



Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society

The Vision, an Interview with Eve Vigil by Chenda Lor

A botanical garden is a setting through which we tell a story - the story of life in the five Mediterranean climate zones of the earth. The vital interactions between plants and people became the San Luis Obispo Botanical Gardens mission and the goal is to inspire deep respect and understanding for the natural world we depend on. The Garden's story tells of the importance, the significance and the fragility of the five Mediterranean ecosystems of the world."

Eve attended UC Berkeley but her degree in liberal arts did not satisfy her passion for science. When her husband accepted a job at Cal Poly in Environmental En-

gineering, Eve got a second degree in Ornamental Horticulture. In her senior year she landed a summer job

Forest project. The emphasis on drought tolerant landscaping and the role of Mediterranean plants

At the time, California was in the throes of a severe, multi-year drought. The challenge facing Eve was to develop a list of plants that were both "beautiful" and "drought tolerant". Xeriscape became the model that Eve explored to replace the plants that require extensive irrigation and water.

The xeriscaping movement favored California natives and plants from the four other Mediterranean climates. Botanical gardens were the only places where Eve could find the plants she needed. From this experience came a question – why don't we have a botanical garden in San Luis



with Los Padres National Forest as the horticulturist for the Vandenberg Urban

sparked Eve's interest in sharing this knowledge with others.

(Continued on page 2)



Lavatera x clementii

See Carol's article on page 6

Meeting January 19th at 2:00

The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden

Our speaker will be Eve Vigil, one of the founders of the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden. Please see the

excellent article above about how Eve helped get the garden started.

The meeting will be at 2:00, Stone Pine Hall, 200 South "H" Street, next to the

Lompoc Museum.

Light refreshments provided. All garden enthusiasts are welcome.



The Vision cont. from page 1

Obispo?

Eve approached Professor Woody Frey at Cal Poly with her idea to start a Botanical Garden here. His enthusiastic response: “Eve, that’s a great idea! Why don’t YOU do it!” Not the answer she expected, but the idea was worth exploring.

Eve talked with anyone who would listen and quickly realized that people were the key ingredient to make a botanica garden happen. She needed to develop a strong, committed and multi-disciplinary team to tackle the project.

A chance encounter got the process started. Eve was interviewing for a position



on the San Luis Obispo Parks Commission where she met a fellow applicant, Joe Donaldson, a Landscape Architecture professor at Cal Poly. An initial conversation led to coffee and brainstorming a vision for a botanical garden.

A mission for the future garden was self-evident - to display and study plants of the five Mediterranean climates of the world. Joe invited two landscape architecture students, Erin Kelleher and Allyson Biskner to join the project, forming an initial team to start an organization and to search for a location for the garden. The Friends of the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1991.

The Friends had three initial goals: find a site of at least 100 acres; master plan the botanical garden; and develop a “Preview Garden”. By 1998 all three goals had been achieved.

On October 22, 1994 all five County Supervisors joined the Friends in dedicating the 150.4-acre parcel in El Chorro Regional Park for the botanical garden.

The Portico Group, an international design and planning firm, developed the Master Plan, which won the

prestigious Site Planning and Analysis Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1997. The San Luis Obispo landscape architecture firm, FIRMA, designed the Preview Garden which opened to the public in 1997.

Membership and volunteers have expanded rapidly. Volunteers began to specialize in specific areas that interested them. They worked on staffing the organization, building the research library and writing educational newsletters. Docent tours of the garden and lectures were added. The Board of Directors expanded and fund raising began in earnest.

All this and more continues to this day. We have that most important ingredient in all successful projects – an outstanding team of people who have brought the Garden this far and who will carry on the work in the future.

Eve and everybody who has been part of this grassroots, amazing project feels that the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden will leave a permanent legacy of conservation and understanding of the California flora and the Mediterranean ecosystems of which we are all a part of!

Albert Thompson, Renaissance Man by Carol Redhead

A favorite son of Lompoc, who belongs to the history of this town, is leaving us for that other clime of Ohio. Albert (Al) Thompson is a renaissance man, who stole into the hearts and lives of hundreds of us through his many endeavors.

