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CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

BULLETIN

Living with Fire

BY DAVID CHIPPING

With hundreds of fires burning in California at the time of this writing, it's clear that the 2008 wildfire season will continue the recent trend of hotter, longer, and more dangerous seasons than we have grown accustomed to in recent years.

Last year the United States experienced one of its most intense fire seasons in recorded history. So far this year, lightning-sparked fires, unusual for June, started at least 1,000 California fires over a couple of days, but the fires originated from a perfectly natural process.

Once we understand that in California fire is as natural and inevitable as earthquakes, and that wildland fire is an essential part of most, but not all ecosystems, then sensible policy and regulation can be implemented and enforced that will protect both the natural cycles of nature and private property.

Unfortunately, when homes burn and people and wildlife are displaced, many become angry and look for someone to blame. Through ignorance and fear, people want to make destructive and needless changes to the local vegetation. However, much fault lies with the history of human occupation within the fire zones, and to a lesser degree the general failure to understand how one can build to survive fire. Simply put, many homes burned due to poor location, failure to fireproof the structure, and failure to properly manage fuels such as vegetation and wooden fences within the 100-foot defensible zone around the structure.

CNPS is currently working to develop policies and recommended management practices that will protect native flora and ecosystems, while at the same time protecting property. There is already a wealth of information on fire protection strategies for those living on the edge of fire-prone lands, but we have found that some is seriously flawed.



David Chipping

The 1994 Highway 41 fire (pictured above) burned through the West Cuesta Botanic area north of San Luis Obispo and subsequently revitalized it, but it also destroyed nearly all the homes in Tassajara Canyon. The current rash of California fires is having a similar impact on wildlands and nearby homes.

For example, the California Firesafe Council is a source of useful information. However, the web-based short version of their "Fire Safe–Inside and Out" brochure tells people to "Replace native plants with ornamental landscaping plants that are fire resistive." Their longer version states, "Removing flammable native vegetation and replacing it with low-growing, fire resistive plants is one of the easiest and most effective ways to create a defensible space."

There is absolutely no justification for telling people to remove plants because they are native. The San Diego Chapter has already provided the local public with practical suggestions on how to manage on-site vegetation to reduce fire risk, together with recommendations for suitable native plantings. Their excellent brochure, *Native Plant Landscaping to Reduce Wildfire Risk: Recommendations for Landscaping Near San Diego's Canyons And Wildlands,* is available at *http://www.cnpssd.org/fire/ReduceFireRisk.pdf.* It is our intent to make this a major priority for the CNPS Horticulture Program by collecting information from our chapters, the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants *(http://www.theodorepayne.org/),* and elsewhere so we can inform both homeowners and fire agencies.

Unfortunately, fire management of wildlands is a complicated issue. A solution for one situation may not suffice in another.

(continued on page 6)



From the Executive Director:

Transition and New Staff

I am sad to say that I will be leaving CNPS early next year. In August my husband, Jeff Jorgenson, will begin working with the Division of Scientific Authority of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, DC. While the news of his promotion made our family very happy, the realization that I will be leaving CNPS deeply saddens me.

I am, however, not saying goodbye yet. I have decided to continue to work for CNPS until January 2009, so that I will be here through the CNPS Conservation Conference. I hope that my staying with CNPS for this additional period will facilitate a smoother transition. I will also be working with the CNPS Board of Directors to find a new executive director, and we will certainly keep you informed about that effort.

In addition, I would like to introduce you to two new ecologists in the CNPS Vegetation Program. Kendra Sikes and Eric Peterson joined CNPS this past spring.

Kendra supervises our field operations and data gathering. She earned an M.S. in botany from Oregon State University, where she studied the community composition effects of different fuel treatments on chaparral in southwestern Oregon. Kendra has worked for the National Park Service in the Santa Monica Mountains, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and Yerba Buena Nursery.



Scott Woodbury

Kendra Sikes

Eric plans our field sampling activities, and compiles and manages our vegetation data and GIS information. Eric obtained his Ph.D. from Oregon State University, where he studied lichens and vascular plants at the community level. For the past seven years he worked with the Nevada Natural Heritage Program.



