Aliso: A Journal of Systematic and Floristic Botany

Volume 9
Issue 1 *Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden—The
First Fifty Years, 1927–1977*

Article 8

1977

The Formative Years

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Recommended Citation

Lenz, Lee W. (1977) "The Formative Years," *Aliso: A Journal of Systematic and Floristic Botany*. Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/aliso/vol9/iss1/8>

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The earliest known record indicating that Mrs Bryant was seriously considering a garden of native plants is a letter written by Theodore Payne to Mrs Bryant on 12 October 1925 in which he used the term "your Wild Garden project . . ." Payne had visited Mrs Bryant at the ranch a week earlier and in his letter he wrote:

With reference to your Wild Garden project I have been giving this matter a good deal of thought since my visit to your ranch about a week ago. My idea would be to first establish several large groups of trees. A Live Oak grove, a Sycamore grove, and Redwood grove and a grove each of Torrey Pine, Sabin Pine, Monterey Pine and perhaps some others. Then the other trees and shrubs would be worked in in small groups and some scattered specimens just the way they are found in nature. The trees as they grow up would provide shade for ferns, lilies and many other plants that require a shady place and these could be added later. The large open areas would be kept for masses of wild flowers and the whole when complete would form a beautiful natural landscape.

You said you wanted every kind of wild plant that grows in California. This is quite an order as there are more plants native to California than any other state and they run into the thousands. Many species especially those from the high mountains and from the desert would not thrive with you and it would be useless to plant them. However, I have made up a list of nearly two hundred kinds which will do perfectly well there.

It would be very difficult to make a plan which would really be of use without having a topographical map of the place as of course one should know the area to be covered, the contours, and the location of the road and house. You spoke of having a topographical map made in the near future and if I could have this I can make a planting plan for you. Of course if you prefer it I can go down to the ranch and make a survey of that section of the land to be used for the house site and as much as I think should go into the wild garden.

The term "Wild Garden" was first used by William Robinson, English gardener and author in his *The Wild Garden* (1870). There he wrote: "The idea of the wild garden came into my head in the days of my efforts for natural form in the flower garden when 'bedding out' was rampant and the yet more deplorable 'carpet' gardening." He continued: "The aim in the Wild Garden is now to show how we may have more of the varied beauty of hardy flowers than the most ardent admirer of the old style of garden

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

Botanic garden site, Rancho Santa Ana, ca. 1926. Here heavily pastured, the site was originally coastal sage scrub, remnants of which may be seen on the hills in the distance. Photograph by Braunton.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

ever dreams of, by naturalizing in our fields, woods and copses, outer portions of pleasure grounds, and in neglected places in almost every kind of garden."

The term "Wild Garden" as proposed by Robinson was to be applied to a new and naturalistic style of landscaping. As used by California writers the term referred to plantings of native plants.

Apparently Mrs Bryant did not reply to Payne's letter of 12 October as he wrote her again saying:

As I have never received any reply to my letter of October 12th, I am making free to write and ask you if you have given up the idea of your California Garden. I hope not for as you know, this is something that is very near to my heart and I should very much like to see you carry it out.²²

The problem however appears to have been with the mail and Mrs Bryant replied:

After your visit to Rancho Santa Ana I expected to hear very soon from you in regard to planting my native wild garden. In December a letter came saying you were wondering why I had not answered yours of October twelfth—and several days after that came the October twelfth communication.

We seem to have become rather mixed up in our correspondence on this subject, and I wish to take this occasion to thank you for your splendid suggestions and comprehensive list of the varieties of native plants and shrubs you have in stock.

