much flower display; I missed the usual showing from several lachenaleas. Only *Lachenalea viridiflora* and *L.*

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From My Point of View (cont'd)

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pustulata came through. It has been colder than usual. I guess that made the others withhold their bloom.

I have had one or another oxalis blooming since early fall. One of those is *Oxalis incarnata*. It never has a lot of blooms, but there are always a few. *Oxalis namaquama* is beginning to bloom, as well.

The cyclamen are compensating for the shy lachenaleas. *Cyclamen persicum* has been blooming heavily since

the end of January and shows no sign of slowing down. I can't take credit for their heavy bloom; they were new from the nursery this year. The Christmas cyclamen have slowed down, but still have a few flowers. Still, all cyclamen are a wonderful addition to enjoy with my morning coffee.

A small orchid, *SLC* 'Little Fairy Genie' is blooming on the orchid tree. The tree is formed from a dead manzanita branch wrapped with dried grey moss. I have wired several small orchids and other epiphytes to its branches. It's always satisfying to prepare an unusual display area for the small plants that get lost on the benches.

Iris histroides 'George' is a returning addition for my garden this year. I kept it in a container for this first year and am pleased that it bloomed freely. I also *had* to order *Iris reticulata* 'Marguerite' just because of its name. It is a bit slower and hasn't yet bloomed. Both will go into the open garden later. The miniature irises do well here, as do the larger types. I had several miniature varieties here at one time, but they didn't survive the 2005 fires. It has taken a while to start replacing them.

Latest to bloom is a small container of crocus. These, too, will go into one of the garden beds later to replace those I used to grow. I had several in the beds at one time, but bulb predators took their toll. I started appreciating these little beauties after David Stephens, who was at that time holder of one of England's National Crocus Collections, wrote an article for the Summer 2002 issue of *The Bulb Garden*.

I've been keeping busy building a two-foot by four-foot box for cuttings. Soil surrounding a heating cable fills the bottom half. I start the cuttings in containers—kitty litter boxes are a perfect size. The cuttings sit on top of the soil and keep warm within the sides of the box. I start cuttings every year for my local garden club's plant sale and now am starting some for a friend who sells native plants. The warm box should speed up their growth. Since it is only half filled so far, I finished with some of the little bulb containers that weren't thriving. Even though I'm no longer a serious do-it-yourselfer, it is satisfying to putter with an occasional useful item for the garden. Keeping a greenhouse is an excellent way to stay out of trouble! I seldom have time to sit idle for long. There is always something enjoyable to do or look at.

Pacific Bulb Society

Gardening with Bulbs

Nhu Nguyen takes us along with him on a seashore visit to *Iris douglasiana,* growing wild along the California coast. Page 7.

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Editor: Jane Merryman, jane@sonic.net; Co-Editor: Jennifer Hildebrand

Visit us online! www.pacificbulbsociety.org

Pat Colville – Memberships
1555 Washburn Road
Pasadena, CA., 91105

www.pacificbulbsociety.org