Eric Peterson

Eric Peterson

Amanda Jorgenson
Executive Director

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Team Effort Rewarded for Pulling French Broom

Early this year, the Habitat Restoration Team of CNPS's Santa Cruz Chapter won an Outstanding Service Award from District VI of the California Park and Recreation Society, which covers Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties.

Our team was honored for its efforts over the past four years in removing French broom, an invasive, non-native plant, from Quail Hollow Ranch County Park, a 300-acre nature preserve and horse ranch in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Each year many volunteers are recruited for this task, which involves pulling broom starting at one end of the park, and slowly edging our way up the valley. As anyone knows who has pulled out broom, it requires patience and a long-term commitment. You have to return year after year, and carefully remove all reproducing plants in order to halt the production of more seeds, which remain viable in the soil for decades.

Thanks to our dedicated and diligent team members, we have made a significant dent toward eradicating French broom from the park, while helping to preserve its unique native flora and fauna.



Pat Kittle

Broom bash volunteer work party at Quail Hollow Ranch County Park.

Linda Brodman
Santa Cruz Chapter

Join the CNPS Conservation Conference 2009!

Early registration ends November 15



We would like to invite you to register early for our "2009 Conservation Conference: Strategies and Solutions" that will be held January 17–19, 2009, at the Convention Center and Sheraton Grand Hotel in downtown Sacramento.

This conference is an excellent opportunity for all of our members to learn about new developments in plant conservation science, environmental policy, and land-use planning, as well as to learn about the extraordinary work CNPS is doing throughout California. Here are some of the highlights of the conference:

- Exciting and inspiring keynote speakers
- Over 200 accomplished presenters featured in 16 thematic sessions, including five bioregion-specific sessions
- Posters from CNPS chapters highlighting our conservation achievements
- Photography, botanical illustration, and poetry reading contests and exhibits
- Over 25 exhibitor booths featuring relevant publications, leading-edge conservation tools, and much more
- Social events and numerous networking opportunities
- Associated meetings of the CNPS Rare Plant Committee, the Consortium of Herbaria, and others
- Fourteen workshops on January 20–21, 2009 (see sidebar)
- Student discounts and scholarships
- Contests for student presentations and posters

This will be the largest outreach and education event CNPS has held since 1986, with over 1,000 participants expected to attend. We need the active involvement of our chapters to ensure the conference's success. Here's how you can help:

- Present a poster of the conservation achievements of your chapter.
- Contribute funds to help sponsor students, other presenters, or a session of interest to your region.
- Submit photographs, botanical illustrations, or poems.
- Sell t-shirts, hats, books, and cards at the giant CNPS booth.
- Attend the conference and hobnob with other conservationists and CNPS members from the California floristic province.
- Volunteer and receive a registration rebate (contact Josie Crawford at *jcrawford@cnps.org* or Andrea Williams at *Andrea.Williams@nps.gov*).

We hope you participate in this extraordinary conservation event! **Early bird registration ends November 15!** For up-to-date information and online registration visit: *http://cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2009/*.

Amanda Jorgenson, Executive Director
Josie Crawford, Conference Coordinator

Post-Conference Workshops, January 20–21

Immediately following the CNPS Conservation Conference, participants will have an opportunity to attend two days of workshops in Sacramento. All activities will be held at the Sheraton Hotel unless otherwise noted. *Preregistration is required.* All workshops are also open to non-conference registered attendees; however, conference registered attendees, CNPS members, and students will receive registration discounts. Below is a list of the workshops being offered:

- The Art of Field Sketching: Drawing Plants
- The Art of Field Sketching: Drawing Wildlife
- Basics of Native Grass Seed Collection and Storage
- Basic Wilderness First Aid
- California Natural Diversity Database Tools
- Fifty Plant Families and Introduction to the 2nd Edition of the *Jepson Manual*
- Invasive Plant Management Workshop
- Introduction to NEPA/CEQA for Botanists
- Introduction to the 2nd Edition of *A Manual of California Vegetation*
- Measuring and Monitoring Plant Populations and Vegetation
- Rare Plant Surveys
- Mutual Gains Negotiations
- Vernal Pool Invertebrates
- Native Plant Propagation

