A Botanical Tour of the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens

Produced by the GLAZA Docent Botany Committee

Gooseberry
IN MARCH 2002, THE ZOO RECEIVED ACCREDITATION from the American Association of Museums for both its animal and plant collections. In recognition of this honor, the City of Los Angeles changed its name to the **Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens**. We are proud of our gardens and eager to share them with all the Zoo’s visitors. This guide highlights many of the noteworthy plants you can see while strolling through the Zoo. Viewing plants and animals together will show you the diversity of life that exists in a whole and healthy ecosystem. We hope you will see the Zoo with fresh eyes and take away a more memorable experience for having seen this diversity.

The Zoo is divided into areas named for continents which display animals and plants native to these continents. Animal enclosures are placed on circular walkways or loops with plants gracing these paths and enclosures. Australia, North America, Africa, Asia and South America make up the geographical loops. There are also areas for Aquatics with water-dwelling animals; the Aviary; Treetops Terrace, a picnic and meeting area; and the Reptile House. Major walkways link all of these areas together.

In addition to trees and shrubs identified in this tour, we have included in the second half of this booklet a calendar listing those plants likely to be in bloom at various times of the year. We hope this tour will delight and inform you today as well as encourage you to return often to see the Zoo in bloom.

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**Welcome**

*Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life.*

Charles Darwin

1. *Clivia Flower – Africa*
I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul remembering my good friends.
Shakespeare

Remembrance

Dr. Warren Thomas, Zoo Director and consultant for many years was instrumental in shaping the Zoo’s plant collection. His vision and determination to assemble a plant collection as varied as our animals and to integrate both has given us all a richer experience of the earth’s great natural diversity.
A gift with a kind countenance
is a double present.

Italian saying

Acknowledgments

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John R. Lewis, Zoo Director
Connie Morgan, GLAZA President
Joan Anderson, Docent Chairman
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Janica Jones, Zoo Horticulturist, and Robert Wickham, Volunteer in Horticulture generously shared with us their expertise, time and good humor. We greatly appreciate their efforts.

The Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support the Los Angeles Zoo and enhance the experience of its patrons through tours, lectures, publications and various outreach programs. GLAZA Docents and Volunteers are individuals who donate their time and talents to fulfill this mission.

Your support of GLAZA through your Zoo membership and by purchasing publications such as this booklet helps us provide information and services so that we may all enjoy and appreciate the diversity of life here at the Zoo and in the world around us.

Thank you.
GLAZA Docent Botany Committee

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I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree,
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,
I’ll never see a tree at all.

Ogden Nash

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No one feels himself easy in a garden which does not look like the open country.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Zoo Entrance Area

The Zoo has many interesting and beautiful plants from around the world. Our local plant heritage is an important part of this collection. The California sycamores and coast live oaks planted in the parking area are among the first California natives you see when arriving at the Zoo. Near the gift shops, you will also notice Mexican and California fan palms, our only native palms.

The Mexican fan palm, *Washingtonia robusta*, and the California fan palm, *Washingtonia filifera*, were named in honor of George Washington. They are illustrated on the back cover of this booklet. The Mexican fan palm is taller, more slender and has smaller fronds than the California palm. Both are often called petticoat palms because the dead fronds hang down in a layered skirt around the trunk. The trees here have been trimmed, but you will see this effect on the washingtonias located at Treetops Terrace. These palms produce small blue fruits that are eaten by birds, rodents and coyotes.

The Education Building is on the left beyond the gift shop area. The plants alongside this building include several distinctive trees called cycads which are often mistaken for palms. The two species represented here are *Cycas rumphii*, the fern palm, and *Cycas revoluta*, the sago palm.

Cycads are ancient plants that thrived during the Age of Dinosaurs. They have since declined in numbers and many species today are rare and endangered. However, the two species here are popular landscaping plants and are therefore numerous.

Proceed along the main walkway past the Education Building until you come to the Baja Garden on your left. It is the first of the Zoo’s desert gardens. As a prelude to viewing this garden, the next section provides an overview of how desert plants adapt to their environment.
And so it criticized each flower,
This supercilious seed;
Until it woke one summer hour,
And found itself a weed.

