



Insignis

Newsletter of the Alta Peak Chapter, celebrating and supporting the native plant communities in Tulare County, serving the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Mountains and Foothills.

Volume 18, Number 4

September 2008

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order form to return
by September 20!



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NATIVE PLANT SALE

October 4 Saturday: 9 am to 12 noon
Three Rivers Art Center
41763 North Fork Drive, Three Rivers

**The enclosed pre-order form must be received by September 20 for CNPS members to receive a 10% discount. Use a separate envelope with a deposit check made out to "CNPS", mail to Janet Fanning, 41118 Blossom Drive, Three Rivers, CA 93271.*

Locally grown shrubs and trees, perennials, wild grasses, and bulbs will be offered for our annual native plant sale. Come early if you have not pre-ordered. CNPS members will be available with suggestions about how and where to plant, mulching, and answers for special gardening questions. Books and posters will be available for your purchase. All pre-orders must be picked up by 12 noon. Plants are provided by Intermountain Nursery in Prather, Quercus Nursery, and California Native Nursery in Porterville.

Call 561-3461 for information or to volunteer.

CNPS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED !!

*Please help with plant sale
on both October 3 and 4.*

Volunteers are very important both days of our plant sale. At 10 am on Friday we receive the plants. We then pull all the pre-orders and price the sale plants. There will be no early bird sales on Friday, but volunteers can pick up their pre-ordered plants. The sale plants need to be watered and the remaining orders rechecked.

On Saturday, the books and posters arrive and the doors are opened at 9 am. At this point we need volunteers to help customers take their plants to their cars. We also need knowledgeable people to answer questions about native plants, how and when to plant and maintain their plants. After the sale any unsold plants are picked up and returned to the sellers. We greatly appreciate your help and look forward to seeing you at our always successful annual plant sale.

FALL PROGRAM

October 18 Saturday 7 pm
Three Rivers Art Center

*Balancing Fire Hazard Reduction
and Resource Protection in
California Shrublands and Forests*

Along an elevational gradient of increasing moisture, from the semi-arid foothills to the montane environment, we see changes in vegetation structure that generate very different fire regimes. Human impact through managed suppression of fires as well as increased unplanned ignitions have had opposite impacts on fire regimes between the low elevation and high elevation ecosystems. These differences result in profoundly different management dilemmas. Recently we have experienced an increase in huge "megafires" throughout the state, and the causes are tied to both patterns of past fire management practices as well as climate patterns.

*Presented by Jon E. Keeley, Research Scientist,
USGS Western Ecological Research Center,
Sequoia National Park*

Conservation Report

by Joan Stewart

The major CNPS conservation issues continue to be the proposed development in Yokohl Valley, assessing the Tulare County General Plan update versions, and the ongoing work by US Forest Service to draft a management plan for the Sequoia National Monument.

Management Plan for Sequoia National Monument....

This is currently in the scoping phase with a collaborative process being utilized. This encourages active participation by representatives of groups with particular interests in the way the land is managed. Recreation is the focus of this part of the effort. CNPS is one of the groups, with our "interest" being the long-term condition of natural plant diversity. A two-day session in the Hume Lake District of SNF in August was the most recent meeting, with the next one planned for October. If you are interested in attending as an "alternate" representing CNPS, call Joan, who wears the conservation hat for our Chapter.

Yokohl Valley....

We continue to wait the distribution of the Draft EIR document that will offer specific, detailed information about what is being planned for this "new city" development, and what the consequences will be for the environment. Alta Peak Chapter is prepared to pay for an outside botanical professional consultant to work with local members to help review information if it involves drawing on data-base resources that we are not experienced in using. Your Chapter Board believes this is a good use of our funds.

Tulare County General Plan....

But the language of the not-yet-available updated General Plan will affect what happens with the Yokohl Valley development question. Will it direct new development (housing, other) to existing urban centers, or open the door for "new cities" and "new towns." To the extent that these are allowed and/or supported, the Yokohl Valley new town project may proceed. So we wait to see what the County comes up with. This single, fundamental question will determine the future for how and where water is used, zones for commercial projects are placed, what prime agricultural land means to our area, what we want the foothill areas to be like in coming years. What kind of housing (how expensive?) does the region really need or want for residents, present and future? What do we want our tax money to pay for?

