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CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
BULLETIN

California's First "Native Plant Week"

CNPS chapters, schools, government, businesses, and other groups encouraged to participate

By Mike Ross

As California native plant enthusiasts, we're used to celebrating year-round the beauty, diversity, and unique benefits of our native flora. Come the third week of April, however, we're going to ask all Californians to join us—with the encouragement of the California State Assembly and Senate, no less.

Beginning in 2011, the third week of April will be known officially as "California Native Plant Week," according to an Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR 173) passed on August 2, 2010 by the State Assembly and on August 27, 2010 by the State Senate.

The first California Native Plant Week (CNPW) will be officially celebrated April 17–23, 2011, although events are expected to encompass both weekends (April 16-24).

The CNPS-sponsored resolution was introduced by Assemblywoman Noreen Evans (D-Napa), who has supported issues related to California's native plants in the past. It attracted bipartisan support from 48 additional Democratic and Republican cosponsors, as well as the approval of horticulturists, conservation organizations, and nurseries from throughout California. By pleasant coincidence, Ms. Evan's birthday (April 22, which is also celebrated as Earth Day) will fall within California Native Plant Week during most years.



Joshua Stark

California State Assemblywoman Noreen Evans (D-Napa, right), who introduced the state resolution creating Native Plant Week, and CNPS Executive Director Tara Hansen.

ACR 173 recognizes the vital historical, artistic, and economic contributions that California's native plants have made to our state, and points out that California native plant gardening and landscaping

(continued on page 3)

San Diego's Fuel Treatment Strategy is Harming Ecosystem

Policymakers attempting to circumvent environmental regulations

By Richard Halsey and Carrie Schneider

[Editor's Note: The next issue of Fremontia *will focus on issues related to native plants and fire safety.]*

An increasingly familiar and unfortunate response to California's wildfires has been to blame native plant communities rather than focusing on what matters most: retrofitting flammable structures, removing flammable ornamental vegetation, and creating appropriate defensible space by thinning rather than "clearing" native habitat.

In a draft community wildfire protection plan issued in 2010, a citizen group in Monterey County excluded local conservationists and scientific input and equated "clearing brush" to a constitutional right. The plan erroneously refers to native shrublands as "over-mature" and "overgrown" fire threats. In Santa Barbara County, federal funds are being spent to clear-cut large expanses of native chaparral to create what a local fire safe council member has described as a park-like setting. Despite denials, what is actually left behind are fields of invasive,

(continued on page 6)

From the Executive Director

Effective meeting formats and outreach

During the third week in October, I had the pleasure of visiting our San Diego and Orange County Chapters to present an overview of the CNPS mission and vision, and how the central office and chapters are working to implement it through our five programs.

The San Diego Chapter meeting, held at the Casa del Prado building in Balboa Park, was attended by roughly 50 or so members and volunteers, who primarily turned out to hear Kim Camilli, a forest pathologist, give a fascinating talk on the goldspotted oak borer and its impact on San Diego oak forests. (Go to *http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/spf/fhp/gsob.shtml* to learn about this new threat to California oaks.)

Even in the pounding rain, chapter volunteer Carolyn Martus and others brought and sold native plants before the meeting! Other volunteers sold books and answered questions and Dave Fleitner, chapter president, greeted new people as they came in.



Pete DiGirolamo

The historic and majestic Casa del Prado building in Balboa Park, site of the San Diego Chapter's monthly meetings, and also its fall plant sale.

In Orange County, horticultural expert Carol Bornstein gave an engaging talk about the sensory delights one can experience from native plant species in residential gardens. About 100 members turned out to hear Carol, mingle, and ask questions of longtime native plant volunteers and chapter leaders Laura Camp, Brad Jenkins, Celia Kucher, Dan Songster, and many others.

Orange County Chapter has adopted a meeting setup that includes information stations on various topics related to native plants and conservation so that members can seek out information on topics of particular interest to them. They also staff a membership and registration table at the entry, and greet everyone with CNPS membership information as they arrive.

Both of these meeting formats appeared to be quite effective in welcoming and educating new members, and the program topics were highly informative. For additional details about the San Diego and Orange County Chapter meeting formats and outreach, please contact Dave Fleitner or Laura Camp.