Grazing Keeps Invasives in Check; Protects Rare Plants, Butterfly Habitat

This past spring the CNPS Invasive Exotics Working Group heard a presentation by Stuart Weiss, a restoration ecologist, on the effectiveness of mowing and grazing to prevent invasive grasses from destroying rare plant and butterfly habitat on Coyote Ridge in San Jose. Weiss reported on his research showing that managed grazing controls invasive nonnative grasses, whose spread has been caused by atmospheric nitrogen from air pollution.

Also attending his presentation were Sam Herzberg of the San Mateo County Environmental Services Agency, Michele Salmon of San Bruno Mountain Conservancy, and Doug Allhouse of the Friends of San Bruno Mountain Mission Blue Nursery. This latter group, together with CNPS, is exploring ways to restore habitat for the mission blue butterfly on San Bruno Mountain in San Mateo County.

Don Mayall, CNPS Invasive Exotics Working Group

CHAPTER NEWS

SHASTA CHAPTER:
Leveraging Creativity With Three Plant Sales a Year

Many CNPS chapters have an annual plant sale as their primary source of revenue, but the Shasta Chapter has expanded this activity into a three-times-a-year event. Our fall plant sale in October is still the bread and butter of the chapter, but in the spring two other sales are increasing in popularity.



Jay Thesken

Plant sales at the First Annual Native Plant Garden Tour boosted the Shasta Chapter's income. The chapter also partnered with Shasta Community College to sell plants at the college's annual plant sale. Partnering with another organization is another creative way to boost funds without organizing an entire event.

Shasta Chapter covers the entire northeastern corner of California, including Shasta, Siskiyou, Modoc, and Lassen Counties. Even though many of our potted plants are suited for the northern extreme of California's Mediterranean climate near Redding, some of our plants can find happy homes in the nearby foothills and portions of the neighboring Klamath, Cascade, and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges.

Beginning in January, chapter members from as far away as Yreka and Alturas come to propagate stem cuttings and to plant seeds at the horticultural greenhouses at Redding's Shasta Community College. Most of the propagative material comes from backyard native plant specimens, but occasionally additional material is purchased from commercial nurseries. By April there are more than 2,000 plants in one-gallon pots and several trays of young sprouts waiting for transplant.

In late April, Shasta Community College holds their annual plant sale of horticultural and vegetable plants. Since 2005, CNPS has partnered with the College by selling our popular native plants during this event. The success of the spring sale can be attributed to the combined community support of the college and CNPS, to the attractiveness of certain springtime flowering specimens, and to the pervasive "spring fever" of the customers.

About a week after the college plant sale, Shasta Chapter sponsors a popular Native Garden Tour, which highlights five or six home gardens and includes another plant sale. The focus of this plant sale, which occurs at one of the participating gardens, is to sell plants that can be observed during the tour. Over 300 people attended the tour this year.

Proceeds from the three plant sales are primarily used for two education-oriented grant programs sponsored by the chapter. Each year, at least one scholarship is awarded to a high school or community college student entering a four-year university for a life science degree. This year the scholarship amount has been increased from $1,000 to $1,500. Our second grant program is the "Acorn Grant," which awards up to $500 to primary and secondary schools for botany-related projects. As many as four awards have been made within a year for native plant gardens, science projects, and field trips.

During a chapter meeting where members meet the scholarship recipient, or when a second grade classroom gives a PowerPoint presentation about their school's native plant garden, all the dirt under the fingernails seems well worth it!



Jay Thesken

Volunteers propagate plants for for all three chapter plant sales at the Shasta Community College greenhouse.

Jay Thesken, Field Trips and Public Programs, Shasta Chapter

Volunteer Service Awards

CNPS regularly recognizes members for outstanding contributions to the preservation and appreciation of California's native flora through its Volunteer Recognition Award. CNPS is grateful for all they have done.



