

NEWSLETTER Volume 2 Number 2

#### **2012 Calendar of Events for FALL** http://www.palomar.edu/arboretum/calendarEvents.htm

# Events, Workshops, Lectures and Tours for 2012

\*Thursday, October 4 8:00 am - 3:00 pm **Annual Arboretum Plant Sale** Near the Student Union Flag Pole

The public is welcome! For more information email Tony Rangel arangel@palomar.edu or call (760) 744-1150 x2133

#### Saturday, October 6, 2012 **Annual Fall Arboretum Beautification Day** 9:00 am - Noon

Meet at the Patron's Pavilion in the Arboretum 1140 W. Mission Road, San Marcos, CA 92069 Sponsored by the Friends of the Palomar College Arboretum Please RSVP Tony Rangel if you are planning to help. Email: arangel@palomar.edu or call: (760) 744-1150 x2133 Free parking in Parking Lot #5 for this event day and time only.

Continental breakfast in the morning and water will be provided through-out the day.

Please bring along your rake, shovel, gloves, hat, sunscreen & sunglasses. Mark your tools with your name and phone number

\*Saturday, November 3

9:00 am - 11:00 am The Kingdom Fungi with Steve Farrar

Room: First Floor NS Building in room #139 Please RSVP Tony Rangel if you are planning to attend this lecture. Email: arangel@palomar.edu or call: (760) 744-1150 x2133 Free parking in Parking Lot #5 for this event day and time only. http://www.palomar.edu/arboretum/fungiLecture2011.htm

August 27, 2012

Mr. Farrar has almost 30 years of experience in various aspects of the mushroom industry including mushroom farm design, construction and startup; mushroom cultivation equipment sales, cultivation of culinary mushrooms (Oyster, King Trumpet, Shiitake, Maitake, Enoki, Shimeji), cultivation of medicinal mushrooms (Cordyceps, Reishi, Lion's Mane, Turkey Tail, etc for dietary supplement products; and the utilization of spent mushroom compost.



### **Past Events**

ast April 28, 2012 was the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Garden 50th Anniversary Celebration sponsored by The Friends of the Palomar College Arboretum and The Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society. About 100 people attended the festivities, including a luncheon and tours of the Palomar

College campus, Arboretum and Cactus Garden by Tony Rangel, Dick Henderson and Wayne Armstrong. The Cactus Garden was especially spectacular because it was in full bloom.



The beautiful red torch cactus (Echinopsis huascha) native to northwestern Argentina.



A large Australian bottle tree (Brachychiton populneus) at west end of the new Multidisciplinary Building.



#### The Amazing Pokeweed Family (Phytolaccaceae), June 10, 2012

The Palomar College Arboretum includes several L large South American trees in the pokeweed family (Phytolaccaceae), a small family found mostly in Africa and the New World. It also includes a native North American perennial herb and some unusual tropical vines, mostly native to the Caribbean region, Central and South America. Agdestis clematidea is a climbing vine native to Mexico and Guatemala. It grows from a huge gray tuber weighing up to 150 pounds and resembling a large granite boulder. Another interesting species called hoop vine (Trichostigma octandrum) is native to the Virgin Islands. Like a woody boa constrictor, it trails along the forest floor, ascending tropical trees and often forming tangled masses of serpentine branches. It is essentially leafless except on new growth where leaves are produced. Hoop vine is used in basketry on the island of St. John, a rare art that is only practiced today by a few native islanders.

ne of the most interesting trees in the Arboretum Jis the ombu tree (*Phytolacca dioica*) native to the pampas of Argentina. Ombu trees (also called umbu) grow to a height and spread of 60 feet or more, often with multiple trunks developing from an enormous base resembling a giant pedestal. The huge base may be three to six feet tall and 95 feet in circumference. The wood is very soft and separates into layers when dry like tightly rolled up cardboard. In their native grasslands of Argentina, ombu trees are widely spaced and often the only trees for miles. They are called "lighthouses of the pampas" by gauchos who use them for welcome landmarks and shelters. The massive, fire-resistant trunk contains water storage tissue, an excellent adaptation for raging grass fires that periodically sweep across the pampas. Even young trees develop the characteristic enlarged (caudiciform) base, an obvious

#### by W.P. Armstrong

advantage in surviving prolonged months of drought during the dry season. Several specimens of ombu trees are planted at the Palomar College Arboretum, including an unusual hybrid between *P. dioica* and a Peruvian species *P. weberbaueri*. We have two large specimen trees of the *P. dioica x weberbaueri hybrid*, one near the main entrance and the other above the Palm Garden.

The flowers of *Phytolacca dioica* do not have petals. Instead they have numerous conspicuous stamens (technically referred to as an androecium) and a pistil (gynoecium) in the same flower, although racemes in fruit may be lacking evidence of stamens. In some flowers with mature stamens the gynoecium is not fully developed. Most references list this plant as dioecious, a species with separate male and female trees in the population. Dioecious species typically have unisexual male and female flowers, but *Phytolacca dioica* flowers in the Arboretum appear to be bisexual.