At present [17 February 1926] I am in the throes of installing an irrigation system for the new garden: which means building a reservoir and storage tank, putting in pipe lines, etc.; as well as grading roads and walks. When this foundation is completed I will be ready to commence setting out trees, and hope to do quite an appreciative amount of planting this coming winter. As soon as we are ready you may be sure I shall appeal to you for your latest list and anticipate drawing heavily on your stock in the immediate future. Already we have aroused quite a bit of interest among the University professors, writers and other California enthusiasts, and I can imagine nothing more fascinating than working out the details of a real botanical garden where California native flora will reign supreme.²³

This letter is of considerable historical interest for it shows conclusively that not later than February 1926, and possibly as early as the latter part of 1925, construction at the future botanic garden site was actually underway with the installation of an irrigation system and the grading for roads and trails. There appears to be no historical information on when or how the site for the garden was chosen. It has often been said, but without supporting evidence that Theodore Payne helped Mrs Bryant select the location. According to Mrs Ernest R. Johnson, Mrs Bryant was considering another location on the ranch and her husband, Ernest Johnson, first

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

suggested the area where the garden was eventually established.²⁶ Ernest A. Bryant, Jr is of the opinion that his mother chose the location for the botanic garden and was not influenced by anyone else (pers. com.).

On 14 December 1925 Mrs Bryant wrote to Carl Purdy at Ukiah inquiring about the availability of native plants at his nursery. Carl Purdy (1861-1945), born in Michigan, arrived in Ukiah with his family in 1870 and at the age of 17 began commercial bulb collecting and by 1888 his bulb business had become large enough to make it a full-time operation. In 1889 Purdy sold over a quarter of a million bulbs, all of them collected in the wild.²⁴ Beginning in 1903 Purdy worked as a landscape gardener and designed many of the large estates in northern California. He also planted numerous wildflower gardens for which he was especially qualified because of his wide experience in growing natives.²⁵ Mrs Bryant must have sent Purdy a list of things she wanted because he wrote on 18 December: "I will now pass on to the list you have made out." This could have been the same list Payne had earlier sent to Mrs Bryant. Purdy lists a large number of trees and shrubs that he had available or could obtain along with the prices.

On 9 March 1926, Mrs Bryant wrote to Dr Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927) at the Arnold Arboretum near Boston, Massachusetts, saying:

Several professors and others who are studying California flora have suggested that I should write to you about a plan I am working on to establish a botanic garden for the growing of our native trees, plants and flowers. It has always seemed rather a pity to me that the most complete collection of our California Natives is at Kew Gardens and not in our own State.

On my Santa Ana Canon ranch, in the foothills between Los Angeles and Riverside, I am hoping to develop an arboretum (the very word at the present time seems too important a one to use however) and am anxious to make my plans in such a way that the whole scheme may work into a valuable contribution to others who are enthusiasts over our beautiful native plants; which grow wild in such great diversity and profusion through the length and breadth of the State. I have been told that you take a very special interest in our part of the world, and that is why I am approaching you about my garden.

To start with we are setting aside approximately one hundred and sixty-five acres for development, and, if it ever seems advisable, we can extend our area further back into the hills as we wish to expand. The ranch hills are many of them already covered with live oaks, sycamores, black walnuts, elderberries and various shrubs, together with about two hundred and fifty or three hundred varieties of native wild flowers.

About seventy acres of the piece I am selecting for the botanic garden is fairly level, high, table land of excellent soil (from five hundred to six hundred feet above sea level and some twenty miles inland from the ocean), and the balance of the acreage is up and down the hillsides. Many of our pines, which are drought-resistant, will grow in the higher elevation, (around one thousand to twelve-hundred feet), and on the dry southern face of the hillsides countless lovely desert shrubs, cacti, yucca and flowers will grow well. On the table lands, under ample irrigation we can succeed with a great variety of native plants from

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

all parts of the State, and we can even have—so Mr. Purdy, our authority at Ukiah, tells me—a location favourable to growing nearly all our exquisite lilies.

I am first working out the structural problems such as reservoirs for water storage, pumping plants, location of pipe lines, etc., and hope to begin planting after our first rains in the Autumn.

The latter part of this month I expect to be in Massachusetts . . . and would be glad to go to Boston to see you; if you would have the time and would be interested in going over my blueprints and making suggestions to me about the development of this idea.

Mrs Bryant did visit Sargent at the Arnold Arboretum and showed him her plans and it is obvious that Sargent was not sympathetic to her project for the California garden and he wrote:

Since you were here I have thought a great deal about your proposed Arboretum and have another suggestion to make to you. This I feel quite confident you will dislike even more than those which I made to you when you were here, and probably you will never even acknowledge this letter.

