

THE LEAFLET

October 2014

The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden Vol. 4, No 10



JARDIN BOTANICO
VALLARTA



THE LEAFLET

The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, México



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Curator's Corner

Dear Friends of the Garden,

While the benefits that the Vallarta Botanical Garden brings to our local community through environmental education, conservation, research, horticultural display and beautification are obvious, I'd like to take this month of October to focus on the profound economic benefits that our organization has on the entire region and how support of our work effects the prosperity of our local businesses and residents.

Tourism destinations such as the greater Vallarta Region depend on the tourism generators they are blessed with as fundamental to their success. While our region has great *natural* tourism generators: beautiful beaches, an excellent climate, stunning mountain panoramas, and a staggering biodiversity of plants and animals, we as a community have created relatively few public infrastructural resources for our multitudes of national and international visitors. The Vallarta Botanical Garden represents one of the few investments into an infrastructure to attract new and returning tourists to our region. Amazingly, this has been done almost solely through the support of members and donors who wish to contribute to the future they want to help create for Puerto Vallarta.

The latest major development at the Garden that is sure to become a cornerstone of our tourism generation potential is the new Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids. The elegance of this structure is quickly establishing it as an iconic regional landmark along the ranks of the crown-adorned church, "*Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*," and the famous bronze statues of the *Malécon*. We are now very busy at work transforming the interior of this new exhibit space with living displays of native Mexican plants, especially orchids. The result we aim to achieve is a facility whose grace and appeal attracts visitors in the manner that the most exquisite of orchid blossoms bring in pollinators from near and far. Not only can such an appeal attract the support of the Garden's work, it can help ensure that Puerto Vallarta continues thriving as one of Mexico's top travel destinations.



Interior of the Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids upon completion of construction in July and with plants in October.

The new Orchid Conservatory has just been recognized by the prestigious international organization "[Jardins Sans Limites](#)" (Gardens Without Limits) in Metz, France. Their conference committee presented the Vallarta Botanical Garden with the "Initiative of the Year Award" specifically for the success of the Conservatory project. We sincerely thank the conference committee for their award and are happy to announce this wonderful news with the Vallarta community as well as friends from all over the world. We encourage local Vallarta businesses to share this news in their marketing to attract more visitors not just to our Garden, but to the Vallarta Region in general. Garden tourism is one of the most strategically important niches of world tourism and botanical gardens are effectively being marketed by communities as "Gateways to the Region."

To those of you in Puerto Vallarta, please show your support of the Vallarta Botanical Garden's community commitment by visiting us at this time. Bring your friends, bring your family, bring your cameras, bring your appetites, and bring your imagination. Those of us who imagine an even more beautiful, prosperous, and sustainable Puerto Vallarta *and work together towards it* can and will achieve something far beyond most people's wildest of imaginations. To those of you in other places, keep Mexico in your hearts!

From the Garden,

Bob Price, Curator and Founder



“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point.”
— C.S. Lewis



Representing our Garden and Taking it to Higher Levels

By Bob Price, Curator and Founder, VBG

Please join me in congratulating our Executive Director, Neil Gerlowski, in his appointment to serve on the Program Selection Committee for the 2015 and 2016 conferences of the American Public Gardens Association to which the VBG is an institutional member. Additionally, Neil along with our Research Coordinator, Alan Heinze, and our Conservation Coordinator and Peace Corps Volunteer, Linda Asencio, have been accepted to represent our Garden in a presentation at the annual meeting of the Mexican Association of Botanical Gardens in Puebla at the end of this month of October.

Our participation with these professional associations is of utmost importance in advancing our Garden to established international standards of best practices, staying abreast of the latest trends, and keeping our work efficient and relevant even as technologies and conventions in our field meets constant change. Our involvement with these professional associations is establishing the Vallarta Botanical Garden as an emerging leader not just in Mexico, but far beyond our borders.