Grif McDaniel

Peigi Duvall

Peigi Duvall exemplifies the CNPS ideal: a volunteer who takes what CNPS has to offer, and then gives back generously to CNPS and others. Peigi has served in horticultural and other leadership areas for the Santa Clara Valley Chapter, and for five years as CNPS's Horticultural Program Director. In that position, she visited and assisted many chapters, helped to produce an improved version of the "Gardening With Natives" brochure, and coordinated CNPS participation in the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show. She has also taught a popular class on native plants for Stanford Continuing Education.

Patt McDaniel, a native southern Californian, has been an active volunteer for the environment. Over the last 20 years she has held many positions in the Channel Islands Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, including six years as chapter president. Among her contributions at the state level, she has served on the CNPS Board of Directors, and



Patt McDaniel

helped with the Society's reorganization and insurance programs. Patt is also an accomplished nature artist, and has been active in promoting native plant awareness in the wider local community.

CNPS members are encouraged to submit award nominations to *blairce@verizon.net* through—or with the concurrence of—their chapter presidents.

Charles Blair, Chair
Volunteer Recognition Committee

Consider a Planned Gift to CNPS

Help Conserve California's Plant Diversity for Future Generations

You don't need to be a millionaire to leave a lasting legacy and to continue to support the conservation of California's native plants and landscapes. You can make an important gift to CNPS as part of your estate plan and benefit both yourself and the flora.

A charitable bequest is probably the most familiar form of planned giving. Bequests to CNPS can be included in your will or in your trust (including living trusts). You can make an unrestricted gift or you can specify what CNPS program you would like to support. The simplest planned gift is a gift of cash, but you can also make a gift of appreciated securities or other assets. Indeed, a gift of securities can avoid capital gains taxes while providing a tax deduction.

There are other planned giving options, including life income gifts, gifts of real estate, gifts of retirement funds (especially IRAs), annuities, and many others.



Lynn Houser

Help CNPS ensure that majestic landscapes such as this one will still be around for future generations to enjoy.

You may want to take advantage of the reductions in taxes offered by planned gifts. A planned gift may also help you meet other financial objectives, such as income or diversification of your assets. Please consult your tax advisor or estate planning professional to determine which option is best for you.

The important thing is that your gift will help to preserve something you love—California's native landscapes.

Sandy McCoy, Chair
CNPS Development
Committee

Living with Fire

(from page 1)

For instance, the fast burning Santa Ana wind-driven fires of southern California will throw a rain of burning debris well ahead of the fire front, and it is that debris which ignites houses.

Recent fire research in Colorado pine forests, California chaparral, and Tahoe's recent Angora Fire, showed burned homes surrounded by still-green vegetation. Slowly but surely, building codes are catching up with necessity, and houses can be built that will not burn (see *http://www.Firewise.org*). I would also recommend using the following Reno-based website (*http://www.livingwithfire.info*). Unfortunately, people in older, flammable houses tend to put off expensive preventative measures such as reroofing and fireproofing siding. Some incentives—perhaps both "carrots" and "sticks"—need serious legislative attention in Sacramento.

The greatest problem for California fire management personnel has been the vast increase in the length and complexity of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) due to urban sprawl into fire-prone landscapes. As a result, it has been impossible to mount a sufficient firefighter response to fast-moving fires. Part of the problem has been developer-driven desires to minimize protective buffers, but most lies with city and county government failing to regulate growth at the WUI.

CNPS needs to widely propagate the message that native plants in California wildlands are not the enemy. While fire breaks and native vegetation management often carry negative consequences for native species, this need not be the case, and those consequences can often be minimized. For example, the use of prescribed fire (controlled burns) in chaparral located away from communities has lowered the intensity of subsequent wildfires, although it has done little to slow the speed of the fire front in extreme Santa Ana conditions. Prescribed fires are usually held while the vegetation is still green, and can cause serious ecological damage by steam-cooking the soil and native seed bank.





Cuesta Pass checkerbloom *(Sidalcea hickmanii* ssp. *anomala)*, a serpentine endemic of San Luis Obispo County once thought to be nearly extinct with only 2 to 3 individuals remaining, came back by the thousands after the Highway 41 fire. Inset: Close-up of Cuesta Pass checkerbloom. Both photos by David Chipping.

