The Leaflet

Vallarta Botanical Gardens A.C.

Theobroma cacao

August 2012

Content:

Curator's Corner 1

Announcements 2

Cacao and Vanilla Celebration 3

Upcoming Events 4

In the Garden 5

Mission Statement 6

Curator's Corner

Volume 2, No. 8

Dear Friends of the Gardens,

The Vallarta Botanical Gardens are invigorated by the spirit of youth during our summer camp session, now in full swing. We are proud of our ability to provide unique and stimulating educational and recreational experiences to the youth of Vallarta and engage them in developing a wonder for the natural world. In our lives of increasing urbanization and mechanized modernity, it is even more important to instill principles of ecology, conservation, and environmental awareness in our future leaders.

Other events to look forward to include our Gardens' "Rainforest Cacao and Vanilla Celebration," during the entire month of August, and our Humboldt Birthday Weekend on September 14, 15, and 16. Flipping much farther ahead in our calendar, but worth penciling in now is the 2013 Vallarta Bird Festival, March 7 through 10, and the 2013 Puerto Vallarta Bougainvillea Festival, May 17 through 24. Please read further in this issue about these important educational and cultural opportunities that help Vallarta retain its reputation as one of the best places to live and visit in Mexico!

Trip Advisor 2012 has named Puerto Vallarta Mexico´s favorite vacation destination. Remember that tourism is the lifeblood of Vallarta. Our Gardens are a powerful "tourism generator," attracting tourists for the benefit of the entire region.

Despite sensationalist media reports to the contrary, Mexico remains a safe and beautiful country to visit. To those of you in Puerto Vallarta, please come up and visit us soon; to those of you in other places, keep Mexico in your hearts.

From the Gardens,

Bob Price

Curator and Founder

The botanical name of the chocolate plant is Theobroma Cacao, which means "Food of the Gods".

Announcements

Lost Treasures of the Sierra Madre

We at the Vallarta Botanical Gardens are happy to announce an exciting new way to learn about natural science—by mining at the Gardens! Try your luck in the traditional frontier-style process of panning for real Mexican gemstones. You may find amethyst, quartz crystals, rose quartz, tiger eye, calcite and more! And you keep everything you find.

This is a great way for the whole family to participate together in discovery, science and fun! Purchase your ticket to the mine in the Gardens’ gift shop.

Rainforest Cacao and Vanilla Celebration

Visit Vallarta’s very own Rainforest!!!

You are invited to the annual Vallarta Botanical Gardens Rainforest Cacao and Vanilla Celebration.

From August 1st to August 31st 2012

Experience the splendor of Vallarta’s rainforest in its divine abundance with a visit to the enchanting Vallarta Botanical Gardens. Two globally important plant species, vanilla (Vanilla planifolia) and chocolate (Theobroma cacao) native to the rainforests of Mexico are being celebrated now at the Botanical Gardens.

The Vallarta Botanical Gardens and its famous Hacienda de Oro Restaurant invite you to celebrate this magical time with us.

Celebration lunch special
Only - $260 pesos!

To Begin- Plantation Salad, baby field greens with mango and cashews topped with balsamic or blue cheese dressing, or Chilled Gazpacho with avocado.

Special Lunch- Your choice of Mahi Mahi gourmet Fish Tacos or a traditional Jalisco Birria (Beef stew in a traditional spiced red sauce, served with roasted country potatoes, refried beans and handmade corn tortillas).

Dessert- Vanilla Tapioca or Vanilla Ice Cream topped with chocolate sauce.

Includes one glass of wine, one house margarita, one beer, or one non alcoholic drink. Our regular menu is also available.

See Magnificent Waterfalls along the way!!

Special Thanks to Xocodiva
Oficial Sponsor of the Cacao Trees

Cocoa Trees at the Vallarta Botanical Gardens

Chocolate is a product of the cacao tree (Theobroma cacao) a small evergreen tree native to Mexico’s south tropical region. Its seeds are used to make cocoa powder and chocolate. The fruit, called a cacao pod, is ovoid, 15–30cm long and 8–10cm wide, ripening yellow to orange, and weighs about 500 g (1.1 lb) when ripe. The pod contains 20 to 60 seeds, usually called "beans", embedded in a white pulp. The seeds are the main ingredient of chocolate, while the pulp is used in some countries to prepare a refreshing juice. Their most noted active constituent is theobromine, a stimulating compound similar to caffeine

Vanilla “Beans” at the Vallarta Botanical Gardens

Culinary vanilla (vanilla planifolia) was first cultivated by The Totonac people of the Gulf Coast of Mexico in the present-day state of Veracruz. According to Totonac mythology, the tropical vanilla orchid was born from a story of love and tragedy. When Princess Xanat, forbidden by her father from marrying a mortal, fled to the forest with her lover, the two were captured and beheaded. Where the blood of the princess' lover touched the ground a tree grew and next to it, where the princess' blood touched the ground the vine of the vanilla orchid grew attaching to the tree forever. Mexico had a near monopoly on vanilla production until 1841 when a 12-year-old child slave living on the French island of Réunion discovered a simple way to hand-pollinate the flower. Because of the labor required to pollinate and cure vanilla it is the second most expensive spice (after saffron).

