

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.

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adding to your garden!



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Fall Chapter Program

October 1, 2011 at 2 pm

Planning, Planting and Maintaining your Native Landscape for Fire Safety

by Melanie Keeley

Restoration horticulturist for Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks, Keeley is most passionately interested in California native plants. She has focused her career on all aspects of native plants, and has expressed understanding gained over the past twenty or thirty years, through teaching, writing and illustration.

Having a fire-safe landscape is a responsibility that comes with living in the hot, arid foothill regions of California. While it is true that the life cycle of some California native plants 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, as well as give unique character and beauty to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.

Proper maintenance in mature gardens and sound planning of new plantings can reduce the risk of fire not only to our own properties, but those of our neighbors. cont'd on page 2

Annual Native Plant Sale

October 1, 2011 at 9 am to 1 pm

Held in conjunction with the Green Faire Three Rivers Arts Center, North Fork Drive

We have included in this newsletter a pre-order form plant list, deadline for submission is September 19, 2011. We have this plant sale every year, so you can take a look at your garden(s) and select items to fill in those blank spaces. The website, cnps.org, is a good place to find out more about plants you are unfamiliar with.

There are several listings of 4"/6pk items on our list. These plants are very small ie: take a piece of paper 4" square and divide it into 6 pieces. You got it...that's small. The following 5 items in 4''/6pks were left off the list due to lack of room: Eriodictyon californicum, Yerba Santa; Mimulus a.calycinus, Yellow Monkeyflower; Penstemon rydbergii, Meadow Penstemon; Salvia apiana, White Sage, and Zauschneria canum latifolium, High Elevation California Fuschia, each for \$6.25.

Be sure to check out the CNPS books and posters at the entrance of the building and visit the Green Faire, too.

> See you there! Janet Fanning, Plant Sale Chair

Chapter President's Report by Joan Stewart

The work of conservation, promoting native plants, is not without differing opinions. A goal is to see land set aside rather than used for purposes destructive of natural vegetation but sometimes land is "taken" with a large amount of land set aside to "mitigate" for loss. Is this always beneficial?

What should be done to maintain conserved land to protect plant resources? Trails? What level of effort to remove weeds? After questions of maintenance, there are considerations of monitoring.

Some plants used for drought tolerant landscaping end up escaping from cultivation. Does moving plants to be used in revegetation planning affect the genetic makeup of those that exist in the wild?

And always this is wrapped up into politics, at any, all, levels. Working for conservation is full of discussions, we try to become informed about our local issues, and make recommendations to the best of our abilities and based on what we currently understand. We always welcome your ideas, and comment. Let us know what you think and know about local land management issues.

Report from July 2011 Alta Peak Board Meeting

Finances were reviewed (all is well!) We discussed plans for the October 1 Plant Sale at the Three Rivers Art Center (same as in past), suggested several potentially interesting programs we might offer our communities, and reviewed Chapter Activity reports from around the State, noting ideas that might interest our area.

As a report on Conservation, it was noted we still are waiting the final EIR documents for the County General Plan update. The final documents for the Management Plan for Giant Sequoia Monument are due out spring of 2012.

At the recent Bakersfield State Chapter Council meeting the Three Rivers Fire Station native plant garden (designed and created by the Redbud Garden Club in Three Rivers) was described as a model for other chapters to add to their Horticulture programs. Fire management issues continue to be of great concern everywhere, and an upcoming Fremontia, will focus on the topic.

As new business, Elsah suggested we consider introducing an offer of annual scholarships to students planning to continue their education in fields related to the CNPS mission. Amounts, number of such grants, and administration will be further reviewed.

September Chapter Council meeting will be in San Diego. All members are welcome to attend. The Chapter delegate is our voting representative. We thank Cathy Capone for providing her home and hospitality for our Board meeting. Anyone interested in joining our Board, please call Joan or Elsah.

Fall Chapter Program, cont'd from page 1

Fall is just the right time of year to assess the condition of your land, and to plan and plant it using the general principles given in this talk.

