Acacias for Central Valley Gardens

Ryan Deering, GATEways Horticulturist

In the UC Davis Arboretum, the Eric E. Conn Acacia Grove displays acacias from Australia, Africa, and the Americas



The flowers of Bailey's acacia, Acacia baileyana

The Eric E. Conn Acacia Grove is especially popular in early spring, when visitors can walk through clouds of fragrant vellow blossoms as many trees flower in unison. While most acacias are heat and drought tolerant, many of the showiest species are not tolerant of our winter cold. Such

was the case in 1990, when a devastating 'hundred-year' freeze, with temperatures below freezing for more than a week, killed more than half of the trees in the grove. In an effort to strengthen this unique collection and identify acacias with cold tolerance and horticultural promise for inland California, the Arboretum began a new phase of expanding and renovating the grove last year.

Thanks to a generous donation from Dr. Eric Conn, as well as grant funding from the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment Fund, Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, and California ReLeaf, the Acacia Grove at the Arboretum has gotten a recent facelift. Last summer new

winding secondary paths were constructed to expand access to the grove. Then thousands of grass plugs were planted to create meadows of native California bunchgrasses to beautify bare areas and prevent erosion. And finally, new trees were planted to test more species for hardiness and garden worthiness in Central Valley conditions. Tree planting is being conducted in two phases: the first phase is to plant and evaluate commercially available acacias from western nurseries, while the second phase will concentrate on growing acacia species with potential cold-hardiness from seeds collected in the wild. Arboretum staff have been acquiring wild acacia seeds from Australia and are growing them in the nursery. We also

OUR NURSERY IS MOVING!

Stock up on bargains at the

PRE-NURSERY-MOVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 12, 9AM-3PM Arboretum Nursery at Orchard Park

SPECIAL DISCOUNTS ALL DAY!

Even bigger discounts for members— Join at the door for a free plant!

> (530) 752-4880 arboretum.ucdavis.edu

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found some acacia seeds from the 1980's in our seed storage and they germinated just fine!

WHY GROW ACACIAS?

Most acacias are heat and drought tolerant and many would make excellent garden plants for the Central Valley. There are lots of acacias to choose from: there are over 1,300 species worldwide, making them one of the largest groups of woody plants in the world. In Australia alone, there are over 1,000 species, and Aussies fondly refer to them as wattles. Acacias range in habit from prostrate, low-growing species to tall shade trees. Many are small trees and therefore ideal for patio plantings and suburban gardens, and since they are typically evergreen, make great hedges and screens. Many gardeners plant acacias for their masses of golden flowers which bloom in late winter and early spring—perfect timing for their showy yellow blossoms to coordinate with yellow daffodils and other early spring bloomers. The flowers are often fragrant, with some species used in perfumes. Acacias also have a



Acacia aneura, mulga Forest & Kim Starr

huge variety of leaf forms, from feathery compound leaves to leathery, broad or bristley phyllodes, which are the modified leaves common in many acacia species. The showiest ones are valuable as cut flower crops for florists.

Their other virtues include low water use, tolerance of most soil types, and a lack of serious pest problems in California. Acacias are a good source of pollen and provide food for honeybees and other beneficial insects. Acacias have a reputation for causing allergies, but acacia pollen is large and heavy and

not likely to spread far; other spring blooming, wind-pollinated plants with less showy flowers are probably the real culprits. Some acacia species have become weedy in coastal California, but these are not problematic in the drier Central Valley. Susceptibility to cold is the major challenge in growing acacias in Valley conditions and the Arboretum is actively testing cold tolerance by growing species from the coldest parts of their range.

ACACIAS WORTH GROWING IN VALLEY GARDENS

Acacia boormanii, also known as the Snowy River wattle, comes from the foothills of the Australian Alps in southeastern Australia. It

has narrow blue-green leaves and bright yellow flower puffs at branch tips in late winter. Plants are 12 feet tall and narrow and make a graceful, see-through screen if allowed to grow from suckers. This plant is an Arboretum All-Star and will be available at our April plant sale.

