



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 19, Number 3

September 2009

Fall Native Plant sale

set for October 3...
Page 1
See insert for plant list order form to return by September 21!



Fall Program

On October 3 learn about the connection in nature in the Sierra Nevada with author, John Muir Laws.
Page 1 and 2

A Hopi Elder Speaks

The time for the lone wolf is over...
Page 5

President's Report

Joan tells us what's up with our Chapter...
Page 2

Tulare County Gen Plan

make comments
Page 5

Growing Deer Grass

backbone of the garden..
Page 8

Environmental weekend

set for October 3-4, See solar cooking demonstrations
Page 5

Green Home Tour

Visit 5 green homes in Three Rivers...
Page 6

2009 Invasive Plant Symposium in Visalia

Wildland Weed Management on the Leading Edge
Page 4

Fire-safe landscaping with Native Plants

simple suggestions for peace of mind
Page 3

Contact Information

Join our Chapter Board of Directors
Page 7

Updated CNPS website

Check it out...
Page 7



NATIVE PLANT SALE

October 3 Saturday 9 am to 1 pm
Three Rivers Art Center

41763 North Fork Drive, Three Rivers
this issue of Insignis includes pre-order form with 10% discount for CNPS members

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. Plants are provided by Intermountain Nursery in Prather and California Native Nursery in Porterville. Books and posters will be available for your purchase inside the Arts Center.
All pre-orders must be picked up by 12 noon.

CNPS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Please help with plant sale on both October 2 with the delivery of the plants and Oct 3 for sale itself.

Call 561-3461 for information & to volunteer.



FALL PROGRAM

October 3 Saturday 2 pm
Three Rivers Art Center

"Finding Connection in Nature"
with John Muir (Jack) Laws

John Muir said "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Join us for an exciting afternoon of appreciation of some of the most astounding and unappreciated species in the Sierra Nevada. In this illustrated lecture, John (Jack) Muir Laws (no relation to the other John Muir) will help us follow a series of astounding relationships between plants and animals in the Sierra Nevada. You will be delighted and amazed by the subtle and essential threads that connect species. You can find many of these species on a mountain hike with your friends or family and share the stories with them. Jack will also discuss some of the conservation challenges in the Sierra Nevada and what stewards of nature are doing to confront them. Whether you're a botanist, birder or backpacker, don't miss this opportunity to enrich your next exploration of the Range of Light!

cont'd on page 2

Chapter President's Report

by Joan Stewart

I just finished filling out a questionnaire for The Sierra Nevada Alliance, a regional organization that brings together groups with interests or concerns about the parts of California that are close to or part of the Sierra Nevada mountains. One of the sections asked for "current focus and accomplishments for the past year" and this is what I sent off about our chapter:

"In Tulare County, Alta Peak Chapter representatives are currently working and collaborating with others in the area to comment on, modify, and influence those people responsible for drafting an updated General Plan for Tulare County, and for a management plan for the Giant Sequoia National Monument. Spring and summer field trips looked at seasonal changes in high elevation mountain meadows and the variability among the different sites and situations. The annual Native Plant Sale in October offered material for gardens, distributed information about the plants and about CNPS, and incidentally provided financial support for the Chapter's other activities. Irregularly scheduled programs during the year bring speakers to share experiences with flora both close to and far from home."

This, I suppose, captures much of what this President's Message needs to convey, as summer ends, and we look forward to cooler fall months, a change from brown to green over our hills, and renewed vigor to consider what we can, or want to do in coming months, to convey the CNPS message to our communities.

There has been an interesting discussion statewide lately about the CNPS Mission/Vision statements that have been around for so many years. Do they need revising? Is there another word besides "appreciate" that works better? This will be one of the items, I'm sure, on agenda for the upcoming September Chapter Council meeting in San Diego, but the consensus seems to be that more important than the wording of these sentences (after all, they have "worked" for years!) is what CNPS actually accomplishes.....and this essentially comes down to encouraging and supporting volunteers who do the on-the-ground work that carries out the mission. As we enter the fall and winter seasons for the Alta Peak Chapter, consider what can be done to spread the word, to help us continue to understand, learn about, and conserve our native species and vegetation as they occur naturally.