In urban areas, hand clearance and goat grazing have been used, but suffer from indiscriminate use by untrained workers. A case in point: tractor disking in the Santa Monica Mountains resulted in the massive proliferation of noxious weeds. In some cases, as in the Santa Cruz Mountains, firebreaks created by heavy machinery would have so altered soil structure as to potentially eliminate rare plant habitat.

Less destructive methods exist to achieve better fire control, such as vegetation thinning and reduction of dead vegetation. CNPS is urgently working on scientific and political solutions to the problems of wildfire, especially the propagation of knowledge about fire-proofing homes and land-use policies associated with the continued expansion of the WUI. We are also addressing several other key issues including approaches to vegetation control that will limit the spread of flames, how best to create and manage fire breaks, the role of invasive plants in increasing fire risk, and the best ways to manage fire-prone landscapes to maximize public safety *and* the integrity of native ecosystems. This latter issue includes determining the suitability, timing, and frequency of prescribed fire in various situations and conditions.

CNPS will continue to apply good science in public education and future legislation concerning wildfire. We welcome your contribution to this effort.

David Chipping served as CNPS Conservation Director from 2001 to 2005, and remains active in several CNPS committees. He currently serves as president of the San Luis Obispo Chapter.

CORRECTION

A photo caption on page 6 of the *CNPS Bulletin* (Vol. 38, No. 3) said that maritime chaparral is threatened by fire suppression. Richard Halsey, director of the California Chaparral Institute (*http://www.californiachaparral.com/*), brought to our attention that while this may be true for a good many native plant communities, it is not for maritime chaparral. He indicated that the primary threat to this community is development and excessive fire frequency, especially in southern California. Since natural, lightning-caused fires are extremely rare along the coast, old-growth stands were likely quite common before human settlement. However, human-caused ignitions are threatening those that remain.

Gardening With Natives

Hedges, Screens, and Living Fences

BY DAVID FROSS

Our native flora is well known for a diverse wealth of plants suitable for California gardens. A collection of choices can be suggested to satisfy most any requirement a gardener may encounter—grasses and sedges for a meadow, a low-growing manzanita as a bank cover, or a collection of dudleyas in containers. In the urban and suburban environments of California the need for privacy is often a priority, and here, too, plentiful native choices are available to create formal and informal hedges, natural screens, and living fences.

In the past, California gardeners have often turned to exotics to fill this garden niche. Escallonia *(Escallonia rubra)* from Chile, Japanese privet *(Ligustrum japonicum)* from Asia, and oleander *(Nerium oleander)* from the Mediterranean Basin are ubiquitous examples found from Redding to San Diego. Their success is a function of their tolerances. Whether neglected or nurtured, in heavy or poor soil, given too much water or not enough, in old gardens and new, they persist.

Exotics are planted again and again because they have proven their worth in the diverse landscapes of the state. Can native plants measure up in this environment? Do we have a palette of shrubs and small trees that will tolerate the sometimes odd and challenging environment of urban California? Certainly, and although not as common as oleander and privet, California native plants offer choices with equal growth rates, utility, and garden tolerance.

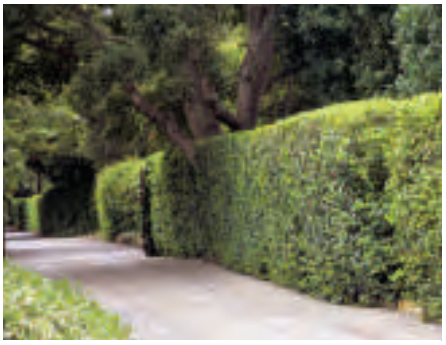
A classic example of a living fence can be seen at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Lemonade berry *(Rhus integrifolia)* was planted in the 1940s to screen the nursery and frame the courtyard. Planted three feet on center, these evergreen shrubs quickly grew together to form a handsome hedge. Pruned three to four times a year in a formal style, the planting has been maintained at varying heights to eight feet.