Acacia baileyana 'Purpurea' is called the purple-leaf acacia. One of the hardiest acacias, it has beautiful feathery foliage that begins purple and ages to silvery-blue. It becomes a rounded tree to about 25 feet tall and produces yellow, fragrant flower clusters.

Acacia pravissima, commonly called Ovens wattle, has very interesting triangular leaves densely arranged on weeping branches. Its flowers, borne in profusion in late winter, are fragrant and bright yellow. This small tree is very frost tolerant.

Acacia stenophylla, commonly called the shoestring acacia, is a small tree with long and narrow gray green leaves. It has creamy flower balls in winter followed by long seed pods. It typically has an open, weeping structure and is very drought tolerant.



Volunteeer gardeners Kathryn Shack and Peter London planting new specimens in the Acacia Grove. We currently have 37 species and varieties of acacias in the collection, with more to come.

Acacia wilhelmiana, also known as dwarf nealie, is a low growing dense shrub to 2' tall that has small fragrant phyllodes with interesting hooked tips. It produces abundant golden balls of flowers and coiled, twisted seedpods.

SOME ACACIAS WITH PROMISE THAT WE ARE EVALUATING

Acacia covenyi is known as blue bush because of the powdery blue-gray leaves that grow densely on chocolate brown branches. It is tall, narrow, and fast growing and therefore is useful as a hedge or screen. It is reportedly hardy to below 15° F and comes from limestone soils in foothills in southeastern Australia, making it suitable for alkaline Valley soils.

Acacia podalyriifolia, also called the pearl acacia, has attractive roundish, silvery-gray leaves that are covered in satiny hairs. It produces clouds of yellow flower clusters in the winter. It is shrubby, but can be trained as a tree with wise pruning. Although pearl acacia is tender to hard freezes, it is too showy to omit completely.

Around the Garden

GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS INTERNSHIP

This fall, the Arboretum kicked off a new internship program for UC Davis students. Six students completed the Gardening with Native Plants internship under the direction of GATEways horticulturist Ryan Deering. Students met twice a week and learned about growing California native plants by doing hands-on projects in the Mary Wattis Brown Garden of Native Plants. Students got expert lessons in pruning, wildlife gardening, and plant propagation from Arboretum staff. With the help of interpretation coordinator Holly Crosson, students created new interpretive signage for the garden with exciting themes like Native Bees, Valley Longhorn Elderberry Beetle Conservation, Life Cycle of Oak Galls, and Summer Deciduous California Buckeyes. Be on the lookout for these creative new signs when you visit the garden this winter. Great job, interns!



Interns Andrew Griffin and Felicia Yu show off interpretive signs they created for the Mary Wattis Brown Garden.

ONLINE DATABASE OF ARBORETUM PLANT COLLECTION

With support from a UC Davis Undergraduate Instructional Improvement Program grant, Curator Mia Ingolia has posted an online searchable database of the Arboretum living plant collection. This is the first time that the collection data has ever been available online. The site is hosted by the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition to ours, 26 other public garden collections can be accessed from this site.

Searches can be performed by entering one or more scientific and/ or common names, and the database will produce source and location information for those plants. We are still in the pilot phase of this project, and we have Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinate information posted for about 25% of the collection. We will be uploading more coordinate information as it becomes available. We hope to allow users to search by collection in addition to plant name. You will find a link to the online database at the bottom of the Collections page on the Arboretum's website: http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/Collections.htm.

SERVICE, LEARNING AND OUTREACH: THE ARBORETUM AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Betsy Faber, Education Outreach Manager

A major focus of the Arboretum GATEways initiative (Gardens, Arts and the Environment) is to link undergraduate learning with community engagement in the Arboretum. As a university garden, we are continually cultivating new and exciting partnerships with campus departments (see *Arboretum Review*, Summer 2007). These efforts further the land-grant mission of creating more engaged and participatory student learning experiences while meeting the needs of the broader community which UC Davis serves. In addition to collaborating with our academic partners, we are also creating an innovative leadership and service learning internship program.