Tara Hansen
Executive Director

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Landfill Mitigation Helps Native Plants

In densely urbanized Los Angeles County, the concept of mitigation is being applied in an unconventional way. The Puente Hills Landfill, the largest sanitary landfill in the West, is located there. In 1994, the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Authority was established as mitigation for the landfill. A portion of the tipping fee charged for each ton of refuse is now being used to purchase and restore public open space in the Puente Hills, located in southeastern Los Angeles County. To date the preserve has grown to 3,860 acres.

The Habitat Authority's primary goal is to protect biological diversity. The plan also involves making this preserve part of a larger wildlife corridor that connects Cleveland National Forest, in Orange County, through the Puente Hills to the San Gabriel River, which in turn would connect to Angeles National Forest. Although this project is not CNPS-sponsored, it is useful to know of this creative initiative that is helping to conserve native plants.

Norman Ackerman
San Gabriel Mountains Chapter

Plant Week *(from page 1)*

have tremendous positive impacts on our watersheds, on habitat recovery, and on curbing catastrophic wildfires. It recognizes, further, that home landscaping and gardening with native plants can reduce residential water use from 60 to 90% over conventional gardening.

In particular, ACR 173 "encourages community groups, schools, and citizens to undertake appropriate activities to promote native plant conservation and restoration, and to inform their neighbors and communities of the value of native plants in nature and in horticultural settings" during California Native Plant Week. (For the complete text of ACR 173 and a list of its sponsors, go to *www.cnps.org*. and click on Native Plant Week at the top right under "Conservation.")

"The idea for this resolution came out of discussions between Greg Suba, CNPS Conservation Program Director, Vern Goehring, CNPS Legislative Consultant, and me in planning our 2010 legislative initiatives," said Tara Hansen, CNPS Executive Director. "Given that 2010 was an election year—and that the partisan divide in Sacramento showed scant signs of healing—this resolution was developed as a positive and publicly popular measure. It also meshes with our intention to reach new audiences and grow as a Society."

CNPS will be reaching out far and wide to promote California Native Plant Week. The Chapter Council has created a committee to plan and organize events and publicity for the week, and encourages all members to contribute their time and effort to make the first year's celebration a resounding success. (For a list of CNPW committee members, see the CNPS website.)

Initial plans are being drawn up, and it's hoped that many annual Chapter-sponsored events—such as plant sales and wildflower shows that have historically taken place during April—can be held during CNPW. Public field trips, lectures, and school activities will also be encouraged.

The celebration will by no means be limited to CNPS. We will be collaborating with many environmental groups, botanic gardens, water districts, parks, schools, and other organizations to hold activities related to native plants during CNPW. Nurseries and other retailers will be encouraged to hold CNPW sales, and promotional materials touting the wisdom of protecting and gardening with native plants will be produced. Advance publicity will be sought for CNPW itself as well as same-day local media coverage of significant, popular, and attractive events associated with CNPW.

The Society has also created an online calendar that the public can use to find CNPW events in their neighborhoods.

"I urge all CNPS members to join together to make this first California Native Plant Week a success," said Hansen. "The CNPW committee members will be canvassing the chapters, but any members with ideas for a successful event or activity are encouraged to contact a committee member, or the chair, Mike Ross (*mikeross2@prodigy.net*)."



Reny Parker

A splendiforous wildflower display at Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve, San Mateo County.

Mike Ross is a science writer in San Jose. He has been a member of CNPS since he moved to California during the 1976 drought.

Join Statewide Invasives Mapping Effort

In 2006–2008 Cal-IPC mapped the existing distribution of all species in the Cal-IPC Inventory by county and Jepson floristic region. In 2010–2011 we're continuing to map at a finer resolution (7.5 minute USGS quadrangles).

The keystone of this effort is to gather a group of local botanists and land managers and map their expert knowledge. We're seeking input from CNPS volunteers with strong botanical skills and a regional knowledge of invasive plant distribution. Come participate in our data gathering meetings!

To participate, please contact your chapter's invasive species or conservation coordinator (if applicable) or email *mapping@cal-ipc.org*. Visit *www.calweedmapper.org* for more information.

Dana Morawitz
Cal-IPC Mapping Program Manager

CHAPTER NEWS

RIVERSIDE/SAN BERNARDINO CHAPTER:
Partnering with the local water district

Growing native plants is a great way to preserve our precious water resources. Fortunately for the Riverside-San Bernardino chapter, the Western Municipal Water District in Riverside, California is also promoting water efficient plants, including natives, in the landscape.