In thinking over the whole situation it seems to me that it would be wise to reduce the size of your Arboretum as such to an area large enough to contain only the plants which can be grown in your region without irrigation. This would mean an arboretum of probably less than fifty acres. It would take you several years to collect the plants which could be grown in it but once collected they would not require much care. No drives through it would be needed and it would be the only arboretum of its kind in the world. Every one interested in plants visiting California would visit it and your reputation as a useful and public-spirited citizen would be assured forever.

I should not suppose that any elaborate plan would be needed but it would be wise, of course, to keep the species of each genera together and they could be planted as fast as collected. This arboretum once planted I should suppose could be cared for by one man, two at the outside, so that the chance of obtaining eventually an endowment for it would seem to me good. The rest of the ground set aside for an arboretum you might use as a flower garden or in any way you like, with the understanding that the only part of your land on which plants could be grown without irrigation could be devoted to any purpose which you might care to use it for.

My scheme, much as you will dislike it, is a practical one and will be of immense service in increasing the knowledge of a class of interesting plants It was a great pleasure to see you here and I am sorry that I could not encourage you in the plan which you have so much at heart.²⁷

Sargent had the reputation of being bluff and a little overpositive but it must be remembered that at the time Mrs Bryant visited him, he was 85 years old, suffering from chronic gout and with less than one year to live.¹⁰ Under the circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that he was unresponsive to Mrs Bryant's expansive plans for a botanic garden to be carved out of the barren hills of southern California. Later Mrs Bryant wrote Sargent saying:

Yucca whipplei ssp. *parishii*, San Gabriel Mts. Photograph by J. O. Hickox. RSA.

In thinking over the hours spent with you and your assistants and the Arnold Arboretum I find from that rich storehouse I carried away a good deal of information which will be of real and practical value to me in the work I am trying to accomplish. I was much busier "brain picking" than you realized.

You gave me a new impetus to go ahead with my own arboretum—both through your suggestion for the restricted field of desert plants, and your sincere opposition

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

to my larger plan. In the traditional feminine manner I am going to compromise by going ahead with my original scheme. I shall develop your idea as fully as possible on non-irrigated land and also put quite an acreage under irrigation in order to bring many of our very beautiful northern trees, plants and lilies down to this part of the State where we Southern Californians may enjoy them all the year round.

Despite my most obvious lack of technical knowledge of the subject in question . . . I hope and believe I can be instrumental in establishing a botanical garden of our California native plants which will be of sufficient value to warrant the adventuring in untried Elysian fields.

The road work is practically finished over the one hundred and sixty-five acres I am setting aside for wild garden planting and the ranch force can put in trails up and down the hillsides for "rainy day odd jobs."

Within a few weeks our storage reservoir, and tanks, and also the pumping plant and pipe lines will be finished; and I am having plans drawn for my "Old Mission" house which can eventually be turned into an administration building with ample space to provide staff offices, an herbarium and library

This will doubtless sound like the ephemeral meanderings of a "crazy enthusiast"—but there is enough practical foundation to build upon for me to feel that I can still keep my feet on the ground and yet go adventuring.

Think back to the beginnings of your wonderful arboretum and then write me that you know this to be the right road to accomplishment—provided a foundation of sufficient opportunity and money, as well as enthusiasm, is available at the starting point. I will not go forward any faster than at the pace I can reasonably keep up with financially.²⁸

Sargent suggested to Mrs Bryant that she should have a professional landscape architect lay out the plans for the garden and he recommended Ernest Branton of Los Angeles.²⁹

On 8 September 1926, Mrs Bryant telephoned Branton, but apparently the phone connection was so bad that he was unable to understand why she wished to see him and in a letter of the same date Branton wrote, "I understand that you wished to do some planting of native vegetation on a country place but [I] did not understand if you wished a plan for same or advice on varieties and planting, etc."³⁰ He went on to say that he was very busy, but that if she would phone him the day before, that he would be able to stop at her home on about any day that suited her as he was in the west end of the city every day after two o'clock.