Mildred Howells

Facts About Desert Plants

Deserts are dry environments with extreme temperatures, both hot and cold. A desert’s dryness, heat and wind causes plants to lose more water through evaporation than can be replaced by rainfall. This makes conserving water the most important rule for survival.

Since water is lost through leaves, many desert plants, like cacti, have modified their leaves as a way of conserving valuable moisture. You’ll notice that the leaves of some cacti have become sharp-pointed spines.

Other plants, like palo verde trees, are drought-deciduous, losing their leaves during the driest part of the year. Plants that keep their leaves usually have tiny ones that curl up or turn away from the midday sun for protection.

The color of a plant also helps protect it by reflecting excess sunlight. Desert plants are often gray, blue green, silver, white or variegated. Many are succulents, storing water in leaves as agaves do, in stems or trunks like cacti, or in roots hidden from sunlight.
Recalling the facts about desert plants, you will notice the size, thickness, arrangement and color of the leaves of these plants. You will also notice the variety of birds that enjoy this garden as much as we do.

In the center is a tall, succulent tree with long linear leaves on the branch tips. Called the bottle palm, it is not a palm but part of a family of desert plants native to the Western Hemisphere. Its botanical name is *Nolina recurvata*. Notice the large swollen base of its trunk. This is the caudex where the plant stores water, a common adaptation for drought-resistant plants. You will see more examples of the bottle palm in the North American loop.

At the tip of the garden is a shrub called the elephant tree, *Bursera microphylla*. It belongs to a worldwide group of trees and shrubs noted for their aromatic foliage and sap. Trees yielding frankincense and myrrh belong to this group. Being drought-deciduous, the shrub sheds its tiny leaves during dry periods while its reddish branches store water.

Continuing along the main walkway, take time to admire the roses in the Ferraro Rose Garden on your left. The tree towering over the roses is a rusty leaf fig, *Ficus rubiginosa*, native to Australia. Notice the irregular shape of the trunk. In moist, humid climates, aerial roots of many ficus trees reach the ground. Some of these roots form secondary trunks with branches, eventually expanding the spread of a single tree to a large area. The banyan tree, *Ficus benghalensis*, is the best-known species exhibiting this kind of growth. Ficus is an essential part of many animals’ diets. Our own Sumatran rhino eats foliage harvested from ficus trees planted in the Zoo.

Farther along the main walkway, just past the flamingos and the Safari Station shop, you will come to a fork in the walkway. Continue the tour by taking the walkway to the left to reach the Aquatics loop.
“Oh! How beautiful you are!”
“Am I not?” the flower responded, sweetly.
“And I was born at the same moment as the sun . . .”

Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

As you approach Aquatics, pause at the second bench on the right. Behind it you will see the cork oak, *Quercus suber*, marked with a sign. Its soft bark has been the source of commercial cork for hundreds of years. A portion of this bark can be removed every ten years or so without harming the tree. Cork oak groves are now being cultivated in California’s wine country. The ancient cork oak groves of Portugal and Spain are refuges for the highly endangered Iberian lynx and the Spanish imperial eagle.

**Turn left into Aquatics and walk up the ramp overlooking the area.** On the right side of the ramp is the beautiful *Ginkgo biloba* tree. It is a living fossil from the Jurassic period. This tree is a female ginkgo that produces a seed enclosed in a fruit with a distinctly unpleasant odor. The male ginkgo does not produce fruit and is, by comparison, a more popular landscape tree.

Planted on the left side of the ramp is a large, stately carob tree, *Ceretonia siliqua*. This tree, once exclusive to the warm Mediterranean region, has been introduced worldwide, arriving in California with the Spaniards. Its fruit, long dark brown pods with beans, is pleasant tasting and used as a chocolate substitute.

Beneath the carob tree are more cycads. Try to figure out which of these cycads is a female tree and which is a male. Look for the female’s “nest of eggs,” or seeds, and the male’s unique feature, a cone-like structure that produces pollen.

**Walk back down the ramp, turn left and continue along the main pathway toward Australia.**
A cross from the entrance to the Australian area, against the stone wall, is a *Ficus petiolaris*, the rock fig. It has large shiny green leaves with pink veins and is native to Baja California. The leaf is illustrated in the section describing the Baja and Rose Gardens. It is called a rock fig because it is usually found growing on top of a rock, its roots tightly gripping the rock’s sides. In regions drier than ours, the trunk swells to become a reservoir for water, as does the caudex of the bottle palm we saw in the Baja Garden.

