

# THE LEAFLET

The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

**April 2017**





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The Monthly Magazine of the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico

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Cover: *Parodia magnifica*  
Photo: Mansur Kiadeh

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[www.vbgardens.org](http://www.vbgardens.org)

## Curator's Corner

*Dear Friends of the Garden,*

For those of you who are not already tuned in to an emerging economic force, Garden Tourism is a booming market and great garden venues are driving factors in determining the vacation destination decisions of about a third of the world's international tourists. According to Richard W. Benfield, author of *Garden Tourism* (2012), "More people visit gardens in America than go to Disneyland and Disneyworld combined, and more than visit Las Vegas annually, making it one of the largest sectors in the tourism market."

We who live and work in Puerto Vallarta have been blessed with an incredible 2016/2017 winter season; preliminary indications suggesting that this may be the busiest season in the history of our region. That's excellent news, and this is also an excellent time to remind owners and managers of our region's businesses and properties that tourist traffic can never be taken for granted and requires constant reinvestment to encourage future successes.

I just had the recent good fortune to attend the 2017 North American Garden Tourism Conference and my time there reconfirmed my long-held belief in the three most important pillars of maintaining a world-class tourist venue: safety/security, destination cleanliness, and natural beauty. We in Puerto Vallarta have the great fortune to live in one of the safest and most secure places in the world and while we can do much better to keep our town clean, maintaining the natural beauty and rich natural treasures of our region is, in my opinion, where we need to concentrate much more effort. The Vallarta Botanical Garden inspires beauty through constantly enhancing our visitor experience. Our ever-increasing conservation impact serves to inspire our tourists to the region and those of us who live here. Your investments in the Garden through memberships and donations are investments in generating tourism in our region.

*Warmest regards,*

Bob Price, Founder and Curator, VBG

Michel Gauthier, Executive Director, Canadian Garden Council,  
Addressing leaders of tourism and public horticulture  
Photo: Bob Price







Forest Elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), Dzanga Bai, Bayanga Region, Central African Republic  
Photo: Andrew Stern



## Art Inspiring Conservation from Africa to Mexico

By Neil Gerlowski, Executive Director, VBG

Last month we received a very special guest, Todd McGrain, who participated in the Vallarta Bird Festival hosted by the Vallarta Botanical Garden and the University of Guadalajara. Todd introduced screenings of his 2012 film, *The Lost Bird Project*, to festival participants at both the University and the Garden. *The Lost Bird Project* is a documentary about his work creating and installing larger-than-life bronze sculptures memorializing birds of North America that have been driven to extinction by human causes. This work has earned him the Audubon Award for Art Inspiring Conservation.

During his time with us, Todd was inspired by Festival participants, the Puerto Vallarta community, and the grounds of the Vallarta Botanical Garden where people from throughout the world come together to interact with a rich, intact, yet imperiled Mexican forest ecosystem. He now hopes to begin a memorial sculpture to the Imperial Woodpecker, an extinct Mexican endemic, which until its recent demise was the largest living woodpecker in the world.

This work would be a return for Todd to the world of sculpting and a return to North America for that matter. Todd has spent much of the past four years in the Central African Republic producing a film about the plight of the African Forest Elephant, the smallest, least understood, and most threatened of the three extant elephants species. Its current crisis is critical as a rapidly expanding web of logging roads increasingly gives poachers easy access to the elephants, whose ivory provides temporary tickets to relative riches in this war-torn and impoverished section of the world. Todd's new film, *Rue des Elephants*, is due for release this fall, and it is our sincere hope that the awareness it raises can help the dedicated protectors of this species to curb the unsustainable mass slaughter it is currently suffering.

In our own corner of the planet, we have much to lose as well if we don't figure out a way to live more sustainably. The forests around Puerto Vallarta and the animals that depend on them are increasingly affected by habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. The Imperial Woodpecker may be gone forever, but its memory can help inspire our community to save species on the brink of extinction in the wild, like the Yellow-headed Parrot (practically gone from the Vallarta region since about the 1980's, except for an occasional sighting) and others of concern like the Military Macaw. The illegal pet trade fuels demand for this macaw and thus its continued poaching as witnessed by the dwindling numbers in our skies. But there is still plenty of hope as long as local citizens are committed to positive change. Art can help encourage this kind of change!