Apparently a few days later he did visit Mrs Bryant and later wrote her about the merits of a botanic garden devoted to California plants saying that he had a letter from Dr W. L. Jepson introducing Dr Karel Domin, Curator of the National Botanical Museum of Czechoslovakia and Professor of Botany at Charles University, Prague, who was shortly to visit southern California. When Branton asked Domin what he wanted to see, he said:

All kinds of plants, exotics and native. But I travel much—Africa, Australia, all Europe, etc. and therefore see much garden plants. So if our time is to be

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

limited let me rather see the native vegetation for the native flora of California is the finest in the world

Braunton continued:

So I had him and his wife on the travel from 8:00 to 5:00, over gardens, parks and in canyon and on hill, pointing out and naming the various species, while his wife wrote down the names and he photographed many of the plants. He did not wish to leave the wilds and regretted that he had to get away back to the West Indies, where he said he should see many of the garden plants we grow here. The point I am making is that our exotics may be seen in many lands but few of our natives except on their native heath.

This is merely to lay a foundation for the following: I told what you proposed doing, build a California plant sanctuary. At once he was almost wildly enthusiastic. He named some of our very best plants and bemoaned the fact that he had to travel 800 miles, from San Diego to Siskiyou to see it all, much of it so difficult of approach that more than a year would be consumed in superficially skimming it over. He said: "If there was a garden where I could see it all, or a considerable part of it, I would spend even a few days more here if it should entail a very short West Indies visit for yours is the most wonderful flora. If that woman builds such a garden she will be the greatest benefactor the field of botany has ever known and when she passes away will leave a lasting monument by which the world of science will for all time do her honor."

He then asked me if you realized the magnitude of the task you were to undertake for he said the mere thought of it was staggering, though not appalling. He was extremely wrought up over the possibility and had much to say about it, some of which I may recount if opportunity presents. He left California with a much higher appreciation of our plant life, both native and foreign, than he had previously entertained. In fact, he said he had listed more plants than he had previously in any one day since he left home.

We are having many of these foreign botanists every year, is it not a shame we have no native collection to show them? I get them all for Dr. Jepson told him they always send them to me "Because you can name more of both garden and native plants than any man in the state, and he did not put it strong enough." When can we have the Bryant Botanic Garden to show visiting scientists?²³⁷

On 22 September 1926, Mrs Bryant wrote Dr W. L. Jepson at the University of California, Berkeley saying:

In the Santa Ana Canon I am planning to make an extensive planting of the native flora of California, and am writing to ask if you can give me the name of a practical botanist whom you can recommend. Of course a man who has made a special study of our native plants will be the best qualified to classify the California things and keep records as our garden develops. Please also state the salary which you think such a practical man should command in a situation of that kind.

My plan is to establish eventually an arboretum where we will collect every kind of native tree, plant, and flower which will grow in this part of the State—and I am setting aside one hundred and sixty-five acres on the Ranch to start with.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The reservoirs, pumping plant, pipe lines and roads will all be completed in two or three weeks and we expect to do an appreciable amount of planting this winter.

Mr. Ernest Braunton goes to the ranch with me in the morning to advise us in working out our general plan.

So far as is known this is the first time that Mrs Bryant had written Jepson. At that time Willis Linn Jepson (1867-1946) was unquestionably the dean of California botanists and an enthusiastic and active conservationist. Born near Vacaville, he was an acknowledged authority on the flora of the state and the author of many taxonomic works. His *Manual of the Flowering Plants of California* completed by the end of 1925 was to remain for many years the standard taxonomic work. No person was better qualified to serve as a consultant on taxonomic matters than was Jepson. Writing to Jepson again three days later, Mrs Bryant said:

Since writing to you a few days ago I have decided to have a more detailed plan made for the planting of my one hundred and sixty-five acre botanical native garden about which I wrote you.

