CGCI Award #13 — Club Touring

Summary and Objectives:
During July 2023, the Wonderful Valley Garden Club's Executive Committee and the club's Tour Chairman met to plan and organize tours for the upcoming club year. It had not been since 2019 that the club had organized any tours. It did not take long (two hours) to create a list of four well-known gardens in Southern California and dates to visit these gardens during the 2024 awards year. Then, someone suggested that tours to a flower show and a garden center should also be placed on the list to add variety to the types of tours. It was planned that all would carpool to the venues. There was discussion about hiring a bus, but it was the consensus to try the carpool method first and then, perhaps next awards year, think about booking a bus.

Scope of Project and Comprehensiveness of Work: There was not a lot of work involved in organizing the tours. Our Tour Chairman contacted each garden, obtained passes to the gardens and permission from the garden center, and organized the carpools. Once our yearbook was distributed in September, members sign-up with the Tour Chairman. Every club newsletter contained tour invitations. There was not an open spot left on the six tours (which were limited to thirty — club members and members from the community). See Financial Report for expenses.

Activities to Attain Goals: At every meeting, an education board listing and describing the tours was exhibited, and our Tour Chairman (who is an NGC Master Flower Show Judge and a consultant in all of NGC's other schools) enthusiastically described each venue and what members might learn from the tours. A sign-up sheet was circulated at every meeting.

Benefit/Need: The benefit of the tours was to educate our members about the horticulture that is found beyond our desert home. Our members yearned to learn what grew in other areas of Southern California besides what grew in our little desert valley. All members and guests learned a wealth of information, not only about plants, but also about beneficials insects and pollinators, animals that make up our ecosystem, etc. Members took away so much information from the tours that they want to write about their experiences in our newsletter and the local desert valley newspaper. Plus, it was a time for members to have fun and get to know each other again (post pandemic).

Accomplishment of Goals/Evaluation of Goals Reached: After all of the tours concluded, the club received accolades from the participants about the wonderful selection of gardens, the flower show and the garden center, and members voiced how much they had learned from the tours. Members noted "how fun it was to get together again with their garden club pals and to get to know the new members and guests." Since the successful outcome of the tours has been realized, the club is now planning to expand the tours for next year with bus trips to Central and Northern California botanical gardens and flower shows.

Prior Planning: As this was a new project, there was no prior planning, except for the July meeting to select the destinations and dates.

Financial Report: The club initially paid for all admission fees, all of which were reimbursed by club members and their guests. As everyone carpooled, no transportation costs were involved. However, with a generous donation from a member's husband, $300 was received for snacks, soft drinks and water before and after the tours. The only thing that members had to pay was for their lunches at the various destinations.

Participation: Club membership is 60 members. 85% of club members participated in the tours. Twenty-five guests from the community participated, with thirteen joining our garden club after the tours!

Tour 1: The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens

Tour 1: The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino was our first tour. This tour took place on Thursday, February 1, 2024. There we spent the day strolling through the botanical conservatory, art galleries and acres of spectacular gardens. Twenty-five members and five guests attended the tour. As it was a Thursday, everyone received free admission! Some actually enjoyed English Tea while there!

The Rose Garden

The Japanese Garden

The Chinese Garden

Tour 2: Sepulveda Garden Center

Tour 2: Sepulveda Garden Center in Encino was our tour in March. This tour took place on Tuesday, March 1, 2024. Attendees (twenty-three members and seven guests) experienced first hand what a garden center is all about — community gardens and meeting rooms for garden clubs and the community. While there, attendees were guests at a meeting of the Southern California Garden Club (SCGC) where they learned about pruning roses and parliamentary procedure tidbits from SCGC members.

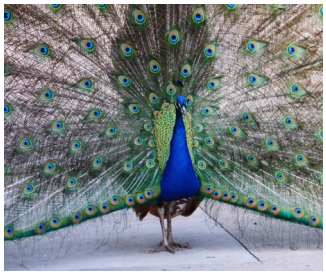
Sign at Entrance to the Garden Area

Garden Area

Individual Garden Plots

Tour 3: The Los Angeles Arboretum and Botanic Gardens

Tour 3: The Los Angeles Arboretum and Botanic Gardens in Arcadia was the third of our club tours. Thirty members carpooled to our destination on Saturday, April 1, 2024 where we were trilled to experience an extra treat -- the International Fern Society's Show. After learning all about ferns, members walked through the enchanting gardens and learned about the peacocks which roam throughout the Arboretum and the gardening techniques used by the various school gardens on the premises.



One of Numerous Peacocks

Queen Anne Cottage

Tour 4: Colton Flower Show

Tour 4: A Near Club Flower Show in Colton was our tour to a Standard Flower Show. This tour took place on Saturday, April 15, 2024. Attendees (twenty-five members and five guests) were amazed at the horticulture, floral designs, botanical art photography, and educational exhibits on display at the flower show. While at the show, attendees were able to attend a few lectures on American Traditional Design, Pollinator Gardens, and Growing Mushrooms.

Fairy Garden Exhibit

Edibles Class

Educational Exhibits

Floral Design

Tour 5: Descanso Gardens

Tour 5: Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge was our fifth tour. Our tour took place on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. After the guided tour, members participated in a spring bulb planting workshop at the Gardens and learned all about the planting and caring of spring bulbs. Many members and guests purchased unusual plants at the gift shop to take home. Again, we had thirty participants (twenty-six members and four guests) who attended the tour.

The Rose Garden

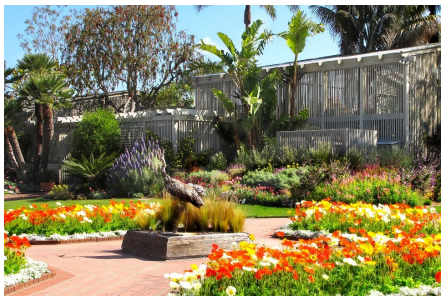
Japanese Garden

California Garden

Tour 6: Sherman Library and Gardens

Sherman Library and Gardens in Corona Del Mar was our final tour for the year. We toured this wonderful wealth of horticulture knowledge on Saturday, June 10, 2024 where we (26 members and four guests) visited every nook and cranny of this special place in Orange County! Members toured the greenhouse, walked along the beautiful paths of the garden, had lunch at the adorable restaurant, and we were able to spend some time in the famous library. From the Gardens' website, "The Gardens provide a tranquil environment simply to be enjoyed for the beauty or, if desired, a place to observe and study firsthand plant life from various parts of the world."

Greenhouse



Courtyard Area

Cactus Garden