State Level Conservation News

Much is currently being written and publicized about the upcoming State Conservation Conference which is planned for January 17-19 2009, in Sacramento. It is designed to identify and talk about *Strategies and Solutions* making clear that this is visioned as a positive, productive series of sessions, focussing on successful steps toward the CNPS Mission. It is intended to reach amateur and professional botanists, conservationists, university students, public policy makers, local and regional planners, land managers from throughout California (and beyond?) The sessions include scientific papers, reports on related topics from around the State, poster displays, and an opportunity for Chapters to describe and illustrate their plant related conservation work. Student scholarships are available. If you are interested in attending, maybe we can get together to travel for a car pool?

For information call the State Office (916 447-2677)

or email at sflowerdew@cnps.org.

Website: www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2009

for the 2009 Conservation Conference.....along with one of the objectives on the conference to "foment a greater understanding and appreciation of California's unique flora", two creative contests are announced!

Photography Contest

Photos must be taken in California and feature plants native to the state. Images may be species specific macro shots, wide angle landscape photos or pictures of people or animals interacting with the natural environment of California.

Botanical Art Contest

Artists are invited to enter original artwork in any two-dimensional medium that reflects the beauty and uniqueness of California flora and adheres to high standards of botanical accuracy.

Deadline for entry to both contests is November 15, 2008.

Monetary prizes will be awarded with 1st prize including publication in *Fremontia*. Entry fees are \$20 per entry or \$10 per entry for conference attendees.

For full details and entry forms look at website:

<http://cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2009>
or call 916.447.2677.

(from *A Primer of Ecological Principles* by Richard J. Vogl, Pyro Unlimited, Cypress CA: 1975)

Energy Principles 1. THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ALL ENERGY IS THE SUN. The earth is a closed thermodynamic system operated by solar energy. 2. SUNLIGHT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL LIFE. Sunlight is the energy source of the life-sustaining carbon dioxide and oxygen cycles of plants and animals, including man. It regulates the reproduction, migration, and behavior in birds, the breeding behavior of mammals, the behavior and life cycles in cold-blooded vertebrates and invertebrates, and the growth and reproduction in plants. It also affects man's psychological moods, hormonal balance, and body chemistry. 3. PLANT LIFE IS THE RECEPTOR AND CONVERTOR OF SUNLIGHT, AND THEREFORE, THE BASIS OF ALL LIFE.

Summer Field Trips Report

by Joan Stewart

The previous *Insignis* printed a schedule for Summer Field Trips on the front page, and we were excited about the prospect of exploring a series of high elevation mountain meadows, both in Sequoia National Park and in Sequoia National Monument as a follow up to the winter program about these "wet places." For our June hike the access road, North Road, was closed so we diverted to Quaking Aspen Meadow, and found a large number of flowering plants, mostly small, mostly in very early stages. And some expected species just weren't out at all. Nevertheless, although not exactly as planned, it was a lovely morning.

We "heard" in early July that Crawford Road was "closed" off Western Divide Highway, meaning that if we indeed intended to get into Nobe Young Meadow as hoped we would have about 1.5 miles to walk. This tentative report discouraged some from planning for the scheduled date. The hikes this year had been announced as easy to get to, a chance for those not interested in difficult or strenuous walking to enjoy our native plant communities. But when I checked with the local Ranger Station, I learned that although Crawford was closed west of Windy Gap, it was definitely open as far as we needed it to be. Nobe Young was everything we had hoped....two orchids, shooting stars still in bloom, and blankets of yellow sneeze weed (*Helenium*), and nearly 20 others that we listed and saw. We are truly sorry that the date conflicted with plans of so many of those who called for information, and there was the uncertainty about access. It was a trip you would have remembered.

