

Last year the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department strived to create both a resident fee and a nonresident fee. Both were defeated! This year the Botanical Garden Society paid lobbyist Sam Lauter tens of thousands of dollars to implement a “nonresident” fee (see below) that will exclude people but not make money! Join the Sierra Club, the San Francisco Labor Council and the residents of San Francisco and elsewhere in calling for an end to the fees!

1/4/2010	\$10,000.00	San Francisco Botanical Gardens
1/4/2010	\$10,000.00	American Beverage Association
1/4/2010	\$7,500.00	Maritz Wolff
2/2/2010	\$7,500.00	Medjool, Inc
2/5/2010	\$10,000.00	At&T
2/12/2010	\$10,000.00	San Francisco Botanical Gardens
3/1/2010	\$10,000.00	San Francisco Botanical Gardens

*Corporate lobbyist Sam Lauter's payments for 2010's first quarter. (He is still on the payroll).*

Dear Katie,

I know you need a number to put in your budget from me. I believe a reasonably conservative net number from admissions from the Botanical Garden allocable to the Department would be \$100,000 the first year. This assumes a bad economy and a delay in start up to October, 2009 when much of the tourist season has declined for the year. If the admissions program begins later than October the net to be realized from this source could decrease.

We believe there are other savings and revenues to be obtained from rental income and gate management at the Tea Garden by other than Department staff, which we are glad to discuss. However, this will require more time than I believe you have now. It will also require a business plan and the ability to obtain additional approvals for permitted sites. Having said that, might this not be the time to consider requesting additional permitted sites, such as the Tea Garden, and an increase in the admission charge at the Conservatory to \$6, since that rate has not been increased for some time? In order to realize the full savings and additional income potential from all three garden sources a number of such changes would be necessary.

Clearly, there must be enough money coming into the system through unification of the three gardens to support both the Department and the newly unified entity. Visitors will want to see that a substantial amount of the gate fees go back into the garden(s) they are visiting. To obtain this balance in these constricted financial times will require some carefully crafted operating formulas.

So, for today's purposes, the Society will exercise its very best efforts to assure that \$100,000 comes to the Department after reducing income by the necessary operating costs. However, we are not prepared at this time to guarantee that figure from Society assets. And, again, the October start date is essential to generating this net figure.

I hope this addresses your near-term needs for information, and I stand ready to work diligently to help you with other information you may need.

We all wish you the very best in this trying budget atmosphere.

Best regards,

*Note: This e-mail from Michael McKechnie to a City creative budget fabricator at the RPD. shows what the Society was promising in 2009. The SFBGS currently promises that fees will net \$650,000 to bring in \$250,000!*

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/keepthearboretumfree>

# The Strybing Arboretum Gazette

ENSHRINING THE MEMORY OF HELENE STRYBING, FOUNDING DONOR OF STRYBING ARBORETUM



*The 'Helene Strybing' Tee Tree (Leptospermum scoparium)*

HELENE STRYBING WOULD HAVE BEEN GRIEF STRICKEN to see how the Botanical Garden Society has betrayed the terms of her behest. You can find her poorly maintained monument behind the fountain, but her name has been all but removed from Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens which Michael McKechnie (☎ 661-1316 x 415) wants to turn into a high-profile tourist destination complete with \$13-million glorified greenhouse (for which the State is paying \$7 million, if granted).

**The fees must be terminated!** They stand against San Francisco's core ethical values of hospitality and non discrimination. The gates behind the Hall of Flowers are now closed, as is the so-called “Dump Gate,” which lines up with a pathway across the street leading to the entrance to the Academy and the Shakespeare Garden. The undocumented, those without photo IDs to prove residency, and our friends and family are being excluded unless they pay \$7, while *members of the Society, get in*

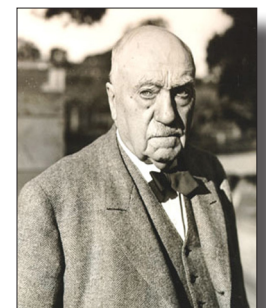
*for free!* Members and volunteers have been deliberately misled. These fees will “sunset” in one year (or perhaps sooner) if those who care about the future of the Arboretum band together. Call Michael McKechnie (☎ 661-1316 x 415), RPD Director Philip A. Ginsburg, (☎ 831-2704) and your Supervisors and demand an end to these fees and implement civilian oversight of nonprofits in the parks!

