



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

July-August 2005

GENERAL MEETING AND PROGRAM

**Friday, July 22nd at 7:30pm
Los Altos Library Program Room
13 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos**

**Topic: ELEMENTS OF A WONDERFUL
WILDFLOWER SEASON:**

Looking Back on Spring 2005

Speakers: Various Members

Don't we wish that all wildflower years could be like this one! Thanks to an early and often rainy season, we have experienced one of the best wildflower seasons in many years. There was such incredible abundance that those of us with wildflower fever had to make some difficult choices: nobody can see it all, though some of us sure tried.

So as the spring bloom fades into memory with the rise of summer, it's a great time to gather to review and share what we've experienced. Many photos have been taken from one end of the state to the other, and now is the time to share your better slides and/or digital photos with the group.

Those wishing to contribute to the show, please contact Kevin Bryant at mtngreen17@verizon.net or at (408)353-8824 **before July 12th**.

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. If the library lot is full, proceed to the adjoining lot for Hillview Community Center.

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

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

April Wildflower Show Report

By Stephen Buckhout and Stella Yang, Wildflower Show co-chairs

Thanks to the efforts of more than 60 volunteers, the annual Spring Wildflower Show was held at Mission College on Saturday and Sunday, April 23 and 24. The number of plants displayed was 563, a new record. Of the plants shown, 480 were natives and 83 were non-natives. There were 39 plants shown that had never been displayed at the show in prior years; there was one new plant family. Attendance was 581, down significantly from prior years.

We are grateful to the Biology Department at Mission College for sponsoring this year's event and to Mission College for their continuing support and assistance. Thanks also go to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District and the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department for granting us permission to collect a limited number of plant specimens from their properties.

New this year was a series of hour-long classes organized by Arvind Kumar on plant family identification, native plant gardening for butterflies, and landscaping with native plants. Special thanks go to Judy Mason, Stephanie Morris, and John Steiner for teaching these informative and well-received sessions and to Don Mason for providing essential technical support.

We enjoyed special collections of grasses provided by Sally Casey, pine cones provided by John Rawlings, and succulents provided by Paul Heiple. Thanks to Chapter publicity chairman Arvind Kumar, we had our first ever TV publicity that brought several people to the show.

We are particularly grateful to Jean Replicon in the Biology Department at Mission College for acting as the go-between for our Chapter and the College. Thank yous go to Arvind Kumar for his year-round efforts in promoting the

Show; Vicki Silvas-Young for her work feeding all of the volunteers throughout the weekend; David Struthers for coordinating the greeters; Ingrid Graeve for coordinating book and poster sales and recruiting people to help; Janet Gomez for designing and putting out new, more visible signs around campus directing people to the Show; Jean Struthers for designing the Show poster; Kevin Bryant for finding leaders for each of the native garden tours; David Chapman for taking on a number of additional responsibilities; and Bill Prince for designing and making a stand for the sound system speakers. We are very appreciative of all the plant collectors and their assistants, without whom there would be no show.

The Show would not have happened without the individual efforts of everyone involved. Thank you to all who helped out but are not listed above. Several of this year's volunteers were new to the Chapter and/or to the Show. We hope everyone will return to help next year.

Native Plant Nursery

Thanks to all the volunteers that helped make our Spring Plant Sale a record setting event. The May 14th sale was the best single day fundraiser in Chapter history! Our **fall sale will be held on Oct. 15th** at Hidden Villa, and we look forward to another successful event.

Healthy, vibrant plants are a key element of a successful sale, and we need more volunteers to make this a reality. You can help by coming to one of our nursery work sessions at Hidden Villa, which take place every **Wednesday from 12noon to 3pm**. Bring garden gloves, sunhat, clippers, and your lunch if you like. Other tools will be provided at the nursery. Knowledge of plants is not necessary: your willingness to help is all that's required.

Through early August, call Jean or Ray before you come to the nursery because the gate at Hidden Villa may be locked for summer camp.

For more information, contact Jean Struthers at (650)941-2586 or JeanStruthers@aol.com, or Ray Deutsch at (650)365-6136 or henrymarsh@yahoo.com.

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. Proceed over the bridge, and park in the visitor center parking lot to your right. The Native Plant Nursery is at the greenhouse just beyond the visitor center.

Gardening with Natives

After many years of nurturing the Gardening with Natives group, Stephanie Morris is moving on to other projects. During her tenure, the group has grown steadily through monthly meetings, garden visits, and special events.

