



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

September-October 2008

GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

**Friday, September 19th at 7:30pm
Los Altos Library Program Room
13 South San Antonio Road, Los Altos**

Fire and Native Plants: Myths and Reality Speaker: Patrick Congdon

The 2008 fire season has been one of the worst in memory for our part of the state, and climate change experts are warning that Californians had better get used to increased fire frequency. Humans are moving more and more into areas known to be prone to periodic wildfires. And whether by accident or arson, in the modern world most wildfires are started by people. For over a century, we've been learning how to control and suppress wildland fires, and we are continually honing these skills and tactics. The net effect on our native habitats has some areas burning more frequently, while other areas accumulate fuel and are waiting longer to burn. Add to this the increase of invasive non-native vegetation, debates regarding forest thinning and roadless areas, and the specter of unforeseen changes due to global warming, and we see that this topic will be on our minds for a long time.

Patrick Congdon, General Manager of the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, will discuss wildland fire behavior and its relationship to the vegetation that grows on the land. He will share his experiences in finding a balanced approach to fire fuel management, including using tools such as selective vegetation clearance, prescription burning, and fire-safe building practices. He will also discuss how fire is being used to help renew important native plant communities in our area.

Mr. Congdon has worked for public land agencies at the county, state, and federal level for over 32 years, observing and studying fire behavior and actively practicing firefighting techniques. He worked as Fire Behavior Specialist on the 2002 Croy Fire in the Santa Cruz

Mountains, and has worked on prescribed burn crews in California, Oregon, Arizona, and Colorado. As General Manager of the Open Space Authority, he has championed the preservation and enhancement of the remaining native habitats of Santa Clara County, and has provided protection to many of our rare plant populations.

7:00pm What's that plant? Come early, bring your mystery plant, and we'll try to ID it together.

Directions: From Foothill Expy., travel ½ mile on San Antonio Road towards the Bay, cross Hillview and turn right into the driveway; library is on the left. From El Camino, travel towards the hills on San Antonio Road, cross Edith and turn left into the unmarked driveway just before Hillview. The sign on San Antonio Road reads "Civic Center, Library and History Museum." Enter through the lobby of the main entrance.

CNPS general meetings are free and open to the public. For more information, contact Chapter President Kevin Bryant at mtngreen17@verizon.net or (408)353-8824.

Save the Date!

Our November Chapter General Meeting will include our **annual potluck dinner and Chapter elections**. It will be held on **Saturday, November 8** at the Shoup Garden House in Los Altos.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Fall Native Plant Sale October 18 Call for Volunteers

Our Fall Native Plant Sale will be held on **Saturday, October 18, from 10am to 3pm** at our Hidden Villa nursery. Once again we're asking everyone who can to come and help with the sale. Most of the jobs listed below don't require expert knowledge of plants, and you can choose to work one or two hours or all day.

Before the sale, you can help during our **Wednesday** work sessions at the nursery from **10am to 2pm**. Special nursery work days will also be held before the sale to help prepare the nursery and label plants. We'll work from **noon to 3pm** on **Wednesday through Friday, October 15, 16, and 17**.

On the day of the sale, we will need people to:

- Help set up before the sale (starting at **8am**)
- Help with parking
- Answer customers' questions about the plants and help them decide which plants to purchase
- Write up the sales tags before customers go to the cashiers to pay for their plants
- Work as cashiers
- Help customers take their purchases to their cars and bring back the wagons and carts to the nursery
- Help clean up after the sale (**3-4pm**)

For parking, we will need several additional volunteers beyond the already large number that usually participate in order to adequately staff the additional space that is available as a result of Hidden Villa's expansion of the parking area near the hostel.