Then in July, closer to those living north of Springville and Porterville areas, the Mountain Meadows of Sequoia National Park, led by Sylvia and Athena, was a very different experience. Most of the time was in and around Halstead Meadow where Athena is supervising a huge project. Quoting from a report she provided, this site, "once a 25 acre

wetland with water flowing across its entire surface, ...developed an incised channel and 15 ft deep erosion gully--probably from heavy livestock grazing early in the Park's history....as part of highway construction in 1934 water was channeled under the pavement, further eroding meadow soils." This was what Athena had to work with!! What has been done is amazing....gullies gone, water spreading in natural flows, and hundreds of three species (a *Scirpus*, a grass, and an umbel, all dominant naturally in the upper undisturbed portion) have been planted and are thriving.

A second stop was Crescent Meadow, with parking, picnic, trailheads all nearby, perhaps the most "popular" meadow site for Park visitors. This is within a Sequoia grove, and ringed by giant trees, adding to its "tourist attraction" value. Yet the vegetation itself remains essentially undamaged, and we found many grasses and flowers as we entered along fallen logs. From here we walked a short mile (?) up to Huckleberry Meadow, a wonderful last stop for the day. Completely different.... insectivorous *Drosera*, two orchids (same two as we had seen earlier at Nobe Young) carpets of brilliant *Camassia*, gentians, and scattered specimens of some very unusual species. Sylvia had prepared a species list for the day's explorations, and several taxa were added, based on what we found there. A long, lovely day, and thank you to both Sylvia and Athena.

Winter Program

Advance notice for our winter program on February 7, 2009, a Saturday evening, brings Steve Ingram to Springville, coming from "across the mountain", the Bristlecone Chapter, with a presentation that traditionally is planned to bring color and brightness to the season. En-route to San Francisco, he will share pictures and anecdotes about California's cacti, agaves, and yuccas and has agreed to put Tulare County on his route. So be sure to mark your calendar.... as always, open to all with free admission!

A Local Jewel

by Joan Stewart

Every year, rain-or-shine, I am in awe of the way our "Tulare" Blue Curls (*Tricostema lanceolatum*) manages to germinate, grow, and flower in the middle of driveways, along scraped roadsides, to thrive in the hottest driest part of the year. A common name, one that needs to be replaced, is vinegar weed, because of the pungent (but not "bad"?) scent. Flowers are delicate, lavender blue, with long stamens surrounding the pistil extending out from the petals, curled over and upwards. If this species occurred in a tropical jungle, as an epiphyte (as orchids do), and was used as the cover illustration for a plant brochure, people would ooh and aah over it, but here, "no respect". So, look around, find some, and recognize how something lovely can exist unappreciated!. A different, but very similar species, in southern California is sold at Chapter plant sales, available in limited quantities, expensive, and is a sought after plant for home gardens.



photo by E. Cort

Crescent Meadow path...summer 2008

Planning Your Native Plant Garden

By Steven L. Hartman,
member of Los Angeles/Santa Monica
Mountain Chapter of CNPS

If you have contemplated growing your own native garden, the summer is the time to start your planning. Our southern California natives have a growing season that starts with the first rains in fall. Therefore, the ideal planting time is after the first rain, when the soil is moist. If you are lucky, and rain falls every two weeks or so throughout the late fall and winter, you won't have to water at all. However, in many years we do not have consistent rain throughout the late fall and winter (December and January can be particularly dry), so you will want to water your newly planted natives once or twice a week to keep them happy. Below are some suggestions for a successful native garden.

First, find an area of your yard where you can control the irrigation.

If it is a hot, sunny spot, you will want to plant natives that are drought tolerant, and typically, such plants prefer little summer water. A little summer water (once a month) won't hurt most species, and might convince plants such as sages not to drop their leaves.

Second, start with an area that is not too big.

The 1-gallon shrubs that CNPS offers at the plant sale need to be spaced at least 3-4 feet apart (that is at least 6-8 feet between plants), and will not begin to fill their spaces for about a year. Rather than having lots of empty space with apparently very small plants covering your entire yard, a good strategy is to plant one small section at a time. To mask the sparse spacing of newly planted one-gallon natives, spread native seeds of poppies and lupine. These annuals will provide quite a lovely fill of orange and purple while the shrubs take their time to grow and spread. Also, well placed rocks look nice in a native garden.