The GWN group now has 280+ members. Stephanie's knowledge, energy, and volunteer spirit were infectious. Among her recent accomplishments is coordinating the native planting project at the PCC in Palo Alto, designed and installed by a team of GWN members. She will be missed, and we wish her the best for her next project.

GWN activities will henceforth be coordinated by a steering committee consisting of Sherri Osaka, Agi Kehoe, Chris Todd, and Arvind Kumar. If you have suggestions for future meetings, please email gardeningwithnatives@yahoo.com or call Arvind at (408)274-6965.

The GWN group meets monthly and includes a mix of seasoned native plant enthusiasts as well as beginners. Newcomers are always welcome. Our next meetings will be **Thursdays, July 7 and August 4**.

On **July 7, from 6:30-8:30pm**, we will visit the Cantor Museum Native Garden at Stanford with trip leader Ingrid Graeve. This garden was planted in November 2002 by Meg Webster, and many plants are now fully established. The garden contains a large number of species in a comparatively small space, especially shrubs and grasses, and offers a good opportunity to see mature specimens in a landscaped setting.

For more details and the plant list you may visit grounds.stanford.edu/points/calnativegarden.htm.

Directions: Take 101 to Palo Alto. Take the University Ave South exit, and go south until it becomes Palm Drive. Turn right on Museum Way, then left on Lomita Drive. Park near the intersection of Lomita Dr. and Roth Way. Walk past Roth Way, and the native garden will be to your right.

On **August 4, from 6-8pm**, we will visit the garden of native landscape designer Agi Kehoe. This is a good opportunity to see a native meadow with yarrow, hummingbird fuchsia, foothill sedge and deergrass in summer. The backyard contains a wide variety of native plants designed for aesthetic value as well as wildlife habitat. This charming garden demonstrates how native plants and horticulture can be combined successfully.

Directions: The garden is located at 224 Hazelton Avenue in Sunnyvale. From 101, take Fair Oaks Avenue South exit, turn right on Maude, left on Sunnyvale (at the light), left on Hazelton.

Native Hill News

The plants at native hill have been spectacular this year. The extended rain has produced luxuriant growth and wonderful flowers. The wooly blue curls, matilija poppies, St. Catherine's lace, pink buckeye, Edgewood malacothamnus, and many California poppies and clarkias are all still very colorful and attractive. If you have time to drop by it is well worth a visit.

If you are inspired to help, call or write Phil Higgins at (650)941-4752 or phidor@juno.com for the next workday.

Photography Group

The Chapter Photo Group meets on the 3rd Monday of each month (next meetings will be **July 18** and **August 15**), in the Kestrel Room of the PCC from **7-9pm**.

As always you are welcome to bring digital images (either on CD or your laptop), slides, or prints. If you would like to be added to the email or phone lists, contact Jerry Welch at (408)353-8352 or jdwelch@yahoo.com.

Directions: The PCC (Peninsula Conservation Center) is located at 3921 E. Bayshore Road. From Highway 101 north, take the "San Antonio North" exit, get immediately into the left-hand turn lane, and turn onto East Bayshore. This will curve around to the left, then right. The first street on your right is Corporation Way. Turn right. Then turn into the first driveway on your left, which is the PCC parking lot.

Keying with Natives

Join us on the last **Friday** of every month, from **6:30pm - 8:30pm**, to learn about keying out local plants. We meet at the PCC building in Palo Alto. The next meetings will be **June 24, July 29, and August 26**.

Please bring a locally collected plant with flower or fruit if available, and an interest in learning how to key out or identify local plants. Microscopes, lamps and keying books are supplied but you may bring your own. Contact David "Tex" Houston for more details, (650)962-9876 x347 or tex@acterra.org.

Habitat Restoration at Edgewood Park

A new development at Edgewood should catch your eye if you look to the south from the central ridge. Ten acres of

grassland on the main serpentine block have been treated to reduce nonnative grasses and thatch buildup. The reason for this work is the anticipated release of the Bay Area checker spot butterfly. This butterfly went extinct at Edgewood less than ten years ago due to the increase in the weedy grasses. It is hoped that the removal of these grasses and their continued control will allow the butterfly which helped to save Edgewood to return and thrive there once again.