The plant sales are always lots of fun to work at, and we provide lunch to volunteers. Please sign up with the following coordinator(s) depending on your interest:

Horticultural consultation and miscellaneous:

Jean Struthers (650)941-2586, JeanStruthers@att.net
Ray Deutsch (650)365-6136, henrymarsh@yahoo.com

Writing sales tags and/or cashiering:

Georgia Stigall (650)941-1068, GeorgiaStigall@yahoo.com

Parking (directing customers in the lot):

Stephen Buckhout (408)255-6233, yscottie@pacbell.net

Directions: Hidden Villa is located on Moody Road west of Foothill College. From Hwy 280 in Los Altos Hills, take the Moody Road exit and head west. Two miles west of Foothill College, look for the Hidden Villa sign and driveway on the left. Follow the directions of the parking volunteers on sale day, or proceed over the bridge and park in the visitor center parking lot to your right. The Nursery greenhouse is just beyond the visitor (Dana) center.

Gardening with Natives

Gardening with Natives (GWN) is a special interest group within the Chapter that usually meets on the first Thursday of each month, at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC)

in Palo Alto (directions below). The group is open to all, and includes a mix of seasoned native plant gardeners as well as beginners. Newcomers are always welcome.

Native Plant Communities for Bay Area Gardens

A talk by Glenn Keator

Friday September 5, 7-9pm at Los Altos Library
Host: Sherri Osaka

Glenn Keator is a free-lance botanist, teacher, and writer with over 10 published books, who lives in Berkeley. He has taught widely on many botanical topics and leads field trips all over California. His main interest is in California native plants, and he is especially enthusiastic about promoting natives in appropriate garden landscapes.

Dr. Keator will focus on native plant communities for local Bay Area gardens, pulling information from his latest book with Alrie Middlebrook, *Designing California Native Gardens*.

Directions to the Los Altos Library: see directions to the Chapter General Meeting on page 1 of this newsletter.

Fall Seed Exchange

Thursday, October 2, 7-9pm at the PCC

Host: Peigi Duvall

Due to the ongoing Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) quarantine, our Fall Exchange program this year will be limited to a Seed Exchange only. This is one of the most interactive and enjoyable programs of the year. Come to browse the offerings -- ranging from easy-to-grow to hard-to-find -- and go home with some -- *for free!* Bring coin envelopes in which to carry seeds home.

If you can, bring native plant seeds from your own garden to share. Label them; and if you are so inspired, attach helpful hints about growing them and display photos of plants in bloom. Don't have seeds to share? No problem; there is usually enough material for all.

After introductions and announcements, you will have a chance to show and tell what you brought. Then the exchange will begin. Free and open to all! Such a deal.

Directions to the PCC: PCC (Peninsula Conservation Center), 3921 E. Bayshore Road, Palo Alto. From Highway 101, take the "San Antonio North" exit, get immediately into the left-hand turn lane, and turn LEFT onto East Bayshore. This will curve around to the left, then right.

Turn right on Corporation Way. Then turn into the first driveway on your left, which leads to the PCC parking lot.

For more information on the Gardening with Natives group, visit its website at www.GardeningWithNatives.com. GWN maintains a Yahoo group with over 500 members, a true resource for native plant gardeners in this area. To join the Yahoo group, visit groups.yahoo.com/group/GardeningWithNatives. To contact the GWN Steering Committee, email info@gardeningwithnatives.com or call Arvind Kumar at (408)715-7020.

Native Hill - Wildlife Haven

Foothill College's Native Hill garden has been a haven for wildlife this year. Besides observing the quail chicks living in the Saint Catherine's lace, we've found that butterflies abound on the *Grindelia* spp and *Aster chilensis*: during one survey 18 individuals from 4 species were observed. Hummingbirds relentlessly hover over the *Epilobium* spp.

This year we have also had a significant increase in young lizards, which prefer the ground cover plants during the heat of the day but also benefit from basking in the early morning sun on rocks that we placed around the garden. The rocks were placed mainly for aesthetics but we've found birds using them for perching while foraging.

As always, if you would like to volunteer at the garden or be added to the email list to be notified of upcoming workdays, contact Phil Higgins at phidor@juno.com or (650)941-4752.

