



# THE LEAFLET

## August 2014



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The Monthly Newsletter of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, México



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## Contents

	Page
Curator's Corner	1
Orchid Conservatory Dedication Ceremony	2
Orchid Conservatory Project Update	4
Workshop of the Americas	5
Mexican Orchid of the Month	7
Mexican Bird of the Month	8
Education & Volunteer Report	9

## Upcoming Events

Avocado Festival	11
Rainforest Festival	11
Events Calendar	13

## Features

Garden Amenities & Services	14
Membership & Support	14
Feedback	19
Contact	20

# August 2014

Vol. 4, No 8

## Curator's Corner

### *Dear Friends of the Garden,*

While many dear friends are away from us in the summer, July has brought many wonderful visitors to the Vallarta Botanical Garden, certainly too many to name. Yet, I would like to specifically mention a few, including the 50 botanical garden professionals from four different countries who attended the Workshop of the Americas of the Sentinel Plant Network, which we were proud to host. Please read on further in this Leaflet for details about this important workshop and those who attended.

We were also pleased to be contacted by Antonia Echenique Celis, the Executive Director of the Jardín Botánico Chagual in Santiago de Chile, who informed us of her avid readership of our newsletter, *The Leaflet*, which prompted her to visit us in person. It turns out that the stories from our young and growing Latin American botanical garden have served as an inspiration to the developing garden under her leadership. She and her partner, Juan Gabriel Valdés, Chilean Ambassador to the United States, joined us for a delightful visit to talk about our common work and how to best overcome our biggest challenges. Antonia and Juan, many thanks for your visit—we're equally inspired!



Left to Right:	Juan Gabriel Valdés	Chilean Ambassador to the United States
	Linda Asencio	Peace Corps Volunteer at the Vallarta Botanical Garden
	Bob Price	Founder and Curator of the Vallarta Botanical Garden
	Antonia Echenique Celis	Executive Director of the Jardín Botánico Chagual
	Neil Gerlowski	Executive Director of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

While providing and receiving inspiration internationally is exciting, we're most proud of the inspiration we provide to our local Cabo Corrientes, Puerto Vallarta, and Bahía de Banderas communities in plant and animal conservation and treading lightly on the environment we call home.

Without the direct government funding that many of the other [\*\*"TOP 10 Gardens in North America Worth Traveling For"\*\*](#) receive, we thank our members and donors for allowing us to continue our mission, "to create



Mexico's foremost botanical garden for the discovery, study, propagation, conservation and display of native and exotic plants for the enjoyment of Puerto Vallarta's residents and our visitors."

To those of you in Puerto Vallarta, please come up to the mountains and visit us soon; to those of you in other places, keep Mexico in your hearts!

***From the Garden,  
Bob Price, Curator and Founder***



## **The Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids Dedication Ceremony**



A beautiful ceremony was held on Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup> to dedicate the principal stairway of the new Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids in memory of Jalisco's foremost orchid researcher, Roberto González Tamayo. Roberto (1940-2014), dedicated much of his life as a professor with the University of Guadalajara's Institute of Botany. His fieldwork resulted in the discovery of several new species especially in the orchid family and content in several scholarly and popular publications.

Guests were first welcomed with a lively performance by the El Tuito Folkloric Dance Troup. Following this choreographed show of color and local talent, Bob Price, Founder and Curator of the Vallarta Botanical Garden, expressed his gratitude for both the dedication of botanical pioneers including Robert González Tamayo and those who contributed towards the construction of the new conservatory. He explained that though the beauty enjoyed each day at the Vallarta Botanical Garden appears to have been created "as if by magic" it is in fact

realized by the hard work of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers and the generosity of a community that appreciates the resource and benefit that the Garden has become.

Emiliano Sanchez Martínez, President of the Mexican Association of Botanical Gardens, then spoke of the important work of Mexican botanists and botanical gardens and their impact in plant conservation, research, and public education. The final two addresses were made by colleagues of Roberto González Tamayo, Lizbeth Hernández Hernández and Dr. Jorge Pérez de la Rosa who both worked with Roberto at the Botanical Institute of the University of Guadalajara. Lizbeth collaborated very closely with Roberto for over 20 years and during his last 10 years when he became blind, she tirelessly served as his eyes and arms to complete the first volume of a new series on the orchids of western Mexico – *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 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.



**Dedication of the stairway to the Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids**

Following these inspiring words by Roberto's colleagues, guests then gathered for a group photo behind the freshly installed tiles in memory of Roberto Gonzalez Tamayo on the stairway to the new conservatory. This event marks the "soft opening" of the new conservatory, but only the first plants that will form the facility's collections have been displayed and we will be working for months on getting plants and displays ready for the conservatory's grand opening on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

## **The Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids Project Update**

Construction is complete on the new Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids! Public access to this new facility is now available even while we are adding displays, plants, and interpretive signage in preparation for the Grand Opening on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Please mark your calendar to join us for what will be a fun and memorable celebration this December.