During the 1960s, after a teaching stint in Seattle, Washington, Al was teaching back in his home state of Ohio when a recruitment letter from the Lompoc Unified School District, in desperate need of teachers due to the rapid rise of nearby Vandenberg Air Force Base, arrived. Having an interest in California, Al, at the age of 32, applied and was immediately hired for a position on Vandenberg beginning in the fall of 1964. He retired from teaching 24 years later.

As his first full summer of 1965 approached, AL realized, due to the school's 10 month salary schedule at the time, he would be short of rent money during the summer months and hired on as a flower field roguer [removing rogue flowers of inappropriate form] for Burpee Seeds Lompoc Branch, a job which gained him knowledge about the flower seed business industry. One amazing piece of that knowledge being that the Lompoc Valley grew 60% of the flower seeds of the world at that time.

That field experience was

instrumental in Al becoming involved in both the botanic and horticultural worlds. He eventually became an honorary-life member of the Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticulture Society and columnist for the Lompoc record writing weekly botanic and horticultural items.

As well, he spent four years as a Lompoc Valley Beautification Commission member to support the early Flower Festival, honoring Lompoc's home gardeners for their hard work creating beautiful gardens.

One year, AL was honored to be interviewed and filmed by Huell Howser as a trained docent at the La Purisima Mission. Mr. Howser filmed a Sunday Program featuring the work of Al as the Mission garden historian, where he had served for 21 1/2 years.

Al not only taught and was part of the valley seed industry, but he was also a large part of the local and county arts associations. He became for eight years a board member of the Lompoc Valley Art Association, serving as president for one year, and is now an honorary life member. The well-known murals of Lompoc also owe their fame to Al as he had as a guest the first artist, Art Mortimer, in his own home while Art showed the artists of Lompoc how murals are constructed. More artistic endeavors led Al to serve



Al in his garden above, visiting Gerlinde's garden and leading a tour of Arroyo Hondo below

four years on the 4th District Santa Barbara County Arts Commission. Having had some experience in acting and directing, in 1973, Al became the founder of the local theatre group - the Lompoc Civic Theatre.

When asked what Al will remember of his long life of 88 years here in the Lompoc Valley of Arts and Flowers, he says he will surely miss all the wonderful friends, the beauty of this area, the plants, flowers, art, and so much of the good life here.

He is moving to a retirement community called Copeland Oaks in Sebring, Ohio to be near his sister, relatives and friends. There he will enjoy gardening, hiking through nearby woods, and a lake. Thousands of his friends in Lompoc will say farewell to Al Thompson, a cheerful, energetic, and true friend who blessed us with memories never to be forgotten.





Charlie and Rosemary take a break from work in the Burton Mesa Chaparral Garden, 2018

Photo Mimi Erland

President's Message by *Charlie Blair*

Welcome to the new year for our group. We are looking forward to a presentation on the San Luis Obispo Botanic Garden by Eve Vigil, one of its founders.

Our Spring Workday will be at the Drought Tolerant Garden by the Lompoc Wastewater Plant, with a June workday at the Burton Mesa Chaparral Garden at Allan Hancock College.

Last year, we had a table for two days at Old Town Farmers Market that was

very well received. In an effort to increase our outreach, we will have a table at the 12 January Route One Farmers Market in Vandenberg Village 10 AM – 2 PM, by the VVCSD Office on Constellation Road. If this is successful, we may continue having a table on the Sunday before our regular meetings.

We have several of our publications, The Burton Mesa Chaparral DVD, the Vern Human book on local

natural history, and Bess Christensen's Acres of Loveliness, a history of the Lompoc flower seed industry for sale. These make great gifts.

We bid a fond farewell to Al Thompson, one of our early members and strong supporters. He is moving back to Ohio January eleventh. We will miss him and his many great articles. Hopefully, he will continue to send us some.

Minutes from November 17th by *Judy McKinnon*

The meeting was brought to order at 2:15 pm by President Charlie Blair.

Minutes were approved on a motion by Al Thompson and second by Ken Jorgensen.

Treasurers Report was presented by Julie Levy: current balance is \$17,805.12, down \$470.00. Dues were paid to CGCI at state and district levels, and \$250 went to a grant to the Lompoc HS CFOE.