The Arboretum Ambassador Program is a largely student-led effort that draws on our history of successful student internships with the UC Davis School of Education. The Ambassador students commit for a year-long internship in which they receive academic credit, leadership training and content expertise in sustainable gardening and ecology. They gain valuable experience by supporting existing Arboretum educational programs while also planning and implementing their own outreach initiatives, beautification efforts, and educational events. They will also serve as our liaisons to the student body (now 30,685 students strong!) and the UC Davis staff and faculty.

We currently have three student ambassadors as part of our team. They are Jennifer Velazquez, 3rd year Biological Sciences major; Katrina Castaneda, 3rd year Animal Sciences major; and Christian Commander, 3rd year Wildlife, Fish and Conservation Biology major. These students are also honorees of a prestigious service-based scholarship program sponsored by the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation and AmeriCorps. Their hope is to recruit additional students interested in service learning and the environment. The Ambassadors are also passionate about reaching underserved youth in the community and will create focused environmental outreach programs targeting junior high school students in the region.

Look for our Ambassadors in the garden during this spring's line-up of exciting programs and events. It is our hope that these student leaders will also have an opportunity to shine during the UC Davis Centennial Year (2008-09) with its emphasis on service projects and community engagement. As Ambassador Katrina Castaneda says, "We are representatives of the student community who use the Arboretum as a resource to meet the needs of the broader community."

SPRING 2008 3

VALLEY-WISE VISIONS



Missy Bore



Artist Donna Billick (above) worked with community volunteers and students in Prof. Diane Ullman's Entomology 1 course to create a ceramic mosaic mural for the restroom building at Shields Grove. The mural features Arboretum plants and their associated insects. Volunteer Christy Dewees created a stunning California fuchsia (left).

GRANTS SUPPORT SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

The Arboretum has received a grant of \$2,540 from the campus sustainability progam of the Office of Administration for the design and printing of a new publication about the Arboretum All-Stars and sustainable gardening for California's Central Valley.

We were awarded grants totaling \$50,461 from the campus Be Smart About Safety program to support the purchase of new ergonomic equipment for the garden and nursery, to reduce the risk of injury to staff and volunteers. The funding will be used to purchase raised nursery benches; an electric cart and two trailers for moving plants and tools; hose carts and hose reels; and a pneumatic pruning system.

CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR URBAN HORTICULTURE EVENTS

Missy Borel, CCUH Program Manager

The newly established California Center for Urban Horticulture (CCUH), in parternship with the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CA&ES) and the Arboretum, is offering two exciting spring events. The CCUH mission is to enhance urban living through horticulture and with avid gardeners in mind, we have developed programs and events that encourage education and smart gardening practices. We invite you to join us this spring. Additional event information and online registration are available at http://ccuh.ucdavis.edu/events, or call (530) 752-6642.

In partnership with Foundation Plant Services, CCUH will host CA&ES **ROSE DAY** on Friday, April 25, 2008. The rose industry is calling Rose Day THE rose event of the year. Rose enthusiasts and avid gardeners will join in discussions of rose

production, hybridization, marketing, and pest/disease issues with national and international industry leaders. Conference registration (\$150) includes a Flower Carpet ® Scarlet ground cover rose (right), campus parking, admission to the event, and a catered lunch. The morning event will take place in the prestigious UC Davis Mondavi Center. The



extended lunch will afford the opportunity to meet industry leaders and engage in conversation before heading to Foundation Plant Services for tours of eight acres of roses in full bloom. Roses, including All-America Rose Selection winners, will be available for sale in the afternoon. The sale will take place on the grounds of Foundation Plant Services and will serve as a fundraiser for CCUH programs. Roses were contributed by Jackson & Perkins, Star Roses, and Weeks Roses and will be available in #5 (approximately five gallon) containers. The field tours and rose sale are open to the public. If you are unable to join us for the morning presentation, please join us in the afternoon.

On Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31, 2008, CCUH will host the CA&ES GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND YOUR **BACKYARD CONFERENCE**. This event is designed for homeowners, gardeners, researchers, and horticulture industry professionals. This unique conference is designed to be an educative forum on climate change and its relationship to horticulture and the urban forest. We will explore practical solutions to our changing environment at both the personal and community level. Conference highlights include a panel discussion moderated by NPR's Science Correspondent and host of Talk of the Nation: Science Friday, **Ira Flatow**, and a keynote address by **Katy Moss Warner**, President Emeritus of the American Horticultural Society. Friends of the UC Davis Arboretum and Master Gardeners will receive a discount on conference registration as well as a coupon for a free Arboretum All-Star plant. Your conference registration (\$150 general; \$125 for members) includes admission to the event, parking and lunch on both Friday and Saturday.

Staff & Volunteers

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Amy McGuire, who served as the Arboretum's volunteer and outreach manager for several years, and more recently as resource development manager, has taken a position as associate direc-



Judy Hayes



Susan Macaulay

tor of development for the UC Davis College of Engineering. We are sorry to see her go, but we congratulate her on this promotion and wish her every success in her new position. Administrative manager **Linda Johnson** resigned her position in December. We wish her the best and thank her for her service to the Arboretum.

Judy Hayes, our fantastic special projects assistant, will be taking on more financial and administrative responsibilities. In addition to managing payroll and purchasing, she will be in charge of the membership, donations, and memorial programs.

We are fortunate to have been able to hire **Susan Macaulay** through the campus temporary employment pool to fill in as customer service assistant. Susan has been a volunteer naturalist and gardener with the Arboretum since 2005 and works at the membership table at plant sales. She will handle reception duties and help with membership processing, events planning and other administrative functions. Welcome, Susan!

NEW VOLUNTEER LIBRARIAN

We are pleased to welcome Edith Vermeij as the Arboretum's new volunteer librarian. She will be taking the place of Bill McCoy, the Arboretum's longtime librarian, who passed away last year. Edith is an experienced docent at the Arboretum. She has a biology PhD from Yale and has worked as a researcher in the Geology Dept. at UC Davis for 19 years. She likes to garden and has recently gotten back to watching birds after raising canaries for years. She says she has always loved books and enjoys spending time with them, and she figures she can ask her cataloging librarian daughter for help with the Arboretum library.

After getting the library back in order, she plans to create a file of recent plant-related papers published by UC Davis faculty. She's also interested in adding DVDs, such as David Attenborough's "The Private Life of Plants."

The Arboretum library has 1900 books on botany, ecology, gardens and gardening. Members can check out items for three weeks. Call ahead (530-752-4880) to confirm open hours.



Ellen

Nancy Crosby and Pat Miller, founders of the Arboretum Plant Faire.

NANCY CROSBY AND PAT MILLER HONORED BY THE CITY OF DAVIS

Excerpted from an article by Claire St. John, originally published in the Davis Enterprise, November 20, 2007

You never know you're going to be awarded one of Davis' top community honors until it happens. For Nancy Crosby and Pat Miller, longtime volunteers in Davis, the news came as a total shock.

Crosby and Miller, founders of the Friends of the UC Davis Arboretum and the Arboretum Plant Faire, share the A.G. Brinley Award, established in 1969 in honor of Samuel Brinley, by his son, John W. Brinley (who, coincidentally, was a member of Friends of the UC Davis Arboretum).

The award recognizes outstanding service in a particular area, such as in the arts, education or health, or in a major project that benefits the city. The award winners were honored at the Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner January 26.

Thirty years ago, when Nancy Crosby and Pat Miller heard the UC Davis Arboretum was losing its government funding, they sprung into action. A friend asked Crosby, "Why don't you organize some volunteers?" she remembered. "So I did the volunteers and Pat did the plant sale."

The Plant Faire started as an iris sale on a blanket in Central Park on a windy day in 1974. "All the money was flying away because we didn't think to bring a cigar box," Crosby said

After that, Miller and Crosby cultivated the plants themselves and the sale grew into a much-anticipated annual community event that brings in lots of funding for the Arboretum.