Local Businesses & Media Catching on to the Power of Garden Tourism

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Members of the press and the *Asociación de Hoteles en Puerto Vallarta* (Association of Hotels in Puerto Vallarta) met with Garden executives and board members on October 2nd to plan the promotion of Puerto Vallarta as an international garden destination for the betterment of the region. Garden staff presented bold and engaging new promotional materials, many of which are free of charge as electronic files at www.vbgardens.org/promotions. Do you love Puerto Vallarta? Go ahead and use these materials for your business or personal social use to share with others of the many wonders of Vallarta and why we see it as the number 1 travel destination in Mexico.

I was recently honored by an invitation to serve as the Mexican Representative of the new International Garden Tourism Network (IGTN) to further collaboration between botanical gardens for the continued development of the garden experience as an essential part of world travel. People plan their leisure travels based on a variety of other incentives including culture, food, and sports, but natural history and garden tourism are top contenders and promise to continue as such as more people place our planet's resources among their top concerns. I thank my IGTN colleagues from countries including France, Great Britain, Canada, USA, Indonesia, Singapore, and many others for inviting Mexico to participate as a partner in this initiative and I look forward to my service with them.



What do you want to call your conservatory?

Some already love the name, “Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids,” while others are suggesting alternatives. We’re thrilled that there’s already such a buzz about this new facility even before our Grand Opening, scheduled for December 6-13th. We’re not yet locked into any particular name, so please send us *your* recommendations either by joining the related discussion on our facebook page or by emailing your nomination and rationale to info@vbgardens.org. Please do so prior to the next meeting of our Board of Directors on October 22nd.

When considering the name of your choice, please reflect on the new conservatory’s *mission* to provide the Puerto Vallarta region’s residents and our guests with an inspirational native Mexican plant experience focusing on the exceptionally diverse and emblematic orchids of our country.

Monkey Business along Vallarta's South Shore?

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG



Candid camera-phone monkey snapshot

When friends living along Vallarta's South Shore passed multiple reports a monkey on the loose, I didn't doubt the possibility of a hairy primate on their premises, but I was skeptical about claims that it was a wild animal from the nearby mountains. In my four years living in Puerto Vallarta and extensive exploration of our region's forests I have yet to see or hear a single monkey outside of a cage. This being said, I've also yet to see a jaguar here, but don't necessarily need to see one to believe in their presence, so in summary: I'm open-minded.

Thinking a quick web search could provide the answer by means of a distribution map, I saw sure enough that the range of the Spider Monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*), the most northerly occurring primate in the Americas, extends along Mexico's west coast only to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (over 1,000 km away). But, there were also reports of an isolated population of Spider Monkey along Jalisco's West Coast! It appeared as if I had stumbled onto yet another internet-induced but not-so-urban ledged.

Further research revealed that despite this Jaliscoan monkey population rumor working its way into academic publications and journals, it had never once been verified. Monkeys would not be generally suited to Puerto Vallarta as most species require year-round access to large quantities of fruit that Jalisco's Tropical Dry Forests provide abundantly only seasonally. So once again, the botanical realm largely defines the constituency of an a region's wildlife.

Our friend Kim Kieler, one of the South Shore residents with a recent simian run-in, and the responsible party for the photo featured with this article, spent some time browsing monkey mug shots after a startling morning encounter with this screeching teeth-barring little creature. As soon as she came across a photo of a South American capuchin she knew she had found her match.



The South Shore Monkey on the loose is still a bit of a mystery, and if it's a captive animal recently gone feral there is certainly concern for both the monkey and that of people it may approach. Any sightings of feral animals should be reported to local authorities who can hopefully see to their welfare. We wish the best to this colorful little creature who has added another layer of excitement to Vallarta living for some of those along the South Shore.

The higher that the monkey can climb,
the more he shows his tail.