Please advise me if you think Mr. Ernest Braunton would be competent and the right man in this part of the State to do the work. If not I should be glad of any suggestion you can make about a suitable person to draw that plan for me.³¹

Jepson replied:

Mr. Ernest Braunton is one of the ablest men in horticulture in California. He has had a great deal of practical experience and knows garden plants very thoroughly and has also a wide acquaintance with the California flora. I should regard him as in every way competent and I believe that he can make a success of what you wish done

It is, of course, difficult for me to make a recommendation in such a case as this, because I know nothing of your plans or objects. Do you mean to create a botanical garden for scientific work? Or, have you in mind something in the way of a nursery business with the native plants? Or, are you looking towards some economic or commercial scheme? Or, possibly yet again, are you doing this purely for your own pleasure and interest in just growing plants? Or, yet once again, is the plan one that is purely esthetic? There is such a range of possibilities that I scarcely venture to advise you without learning more of the significance of your project.

On first reading your letter of September 22d, I confess that I had a great thrill, because I jumped at once at the idea that you were planning a botanical garden of the native plants. I have now reached a stage in the production of my floras when I should like nothing better than to have sufficient means of my own, such ample private means, as would enable me to go to some choice spot in the state and there develop a botanical garden of the native plants. In such a garden it would be a great delight to bring together thousands of interesting native species to be observed and studied from various points of view.

It is rather staggering to think that California of all places in the world so desirable for a botanical garden, has not at the present time even one botanical

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

garden that can truly be called scientific. For the whole state of California, for its people at large, rich and poor, north or south, country dweller or city denizen, the benefits to be derived from such a garden are manifold and would increase with the decades, and the little you suggest of your plans interests me vastly. I wish to assure you that in any way in which I can further them, I shall be happy to be at your service."²²

On 7 October Mrs Bryant again wrote Jepson, this time inviting him and Dr LeRoy Abrams (1874-1956) of Stanford University and an authority on California plants to visit Rancho Santa Ana:

The ambition I have for the native garden at Rancho Santa Ana is to make it the best and most complete botanical garden which we can develop for our California trees, shrubs and flowers. It seems feasible to believe that we can make a large collection which will grow in our locality. There are sycamores, two or three species of oaks, black walnuts, and several other trees, as well as a great many varieties of flowers, growing wild over the ranch which give us a good background to start with. We are ready to start our first important planting and I feel that your advice now would be invaluable to me.

It would give Doctor Bryant and me a great deal of pleasure to have you and Doctor Abrams spend a week-end with us as our guests up there; and I am sure the ranch will interest you.

A few days later Jepson wrote Mrs Bryant thanking her for her invitation and saying that it would be impossible for him to go south at that time. He also pointed out that for its greatest usefulness it must be a scientific garden and it would require a large endowment.

Of all countries in the world, no other at the present time offers so much promise for a botanical garden as California. A botanical garden of the native plants makes a peculiarly strong appeal.

For its highest usefulness and permanent prestige it must be a scientific garden: first, to increase knowledge of the native California plants, second, to make that knowledge available both to botanists and to the general public. Such a garden will be unique and it will be sought by scientific men from all over the earth, to the mutual profit of the garden and of the guest. Moreover, such a garden, holding our prized native flora, will be the pride of all Californians, for it can be laid out with lines of beauty in no wise inconsistent with its highest scientific use.

Naturally, a botanic garden of the native plants needs a large endowment, but a large sum could not be better expended, for there is nothing else in California so much worth while, there is nothing else that would make so permanent a monument to its founder because of the service that it would yield to our people and to the world. If the garden is to be a scientific garden, you need not have, I think, any misgivings as to "irretrievable mistakes."²³

In April 1927 Jepson did visit Mrs Bryant at her home on West Adams and in his field notebook for 20 April recorded in detail the events of the day. Among other things she told him that she planned to produce seed of

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

many species which could be sold to make the garden self-supporting. Jepson wrote:

She has no appreciation of the fact that by entering the commercial field she puts her garden out of the class of botanic gardens and into the class of commercial gardens. Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant is very sure of herself. She is able, keen, intelligent, shrewd and obviously a keen business woman, for she told me at considerable length in what manner she handled the Rancho Santa Ana. Experts tell her that the 300-odd acre Valencia Orange orchard on the Rancho Santa Ana is the finest in the U.S. . . .

