

IN MEMORIAM: CALIFORNIA PLANTSWOMAN RUTH BANCROFT

Ruth Bancroft, a legendary California plantswoman and garden designer, died in late November at the venerable age of 109.

Bancroft was the founder and creator of the Ruth Bancroft Garden in

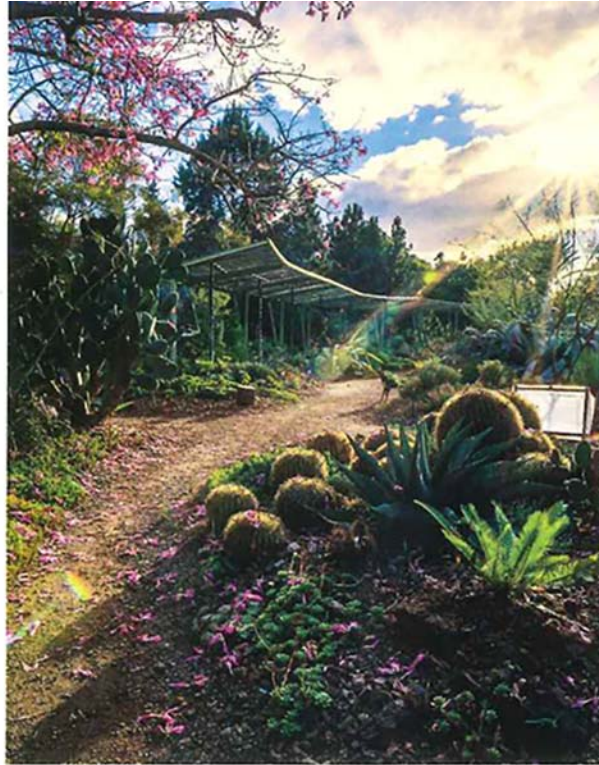


Ruth Bancroft

Walnut Creek, California, a highly regarded “dry” garden that showcases how to use drought-tolerant plants in aesthetically pleasing ways. The Bay Area property was farmland in 1939 when Bancroft moved

there following her marriage to Philip Bancroft Jr.

The modern garden originated in the early 1970s, when Bancroft decided to begin planting her extensive potted succulent collection in the landscape.



A wide variety of cacti and other succulents flourish at the Ruth Bancroft Garden.

Her eye for design—she was originally training to be an architect—and grasp of what plants were adapted to the Bay Area climate drew the attention of plant

lovers from around the world. Among the awed visitors was Frank Cabot, who was inspired to found the nonprofit Garden Conservancy to ensure the garden would be preserved beyond Bancroft’s lifetime. The Ruth Bancroft Garden opened to the public in 1992, and Bancroft remained the primary gardener until she retired in 2005. [See the March/April 2014 issue of this magazine for an article about Bancroft’s garden.]

A public celebration for Bancroft will be held at the garden on February 17. You can learn more about her legacy and the garden itself at www.ruthbancroftgarden.org.