

Tidings

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Lake Merritt Institute
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City of Oakland

To contribute to the Lake
Merritt Institute, contact
us at
(510) 238-2290
or at 568 Bellevue Avenue
Oakland CA 94610

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.lakemerrittinstitute.org

Volunteer of the Month



Bill Bardeen lifting trash out of Lake Merritt waters

The Lake Merritt Institute
568 Bellevue Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610



Volunteer Name
Street Address
City, ST ZIP Code



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Shoreline Plants Along the Lake

By Kaletha Patterson

Several types of wildlife and plant life can be found around the Lake, but did you know that some of the plants are edible?

If not, you should know that pickleweed falls into this category and some salad lovers have used it within their mixed greens. [Note; This is not a recommendation to consume pickleweed. Wild plants should not be consumed without consulting an expert in their identification and use.]

Rooted in salt water, pickleweed has long, round, waxy leaves that contain significant amounts of moisture and salt. As the salt content increases, the leaves turn red. In the fall to early winter, when they can no longer absorb more salt, they begin to decay.

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Holiday Caroling

There will be holiday caroling on the Lake aboard a decorated water sleigh. Opportunities will be offered Friday, 12/19 at 6 and 7 pm; Saturday, 12/20 at 4, 5 and 6 pm; and Sunday, 12/21 at 4, 5 and 6 pm.

Tours glide past the fountains and we hope to have festive lighting on one of the fountains by Christmas. The cost is \$5 per person or private groups for \$75 (20 person maximum) and includes complimentary cookies and hot cider. For reservations, call the boating center at 510-238-2196.

Awards for Local Volunteers



Stana Hearne with her award for serving 16 years on the Board of Directors. Stana was our chairperson for several years. Stana received her award in November 2008.



David Smith of EPA receiving his award from Chairperson Andy Young. His plaque reads: "Outstanding Leadership Award Presented to David Smith of the US EPA in Appreciation for Listing Lake Merritt Under § CWA 303(d) in 1998. Presented by the Lake Merritt Institute."

Gum Plants: What Kind of Florae Are They?

By Kaletha Patterson

It's not uncommon to see flowers sprouting throughout parks or among community lots, but in the middle of autumn, a person may be surprised to find them bursting with color amongst the foliage of Lake Merritt.

Bright yellow flower heads were recently spotted by a visitor to the Lake. These flowers appear to have been gum plants growing from cracks in the seawall at various locations around the city's largest body of water.

The gum plant, *Grindelia robusta*, grows in California and is described as having green, leathery leaves that are covered with a resin-like substance, thus giving the plant a shiny, gummy appearance. The resin is also known to be used in producing inks, varnishes and plastics.

When the plant is full grown, it stands between 1 to 2 feet high with full blossoms that are less than an inch wide.

Many other florae grow in this climate, but the gum plant is a saltwater marsh plant that sprouts above normal tidal ranges, from cracks in the concrete walls and on the one remaining sand/mud beach around the Lake. Persons unfamiliar with these plants may assume they're dandelion or similar weeds.

Gum plants along Lake Merritt are an indication that extensive tidal marshes used to exist along the edge of the Lake's shoreline. Prior to urban development and the decimation of marshes and mudflats around the Lake, these plants dominated bands of national shoreline as important plants for wildlife, creating food and habitat.

Additional species of shoreline plant include pickleweed and *Atriplex*.



A photo of a gum plant along the Lake



Grindelia hirsutula, a synonym used for *Grindelia robusta*



A close-up image of a gum plant

Shoreline Plants along the Lake... cont.

Unlike seaweed, which grows underwater, pickleweed grows in low marsh areas where it's not submerged by water full time, as a constant submersion in water could be harmful to the plant's productivity.

Pickleweed is also known as a saltbush due to the content of salt in the leaves and because it is able to tolerate soils/areas with an intense salt presence.

Another plant of this type (halophyte) is an *Atriplex*, which belongs to a group of species that are also edible. *Atriplex* plant leaves have been used in cooked meals as well as salads and can grow in a range of colors that include red, white and green and *Atriplex* can be found around Lake Merritt.

From an ecological standpoint, *Atriplex* and other saltbushes are commonly used to prevent soil erosion in coastal areas, and along Lake Merritt, you may see them growing from the walls and marshes.



A photo of pickleweed

Contributors Wanted

Are you interested in writing and/or contributing articles to Tidings? If so, please send an email and suggested topic ideas to Dr. Bailey at the Lake Merritt Institute: Imi@netwiz.net

Donations Needed

The Lake Merritt Institute is seeking donations, which help us to maintain the quality of the Lake. It's worth a tax write-off!

The Lights at Bandstand Fountain

These photos show the Bandstand Fountain at 18th St. and Bandstand prior to the red and green lights that were added for the holidays last week. Lake Merritt's fountains are maintained by the Institute and electricity is provided by the City of Oakland.



Photos taken of the new Bandstand Fountain lights at night