



THE PAINTBRUSH

MARCH—APRIL 2003 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun., Mar. 9, 9:00 am:** Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Rick Fisher
- Thurs., Mar. 27, 7:30 pm:** *Are There Any New Cacti in California?* by Patrick Griffith
- Sat. Mar. 29, 9:00 am—Noon:** Spring Fire-following Wildflowers field trip with Steve Segreto, USFS
- Thurs. Apr. 3, 7 pm:** Chapter Board Meeting
- Sun., Apr. 13, 9:00 am:** Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Eva Morgan
- Thurs., Apr. 24, 7:30 pm:** *Eschscholzia: Rare, Medium-rare, and Well-distributed* by Curtis Clark

THE WOLVES AT THE DOOR:

The Three Lupines You Are Most Likely to Find At Eaton Canyon
By Jane Strong with illustrations from *The Jepson Manual* and *The Jepson Desert Manual*

The generic name, *Lupinus*, comes from the Latin *lupus*, for wolf. Earlier generations believed that lupines robbed the soil of nutrients, “wolved it down”, so to speak. But we now know that these plants are nitrogen-fixers, returning much needed chemicals to the ground they live upon.

Personally I always thought that the flowers looked like wolves’ heads, the banner petals sticking up like alert ears, the wings petals like hanging jowls or cheeks, and the protruding keel like a keen snout.

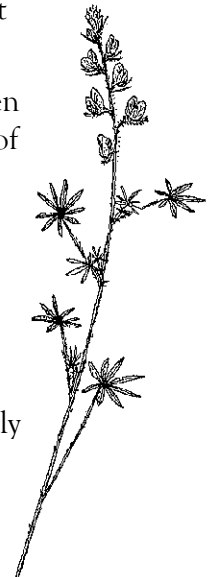
The three most commonly seen lupines in the canyon, stinging, collar and Coulter's, can be told apart by the leaves. The lupine leaf is palmately compound, that is, it has one leaf stalk and several leaflets all coming out from the same point, like fingers on the palm of a hand.



Stinging lupine, *L. hirsutissimus*, (pictured to the left) has 5-8 broad leaflets with scattered, stiff blister-based hairs that are very easy to see. Good thing, too, because this wolf bites (stings). Ouch! If you are so fortunate to see stinging lupine in bloom, you can recognize it immediately by its bright magenta spikes.

Collar lupine, *L. truncatus*, has 5-8 green linear (skinny) leaflets. Usually the tips of these leaflets look like they have been bitten off, truncated. These I find at the base of cliffs or small slides.

Coulter's lupine, *L. sparsiflorus*, (pictured to the right) has 7-11 small grayish-looking leaflets densely covered with long hairs. This is a larger number of leaflets than most lupines. Those I have seen at Eaton Canyon mostly have ten. These can be found in the wash and sandy areas.



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To review: stinging has 5-8 fat leaflets with blister-based hairs; collar has 5-8 skinny leaflets with the tips cut off; and Coulter's has 7-11 leaflets so densely covered with long hairs so as to appear gray.

Caution: If the lupines you see do not fit these descriptions, you have probably found another species. The three described above are only a few of the many kinds of these beautiful blue-spined plants. But they are the most likely little wolves to be encountered in Eaton Canyon at this stage of fire recovery.



THE SPRING FLOWERS in a wet year were unbelievable. The whole valley floor, and the foothills too, would be carpeted with lupins and poppies. Once a woman told me that colored flowers would seem more bright if you added a few white flowers to give the colors definition. Every petal of blue lupin is edged with white, so that a field of lupins is *more* blue than you can imagine. And mixed with these were splashes of California poppies. These too are of a burning color- not orange, not gold, but if pure gold were liquid and could raise a cream, that golden cream might be like the color of the poppies.

—JOHN STEINBECK,
East of Eden, 1952

Ed. Note: It's a good year to be "out among 'um". Check our website for ideas or call the T. Payne Fdn. Wildflower Hotline, 818-768-3533; then go out and enjoy the Golden State.

CHAPTER EVENTS

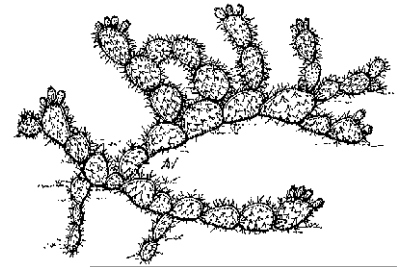
Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (map on back cover) on the fourth Thursday of the month. Informal plant identification and social time from 7:00 to 7:30 pm; programs start promptly at 7:30 pm.