**To the left of the entrance**, you will see the Australian native *Rhodosphaera rhodanthera*. Often called the yellowwood tree or the tulip satinwood tree, its lumber is prized by cabinetmakers. The tree bears clusters of pink to deep rose-colored flowers in spring, followed by shiny brown fruits that hang in clusters like grapes. It was once rare in Southern California but is now growing in popularity as an ornamental tree for street and garden.

The Australian loop is filled with native Australian plants. The imposing trees **immediately inside the entrance** are called Queensland lacebark, *Brachychiton discolor*. They feature showy sprays of pink flowers in spring followed by large velvety seed pods hanging from their branches. Two other members of this family are the cacao tree of South America, from which we get chocolate, and the African kola nut tree, the source of flavor for cola beverages.

Another brachychiton, the kurrajong tree, *B. populneus*, is located in both the gray kangaroo and koala exhibits. It bears white flowers which become woody pods. Australian aborigines made fishing lines from the bark fibers of this tree and used the seeds for food and for a beverage.
Grevillea are members of the large protea family of evergreen shrubs native to Australia. Several species are located in front of the koala enclosure and in the central planters facing the Australia House. The leaves are lacy and fern-like and the characteristic spider-like flowers come in many colors. The flowers are rich in nectar, making them popular with insects, birds and Australia’s marsupials.

Not all grevillea are shrubs. The silk oak, Grevillea robusta, is a popular landscape tree with bright golden-orange flowers that appear in early spring. You can see one standing at the tram stop by the souvenir kiosk and on the left corner as you leave the Australian loop.

Amid the grevilleas in the planters are several grass trees, Xanthorrhoea arborea. Recognizable by their round mass of long linear leaves, they appear similar to many yuccas of North America although they are unrelated. Like yuccas, they grow in a semi-arid or dry environment. Grass trees produce a cluster of tiny fragrant flowers on a stalk rising high above the leaves and looking very much like a cat o’nine tails reed.

Australia is rich in acacia trees, often called wattles. The Sydney golden wattle, Acacia longifolia, is planted throughout the Zoo. You can see several opposite the flamingo exhibit. Its bright golden flowers bring a glow to gray February days. All acacias regardless of size, shape or origin have yellow blossoms.

There are several acacias in the planters in front of the Australia House. These include the striking Acacia xanthophloea, or fever tree, immediately identified by its distinctive yellow bark. The fever tree, immortalized in Rudyard Kipling’s The Elephant’s Child, is not native to Australia but to swampy areas of southeastern Africa. Its branches are covered with sharp spines, probably as a defense against browsing animals. Australian acacias, by contrast, usually do not have spines. Plentiful in both Africa and Australia, acacia is a major food source for many animals, including the Zoo’s Masai giraffes and great apes.
Nothing says Australia like eucalyptus trees and there are several species here. The majestic pink ironbark eucalyptus trees, *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*, are **at the entrance to the Komodo dragon exhibit**. Unlike the more common smooth-bark species, their deep rust-red bark resembles the pine tree. But the slender, curved leaves hanging gracefully from their branches and the button flowers filled with bright pink stamens that appear in February are unmistakable characteristics that identify it as a member of the eucalyptus family. Its leaves are one of the favorite foods of koalas.

While eucalyptus trees represent the largest group of plants in the myrtle family, other trees in this family are also found in the Australian loop. The paperbark tree, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, is easily identified by the spongy sheaths of bark that peel from the trunk. The flowers are fluffy creamy-white clusters that bloom in summer and fall, followed by characteristic woody seed capsules that line the branches like rows of beads.

The bottlebrush, *Callistemon spp* is similar to the melaleuca and far more common throughout the Zoo. In spring and summer, a profusion of red, pink or cream flowers formed by dense clusters of bristle-like stamens attract nectar-loving birds.

**Leaving the Australian loop, turn left toward the North American area and follow the walkway up to the Gorilla Grill located across from the zebras.**
The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value. 

Theodore Roosevelt

North America

The path that circles around the North American area begins behind the Gorilla Grill. Here you will find two evergreen southern magnolias, Magnolia grandiflora, among the most ancient of the flowering plants.