A number of commonly available California natives can be used in this fashion with equal success. Pacifica wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*) and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*) would be suitable as a hedge and will tolerate moist sites found near lawns or frequently irrigated borders. Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), and Catalina cherry (*Prunus lyonii*) can also be sheared regularly as a formal hedge or pruned occasionally to conform to a smaller urban location.

All of the above-mentioned choices are suitable as screens or informal hedges. The columnar or narrow habit and garden tolerance of Pacific wax myrtle, toyon, and mountain mahogany recommend them in the smaller gardens common to urban areas. If the garden soil is even moderately well-drained, an additional range of California natives can be considered, and many of the upright cultivars in the nursery trade make excellent natural screens with minimal pruning. California lilac *(Ceanothus)* alone offers a bewildering range of choices; fast growing and longer-lived selections include *Ceanothus* 'Ray Hartman,' *Ceanothus arboreus* 'Cliff Schmidt,' and *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* 'Snow Flurry.' Manzanitas such as *Arctostaphylos bakeri* 'Louis Edmunds,' 'Hood Mountain,' and 'Austin Griffiths' could be used in combination to create a striking eight to twelve foot screen, but regular pruning and shearing are not recommended.

Ample garden space would provide additional choices, including many smaller trees such as Tecate cypress (*Cupressus forbesii*) or desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), and larger shrubs such as flannel bush (*Fremontodendron* 'California Glory') or elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). Note that stellate hairs on flannel bush can be irritating, so plants should be carefully placed. Even a wild grape *(Vitis californica)* can be trained to clamber up a chain link fence or dull concrete wall to add seasonal green texture and fall color to an existing constructed screen.





Top: Seven-year-old toyon *(Heteromeles arbutifolia)* pruned as an informal hedge in Santa Ynez, California. Bottom: Hollyleaf cherry *(Prunus ilicifolia)* pruned as a formal hedge in Santa Barbara, California. All photos by David Fross.

Historically, California native plants have been recommended for a single purpose—either to reduce water usage, lower maintenance costs, or attract wildlife—and their functional versatility has been overlooked. The urban and suburban landscape in California is a challenging and extraordinarily varied environment, but our native flora offers solutions that are limited only by our imagination.

David Fross is the president of Native Sons Wholesale Nursery and teaches horticulture at Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo. He is also coauthor of *Ceanothus*, and *California Native Plants for the Garden*.

Input Sought for New Publication on Restoration in SOD-Affected Forests

The management and restoration of forests impacted by sudden oak death (SOD) is the topic of a new publication being prepared by the USDA Forest Service. The publication will provide information and strategies to assist landowners, land managers, and resource professionals in dealing with areas that have been or have the potential to be impacted by the sudden oak death pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*.



Ted Swiecki

Tanoak trees *(Lithocarpus densiflorus)* killed by sudden oak death in Sonoma County. Douglas-fir trees *(Pseudotsuga menziesii)* (saplings in foreground) will likely replace tanoak as the dominant canopy species at this site.

CNPS members Dr. Ted Swiecki and Dr. Elizabeth Bernhardt of Phytosphere Research, Vacaville, CA, are developing the document, which will be published and distributed free-of-charge by the Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station. Swiecki and Bernhardt are plant pathologists and plant ecologists and have extensive research experience with the ecology and regeneration of California oaks, and the impacts of SOD and other diseases on native plant communities.

Because this will be the first publication to substantially address issues that relate to the restoration of SOD-affected plant communities, the authors are especially interested in seeking input and comment on this portion of the publication as it is developed. CNPS members and others with interest or experience in regeneration and restoration in SOD-affected forests are encouraged to contact the authors (*phytosphere@phytosphere.com*). A draft of the publication should be ready for review near the end of 2008, and available for distribution by mid-2009.

Ted Swiecki, Conservation Chair
Willis L. Jepson Chapter

Next Chapter Council Meeting

(Details available at: *http://cnps.org/cnps/admin/cc/index.php*)

SAT., DEC. 6, 2008 — MILLS COLLEGE, OAKLAND
HOST GROUPS: BAY AREA CHAPTERS

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
Bulletin
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