

CBS PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR VOLUME 64

Dear Colleagues,

This is my first report as President of the Society, and I'm delighted to represent the Society as the Council and I develop new opportunities for our members. We are now planning how to implement several new initiatives to build membership in the Society; to enhance botanical careers; to create new avenues for collaborative research and education; and, of course, to reduce plant blindness near and far. *Madroño* is under new leadership as well; Dr. Justen Whittall (Santa Clara University) is the journal's incoming Editor, and I'd like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Matt Ritter (Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo), *Madroño*'s Editor from 2012–2016, who is now introducing Justen to the tasks at hand. Continue to look for the arrival of your quarterly issues!

The 100 of us who attended the 2017 Graduate Symposium at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden in April couldn't help being impressed by the enthusiasm, knowledge, creativity, and diversity of the participating graduate students, postdocs, and faculty. The symposium included 30 presentations, 16 posters, and 60 people at the banquet: a very full day in the SBBG's brand new and stunning Pritzlaff Conservation Center, and among the Garden's botanically rich trails.

The spring also brought the Council's decisions regarding the 2017 Paul Silva Student Research Grant awards. The competition was so stiff that three awards were granted, including one to a four-student team from Cal Poly (read more about them in the upcoming issue of the Society's newsletter, *Nemophila*, and at calbotsoc.org/grants/). In light of all of this happy activity, it was easy to feel that the future of botanical research in California is in excellent hands, but with the unpredictable effects of climate change looming, and with insufficient funding for basic and applied research — not to mention for the kind of far-ranging field courses that drew many of us into Botany — we must be mindful to keep this future secure.

We know two things for certain: wild plants and their habitats need the attention of all plant scientists, and, in order to create the next generation of talented and sharp-eyed botanists, we must encourage them (and perhaps ourselves, too...) to look up from their hand-held devices and introduce them to the pleasures and adventures intrinsic to discovering and observing wild plants — and their pollinators! — in their natural habitats.

As the only statewide organization dedicated to developing a pipeline for the training of professional

plant scientists and academicians in California, the Society is uniquely poised to facilitate the growth, skills, and visibility of botanical experts whose work contributes to the persistence and diversity of our state's flora. Towards this goal, the Council has assembled a set of initiatives for the upcoming year, including the following priorities:

Botany Ambassador Program: This program aims to inspire future botanists by creating bridges between graduate students, informal science education programs, and local classrooms. Participants will develop and exchange teaching materials (to be made available on our website), and visit local schools, botanic gardens, and outdoor education venues to introduce K–12 students to botany and to the wide range of botanical careers that they may pursue. Participants will also have the opportunity to “translate” recent *Madroño* articles into short summaries for general audiences, to be posted on the Society's website. In short, we aim to ignite young students' interest and awareness of botany as a career, and to facilitate the professional training of current graduate students. Those interested in participating or supporting this program should contact our Membership Chair, Rachael L. Olliff Yang (membership@calbotsoc.org).

Membership growth and retention: California has an abundance of riches with respect to botanical societies (can you name at least three others?), so the California Botanical Society must rise to the challenge of continuing to build our membership if we are to grow and to thrive. The Council is considering a number of ways to entice new members to join, including: facilitating professional networking through our website; creating a portal through which students and investigators may seek new collaborators; reaching out to professional botanists at universities and colleges across California and other western states; increasing the availability of funds for undergraduate and graduate student research; and strengthening our relationships with western botanical gardens.

Professional development: The Council wishes to offer a new training opportunity for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers by inviting them to review manuscripts submitted to *Madroño* and to learn from the comments provided by other reviewers as well as from the Editor's decision. If you would like to participate in this opportunity, or if you are a faculty member with lab members who you would like to recommend for this activity, please contact incoming *Madroño* editor, Dr. Justen Whittall (madronoeditor@gmail.com).

The Council is brainstorming about other ways to increase the value of the Society (and our website) to our members, and, with a bit of luck, you'll hear a lot more about these plans at the 2018 California Botanical Society Banquet to be held at UC Davis – but only if you come (better yet, bring a new member, too)! To that hopeful end, please keep an eye out for upcoming announcements.

With best wishes for a cool and crisp autumn,



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