The southern magnolia is native to North America and was introduced to England and Europe in the 18th Century. With its glossy leaves and large fragrant flowers, it was an immediate sensation. The magnolia flower depends on beetles for pollination.

Beneath the magnolias lies a bed of California wildflowers extending to a nearby group of plants on the right, called mahonia. Mahonias are evergreen shrubs with small spiny, toothed leaflets. When mature, the leaves are rather stiff and prickly, like holly leaves. In spring, mahonias have clusters of tiny yellow flowers arranged in dense spikes. After blooming, most varieties of these shrubs produce blue-black berries, favorites of birds and wildlife. The berries are usually found on the tops of the shrub where they can be quickly gathered and consumed. Varieties of mahonia planted here include the leatherleaf mahonia or Mahonia bealei and the Oregon grape, Mahonia aquifolium, the state flower of Oregon.

The garden area of the fox exhibit is on the corner across from the magnolias and mahonias. There, next to the exhibit entrance, you will see the coast redwood, Sequoia sempervirens, one of the tallest tree species in the world, topping out at over 350 feet. A survivor of forests that once covered the Northern Hemisphere, the coast redwood now occurs naturally in a narrow coastal belt in Northern California and Southern Oregon.
11. Flannel Bush

Next to the coast redwood is a large native shrub called the flannel bush or fremontia, *Fremontodendron californicum*. Its leaves are usually three-lobed with sharp points along the edges. The bristly hairs on the leaves and fruit give it its common name of flannel bush. In March and early April, it is covered with large bright yellow flowers that contrast strongly with its dark green leaves. This shrub is planted here and around the coyote exhibit.

Growing beside the flannel bush are large, native shrubs of California lilac or ceanothus. They bear large fragrant clusters of tiny flowers in shades of violet, blue or white on branch tips. These flowers contain substances called saponins that cause the blossoms to lather up when rubbed in water. Native Americans used the flowers to make soaps and shampoos.

12. California Lilac

Continue along the loop to the entrance to the coyote exhibit. Here you will see the impressive bald cypress tree, *Taxodium distichum*, from the southeastern United States. If it were growing in a swamp it would have “knees,” woody protuberances just above the water line allowing air to get to its roots. Look carefully at the base of the tree to see a “knee” beginning to emerge. In winter, you will see a bare tree for it is one of the few conifers that is fully deciduous.

On the immediate right of the entrance is a shrub or small tree called western redbud, *Cercis occidentalis*. A member of the pea and bean family, it is found in California foothills and is drought-tolerant once established. Its leaves are roughly heart-shaped. Green in summer, they turn yellow or red in autumn before dropping. In spring, small pink and magenta flowers cover the bare branches. Local Native Americans used the young branches for basket frames.

From the coyote exhibit, turn right and continue walking past the wolf enclosure toward the Bactrian camels. The hillside fronting their enclosure contains more California lilac and western redbud.
Continuing on, the area in front of the Chacoan peccaries also contains several native plants: red monkeyflowers, *Mimulus cardinalis*, coyote brush, *Baccharis pilularis* and mahonia. Coyote brush is a shrub with tiny oval leaves that become sticky in warm weather. This is probably an adaptation to protect itself from drying out and to keep cool. It is a valuable part of our chaparral plant community because it regenerates quickly from its dense root crowns after a brush fire. It is therefore an important plant for controlling erosion.

**The hillside behind the vending machines** is planted, on the right, with varieties of California lilac, and on the left, with varieties of currants and gooseberries. They are part of the ribes family and are planted around the North American area. They provide nourishing berries and flowers for birds and wildlife. Look for some of these shrubs in the planter with the bottle palm across from the desert bighorn sheep.

Notice the large shrub planted on the right as you approach the desert bighorn sheep enclosure. This is the California buckeye, *Aesculus californica*. It is commonly found on dry slopes and canyons and blooms in May with large conical clusters of fragrant white flowers on the branch tips. Its seeds are poisonous and were used by Native Americans to stun fish, making them easier to catch.

Several North American honey locust trees, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, are growing among exhibits in this area. Look for one in the desert bighorn sheep enclosure. It’s a tall tree with rough gray bark and small leaflets that provide filtered shade. The fruits, long brown seed pods, are eaten by many animals, domestic and wild.