"The University of California at Davis Arboretum is extraordinarily indebted to both Nancy Crosby and Pat Miller for its successful survival and continuing progress," Warren Roberts, Arboretum superintendent, said in the award's nominating letter. "They have continued as volunteers for more than 36 years essentially without pause. No one else can claim such nonstop volunteer commitment in support of the Arboretum."

SPRING 2008 5



CALENDAR OF EVENTS SPRING 2008

GUIDED TOURS

No charge, no reservation required

IMPROVE YOUR CONTAINER GARDENING

Saturday, April 5, 11:00 a.m. Arboretum Terrace Garden

WALK WITH WARREN

Wednesday, April 9, noon, Gazebo

SPRING IN THE NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Saturday, April 12, 11:00 a.m. Buehler Alumni & Visitors Center

WHAT'S NEW? BICYCLE TOUR OF ARBORETUM HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday, April 26, 11:00 a.m. Buehler Alumni & Visitors Center Bring your bike

BRING THE MEDITERRANEAN INTO YOUR BACKYARD

Saturday, May 3, 11:00 a.m. Arboretum Terrace Garden

CHOOSING SPRING PLANTS FOR YOUR VALLEY-WISE GARDEN

Sunday, May 11, 2:00 p.m., Gazebo

WALK WITH WARREN

Wednesday, May 14, noon Mark Hall south entrance

HERBS AND HERBIVORES

Saturday, May 17, 11:00 a.m., Gazebo

USE A MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN MODEL FOR YOUR GARDEN

Saturday, May 24, 11:00 a.m. Arboretum Terrace Garden

GET READY FOR YOUR ROSES

Saturday, May 31, 11:00 a.m., Gazebo

ARBORETUM ALL-STARS IN THE STORER GARDEN

Saturday, June 7, 11:00 a.m., Gazebo

WALK WITH WARREN

Wednesday, June 11, noon, Gazebo

JUNE IN THE WHITE FLOWER GARDEN

Saturday, June 14, 11:00 a.m., Gazebo

Information: (530) 752-4880 www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu

PRE-NURSERY-MOVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 12, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., Orchard Park Nursery
We're clearing out the nursery in preparation for moving to our new site! Take advantage of some great bargains on locally-grown, uncommon garden plants. Special 20% member discount and additional discounts all day. Join at the door and receive a free plant.

Arts & Letters

FOLK MUSIC JAMS

Alternate Fridays: April 4, 18, May 2, 16, 30, June 13, 27 12:00 p.m., Wyatt Deck

Pull out your fiddles, guitars, banjos (you name it) for an acoustic jam session. Campus and community folk musicians play together over the lunch hour. All skill levels welcome. Listeners welcome!

WRITERS IN THE GARDEN

May 6: Karen Joy Fowler May 20: Matt Biers-Ariel

Tuesdays, 7:00 p.m., Wyatt Deck Karen Joy Fowler is best kno

Karen Joy Fowler is best known as the author of *The Jane Austen Book Club*, which was recently made into a widely-distributed motion picture. Matt Biers-Ariel is author of three books on Judaism and the environment and is currently writing a book on the bicycle trek his family took from San Francisco to Washington D.C. to deliver a petition on global warming to Congress. These outstanding writers will read from their work and talk about the importance of the natural world in their writing.

BOTANICAL ART WORKSHOP

Saturday & Sunday, March 29 & 30 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Fee: \$170/\$150 students, members + \$10 materials

Learn techniques of botanical drawing and watercolor with instructor Catherine Watters, a botanical art instructor at Filoli in Woodside. Her work has been exhibited at the Oakland Museum, the San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum, the Weisman Museum in Minneapolis and the New York Horticultural Society. Advance registration required: contact (530) 752-4880 or skmacaulay@ucdavis.edu. Space is limited so please register early.

MOONLIGHT MUSIC AT THE WHITE FLOWER GARDEN

Saturday, May 17, 8:00 p.m., Gazebo

Join us for a concert under the full moon in the white flower garden. Composer Luciano Chessa will perform a set of his own compositions for electrified Vietnamese dan bau. Chessa has taught at the Conservatory of Music in Bologna, Columbia University, and UC Berkeley. He currently teaches at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. His Inkless Imagination IV recently premiered at the Mondavi Center. The program will also include collaborative pieces with Keith Cary and Erin Espeland.