## Contact of Public Official Details

Date	3/3/2010
Lobbyist	Lauter, Samuel
Firm or Employer	Barnes, Mosher, Whitehurst, Lauter And Partners, Inc.
Client	San Francisco Botanical Gardens
Client Address	1199 Ninth Ave Lincoln Way San Francisco, Ca 94122
Client Phone	415-615-0311
Public Official	Elsbernd, Sean
Department	Board Of Supervisors
Subject Area	Recreation and Parks
Issue	Revenue Generation

## Reported Contacts List

Date	Official	Subject Area	Lobbyist	Client	Details
6/22/2010	Ginsburg, Phil	Recreation And Parks	Gruwell, Chris	Boston Properties Limited Partnership	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Chiu, David	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Campos, David	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Chu, Carmen	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Mar, Eric	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Avalos, John	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/25/2010	Alloto-Pier, Michela	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/19/2010	Chiu, David	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/18/2010	Campos, David	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/18/2010	Elsbernd, Sean	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/18/2010	Chiu, David	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/18/2010	Maxwell, Sophie	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/17/2010	Avalos, John	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/17/2010	Duffy, Bevan	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
5/4/2010	Maxwell, Sophie	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>
4/30/2010	Duffy, Bevan	Recreation And Parks	Lauter, Samuel	San Francisco Botanical Gardens	<a href="#">Details</a>

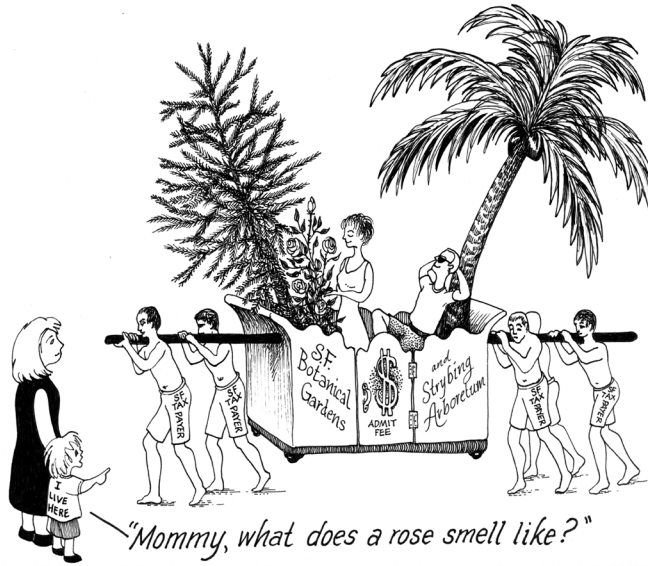


*Arboretum Founder and privatization opponent John McLaren*

*Since 2009 the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society paid lobbyist Sam Lauter tens of thousands of dollars to strategically lobby the Supervisors, enticing them with the prospect of campaign contributions by arriving with wealthy trustees, known to the Supervisor in question, in tow.*

## Goals for Citizens Concerned About the Future of Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens

- End the fees! The Arboretum and gardens are a multi-use facility. We should stop alienating visitors and taxing citizens who do not have photo ID. While the fees are in place, members should pay the same as everyone else.
- Call for new leadership! The current City and Botanical Garden Society leadership are elitists who do not believe in community involvement in the gardens. This must be changed!
- Revise the plan for the Nursery and Center for Sustainable Gardening. We do not need another tourist trap in Golden Gate Park. The Arboretum's founder, John McLaren would have been aghast at the Society's plans!
- Establish a citizen review panel for the Arboretum. The Society has too much power over this public commons!
- Bring back the daily free hours for the Tea Garden and institute daily free hours to the Conservatory of Flowers. In this time of depression, we need more access to public spaces, not less. Lobby your Supervisors!



### The Gates and the Damage Done

- Hours have been greatly curtailed.
- Admission is prohibited one hour before closing.
- More than a hundred wayfaring signs have been installed, despite the lack of funds for gardeners.
- A new wall has been constructed blocking the entrance to the demonstration gardens.
- As much as \$700,000 was spent on privatization preparations.
- The library is now open only four days per week. (But there is money for security guards.)
- Visitors are turning away because they do not have the funds or identification. The fees lose money for the City.