Third, there is no way to know whether a particular species will grow well at any particular site.

So I recommend that you buy one each of a selection of natives, plant them out, and see which ones thrive. The ones that do well, next year buy more of the same or others in the same family or genus. The ones that die, add them to the list of plants not to buy for your yard. Remember, the goal here is to find natives that will grow in your garden with little or no care.

Fourth, do not fertilize, and, if you can get away with it, don't add supplemental water after the first year.

My philosophy for my front yard is that I want plants that will grow without ANY fertilizer or extra water. After all, I am trying to replace my water-guzzling lawn with a native xeriscape. Obviously some plants will do better with additional water, but if your goal is to not have to water, there are natives that will grow without any supplemental water. If you are living in or near the Santa Monica Mountains, many of the plants that you see growing along the trails will grow in your home garden as well.

Fifth, don't expect to get by without any maintenance.

Many shrubs need to be pruned back annually or dead-headed (removing the dead flowers). Also, even though I warned you, you will plant the natives too close together, so you might end up moving plants (which can be done with some success in the winter or early spring). Other plants, despite their beauty, have a tendency to take over your yard (Matilija poppies, mallows, and buckwheat) and need to be pruned back.

So give it a try. Growing natives can be very rewarding, and no amount of hiking in the wilds gives you the same intimate knowledge of a native species that you can get by watching one growing in your garden, day after day, season to season, from bud, to flower, to seed.

(from the LA/SM Mtn chapter website at:
www.lasmmcnps.org/journativegarden.html)



other chapter plant sales.....

September 20, 2008

Sacramento Valley Chapter
Shepard Garden & Arts Center
McKinley Park
3330 McKinley Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95816
916.961.4057
mmaret@sbcglobal.net

September 27, 2008

Sequoia Chapter
Clovis Botanical Garden
559.226.0145

October 11, 2008

Sierra Foothills Chapter
West America Bank parking lot
14729 E. Mono Way
3330 McKinley Blvd.
East Sonora, CA
209.928.4886

October 11-12, 2008

**Los Angeles/Santa Monica
Mountain Chapter**
Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia Blvd.
Encino, CA
818.881.3706

October 18-19, 2008

East Bay Chapter
Native Here Nursery
101 Golf Course Drive
Tilden Park
Berkeley, CA
510.549.0211
nativehere@ebcnps.org

October 18, 2008

San Diego Chapter
Balboa Park
Casa de Prado Courtyard
San Diego, CA
plantsale@cnpsd.org

from Michael Pollan's
introduction to his book,
Second Nature--a Gardener's Education,
Grove Press 1991

.....traditionally, when we have wanted to think about our relationship to nature, we have gone to the wilderness, to places untouched by man. Thoreau, in fact, was the last important American writer on nature to have anything to say about gardening. He planted a bean field in Walden and devoted a chapter to his experiences in it. But the bean field (which I talk about in my chapter on weeds) got Thoreau into all kinds of trouble. His romance of wild nature left him feeling guilty about discriminating against weeds (he rails against the need for such "invidious distinctions") and he couldn't see why he was any more entitled to the harvest of his garden than the resident woodchucks and birds. Badly tangled up in contradictions between his needs and nature's prerogatives, Thoreau had to forsake the bean field, eventually declaring that he would prefer the most dismal swamp to any garden. With that declaration, the garden was essentially banished from American writing on nature.

I think this is unfortunate, and not just because I happen to stand in need of sound advice in the garden. Americans have a deeply ingrained habit of seeing nature and culture as irreconcilably opposed; we automatically assume that whenever one gains, the other must lose. Forced to choose, we usually opt for nature (at least in our books). This choice, which I believe is a false one, is what led Thoreau and his descendants out of the garden. To be sure, there is much to be learned in the wilderness; our unsurpassed tradition of nature writing is sufficient proof of that. But my experience into the garden leads me to believe that there are many important things about our relationship to nature that cannot be learned in the wild. For one thing, we need, and now more than ever, to learn how to use nature without damaging it.....

CalPhotos

photo database developed by the UC Berkeley Digital Library Project.

