

Spring 2013

## Home at Last

**Text and photos  
 by Alex and Darby Feldwinn**

**W**e moved into our house the night that the Gap Fire took out the power back in July 2008. Luckily that only lasted a few hours but was an omen of things to come. With the Tea Fire only a short five months later making us evacuate our home, we knew we needed to make a thorough catalog of everything in our home. Not quite a year after we moved into the old Witmer ranch, our house was taken by the Jesuita Fire, and our three-and-half-year home building project started.

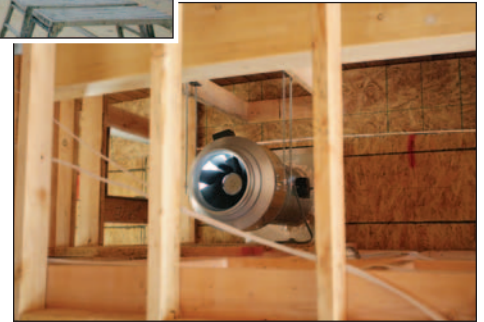
Naturally we were underinsured like most people who had no idea how much it costs to build a house in Santa Barbara. We had assumed the number that the insurance company gave us would rebuild our house. We discovered that in Santa Barbara you really



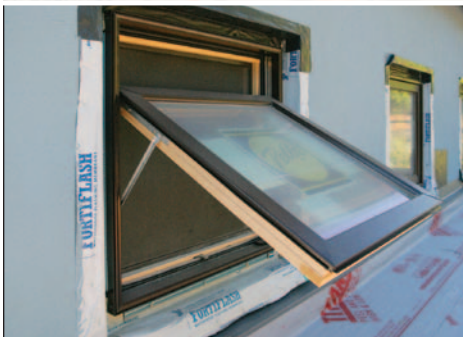
◀ Created offsite, structural insulated panels (SIPs) came with six inches of hard foam, fire-rated insulation, yet are lightweight, as Alex Feldwinn demonstrates (inset). Assembled like a giant jigsaw puzzle, the house does not need air conditioning as it has 10 inches of foam in the ceiling panels and two inches more on the exterior walls.

should insure for at least \$300 per square foot. After fighting with the insurance company and suffering through the inane County Board of Architectural Review, we were two years in and hadn't even broken ground. Finally realizing that we were getting nowhere with the BAR, we resorted to going like-for-like, building a house that matched the old one in square footage and footprint, thus allowing us to bypass the seemingly power and money hungry bureaucracy at the county building.

With the help of our architect, George Hided of Design Apparatus, and our contractor, Lindsey Adams of Lindsey Adams Construction, we were able to build our dream home. We used a lot of newer construction methods and materials to make sure our home was both fire resistant and environmentally friendly.



▲ A whole-house fan sucks cool air down low and expels hot air near the ceiling, and each bedroom has a ceiling fan.



▲ The tubes in the top picture run hot water through the floors to heat the house. The low-E windows in the bottom picture allow little heat transfer, aided by dual-pane construction and a tight seal. Small windows on the south side of the house mean low heat gain.



▲ The light-colored metal roof is both heat and fire resistant, and plumbed for solar panels. Exterior lights are all shaded downward to help with light pollution. The stones in the foreground are stacked to form a retaining wall.



◀ Energy-saving LED and compact fluorescent lights were used for most of the lighting.

# Native Revegetation Project Along Rattlesnake Creek

By Rick Frickmann

The City of Santa Barbara, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, and Urban Creeks Council just finished a native restoration planting along Rattlesnake Creek

In 2006 the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) purchased 2333 Las Canoas Road, a property at its southeast corner, and used it for staff housing. At the south end of this six-and-a-half-acre parcel along Rattlesnake Creek was a large grove of blue gum eucalyptus trees, many over three feet in diameter and a hundred feet tall. Over the years this grove had crowded out the naturally occurring trees along the creek.

Though beautiful and spectacular trees, the nonnative eucalyptus have their faults. They are prone to dropping branches and falling over. They also spread quickly, displacing native vegetation, and they are a terrible fire hazard. In the 2009 Jesusita Fire, much of this grove burned.

After the fire, in keeping with the SBBG's mission statement that it "foster the conservation of California's native plants" and "serve as a role model of sustainable practices," it decided to remove the whole grove, not just the trees that burned.

Meanwhile, Santa Barbara Urban Creeks Council (UCC) has been working on Rattlesnake Creek to facilitate the return of steelhead trout. Besides removing barriers to fish migration, such as old bridges with walls across creeks, UCC also takes note of the riparian vegetation. Shaded water is important



The site after cutting the eucalyptus.  
PHOTO: Google Earth © 2010



Irrigation system delivers water to newly planted natives.  
PHOTO: Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

for fish and aquatic wildlife. A healthy tree canopy over the creek keeps the water cool.

