

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 1, 2013

Press Contact: Nina Sazevich, (415) 752-2483; nina911@pacbell.net

Butterflies & Blooms

**The Conservatory of Flowers' exhibition of live butterflies returns
with hundreds of beauties on the wing
in a fascinating demonstration of plant pollination in action**

May 8 through October 20, 2013

SAN FRANCISCO -- Get eye to eye with a butterfly in the exhibit *Butterflies & Blooms* coming to the Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park this spring. The popular exhibit returns to San Francisco's beloved greenhouse, transforming its Special Exhibits gallery into a beautiful and intimate cottage garden aflutter with hundreds of butterflies on the wing. Visitors can see a dazzling array of more than 20 species of colorful and familiar North American butterflies including magnificent monarchs, Western swallowtails, red admirals, and more, and even several giant moths like the impressive cecropia moth.

Butterflies & Blooms is a unique opportunity to walk amongst a wide variety of brightly colored daisies, sunflowers, zinnias, and more while free-flying butterflies flit from flower to flower, drinking nectar and getting covered in pollen. These goodwill ambassadors of the insect world provide a fascinating demonstration of plant pollination in action, and the exhibit is designed to highlight the critical role pollinators play in the life cycle of plants.

"Pollination isn't exactly a process that is commonly understood," says Lau Hodges, Curator. "I think if you asked most people to explain how a flower turns into an apple, they wouldn't be able to. But life as we know it just wouldn't be possible without pollination – no flowers, no plants, no fruit. It's a crucial natural process. We want people to understand that and to know there are some very important insects and animals that do the work."

The Butterfly Bungalow in the middle of the gallery also lets visitors observe one of the most critical stages of the butterfly's life cycle – the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly. At the

Bungalow, visitors see the chrysalises, hardened exoskeletons formed by the caterpillars. These intriguing structures are as varied as the creatures that created them -- some jade colored with gold spots, some sporting prominent and unusual horns. Inside, one of the great mysteries of nature is taking place -- a total metamorphosis during which the caterpillar liquefies completely and its cells reorganize into a butterfly. Many visitors will be lucky enough to catch the moment when one of these transformed and winged beauties emerges.

The process of metamorphosis is just one of the amazing facts visitors can learn more about in a handy butterfly booklet free with entry. Butterflies, for example, taste with their feet, using special receptors to determine whether a particular flower is a good stop for a drink of nectar or a good place to lay their eggs. Visitors may also be surprised to discover that the monarch has the longest migration of any insect (as much as 3000 miles), and that this migration is an enduring mystery since no single butterfly makes the round trip. Scientists still are not sure how the last of the many monarch generations that live and die as they travel to their northernmost habitat return on their own to the same exact overwintering spots each year.

The booklet can also be used to identify the species on view in the exhibit and at home in the garden, offers tips on growing your own delightful butterfly garden, and provides insight into pollination and the wondrous, age-old symbiotic garden relationships between plants, butterflies and other pollinators like moths, bees, birds, bats, and beetles.

Hodges hopes that visitors' memorable encounters with the butterflies in the exhibit will inspire them to care for the world's pollinators. "I'd like to think that the awe people experience when they are surrounded by these gorgeous creatures will make them think twice about using toxic insecticides or paving over habitat," she says. "Maybe getting eye to eye with a butterfly is just the thing to encourage change."

Media sponsors for *Butterflies & Blooms* include The San Francisco Examiner, Alice@97.3, and KQED.

***Butterflies & Blooms* is open Tuesdays – Sundays from 10 am to 4 pm and is included with admission to the Conservatory. Admission for San Francisco residents (with proof of residency) is \$5 general; \$3 youth 12-17, seniors and students with ID; \$1.50 children 5-11; children 4 and under FREE. Admission for non-residents is \$7 general, \$5 youth 12-17, seniors and students with ID; \$2 children 5-11; children 4 and under FREE. The public should call (415) 831-2090 or visit www.conservatoryofflowers.org for more information.**

Related Programming

**National Pollinator Week Family Fun
Saturday, June 22
10 am to 12 pm**

It's National Pollinator Week, and the Conservatory of Flowers joins forces with Pollinator Partnership to offer families a free, fun-filled morning of activities and crafts in celebration of the important work of bees, birds, butterflies, bats and beetles.

Background

The Conservatory of Flowers is a spectacular living museum of rare and beautiful tropical plants under glass. From Borneo to Bolivia, the 1,750 species of plants at the Conservatory represent unusual flora from more than 50 countries around the world. Immersive displays in five galleries include the lowland tropics, highland tropics, aquatic plants, potted plants, and special exhibits. Opened in 1879, the wood and glass greenhouse is the oldest existing conservatory in North America and has attracted millions of visitors to Golden Gate Park since it first opened its doors. It is designated as a city, state and national historic landmark and was one of the 100 most endangered sites of the World Monuments Fund.

###