



Volunteer Times

Published for the volunteers of the UCI Arboretum

January 2012

Winter Blooming Aloes Put on a Show at Arboretum



Aloe spectabilis

By Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum

In the chill of winter the UCI Arboretum's collection of winter blooming Aloes brighten up the garden with their warm reds, yellows, and blazing oranges. Their colorful flowers are often carried on many-branched flower stalks, making an impressive and colorful show during the fall and winter.

Aloe is a well known genus to most everyone thanks to one particular species, *Aloe vera*, producer of the famous skin soother (extracted from the gel-like interior of the plant's leathery leaves. However, there are from 500 to 600 different species in the genus, depending on which authority you consult; they are definitely a

large and diverse genus. They grow as classical rosettes (*Aloe vera*), ground hugging crawlers (*Aloe mitriformis*), 10ft + tree aloes (*Aloe barbarae*) and even as vine-like climbers (*Aloe ciliaris*).

The origin of the name Aloe is debated. Many authorities think it derived from the ancient Greek word for 'bitter.' Certainly a very bitter sap is one of the plant's defenses against predation, along with a pretty formidable array of thorns on the leaf margins.

They are native to Africa, the Middle East, and the Cape Verde Islands. They can be very long lived, with documented specimens over 100 years old.

Several species of Aloes are threatened or endangered. The most recent IUCN 'Red List' of threatened or endangered species lists 46 species of concern. In-

See Aloes, Page 2



Aloe dichotoma all photos by Laura Lyons

Volunteers Needed for Early Season Plant Sales

By *Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum*

January is always a busy month at the Arboretum. We have a new quarter starting, including our Ornamental Horticulture class, new Independent Study students to train, and a new year of plant sales to plan for and execute.

Already I have sent out press releases for sales through May; we certainly have a full calendar of winter and spring sales planned.

The first sale of the season is a Saturday Plant Sale on January 21st. The Nursery Group has been busy propagating and growing plants for our upcoming sales, including some very interesting new varieties from the

Proven Winners® line. The unseasonably cold November has slowed production down somewhat, but I still expect to have a variety of new items for this event and, of course, for the sales to follow (please see a complete calendar of our winter and spring sales on page 3).

For this first event we will need volunteers to work as cashiers, take out people, and sales. We'll run with the usual shifts: Setup from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., Morning Run from 8:30 a.m. to noon, and Afternoon Run from noon to 3:30 p.m.

To volunteer for the January 21st sale, please email ldlyons@uci.edu or call (949) 824-5833. 

Upcoming Workdays

By *Laura Lyons, UCI Arboretum*

With UCI starting a new quarter and Dr. Bowler back from sabbatical, I expect a number of new students to join the Arboretum for Winter Quarter. Therefore, on Saturday, January 7, I plan to have a garden workday/training day from 9 a.m. to noon, and you are invited to join us.

I usually go over over a variety of topics; including

plant propagation, weed ID, watering tips and techniques, and other topics in horticulture.

The following weekend, January 14, I plan to have a planting day, if we get enough students and volunteers—that IS the Martin Luther King birthday weekend, but with the holidays just past, people are less likely to go out of town.

If you are interested in volunteering for either day, particularly January 14, please let me know ASAP.



URGENT REQUEST
USED 1-GALLON POTS
 Drop off by our garage any time we are open,
 or outside the front gate when we are closed.



IMPORTANT DATES

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>TIME</u>
January 7	Garden Workday	9 a.m. to noon
January 14	Garden Workday?	TBD
January 21	Saturday Plant Sale	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

EARLY SEASON EVENT CALENDAR

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
February 11	Saturday Plant Sale
March 3 & 4	Winter Bulb Festival
March 24	Saturday Plant Sale
April 14	April Showers of Flowers
May 5 & 6	Spring Perennial Sale

Aloes Adaptable

Aloes from Page 1

International trade in Aloes is strictly regulated, with all species on on CITES Appendix 1 (21 species) or Appendix 2 (all other Aloes except *A. vera*).

Raw aloe is poisonous to ingest and some people also have a skin allergy to raw aloe—slicing a leaf open and applying it to your sunburn may not be the best idea! If you are one of the unlucky people that is allergic to raw Aloe, you'll wind up with a rash on top of your sunburn. A thin yellow layer right underneath the leathery skin is the main culprit—commercial preparations of aloe for skin use have the irritating chemicals extracted.

Various aloe extracts are, also, used in herbal preparations. In fact, one particular Aloe extract was used extensively as a natural laxative until the FDA banned one of the main ingredients, aloin, in 2002.

They are hardy and adaptable plants in the garden and tolerate a wide variety of conditions. Here in Southern California they prefer full sun, tolerate a wide variety of soil conditions, and need little water once established. However, many species can tolerate a great deal of water as long as their drainage is good.

Among the winter aloes, there are a few standouts in my mind. *Aloe dictotoma*, the quiver tree, is a perennial favorite with showy yellow flowers; it is an early blooming species, usually at its peak around Thanksgiving. *Aloe africana* reminds me of the colorful 'Big Stick' ice creams of my childhood, with its large, straight flowers with flowers in shades of soft orange to yellow. Vivid *Aloe wickensii* is one of the bicolored aloe flowers, with the buds a rich ruby red and the open flowers a bright yellow. The candle aloe, *Aloe plicatilis*, is always an attention-getter, thanks to its unusual fanlike arrangement of leaves.

For sheer size, our 30+ year old *Aloe arborescens* is always a show stopper. For years this was the only aloe commonly sold in nurseries. It usually came in a 5-gallon container with one or two spindly stems. Little did most people know that it could grow into a mound more than 6-ft tall and 10-ft across!

Aloes are an impressive group of succulents readily adaptable to southern California gardens. With the surge in popularity succulents have enjoyed in the last few years, there are more varieties than ever available, both species and a variety of hybrids. Their unique form, showy flowers, and unthirsty habit make them a great choice for pot or garden.



Aloe marlothii



Aloe plicatilis

CURRENT VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>DAY AND TIME</u>
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 Important Dates

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