

Local Couple Propose Botanical Garden for Sacramento

By Dr. Bruce Ritter and Dr. Linda Ching



*Dr. Linda Ching, O.D.,
Co-Founder, Outreach Director*

It has been a whirlwind three years for Sacramento native, Linda Ching. Beginning with becoming a certified Life Coach in March of 2017, Linda stepped away from the profession of optometry to pursue new passions. After taking her partner through her life coaching program, he came back to life with his passion for plants. A botany major in college, Linda's partner, Bruce Ritter, decided to take Landscape Design classes so that he could go back to his plant-loving roots. In May of 2018, these two optometrists came up with a vision to bring a botanical garden to Sacramento.

Sacramento is one of only 15 state capitals lacking a botanical garden. As the capital of California, it is an embarrassment that we do not have a showpiece garden. Linda and Bruce are co-founders of a new non-profit, called Sacramento Botanical Gardens. They have found that doors are opening to their idea. Bruce filed the paperwork for Federal and State non-profit status. He and their Financial Director, Jesse Avitia, launched the website and the Facebook page.

The couple's forward looking plan for the garden features a 20,000 square foot glass conservatory run entirely by solar power, a farm to fork garden, and a Chinese garden with a tea house. There will be water features and demonstrations gardens. A venue for meetings and weddings is also planned. Educational events throughout the year will be available to the public, and will also involve local elementary schools and community colleges.

For one and one half years, Dr. Linda Ching, a Sacramento native, and her partner, Dr. Bruce Ritter, have been working with the city council to bring a botanical garden to Sacramento. The Sacramento Zoo's efforts toward finding larger quarters inspired Drs. Ching and Ritter to propose a botanical garden at the current zoo site or, perhaps, adjacent to the zoo at its new location. The New York Botanical Garden and the Bronx Zoo in New York City are situated across the street from each other, creating a partnership that has benefitted both institutions for over a century. The couple believe that our city will benefit from this new attraction, which will offer horticultural education for our ever more challenging climate, as well as insights into preservation of our vanishing species and ecosystems.



*Dr. Linda Ching and Dr. Bruce Ritter
with Council Member Angelique Ashby*



"SacBo" was added to a feasibility study commissioned by the City on where best to move the zoo. The Sacramento Zoo is in danger of losing its accreditation because the space requirement standards for animals has changed. The 92 year old zoo has been trying to move to a larger space for years. The results of the study should come in next year. SacBo has a meeting scheduled with the Assistant City Manager and the consulting firm in mid-January.

While the garden project has momentum, another worthy project is to bring eyeglasses to Fijians. Linda and Bruce went to Fiji and New Zealand last Spring. After a visit to a small village on Ono Island, Bruce noticed that none of the natives were wearing glasses. The Lions Club has told the two optometrists that it can supply hundreds of pairs of glasses for an eyeglass missionary trip. This week, we heard from the resort owner that our trip can go forward in 2020.

Readers are encouraged to help spread the word about the planned botanical garden. Please visit the website for SacBo.org or the Facebook page for Sacramento Botanical Gardens.

If you like the idea of having a beautiful, serene, green space with plants from around the world, if being outdoors surrounded by the amazing diversity of the plant kingdom, then please share the website with your friends. There is a link so that you can email the Mayor to tell him you are in favor of Sacramento investing in a garden. Mayor Steinberg wants Sacramento to be a destination city: we need amenities. Gardens are educational, serene places to spend a day when traveling.

Sacramento Botanical Gardens
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