



# Volunteer Times

Published for the volunteers of the UCI Arboretum

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## Past and Future Propagation Efforts With Bulbs at the Arboretum

By Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum



*Ornithogalum, sp. one of our bulbs in active propagation for future release.*

The Arboretum's prized southern African winter growing bulb collection has gone into its summer 'sleep' after a long and successful growing season, both out in the Bulb Garden and in our nurseries.

Back in 2006, the Nursery staff, under my direction, embarked on a stepped up propagation effort with our South African bulbs. We embarked on a more active program to grow by seed and also experimented with new propagation techniques to increase our stock.

Bulb propagation is not a short term project. Bulbs can take 5–7 years to reach blooming size from seed; other, more exotic methods, such as chipping, yield many offsets but also can take time for bulbs to reach blooming size.

Two of our largest projects were the propagation of *Gladiolus tristis* by seed and the isolation of desirable hybrids of *Amaryllis belladonna* from our rather extensive plantings of the classical 'Naked lady' and the propagation of those hybrids—and also the basic dark pink, white and medium pink colors—by a technique known as 'chipping.'\*

In the case of the *Gladiolus tristis* seed, we saw results much quicker than usual for bulbs, with the first

bulbs going out for sale in 2009. Now, we have a good supply of these beautiful and fragrant bulbs to support our sales and also to be planted out in the garden.

Our first large scale attempt at chipping *Amaryllis* was in Fall 2007, and was also a very successful endeavor, with a few bulbs reaching sellable size by 2010 and quite a lot ready for sale by this year. This fall we intend to do more chipping, particularly of some of the hybrids. I have my eye on a particularly colorful clump I noticed last year, tentatively named 'Mardi Gras.' Last year each flower showed patches of every shade of pink from very light to very dark, with each flower unique in its patterning. I intend to check out the blooms and confirm they are 'true' – in other words, that they show the same stunning variegation. *Amaryllis* can show a certain amount of temperature and light sensitivity that can affect the shading of a flower. A plant that is blush pink in a cool summer might be pure white if the temperature is higher. I usually like to observe an *amaryllis* flower for two seasons minimum to make sure the color is consistent.

Bulbs, of course, multiply naturally by division, creating one or more offsets each year. Some of them multiply quite enthusiastically! A good fertilizer pro-

*See Bulb Efforts, Page 3*



*One of our white Amaryllis belladonna*

# Arboretum Begins Summer Plant Sale Schedule

By *Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum*

Summer mornings, crisp, sunny and (hopefully) cool are a nice time to go plant shopping. The Arboretum continues its once a month plant sales through the summer months, but reduces its hours to the morning only, 9 a.m. to noon. They are usually busy mornings!

For July, our sale is on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and I hope all our volunteers will plan to help out. With the abbreviated schedule, I am looking for volunteers primarily for setup from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., or the sale itself, 8:30 a.m. till 12:30 p.m. I also would like one volunteer for the afternoon – from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. – to help with watering around our nursery.

For the sale, I need the usual helpers: cashiers, sales people, and people to help take plants to the customer's cars. Our clients really appreciate the extra service we provide in an era when takeout help is usually only available by special request, if at all.

We have an abundance of stock thanks to the hard work of our nursery and Friday club volunteers throughout the spring. They have made cuttings, sowed seed, transplanted, weeded, fed, and otherwise pampered our plants to maturity. The Nursery Group on Wednesdays will continue this work throughout the summer while the Friday Club shifts primarily to bulb repotting. We are already propagating for fall and even for early next year, taking advantage of the summer growing season. Since many plants grow little after the weather cools in October, plants for January and February and even some plants for next year's Winter Bulb Festival need to be propagated now and be to nearly full size by Halloween, or Thanksgiving at the latest.

If you are interested in volunteering for the July 21<sup>st</sup> sale, please email me at [ldlyons@uci.edu](mailto:ldlyons@uci.edu) or call (949) 824-5833.



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## Annual Summer Bulb Repotting Begins

By *Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum*

Each summer is a busy one around the Arboretum. Besides all our usual tasks—weeding, propagating perennials, finding the best breeze, and of course, lots and lots of watering—our winter bulbs, now gone dormant, are ready for a Summer of Love from our Arboretum volunteers. That is, many of them need nice fresh soil in which they will happily grow for the next 2–3 years.



Most of our bulbs are on a three-year cycle. After about three years, most of the organic content has decayed from our potting soil, leaving a few sad shreds of redwood compost amongst a sea of sand and perlite. This tired old soil is ready for an honorable retirement. Volunteers carefully sift the soil and remove the bulbs, storing them in paper bags. Much of that work is done by our good friends at the Pacific Life Good Guys during their two visits to the Arboretum each summer—more details on that are below!