— Tom Waits



Volunteer Spotlight — Krysia & Michał

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Did you notice that this month's edition of "The Leaflet" as well that of September are available in Polish? This, and several other new developments in the Garden, are possible thanks to the volunteerism of Krysia Jędrzejewska-Szmek and Michał Kryciński, two professional biologists and educators from Warsaw, Poland.



Krysia and Michał began their service to the VBG on August 19th and are continuing full-time collaboration with us until October 19th. They are each taking sabbaticals from their employment in Poland, Krysia as lead educator of the University of Warsaw Botanic Garden and Michał as interpretive educator of the Copernicus Science Center. Krysia's skills as a photographer have already blessed "The Leaflet" and the Garden's Facebook page with incredible new images. Michał is currently working on a new map and visitor guide to the Garden which we hope to print and have available by December. Please join us in sharing a big "dziękujemy" (thank you) to these generous young volunteers.

"From blossoms to birds to boas, each day in the Vallarta Botanical Garden and its forests have brought wildlife surprises to our great delight. Two months here is not nearly enough time to explore and experience the tremendous diversity of Vallarta and Cabo Corrientes, Jalisco, Mexico."

– Krysia Jędrzejewska-Szmek & Michał Kryciński, visiting volunteers from Poland



"A philosopher's ideas are not subject to the judgment of ordinary persons, because it is his endeavor to seek the truth in all things."

– Nicolaus Copernicus

The Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids – Initiative of the Year!

The Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids was just awarded the Initiative of the Year at the 2014 conference “*Jardins San Limites*” (Gardens Without Limits) in Metz, France. Public access to this new facility is now available even while we are adding displays, plants, and interpretive signage in preparation our Grand Opening. Originally scheduled for December 13th, 2014, we’ve now programmed a whole week of **Grand Opening Celebration** activities from **December 6th through the 13th**. Please mark your calendars accordingly!

Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids Project Costs

Building Construction	\$2,500,000 MXN	(Approx. \$200,000 USD)
	Reached in early 2014! -- Construction complete!	
Plants & Educational Displays	\$800,000 MXN	(Approx. \$60,000 USD)
	Goal: November 2014 – Please contribute now!	
1st Year Operational Budget	\$400,000 MXN	(Approx. \$30,000 USD)
	Goal: December 2014 – Please contribute now!	
Orchid Laboratory Completion	\$800,000 MXN	(Approx. \$60,000 USD)
	Goal: April 2015 – Please contribute now!	

For those who have already contributed we extend a heartfelt thank-you. For those who would still like to contribute, we invite you to [donate now](#). Tax-deduction receipts are available for US and Canadian taxpayers (our *Donataria Autorizada* is also in process in Mexico).

Contributions are still needed and matching funds up to \$50,000 USD have been extended until the end of 2014!
Please contribute to a legacy to our beloved Vallarta community by supporting this conservatory project.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, Committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

Golden Oak Environmental Awards

By Bob Price, Curator and Founder, VBG

On the anniversary of the birth of one of the Garden's many inspirational spirits, that of Alexander Von Humboldt, we held our second annual awards ceremony to honor a few of the many modern pioneers working to conserve our region's natural resources and protect the environment that cares for us all. I personally presented awards to honor two of the most diligent laborers on behalf of the Vallarta Botanical Garden — Ellen Zagory and Neil Gerlowski. Also, two other community leaders, Juan Espinoza and Isabela Cárdenas Oteiza, presented awards to two other important local conservationists, Dr. Helios Hernández Hurtado and Oscar Aranda.



Ellen Zagory serves the Garden's US-based Board as volunteer secretary and is the person who first proposed the creation of a conservatory focusing on native Mexican orchids here at the Garden. During 2013, when the majority for the funding for this conservatory was raised, Ellen's workload for the Garden quadrupled, yet she rose to the occasion even while maintaining her "real job" as Director of Horticulture the UC Davis Arboretum. Without her commendable service we wouldn't have been able to accept the generous donations that made the conservatory's construction possible for this facility to now serve as a living classroom and conservation center. Carlos Mendoza accepted Ellen's award in her absence and we look forward to seeing her soon to present it to her in person.