As can be seen from Google's satellite view (left photo), a 300-foot length of creek was laid bare after the eucalyptuses were removed. In 2012, UCC contacted the Garden about a joint effort to revegetate this section. SBBG director Dr. Steve Windhager said the Garden had plans for native restoration but could not yet afford to do so.

UCC found a program administered by the City of Santa Barbara Creeks Division to help fund planting of riparian trees on parcels that border creeks flowing through the city. Rattlesnake Creek is tributary to the Mission Creek watershed and thus qualified.

Denise Knapp, the Botanic Garden's Conservation Program Manager, laid out a

plan to plant 75 native trees on the quarter-acre site: 18 alders and sycamores right on the creek bank (the way nature would have done), and 57 bay laurels and oaks above the bank. The agreement was signed last November; work started in December and finished in January. City-hired crews dug 75 holes and lined them with wire gopher baskets. Before placing the trees, a 600-foot water line (right photo) had to be brought down from the main house for the drip system.

Like the rest of Mission Canyon, at the planting site one can regularly see native deer, bobcat, coyote, quail, turkeys, and gophers. Hopefully, soon we can also add migrating steelhead trout to this list.

## No Euphoria over Euphorbia

By Laurie Guitteau



Turns out the Jesusita Fire not only burned down homes, but it opened the door to invasive plants seldom seen before in the canyon. Two of these are euphorbias: *Euphorbia dendroides* and *Euphorbia terracina*. These plants have been found after

fires in many areas of the world; the fire seems to stimulate regrowth that is stronger and more dense. When allowed to bloom, both species multiply faster than rabbits! They tend to sneak up on you if your gar-

*Euphorbia dendroides*. Euphorbias follow fire and rapidly take over native plants. Remove and dispose of with care.

PHOTOS: Main photo: Laurie Guitteau; Inset: Frank Vincentz, © 2009, Creative Commons

den, like ours, is not manicured. At first, you just notice a new plant, very green with small yellow flowers. In no time, your garden is nothing but euphorbia. It overtook the myrtle and the ivy, not an easy task!

It is those small yellow blooms that spread the seeds. Thus, it is important to remove or kill the plants before they bloom. Using a very strong solution of Roundup (glyphosate) will kill the plant. Another method is to cut the plant, then paint the stem with Roundup, a very tedious and backbreaking endeavor. Remember to put the plants in the garbage, not your compost or green bin!

You can learn more at this website: [cal-ipc.org/symposia/archive/pdf/2006/EDBrigham.pdf](http://cal-ipc.org/symposia/archive/pdf/2006/EDBrigham.pdf). Both *Euphorbia terracina* and *Euphorbia dendroides* are very similar in behavior. Neither are welcome neighbors, but both are thriving in the canyon.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Incoming director of the Natural History Museum Luke Swetland (left), pictured here with Palmer Jackson Jr., Museum board chair, and retiring director Karl Hutterer. PHOTO: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

### State of the Museum

With many a reference to the global state of Mother Nature, Karl Hutterer closed out his tenure as executive at Santa Barbara's Natural History Museum with a "State of the Museum" address on January 24, and introduced his successor, Luke Swetland, formerly of the Autry National Center of the American West. Citing facts and figures from the year previous — capital campaign, \$5.2 million raised; membership, 5,689; attendance, about 250,000 at the Mission Canyon campus and the Sea Center combined — Hutterer emphasized the relevance of such a museum in today's world.

But the part many had come to hear was about the State of the Museum's Master Plan. That, Dr. Hutterer candidly told us, is something his team has agonized over at length. And, as they have done five times previously, they have opted to trim their ambitions. The longed-for gallery space is deleted, subtracting about 10,000sf from previous plans; about 20 more sycamore and oak trees are off the chopping block; and more of the semi-historic buildings have been left in place. Community meetings are planned for the spring. —JY

### Grunts Follow Goats

Implementation of our Fire Safe Council Grant continues slowly but surely. The goats munched their way through the trailhead, Holly Road, and sections of Palomino Road. Kudos to the residents who took advantage of their presence and hired Brush Goats 4 Hire to clear their own properties, making the canyon even safer.

Now it's grunt work that must follow the goats. Hand crews are taking out the dead trees and large brush that the goats can't eat, and that is hard work, often done in steep terrain. One important lesson the grant has taught is that dumping anything, including

brush you have cleared, is going to come back to haunt you. Two goats were lost in the Palomino Project, one to wire that had been carelessly tossed over a steep embankment and one to oleander. A very large pile of old brush that had been tossed into a deep gully added at least \$1,000 to the cost of the project because it took so much time and effort to remove.