Another butterfly, that you may have noticed migrating through the area a month or so ago, has started to eat Italian thistle and yellow star-thistle. The butterfly is the painted lady. Its black spiny caterpillars tented by webbing have been found on these thistles throughout the area. The plants are still not the favorite food of these butterflies, but it is a start that could lead to a group that finds these thistles the best thing to eat.

Join us as we strive to help the butterflies protect sensitive habitats at Edgewood. We meet on Wednesdays and Fridays. Bring gloves, sunscreen and liquids. We have one special **Saturday** work session left, which will take place on **July 16 from 9am until noon**. We will meet at the West Kiosk and we hope to see several species in the genus *Piperia*, the Rein Orchids.

Wednesday evening sessions begin at **5:30pm**. For more information, including locations, call Ken Himes at (650)591-8560, or visit the weed warriors website, edgewood.thinkersrus.net.

Friday sessions start at **8:30am**. For information on these sessions contact John Allen at jcakwa@earthlink.net.

Website References

Here are the websites cited by Toni Corelli at our May program. Photographs of the entire California coast: www.californiacoastline.org

Species database for our region: www.nrdp.org

Those who were at our January Members' Night will also recall Kevin Bryant's wonderful photographs of plants he took while visiting Chicago. You may be interested this website for a look at restoration and preservation efforts in another state: www.chicagowilderness.org

In Memoriam

The Chapter regrets to announce the deaths of three former Chapter members: Robert Will (former State and Chapter president), Jean Sorenson (Chapter historian) and Polly Paulus (Chapter volunteer).

GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

By Nora Monette, Chapter Education Chair

The Chapter has awarded three \$1,500 scholarships to graduate students doing research related to plant systematics, plant ecology, plant physiology, and other related botanical studies of plants that grow in habitats in Central and Northern California.

The recipients of the 2005-2006 scholarships are:

Janell Hillman, San Francisco State University. Janell is studying the constraints on recruitment (successful reproduction) in populations of Mt. Hamilton thistle (*Cirsium fontinale* var. *camplyon*). Mt. Hamilton thistle is a serpentine endemic and considered rare in distribution (CNPS List 1B and Federal Species of Concern). It is locally abundant in serpentine seeps and perennial streams in Santa Clara County, primarily in the foothills of the Mt. Hamilton Range. Her work will examine seed production, dispersal, seed predation and germination. Janell will also address potential environmental limiting factors such as hydrological regimes, aeration and soil type.

Megan Keever, San Francisco State University. Megan is working on pollination in vernal pool communities. Her work will consider the effect of landscape context, or the surrounding landscape matrix, on vernal pool plant reproductive success. The surrounding matrix can effect hydrology, plant community composition and provide nesting habitat for vernal pool pollinators, among other ecosystem functions. Megan will measure seed set and seed quality (weight) in four species of vernal pool plants with three pollination treatments. She will also measure pollinator visitation to vernal pool plants. Her work will include both field and greenhouse studies. Field work will include vernal pools in Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Alameda and Santa Clara Counties.

Debra Welch, San Jose State University. Debra is working locally on serpentine grasslands and on the effects of prescribed burning on *Linanthus ambiguus* (serpentine linanthus). The purpose of her study will be to determine if burning will affect the abundance of *Linanthus ambiguus* either positively or negatively within its current habitat and if burning will expand habitat for *Linanthus ambiguus* into adjacent areas that are invaded with non-native annual grass, *Bromus hordeaceus* (soft chess). Her work on Santa Clara County Open Space Authority property will also look at species richness and soil conditions.

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 upcoming newsletter articles and at General Meetings.

Congratulations Janell, Megan and Debra.

COMMITTEE NEWS AND REPORTS

Update on Baylands Phragmites Infestation

By Libby Lucas, Chapter Conservation (South) Chair

The City of Palo Alto Parks Department has been granted \$51,000 for their phragmites removal project in the Palo Alto Flood Basin for the end of summer.

Regulatory folks seem now to be more aware of this common reed that has morphed into a major invasive on the East Coast. In our Flood Basin, its biomass is so extensive that even this initial spraying may not begin to control it in this first year.

The spray application will have to be handled with particular constraints because of possible presence of the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse, and high recreational use of trails around the flood basin. Spray drift would be a concern for workers as well as any nearby hikers or birdwatchers.

Spring 2005 Field Trip Retrospective

By Kevin Bryant, Chapter Field Trip Chair

Our Chapter's spring field trips this year have allowed attendees to immerse themselves in the stunning beauty and diversity of the California flora. Two of our excursions showcased that incredible ecological diversity and took us to the farthest ends of our state.