This colorfully illustrated talk will feature Three Rivers' own fire-safe demonstration garden at the Cal Fire station (across the street from the Valley Oak Credit Union on HWY 198.) The Redbud Garden Club of Three Rivers developed this Fire-Safe Native Plant Garden on the newly developed fire station building site in 2005, with design assistance from Melanie Keeley. "Garden Watchers" from the Garden Club continue to observe the garden, provide advice and assistance for some of its maintanence.

Over time the garden has been expanded to include two memorial gardens, one with shaded picnic table and dry stream bed, and a more irrigated area with a lawn near the fire personnel's quarters. Cal Fire is only seasonally staffed, therefore it has maintenance lapses and irregular irrigation that reinforce the value of native plants in tolerating difficult conditions.

A weed abatement garden enhancement project in February 2011, using 25 tons of river rock and boulders, further beautified the garden while decreasing maintenance needs. The Redbud Garden Club received an award from the Cal Fire District for this project.



Fire Safe Garden in Three Rivers is open to the public. Located at the Cal Fire Station across from Valley Oak Credit Union, on the South side of HWY 198, across from the Village Market. Photo by Melanie Keeley

If you would like to assist the Redbud Garden Club in maintaining the five native plant gardens in Three Rivers, there are welcome open membership slots in this fun club.

Contact President, Marcia Goldstein, at 561-3204 or visit

redbudgardenclub3r.org

Special Plants of Tulare County

by Joan Stewart

The following is an excerpt from a new publication written by Joan.

The full document will soon be placed in pdf format
on the Alta Peak Chapter Website.

The area around Springville, then "Daunt", was home base for Carl Purpus, a botanist who collected widely throughout Mexico and Western America in the 1890's. His collections for several Tulare County species are cited as paratypes for taxa subsequently formally described (e.g. *Dudleya calcicola*).....

Of interest to us in the Sierra foothills of Tulare County, his records include notes on one particular and characteristic trip. In June, 1896, he "departed with a companion and several pack animals from my base camp (near Springville) in the chaparral region on the west side of the Sierra Nevada on a journey to collect in the southeastern Sierra." This trip took him up the middle fork of the Tule River, on to Hockett Meadows. Nearly two weeks later he was in the headwaters of the Little Kern. From nearby sites he recorded specimens from Lyon Meadows, Trout Meadows along what is now called Golden Trout Creek, eventually to Olancha Peak, then east to Cottonwood Creek canyon, into the Owens Valley, and in late October he was botanizing in Walker Pass. In between he was on Mt. Whitney where he delighted in the vegetation he found.

Moving into the next century, James R. Shevock based his 1978 MS thesis on the vascular flora of Lloyd Meadows in SNF. While serving as Botanist on the Forest (1979-84), he provided the first records for 18 species of flowering plants in the southern Sierra, six of them named in his honor. Commenting on the diversity of the southern Sierra region, he wrote that "the southern Sierra is extremely rich in endemics, rare species, and total floristic composition..." and called attention to concern about the continued presence of many of the species; "adverse impacts to some Sierran rare plants are occurring along the western fringe of the range adjacent to the Central Valley where conversion of lands to agriculture and urbanization may greatly restrict or alter essential habitat for...rare species..." It was the work of Shevock that put this part of California "on the map" as a very special place for plants, and Tulare County shares in his legacy.

From low elevations in the western (Central Valley) portion of the County, eastern foothills rise gradually, succeeded by more abrupt elevation gains in rocky escarpments, steep slopes, with the Western Divide at over 7000' separating the Kern Plateau and the Kern River on the east from the crest to the west. Northeast of the Kern Canyon, the eastern crest of the Sierra rises to 14,000+' at Mt. Whitney near the Inyo-Tulare County line. This enormous range of physical conditions supports the diversity of vegetation that has been so frequently remarked on. Vernal pools, alkaline, adobe, and limestone soils, high

elevation "wet" places, whether they be considered bogs, fens, meadows, riparian, all selectively provide special places for plants that thrive there. Superimposed on these combinations, the climate contributes short wet (relatively) winters, and longer dry hot summers that can extend into the bracketing spring/fall seasons. Precipitation to the west of the Kern Canyon (Great Western Divide) drains from east to west via the Kaweah, Tule, and the often more ephemeral Deer Creek and White River further south. The Kern drains the slopes between the western and eastern crests in a north to south direction, into Lake Isabella in Kern County, entering the San Joaquin Valley via the Kern Canyon.