So when we approached them last year to ask about holding our annual fall native plant sale at their office and demonstration gardens, the response was enthusiastic. Not only did they agree to host the plant sale, but District staff designed a bill insert promoting the event and helped us on the day of the plant sale.

Our first plant sale in partnership with the Water District was held in November 2009 in the District's parking lot, which is adjacent to their demonstration gardens. The site is located in a busy area of Riverside, and this proved to be our most successful plant sale ever. The District again hosted our plant sale in 2010, and again sent out bill inserts announcing the sale.



Holding the chapter's native plant sale at the local water district brought it free publicity on a large scale. This insert was included in bills sent out to nearly 24,000 customers.

The insert was included in approximately 24,000 water bills sent to their retail customers, encouraging them to "Make Your Garden Water-Wise, Beautiful, and Wildlife-Friendly" by coming to our plant sale. At press time the sale had not yet been held, but we expect it to be at least as successful as last year's.

Western Municipal Water District also has other programs that encourage homeowners to convert their gardens and go native. They offer a turf buy-back program to encourage the use of climate appropriate and waterwise plants. Through their website, they promote a free landscaping seminar that showcases water-wise and native plants.

We are very grateful to Pam Pavela, water use efficiency specialist for Western Municipal Water District, and the entire District for this wonderful collaboration.

Katie Barrows, President
Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter

SEQUOIA CHAPTER:
Restoration project enters planting phase

In 2002 the Sequoia Chapter began a restoration project at China Creek, an undeveloped 120-acre Fresno County park of remnant oak woodland near the Kings River. It sounds odd to admit that in eight years all we've done is kill weeds, mainly the noxious weed yellow star thistle (YST). However, finally in September 2010 we started something new: on a seven-acre test plot we actually began preparing for planting!

We realize the revegetation phase of the project will be a long and gradual process of planting and encouraging native grasses to compete with and take the place of YST and the exotic annual grasses that dominate the Park's savannah areas. But with the help of up to 12 chapter volunteers and Vulcan Materials, we've already spread mulch on about an acre of this area so far.

Next we plan on adding native grass cuttings, and then integrating the cuttings and mulch with a mower. We're hoping for enough rain this season to germinate the seed and start the renewal process.



Warren Shaw

Spreading mulch where weeds once abounded at China Creek County Park.

Warren Shaw
Sequoia Chapter

Corps' Plan to Remove Levee Vegetation Violates ESA

The California Delta is a labyrinth of sloughs located roughly between Sacramento in the north and Stockton in the south. It encompasses about 1,000 miles of waterways. Much of the Delta's riparian vegetation is found on levees.

The Army Corps of Engineers has issued a new nationwide policy requiring the removal by local flood control districts of riparian vegetation along levees, which would impact vegetation in the Delta. This could result in the loss of from 25% to over 80% of existing important and rare riparian vegetation types including valley oak, white alder forest, and Mexican elderberry woodland.

The Corps' policy violates the Endangered Species Act, which requires that before vegetation can be removed, federal wildlife agencies must be consulted on potential impacts to listed species. Vegetation in the Delta is important for listed species such as salmon, steelhead, giant garter snake, and Valley elderberry longhorn beetle. Moreover, as pointed out in a joint document issued by the California Department of Water Resources and Department of Fish and Game, the preponderance of scientific evidence suggests that well-managed levee vegetation poses very little risk to levee integrity, and often reduces the risk of erosion. The removal of trees may actually compromise levee safety.



Example of expected extent of clearing of Delta levees (gray) overlain onto a recent detailed vegetation map to show the effect on channel margin riparian growth (yellow polygons). Map courtesy of Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program, DFG.

The Center for Biological Diversity has filed notice of intent to sue the Corps if it implements the new policy, based on impacts to endangered species in California.

In Appreciation: Brad Jenkins

The driving force behind a more user-friendly rare plant database

Brad Jenkins is very excited about a new endeavor. This comes as no surprise to the many CNPS members who know him. For many years Brad has been a high-profile volunteer in the Orange County Chapter, the CNPS Board of Directors, and the CNPS Chapter Council. His latest passion is the new *Rare Plant Online Inventory* which he says "will make searching for rare plant data fast and fun."