Are you a native plant advocate?

Please consider joining the Board of Directors for our Chapter. We have openings for several areas, including education and legislation, and welcome any other areas you are willing to offer service.

Contact Joan Stewart--soon--at 539 -2717.

FALL CHAPTER PROGRAM

cont'd from page 1

Jack Laws is a naturalist, environmental educator and author and illustrator. He has worked as an environmental educator for over 25 years in California, Wyoming, and Alaska. He teaches classes on natural history, conservation biology, scientific illustration, and field sketching. He is trained as a wildlife biologist and is a research associate of the California Academy of Sciences. His illustrations capture the feeling of the living plant or animal, while also including details critical for identification.

Jack is the author and illustrator of *Sierra Birds: a Hiker's Guide* and *The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada*. This pocket-sized field guide contains 2,710 original watercolor paintings of more than 1,700 species in the Sierra. He is also a regular contributor to Bay Nature magazine with his "Naturalists Notebook" column. Jack is deeply committed to stewardship of nature and collaborates with organizations throughout the state.

www.johnmuirlaws.com



Jack initiated **Following Muir's Footsteps**, an educational program to engender passionate love of nature, personal understanding of natural history and commitment to stewardship. This program gets students out in the field, learning from their own observations and using field guides and nature journals as the basis for discovering nature around them. As a part of this project, he is working secure funding to donate sets of field guides to every middle and high school in the Sierra Nevada. Read details about this program at www.johnmuirlaws.com/SierraClassroomProject.htm

"From an early age, my parents instilled in me a deep love of nature and an insatiable curiosity. Nature exploration has opened my eyes to a world of beauty and wonder that has grown into a deep commitment to stewardship." ...John Muir Laws

Fire-safe Landscaping with Native Plants

by Melanie Baer-Keeley, Outreach Chair

The first line of protection against wildfire can and should be your landscape. With thoughtful selection, placement, and care—especially maintenance and watering of the native plants surrounding your home, a fire can be significantly slowed or deterred. It is clearly possible to have a fire-safe, attractive native landscape. There is no such thing as a plant that won't burn, so managing your landscape is the key to keeping your home safe.

Native Plants

While it is true that native plants of the foothill regions of California are adapted to fire, it is important to retain, but manage native vegetation. These plants perform essential functions such as watershed protection, slope stabilization, wildlife food and cover, while retaining the unique character and beauty of the region.

Maintenance and Pruning

To manage existing native landscapes, thin and space individual plants, as well as reduce and remove excess burnable fuels.

- *Surface fuels*—Dried weeds and grasses must be cut close to the ground, especially those surrounding shrubby vegetation and ones located within 30' of any structures. Remove excess leaf litter at the base of shrubs from time to time.
- *Ladder Fuels*—Mid-sized shrubs may carry fire vertically from ground to crown of intermingled plants. To prevent this ladder effect, be sure to thin dead branches and twiggy growth from these shrubs. Open up the canopy, reducing quantities of live foliage as well. Raise the shrub canopy up 1/3 of the total shrub height, removing branches that lay on the ground. Selectively remove individual shrubs, spacing canopies approximately 15' apart. If necessary, cut down but retain root mass to bind and stabilize soil.
- *Crown Fuels*—Tree canopies should be thinned of dead wood annually. Keep trees away from chimneys and away from rooflines. Avoid planting highly combustible trees such as acacia, eucalyptus, or conifers such as pines and junipers nearby structures.

Watering

Water the landscape immediately surrounding structures regularly, keeping vegetation plumped up and healthy. Well-watered plants are less likely to burn.

- Studies have shown that moisture content was the main determinant of fire resistant plants. Keeping leaf moisture content elevated in plants throughout the fire season and allowing only minimal accumulation of dead material will significantly decrease chances of burning.
- Anticipate extreme weather events such as heat and wind by watering the soil a little in advance of actual plant needs. However, native plants of the foothill regions are drought-adapted, so water cautiously and sparingly.
- Radiating outward from your home, create more planting zones consisting of compatible plants that require less and less irrigation as they filter into the surrounding wild landscape.

Plant Selection and Placement

Choose and position native plants wisely, separating planting areas to reduce continuously available fuel.