PROGRAMS

Thurs., Mar. 27, 7:30 pm: *Are There Any New Cacti in California?*

by Patrick Griffith, PhD candidate at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

Generic and specific concepts in the Cactaceae have recently been under extensive revision. Do the new taxa accurately depict the relationships of Californian taxa among each other and plants from afar? Our speaker will discuss these questions with examples from his research on *Opuntia* and its relatives, with an emphasis on the Californian species. [NOTE: This talk was rescheduled from Feb.]



Opuntia phaeacantha
from *The Jepson Desert Manual*

Thurs. Apr. 3, 7 pm: *Chapter Board Meeting* at Eaton Canyon NC

Thurs., Apr. 24, 7:30 pm: *Eschscholzia: Rare, Medium-rare, and Well-distributed* by Curtis Clark, Professor CalPoly Pomona.

Why are some *Eschscholzia* species (such as the California poppy) widespread and common, and others localized and rare? This talk will examine some of the factors that affect abundance of the different species.

CHAPTER OUTINGS

TBA: *Bush Mallow Foray* with Steve Fischer. Call Steve for details as to date and location for this third Chapter outing to document the whereabouts of *Malacothamnus davidsonii*.

Sun., Mar. 9, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Rick Fisher

Sat. Mar. 29, 9:00 am—Noon: *Spring Fire-following Wildflowers* with Steve Segreto, USFS Ranger/Naturalist. This tour of the Curve Fire burn area in San Gabriel begins at the San Gabriel Canyon Environmental Education Center (the old Rincon Station) on Hwy 39 just west of the OHV area. The fee is \$5 per person (a donation to the Environmental Education Center). The trip is open to everyone as part of Steve's last Saturday of the month "Spend a Saturday Morning in the Forest" program. But he arranged the date for us [at Jane Strong's request]. He will scout the area the week before looking for all the flowers to show us. The last Saturday of every month is a free Adventure Pass day, so you can enjoy the rest of the day in the forest for free. The pass is not needed for parking for the tour. For more information/reservations, contact Steve Segreto at 626-335-1251 x 225.

Sun., Apr. 13, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Eva Morgan

OTHER OUTINGS

April 4-6: CNPS Desert Field Trip to Joshua Tree NP & environs

We will be camping at the Lost Horse Campground, reserved especially for our group. There will be field trips, some weeding, a meeting (Saturday late afternoon/evening), followed by a campfire sing-along/music making session (bring your guitar, fiddle, harmonica, mandolin, drum, etc. if you have one). The meeting is to discuss current environmental issues facing the desert and how CNPS can empower volunteers to get involved. The Friday morning agenda is optional, so it is OK to arrive late Friday afternoon or evening or to arrive Saturday morning before 10 am. There has been rainfall in the desert this winter so we are hoping for wildflowers.



The tentative agenda will be:

Friday, April 4, 8:00 am meet at Big Morongo Wildlife Preserve for bird watching and nature walk. At around noon we will leave Big Morongo and drive into Joshua Tree NP as a caravan, stopping along the way if there are flowers, and then on to Lost Horse Campground to set up camp. Friday afternoon will include various hikes in the vicinity of the campground, and Friday night will include a night hike. Lost Horse Campground has a porta-potty but no water.

Saturday, April 5 at 10:00 am sharp, begin caravan to hiking/weeding locations during the day. Meeting around the campfire in the evening.

Sunday, April 6. Drive south to Cottonwood Springs with stops on the way at various places and visit "Native Canyon" to pull weeds. Go home.

Please RSVP Steve Hartman at naturebase@aol.com or 818-881-3706.

Detailed instructions will be sent via email to all respondents.

May 17-18: Field Trip for the Hardy—Idria Serpentine/Joaquin Rocks

Once again this spring the Bureau of Land Management, Hollister Field Office, and many CNPS chapters, will cosponsor a fascinating, rugged field trip to southern San Benito and western Fresno counties. Our trip will begin at the BLM Hollister Field Office at 9:00 a.m. Saturday morning on May 17, returning late afternoon on Sunday the 19th. We will approach the Idria serpentine from the east via Panoche Road through Griswold Canyon, up through the historic mining town of Idria.

Our trip will include several stops to observe plant community composition and to eat lunch, as we meander through the geologically diverse terrain. We will traverse the higher elevations of the Clear Creek Management Area; through the unique San Benito Mountain forest (containing Jeffrey and Coulter pines, plus hybrids between the two

species), with a final destination at the Joaquin Rocks for dinner and camping. Sunday morning we will botanize around the Rocks and develop a plant list. After lunch we will begin our journey back to the Hollister Field office and then home.