Of increasing interest in California are plant species or groups that are recognized as "locally" rare, distinctive in their distribution, significant or important for one or another reason. These are often loosely grouped as "special", and many counties (e.g. Napa, Alameda, Contra Costa, Shasta, Orange, San Diego, Ventura) are assembling information about such species. Even if a plant is widely distributed in other regions, on a local scale it may merit attention. Some plants are designated "special" because they are at the far end of a distribution range, an "outlying" population, perhaps with a genetic basis that allows them to grow in an unusual habitat. These are also sometimes termed peripheral or relict populations. Others are restricted to soil conditions that are themselves unusual, making a plant an indicator species for a habitat that is of ecologic concern (vernal pools, serpentine soils). For those everywhere, rare or highly endangered, occurrence in this area is important.



CNPS 2012 Conservation Conference January 12-14, 2012 in San Diego

The Conference Program Committee will be accepting abstracts for oral and poster presentations between April 11-August 4, 2011. The program will focus on plant conservation and restoration and will include a keynote address, plenary sessions, concurrent sessions that include a mix of invited and contributed oral presentations, a student paper session, and poster session. A special session dedicated to posters will allow in-depth discussion between authors and conference attendees. New this year will be special sessions devoted exclusively to student presentations.

To find out more about the conference please go to

cnps.org/2012

Western Redbud by Cathy Capone

Alta Peak Chapter Horticulture Chair

Western Redbud is a signature plant of the Sierra foothills and welcomes us back to the out-of doors each spring. Western Redbud, *Cercis occidentalis* is a deciduous shrub to small tree, it has magenta flowers, which occur in spring, Feb.-April. It is native on dry slopes (usually next to a spring or seasonal creek), in the Coast Ranges and Sierra foothills to 4500′, east to Utah. Plant in sun or part shade but it flowers best in full sun, some summer water for faster growth, and regular water in desert areas. It's tolerant of clay soils, and needs a winter chill before flowers set properly. Flowers and young pods are edible. The young, small redbud plants are not cold hardy below 20 degrees F. Older plants are no problem at 10 degrees F. or less. Tolerant of lime or acid soils, pH 5.5-8 is safe. Its reddish-purple seedpods hang on tree in winter.



Photo by Elsah Cort

Characteristics of Western Redbud

- •tolerates alkaline soil and clay.
- •great for a bird garden.
- •foliage turns a different color in the fall, deciduous.
- •flower color is violet and is edible.
- •fruit is edible.

The thin, shiny brown branches bear shiny heart-shaped leaves, which are light green early in the season and darken as they age. Leaves on plants at higher elevation may turn gold or red as the weather cools. The showy flowers are bright pink or magenta, and grow in clusters all over the shrub, making the plant very colorful and noticeable in the landscape. The shrub bears 3-inch-long brown legume pods, which are very thin and dry.

Beautiful in all its seasons, the native redbud is well worth growing. The smooth silvery-gray branches are picturesque in the winter landscape.

It grows at elevations of 4,000 ft. or less, in canyons and on rather steep slopes, in gravely, and rocky soils along streams, where it is never flooded. It also grows in the bottom of

ephemeral streambeds in little pockets, benches, or crannies of boulder outcroppings. The plant is drought tolerant, sunloving, and grows in a wide variety of soils, but it is usually found in rather harsh environments with course, nutrient-poor soils that are well-drained. It grows mostly singly, but sometimes, in sheltered situations, in shrubby clumps.

For propagation, if possible, gather the seed from local sources, to maintain genetic diversity of redbud. The seedpods can be collected in the fall of the year from September to November from redbud branches. Redbud seeds are adapted for prolonged periods of dryness and cold and they require special pretreatment to germinate, owing to an impervious seed coat plus a dormant embryo. One method is to place the seeds into a container and pour boiling water over them and let the seeds soak overnight. They can then be covered with damp peat moss and refrigerated for two months or they can be planted right away. The germination of redbud seed in the wild is favored by fire, which cracks the seed coat and generates the heat needed to stimulate germination. In the writers experience redbud will germinate with the hot water treatment and immediate planting in a peat moss rich soil mix. The seedlings germinate slowly and grow slowly, so expect that your seedlings will be ready for planting out or planting up in about one year.