Arboretum Adventures Family Nature Programs

BIRDS OF SONG AND CLAY

Celia M. Hastings Art-Science Education Day Sunday, May 4, 1:00–3:00 p.m., Wyatt Deck

Come listen to local folk trio MudLark perform music exploring our relationship to nature and the environment. Then roll up your shirt sleeves and create native birds of California from clay. The co-director of UCD's Art-Science Fusion Program, Professor Diane Ullman, will help us hand-build clay birds which will be included in a large ceramic mural of the state of California for the Washington, D.C. office of Congressman Mike Thompson.

AQUATIC LIFE IN THE ARBORETUM

Sunday, May 18, 1–3 p.m., Wyatt Deck
Join us for an exciting look at life in the
Arboretum waterway with Wildlife, Fish, and
Conservation Biology Professor Peter Moyle,
an expert on the ecology and conservation of
freshwater and estuarine fishes in California.
Ryan Thoni, President, American Fisheries
Society, Sacramento-Davis chapter, and fellow
students will lead hands-on activities including
fish printing, fish identification, and more.

Donations this Quarter

We extend our sincere gratitude to these donors

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

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UNRESTRICTED GIFTS

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DEDICATING TWO BENCHES IN THE ACACIA GROVE

Kevin & Bea Olsen

IN MEMORY OF **SHELLEY BOOTH**

William Booth

IN MEMORY OF BOB & DOROTHY LABEN

Mark & Elizabeth Cunningham

IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM F. **McCOY**

John M. Tucker

IN MEMORY **OF ELSIE RICHARDSON**

Jean D. Albright & William T Coyle

IN MEMORY OF KENNETH K. **TANJI**

Arthur & Hilda Garcia

IN SUPPORT OF THE ARBORETUM **TEACHING NURSERY**

Gerald Dickinson

DEBORAH N. PINKERTON ARBORETUM PRIZE FUND

Bret Hewitt & Deborah Pinkerton

IN HONOR OF ROBERT & GINNY VAUGHN-RALSTON

Corie Ralston

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We continually strive to enrich our work and expand our impact by integrating more with the academic mission of the university. We collaborate with faculty to develop experiential learning opportunities for students. As the students learn, they share their work with the public (a win-win), and the Arboretum becomes a learning laboratory for students to prepare them for the future. This is the model for "the engaged institution" set out by the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Land-Grant Universities. In this issue, you can read about three such efforts: the Gardening with California Native Plants Internship (p.3), the Arboretum Ambassadors program (p.3), and the Art/Science Fusion Program (p.4).

We're also increasing our academic and scientific connections by focusing on important issues such as sustainability through our work with the California Center for Urban Horticulture (CCUH) (p.4) and by making our plant collections available online for research and study (p.3).

As you read in the last issue, our nursery is moving, and we're taking this opportunity to re-invent it as the Arboretum Teaching Nursery. We'll be doing more research and plant testing in connection with researchers at UC Davis; expanding the Arboretum All-Stars program as a centerpiece of the new nursery in partnership with CCUH; and linking the nursery more closely with our plant collections, so that you can learn from the plants in the gardens as you select regionally-appropriate plants for your home landscapes.

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Don't miss our April 12th plant sale—a blow-out pre-move clearance sale to prepare us for the move and the opening of our new Arboretum Teaching Nursery in time for the fall Plant Faire! There will be lots of good buys, and your purchases will help to support the important work of the Arboretum. I hope to see you there!

Thanks, as always, to our wonderful community of friends—the volunteers and donors who make our work possible. In this issue, you can read about Eric Conn's gift in support of the Acacia Grove (p.1), and the well-deserved honor given by the City of Davis to Nancy Crosby and Pat Miller, founders of the Plant Faire (p.5).

Enjoy spring in the garden, and I hope to see you at some of our great events (p.6).

Sincerely,

Kathleen

UC Davis Arboretum Review

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