Neil Gerlowski, the Garden's Executive Director, continues to amaze me with his vision and drive for the Garden and its programs. This past year, while excelling at his other duties here, Neil has brought about outstanding new developments to our educational programming and has managed a constantly growing and increasingly skilled team of volunteers to work together with him. We are not only receiving more visitors and school groups than ever before for educational programs at the Garden, but are now offering teachers a range of meaningful activities and custom-tailored events, lectures, and workshops for their young learners.

Juan Espinoza, the Editor of Bay Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit, leads the quest for engaging content for his fine publication which includes an abundance of essays on the natural world, especially the wildlife of our region. We asked Juan to present an award to a local environmental hero, and he chose Oscar Aranda without hesitation. Oscar's commitment to sea turtle conservation and public education is inspiring. We were very blessed to hear of his accomplishments in this work and his goals for the long-term protection of these charismatic creatures.

Dr. Liza Danielle Kelly Guitiérrez, the Career Coordinator of Biology at the University's local coastal campus, was invited to nominate an award recipient as well. Her selection of Dr. Helios Hernández Hurtado met our instant approval. Dr. Helios has been laboring for the study and protection of the Bay of Banderas' crocodiles for twenty years. From wrangling colossal crocs to careful monitoring of wild specimens and documenting their last remaining nest sites, Dr. Helios has shown a devotion to species conservation that rivals any others that I know. In Dr. Kelly's absence, Isabela Cárdenas Oteiza presented Dr. Helios with his award.



Mexican Orchid of the Month — *Habenaria jaliscana*

By Lizbeth Hernández Hernández, Biologist and co-author of “*Las orquídeas del occidente de México, Volumen 1*”

This beautiful flower, from the group of green habenarias, has an arachnid-like form reminiscent of an arachnid. *Habenaria jaliscana* is a terrestrial orchid found in pine and oak forests, or among rocks and grassy hillsides and forest clearings, and occasionally in ravines. It can be found isolated or in populations of several individuals in altitudes of 1000 to 2,525 m.

In the state of Jalisco, it is a widespread and easy-to-find plant, as well as easy to cultivate. The genus name is derived from the Latin word *habena*, which means “rein”, because of its spur which resembles that object.

Habenaria jaliscana is one of the native Mexican orchids found in – *Las orquídeas del occidente de México, Volumen 1*, Jorge Roberto González Tamayo and Lizbeth Hernández Hernández, México, 2010. This impressive volume, full of meticulously written and beautifully illustrated descriptions along with accompanying colored photos, is now available at the University of Guadalajara’s Botanical Institute and the Vallarta Botanical Garden’s gift store.



© Petr Myska

Mexican Bird of the Month — Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)

Piranga rubra is commonly known as the “Summer Tanager” in the US for the time of the year it spends there breeding and raising its young. In September and October these birds fly south to overwinter in Mexico and further south. This species can be difficult to observe despite the male’s bright red coloration as these birds spend much of their time high in the forest canopy. As with many forest songbirds, knowing their call can help locate them.

Many thanks to Petr Myska of [VivaNatura](#) for his image of the Summer Tanager. The second edition of his “Field Guide to the Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds and Mammals of Western Mexico” is now on sale at the Vallarta Botanical Garden for \$320 pesos, or \$288 pesos with a member discount.

VBG Education & Volunteer Program Report

By Linda Asencio, Biologist, Conservationist, and Environmental Educator

Peace Corps Volunteer at the Vallarta Botanical Garden collaborating with Mexico's Park Service (CONANP)

September started off with yet another international flair through a visit of 26 volunteers all the way from Holland and Belgium! We happy hosted these helpers for a very busy morning of trail and greenhouse maintenance and cultural integration. As they worked alongside garden staff, one could hear a beautiful cosmopolitan symphony of Spanish, French, Dutch, German, and English.