Plant the treated seed in the fall in flats, spacing the seeds approximately one to two inches apart. Use a slow-release fertilizer in the planting mix. Cover with about a quarter-inch of soil (approximately 3 to 4 times the width of the seed). To reduce the possibility of damping off, keep the flats outdoors in a protected area with partial shade and little wind. Water the flats through the winter and the let the plants grow one full year before planting them out. The seedlings will be about three inches to one foot tall by the following fall. Plant the seedlings in a sunny location with good drainage. If gophers are a problem, plant redbud seedlings in cages. Give the young plants summer water for the first three years in the ground. Do not over water, as redbud will not tolerate summer water in the root crown area (at the soil level) and will suffer crown rot (Phytophthora sp.) if over-watered. When leaves first emerge in the spring, use liquid fertilizer to boost growth.

Periodic pruning of redbud after it has reached the minimum age of 5 years, can be accomplished to remove dead or dying branches that might harbor diseases or insects. Pruning should take place in the fall, winter, or early spring, after leaf drop and during the dormant period. Contemporary Native American weavers practice two types of pruning. One technique is coppicing where the whole plant is cut to within several inches of the ground. Redbud vigorously resprouts from the coppice stool, sending up young straight shoots with a beautiful red pigment. This can bring added color to gardens and also these shoots are highly valued for basket weaving.

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Redbud, cont'd from pg 4

Coppicing, however, should only be done on mature shrubs--at least a decade old. Flowering will be lost, until the young sprouts are two to three years old and shed the red pigment and form true bark. The other technique is selective pruning within the canopy to direct the growth of the plant. Selective pruning, leaves some older flowering branches, important for bees and butterflies.

Plants compatible with Redbuds

Redbuds can be paired with the same types of drought tolerant plants that are useful to plant near and under oaks. The following plants are a brief list of the shorter plants which can be planted under and around redbuds: purple needle grass, low growing salvias, penstemons, buckwheat, sedges, sedums, low growing baccharis, and California fuchsia. Redbuds can be planted as an understory plant for valley oaks or black oaks. Since the redbud blooms very early in the spring, it will bloom before the oaks are in full leaf. The following bushes or small trees can be paired with redbud: Elderberry, flannelbush, manzanita, coffeeberry, and ceonothus.

Garden Visitors

The flowers of redbud provide nectar to bees and the young shoots, leaves, and seedpods are browsed by goats, and to a limited extent by deer, sheep, and cattle. The purple-reddish flowers also attract hummingbirds.

Ethnobotany of the Redbud

Western Redbud is highly valued by Native American basket weavers in California for their young, wine-red branches, harvested in the fall and used in the warp, weft, and designs of baskets. If the branches are harvested in the spring when the bark slips, the white inner sapwood may also be used as the weft or lacing in baskets.

Redbud use in the Landscape

It is a small tree that is valued far more than its small size might suggest. This lovely harbinger of spring has been called "a breath of fresh air after a long winter" and no less than "one of our most beautiful native trees", tree expert Michael Dirr.

What makes the redbud so special is its gift of spring color and its hardy adaptability. This little tree, which usually grows no taller than 30 feet, bears showy pink flowers in very early spring, flowers lasting for two to three weeks. The leaves also emerge with a reddish color, giving way to a lustrous summer green and finally to a striking fall yellow. Even in winter this little tree is pleasant to behold, with its arching limbs and rounded crown. Its size and adaptability make it as welcome in a forest setting as in a home landscape, where it can serve

admirably as a specimen tree or in groups. Plant redbud where you want a strong color interest in the early to mid spring. The foliage is particularly attractive when backlit. Redbuds grow reliably in zones 7-9 from the valley floor to 4,000 feet.

Plant single specimen redbuds:

- Anchor the corner of a garden or house
- Free-standing in a planting island within a garden. The garden island should not be watered with the same irrigation system as the lawn if surrounded by a lawn. Redbuds prefer to have monthly deep watering once established. They grow in the foothills with no additional summer water.
- •Single specimen as within a small patio. A redbud can be maintained at five feet or trained into a small-scale canopy with yearly pruning.
- •Locate a redbud on the far side of a water feature so that the flowers will reflect off the water surface.

