

## THANK YOU GEORGE! WELCOME ARNOLD!

As with the changes of the seasons, the September 26th LAAF Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social brought changes to the LAAF Board of Trustees.

George Brumder turned over Board leadership to Dr. Arnold Mulder, the newly elected Board President. George served as President from 1999 through 2004, guiding the development of a long range plan for The Arboretum and over saw execution of the joint operating agreement with the Los Angeles County.

Thank you cannot be said often enough for George's years of service and leadership.

The next newsletter will feature new board members and a message from Dr. Arnold Mulder.

## MEXICO'S DAYS OF THE DEAD, A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

With fall's arrival, the long warm productive days of summer give way to the shorter days and crisp evenings of the harvest season. As growth begins to slow, and leaves change color or wither and drop, many cultures believe that the veil between the living and the shadow worlds grows thin.

Many modern Americans and their children celebrate this supernatural season at Halloween, a tradition with its roots in the ancient Celtic holy days now called Samhain that, with the coming of Christianity, became Hallowe'en (31 October), All Saints Day (1 November), and All Souls Day (2 November).

For the ancient Americans to the south, this time of year was no less special. In the fourteenth month (Quecholli) of eighteen in the Aztec calen-

dar, people visited the graves of deceased warriors and left offerings of tamales, arrows, and pine torches. After the conquest of Mexico, the Aztecs adapted their own festival for the dead to the Catholic ceremonies of All Saints and All Souls holidays. This mingling of native and sixteenth century Spanish Catholic traditions became "Día de los muertos" or "Day of the Dead," celebrated widely in Mexico even today.

Day of the Dead celebrations cover two days, both November 1 and 2. The first day is devoted to honoring the souls of children; the second day is for adults. Instead of somber days of mourning, the days of the dead are festive and upbeat. Colorful altars to honor dead family members are constructed in homes. On these altars the

departed souls are invited to return to enjoy flowers, fruits, candles, cigarettes, chocolate, and their favorite food and drinks. In the local cemetery, family and friends gather to clean family plots, decorate, drink, and remember their departed relatives. In the markets one finds lighthearted parodies of death in the form of candy skulls, cartoons, cut paper figures, and folk art showing the dead in all sorts of very human activities.

Certain flowers are associated with the Days of the Dead. In particular, the marigold (*Tagetes erecta*), or cempasuchil in Spanish, plays a prominent role. Another flower used widely at this time is the cockscomb (*Celosia cristata*), 'Mano de obispo' or 'bishop's hand' in Spanish. The brilliant orange or vivid yellow marigold heads contrast with the raucously brilliant magenta crested stems of the cockscomb and add beauty and color to altars and graveyards. Ancestors of these same marigolds were important in Aztec ceremonies.

If anything, the Days of the Dead celebrations in Mexico and north of the border have become more popular in recent years. Everyone can draw comfort by connecting in a positive way with those who have already left this world. In Los Angeles and surrounding areas, many public Days of the Dead events mix tradition and urban creativity. Such celebrations connect us to our roots and our cultures and add a deeper dimension to the changing seasons.

*Jim Bauml, Ph.D.,  
Senior Biologist*

## LOS VOLS UPDATE

## LOS VOLUNTARIOS ON THE GO

During the fiscal year 2003-2004, members of Los Voluntarios contributed over 29,000 hours of volunteer work to The Arboretum. "We have challenged ourselves to increase those hours by 10% for 2004-2005," stated Los Vols President, Carol Cuthbertson, during the LAAF Annual meeting on September 26.

Thirty-one prospective volunteers started their orientation on September 30, 2004. John Barnes, First Vice President of Los Vols, planned an informative, interesting, "behind the scenes" look at various areas of The Arboretum—literally, some-



thing for everyone. The Orientation continues on Thursday mornings thru November 4th.

*From left to right: Tom and Mary Conrow and Hiroko and Yoshio Fujioka.*

Photo: The Arboretum





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