**Continue walking past the Arabian oryx and Grant’s zebras. As you leave North America, the pathway will veer to the left toward the African loop. Take the path on the far left uphill.**
The scale on which nature works is so vast . . . that any cause, however slight and however liable to be veiled and counteracted by accidental circumstances, must in the end produce its full legitimate results.

Alfred Russel Wallace

Africa

The African area features a number of plants native to Africa and now common to gardens of Southern California: the bird of paradise or Strelitzia reginae, the lily of the Nile or agapanthus, Agapanthus africanus, clivia or Clivia miniata and cape honeysuckle, Tecomaria capensis, a flowering shrub or vine. They are planted throughout the Zoo as well as in the African area.

As you walk from the gerenuk exhibit uphill toward the lions, you may detect a strong skunk-like odor. The culprits are the purple flowers all around you, society garlic, Tulbaghia violacea, that give off an onion or garlic odor. On the plus side, the leaves can be used in cooking.

Look for a plant called lion’s tail, Leonotis leonurus, along the walkway of the African loop. It’s a sprawling bushy plant that can grow as tall as six feet. The flower is a tawny-gold ring of tubular-shaped petals growing in a whorl around the stem. A stem may have two or three whorls of these furry gold blossoms, a tail of which any lion would be proud.

Directly across from the lion enclosure, take the path with the Mahale Café on its right. As you turn up this path, look up to your left to see a Kaffirboom coral tree, Erythrina caffra surrounded by strelitzia, the bird of paradise. Native to Africa, it has the thorny trunk, trifoliate leaves, one leaf having three leaflets, and seed pods with poisonous red seeds that are typically found in all coral trees of the world. The scarlet flowers of the African tree are broader, more open and accessible to nectar-eating song birds than are the tubular flowers of its South American relatives that are visited by hummingbirds. Children in Africa play games with, and make jewelry from the shiny red seeds.
After viewing the coral tree, **continue along this path to the top of the hill.** Just to the right of the mandrill exhibit is a tall leafy tree called the pink ball dombeya or *Dombeya cayeurii*. In January, the soft pink flowers hang in round clusters among large heart-shaped leaves.

After spending a few moments with the mandrills, **return downhill, keeping to the left and passing the Masai giraffes as you head toward the Mahale Mountain chimpanzees.**

From the benches facing the exhibit, you may see our three chimpanzee youngsters play with everyone and everything. Then look at Australia’s Moreton Bay fig, *Ficus macrophylla*, behind and above you. All of the more than 800 species in the fig family, found in tropics worldwide, exude a white milky sap that is the origin of latex. This sap is harvested from cuts in the bark. The nutritious fruit of these trees is consumed by many rainforest inhabitants.

**Continue your tour through the chimpanzee house then turn left up the pathway.** Continue straight past the siamang exhibit to the bridge beside the markhor enclosure. This leads to the Asian loop.
Let us ask the hypothetical and simple question: “What have Orang-utans done to us that we have driven them to near extinction?” The answer to this is easy (as indeed for most other species in the predicament): . . . nothing, absolutely nothing.

Gisela Kaplan and Lesley Rogers

Asia

From the bridge next to the markhor exhibit, look to your right to see the flowering purple orchid trees, Bauhinia variegata. The blossoms are shades of purple sometimes marked with white. This beautiful tree is native to Southeast Asia. A little farther along, flanking both sides of the bridge closest to the Sumatran tigers, are majestic Canary Island pines, Pinus canariensis, native to the Canary Islands.

As you stop to admire the tigers, look to the far right of the planter in front of you to see the fruitless mulberry, Morus alba. It is “fruitless” because it has flowers that produce only pollen. It may aggravate your allergies, but it will not stain your sidewalk or patio. Mulberry leaves are the exclusive food of silk worms.

Continuing past the hippo and rhino exhibits, you will come to the children’s Play Park with a grove of ginkgo trees beside it. You first met the ginkgo in the Aquatics area. These ancient trees were once nearly extinct but saved by the Chinese who prized their beauty and utility. Europeans also admired this tree and introduced it to Europe and North America.