To my profound delight, I was honored earlier this month by my volunteer service to the community being featured in the September 1-16 edition of the magazine "[Bay Vallarta](#)-Riviera Nayarit." It was incredible to share my conservation and environmental education experiences through the Peace Corps, CONANP, and the Vallarta Botanical Garden with Bay Vallarta's editor, Juan Espinoza Lozano, and then see all of this in print.



A special volunteer article in "Bay Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit"

To read the full article, visit www.bayvallarta.com and scroll through past issues

Many thanks to Bay Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit's editor, Juan Espinoza Lozano for this great article and all of excellent coverage his magazine provides on the important work of many of our area's not-for-profit organizations.

September is famously "back to school" time, and has brought me into the classrooms in El Tuito for the exciting new environmental education outreach collaboration between the Vallarta Botanical Garden and CONANP. I'll continue bringing hands-on activities to science classrooms at least three times each month focusing on both the plants of our forests with my "Garden hat" and the ecology of the Banderas Bay and its nearby islands through CONANP presentation materials.

Monthly tally of visits, program participation, and volunteer service:

Oct. 2014	Total member visits to the VBG:	12
	Total non-member visits to the VBG:	385
	Complimentary entries for organized school groups*:	5
	Total participation in daily 1 pm tours:	8
	Total participation in special events, classes, or workshops:	5
	Total volunteer service hours:	435

*The VBG is happy to provide complimentary entries, guided tours, and educational programming for organized school groups with advanced reservations as one of our services to the Bahía de Banderas, Puerto Vallarta, and Cabo Corrientes communities. Reservation requests should be sent to educadorambiental@vbgardens.org at least 5 days before the requested date of your visit. Requests are granted first come, first served and are scheduled around other events and programs already on our [calendar](#).



The Vallarta Botanical Garden was recently featured in an episode of HGTV's "House Hunters International" and our organization has been selected as one of the four beneficiaries to share the proceeds of the upcoming screening and charity event on Monday, November 24, at the new Mantamar Beach Club (located on Los Muertos Beach). Hosted by Timothy Real Estate Group, the party theme this year is "Gilligan's Island" and the Garden's Founder and Curator, Robert Price, has agreed to dress the part of Thurston Howell III, "The Millionaire."

Pre-sale tickets for the event are now available at the Gardens for just \$300 pesos (down from \$350 pesos at the door) and include event cover, appetizers, and a tropical welcome drink. In addition to the viewing of the new "House Hunters International" episode, re-runs from the older PV episodes will be playing and some of our favorite Vallarta friends will be decked out as ringers from the old "Gilligan's Island."

For more info, visit the ["House Hunters International" charity fundraiser Facebook page](#) or [download the poster](#).



Butterfly Celebration Month October

Bird watching is may be a popular pastime for Garden visitors, but these are not the only winged animals that captivate nature lovers of all ages. Butterflies return to the stage at the Gardens in a big way each fall in their peak season of abundance and diversity. From the large elegant white "guardian angels" to miniature species in fascinating arrangements of color, these delicate creatures float through the sky as if flowers in animation.

Touching down on a Cosmo Flower

International Migratory Bird Day October 11



© Peter Myska

Of the 124 species of birds so far observed and documented at the Vallarta Botanical Garden, 18 are considered migratory birds and several others may have resident populations, but likely also come through as migrants. Many of these, including the Summer Tanager (our bird of the month) have already started their epic migrations.

