

# Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden Naming Proposal

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# Why Renaming the Cactus Garden is Needed

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1. Remember Kate Sessions' contributions to the garden
2. Signify the direct relationship between the garden and San Diego's early known horticulturist
3. Honor Kate Sessions' role in introducing cacti and succulents to Balboa Park
4. To recall the Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden
5. Reduce naming confusion of other gardens

# Kate O. Sessions

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- Honored with “Kate O. Sessions Day” on Sept. 24, 1935 as part of the 1935 Exposition
- Called “Mother of Balboa Park”
- Early known horticulturalist in San Diego
  - possessed valuable understanding of San Diego’s climate and exotic plants



# History of Kate O. Sessions' Advocacy for a Cactus Garden

- 1899, Kate Sessions said cacti in Balboa Park would “flourish and bloom and be more of interest to all travellers than almost any other order of plants”
- 1918, Sessions wrote that San Diego could be the “world’s cactus center”
- 1926, Sessions wrote that San Diego could have an open-air cactus garden that “outrivaled any in the world” and would help advertise Balboa Park and San Diego



# Sessions' Persuasion for a Cactus Garden for the 1935 Exposition



Balboa Park Cactus Garden April 1935

- *California Garden Magazine* 1935 edition--“earnest efforts” of Sessions to “finally persuade” the Exposition Company to create the cactus garden
- “Coaxed and pleaded” with the Exposition Company



# Sessions' Role in Cactus Garden



Cactus Garden San Diego Union 1935

- California Garden 1935 & 1936-- Sessions cited as coordinating donations of cacti specimens
- Jerabek, City horticulturist, also credits Sessions for “making the contacts of majority of the donations”
- Oversaw development of extensive collection of “over a thousand varieties”
- Received donations throughout southwest including fine specimens from Arizona

# Kate O. Sessions' Role in Cactus Garden (cont.)



- Jerabek designed the Cactus Garden as a tribute to Sessions
- *California Garden Magazine* 1935 cont. Sessions “gave her entire collection of cacti to the garden”
- Frequently offered her advice and suggestions to those working in the garden



# The Garden's Impact During the 1935 Exposition



- At the close of 1935, the *San Diego Union* named the Cactus Garden as one of the top three "most interesting permanent gifts to park landscaping made by the California Pacific International Exposition."
- Midway through the 1936 run of the Expo, Sessions stated in the *San Diego Union* that the Cactus Garden is "the only real contribution made by the Exposition to the park."



# Findings on Cactus Garden Naming

- Called “Cactus Garden” in 1935 postcard
- This naming does not reflect nor preserve Sessions’ role and importance in advocating for cacti and succulents, and in creating this garden
  - In the Official Balboa Park Map from 1999 printed in *Balboa Park: A Millennium History*, 54 items are listed on the map, including the Desert Garden, however, the Cactus Garden does not even make the map



# Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden 1935

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- The Kate O. Sessions Aloe and Agave Garden was established in 1932 and dedicated in Balboa Park on March 23, 1935
- Cactus Garden specimens were to be moved to the Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden as intentions were to phase out the Cactus Garden (San Diego Union 1970)
- The Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden location was paved to create the Spanish Village parking lot in 1971





# Confusion on the Desert Garden & Cactus Garden

- Nothing remains to tie Kate O. Sessions to her advocacy for cacti and succulents
- Naming the Cactus Garden Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden will lessen the confusion between the Desert Garden and the Cactus Garden







# Conclusions

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1. Sessions had immense contributions to the Cactus Garden from her advocacy, expertise, and coordination skills to even donating her own personal inventory of cacti and succulents to the garden
2. The Cactus Garden has a direct--but largely unknown--relationship with San Diego's most imminent early known horticulturist

# Conclusions (cont.)

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3. Kate O. Sessions Aloe & Agave Garden was the only garden tying Sessions to cacti and succulents, however no longer exists today
4. Renaming the garden will finally link Kate O. Sessions to cacti and succulents other than trees and other horticultural life and signify her importance in introducing this flora to Balboa Park
5. This will reduce confusion on arid climate flora gardens in Balboa Park ultimately enhancing the visitor experience and preserving the park's history



# Thank You!

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Thank you for your time and thoughts.

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Feedback & Questions



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## Photo Links:

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- “Kate Sessions near A Saguaro in Balboa Park Cactus Garden” <https://www.sandiego.gov/digital-archives-photos/kate-sessions-near-saguaro-balboa-park-cactus-garden>
- “Cactus Garden behind the New Mexico Building in 1940” <https://www.sandiego.gov/digital-archives-photos/cactus-garden-behind-new-mexico-building-1940>