Plant redbuds in groups:

- Informally cluster to anchor an area of the garden. This treatment provides visual separation of garden areas,
- As an informal cluster on the garden perimeter providing privacy and perspective without looking like a hedge.
- As a colonnade of redbuds. Plant in twin rows placing bushes 10 to 20 feet apart along each row. Space the rows 15 to 25 feet apart. This will provide a shaded path in a larger garden. The colonnade can be selectively pruned once a year to increase the overhead shade while maintaining the walking path.
- •Use as an informal hedge when planted in a single row.
- Plant with an uneven distribution on a hillside to provide a natural appearance.
- •Plant to stabilize a bank in a dry creek or hillside situation with water provided the first five years or along a year long creek set the redbuds at least 10 feet above summer water levels.

Do not plant in the following areas.

- Near a pool- The redbud drops spent flowers in the spring, leaves in the fall, and seeds and seed pods in the winter.
- Over an area where you require a plant litter free environment for the reasons stated in one above.
- In a high water use landscape unless you can separate the watering patterns
- Within four feet of a wall. Redbud can be espaliered, but this is a time-consuming landscape technique.
 Redbuds have a naturally rounded head and need four feet of space even when you trim one side flat as you would against a house wall.



Deadline to return plant sale pre-order form September 19, 2011

Trees--A Personal Connection

by Mona Fox Selph

Alta Peak Chapter member and founder and organizer of the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend including the **Green Faire on October 2 from 9-5**

My first memories are of trees. The shade of the peach tree under which I made mud pies at age two or three, and coaxed my little friend to eat , for which I was punished. I remember the incident because in my childhood fantasy world, I only understood it was wrong after I was pun- ished. At four, the apple tree I climbed with my older brother and a few neighborhood children.

It was there that the other kids shared with me the astonishing facts of life ... where babies came from and how they got there. It was so shocking to me that I nearly fell out of the tree. Years later, when I was in fourth grade in Bad Wildungen Germany, a huge spreading tree near a brook was the meeting place of all the American children of the area. We claimed favorite spots on favorite limbs, and some dared others to climb higher. In my memory, the tree was kind to us children. No one ever suffered more than a skinned knee.

I owe much of my environmental awareness to my father. He almost worshipped trees, perhaps a thread of his very DNA. His ancestors came from the British Isles, home to tree worshipping Druids. The exception was a Cherokee grandmother several generations back. American Indians believed that all of nature was alive and imbued with spirit. Both of my father!s parents were teachers, but in those days almost everyone was a farmer as well, so he grew up on a farm near Franklin, Tennessee, and lived close to nature. My father seemed to know every tree in the South. There are some 750 species of trees growing wild north of the Mexican border. On walks, my father would show us children how one oak leaf differed slightly from another, and so how to correctly name the tree.

As an Army officer, my dad had traveled to many parts of the country and the world, but until his retirement, only briefly to California where my young family ended up. If I have ever seen transcendence on a person's face, it was that of my father when we brought him and our young children to Sequoia Park for the first time. I thought he would burst with joy when he saw his first Giant Sequoia. He stared in wonder, transfixed. The image of his face that day is burned into my memory. He was an environmentalist before most people were familiar with the concept. For years, he sent our family gift subscriptions to Rodale Magazine. He and my mother purchased 100 hectares in Brazil, where prior to my brother!s tragic accident that made him quadriplegic, my parents had hoped to retire. After their owning it outright and paying taxes for years, a new mandate from the Brazilian government demanded "development" of the area, including fencing and

clear cutting a huge part of it. My father refused, and because of his inability to expend the time and energy to legally fight the decision due to my brother's medical needs, the Brazilian government confiscated the land. I could recount at least three or four other instances of his personal environmental protectionism of forests and trees.

My ex-husband was a rocket scientist at Edwards Air Force Base in the high Mojave Desert, so that is where we raised our children. I learned to appreciate the special beauty of the desert when it was awash with wildflowers, or blanketed in snow, or on nights brilliant with countless stars. And all the more so in those times, because most days were brown expanses below and blue expanses above, sometimes cloudless and unchanging for nearly nine months of the year. Yet all of those decades, my senses yearned for trees, a craving much like my father!s, perhaps from his DNA to mine.