Brad gives credit to everyone whose past work has in some way made possible this new online version of the *Inventory*, from evolutionary botanist G. Ledyard Stebbins, who started maintaining a card catalog of locally rare Californian plants in 1968; to Larry Levine, who has maintained an online version of *The Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants* since 2001; as well as former CNPS Rare Plant Botanists Kristi Lazar and Nick Jensen, and current Rare Plant Botanist Aaron Sims, all of whom have contributed their expertise.

The need for a more advanced yet user-friendly interface encouraged Brad to look into new database display possibilities. Surprisingly, it was Brad's background in investing which provided an unexpected boon: when using screening tools for equity research, he realized the instant criteria matching style could be adapted to online rare plant research. It was after Nick Jensen assumed several coordination tasks for the Inventory and the nonprofit Calflora demonstrated that sophisticated botanical database coding was possible, that people started getting really excited about the changes.

The final obstacle—namely how the project could be funded— was removed thanks to a CNPS Board allocation from the funds donated by the late June Bilisoly, contributions from Online Inventory users, and a generous donation from the Jenkins Family Charitable Gift Fund.

CNPS is grateful for the continued support, leadership, and vision that Brad Jenkins has provided to this valuable achievement. In turn, Brad credits the amazing wealth of volunteers at CNPS saying, "Completing this endeavor deepens my appreciation for every member who volunteers time or provides funding for valuable CNPS projects."

Stacey Flowerdew, Membership & Development Coordinator



Linda Jenkins

Brad Jenkins

Fuel Treatment *(from page 1)*

flammable weeds interrupted by an occasional manzanita or scrub oak damaged by the loss of the surrounding watershed.



Richard Halsey

This fuel break has been taken over by invasive, nonnative weeds that can now invade the surrounding chaparral ecosystem.

In San Diego County, the approach has been to ignore volumes of scientific research and promote a massive "fuel treatment" project of more than 300 square miles that would seriously threaten the health of an entire ecosystem.

San Diego County's actions are especially troubling because they are based on attempting to circumvent state environmental laws by using the emergency exemption clause in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The clause allows agencies to respond to "imminent" threats such as a collapsing bluff or a raging fire without undue delay. However, case law has clearly established that local governments may not use the clause to avoid their legal obligation to conduct appropriate environmental reviews of long-term projects. Unfortunately, emergency exemptions for fuel treatment projects are being increasingly used for this very reason.

Recognizing the danger San Diego County's strategy presented, the California Chaparral Institute, with the support of the San Diego Chapter of CNPS, challenged the County in court and won earlier this year. The judge made it clear that the use of the emergency exception clause for a four-year fuel treatment project was illegal and that the county needed to go back and follow the law.

The county responded to the judgment by issuing a negative declaration, a CEQA project document that allows development projects to proceed if they will not cause any significant environmental impacts. Ironically, by filing the original emergency exemption, the county had already recognized there would indeed be significant impacts.

At the same time the negative declaration was issued, the county sponsored a bill in the California State Senate that would have exempted future fuel treatment projects from environmental review and citizen oversight. Fortunately, due to the efforts of many dedicated conservationists, the bill died in committee. At press time, the County is still in the process of responding to comments on the negative declaration. The County's final decision will determine whether or not the court battle will continue.

Unfortunately, the possibility of a reasonable compromise is not promising. Despite more than seven years of work by local conservationists and the recent legal decision, San Diego County has made it clear in a recent newspaper editorial that it intends to continue its efforts to circumvent environmental protections in order to clear the natural landscape of what it sees only as dangerous fuel.



Richard Halsey

Yellow star thistle *(Centaurea solstitialis)* and wild oats *(Avena* sp.*)* overwhelm a fuel treatment area in chaparral.

In addition, the county has lobbied the state to ignore global climate change in its development of future fire plans, and has continually claimed that the conversion of native shrublands to nonnative grasslands is not a problem. The county's rationale for these viewpoints is that taking such problems into consideration would interfere with its plans to conduct major fuel treatments in the backcountry.

For an illustration of what vegetation removal can do to chaparral, view a before and after comparison at *www.californiachaparral.com/threatstochaparral.html*. The fall 2007 cover of *Fremontia* shows a mature stand of manzanita, subsequently cleared in an attempt to "reduce fuel." The results of this treatment turned an unbroken old-growth chaparral shrubland into a parched hillside.