Photo Group

Our Chapter Photo Group meets on the **third Monday** of even-numbered months at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC) in Palo Alto. The Group is open to all, and includes both beginning and experienced photographers.

Our next meeting will be **Monday, October 20**. In addition to the featured program of each meeting, attendees are encouraged to bring recent favorite photos. For more information, please contact Patrick Gallagher, at (408)483-9366 or drrust@greenisles.com.

Keying with Natives

Join other native plant enthusiasts in a fun and educational atmosphere, as we hone our skills at plant identification (aka "keying"). We meet **6:30pm-8:30pm** usually on the **last Friday** of each month.

Upcoming meetings are **August 29, September 26, and October 24** at the PCC building in Palo Alto. For details,

contact David "Tex" Houston at tex009@sbcglobal.net or Sally Casey at (408)377-0989.

CHAPTER NATIVE PLANT CLASSES

Our Chapter is co-sponsoring two classes with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. For more information or to register for either of these classes please contact Toby Goldberg at (408)252-3740 or programs@scvas.org.

Gardening with Native Plants

A two-part Class with Jeffrey Caldwell

Would you like some guidance in designing, planting, and cultivating California native plant gardens successfully? Jeffrey Caldwell, a biologist and horticulturalist with much experience creating native plant gardens that attract and support native birds and other wildlife, will be offering this class in Cupertino. The class includes discussion of the aesthetic qualities, wildlife values and other values of easy-to-grow species suited for the local area. Supportive handouts will be provided and there will be opportunities for specific questions

Dates: **Wednesdays, September 10 and 17; 6-9pm**

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Fee: \$30 members of SCVAS or CNPS; \$35 non-members

Biodiversity, Native Plants, and the Home Gardener - with Arvind Kumar

This class will focus on the importance of biodiversity, the unique position of California in the world, the critical role of native plants and how we are losing them to human pressures. We will also examine what the average home gardener can do to support biodiversity by planting native plants and promoting habitat, and will discuss the specific plants one can introduce to the home garden and their benefits.

Date: **Saturday, September 13; 9am-12pm**

Location: McClellan Ranch Park, Cupertino

Fee: \$15 members of SCVAS or CNPS; \$20 non-members

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2008-2009 Graduate Scholarship Recipients

By Nora Monette, Scholarship Committee

In May the Chapter awarded three \$1,500 scholarships to graduate students doing research in plant systematics, plant

ecology, plant physiology, and other areas. The recipients of the 2008-2009 scholarships are:

Lisa Cutting Auchincloss, University of California, Davis. Lisa is studying Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) seedling survival in semi-arid riparian ecosystems. She is studying plant resource relationships and physiological responses of plants to resource limitations (water, nitrogen, and phosphorus). Interestingly, she is using economic theory-based analyses applied to plant function to improve the general understanding of plant response to multiple resource limitations. A goal is to improve river management and remedy deleterious impacts of water regime disruption on riparian vegetation. Water drawdown rates of dammed rivers and seedling survival will be specifically addressed. Lisa's major advisor is Professor Jim Richards.

Chris Mallek, University of California, Davis. Chris is working on environmental variables affecting California cypress (*Callitropsis macnabiana*), including response to fire regime. His multiple year research builds upon his work on the variation of *C. macnabiana* vegetation and fire regime across the range of the species. Surveys will use the CNPS Releve Protocol and population size and vegetation variability will be determined along with location, elevation, slope, aspect, cover and chemical and physical soil attributes. Qualitative estimates of minimum time required between fires and increased risk of local extirpation posed by short fire return intervals will also be assessed. Chris' major advisors are Professors Michael Barbour and Kevin Rice.