- Select plants with thick evergreen leaves, such as coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) that maintain moisture even when drying winds are present. Or, select trees that are deciduous such as the Fremont Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*). Deciduous trees often have higher moisture content within their leaves.
- Pick plants with a low profile. Prostrate plants such as groundcover forms of Manzanita (E.g. *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) deter weedy growth, keep live moisture-filled plants close to the soil, build minimal biomass and don't create a fuel ladder.
- Plant in distinct groupings in order to disrupt an on-going movement of fire.
- Avoid planting invasive species that rampantly spread into wildland areas and add to the fuel load.
- Space tree and shrub canopies 15' apart, to keep fire from spreading upward.

By following these simple suggestions annually, enjoy peace of mind by having a safe and secure defense against wildfire.

"I have a friend who feels sometimes that the world is hostile to human life--he says it chills us and kills us. But how could we be were it not for this planet that provided our very shape? Two conditions--gravity and a livable temperature range between freezing and boiling--have given us fluids and flesh. The trees we climb and the ground we walk on have given us five fingers and toes. The "place" (from the root plat, broad, spreading, flat) gave us far-seeing eyes, the streams and breezes gave us versatile tongues and whorly ears. The land gave us a stride, and the lake a dive. The amazement gave us our kind of mind. We should be thankful for that, and take nature's stricter lessons with some grace."Gary Snyder

18th annual Cal-IPC Symposium

"Wildland Weed Management on the Leading Edge"

October 8-10, 2009 at the Visalia Convention Center

The California Invasive Plant Council will hold its annual symposium in Visalia, "Gateway to the Southern Sierra."

A pre-symposium field course on Advanced Herbicide Control Methods will be held October 7. The Symposium brings together more than 300 natural resource managers and researchers to discuss the latest developments in the field of wildland weed control and restoration. Join us this year in Visalia! Field trips are planned to Sequoia National Park and Kaweah Oaks Preserve.

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Richard Minnich, UC Riverside, presents his new book, *California's Fading Wildflowers: Lost Legacy and Biological Invasions*. The book casts new light on the historic prominence of forbs in the state's ecosystems, and the devastating impact of invasive plants throughout California.

The Leading Edge of Weed Management

- Athena Demetry, Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks - From foothills grasslands to alpine peaks: Managing weeds at the leading edge in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.
- Wendy West, UC Cooperative Extension, El Dorado Co. - Managing the leading edge: Landscape-level control of invasive plant spread in the Sierra and beyond.
- Paula Schiffman, CSU Northridge - The roles of animals and disturbance in plant invasion: Lessons from the Carrizo Plain.

DPR Laws & Regulations - 2.0 hours of DPR CEUs available

- Kate Filippini, CA Dept. of Food & Agriculture - Laws and regulations pertaining to the sale and movement of noxious weeds in California.
- Fred Hrusa, CA Dept. of Food & Agriculture - The importance of vouchering for plant identification.
- Joel Trumbo, CA Dept. of Fish & Game - Yeah, but what would Aldo think? A look at herbicide ecotoxicology.
- David "Alex Trebek" Chang, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office - Pesticide "Jeopardy!"

Climate Change: Impacts and Responses

- Matt Brooks, US Geological Survey - Interactions between fire and plant invasions under a warming climate in the Sierra Nevada Bioregion.
- Nicole Heller, Climate Central - The promise and pitfalls of species distribution modeling to predict future invasions.
- Rick Rayburn, California State Parks - Climate change and protecting biological diversity: Implementation of California's report on adaptation strategy

The Leading Edge of Weed Management: New Tools & Techniques

- Beth Leger, Univ. of Nevada, Reno - Adaptive value of remnant native plants in invaded communities: Examples from the Great Basin.
- Mark Heath, Shelterbelt Builders - From backpacks to jetpacks, handpicks to skidsteers: Leveraging old tools and new techniques for long-term restoration success.
- Joe DiTomaso, UC Davis - New tools and techniques in the field.