In addition, bulbs propagate actively by offsets, in essence, making clones of themselves—sometimes just one a year, but sometimes more. During bulb repotting the offsets are carefully separated from one another. The bulbs are then sorted by size. Most of the bulbs are potted in fresh potting soil and put back into

the bulb house for another three-year-growing cycle. If we are fortunate enough to have excess blooming size bulbs, they are sold as dormant corms during the fall sale, held for planting in the garden, or potted into 1-gallon pots to sell as blooming bulbs next winter and spring. The sorting and repotting is carried out primarily by our Nursery staff, particularly the Friday Club during their regular volunteer sessions each Friday morning from 9 a.m. to noon.

Pacific Life's first visit of the summer is on Saturday, July 14 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. The Good Guys typically bring between 20–30 volunteers to the July session, and a significant amount of our bulb lifting for the summer is completed in a single morning. All Arboretum volunteers are also welcome to join us on July 14<sup>th</sup>. The bulb repotting work is quite easy. Groups of 10 volunteers sit at tables and work together on their assigned pots.

The Friday Club will begin working on bulb repotting July 6<sup>th</sup>. While they will mostly be sorting and repotting, the Friday Club also lifts a handful of species that require special handling. For example, the roots of some bulbs like *Massonia echinata* (starfish flower) do not die off; they survive, protected by the soil, until the next growing season. Bulbs like this need

*See Repotting, Page 3*

# Bulb Propagation Efforts

*Bulb Efforts, From Page 1*



*A Bench Full of our Gladiolus tristis*

gram can encourage that process. There were some very nice species that we had somewhat limited quantities of – a pot or two – and I was determined to build up our ‘parent stock’ of those bulbs to support future sales. One of those bulbs, *Allium* ‘White Bells’ was sold as blooming pots this winter for the first time; other items will be lifted this summer. If we have sufficient extra



*One of our Gladiolus tristis close-up*

blooming size bulbs, they will be released this fall. Others will certainly become available in the next two years, including the wonderfully fragrant *Freesia alba* and the rich ruby red of *Babiana villosa*.

We continue to collect seed from a number of different species and will sow them in the fall. Seed from previous years is in various stages, and many items are ready for repotting this summer.

I have had the opportunity to obtain some wonderful bulbs commercially, including *Babiana villosa*, *Freesia alba*, *Babiana odorata*, and some interesting *Gladiolus*. These have been incorporated in our propagation program. Once we have sufficient quantities of parent stock, these bulbs will also be available for sale from our nursery.

For details on this summer’s bulb repotting activities, check out the story on page 2.

\*For reprints of some of my earlier articles on bulb propagation, including a collection of articles on growing *Gladiolus tristis* from seed and an article detailing the technique known as chipping, please drop me an email and I will be happy to forward them to you - LL



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## Annual Repotting

*Repotting, From Page 2*

to be lifted and repotted the same day to protect the roots. I expect the Friday Club to spend at least part of the session July 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup> working on bulbs. Work will continue in August, with the exception of August 10<sup>th</sup>, when we will be preparing for a Saturday Plant Sale.

All volunteers are welcome to join any of the Friday sessions and work with this rare and unusual bulbs, learning about repotting technique and bulb care. Since this is my twenty-second summer supervising the bulb repotting, I like to think I know a trick or two! Come join us one Friday this summer—you’ll be glad you did.



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Plants provide the air we breathe, food, medicine and shelter. In fact, one quarter of all prescriptions written in the U.S. are derived from wild plant species. Yet right now, 29% of U.S. plant species are at risk of extinction, one plant in eight is at risk worldwide

<http://www.gardendigest.com/>

*Photos by Laura Lyons*

## IMPORTANT DATES

### DATE

July 4

July 14

July 21

### EVENT

Arboretum Closed

Independence Day

Bulb Repotting Day

Saturday Plant Sale

### TIME

8:30 a.m. – noon

9 a.m. to noon

### LOOKING AHEAD

See Season Event Calendar

## SEASON EVENT CALENDAR

August 11	Saturday Plant Sale
September 22	Saturday Plant Sale
October 20	Fall Art and Flower
November 10	Fall Clearance Sale

Saturday Plant Sales are from 9 a.m. to noon.

## CURRENT VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

### GROUP

### DAY AND TIME

Nursery	Wednesday	9 a.m. – noon
Orchid Care	Wednesday	9 a.m. – noon
Bulb & Perennial	Wednesday	9 a.m. – noon
California Garden	Thursday	10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Herbarium	Thursday	1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Friday Club	Friday	9 a.m. – noon
Special Events	See <b>Important Dates</b>	

For information on any of these or for general information on volunteering, call Laura Lyons at: 949/824-5833 or e-mail: ldlyons@uci.edu



## WE NEED



### USED 1-GALLON POTS

Drop off by our garage any time we are open,  
or outside the front gate when we are closed.