

# Descanso Gardens

Impact Report  
2022





# From our CEO



Our mission at Descanso is to connect people with nature and one another. In 2022 we did that by focusing on our collections, as well as by giving visitors the new and unexpected.

If you wandered the gardens last year, you certainly came upon *Your (Un) Natural Garden*. This garden-wide art exhibition came from the wonderful mind of Southern California artist Adam Schwerner. The artist's whimsical style was found all over the garden and, for what had to be the first time ever, included a room in the Boddy House full of feather boas!

We also opened two huge projects this year. If you visit the lake, look up the hill and you will see the Ruth Borun Nursery and Propagation Center. This nursery is not only an upgrade to our existing facilities but it allows us to propagate our collections to ensure they are protected for generations to come. Recently we found out that Descanso is home to some very rare lilacs. We have already begun propagating those plants to make sure we always have them. We have a similar program for the gardens' rare camellias and other collections.

The second project we opened this year was the labyrinth in the Rose Garden. A labyrinth is used for walking meditation and can quiet the mind, and be good for self-reflection and stress reduction. If you haven't already, I highly recommend walking the labyrinth. Nature and mental well-being have long been connected. The labyrinth and programming will further our goal of being a place for wellness.

We don't tend the garden for awards, but we were certainly proud when Descanso Gardens was named 2022 California Nonprofit of the Year for Assembly District 43. Thank you to Assemblymember Laura Friedman who nominated us for this honor.

Descanso continues to be a place of adventure and discovery for our members, visitors, and school groups. It is a place that I am excited to see grow and thrive in the future thanks to the ongoing generosity of our supporters. Your belief in our mission inspires our work and we are immensely grateful.

**Juliann Rooke**  
Chief Executive Officer

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## Our Mission

*At Descanso Gardens we connect people with nature and one another.*



## Visit us online:

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# Highlights

We had several notable achievements that could not have been realized without the incredible support and efforts of our donors, members, volunteers, and staff. Thank you.



## *New Beginnings: The Nursery Opens*

August was an exciting time at Descanso. The much-anticipated Ruth Borun Nursery and Propagation Center opened with a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony. The greatly expanded space and state-of-the-art facility is a game changer for the future of Descanso and its natural treasures. It enables us to efficiently propagate and nurture more plants and trees, ensuring that their genetic heritage is preserved. Its new location improves upon a multitude of things such as growing conditions, airflow, and accessibility. It will also be a place where children and adults can learn about nature and its preservation. The center was made possible by a generous donation from the Anna and Harry Borun Foundation in honor of the late Ruth Borun.



## *Walking Labyrinth*

As part of Descanso's commitment to wellness, we installed a walking labyrinth in the Rose Garden. A labyrinth is an ancient archetype used for centuries across cultures as a tool for contemplation. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends, but one clear path to the center and out again. To help guide guests through the labyrinth, we hired an expert on meditation and mindfulness to create walking meditations, offered in both print and audio. We introduced our new labyrinth to visitors with Nature Meditation sessions that highlighted the connection between nature and well-being.



## *(Un)Natural Art in the Garden*

Visitors experienced art like they had never seen or felt before. Artist Adam Schwerner asked visitors to please touch the art in his unique and eclectic exhibition, *Your (Un)Natural Garden*. Installations at The Sturt Haaga Gallery, Boddy House, and throughout the landscape intrigued visitors' senses and invited participation. Colorful archways and artworks led to the art gallery and house. Once there, visitors explored rooms filled with unexpected surprises including hundreds of bells playing and a kaleidoscope of feather boas hanging from the ceiling. The popular exhibition was produced in collaboration with JUST Design, Art Mafia, and Pink Sparrow.



## *Recognition for our Work*

We were honored to be named nonprofit of the year for District 43 by Assemblymember Laura Friedman. "Descanso Gardens is a first-rate sanctuary, where people can experience both the flora that is key to our local ecosystems and notable species from all over the world," Assemblymember Friedman said. "Partnering with local schools, Descanso fosters a love for nature for the next generation." Now in its seventh year, the Nonprofit of the Year award is meant to shine a light on the important work that nonprofits do and to foster appreciation of the collective impact nonprofits have on communities.



Photo courtesy of Assemblymember Laura Friedman's office.

# By the Numbers

**71**  
trees  
planted



**90**  
wellness  
classes

**55,337**  
train riders



**153,658**  
people attended  
*Enchanted Forest of  
Light* over 50 nights



**1**  
new state-of-  
the-art nursery

**205,000**  
social media  
followers





**957,849**  
admissions,  
the highest to date



**274**  
volunteers completed  
**13,914**  
hours of service



**74,239**  
people attended  
*Carved*



**51**  
live  
performances



**150+**  
endangered and  
rare plant species  
in our care



**31,472**  
member  
households

# Making Nature Accessible

Making nature accessible to everyone is part of our mission. We offered free admissions and nature programs to those who otherwise might not be able to visit—including EBT cardholders and students from Title 1 schools. We also gave complimentary entry to veterans, active military personnel, teachers, students, and the general public on Free Tuesdays.

**52,738**  
**FREE Admissions**



**30,000**  
**FREE Tuesday guests**



**11,795** students,  
teachers, and chaperones  
on **239** field trips

**5,653**  
**EBT cardholders**

## Educational programs



Some of our school partners included Los Angeles Unified School District's **Beyond the Bell** programs and Pasadena Educational Foundation & Pasadena Unified School District's **My Masterpieces: Discovering Art in My Community** program.

*The field trip was an amazing opportunity for my students to enrich their understanding of plants and animals. They learned so many amazing new fun facts. They were very excited to share them with the school at morning assembly.*

-Teacher survey response





## 2022 Leadership

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## Financials

For the 2022 audited financial report, please visit: [descansogardens.org/about/governance](https://descansogardens.org/about/governance)

## Thank you for your tremendous support

Annual giving in the form of memberships, donations, grants, sponsorships, and other contributions supports our mission of connecting people with nature and one another.

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# Descanso Gardens

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