Local CNPS chapters must become familiar with CEQA and fire science to protect California's priceless native habitats from unreasonable land management projects that are claimed to be necessary to reduce fire risk. Although vegetation management is a critical tool in our efforts to protect lives, property, and natural resources, it needs to be conducted according to sound scientific principles, and not based on panic.

To learn more about this story, please visit the SD County Slash and Burn page at *www.californiachaparral.org*.

Richard Halsey is director of the California Chaparral Institute. **Carrie Schneider** is conservation coordinator with the San Diego Chapter of CNPS.

Delicious Native Plants

By Barbara Eisenstein

While out working in the garden I take frequent breaks to pop delectable berries in my mouth. In early spring, the sweet and tart golden currants (*Ribes aureum*) tickle my taste buds. A few weeks later, tiny strawberries (*Fragaria vesca* ssp. *californica*) delight my tongue while providing a concentrated energy boost. And in late summer, tasty purple grapes (*Vitis* 'Roger's Red') quench my thirst.

Yet this is just the smallest bit of what the land has to offer. Strangely, though native plants provide local food in the truest sense, this food is exotic and unknown to most of us. And the Native Americans—who accumulated knowledge and expertise on how to manage the lands we now live on in order to provide for themselves and people of future generations—are nearly gone. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in tribal peoples and in the native plants that fed them.[1]

There are many native plants that provide food and seasoning, and also make excellent garden specimens. This column is far too short to even begin to do this topic justice, but I would like to share a few of my favorite food plants, focusing on sweet desserts.

Fruits and berries are nature's candy. Wild strawberries, mentioned above, make up in flavor what they lack in size. Not large like the artificial berries we get in the store, these tiny treats are never hard and woody, though some are a bit more sour than others. The only problem is that you must compete with birds and other mammals since they too are privy to nature's most delectable morsels.





Both photos by Barbara Eisenstein

The fruits of serviceberry *(Amelanchier utahensis)* were eaten fresh or dried for winter food by Native Americans. It has a broad range in California and makes an excellent garden shrub with lovely white flowers.

Barberries (*Berberis* [*Mahonia*] spp.) can be sweet or tart, and delicious. Eat them right off the shrub or collect them for an unusual jam. Two of my favorites are Nevin's and Fremont's barberry (*B. nevinii*, *B. fremontii*). Wild grapes (*Vitis girdiana*, *V. californica*, and *V.* 'Roger's Red'—a hybrid used in horticulture) yield small, tasty, juicy fruit. When not popping these berries directly into my mouth and unceremoniously dispersing the seeds around the garden, I collect the bunches, clean them, and then squish them through a sieve to remove the seeds and skin. The concentrated juice adds flavor and color to fresh lemonade, spiced with wild sage.

Another genus that produces some of our most delicious treats is *Ribes*. Both spiny gooseberries and spineless currants can be found throughout much of California. Golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) produces shiny golden to nearly black berries. Hillside gooseberry (*R. californicum*) can be eaten as well if you do not mind the spines. It is reported that Native Americans ate these berries, sometimes singing off the spines and sometimes straight off the shrub (Anderson 2006). I have eaten Sierra gooseberries (*R. roezlii*) but only after cutting them in half and separating the sweet insides from the spiny skin; I cannot imagine how one could swallow them whole.

And finally, I could not end this article without mentioning my favorite wild berry, the blueberry. There are two native shrubs that produce berries that can compete with any store bought blueberry: California huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*) and serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*, *A. alnifolia* 'Regent' and 'Smokey'). These taste much like cultivated blueberries, but as is the case with all wild plants, their flavors are less homogeneous, sometimes tart, sometimes sweet, and always just a bit different.

Barbara Eisenstein is a native plant garden writer, consultant, and enthusiast. When not working in her own garden or in the South Pasadena Nature Park, she may be found updating her website: *www.weedingwildsuburbia.com*.

1 *Tending the Wild* by M. Kat Anderson. 2006. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

Native American Ethnobotany by Daniel E. Moerman, 1998. Timber Press, Portland, OR, *http://herb.umd.umich.edu/*.



Next Chapter Council Meeting

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

MARCH 11–13, 2010: RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN, CLAREMONT
HOST CHAPTERS: SAN GABRIEL MTNS, LA/SANTA MONICA MTNS, AND RIVERSIDE/SAN BERNARDINO

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY BULLETIN

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