Across the road from the Play Park is a Garden of Beastly Delights, grown and tended by volunteers. This garden is stocked with plants that are favorite foods of many of the Zoo’s animals. The plants are marked with name tags that include the names of animals that enjoy them.

Enjoy the black bears and tigers for a moment and then cross back over the bridge to exit the Asian area and reach the South American loop. At the Sumatran rhino exhibit opposite the siamangs, take the left fork of the pathway that skirts the side of the rhino enclosure.
As you continue downhill, you may notice boughs of ficus lying in the rhino exhibit. Recall that ficus is a favorite and essential food for the Sumatran rhino.

At the vending machines, there is a large planter with several trees including two impressive Chilean wine palms, *Jubaea chilensis*. This rare tree, native to Chile, has an large smooth gray trunk and a mass of long feathery fronds at its crown. It produces a sugary sap used in the production of an alcoholic beverage. It has been so widely harvested that it is now endangered.

From the palms, continue left to the snow leopards. The Aldabra tortoise enclosure will be on your right. Once at the snow leopards, you will notice deodar cedar trees, *Cedrus deodara*, growing tightly packed on both sides of the entrance and inside the exhibit itself. Like the snow leopard, the deodar cedar is native to the Himalayas and can live more than 1,000 years.

After your visit to the shy snow leopard, go left and continue down the path to see the Aldabra tortoises at the entrance of the South American area.
. . . Schultes could resolve botanical problems in the moment . . . realign species and genera just by holding a blossom to the light. In the entire history of Amazonian botany, only a handful of scientists have possessed this talent.

Wade Davis, *One River*

South America

**Brazilian pepper trees**, *Schinus terebinthifolius*, are planted around the South American area, both in the central planter and in exhibits such as that of the mountain tapir. These popular landscaping trees from Brazil are attractive for their dark green foliage and red berries. But beware, and don’t touch! They are members of the poison oak and poison ivy family and the sap may irritate your skin.

As you exit the South American loop, notice the Hong Kong orchid tree, *Bauhinia blakeana* on the left side of the pied hornbill exhibit. Native to India and China, the tree is spectacular in bloom, bearing flowers of magenta and pink. Note the characteristic two-lobed leaf common to all bauhinias.

You will find the Brazilian white orchid tree, *Bauhinia forficata*, planted in front of the scarlet macaw exhibit. A native to South America, it is one of several species of bauhinias in the Zoo. It bears creamy white flowers in summer and masses of seed pods in fall. These pods explode and distribute seeds around the area. Notice the many volunteer seedlings in the adjacent gardens.

The planter across from the scarlet macaw exhibit contains a bank of plants called bat-faced cupheas, *Cuphea llavea*, native to stream beds in Mexico. In spring and summer, they are covered with tiny red and purple flowers. Look closely and see if you can see a bat’s face in the arrangement of the flower’s petals.

Pause at the desert garden next to the Reptile House. This garden contains many cacti and succulents from South America as well as plants from North and Central America. These include spectacular examples of agaves, often called century plants. Agaves are leaf succulents that grow in a rosette pattern with their leaves encircling the plant. The leaves unfurl from a central growing tip and are so tightly compacted that the toothed margins make imprints on the surface of the leaf above it.
The trees in the center are Jerusalem thorn, *Parkinsonia aculeata*, also called Mexican palo verde. The tiny leaves are shed for most of the year. In spring, the branches are covered with bright yellow flowers. The tree provides important shade and protection for seedlings of many desert plants.

Notice the cactus nestled on the branches of a palo verde tree. It is a tropical cactus that, like many plants of the tropical rain forest, needs trees for support as it climbs to reach the sunlight.

At the tip of the garden is the *Agave americana*, an outstanding example with its beautiful variegated gray-green and creamy yellow leaves. It can grow to an enormous size with leaves up to six feet in length. It was introduced around the world as an ornamental plant and is now found in warm regions of the Mediterranean, Africa, India and Australia.

*From this garden, walk uphill and cross the perimeter road to reach the path leading up to the Aviary.*
Except during the nine months before he draws breath, no man manages his affairs as well as a tree does.

George Bernard Shaw

Aviary and Treetops Terrace

As you arrive at the path leading up to the Aviary, look to your left to see a stand of floss silk trees, Chorisia speciosa. They are recognizable by their bright green thorny trunks.