Ensuring a bright future for migratory species requires international coordination of habitat conservation both in their summer and wintering zones as well as suitable places for pit stops along the way. An important part of this kind of conservation work is public education—what we learn to love and appreciate, we will hopefully learn to care for. The [Vallarta Botanical Garden](#) has been generously supplied with great educational materials for our own International Migratory Bird Day Event on October 11th from our friends at [Environment for the Americas](#). Also, thanks to a grant from [Optics for the Tropics](#), we have 10 pairs of [Vortex Raptor](#) binoculars for garden visitors to use during their visits here. Our staff and volunteers are coordinating activities for the day with local bird guides including our friend Alejandro Martínez Rodríguez of [Birding In Mexico](#). Teachers interested in bringing their classes to participate in our International Migratory Bird Day activities are encouraged to send reservation requests to educdorambiental@vbgardens.org. Since participation is limited we recommend contacting us as soon as possible; as they say... the early bird catches the worm!

Canadian Thanksgiving Dinner Sunday, October 12



Each November, the Vallarta Botanical Gardens have celebrated Thanksgiving and have become a popular tradition for our friends from the US living here in the tropical paradise of Vallarta. The cooler mountain air at the Garden

compared to that of Puerto Vallarta and the aroma of smoke from our brick oven evokes a sense of holiday tradition nostalgia.

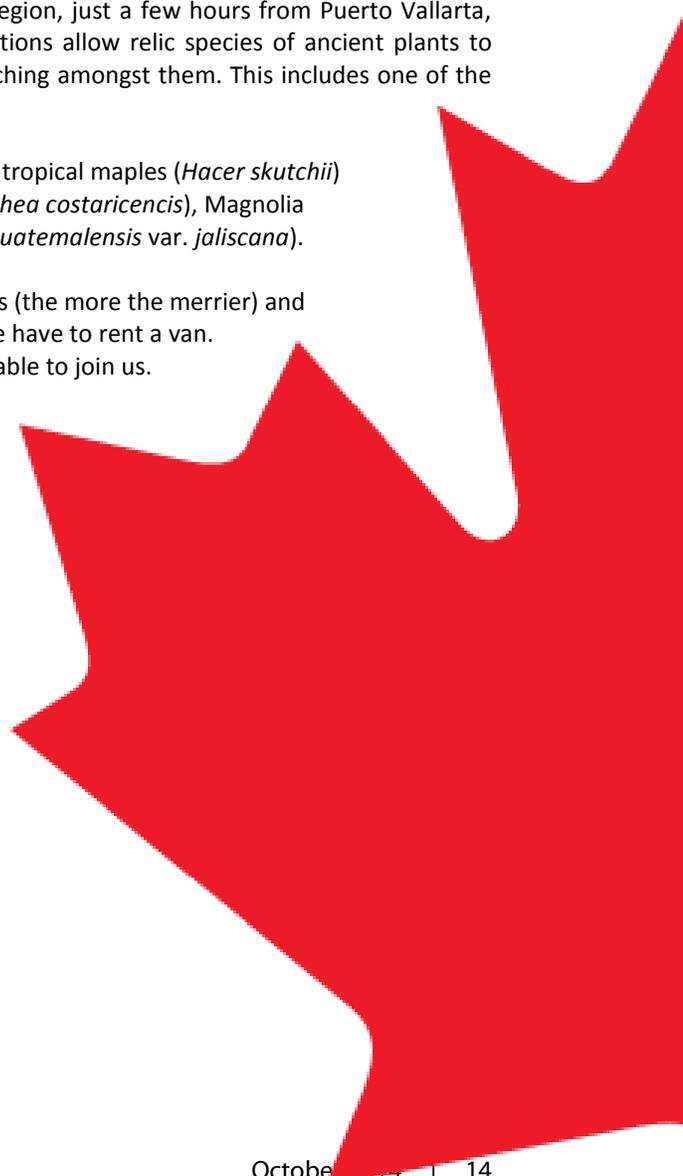
We'd like to offer a similar experience for our friends from north of the next border. Our Canadian Thanksgiving Special (served from 12:00 to 5 pm) can be viewed at www.vbgardens.org/thanks-can. We're offering this for the first time for 2014 even though many of our Canadian friends are still up north. To those of you who are in Vallarta now, please come out and bring your friends.