Since I moved here [Three Rivers] in 1981, I have always said that people here live in "almost Paradise". The "almost" refers to the air quality and summer heat. The "Paradise" refers to the rest. We have mountains, rivers, lakes and we have TREES. We have trees that are the largest and most magnificent on earth, and nearly the oldest. People come from all over the world to experience them, and we below are the gate keepers. We are charged with the responsibility for their health and well being. Strong and resilient as they are, what we do here below them affects their future. Although they benefit from occasional fires as part of their reproductive and environmental health, they and the other trees of their ecosystem also need clean air to thrive.

In the early eighties, with a few film classes at California State University Northridge under my belt, I assisted in the production of a training film for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, called "Fire Ecology in Sequoia Park". In 1984, 1985, and 1986, I was part of a team, trained by Dr. Paul Miller and others, that established Baseline plots for measuring ozone damage to yellow pines and other species in Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia Park, and Saguaro National Monument.

Strangely, when my children were small, I had clipped and saved an article from the newspaper about Paul's Miller's research into the causes for the demise of many trees in the San Gabriel Mountains. In early controlled studies in the laboratories, he showed that as little as three weeks of gassing of young trees with ozone produced chlorotic mottle and necrosis (death) of pine needles. Ground level ozone is one of several components of air pollution, and in the case of the Los Angeles air basin, increasing vehicular traffic was a large part of the problem. He and others after him continued to do field research in many California forests.

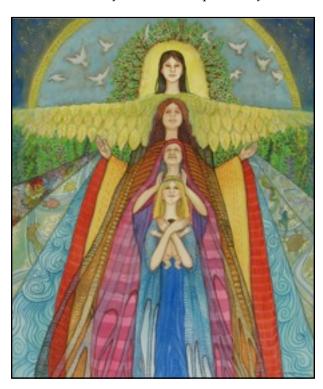
My participation in the establishment of baseline study plots was probably one of the most arduous and difficult challenges of my life, but one I felt very privileged to be part of.

cont'd on page7

Trees, cont'd from page 6

My father died too early decades ago, but I feel blessed that he lived long enough to see his daughter carry on as much as possible, his great love for trees. I know that gave him pleasure in his final days. We at the gateway to our mountains are called to cherish and protect our trees. They and all of the others and their ecosystems elsewhere on the planet are the great lungs of the world, vital to life itself.

On Saturday, October 1, at the annual Green Faire, one of our long time devoted gatekeepers, Annie Esperanza, Air Quality Specialist for Sequoia and Kings Canyon Parks, will give a morning presentation on the effects of air quality on the ecosystems that include our Giant Sequoias. Her 10 am presentation will be followed at 11 am with a presentation by Janelle Schneider of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. At 2 pm in the afternoon, the California Native Plant Society will present a talk by Melanie Keeley. A variety of information and artist's booths will round out the Saturday event. We hope to see you there.



World Tree by Mona Fox Selph

Green Home Tour on October 2, 2011

Part of the Three Rivers Environmental Weekend

The fifth annual Green Home Tour in Three Rivers is part of the American Solar Energy Society's National Tour, featuring active or passive solar applications in homes and buildings. The five homes also incorporate many other creative green ideas, some as part of the original construction plan, and others as post construction solutions. Included this year will be one where the home-owners live in a log home, raise and preserve their own food, but have all of the conveniences their off-grid solar power provides. This year, as in the past, the tours will raise funds to promote responsible building and development in Tulare County. In the past, recipients of the proceeds from the tour have included Habitat for Humanity's Green Building Fund, Tulare County Citizens for Responsible Growth, and the Sierra Club's Kern Kaweah Chapter. Tours are 25 minutes at each of the five home sites reached by carpool caravan, and require advance registration. Tours start at noon and 1 pm. Tickets are \$15 per person, \$25 per couple. Call Mona Selph at 561-4676 to sign up.

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See this newsletter in color in a pdf file on our website.

Chapter facebook page facebook.com/altapeak.chapter

Alta Peak Chapter Annual Native Plant Sale

October 1, 2011



Three Rivers Arts Center North Fork Drive in Three Rivers

(Held in conjunction with the Three Rivers Green Faire)

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