

# PUBLIC INFORMATION

In April, 1968, the Information Section was reorganized as a separate Public Information Division with responsibilities at all three sites. The new setup is a reflection of the growth of public information services within the Department.

A new function assumed by the Tour Guide Section of the PID was the scheduling of school field trips at the Arboretum and Descanso Gardens, a move that made for greater efficiency inasmuch as the PID was already scheduling staff and volunteer tour guides for these trips and was working closely with the staff Youth Education Specialist and curriculum specialists from the Los Angeles City Schools and the office of the L. A. County Superintendent of Schools in developing course material for field trips and in planning and conducting workshops and seminars in modern teaching techniques for guides.

The number of public tram tours at the Arboretum and Descanso Gardens increased by nearly 3,000 in this biennium, despite an unusually high number of rainy days that prohibited the operation of trams.

At South Coast Botanic Garden the addition of a full-time tour guide in August, 1968, followed by the granting of 115 days a year for "as needed" guides — used mainly on weekends — made possible services to the public that, in turn, contributed to the growing attendance. These services are: giving general information on the garden and its activities; answering or referring horticultural questions; giving tours to garden clubs, youth organizations, senior citizens, and the general public; maintaining live plant and other exhibits; organizing volunteer activities; cooperating with the Audubon Society in the study and listing of birds observed within the garden.

A major part of PID work is directed toward extending public understanding of the actual and potential role of arboreta and botanic gardens in the social scheme. This is principally accomplished through publications like the quarterly magazine, *Lasca Leaves*, the Biennial Report, feature stories for newspapers, trade journals, and television, and through publicizing such Departmental activities as research projects, education programs, events, horticultural attractions, and services.



*A highlight of PID work in this biennium was a series of news stories inviting a public search for a rare tree (*Camptotheca acuminata*) containing a drug showing promise in the treatment of cancer. The PID initiated the search after it became known that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Cancer Institute were in need of mature specimens for a critical stage of laboratory tests. The stories were disseminated by national and international news services and by the U.S. Information Service overseas broadcasts. They resulted in over 2,500 tree samples being sent in to the Arboretum for identification, the location of two trees, and attention to the role a botanic garden can play in efforts to solve medical as well as environmental problems.*





Dimond, Donald S. 1961. "Public information." *Biennial report* 1967-69, 13.

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