

Summer 2015
Seize The Daisies
Retired Supervising Ranger, Jim Serpa

[When we think about Doheny, many of us picture the surf, the grassy picnic areas or the various sea, air and land animals that inhabit this great park. Leave it to Doheny's former Supervising Ranger Jim Serpa to remind us that we have some wonderful plants and flowers that grace Doheny, too. The next time you're in the park, take some time to see the flowers. ED]

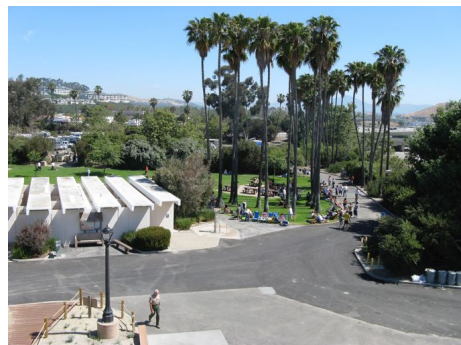


The lady came walking up to us with a bouquet that would rival any bunch purchased at a local florist shop. The first thing she said to my boss, the Supervising Ranger of Torrey Pines State Reserve (who will remain nameless), was “What is this?” pointing to a certain flower in the giant group that she was holding. He answered quickly and matter-of-factly. “That, ma’am, is a \$50 fine.” He then proceeded to explain why it was frowned upon to pick flowers at Torrey Pines State Reserve. Although, thinking back now, I don’t believe he actually wrote the lady a ticket, but he did have a lengthy discussion with her about the park’s

Reserve Status and that picking of any plant life was prohibited. We kept the flowers in a vase for a few days for the park aides to enjoy, out of sight of the public, of course. Why bring this up now, some 27 years later? It’s because, believe it or not, even though Doheny is not a State Nature Reserve, our park can be a blooming beautiful place to take a stroll in the spring and early summer.



Way back in the late twenties and early thirties, the land making up what would become Doheny State Beach was just a degraded riparian estuary habitat located near a beach. When the Civilian Conservation Corp. came in 1933, creating a state park out of the land donated to the State of California by oil



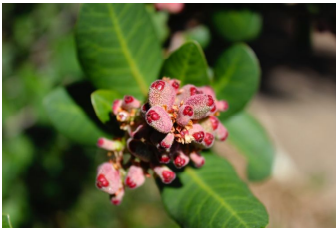
magnate Edward Doheny, they proceeded to plant lots of non-native plants to make Doheny more “park-like” for the picnickers and campers that would be enjoying it. Trees planted at that time were [Eucalyptus](#), [Sycamore](#), [Black Walnut](#), [Cypress](#), [Carob](#), [Chinese Elm](#), [Catalina Cherry](#), [Toyon](#), [Torrey Pines](#) and the ever present [Myoporum](#). Fill

North Day Use, 1969 dirt was brought in from *North Day Use, 2012* surrounding hills to the east of the park. This accounted for the profusion of local (some native) bushes in the picnic areas before the rehabbing of the North Day Use Area in 1969.

The day use area was closed October 21, 1968 so that everything could be torn out and started anew. Most of the trees were pulled out by their roots and the residences and other buildings were all flattened by bulldozer. The North Day Use area reopened May 16, 1970 fully refurbished. Can you imagine getting all that done in that amount of time today?

During this closure some of the trees planted include the [Melaluca](#), more Eucalyptus, [Washingtonia Palms](#), assort pine trees along with the magnificent Torrey Pine, a few other types of palms, Myoporum, Catalina Cherry, Sycamore and [Pride of Madeira](#). The grass that was planted back then and is still there today was a rugged [Bermuda grass](#). In the mid-seventies a group of concerned citizens from the South Day Use Area spearheaded the planting of palms in that part of the park. These were doing well until the winter storms of 2010, which eroded much of South Day Use hard packed ground, causing the death and the washing away of many palms from that era.

Since the seventies we have added [Wild Rose](#), [Iris](#), [Liquidambar](#) (Sweet Gum), [Alder](#), [Lemonade Berry](#), [Sea Fig](#) (most people call ice plant), [Lantana](#), and [Acacia](#) just to name a few. When you add up all the plants in the Butterfly Garden and Campfire Center, Doheny is just a cornucopia of colorful trees and plants.



[Lemonade Berry](#)

For that past 15 years or so there has been a push to make the plants of Doheny native or at the least drought tolerant. With the recent prolonged drought and the cost of water, it has proved to be a good thing, for sure. Having said that, I personally don't think that's really what the park was supposed to be, what it was set-aside for. Doheny wasn't ever designed to be a nature reserve. It was meant to be an urban beach park for picnickers and campers to get away and recreate, recharge their batteries and just hang out in the shade of the trees and shrubs, and delight in the fragrances of the plants. Let's all hope for some rain this year and next.

While working at Doheny I concentrated much of my attention on the marine environment but always harbored a secret love of the plant world. Once, upon request of the local San Clemente Garden Club I gave a talk on native plants of the area and their Native American uses. I think the Doheny Interpreter was floored, seeing me talk for over an hour on the local plant life. What she

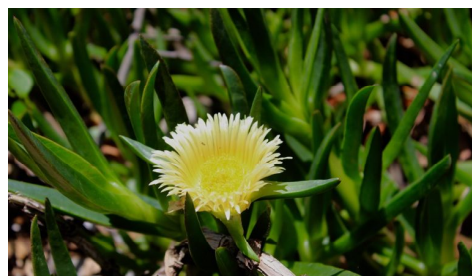


probably [Lantana](#) didn't know was that I started my career at Torrey Pines giving nature hikes to school groups, on just that subject. I had two excellent teachers, Hank Nicol, the resident Torrey Pines Naturalist and Supervising Ranger Bob Whol, both experts in the field. I can't forget to mention my College Botany professors and all the local vegetation classes I took from the San Diego Natural History Museum. I believe our park interpreter,



Vicki Wicker, still has the [Pride of Madeira](#) handout I made for that Garden Club talk. You might ask her for a copy next time you see her.

When the Trailer Park at Crystal Cove (soon to become the State Beach) was being closed to build the new campground and the our state park district office didn't have a lot of extra cash around for re-vegetation



at Doheny, Brad Barker, Brian Mathais, Chris Lozano, Camp Host Steve Dominguez and I went to Crystal Cove and harvested many of the palms, bananas, and other tropicals you see *Sea Fig (Ice Plant)* growing at the Doheny Campfire Center today, and the best part was, they were free. All it took was some hard work digging them up, time to transport them to Doheny and then replanting them.

As long as we are talking about Doheny's Interpreter Vicki Wiker, I think we all owe her a debt of gratitude to her perseverance and drive to keep the park in greenery since her return from San Clemente State Beach. All this while one budget crisis after another, staff shortages, insect infestations and droughts whirled around us. Doheny would be a far less lush park if not for her determination. Thanks, Vicki!

And in case you're wondering, for the record, I only wrote one ticket for flower picking at Doheny during my years there.

Here's how it unfolded: On a morning rounds of the park, I had warned a lady, twice mind you, not to pick the flowers, but as I drove by later that afternoon, I saw her with a gigantic, freshly clipped, bouquet of flowers headed for her motor home. She received a ticket that day, and in my book, it was well deserved.

Washingtonia Palms ->