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

Contributions are still needed and matching funds of up to \$50,000 USD have been extended until the end of 2014!

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).

**Please contribute to the legacy and benefit to our beloved**

**Vallarta community that this new orchid conservatory will provide!**

**Matching funds available until the end of 2014!**



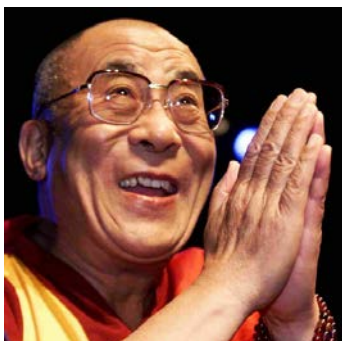
## **The Vallarta Botanical Garden Hosts The First “Workshop of the Americas” In Conjunction with the Sentinel Plant Network**



**International experts on plant pathology demonstrate diagnostic techniques**

The Vallarta Botanical Garden is proud to have just hosted an important international scientific meeting and the first of its kind in Latin America. Fifty botanical garden professionals, plant pathologists, and educators met for the Workshop of the Americas of the [Sentinel Plant Network](#) (SPN). The SPN is one of the flagship programs of the [American Public Gardens Association](#) (APGA) and contributes to plant conservation by engaging public garden professionals, volunteers, and visitors in the detection and diagnosis of high consequence plant pests and pathogens.

Thanks to this workshop, botanical gardens in Latin America are now poised to become part of this network helping to limit the spread of plant pests and diseases throughout farmlands, urban green spaces, and wild areas.



"Happiness is the highest form of health."

--Dalai Lama



**Group photo of participants in the first The Sentinel Plant Network's first Workshop of the Americas hosted by the Vallarta Botanical Garden.**

**Caption with names of participants can be opened [here](#).**

The backdrop of the beautiful Vallarta Botanical Garden was the perfect setting for our workshop. We toured the facility and found many great examples of biodiversity and plant species shared between US and Mexican gardens, reinforcing the common interests we have in protecting them. The plants, and the new Orchid Conservatory are not to be missed!

**-- Dr. Casey Sclar, Executive Director  
American Public Gardens Association**





**Mexican Orchid of the Month**  
***Pleurothallis longispicata***



*Pleurothallis longispicata*, is a miniature epiphyte that blooms in the fall. This is one of many orchids that can be found at the Vallarta Botanical Garden. The VBG propagates orchids responsibly from seed for direct sale to the public. Remember, don't buy orchids from street vendors! They have been illegally collected from the wild and are contributing to the loss of our native plant diversity.

(Many thanks to Vallarta Orchid Society President, T.J. Hartung, for permission to draw from his publication, "Orchids Found ONLY in Mexico," available in the Garden's gift store.)

## Mexican Bird of the Month

### Yellow-winged Cacique



The Yellow-winged Cacique (*Cacicus melanicterus*) is also sometimes referred to as the Mexican Cacique, quite appropriate considering that its range is almost solely exclusive to Western Mexico (from Sonora to Chiapas) with only limited distribution into Guatemala. It's a fairly large (up to 30 cm) and colorful bird (mostly black with striking bright yellow markings) with a long and sometimes very showy crest. Its ability to fan out this crest can give it the appearance of wearing a tribal headdress, hence the connection between this bird's genus name and the Caribbean word meaning "chieftain."

Yellow-winged Caciques are the most northerly occurring of the *Cacicus* genus and like other caciques, they build hanging nests, sometimes living communally. They are commonly seen at the Vallarta Botanical Garden, especially around the feeders, and can be quite noisy. Their strange calls include a sound that has been compared to an old rusty door creaking open. Despite how commonly they are seen at the Garden, their interesting behavior makes them a continual delight.

Many thanks to Petr Myska of [VivaNatura](#) for his image of the Yellow-winged Cacique. 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.

The Garden is a popular birding hotspot year-round. Binoculars can be rented (only 70 pesos per pair for up to four hours) if you don't have your own. Organized school groups receive complimentary use of the binoculars, guided birding tours, and more with advanced reservations.



## VBG Education & Volunteer Program Report



Visiting children from the *Casa Hogar Corazón de Niña*

Hello all from Linda Asencio, the new Peace Corps volunteer at the Vallarta Botanical Garden! This June and July have provided an action-packed kickoff to my two years of service in natural resource management and environmental education. From my first week I jumped right in and lead various events at the Garden for World Environment Day, National Botanical Gardens Day, and National Arbor Day. We also received students from schools and youth centers, including the University of Guadalajara's local CUC campus, Escuela Los Volcanes, Peace Punta de Mita, and Corazon de Niña. I also made visits to elementary schools in El Tuíto and Las Juntas y Los Veranos.