<http://calphotos.berkeley.edu//flora/>

CalPhotos has been on the web since 1995 and was one of the first online image databases specializing in natural history subjects. The database currently contains 184,557 digital images of plants, animals, and other natural history subjects, along with descriptive information including scientific and common names, location and dates of photos, and other information provided by the person or organization that contributed the photos. Around 2,000 new photos are added each month by a variety of organizations and individuals that have registered with CalPhotos. CalPhotos receives more than 120,000 specific queries per day, and serves more than 1 million images per day, as of early 2008. The taxonomic and geographic information that accompanies the photos, along with the annotation system, which allows experts to review identifications for the photos, result in a uniquely useful database for scientists, students, and other people interested in natural history. In addition to numerous ways to search the photos, common and scientific name browse lists and photo thumbnail browse lists add functionality for people searching for specific photos or taxa via web search engines, and make browsing easy and user-friendly.

CalPhotos images are used by a huge variety of organizations and people around the world, including students K-12, college faculty, students and researchers, environmental organizations, parks, museums and zoos, publishers, and members of the public interested in nature. CalPhotos also supports the use of dynamic queries to bring photos into other dynamically-generated web pages.

Jepson Online Interchange for California Floristics

*website for up-to-date flora information from
The Jepson Manual and Jepson Herbarium*

<http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/interchange.html>

The need for authoritative, up-to-date information about our flora is growing as decisions about the future of California's natural areas are being made at an ever increasing rate. At the same time, the rapid pace of new discoveries about the California flora demonstrates the need for an equally fast paced means of conveying the most current state of floristic knowledge to professional botanists and the general public. In the interests of plant conservation and public education, we at the Jepson Herbarium are committed to continual, rapid scientific evaluation and dissemination of the large amount of new data being generated on California vascular plant diversity.

Toward that end, the Editors of the Jepson Flora Project have initiated development of this interchange for advances in California floristics, that will provide the latest information on identification, taxonomy, distribution, ecology, relationships, and diversity of California vascular plants. The necessary scientific data to understand the basis for new plant names and explicit corrections and updates to The Jepson Manual will also be made available. The professional resources of the Jepson Herbarium will assure high quality, with editorial review of all scientific content.



**"An optimist sees a light that is not there.
A pessimist comes along and blows it out."**

"What you see depends mainly on what you look for."

(from A Primer of Ecological Principles)

Other Environmental News

Three Rivers Environmental Weekend

October 4-5, 2008

Presented by the TREW CREW, a small group of concerned citizens, most, but not all of them, from Three Rivers. The Crew evolved from a study group on global warming and decided to do something about the environment. They organize an annual event in Three Rivers, with the primary focus to raise consciousness about what ordinary people can do to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

October 4 Saturday 9am to 5 pm Three Rivers Art Center

See solar cooking demonstrations, get information on green options for your home and view a photo display of Yokohl Valley. You will learn of many ways to make your home and your life more environmentally friendly. Some National Park Service employees will be giving presentations and videos about air quality, water, and other important issues. There will be a presentation on the Boswell Corporation's plans to develop neighboring Yokohl Valley into a city of 30 - 40 thousand people. Free admission .

October 5 Sunday 12 pm and 1 pm Tour Green Buildings and Homes in Visalia and Elderwood

Join others who are concerned about our environment and want to know more about how the green movement can be incorporated into our buildings. Two tours will be held, one leaving Three Rivers at 12 noon and another at 1 pm. Attendees from Visalia will meet at the first stop for each tour. You will visit the new police station in Visalia using straw bale construction, and three homes in the Quaker Oaks area. Those include rammed earth, double adobe brick, straw bale, radiant slab floors, photo voltaic, and more. The home in Elderwood is passive solar with an insulating earth berm on the north wall.

Cost is \$15.00 per person or \$25.00 per couple, and reservations are required, since space is limited. For reservations for 12 pm (group #1) call 561-4676, and for 1 pm (group #2) call 561-4149.

Proceeds from the two events will benefit Solar Cookers for Darfur and Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth, under the umbrella of Sierra Nevada Alliance, and earmarked for the effort to save Yokohl Valley.