Native to Brazil, floss silk trees bloom in October and November when they are covered with large pink and white flowers. Their fruits are large green avocado-shaped pods containing both seeds and a downy white fluff that gently covers the area when the pod splits open. The seeds are favorites of many species of parrots. Continue uphill to reach the gardens in front of the Aviary.

There is a Montezuma cypress, Taxodium mucronatum, on your left behind a row of azaleas and in front of a tree fern. The cypress, called ahuehuete by the Aztecs and considered sacred, is the national tree of Mexico. Even so, its conservation status is “threatened.”

Visit the dawn redwood, Metasequoia glyptostroboides, to the right of the ladies’ rest room by the Aviary. This tree was widely distributed in the Northern Hemisphere from the Cretaceous period down to about 26 million years ago when it vanished from the fossil record and was believed to be extinct. In 1941, a living dawn redwood tree was discovered in a remote area of China. After World War Two, an expedition led by paleobotanist Dr. Ralph Chaney of UC Berkeley located a small forest of these trees in a valley 30 miles from where the first tree was found. Today, dawn redwoods are growing all over the world, serving as ambassadors from the Age of Dinosaurs. Like the bald cypress, the dawn redwood is deciduous and so is bare during winter.
Leave the Aviary gardens by the path downhill to reach Treetops Terrace. On each side of the main entrance are two coral trees. These lovely trees are part of the genus Erythrina, found in tropical regions around the world. You have already seen Kaffirboom coral trees in the African loop. All species feature thorny trunks and stems, a compound leaf with three leaflets and long pods with shiny red seeds. The flowers are usually flame red, blooming on the tips of usually bare branches in late winter before new leaves emerge.

The tree on the right, tucked behind a large hibiscus shrub, is the Mexican coral tree also called the naked coral tree, *Erythrina coralloides*. The tree on the left is *Erythrina x bidwillii*, a hybrid of two species. The blossoms of both trees are tubular in shape and popular with hummingbirds that pollinate the tree while feeding.

Next to the Mexican coral tree is the firewheel tree, *Stenocarpus sinuatus*, native to Australia. It has dense foliage with shiny leaves, but its true glory is its brilliant red and yellow blossoms, large tubular flowers arranged in a circular cluster like spokes of a wheel.

The palm trees surrounding Zoo Meadow are often called washingtonias. You can see them behind the firewheel and Mexican coral trees. These two species, the Mexican fan palm, *Washingtonia robusta*, and the California fan palm, *W. filifera*, are the same palms we saw near the gift shops. However, the washingtonias here are in a natural state with their petticoats of fronds clearly visible.

Washingtonias grow naturally in isolated patches of desert in Arizona, California and Mexico where desert-dwelling Native Americans used virtually every part of these palms. The fronds became roofs for huts. The blades were woven into baskets, rope and sandals, and the new shoots were woven into sombreros. Their fruits were eaten fresh, or dried to be made into mush.

You have now completed your botanical tour of the Zoo. But just as it takes more than one visit to see all the Zoo’s animals, you will need more time to fully enjoy and explore the Zoo’s plants. As the seasons change, so do the plants, many of them transformed by spectacular blooms. Please use the bloom calendar to plan a return visit. Come back soon to renew your acquaintances or to make new friends among the Zoo’s plants and animals.
Today I have grown taller from
walking with the trees.

Karle Wilson

The Zoo in Bloom –
a calendar by area and season

Blooming year-round throughout the Zoo

Cape honeysuckle
Cape plumbago
Lantana
Blue hibiscus
Society garlic
Grevillea

Zoo Entrance Area

Winter
Aloes — desert gardens, meerkat and zebra exhibits
Euphorbias — Baja Garden, meerkat exhibit
Azaleas — Education Building, Aviary gardens, walkways
Camellias — Education Building, walkways

Spring
Fortnight lilies — patio planter, around Zoo
Pink trumpet tree — planter near gift shops
Western redbud — outdoor tables next to Grill
Wisteria — Adventure Island

Summer
Tipu tree — front corner of Grill
Red bauhinia — central planter
**Main Walkway**