He then continued:

She laid it down as a guiding principle of her garden that it cannot progress, cannot go any further, than her understanding of it, that is in her life-time. She means to keep immediate and direct and sole control of it herself. She has no intentions of turning it over to a Board of Trustees in her life-time . . . Mrs. Bryant was in a veiled way contemptuous of H. J. Webber and his suggestions [that she should have a Board of Trustees]. She expressed much the same attitude toward many other people who she did not name who had proffered [sic] her advice. And then she asked me for suggestions. Naturally I was not very responsive. When she pressed me I replied that perhaps my advice would be most valuable in the case of special problems as they arise; that my advice had already been taken for the most important matter thus far, namely that the plants be disposed in the garden according to soil and exposure and not according to any botanical classification . . .

Ernest Braunton wrote Mrs Bryant on 6 October telling her that he was scheduled to speak the following day before the state nurserymen's convention on a botanic garden for southern California. He went on to say that there was nothing assured about the Botanic Garden Foundation and "I can only dilate upon the importance of such a project and dimly outline the proposed plan." He continued:

Now, I had intended also to say that we are assured a botanic [garden] of native California plants, describing the undertaking, its scope and importance to the world of science, but no hint as to owner or precise location. Since this determination, which involves no one, I have wondered if I may not have your permission to state it more plainly, who is to do it, what you hope to accomplish, its permanence for the public, its probable endowment, ultimately, and in whose honor. How far can I go in personalities, if at all. It would not necessarily be official. I could say that I had been assured by the owner that it would be done and that I know it will be. I will be governed by your wish.

Since time was short he asked Mrs Bryant to telephone him. We have no record of her reply but it can probably be assumed that she did not want a public announcement made at that time.

The Botanic Garden Foundation referred to by Braunton in his letter was the Garden Foundation, Inc., which was founded in 1927 with the object

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

of procuring land for a botanic garden within the Los Angeles city limits. It later turned into an ambitious undertaking and 3200 acres in Mandeville Canyon were purchased but the project collapsed during the depression of the early 1930's.³⁴

Mrs Bryant next requested Braunton to submit a letter embodying his offer to draw up landscape plans for the botanic garden and on 10 November he wrote:

I submit herewith a letter such as you suggested, embodying my offer to furnish the plans under discussion

Last evening, at the Sigma Xi dinner preceding Dr. Bailey's lecture, the subject of botanic gardens was brought up at our table and Will Hertrich [William Hertrich, Director of the Huntington Botanic Garden] and I had a quiet talk on the side about your garden as he informed me that he expected to visit it on Saturday. I told him I expected to plan it

I spoke to Dr. Bailey [Liberty Hyde Bailey] about it in more detail now that I expect to plan it and he assured me most heartily that he would aid me with advice or in any way that he could. As I probably know him as well as anyone in California does, this means much to me, for he has seen more botanic gardens than any man I know.

On 8 November Mrs Bryant had written Bailey then visiting at La Jolla saying:

Several of my friends have spoken to me of your presence in Southern California and urged me to ask you to visit my ranch near Corona, where I am planning to establish a garden of native California plants.

I have hesitated to write to you when you are supposedly enjoying a vacation but my consideration has weakened as friends have pointed out more and more insistently how valuable your opinion of this project would be to all of us.

With the hope that your visit to Southern California has germinated in your mind an active interest in our native vegetation I am writing to ask if you feel you could spare a day to see the ranch before you return to the East.

It is not certain whether Bailey visited the ranch at that time.

Mrs Bryant accepted Braunton's proposal for drawing up the plans for the botanic garden saying:

. . . I would like to have you begin work as soon as possible on the plan for our wild garden planting at Rancho Santa Ana; as outlined in your letter. When you go to the ranch Mr. Johnson, my superintendent, will be glad to be of any assistance possible to you, and he will know where I wish to reserve a site for a house, green house, lath house and a small natural amphitheatre for outdoor theatrics later; which I wish to have kept free from planting.