Field Trip to the Maple Forests of Talpa de Allende October 12-13

Nearly everyone knows about the movie Jurassic Park, in which prehistoric animals were brought back to life by mad scientists. While Jurassic Park is fiction, the Talpa de Allende Region, just a few hours from Puerto Vallarta, harbors a real-deal Pleistocene Park in which unique climatic conditions allow relic species of ancient plants to continue thriving much as they did while mammoths were still munching amongst them. This includes one of the only maple forests in the world's tropics.

You're invited to join us as we explore this forest which in addition to tropical maples (*Hacer skutchii*) includes such botanical wonders as tropical American tree ferns (*Cyathea costaricensis*), Magnolia (*Magnolia pacifica*), and our state's own variety of oyamel fir (*Abies guatemalensis* var. *jaliscana*).

The price per person for this fieldtrip will depend on how many join us (the more the merrier) and whether we can find volunteer drivers with their own vehicles or if we have to rent a van. Please contact Linda at educadorambiental@vbgardens.org if you're able to join us.



Vallarta Botanical Garden's Upcoming Events & Special Dates

Date			Cost
1-31	OCT	Butterfly Celebration Month – all month	Included
11	OCT	International Migratory Bird Day – birding tours begin at 8 am; activities all day	Included
12	OCT	Thanksgiving (Canada) – all day; restaurant special served 11 am – 5 pm	TBD
12-13	OCT	Field Trip to the Maple Forests of Talpa de Allende – Meet at the Garden on Oct. 12 at 11 am or the Home Depot Parking Lot at 4 pm Space limited. Registration by OCT. 10 required: educadorambiental@vbgardens.org	TBD
2	NOV	Day of the Dead – evening event, more details to follow	TBD
4-13	NOV	Annual Sister City Visit from Friends in Santa Barbara – still in planning	Included
15	NOV	9th Anniversary of the Vallarta Botanical Garden	Included
20	NOV	Revolution Day (Mexico) – all day (Garden remains open)	Included
24	NOV	House Hunters International Screening Event – 7 pm at Mantamar Beach Club	350 MXN
27	NOV	Thanksgiving (US) – all day; restaurant special served 11 am – 5 pm	TBD
29	NOV	Volunteer Training – 10:30am -2:00 pm (Optional morning activities start at 8 am) Registration by NOV. 27 required: educadorambiental@vbgardens.org	Free
6-13	DEC	Grand Opening Festival for the Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids	Included
14	DEC	Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico	Included
15	DEC	Christmas Bird Count	Included

* Some activities subject to change. The most current calendar, often with links to further event information can be viewed at www.vbgardens.org/calendar.



Hours 10 am – 6 pm

Open 7 days/wk for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March (except Christmas & New Year's Day)

Open 6 days/wk (Closed Mondays) April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., & Nov

Early "Bird" Opening: 8 am every Thursday

Daily Guided Tour: 1 pm (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)

Additional tours can be reserved in advance www.vbgardens.org/tours

Garden Amenities & Services

Visit the Gardens' Hacienda de Oro Restaurant for authentic Mexican food and brick-oven pizza. Our new menu includes delicious dishes such as fish and shrimp tacos. Hike the Gardens' nature trails and bask in tropical mountain scenery. Experience the Holstein Tropical Plant House, Tillandsia House, Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids (scheduled for a Grand Opening Festival from December 6 to 13th), Gift Shop, plant nursery and much more. You can even shop the Gardens remotely through our [online store](#). The very best of Vallarta!



Can you find your name on our WALL OF BENEFACTORS?

A high resolution image of this photograph is available at www.vbgardens.org/benefactors

If you're not yet "on the wall" we invite you to join the family that preserves the Garden forever!

Becoming a member is easy & provides great benefits: www.vbgardens.org/memberships



We would like to acknowledge and thank the following supporters:

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