**Winter**
- Aloes — meerkat exhibit
- Acacias — from Grill corner to tram tickets

**Spring**
- Ferraro Rose garden
- Daylilies — behind Ferraro Rose Garden

**Summer**
- Mimosa — between flamingos and tram tickets
- Giant bird of paradise — just beyond flamingos, near Safari Shuttle stand

**Aquatics**

**Winter**
- Magnolia galaxy — left side of ramp

**Spring**
- Idaho locust (pink blossoms) — North American alligator exhibit
- Black locust (white blossoms) — North American alligator exhibit
- Southern magnolia — island in N.A. alligator exhibit

**Australia**

**Winter**
- Pink ironbark eucalyptus tree — African walkway, across from gerenuks

**Spring**
- Bottlebrush — all around Australia, throughout the Zoo
- Silk oak — tram stop near souvenir kiosk, left side entrance to the Australian loop
- Paperbark tree — in front of center enclosure
Summer

Flame tree — in front of Australia House
Blue hibiscus — planter in front of Australia House, in bloom year-round
Grevillea — planters in front of Australia House; around koala exhibit, in bloom year-round
Queensland lacebark — in front of yellow-footed rock wallaby exhibit

North America

Spring

California lilac — planted from fox to coyote exhibit, front of Bactrian camels
Mahonia — planters around Grill and fox exhibit
Flannel bush — planted from fox to coyote exhibits
Pacific coast iris (Douglas iris) — between fox and wolf exhibits, same side as exhibits
Western redbud — front entrance on right side of coyote exhibit
California buckeye — right side of desert bighorn sheep exhibit
Southern magnolias — planter behind Grill

Summer

California wildflowers — in front of Bactrian camels and Chacoan peccaries
California sunflowers, monkeyflowers, penstemon, woolly blue curls — in front of Bactrian camels and Chacoan peccaries

Africa

Winter

Pink ball dombeya — right side of entrance, mandrill exhibit
Aloes — planters near monkeys and mandrills
Pink ironbark eucalyptus tree — across from gerenuks and bongo

Spring

Kaffirboom coral tree — across from lion, around African loop
Clivias — around African loop, throughout the Zoo
Echium, “Pride of Madeira” — planter between siamangs and gibbons and behind the Mahale Café
Pink trumpet tree — on left side of entrance, mandrill exhibit; bridge beside bongo
Trinidad flame bush — across from African lion
Cape chestnut — all along walkway between North America and Africa

Summer
Mimosa — inside gorilla exhibit
Bird of Paradise — around walkways, planters
Lion’s tail — walkways around African loop
Agapanthus or lily of the Nile — planter around sifaka exhibit
Red bauhinia — planter around sifaka, pathway between Africa and Asia

Year-round
Society garlic — walkway between gerenuks and African lion

Asia

Spring
Purple orchid tree — bridge across from markhors
Nandina, heavenly bamboo — on walkway from Play Park to rhino enclosure

South America

Spring
Hong Kong orchid tree — scarlet macaw exhibit and around vending machines
Cacti — desert garden
Mexican palo verde — desert garden
Abutilon — planted around exhibits and in central planter
Princess flower — in front of the mountain tapir exhibit

Summer
Brazilian white orchid tree — in front of the scarlet macaw exhibit
Bat-faced cupheas — across from scarlet macaw exhibit
Fall
   Floss silk tree — across from the capuchin monkey

Winter
   Crassulas — desert gardens

**Aviary Walkway**

Winter
   Prunus — hillside; left side of entrance to path going to Reptile House
   Pink magnolia — across from path to Reptile House, Aviary garden

Spring
   Pink powderpuff shrub — to the right of the condor exhibit
   Pink trumpet tree — hillside
   Fortnight lilies — near pink magnolia
   Bottlebrush — hillsides around Treetops Terrace
   Flowering cherry — on perimeter road near entrance to path going to
   Reptile House

Summer
   Bird of paradise — under the Washingtonias
   Giant bird of paradise — across from restrooms, near Aviary entrance

Fall
   Floss silk tree — below Aviary, across from path to Reptile House

**Treetops Terrace**

Winter
   Azaleas — all around Treetops Terrace

Spring
   Coral trees — on either side of entrance to Treetops
   Bottlebrush — along pathway and hillside around Treetops
   Firewheel tree — blooms from April and peaks in July; right side of
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