Amelia Byrd Ryan, San Francisco State University. Amelia's research examines the effects of salinity and nitrogen concentration on salt marsh plant growth. She is conducting her experimental work at China Camp State Park on the shores of San Francisco Bay in Marin County. Three distinct habitats are being studied: mixed species communities near marsh channels, pure pickleweed stands near marsh channels, and pure pickleweed stands in the salt marsh plain. Her field work and greenhouse experiments address questions regarding the factors controlling marsh plant abundance and community composition. Amelia's major advisor is Assistant Professor Katharyn Boyer.

Amelia and Chris provided members with an overview of their research prior to receiving their awards at the May General Meeting. The research scholarships recognize the research plans of these graduate students and the potential of their research to further the understanding of plant ecology, restoration, and plant systematics. We hope to hear more about their research in the future.

Congratulations Amelia, Chris, and Lisa!

David Fross Friday, October 17

Our Chapter and the San Carlos Library present a free talk and slide show by horticulturist and author David Fross:

California Classics:

Native Plants for Contemporary Gardens

7:30-9:30 p.m. - San Carlos Library Community Room,
610 Elm Street, San Carlos (650)591-0341

www.smcl.org/libraries/scl

Learn about traditional and unconventional native plant solutions to the often challenging environment found in California's urban and suburban gardens from an acknowledged expert. David Fross is the founder and president of Native Sons Wholesale Nursery and teaches horticulture at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He is the co-author of the classic books *Ceanothus* and *California Native Plants for the Garden*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kevin Bryant, Chapter President

The incredible beauty and unmatched biological diversity of California has been shaped by myriad forces over the millennia, and this active fire season provides us another reminder of a force powerful enough to radically change the lands we know in a hurry: *Homo sapiens*.

This land knows fire, and has known it well for at least the last 10,000 years. Fire is such a part of California that there are plants and animals here that appear only after a burn. Many plants depend on fire for successful reproduction, while others have evolved an ability to sprout anew from their rootstock. Science is still scratching the surface of understanding when it comes to explaining the mechanisms of this remarkable adaptability, but fire seasons like we've seen the last few years across the state add volumes to the knowledge base.

Two facts are difficult to escape: the human population in California has increased by 34,000,000 over the last 100 years, and wildfires will continue to occur here with or without our presence. As a forest dwelling human, I'm interested in how we are adapting to this reality. The several fires we've experienced in the Santa Cruz Mountains in 2008 have put us on alert, and some of my friends and neighbors are responding by denuding large portions of their land. This "brush" cutting is frequently executed without a plan or a thought for the indigenous

plants and the cascade of creatures that depend on them. A friend of mine regrettably lost everything when his property burned in the Summit Fire of May 2008, and he has now vowed to work and cultivate every bit of his seven acres of chaparral and knobcone pine woodland so that no natural vegetation exists to burn again. He plans to install a vineyard, as are several of his neighbors who own larger properties. I consider these to be reasonable people, but such over-reactions to this human-created disaster and the resultant fragmentation of habitat will result in continued species extirpations and extinctions.

Humans are capable of inventing new ways to live in areas prone to fire without destroying habitat. Structures can be created to greatly increase the odds of making it through a fire; planning decisions can be made to keep further development out of harms way in the first place; roadless areas can remain roadless (and weedless); and a balanced approach to fire-fuel management can allow humans and the tens of thousands of local neighbor species to coexist.

The animals have no political voice, and the plants at the base of the food chain have even less standing in our society. It's up to caring citizens to build networks and create a groundswell of desire to put before the political eye. CNPS is one such network, and the swell is still rising. What can you do to help us be sure that the wild places we love today will still be here in another 100 years?

CHAPTER SERVICE OUTINGS

Habitat Restoration at Edgewood Park

Join us as we restore sensitive habitats at Edgewood Park and enjoy late season wildflowers. Weeding sessions take place at the following times:

- **Friday mornings** throughout the year, starting at **9am**
- **Wednesday evenings** during daylight savings time starting at **5:30pm**

For details, including schedules and meeting places, see our Weed Warriors website at edgewood.thinkersrus.net, contact Paul Heiple at (650)854-7125 or pheiple@gmail.com, or email John Allen at jcakwa@earthlink.net.

CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS

We have no field trips to announce for this issue. However, to entice members to stay tuned, we present a report from a recent Chapter field trip.

Sonora Pass Trip Report (Aug 1-3, 2008)

By co-leader Carolyn Dorsch

Eighteen people, including trip leaders Stella Yang and Carolyn Dorsch, headed up to the Sierra the first weekend of August. We car-camped off Hwy 120 at 6,200 feet, near the Clark Fork of the Stanislaus River. The first day we stayed in the "lowlands" and explored along the Clark Fork meadow and the Column of the Giants.

Day two found us up near the top of Hwy 120, just west of Sonora Pass. We spent the day hiking up to St. Mary's Pass (10,100 feet). The walk was steadily uphill, but with wildflowers all along the way, low 70s temperature, and nice breezes, the 1,200 foot climb from the trailhead was quite manageable. Along the way, and at the top of the pass we found many high-elevation plants in bloom, including the following: Pursh's woolly-pod (*Astragalus purshii*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum ovalifolium*), Sierra claytonia (*Claytonia nevadensis*), and Arctic willow (*Salix arctica*). In fruit were two anemones: *Anemone occidentalis* and *A. drummondii*.

All together, it was about a three-mile round trip. A couple of our group took the challenge offered by the mountains, and continued their hike up to Stanislaus Peak (11,233 feet) before rejoining the group back at the trailhead in the late afternoon.

Day three, we drove down Herring Creek Road before heading home. While it can be stunning in June (elevation around 7,000 feet), we had to work harder to find the flowers. Following the water, we came across beautiful colonies of Alpine lily (*Lilium parvum*) near Herring Creek. The trip was capped off with a short visit along the Trail of the Gargoyles, where we could admire the amazing geologic formations.

Plans are already in motion for another trip up to the Sonora Pass area. Late June/early July is the best time to see the flowers at the 6-7,000 feet elevation, but there is plenty to see in early August, so long as you go to the higher elevations. Look for this trip's highlights at our next Member's Night meeting!

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR*
Saturday, October 4, 2008

Email: mattsson@surfpix.net
Phone: (408)255-3767

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(page # in parentheses)

Sep 5 Fri	Gardening with Natives (2)	Oct 16 Thu	Special Nursery Workday (2)
Sep 10 Wed	Caldwell Native Gardening Class (3)	Oct 17 Fri	Special Nursery Workday (2)
Sep 13 Sat	Biodiversity Gardening Class (3)	Oct 17 Fri	David Fross Presentation (4)
Sep 17 Wed	Native Gardening Class Session 2 (3)	Oct 18 Sat	Fall Native Plant Sale (1)
Sep 19 Fri	General Meeting (1)	Oct 20 Mon	Photo Group (3)
Sep 26 Fri	Keying with Natives (3)	Oct 24 Fri	Keying with Natives (3)
Oct 2 Thu	Gardening with Natives (2)	Oct 29 Wed	Last Wed. DST Edgewood Weeding (5)
Oct 4 Sat	Newsletter Submittal Deadline (5)	Wed Afts.	Nursery work sessions (2)
Oct 9 Thu	Board meeting	Wed pm, Fri am	Edgewood weeding (5)
Oct 15 Wed	Special Nursery Workday (2)	Via Email List	Native Hill work sessions (3)

The next Chapter Board meeting will be **Thursday, October 9 at 7pm**
at the PCC, 3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto
Chapter Board meetings are open to all Chapter members and their guests.

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working with its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding and to preserve the rich heritage of the native flora for future generations. Membership is open to all. Individual memberships are \$45.00 per year. If you have questions concerning a new membership, renewal of a current membership, or if you wish to report a change of address, please contact the Membership Chairperson, CNPS, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

The *Blazing Star* web address: www.cnps-scv.org
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