Trusting you can carry on your work with all reasonable haste—so that we may begin some of our major tree setting by the first of the year, and assuring you that I shall be interested in furthering your efforts in every way possible

Braunton then wrote Jepson on 16 November saying:

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

I am at work on a plan for Mrs. E. A. Bryant's garden of California plants (trees and shrubs only, herbaceous and succulents to be disposed of later). For trees I am going to use your *Sylva* to work from. Of course I desire to keep all members of each order together, if it is possible. Now, here's the rub: shall I group Pinaceae, Taxodiaceae, Cupressaceae, also Taxaceae separately or shall I group them all under Coniferales?

This is going to be a big job for me, for I have to combine the botanical with the landscaping so that all will be attractive and orderly and yet keep it all technically correct so that the most captious critic among you botanists will be satisfied. The garden will cover 165 acres and will pay me the largest landscape fee I have ever received. Mrs. Bryant paid me the compliment of saying that I was the only one she could find that combined botanist, gardener, soil specialist, etc.

. . . I should like very much to know the general views of a great many leaders, but shall be unable to see many. Fortunately my very good friend Bailey is here. I have taken him around much, and he told me very cordially that he would aid me in any way that he could as he desired me to make a pronounced success of it.

To this Jepson replied:

There is only one way, I am convinced, of laying out a botanic garden of the native plants, and that is to abjure formalism for the sake of formalism as far as possible. As a prime object the trees and shrubs should be used over the area in order to produce the best possible landscape arrangement. The landscape should not be subordinated to any purely botanical formalism or any set system of botanical classification. There is nothing of sufficient importance to be gained by so doing. All other considerations, ecological, associational, soil, slope, landscape values, cry out against it. Moreover, what classification shall be followed? Our classifications, our phylogenetic systems are at present in a state of flux, which is an excellent thing because it shows that we are alive and making progress.

This particular garden should be in itself and for itself a creation, an original concept, with respect to all the conditions which exist there and with respect to the purposes which it is to serve. It may be that you will want a grove in a particular spot and that that grove can best consist of oak trees or of maple trees or what not. This will be well and good but to violently bring together, just for the sake of bringing together, things which are never found associated in a state of nature, and which would not live well together, seems to me pointless or worse. So that, when you talk about "captious critics" amongst botanists, I reply that you should disregard all such from the start. To my mind all will be "technically correct" if the individuals are permanently labeled and good records are kept.

Now when it comes to the herbaceous plants, those should be disposed to advantage according to soil preference, slope, exposure and general landscape design. A great many botanically allied things may naturally fall together. I can see nothing inconsistent between scientifically useful beds or areas or slopes and the most beautiful landscape effects possible.

Over and above the *general garden*, many botanic gardens often have a systematic garden in which representative species of the families are brought together in formal arrangement. Such a garden is highly instructive, but I have never known one which took up a great amount of space.³⁵

Bryant country home, October 1937. Santa Ana Mts. in distance. Photograph by Wolf. RSA.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

In reply to Jepson's letter, Branton wrote:

No language at my command is sufficiently strong in which to express my gratitude for your wonderful letter of the 19th, regarding the layout of a botanic garden. It has so cleared the atmosphere for me that I have enjoyed a mental relief all day.

Some very good botanists have insisted that Natural Orders should be kept together throughout. I do not see how this can be done and I had so wanted to follow somewhat the plan you suggest. With your moral backing I shall hold my head aloft and sail on (or in).

The job is a serious one for the best one and the stoutest heart. I would like to so plan it that it would stand as a monument of at least the common sense of the designer. Your letter has done more for me than all other advice I have had and I am wonderfully surprised at the grasp you have of the subject. The letter is analytic, dissective, illuminative and deeply informative. Again, I owe you many, many thanks.³⁰

A note attached to the above letter says, "This letter is a bit exuberant, but after all Mr. Branton is quite right—common sense is the main thing.—W.L.J." It is obvious from Branton's letter that he was pleased to have Jepson's backing regarding the arrangement of plants in the Santa Ana garden.