Learn about this incredible plant in first hand with your next visit to the Vallarta Botanical Gardens.

Vanilla is the only edible fruit of the orchid family, the largest family of flowering plants in the world.

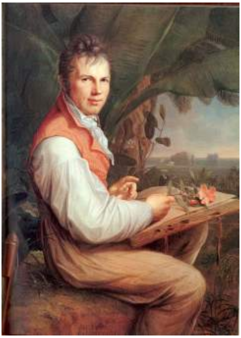
Upcoming Events

Humboldt Celebration Weekend

September 14–16

Many of you have noticed the Gardens' recently unveiled statue of Alexander von Humboldt, the great German explorer who is credited with completing Mexico's first botanical surveys in a modern scientific manner. Humboldt's work has been previously acknowledged in Mexico in many ways, including his statue in Mexico City's Alameda Central (Central Park) and the honorary citizenship bestowed to him by then-President Benito Juárez.

The Gardens will celebrate the legacy of this important botanist and explorer on his birthday on September 14 and the following weekend (15 and 16). Be sure to join us here for a weekend of learning and festivities, including Humboldt historical trivia featured in our daily 1 pm plant tours, German cuisine in our Hacienda de Oro Restaurant, and the music of famous German composers, which will be playing throughout the Visitor Center. This is just one of the many ways that the Gardens promote diversity and international culture in our Vallarta community. Please join us in our celebrations!



Alexander von Humboldt

The 2013 Puerto Vallarta Bird Festival
March 7–10

After an outstanding turnout of enthusiastic speakers, guides and participants at last year’s Bird Festival, we are thinking way outside of the box in brainstorming how to make the 2013 festival even better. Since we’re still open to ideas, you are encouraged to contact the Vallarta Bird Fest Organization’s Secretary, Denise Pietri (dlpietri@gmail.com) or to visit www.vallartabirdfestival.org to get involved. We need dedicated community volunteers to make this a reality. Proceeds from the festival will support local bird conservation groups.

West Mexican Chachalaca

The Vallarta Bougainvillea Festival

May 17–24, 2013

Mark your calendars for the 2013 Bougainvillea Festival, May 17 through 24. This long-anticipated event has been the goal of the Puerto Vallarta Garden Club (www.puertovallartagc.org) for quite some time, and has taken years of planning, support and a mountain of volunteer labor. The PVGC's work in installing and landscaping the planter boxes lining many Vallarta streets and other public places are already transforming Puerto Vallarta into "The City of Bougainvilleas."

While the stunning bracts of Bougainvilleas are in full color most of the year, they are especially flushed and full in May, and hence the stage will already be set for a festival. Just add a 300-person-strong candlelight procession and a "Salute to Mexico" Street Party, and you get a premonition of an instant hit! Other activities for the festival will include a children's day of fun and learning, a guided bus tour to the Vallarta Botanical Gardens, daily downtown guided walking tours, a traditional British High Tea Party and Mexican Folkloric Dancing.

There is still plenty of time for volunteers and sponsors to jump in and get involved in these exciting preparations. Please contact PVGC President Suzanne Kirkpatrick (suzkirk66@gmail.com) to become a member of the PV Garden Club or to volunteer.

Cascading blooms of Bougainvillea

Bougainvilleas are native to Brazil. They were named for Canadian explorer Admiral Louis de Bougainvillea, who traveled across the Pacific Ocean in 1768.

In the Garden

Cocoa Pods

The precious Cocoa Beans were used as a currency and as a unit of calculation in the Mayan and Aztec Cultures.

Pineapple

The pineapple is the most economically important plant in the Bromeliaceae family.

Mission Statement

To create Mexico´s foremost botanical garden for the propagation, study, discovery, conservation and display of Mexican native and exotic plants for the enjoyment of Puerto Vallarta’s residents and visitors.

Click here to make a donation to our important mission. The Vallarta Botanical Gardens are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, so your donation is tax deductible in the United States. Our current campaign is the construction of a new Mexican orchid conservatory.

Become part of the family that preserves this important sanctuary forever!
Become a member today! Click here for more information.

www.vbgardens.org

We would like to thank our Copa de Oro Sponsors for their ongoing support of the Vallarta Botanical Gardens:

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Michael Ricks—Windermere Real Estate
Xocodiva Artisan Chocolates
Carl Timothy Real Estate Group
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No Way José! Restaurant-Bar
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We appreciate your feedback!

We encourage you to write about your visit here on TripAdvisor, to friend us on Facebook, and to follow us on Twitter.

Please support the Puerto Vallarta Garden Club by sponsoring a planter! Click here to go to the organization’s website.

Vallarta Botanical Gardens
Your Best Vacation Value!
Spend the day in the Gardens for only $60 pesos.
The VBG are located 30 minutes south of Old Town, Puerto Vallarta, on Carretera a Barra Navidad at km 24, just past Las Juntas y Los Veranos.
Telephone (322)223-6182
Open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m