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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

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I welcome you to the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and to the diversity of plants in our region. This Symposium, examining morphology and diversity, is particularly relevant to southern California and its remarkable biodiversity. There are 7,036 vascular plant taxa in the State of which 3,860 are native to California and North America and 2,153 are endemic or unique to the State. The 1994 inventory of sensitive plants by the California Native Plant Society indicates 27.7% of the native flora is of concern because of a rare, threatened, or endangered status. California is one of the twenty most important areas in the world for plant diversity. This institution is dedicated to the study and research of California plants and to make this information widely available.

Susanna Bixby Bryant established the original garden in 1927 on her ranch about 15 miles due south of our present site. The Garden was moved to its present site near the Claremont Colleges in 1951. Mrs. Bryant was deeply concerned about the conservation and understanding of plants of California. The mission she established continues today.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden is devoted to the collection, cultivation, study, and display of native California plants and to graduate training and research in plant systematics and evolution. Through all its programs, the mission of the Garden is to make significant contributions to the appreciation, enjoyment, conservation, understanding, and thoughtful utilization of our natural heritage.

This symposium will examine the use of morphology in furthering our understanding of plants and animals and their relationships. It is a topic that helps extend our mission in systematics and evolution.

I am particularly interested in the presentation about *Pelargonium*. This plant has always been interesting from a horticultural perspective as I believe it may represent one of the oldest continually produced clones. Think about how *Pelargonium* has travelled from country to country with many immigrants. There

may be clones in cultivation today that date back many centuries. Today we will hear more about its gestalt and its method of morphological differentiation.

I am also interested in learning more about the genetics of morphological expression in maize. George Beadle, a pioneer in maize genetics, moved from Chicago to Claremont and died here a few years ago. It is an interesting connection to the past that I felt worth noting today.

I invite you to take the time to visit the many collections in the Garden. Your symposium package contains a list of plants in flower or fruit in the Garden. This list is produced weekly by Emeritus Professor Robert Thorne. The list exemplifies the diversity of our collections. I will warn you that not all plants are labelled and you will have to do some sleuthing to find them. I hope you take the opportunity to acquaint yourself with our diverse flora.

I am pleased to recognize the outstanding efforts that Dr. Elizabeth Zimmer and Dr. Mark Porter have made in co-chairing this symposium. I also pay special thanks to Ann Joslin, my Executive Assistant and Botany Program Secretary, who has done a great job in helping make the program run smoothly. I know that many of you have been in touch with Ann, and on behalf of all speakers and participants at this meeting, I express your and the institution's thanks for a job well done. We have other staff and graduate students with us today. Please take the opportunity to talk to them about their programs and the Garden's collections and resources. They have all participated in making this symposium possible.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for continuing support of many aspects of our graduate program and for support of this symposium. I want to thank the speakers for contributing to our symposium and thank each participant for coming to Claremont to participate in our annual Systematics Symposium. I wish each of you a productive and enlightening day.