About 12 years ago, a professor of veterinary medicine contacted me regarding *Phytolacca* trees in the Arboretum. He came across the Palomar College Arboretum while searching Wayne's Word on the Internet. He needed a supply of leaves for his research on a natural insecticide for livestock. Several weeks later he came to Palomar College and obtained large bags of the leaves. This illustrates another valuable use for botanical gardens that contain medicinal plants from far-away lands on different continents.

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a large perennial herb native to the eastern United States and occasionally naturalized in a few areas of San Diego county. Poke is derived from the Algonquian Indian word "pakon" or "puccoon," referring to a dye plant used for staining. It is sometimes spelled polk and the leaves were reportedly worn by enthusiastic supporters during the campaign of James K. Polk, 11th president of the United States. The generic name Phytolacca is derived from the Greek word phyton (plant) and the French lac (lake--a dark red pigment), referring to the crimson juice of ripe berries. Pokeweed may grow to nine feet tall, with large, alternate leaves and a carrot-like taproot. It may become a very invasive weed in southern California gardens and is difficult to eradicate when it becomes well-established. Greenish-white flowers are produced in long clusters (racemes) that droop due to the weight of ripening fruit. The flattened berries change from green to shiny purplish-black. Ripe berries yield a crimson juice that was used as a substitute for red ink and to enhance the color of pale wines. The coloring of wine with pokeweed berries has been discouraged because they are poisonous.

Freshly cut young leaves and shoots are cooked and eaten like spinach. They should be boiled twice, and the first water being discarded. In 1969, when astronaut Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a popular song on the radio was "Poke Salad Annie." The song depicted a poor southern girl who picked a wild plant called pokeweed for a vegetable. The greens are also called poke salet, and they are sometimes canned and sold in markets.

For additional information see articles & images on Wayne's Word: American Pokeweed: http://waynesword.palomar.edu/ecoph24.htm Hoop Vine On Island Of St. John: http://waynesword.palomar.edu/traug99b.htm#hoop



Raceme and apetalous flower of Phytolacca dioica. The central pistil (gynoecium) is surrounded by many stamens.



Pokeweed (Phytolacca americana). Fruiting branch and can of poke salet, the young, tender leaves of American pokeweed.



A large, multiple trunk ombu tree (Phytolacca dioica) in the Palomar College Arboretum.





Large Phytolacca dioica x weberbaueri above the Palm Garden. The trunk diameter of this massive hybrid tree is over 4 feet in diameter. It grew to three feet in diameter in less than 25 years.

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The Palomar College Arboretum Home Page http://www.palomar.edu/arboretum/ by W.P. Armstrong

As editor of the Friends of the Arboretum Newsletter, I want to encourage everyone who sees this newsletter to visit the Palomar College Arboretum Home Page at the above URL.

Elaine Armstrong has done a marvelous job placing all of this information and images on-line. From the above table you can quickly go to the Events Calendar, view important Announcements and see photos of Past Events. In fact, this page should be in the Favorites Menu of your Browser. PDF files of the latest newsletter and all previous newsletters are also available with the click of your mouse. They can be read on your tablet PC, Kindle, Nook, iPad, laptop computer, or whatever device you are using. In my opinion these articles are easier to read electronically than the original printed material. You can even print out a copy and read it at your leisure.

Screen capture image of Arboretum Home Page.



# Would you like to be an Arboretum Volunteer?

Maintaining the Palomar College Arboretum is an enormous task and takes countless hours to keep all the gardens growing. We are often asked: What does an Arboretum volunteer do? How many hours would a volunteer be expected to work? Can anyone volunteer?

Tasks assigned to volunteers are based on an individual's knowledge, experience and physical limitations. Some horticultural experience is a plus; however it is not necessary. Basic tasks include raking leaves, sweeping, weeding and watering. Other complex tasks like trimming and planting may be asked of volunteers if they have been trained properly by the Grounds Services staff. In an effort to keep track of the large and diverse plant collection a data base of all the plants on campus is maintained. Help with this computerized data base project is always needed.

In addition to maintaining the District's plant collection we operate our own nursery and propagation area. We also maintain a seed bank for several of the more rare and unique plants. Plant propagation work is vital to the grounds department. Seeds and cuttings of our specimens are collected from various places and propagated here in our nursery. With the diversity of plants on campus, volunteers have an opportunity to work with cactus, succulents, trees and shrubs from around the world.

Complete information and a volunteer registration packet is available from the Human Resources Office at: *http://www.palomar.edu/hr/Personnel/volunteers.htm*. We request that volunteers commit to at least 4 hours per week and submit to the grounds supervisor a record of hours worked on a monthly basis. In addition, members of the Friends of the Arboretum are eligible for an annual parking pass at *http://www. palomar.edu/arboretum/ParkingPermitApplication.pdf*.