In a letter of 15 December 1926 Branton asked Jepson if he could prepare a checklist of trees and hardwood shrubs of the state. The reason for the request being that he was confused by the different treatments in Jepson's *Sylva* and his *Manual of the Flowering Plants of California*. On 17 December Jepson wrote: "The check list for you is already underway and will be done under my direction by one of my bright graduate students." The student was John Thomas Howell later to become the first Botanist at the new botanic garden. Branton wrote Jepson on 20 December saying:

The plant lists as outlined in your letter of the 17th will be just what I want. I am to use as few trees as is advisable, in each species, for the botanical garden consideration already thrusts upon me more trees and a greater variety of material than I should use if only building a landscape picture. Trees, as Burnap [George Burnap, author of *Parks, their design* etc.] says, are dots or accents and one cannot compose with accents, even if skilfully grouped. In my work I nearly always try to "say it with Shrubs" therefore I would have few trees and many shrubs. For instance why should one need more than five or seven *Lyonothamnus*? I will have to combat perhaps a preconceived notion of Mrs. Bryant's that we are to forestate, for when she first spoke about the job (I did not seek it, it came) she showed me a list of conifers for the upper planting that was given her by a nurseryman friend [Theodore Payne] that provided for 200 and 300 of several species each. I shall have no forests in my scheme for I cannot be in any way influenced by an owner. The last time I talked with her I told her I would have a planting of drought resistant species above the water line (not all will be under irrigation) and she said: "Yes, you can plant redwoods and Torrey pines up there." Did you ever hear of such a combination? She will never be able to see redwoods from the

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

Torrey pines. Redwoods, and all mountain species, will not be seen in the main picture but will be on a cool back slope, not in view from the house or face of the picture unless in future years the tops grow up in sight. There is no place in rural landscape for bayonet-topped conifers or other arboreal exclamation points. It is a place of wonderful possibilities, the owner is a wonderful woman and I would like to make it a wonderful garden. I shall not spoil it for I shall try to build a picture that the artist will want to paint and the photographer to snap again and again. The botanic garden will have to adjust to this picture. Am I right?

By the end of the year Braunton wrote Jepson saying:

List of shrubs received Any suggestions that may occur to you at any time I hope you will communicate. I have confidence in myself to the point of believing that I can do this job better than anyone in the local field, but I approach it with none too bold a face and am much pleased with suggestions from those to whom I appeal. Your first letter [19 November 1926] to me was worth more to me as inspiration than all else I have received verbally and in print. I let our dear old friend Barnhart [Peter Barnhart] read it and he requested a copy to put in his collection of literary gems (the phrase is his).

The checklist to which Braunton referred consists of 11 typewritten pages with double columns and titled "Check List of the Shrubs of California (Angiosperm) by Willis Linn Jepson, For the use of Ernest Braunton, Prepared at Berkeley, California, December 1926 with the assistance of John Thomas Howell."

Mrs Bryant must have discussed her plans for a botanic garden with Dean Ernest J. Jaqua, Dean of Faculty at Pomona College and later first president of Scripps College, who in turn talked with Dr Philip A. Munz at that time Professor of Botany at Pomona. Apparently Dean Jaqua had thought that Dr Munz might be of some assistance to Mrs Bryant and on 29 October Munz wrote her saying that for the past nine years he had been specializing in the flora of California and that insofar as his limited time permitted he would be glad to assist her in "so worthy an enterprise."

Mrs Bryant acknowledged his letter and invited him to visit the ranch as soon "as we have a rain to wash the dust off my hills and orchards."³⁸ She also wrote that Dr H. J. Webber, then Director of the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside, had also written of his interest in her project.

Mrs Bryant wrote Jepson on 11 December telling him that there had been progress at the garden since she had seen him, that they planned to begin the building of the lathhouse and greenhouse and that she had hired a very competent nurseryman. The nurseryman was Bryon D. Stark.

By the end of 1926 Braunton was well along with the plans for the new garden. The formative years had ended.