For more details and registration information go to www.cal-ipc.org

Cal-IPC's mission is to protect California wildlands from invasive plants through restoration, research and education. We work closely with agencies, industry and other nonprofit organizations to support research, restoration work, and public education. Cal-IPC formed in 1992 to address one of California's top environmental threats. We work closely with agencies, industry and other nonprofit organizations. Our active membership includes public and private land managers, ecological consultants and researchers, planners, volunteer stewards, and concerned citizens. Allied invasive plant councils exist in many other states, though Cal-IPC has the largest membership. Cal-IPC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors who work with staff on programs and strategic direction.

Three Rivers Environmental Weekend

October 3, 2009

Saturday 9-5 pm

Three Rivers Arts Center

Saturday's free event will start at 9am with the CNPS annual fall plant sale outside, and inside, exhibits and information. A morning presentation and exhibit will feature Max and Jane Eggman of Terra Bella. They produce the only comb honey in the area, and will have some to sample and for sale. By the way, they will not bring live bees. We will find out if bees are faring better than they have been in recent years. At least one other author will be there, Scott Barker, who recently published a history of Yokohl Valley. His books will be for sale.

CNPS and the Sequoia Natural History Association will be selling books as well, and Sequoia Park, in the person of Annie Esperanza, will have rolling videos about the environment. There will be a variety of information tables and booths, including Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth, Family Farm Fresh, local gardening information, area builders and designers to retrofit your home, or build new. Mike Cannarozzi will show how the application of a white or very light roofing product can help counteract the effect of melting glaciers on global warming. Lori Werner, Spotted Owl researcher, will have an exhibit table "All About Owls", which the kids and adults should find very interesting. There will be a home and garden art and decoration booth or two outside under the trees or canopies, featuring some of our fine local artists. There's lots more in progress, and of course Bill Becker and his famous solar cooking demonstration will again be up front!

Sponsored by the TREW CREW.

For more information call Mona Selph 561-4676.

The Green Home Tour

Sunday, October 4

more details on page 6...

A Hopi Elder Speaks...

"You have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour. Now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered . . .

Where are you living?

What are you doing?

What are your relationships?

Are you in right relation?

Where is your water?

Know your garden.

It is time to speak your Truth.

Create your community.

Be good to each other.

And do not look outside yourself for the leader."

Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said,
"This could be a good time!

"There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are torn apart and will suffer greatly.

"Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above water. And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.

"The time for the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

"We are the ones we've been waiting for."

-- attributed to an unnamed Hopi elder

Hopi Nation
Oraibi, Arizona

Tulare County General Plan Update

www.generalplan.co.tulare.ca.us

More than any other planning document, the General Plan needs to be a reflection of the collective aspirations of those who live, work, and own property in the County. Your involvement in this process is vital in order to ensure everyone's ideas are heard.

Public questions and comments are encouraged.
If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

Dave Bryant
Div. Manager - Special Projects
Tulare County Resource Management Agency
5961 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277
Phone: (559) 733-6291
Fax: (559) 730-2653

Three Rivers Green Home Tour

"Mud Bricks, Straw Bales, and Whatever Works"

by Mona Fox Selph, Alta Peak Chapter member

The Green Home Tour is slated for October 4, 2009, and registration starts immediately. The donation is \$15 per person, or \$25 per couple. To register for the tour that starts at 12 noon, phone 561-4676. For the one o'clock tour, phone 561-4149. Participants should bring snacks and water. We will meet to form car pools at the Valley Oak Credit Union.

It is estimated that about half of the world's population still lives in some sort of earth home. The material is accessible and cheap, such homes provide good insulation from the elements, and they don't burn. There are many ways to build with earth, but the most ancient dwellings were probably wattle and daub, or branches and sticks plastered with mud. Adobe is another very old method. It requires from 15 to 30 percent clay, sand or soil, and often straw is incorporated.

In the southwestern USA, building with adobe has long been practiced since it is the perfect climate. To have permanence, adobe requires a long hot and dry season to evaporate out the moisture it accumulates in the damper, wetter months. It traditionally also requires overhangs to protect it from rain, and/or yearly re-plastering with adobe.

The oldest continually occupied building in our country is the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. It is a multi cellular adobe structure with many individual rooms built side by side up to five stories high. Large timbers called vigas support floors and roofs. In the old days, entry was from the roof using ladders. People have lived there for over a thousand years.