In mid-March, many of us took a break from our rainy season and made the long trek to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. This area of the Sonoran desert had experienced several years of below average rainfall, but had received enough by the time of our visit to bring the flora of the desert to life in brilliant abundance.

The pent up demand after many years of drought caused annuals such as desert sunflower, wild heliotrope, and desert sand verbena to bloom in carpets covering large expanses of the desert floor, with drifts of flowers growing

taller next to and under shrubs. Our campground was very floriferous as well, with our tents situated in the spaces between shrubs in fabulous flower. Several cactus species and ocotillo were also in bloom well ahead of schedule.

Our mid-May trip to the Smith River area in the far northwest corner of our state offered an opportunity to experience a very different side of the same coin. We couldn't have picked a better week to experience the "rain" in rainforest. It rained each day we were there, heavily at times (4" fell in the area while we were there), yet everyone who attended had a splendid time.

Camping in the rain was a challenge at times, but we spent several evenings cooking meals under a large tarp that one member wisely brought along.

We visited a wide variety of ecosystems, from (very windy) flower-covered coastal bluffs to incredibly rich redwood forests, strange ultramafic woodlands to lush montane coniferous forests. We found many floristic treasures including orchids, fawn-lilies, trilliums, and rhododendrons. We found at least seventeen different conifer species, including the uncommonly seen weeping spruce.

On the final day of the trip, the clouds parted long enough for us to catch a wonderful view from 3,500 ft, of the higher snow-covered Siskiyou peaks, the Oregon rain shadow, and the Pacific Ocean in one large panorama.

I'd like to thank our trip attendees for the comradery we've shared. I'd also like to invite those who have not yet attended a field trip to join us as we meet the amazing flora of California through first-hand experience.

CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS

Chapter field trips are free and open to the public. They are oriented to conservation, protection and enjoyment of California native plants and wildlife, and we adhere to all rules and guidelines for the lands on which we are visiting.

In our region it is very important to be prepared for hiking on rugged & steep terrain, wide temperature ranges and rapidly changing conditions at any time of year. All participants should wear sturdy footwear and carry sufficient water, sun protection, food, layers, personal first aid and other supplies you may need. If you have any questions about your ability to participate in a particular field trip, please contact the trip leader in advance.

July 23 Sat 9am Sierra Azul: Woods Rd/Barlow Rd Loop

Join Kevin Bryant as we stretch our legs and take a moderately strenuous hike on the east slope of the Santa Cruz Mountains High Country, at the base of Mt. Umunhum. We expect to find the uncommonly seen golden ear drops in bloom, and with this year's late and abundant rainy season, we're hoping to find a few surprises as well. There will be excellent views, and we'll hike through and view several plant communities.

This will be a 7 mile hike, with approx. 1,000 ft elevation gain/loss and some steep sections. Bring sunscreen, plenty of water, and lunch/snacks. We expect to return to our vehicles at approx. **4pm**. Meet at Jacques Ridge parking lot/Woods Road trailhead at **9am**.

Directions: The Jacques Ridge parking area is located near the intersection of Hicks Road and Mt. Umunhum Road. Exit Highway 85 at Camden Avenue. Head south, turn right on Hicks Road, the right on Mt. Umunhum Road. The preserve parking lot will be on the right. Woods Trail trailhead is adjacent to the parking area.

Aug 20 Sat 10am Summer Blooms of Sierra Azul

We will visit the ocean-facing side of the southern Santa Cruz Mountains high country (3,000 ft +) to see showy species like *Ericameria arborescens* (Golden Fleece) and *Keckiella corymbosa* (Redwood Penstemon) in bloom. The area we'll be visiting offers spectacular views of Monterey Bay and vicinity (or lots of marine layer clouds), and a different look at the Santa Cruz Mountains from one of the higher peaks.

We will meet at Kevin Bryant's place off of Summit Rd. at **10am**, and caravan from there (to a location that is about a 25 minute drive from Summit Rd. & Hwy. 17). Hiking will not be rigorous, probably less than 2 miles, but be sure to bring adequate water, sunscreen and a snack or lunch. We may be able to add a side trip. The planned part of the trip is expected to last **2 to 3 hours**. Please contact Kevin Bryant at mtngreen17@verizon.net or (408)353-8824 for directions to our starting location.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR*

Saturday, August 6, 2005

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