Todd McGrain and crew at work in Africa  
Photo: Andrew Stern



## Enjoying Birds and New Friends During the Vallarta Bird Festival 2017

By Claudia Méndez, Biologist, Military Macaw Conservation Program, CEMBAB A.C.

My first visit to the Vallarta Botanical Garden was about a year ago, and although I have no excuse for not coming back sooner, my most recent return was prompted by an invitation to participate in the Vallarta Bird Festival. My work with Military Macaw rescue, care, and rehabilitation in Puerto Vallarta has been increasingly interconnected with the work of caring for Macaws in the wild, especially through our growing relationship with the “*Rancho El Santuario*”, a project by Francisco Espino Ibarra and Jorge Novoa. The Macaws that naturally occur in their sanctuary are now supported through the introduction of artificial nests to help their populations rebound from years of poaching and loss of natural nest sites.

Although I missed the first day of the Festival hosted by the Centro Universitario de la Costa (University of Guadalajara), I was able to attend both Saturday and Sunday at the Vallarta Botanical Garden and an amazing side visit to the *Rancho El Santuario*. The first personality who I was able to connect with this weekend was our special guest Todd McGrain. Personally I found in Todd someone passionate and transparent with much to give. In viewing his documentary I sensed a deep inspiration and it would be a great honor for us in Puerto Vallarta if he would create and install one of his works here. As a group, we discussed how appropriate it would be to honor the extinct imperial woodpecker that once



Playa cabana  
Photo: Giancarlo Velmarch

graced our region's pine forests. The presence of such a sculpture in a popular botanical garden bordering pine forests would resuscitate this iconic bird in the memory of current and future generations. Although they will never see this dramatic woodpecker flying through the pines they can have a physical reference to contemplate this extraordinary species.

Sunday morning at the Garden was an especially incredible time for bird observation. The most spectacular birds I saw that morning were a pair of painted buntings (*Passerina ciris*). But for many of us, birding is also a very social activity and meeting new friends and reconnecting with old ones is a big part of the enjoyment. My friends Fernando Velez and Giancarlo Velmarch accompanied me in presenting Paco and Rosita, a pair of Military Macaws, as we spoke with Festival attendees about conservation. I had a most pleasant experience this entire weekend and I thank the Vallarta Botanical Garden and all of the participants who made this possible.



Rosita and Giancarlo getting to know each other  
Photo: Fernando Velez



Claudia Mendez visits the VBG with Paco and Rosita  
Photo: Fernando Velez



*Tityra semifasciata*  
Photo: Giancarlo Velmarch





## Mexican Bird of the Month

### *Xiphorhynchus flavigaster*

Article and photo by Greg R. Homel [www.birdinginpuertovallarta.com/birdingadventures@mac.com](http://www.birdinginpuertovallarta.com/birdingadventures@mac.com)

So, with all the hype over the years... you've probably heard of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Right? However, have you ever heard of the Ivory-billed *Woodcreeper*? That's what I thought....

Well, even if they haven't heard of you, either... you can bet your bottom dollar (or Peso, as it were), one of them has at the very least *heard* you, unnoticed, as you walked right under it! These cryptic wonders blend perfectly and pleasingly with the myriad patterns of tree bark in Vallarta's surrounding thorn and tropical broadleaf forests, within which, they adeptly hitch their way up vertical trunks—alive or dead—then fly to the base of the next tree to repeat the process; all the while foraging for their favored insect and arachnid prey.

Quintessentially adapted for an arboreal life, the aptly-named Ivory-billed Woodcreeper has a narrow, fusiform profile, the better to blend within a sometimes dangerous world of vertical trunks, where at any moment a raptor or other predator may threaten. A powerful, ivory-colored bill is their go-to tool for probing under bark flakes or to invade any wooden fissure, with the goal of extricating hidden though delectable morsels ranging from moths to spiders; even scorpions. Strong feet with three toes forward and one aft, give these specialized birds Velcro-like clinging ability, to boot.