During my days away from the Garden, I've been adventuring around the region, exploring the work of other non-profit community organizations. I had the pleasure of visiting Pasitos de Luz, a rehabilitation center for disabled children, the Los Mangos Library, and EntreAmigos, an eco-designed educational facility and recycling center in San Pancho, Nayarit. I also spent time at the University of Guadalajara-CUC campus meeting students and professors from the biology department, and while there, I even did my first radio interview to share about upcoming Garden events! Now that I had this "Go Big!" attitude, I decided to trek my way down to Guadalajara, and visited the Jorge Victor Eller T. Botanical Gardens at the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara.



My Peace Corps service is also partnered with CONANP (Mexico's federal commission for natural protected areas), so I also helped out at the Estero el Salado, at a beach clean-up at Punta de Mita, and will be working with CONANP this August in summer course workshops all around the Bahía de Banderas, Puerto Vallarta, and Cabo Corrientes communities! I know that August will bring more adventures at the Vallarta Botanical Garden, especially as we celebrate the Avocado Festival and the Rainforest Festival.

I hope to see you here!

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

July 2014	Total member visits to the VBG:	97
	Total non-member visits to the VBG:	1374
	Complimentary entries for organized school groups*:	61
	Total participation in daily 1 pm tours:	19
	Total participation in special events, classes, or workshops:	116
	Total volunteer service hours:	358

\*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](mailto: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](#).



"No puede haber prosperidad económica ni progreso si desaparecen sostenedores de la vida que son las especies..."

*There can be no economic prosperity or progress if we allow the disappearance of the sustainers of life—the species..."*

Inés María Mendoza (1908-1990),  
First Lady of Puerto Rico 1949-1965



## **Avocado Festival August 5 - 10**



This delicious, nutritious and creamy Mexican staple deserves to be spotlighted during the time we traditionally harvest it here at the Vallarta Botanical Garden. Come visit our special booth with fun facts and surprising recipes (who knew you could make avocado brownies?). We'll also lead activities including how to grow your own avocado tree from seed.

Considering the current sale price of avocados and how healthy they are for you, this can be an incredible investment towards grocery budget savings and wholesome food for the family.



## **Take a Trip to the Rainforest— Annual Vallarta Botanical Garden's Cacao & Vanilla Celebration August 19 - 31**

Only in the summer season you can experience the splendor of Vallarta's forest in their full abundance during a visit to the enchanting Vallarta Botanical Garden. 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 Garden.

The VBG and its famous Hacienda de Oro Restaurant invite you to celebrate this magical time with us. Click [here](#) to view the lunch special in our restaurant during the Rainforest Festival. Our regular summer menu is also available.

Chocolate is a product of the cacao (*Theobroma cacao*), a small evergreen tree, that is native to Mexico's southern region. Its seeds are used to make cocoa powder and chocolate. The fruit, called a cacao pod, is ovoid, 15–30 cm long and 8–10 cm 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.



**Cocoa Fruit**



**Cocoa Trees at the Vallarta Botanical Gardens**



**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 their 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 slave child living on the French island of Bourbon (now called 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 more about this incredible plant first hand with your next visit to the Vallarta Botanical Garden.



## Vallarta Botanical Garden's 2014 Calendar\*

5-10	AUG	Avocado Festival
19-31	AUG	Cacao & Vanilla Celebration
14	SEP	Alexander Von Humbolt Birthday Celebration
16	SEP	Independence Day (Mexico)
1-31	OCT	Butterfly Celebration Month at the
11	OCT	International Migratory Bird Day
12	OCT	Thanksgiving (Canada)
13	OCT	Field Trip to the Maple Forests of Talpa de Allende
2	NOV	Day of the Dead
4-13	NOV	Annual Sister City Visit from Friends in Santa Barbara
20	NOV	Revolution Day (Mexico)
24	NOV	House Hunters International Screening Event
28	NOV	Thanksgiving (US)
6	DEC	Volunteer Training Day. Join the team!
13	DEC	Grand Opening of the new Vallarta Conservatory of Mexican Orchids
14	DEC	Crash Course on Birding in Tropical Western Mexico
15	DEC	Christmas Bird Count

\* Some activities subject to change. The most current calendar, often with links to further event information can be viewed at [www.vbgardens.org/calendar](http://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](http://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 (recently dedicated and scheduled for a Grand Opening on December 13<sup>th</sup>), Gift Shop, plant nursery and much more. You can even shop the Gardens remotely through our [online store](#). The very best of Vallarta!



## **Please Become a Member or Renew Your Membership**

Become part of the family that preserves this important sanctuary forever!

Become a member today. Click here for more information: [Memberships](#).



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