Charlie announced that a table at the Sunday Village farmers market will be staffed by LVBHS on January 12, 2020 from 10 am until 2 pm. Rosemary Holmes moved that the society pay the \$15 fee to al-

low us to sell plants and literature, and Hannelore Nixon seconded the motion. The motion passed, and Mimi Erland sent a sign-up sheet around for volunteers to staff from 10 am to noon and noon to 2 pm.

A Nominating Committee is needed to create a slate of officers for the coming year. Jane Rees volunteered to be a member at large of the board. Sandra Villegas Ploutz volunteered to work on publicity.

Charlie announced that the board decided to move annual work at the Drought Tolerant Garden to next February, and the work at the AHC Burton Mesa Chaparral Garden will be in June.

Carol Redhead had information on camellias which she shared with the society.

Because this meeting ends with the plant exchange, Alyce Martin suggested that leftover plants be either saved to sell at the farmers market, or given to Jan Maly, who does volunteer gardening on private lots in the city.

The meeting was adjourned for the plant exchange. Members described the plants they brought, and exchange took place.



A lovely December day in the Yucatan Peninsula

Photo Julie Levy

**LOMPOC VALLEY BOTANIC AND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
2020 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM**

Please fill out and mail or bring to the next meeting with your check for **\$10.00** (or \$20.00 for two years) to:
LVBHS, P.O. Box 1266, Lompoc, CA 93438-1266.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail (for LVBHS use only): _____

New member _____ or Renewing member _____ Amount Paid \$ _____ Today's Date _____

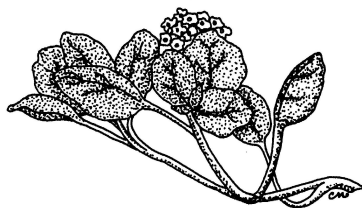
I would like to help with:

_____ The Burton Mesa Chaparral Garden at Allan Hancock College, Lompoc Center

_____ The Drought Tolerant Garden on Central Ave _____ Planning field trips

_____ Website support _____ Hospitality (refreshments) _____ Newsletter _____ Telephoning

_____ Serving on the Board Other: _____



Ambronja maritima

Red Sand Verbena

LVBHS founded June 5, 1977

BOARD MEMBERS:

President

Charlie Blair 733-3189

Vice President

Warren Arnold 736-7633

Secretary

Judy McKinnon 735-1032

Treasurer/Membership

Julie Levy 735-8061

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Chaparral Garden

Mimi, Julie, Charlie

Drought Tolerant Garden

Rosemary Holmes, Mimi

Horticultural

Carol Redhead 819-0760

Newsletter

Mimi Erland 315-7105

Publicity

Sandra Villegas Ploutz

Website lvbhs.org

Julie Levy

justinfo@hotmail.com

At Large Representatives:

Alyce Martin 736-3506

Patcine Beaman 736-7687

Jane Rees 310-951-1151

**Check out LVBHS.org
for all kinds of
wonderful information
about horticulture in
the Lompoc Valley**

Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society

P.O. Box 1266
Lompoc, CA 93438-1266



Ferns in New Zealand

Photo Jan Keller

Lavatera by Carol Redhead

Lavatera, or tree mallow, is a good selection for a tough, drought-tolerant (once established), easy-to-grow plant that has beautiful flowers summer to autumn, except for my friend's *lavatera*, which was dropped in from the sky by birds and is still blooming with beautiful bright pink flowers in the middle of cold January.

I bought two 2-gallon *lavatera* × *clementii* 'Lavender Lady' over 1-1/2 years ago, which now stand over eight feet tall and six feet wide. These have lavender flowers during spring to winter. The trunks and branches are woody, but easy-to-prune to shape. These *lavateras* do not seem fussy about soil types, as some are in sandy soil, and some in a heavier clay, sand mix. They



grow best in full sun and are hardy to -20 degrees F.

According to the Sunset Western Garden Book, *Lavatera* is named after the Lavater family of Zurich, but for many the word means "easy to grow". The flowers resemble single hollyhocks. Several varieties of

lavatera are diverse in height and width, length of blooming time, flower color, perennial, or annual, and zone preference. You can look in your Sunset Western Garden Book or online for the following varieties: *L. maritime* (*L. bicolor*), *L. thuringiaca*, and *L. trimestris* - annual mallow.