Perhaps their most noticeable morphological uniqueness are their hardened, downwardly-pointed distal tail feather barbs that give them incredible, "spring-like" vertical support that would be the envy of any telephone lineman! In essence, every time they stop to rest, feed or survey their environment, they are always sitting pretty! When seen by visitors from the temperate zone, it's usually after giving away their hitherto hidden station by uttering a loud, whistled, somehow pleasing downward staccato vocalization. Immediately, viewers are struck by how much this Neotropical denizen recalls a much larger version of North America's *Brown Creeper* or Eurasia's *Tree Creeper*, though they are completely unrelated. In fact, woodcreepers form their own Neotropical family—the Dendrocolapidae—with 13 species occurring in Mexico and many more as one travels south into Central and South America.

Though they are cavity nesters, they do not usually construct their own nesting chamber; rather, they may modify a naturally occurring tree hollow, or previously-constructed former woodpecker nesting cavity, where they lay two to three eggs cushioned only by bark flakes.

The Vallarta Botanical Garden hosts one species of woodcreeper, though another, the more svelte White-striped Woodcreeper, is found nearby and a little higher in altitude, within pine-oak encinal habitat surrounding the small mountain hamlet of La Provincia. Why not test your visual acuity and see if you can find one of these cryptic, tree-dwelling will-o'-the-wisps with your own eyes! I bet you'll be impressed!





## Mexican Orchid of the Month

### *Meiracyllium gemma* Rchb F.

Article and photo by Marcos Gómez,  
Propagation Coordinator, VBG

Many of the world's orchids have barely been studied as is the case of the genus *Meiracyllium*. With only two scientifically described species from deep in the jungles of Chiapas and Guatemala, these pink little beauties are practically begging for additional scientific research.

Although *Meiracyllium trinasutum* is commonly encountered in amateur orchid collections, neither this species nor its seldom seen cousin, *Meiracyllium gemma*, have much data available regarding their ecology or conservation status. So it's interesting to imagine the botanical secrets locked within these two-centimeter long flowers, which we are proud to present as part of the VBG's native Mexican orchid collection, in bloom now in the Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids and Native Plants.

We hope that *Meiracyllium gemma* inspires your curiosity as it has captivated ours!

#### References:

- Dressler, R. L. (1960). The relationships of *meiracyllium* (Orchidaceae). *Brittonia*, 12(3), 222-225.
- Nagel, O. (2016). Notas relativas a la distribución de orquídeas mexicanas. *Botanical Sciences*, (11), 17-22.





# There is no “Planet B.”

– Ban Ki-moon,  
8th Secretary-General of the United Nations



Earth from space  
Photo: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/1\\_Earth\\_%28blank\\_2%29.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/1_Earth_%28blank_2%29.png)





Paco and Rosita  
Photo: Bob Price

## Celebrate Earth Day Weekend at the Vallarta Botanical Garden

Every day is Earth Day at the Vallarta Botanical Garden where we celebrate the natural wonders of our planet, especially its floristic diversity. Nonetheless, it doesn't hurt to make some extra noise about this during the official international celebration on April 22. We're taking this one step further through a weekend of activities for you to enjoy. We hope you can join us in person for our special Earth Day Weekend celebration!

### Agenda for the Earth Day 2017 Weekend at the VBG

Date	Time	Activity	Location
April 22	8:00 am	Birding in the Forest	Meet in parking lot at 8 am
	11:00 am	Screening of "The Lost Bird Project"	Vallarta Conservatory of Orchids
	1:00 pm	Garden Tour	Meet in the Hall of Flowers at 1 pm
	2:00 pm	Presentation of Conservation Initiatives	Hall of Flowers Ballroom
April 23	8:00 am	Field Trip to <i>Rancho El Santuario</i> for Macaw Observation and a special demonstration of the installation of an artificial nest for the Macaws	Meet in VBG parking lot at 8 am Note: an extra cost of \$200 pesos per person applies for this field trip.
	1:00 pm	Garden Tour	Meet in the Hall of Flowers at 1 pm
	2:00 pm	Presentation of Conservation Initiatives	Hall of Flowers Ballroom



## Celebrating 150 Years of Canada through Flowers

Article and photo by Bob Price, Founder and Curator, VBG

It's no secret that we at the Vallarta Botanical Garden are incredibly fond of our many amigos from Canada. This coming July 2nd, when we in Mexico celebrate National Botanical Gardens Day, our Canadian amigos will celebrate the Sesquicentennial (150 years) of their Confederation. But something this monumental deserves more than just a day of celebrations, and festivities have already begun throughout their provinces and territories.