The grant has also deepened our respect for the residents of Mission Canyon. Meeting our required match has been no problem with so many committed residents doing their own work and taking time to send the documentation to us. We are lucky to be part of a community that works proactively to protect itself. —LG

### Garden Grows

The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is continuing its building and landscape plans. The Cultural Landscape Plan (found under "Plans for the Future" in the "About" section at [sbbg.org](http://sbbg.org)) received approval at the Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission in February. This plan sets the foundation for the hardscape in the gardens. Some highlights include removing benches, pavers, and fences and reopening the historic steps, which will allow the Garden to regain its look of the 1950s.

On the building front, the Garden presented its plans to the Board of Architectural Review for the first time last month, which were well received. The building that is currently under review will be on the east side of the site and will take the place of the Gane House and the proposed conservation building. At least two more reviews are needed before a permit will be issued. The first of these reviews will happen sometime in March.

And, to replace the venerable giants lost to disease on the west side of the meadow



The Campbell Bridge reopened on February 14, reuniting the Botanic Garden to either side of Mission Creek. An integral part of the pathway system destroyed during the Jesusita Fire, the bridge was rebuilt with \$81,353 donated by more than 400 people.

PHOTO: Lee Anne Dollison

(where the terrace had been), two 28-year-old, 20-foot-tall coast live oaks were planted in December. —Darby Feldwinn

### Just Thirty-Five Dollars

The Mission Canyon Association counts itself among the many Santa Barbara non-profit volunteers who are positive doers and shakers, and it exists entirely on simple sweat equity and a relatively small annual dues request.

For only \$35, initiatives like limiting the number of cars and trucks on properties, instituting the Red Flag parking moratorium, the Safe Passage pedestrian project, positive dialogue on development issues in the canyon, regular CHP patrols to control parking, and the removal of dangerous brush and trees with grant money are accomplished with the volunteer labor of the many, many people who join MCA.

Every year, all year long, your Mission Canyon Association and its volunteers endeavor to keep our canyon a place of beauty and peace. If you've already paid your dues, thank you so much! If you haven't, please do it now; send your dues of \$35 to: MCA, P.O. Box 401, S.B., CA 93102. —JY

### MCA Officers & Directors

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- Jean Yamamura:** Treasurer; Fire, Land Use, Newsletter\*, Ordinance, T & P; 845-3051, [jean.yamamura@gmail.com](mailto:jean.yamamura@gmail.com)
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\*Chair of committee

The MCA Newsletter was prepared with the help of **Lee Anne Dollison**, graphics, production, and photography.

MCA's Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., at the S.B. Natural History Museum's MacVeagh House. All residents are welcome to attend.



Mission Canyon Association  
P.O. Box 401  
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

## Your MCA Newsletter Spring 2013

MCA Annual Meeting  
Thursday, April 11  
Save the Date!

### *Garden Whys*

## The Birds and the Trees

By Andy Lanes

Springtime is just around the corner, and winter rains have brought new growth to the vegetation surrounding our homes. Mission Canyon's lush and diverse plant communities host a wide variety of wildlife, including many resident and migratory bird species. Birds in our neighborhoods utilize the trees, shrubs, ground, and even buildings and bridges for nesting sites during the breeding season, which is generally March through August.

These spring and summer months are also popular times for trimming trees and shrubs and clearing weeds, especially in fire-prone areas like Mission Canyon. Uninspected removal of vegetation during these months can harm nests, eggs, and young, destroy potential habitat, and even eliminate food sources. Human activities are causing declines in many bird populations, and federal and state laws, like the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, prohibit the harm of all native birds, their nests, eggs, and young.

It is best for the nesting birds if property owners avoid trimming during the breeding season and for owners to undertake any necessary vegetation removal during the months of September through February. However, when working during the breeding season, here are some precautions you should take.

- Look closely for nests or signs of high activity before trimming around the house and yard.
- When an active nest is discovered, cease any disturbing activities until the young have fledged or the nest is abandoned. Never attempt to relocate a nest.
- On larger properties or areas with dense native vegetation, it may be necessary to hire a trained biologist to survey for nesting activity.
- Report illegal removal or disturbance of active nests.

Most important, learn what birds are nesting in your neighborhood. Get to know them, enjoy them, and help to conserve the

beauty and ecological value that birds provide for future generations.

*Andy Lanes is the science chair of the Santa Barbara Audubon Society.*



Oak titmouse inside her live oak nest. Some birds nest in unexpected spots like palm trees and poison oak.

PHOTO: Alan Vernon, © 2011, Creative Commons