Three Rivers has some beautiful old adobes, although they are new in comparison to Taos Pueblo. There are also many other varieties of buildings friendly to the environment here, and interested residents will soon have the opportunity to visit five of them.

The Green Home Tour began over three years ago with a small study group on global warming, and as they say, the rest is history. It was so worthwhile and so much fun that we are still doing it! I am writing about the Green Home Tour put on by the TREW crew as we now call ourselves, that is the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend crew. The first year we toured six wonderful homes in Three Rivers, donating proceeds to Habitat for Humanity's green building fund. Last year we car-pooled down to the valley where we toured five structures in Visalia and one in Elderwood, donating proceeds to Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth. That group will also be the recipient this year, when we will come home again to Three Rivers with five homes on the list.

For the 2009 Tour, the first home is a new construction, nearly completed as I write this. The dwelling is small and efficient, with well insulated walls, ceilings and windows. The heated

floor is plumbed for future conversion to solar heated water. Solar panels are also planned to heat household water. Built on acreage with an incredible view of the mountains and sky, the owner, Bill Becker, has set aside a prime spot for his telescope, as well as a spot for his famous highly efficient solar cooker.

The second home is the straw bale house we toured two years ago when it was under construction. At that stage, it was roofed but unfinished, so that we could see the details of construction, even things such as the lovely faded blue color of the recycled jeans used for attic insulation. Besides the extremely thick insulating walls, a large number of green ideas were being incorporated wherever possible, from passive solar components to light tubes. This year, tour guests will get to see how the house works as a finished dwelling for owners Hillary Dustin and Kay Woods.

In the Cherokee Oaks community, Tom and Lisa McGinnes will show their owner built Insulated Concrete Form home. It uses exterior solar panels to heat the floor, and for other purposes. They incorporated as many energy saving ideas into the home as possible from the ground up.

The last two homes are adobe. Rick Badgley and Martha Widmann's beautiful home is nestled in a cool and shady draw below the Catholic retreat complex. The house is actually two buildings, the older original one and a second structure Rick added as a master bedroom and bath. This one uses a different method of adobe construction, and Rick will show forms and explain how it is done. A short distance away, Rick built a studio for Martha, who is a wonderful painter and graphic designer. Rick is a skilled craftsman in the construction of fine furniture and cabinets. He built his shop into the hillside above, where the earth insulates it from weather. The domed roof is sod, and here again, Rick will explain construction methods.

The fifth house is the family home of Barbara Lahman, known for her lavender gardens. Her grandfather, Jim Livingston, finished the original adobe structure in 1938 using a guide put out by the Department of Agriculture. The walls are eighteen inches thick. An eight foot deep porch fronts the sixty foot south face of the house. The front door is hand hewn redwood, as are 4x4 beams and window frames. Windows and doors allow for cross breezes, and movable wood shutters cover the windows. The house was supplied with gravity flow water until 1999, and a well pump now pumps water into a rock walled covered reservoir. The old windmill still stands. She and her husband built a second home on the property where their daughter resides.

As it was last year, the tour is registered as part of the ASES National Solar tour, the largest grass roots solar energy event in America. You can compare it to other such tours in California (we are one of only sixteen) by going to www.nationalsolartour.org. Click on "find tours", and then on California.

Alta Peak Chapter Board of Directors



*President,
Conservation:*

Joan Stewart
37759 HWY 190
Springville, CA 93265
559-539-2717
tori2toli@ocsnet.net

*Vice-President,
Newsletter Editor*

Elsah Cort
PO Box 245
Three Rivers, CA 93271
559-561-4671
elsahc@dishmail.net

*Treasurer,
Poster Sales, Plant Sale
Membership:*

Janet Fanning
41118 Blossom Drive
Three Rivers, CA 93271
559-561-3461
janetfanning@att.net

Outreach:

Melanie Keeley
44246 August Drive
Three Rivers, CA 93271
559-561-1907
mbkeeley@live.com

Horticulture:

Cathy Capone
806 W. Westfield Ave
Porterville, CA 93257
559-361-9164
ccapone@lycos.com