During my travels to Toronto this past month for the 2017 North American Garden Tourism Conference I was also able to make it out to the wildly popular Canada Blooms—Canada's Largest Garden and Flower Festival. This year their theme was "Oh! Canada" and the diverse array of horticultural displays throughout their vast indoor exhibit spaces were diffuse with varying interpretations of Canada's history and culture. The hard work clearly paid off with record-breaking attendance at nearly a quarter of a million visitors during the ten-day festival. This kind of attendance is proof-positive that communities who invest in public horticulture and its related promotion stand to reap enormous rewards.







How to say 150 in flowers



## Give Every Month – Become a Garden “GEM”

Dividing your contributions to the Vallarta Botanical Garden into monthly payments can help you better budget your annual giving and allows us a dependable monthly income to carry the Garden through the slower times of the year. A new Give Every Month “GEM” page is now up on the Garden’s website [www.vbgardens.org](http://www.vbgardens.org) for you to begin this kind of contribution today.

## Commemorative Cantera Benches

Would you like to honor or memorialize someone with a permanent cantera bench at the Vallarta Botanical Garden? Benches are finished with beautiful hand-painted ceramic tiles. We can help you create a custom design with text and images of your choice. Prices are at \$7,000 USD for a *Banca Real* (Regal Bench) and \$5,000 USD for a *Banca Distintiva* (Distinctive Bench). Dividing this up into payments over the course of three years is a commitment of only \$194 or \$139 USD per month. These gifts qualify for tax-deductible contributions in Mexico, the US, and Canada. Interested? Great! Please visit our website or call 322 223 6182 and ask to speak to the Garden’s Membership Coordinator, Michaela Flores.

## Your Legacy Lives on at the VBG

Including the Vallarta Botanical Garden in your wills, trusts, and estate planning is an investment in the long-term viability of this important natural sanctuary for Puerto Vallarta and the exquisite flora of Mexico and world tropics. A member of the Garden’s Legacy Committee would be happy to talk to you about the best options for optimizing your philanthropic potential and further blessing a community. Please write to [info@vbgardens.org](mailto:info@vbgardens.org).



*Antirrhinum majus*  
Photo: Bob Price



## Do you have a special flower that you feel connected to when you visit the Vallarta Botanical Garden?

How would you like to experience your connection in your home?

What if you could have a painting of your favorite flower and make a meaningful contribution to the Vallarta Botanical Garden at the same time?

I am a passionate believer in the importance of supporting the Vallarta Botanical Garden as a special sanctuary for all of us in Puerto Vallarta and our visitors.

In an effort to give back to the Vallarta Botanical Garden community I would offer 50% of the proceeds for up to 15 personalized custom floral paintings to help further the Garden's mission and vision.

If you would like to enjoy your special piece of the Garden in your home everyday please reach out soon!

Contact Cheryl at: [wheelercheryl@me.com](mailto:wheelercheryl@me.com)

Cheryl Wheeler  
ART



Flower Fascination  
Photo: Paul Desmond





*Ursulea tuitensis*  
Photo: Neil Gerlowski





## Education and Volunteer Report

By Marcos Gómez, Propagation Coordinator, VBG

On March 15 we received a group of 46 students and teachers from the genetics class of the J. J. Fernandez de Lizardi High School in Puerto Vallarta. Newly recruited VBG staff member, Edith Pamela Cázares, helped me tour the students around the Garden and give them a special presentation of the VBG's In Vitro Laboratory which we use for propagating orchids, ferns, and potentially many other kinds of plants. From a genetics perspective, these are very fertile grounds for experiments!

Sarhai Rivas, the teacher who coordinated their visit, and her students were pleased beyond their expectations to learn about plant hybridization, epigenetics, and the role of botanical gardens in genetic biodiversity conservation. This was my first opportunity to share freshly acquired knowledge from my recent participation in a conservation themed workshop at the *Centro Nacional de Recursos Geneticos* (National Center of Genetic Resources) in Tepatitlán de Morelos in Los Altos de Jalisco. Teaching something is the best way to expand one's knowledge and doing so with such an attentive and appreciative audience was a great experience for me as an educator and plantsman.