“Charging people hard cash to visit a once-great, but now mediocre garden is a surefire way to turn this local gem into just another San Francisco tourist trap.... Parks should be free for anybody to enjoy, including tourists or anybody who can't prove residency in areas with the “right” ZIP code. It is wrong to scare people away from one of the few remaining free city attractions by forcing them to pay a fee.... Tourists and visitors provide a major source of income to the city. In 2009 San Francisco had about 4.9 million visitors, who spent more than \$7.8 billion of their hard earned dollars here. Hotel taxes alone collected \$146.8 million dollars, according to statistics by the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau. It's time to wake up and smell the coffee — the tourism industry is one of the city's life-lines. How does it make sense to piss off the people who bring money to the city by inventing exclusive fees to see local attractions?”  
— Liska Koenig, *The Guardsman*, April 29, 2010

“Green space such as the San Francisco Botanical Gardens is precious, lovely, necessary. Regarding that space appropriately also demands community participation. Taking responsibility for the continuation and preservation of the Botanical Gardens is a civil responsibility. Advocacy for free accessibility is, therefore, imperative so that this precious space maintains its rightful connection with community viability. Certainly, it is a resource that I and the countless other residents who frequent this space to offset the space limitations and stress of urban living would suffer without.”  
— Peter Buis, *Reflections on Public Space: the San Francisco Botanical Gardens at Strybing Arboretum*

## University of Berkeley Scholar Gray Brechin on the Significance of the Arboretum

Fees for the Arboretum and “sponsorships” represent the continuing effort to turn once public spaces into ever more private ones. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Jr. were the great exponents and proponents of public space in the U.S. As designer and superintendent of the nation's first public park— New York City's Central Park—the father constantly fought efforts by the wealthy who built their mansions on the east side of the park to close it to those less fortunate. He called Central Park “the great art work of the Republic,” and so it remains: a magnificent commons where all New Yorkers and visitors to the city meet to reaffirm what a democracy ideally is. San Francisco's Golden Gate Park was, of course, modeled after Central, though it is pointedly larger than the one in that other city. The conservative policy of “starving the beast” by incrementally cutting taxes and shifting to fees has worked splendidly to privatize what was once public. One now must be middle-aged or older to remember when museums, schools, colleges, and state parks were free and adequately maintained because taxes were adequate to pay for them. The fees now proposed for Strybing and other once public spaces are tantamount to the walls that the Vanderbilts and their neighbors once sought to build around Central Park to keep those such as my Welsh immigrant ancestors out. Fortunately, Olmsted prevailed.

Strybing Arboretum is not merely a garden; it is a botanical school essential for environmental education. As we seek to find greener paths to the ruinous one we are now pursuing [witness the catastrophic Gulf oil spill], such resources are needed more than ever. To make it less accessible is to not only foreclose educational opportunities, it is to further erode what Olmsted felt was essential for democracy — space available to all regardless of economic status.

— Gray Brechin, PhD

UC Berkeley Visiting Scholar and Founder of California's Living New Deal Project

Author of *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*

### Contacts (priority contacts in bold)

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**Strybing Arboretum Videos**  
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**Join the Facebook Group!**  
<http://tinyurl.com/noarboretumfees>

**Join the Yahoo! Group!**  
<http://tinyurl.com/yahoo-arboretum>

### Bizarre Facts About the Arboretum

- Visitors from elsewhere from California—who involuntarily helped ruin the Arboretum's ambience with an overdone and mismanaged “repaving” of the paths (now roadways!) by paying into the multi-million dollar State Bond-funded project—now have to pay \$7 to walk on the very pathways they helped fund!
- Members, most of whom can afford to pay, are admitted free of charge (!), while returning native San Franciscans, exiled to Oakland and elsewhere, have to pay. Entry hours have been reduced.
- Former Supervisor Chris Daly maintained in 2010 that opponents the fees were “elitists.”
- The Gardener's Union (LiUNA!, Local 261) and SEIU supported the fees, inadvertently supporting the creation of non-Union \$11-per-hour jobs.
- The Society, although it has tens of millions in the bank, recently cut the library down to four days and has refused to chip in for gardener's salaries, despite claims that “rare plants would die.”
- The City pays the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society \$4,166 each month by agreement.