

NOVEMBER RECAP • HOTY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS • GARDEN SHARE

On November 9, Sandy Masuo, the senior writer in The Huntington's Office of Communications and Marketing kept us entertained and engaged with her program: *Rooted in History: Stories from the Huntington*. Using materials sourced from the Huntington's vast collections, her program took us on a three-part journey through historical gardening texts, ultimately relating all the elements to present day practices.

In "Act I" Masuo likened the act of gardening to the process of editing text, in that a garden is a kind of narrative that reflects the gardener who tends it, with every garden having a story to tell. Historically, different types of gardening arose from the varying needs of gardeners to contain nature and control it for their own purposes. Beginning with an Egyptian garden ca. 1380 BCE, that had a central water feature bordered by trees, both fruiting and ornamental, she posited that these basic components were evident across many cultures, and that garden features evolved alongside these civilizations, much like literature evolved with the development of written language. In an illustrated document of a walled Roman garden with an ornamental fountain, from the first century CE, orchards are seen outside the walls. The divide between aesthetic gardening and the "productive" act of growing food continued to increase, culminating in highly manicured gardens such as those at Versailles. The distinction of tending gardens that were decorative possessions of the wealthy, from the more menial tasks of cultivating food crops, paralleled socioeconomic class divisions, causing these two types of "gardening" to evolve along different paths.

By the early twentieth century, threats to wilderness areas due to land development

and other needs of growing populations brought about the desire to create protected natural zones like botanic gardens. Many of these are designed to blur the lines between the managed landscape with their boundaries and the actual natural world outside. Masuo surmised that, in part, this has also led to trends appealing to those who prefer "naturalistic" gardens. Similarly, global food production has developed into a network of agricultural corporations growing monocultures with chemical assistance, leading to a growing movement favoring a return to sustainable land management practices, which often have worldwide historical precedents to support their validity.

Act II dealt with the plants in our gardens which represent the characters in our stories. Gardeners are the ones who assign meanings to the plants they collect based on our own proclivities, labeling them desirable or not for their own gardens. Masuo cited *Welwitschia mirabilis* as an example, which is much-admired botanically, but was once labeled as "the ugliest plant in creation" when first introduced in European horticultural circles. Before photography, people had to rely on illustrated texts like Nehemiah Grew's "The Anatomy of Plants" (1682) to better "see" plants that they might be interested in. Beautifully rendered botanical illustrations like those of Georg Ehret (1700s) were very popular for scientific and aesthetic reference and may have piqued horticultural interest in plants that might otherwise remain obscure. Botanist Anna Atkins' 1843 self-published "Photographs of British Algae," a collection of her cyanotypes, is considered to be the first book illustrated with photographs, and pioneered the use of photography in scientific illustration.

Masuo concluded with Act III, referencing the ephemeral nature of gardens, which we are forever trying to capture in pictures and words. She shared

images from the Huntington's collections to illustrate her point, including herbals, albums of private plant collections, Carl Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae*, and a gorgeous full-color rendering of a *Welwitschia* from an 1863 issue of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* (still in publication today). Some of Masuo's fascinating selections from the Huntington library can be made available for viewing and many plants contained in their pages can be found throughout the gardens, bringing botanical history to life.

Go to www.huntington.org to learn more and find Masuo's posts on their Verso blog archive. Or just visit the Huntington!

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

Link here to watch the entire program on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IHzNjog9mY>

SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

The December garden is winding down for its winter rest, so let's take it easy as well!

- Finish putting in new plantings, so healthy roots can establish ahead of spring's growth spurt.
- Late this month, start annual rose pruning and soil prep.
- Cut back on irrigation – we're due for another wet winter!
- Get on your tree trimmer's schedule for winter touch-ups.

MAY YOU RELAX IN YOUR GARDEN AS YOU WELCOME THE NEW YEAR!

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

2023 HOTY SILENT AUCTION DONORS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In last month's acknowledgements of work that went in to organizing the HOTY event, we did not have the full list of donors to our Silent Auction and were unable to properly thank members and community supporters for their contributions. The SCHS appreciates the generous participation of bidders and donors alike to this annual fundraising event.

We are grateful to all who donated to the 2023 auction.

(Donors listed in alphabetical order)

Businesses: Baker's Acres Nursery, Green Thumb Nursery, Growing Works Nursery, L.A. Arboretum, Soledad Nursery and

Theodore Payne Foundation. **Individuals:** Laura Bauer, Carol Bornstein, Dr. Raymond Borun, Mardi Caruso, Steven Gerischer, Laurel Jaramillo, Sandy Masuo, MaryAnn Moss, Kathy Musial, Yoav Paskowitz, Sabine Steinmetz, John Trager, Layla Valenzuela, the Dave Verity Estate and George Zhang.

Much appreciation also goes to the Arboretum for providing the venue, particularly Richard Schulhof (former CEO & 2023 HOTY), Michael Deplaines (current CEO), and Nadia Balaz, the Arboretum's Event Coordinator, as well as the staff of the Fresh Gourmet for catering our lovely dinner. You all helped make it a truly special evening...

Thank you all so very much!