Chapter Website:

www.altapeakcnps.org

CNPS spruces up website at www.cnps.org

Growing Natives Program

www.cnps.org/cnps/grownative

The mission of the Growing Natives Program is to promote, support and encourage the appropriate use of California Native plants in public and private gardens and landscapes. One of the goals of the Growing Natives program is to provide technical information and resources to homeowners, landscape designers, and nursery owners on the care and maintenance of native plants so that natives are routinely incorporated into public and private landscape designs

from the CNPS eNewsletter, Volume 1, Number 7: August 2009:

"CNPS Horticulture Committee volunteers have been working with CNPS staff for the past several months to redesign and build new content for the Horticulture section of our website. At long last, these changes will be released in an update to our website on August 28th! One of the first things you will notice is the change in program title from Horticulture to "Growing Natives." The upgrade to the program section includes new content and resources on many topics of interest to native plant gardening enthusiasts.

Along with the substantial changes to the Horticulture/Growing Natives program section of the website, you will also notice a significant change in navigation throughout the site. Content for each of the CNPS program sections can now be accessed from menu links directly from the main website banner, allowing users to find the information they need from the home page and anywhere else within the site, instead of having to click through a maze of links on each individual program tab. The menu links are duplicated on the left side bar within each program tab, again facilitating easier navigation throughout the site. Content on all of the program pages has been reorganized, with significant updates to Education and Conservation program sections.

The changes in our website navigation is proceeding in two phases: this first phase includes updates to CNPS program navigation, and the second phase includes navigation updates to the online store, giving and membership pages and other remaining content. Phase 2 of the project is expected to take place late this year or early next year.

We hope you will visit the updated site at www.cnps.org and send us your feedback!"
Contact Jack Tracey <jtracey@cnps.org> for more information about the e-newsletter.

CNPS Workshops and Professional Training

<http://cnps.org/cnps/education/workshops>

The Plant Science Training Program specializes in providing workshops for professional botanists, biologists, and ecologists to teach the skills and provide the tools and resources for conducting sound scientific surveys for rare plants, rare plant communities, vegetation, wetlands, and invasive plants.

Membership

<http://cnps.org/cnps/join>

The California Native Plant Society welcomes one and all – from students to professionals, from hobbyists to dedicated gardeners, from apartment dwellers to homeowners, from city folk to suburbanites to rural residents – to join the society to learn about California's rich and diverse native plant flora and support efforts to conserve native plants and habitats throughout the state. **Join CNPS or renew membership directly online!**

Any CNPS member who refers a new member to CNPS at the \$45 level or above between now and September 30, 2009 will receive a complimentary CNPS logo hat (\$10 value). Please fill in form at <http://cnps.org/cnps/join/special.php> with your name and address along with your friend, relative, co-worker, or neighbor's name and address along with payment and mail to CNPS, 2707 K Street Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816 to receive hat.

Follow CNPS on Twitter at http://twitter.com/cnps_org

Follow CNPS on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=38417209275>

**Alta Peak Chapter
Annual Native Plant Sale
October 3, 2009**

9 am to 1 pm



**Enclosed is plant pre-order
form which must be returned
by September 21, 2009, to
receive member discount.
More details inside newsletter.**

**Three Rivers Arts Center
North Fork Drive in Three Rivers**

Growing Deer Grass

by Cathy Capone, Chapter Horticulture Chair

Deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) is one of the most attractive bunch grasses I know of, and is certainly the most spectacular of the California native grasses. Deer grass is a summer growing grass with a dense tuft of medium green leaves to about 2 ft. In the late summer, narrow spikes densely crowded with florets rise out of the foliage to a height of 4 ft in happy plants.

The spikes radiate straight out from the crown in sun-grown plants, but will arch over softly on plants grown in part shade. The effect is dramatic and beautiful, and the spikes move wonderfully in the wind. The spikes dry and remain attractive all winter, along with the browning foliage. Groups of plants look especially nice.

Deer grass can be a focus plant or the backbone of a garden. If you naturalize deer grass it needs to be planted in an area where it gets water within its root zone during summer. This can be a drainage way, or near a water source. Deer grass needs some summer water but the large root system can extract it from a large volume of soil. Occasional deep watering in summer is desirable in our hot climate.

Cathy will have plants for sale from her native plant nursery in Porterville.

Elsah Cort, Editor
PO Box 245
Three Rivers, CA 93271