LUTHER BURBANK HOME & GARDENS
FACT SHEET

About Luther Burbank

1. There is no record of Luther ever adopting Betty Jane Waters, the niece of Elizabeth Waters, Burbank's second wife, although she lived with them during her school years.
2. Luther's first wife was Helen Coleman. They were married in Denver, Sept. 1890. The divorce obtained by Luther was dated Oct. 1896. Helen received $1,800 and all her furniture as a settlement. She returned to Denver and married again in 1902 to a man named Albert Gestler.
3. When Burbank died he owned 120 shares in the Geyser Development Company as well as many utility company bonds and almost 30 property lots in Santa Rosa.
4. Luther Burbank was a plant hybridizer and breeder, making it highly unlikely that he did any landscape projects for Edison at his winter home in Fort Myers, Florida, or any projects for Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.
5. The following people have been buried at the site of the Cedar of Lebanon tree that stood in the front yard until November 1989, when it was removed due to root rot. Buried there are: Luther Burbank (1926), Dr. Joseph Shaw (1927), Dorothy Reagan Talbot (1929), James Alfonso Kenny (1931) and Elizabeth Waters Burbank (1977). All but Burbank were cremated.
6. Burbank's dog, Bonita, is believed to be a whippet/terrier mix and was at least 21 years of age when she died eleven years after Burbank's death. The death was broadcast on the 10:00 PM news over national radio and recorded on the Time Magazine's Obit pages.
7. While attending Lancaster Academy (1866-1868) in Massachusetts it was necessary for Burbank to walk 3.5 miles to and from school.

About the plants

1. Spineless Cactus. Developed for the purpose of providing fodder for cattle in dry areas. Not successful, because the thornless cactus required water to survive. Also it needed to be fenced against other animals and the cattle who would eat it to the ground. Luther however, made a great deal of money from this plant.
2. Paradox Walnut. Introduced in 1893, it is a cross between an English Persian and a California Black. Grows to the size of a 50-year-old tree in about 15 years, thus the "paradox" of the name: it is a fast-growing hardwood. The wood cannot be kiln dried but must be air dried. The tree produces very few nuts, but beautiful wood for furniture. It is usually grafted onto other rootstock. We have sample of Paradox walnut furniture in the corner cabinet in the Dining Room.
3. Plumcot. A cross between a plum and an apricot. The original fruit was quite perishable and so was not grown for commercial use. Similar fruits available today are pluot, plucot as well as plumcot. They have different percentages of apricot or plum than Luther's original plumcot which was 50%- 50%.
4. Rose Garden. Our rose garden has Burbank roses around the cement fountain as well as roses developed by Western hybridizers.

5. Shasta Daisy. It was introduced in 1901 after Luther worked 17 years and 34 generations of daisies on this flower. He began with the wild ox-eye daisy from New England and cross-pollinated with daisies from England, Portugal and Japan. The plant was produced as a result of both cross-pollination and natural selection. There are now many varieties of the Shasta Daisy in our Gardens and we sell Shasta Daisy seeds in the Gift Shop, as well as plants on our plant carts. The flower ran a close second to the rose in voting in 1987 for a national flower.
6. Burbank Potato. Specimens are grown in a planter box at the SE corner of the Carriage House. Burbank's original potato was the ancestor for our russet potato of today. Some stores carry a potato labeled "Burbank Russet," which should trace back to his original discovery and development.

About the buildings

1. The house existed on the property when Luther purchased it in 1884. It is believed to have been built in 1875. It is Greek Revival in style.
2. Luther, his mother Olive, and sister Emma lived in the house until 1906, by which time Emma had married and moved to Healdsburg. Luther built a new home across Tupper St. in 1906. The Home was used for storage until Elizabeth redecorated and remodeled it in prior to moving into it in 1927.
3. Elizabeth added the windows and doors on the south side, added a full bath upstairs, and installed colored glass in windows and doors. She replaced the floor in the Dining Room, and decorated with tiles in many locations inside the Home and in the Courtyard/Greenhouse.
4. Greenhouse (more correctly "hothouse") was built in 1889 to Luther's design, and during the 1906 earthquake did not sustain any damage or broken glass. It was remodeled somewhat by Elizabeth who used it for an outdoor sitting room. She installed the tile floor and added decorative tiles in the walls, and removed one potting shelf. At one time there was a wooden end to the structure, but it burned in 1937 and was not rebuilt. During a 1989-1990 stabilization project the structure's foundation was strengthened and other repairs made, as well as addition of water and more electrical outlets. Deteriorating window mullions were conserved in 2005.
5. A ramp was added to the house from the courtyard by Elizabeth as she became semi-invalided during the latter part of her life. The current ramp, rebuilt to ADA specifications, was installed in 1995.
6. The original brick walls enclosing the inner courtyard were built for Elizabeth to protect her privacy after she moved into the Home following Burbank's death. The current walls were modified in 1995.