## Vallarta Botanical Garden's Calendar

DATE		EVENT	COST
		<b>THE GARDEN IS CLOSED ON MONDAYS FROM APRIL UNTIL DECEMBER</b>	
2	Apr	<b>Garden Volunteer and Staff Appreciation Day</b> – Please write to Michaela Flores <a href="mailto:memberships@vbgardens.org">memberships@vbgardens.org</a> for more information.	-
3	Apr	<b>Garden closed Mondays from April until December</b>	-
9	Apr	<b>Palm Sunday Palm Walk</b> – 1 pm	Included with entry
16	Apr	<b>Easter</b> (Garden remains open for all of Holy Week except Monday, April 10th)	-
22-23	Apr	<b>Earth Day Weekend</b> — Please see page 9 for more information.	Included with entry
30	Apr	<b>Vanilla Blossom Expo at the VBG</b> – 1 pm demonstration of hand pollination techniques	Included with entry

\* 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).



Vireya Rhododendron  
Photo: Bob Price

### Garden Hours

**Open 7 days/wk**

**Open 6 days/wk**

**Early "Bird" Opening**

**Daily Guided Tour**

### 9 am – 6 pm

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

**(Closed Mondays)** April, May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., & Nov.

8 am every Thursday (Offered for the months of Dec., Jan., Feb., & March)

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





*Michaela Flores,*  
Membership Coordinator, VBG  
memberships@vbgardens.org

## From the Memberships Desk

Inspiration is a wonderful motivator! One of my favorite things about working at the Vallarta Botanical Garden is that I'm constantly inspired. Of course the beauty of the property and plants here plays an enormous role in this, but of equal importance in my inspiration is from the kindness of our community of supporters. From simple acts such as a smile or kind word to deep commitments of support through volunteerism and or membership purchase—they all add up to an enormous motivation for all of us here at the Garden. So from the VBG team to all of you, thanks for the smiles you put on our faces!

Members: please always wear your membership card when visiting the Garden. This helps our staff and volunteers recognize you as members and offer valuable discounts on your Garden purchases and other important benefits.

## Can you find your name on our WALL OF PATRONS?

**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](http://www.vbgardens.org/memberships)


A high resolution image of this photograph is  
available at [www.vbgardens.org/benefactors](http://www.vbgardens.org/benefactors)





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**(S) = student (I) = individual ☘ = deceased**

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# Your Donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden are Greatly Appreciated

## México



- **Tax-deduction receipts** are available for donations to the Vallarta Botanical Garden made through the *Fundación Punta de Mita* (FPM).
- **Please send an email earmarking your gift for the Vallarta Botanical Garden to** [donaciones@fundacionpuntademita.org](mailto:donaciones@fundacionpuntademita.org) **with a copy to** [info@vbgardens.org](mailto:info@vbgardens.org)
- In this email please include your name, the date your gift was sent, and the amount of your gift.

### Checks may be mailed to:

Fundación Punta de Mita, A.C.  
Carretera Federal Libre 200 Km 18.05  
Punta Mita, Nayarit, C.P. 63734 México.

- Please provide FPM with your email and information to be included in the tax-deductible receipt (which will be sent by email).
- Please provide FPM with confirmation (copy of check) for tracking.

**Wire transfers:** Bank: Banamex  
Account in Mexican Pesos (MXN):  
Account in US Dollars (USD):

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**Paypal:** [www.fundacionpuntademita.org/en/how-to-help](http://www.fundacionpuntademita.org/en/how-to-help)

## Canada



- Our educational programs qualify for **tax-deduction receipts** provided by The Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation (CCSHF)

### Cheques may be mailed to:

Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation  
87 Lavinia Ave  
Toronto, ON,  
M6S 3H9  
Canada

Please write "VBG" for "Vallarta Botanical Gardens" on your cheques.

Alternatively, you may donate using a credit card through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org) (whose donation page is linked to the CCSHF website [www.ccs hf.ca](http://www.ccs hf.ca)) selecting the "Vallarta Botanical Gardens Fund."

## USA



- Our direct support 501(c)3, "Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C." issues **tax-deduction receipts**:

### Checks may be mailed to:

Friends of Vallarta Botanical Gardens, A.C.  
759 North Campus Way  
Davis, CA 95616

### Wire transfers / direct deposits are accepted:

Please write to [treasurer@vbgardens.org](mailto:treasurer@vbgardens.org) for routing and account numbers.

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