Earth Houses: Troglodytes and Moon Dust

by Mona Fox Selph, founding member of the TREW CREW

On many of these burning days of summer, one thinks about J.R.R. Tolkien's cool, dark Hobbit holes, comfortable homes built by those lovable fur footed creatures into the hillsides of the village of Hobbiton. It is on these baking days one ponders why we are all not in actuality doing this, using the earth's thermal mass to moderate temperatures. Animals as varied as rabbits, foxes, swallows, and wasps have used earth to create their homes, as have human beings across the world since time immemorial. Why then, have we in the modern world largely abandoned this material that is right under our feet for highly manufactured industrial products? Perhaps it was the search for new and faster methods of construction, or the challenge of working in new ways with new materials. Whatever it was, many builders in our area and the world over are now reexamining the possibilities of earth buildings, looking backward to find the way forward.

Around 10,000 years ago, some of humankind began to abandon the nomadic lifestyle for that of farming and animal husbandry. Catal Huyuk was an early community of about 9,000 years ago in what is now Turkey. It occupied at least 30 acres, and consisted of mud brick houses and sanctuaries all crowded together in beehive fashion. There were no streets or divided areas, and people used the roof tops as pathways to enter the buildings through the roof holes. With no hillsides to dig into on this flat plane, the inhabitants created their own thermal mass, moderating the temperature between the hottest days and the coolest nights.

Wattle and daub, --- earth, straw, and stick construction --- has served humankind the world over for many thousands of years, and still does to this day in areas where there is little else with which to make shelters. There are numerous versions of these homes, from simple hand formed cob houses found throughout the world, to plastered adobe, to half timbered houses with interstices of wattle and daub, to rammed earth structures. A version of rammed earth called pise' de terre was introduced to the Rhone Valley by Phoenician traders of the Mediterranean 2,000 years ago. This type of construction still dominates this region of France. A modern variation of rammed earth allowing faster building uses high pressure air to shoot moistened soil and cement against a one sided form.

Until his death early this year, Persian American architect Nadir Khalili explored and invented a variety of building methods using the earth. In Hesperia in the high desert of California, he searched for cheap, durable, and attainable housing construction methods for much of the world. He experimented with fired clay rooms rather than fired bricks, tubular construction methods, and many others. His growing fame led to an invitation by NASA to present his ideas to build structures on the moon, where water is not an option, but the sun's energy can be used to melt and fuse moon dust.

from the editor

A belated big thank you and appreciation is given to Erik Frenzel and Monica Rinne for their past work as editors of *Insignis*. We wish you great success with your new endeavors!

Please send articles, ideas, plant news, event announcements, photos, or what's on your mind about native plants for the next *Insignis* due out in Dec/Jan..... use email address at right.

Elsah Cort



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Chapter Board Meeting

October 4, 2008 at 1 pm

*after the plant sale at Janet Fanning's home
at 41118 Blossom Drive near the
entrance to the Three Rivers' cemetery*

We invite people to join our Chapter's Board of Directors. We need your help, however small or big. Come to meet us, talk with us, and learn more about CNPS!

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and how to conserve them and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, horticulture and land stewardship.

JOIN CNPS TODAY AND INVITE YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN! CNPS members enjoy the following benefits, and more:

- Membership in the statewide CNPS organization
- Affiliation with the local CNPS chapter
- Quarterly Fremontia journal
- Quarterly CNPS Bulletin
- The local chapter newsletter
- Access to a wide range of local and statewide activities
- Meeting people with similar interests
- Access to chapter plant sales, book sales, lectures, classes, workshops, hikes, field trips, and wildflower shows
- NEW: A membership card with benefits from partner organizations like Smith and Hawken and Pacific Horticulture Magazine

<http://www.cnps.org>

Alta Peak Chapter Annual Native Plant Sale

October 4, 2008 from 9 am to 12 noon

Three Rivers Arts Center on North Fork Drive in Three Rivers

Enclosed is plant pre-order form which must be returned
by September 20, 2008, to receive member discount.
More details inside newsletter.

Elsah Cort, Editor
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