Expect to experience beautiful rare and common native plants, interesting geology, and the lore of the Joaquin rocks under a full moon. Handouts will be provided including information on the Idria Serpentine Block, and the legend of Joaquin Murietta.

High clearance, 4-wheel drive vehicles are strongly recommended and car-pooling a must. Limited number of vehicles will be allowed into the vehicle restricted Joaquin Rocks management Area. Bring food and water for the entire weekend (NO potable water will be available), clothing and footwear for a range of temperatures and moderate to rough hiking.

Participants must contact trip coordinator Julie Anne for further information and directions to the BLM office (H) 831-392-1820, (W) 831-630-5028.



The Newsletter of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is published bi-monthly and is free to Chapter members. Non-member subscription is \$5.00.

To join the California Native Plant Society, write to CNPS, 1722 J St., Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Please specify San Gabriel Mountains Chapter. Enclose check payable to CNPS.

Membership categories: Individual/Library - \$35; Student/Retired/Limited Income - \$20; Family/Group - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Plant Lover - \$100; Patron - \$250.00; Life - \$1000.

THANK YOU

Since the Fall 2000 issue of the Chapter newsletter, Marianne D. Wallace has provided the excellent illustrations for the Plant Profile feature. Now, both her drawing and writing pens are quite busy with several book projects, including the illustrations for Ron Quinn's forthcoming volume on chaparral from University of California Press and additional volumes in her series of natural history books for young people. So Marianne is going to take a break from Chapter commitments. "Thank You" Marianne for your past contributions and we look forward to seeing your new publications.



NATIVE.NET

Our April program speaker, Curtis Clark has a site that yields some wonderful material on both California poppies and the genus *Encelia*. Log on at www.csupomona.edu/~jcclark and click on the Activities category. Besides general, scientific, historical, and horticultural information, the California poppies section even has the words to two Poppy songs. The *Encelia* section is purely scientific and includes a listing of *Encelia* species with links to photos and distribution maps for each species.

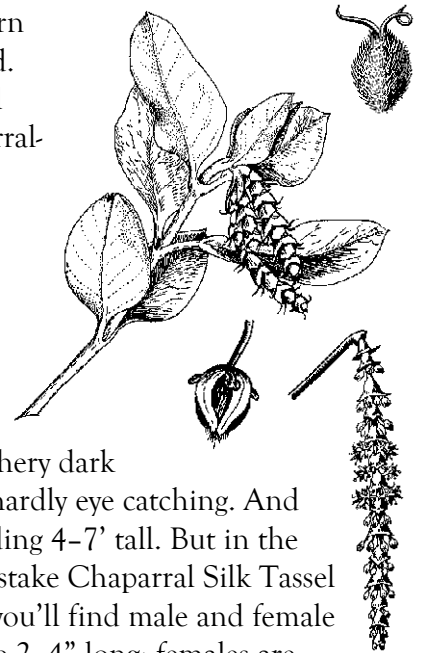
Continuing on the State Flower-theme, try checking out the website for the Antelope Valley Poppy Preserve at www.calparksmojave.com/poppy. There's information on the current year's predicted bloom, as well as information from the past.

PLANT PROFILE:

Garrya veatchii; Chaparral Silk-Tassel
Garryaceae; Silk-Tassell Family

Text by Kathy LaShure; Illustration from Munz's *A Flora of Southern California*

One of the pleasures of living in Southern California is that we can hike year-round. When the high peaks of the San Gabriel Mountains are snow covered, the chaparral-lined trails in the Front Range beckon. And it's here that we find some fascinating shrubs. Nearly everyone can recognize the Manzanitas with their distinctive red bark and fairy-lantern flowers. But how many of you know our local Silk Tassel, *Garrya veatchii*?



Most of the year its brown bark and leathery dark green leaves with woolly undercoats are hardly eye catching. And it's not an imposing shrub, usually standing 4-7' tall. But in the early spring (Feb.- Mar.) you'll never mistake Chaparral Silk Tassel for any other plant. On separate plants you'll find male and female catkins, 2 to 4 to a cluster. The males are 2-4" long; females are 1½-3" long. Both look like pendulous garlands of tiny cream-colored tea cups strung upside down. These remarkable flowers are followed (on the female plants) by small dark berries.

One location you might try looking for this Silk Tassel is along the closed (to vehicular traffic, but not hikers) road (2N80) leading from the Angeles Crest Highway to Grizzly Flat (going northeast) or to Mt. Lukens (going east and joining 2N76). Consult an Angeles National Forest map before setting out.

Besides enjoying this plant on mountain rambles, why not add one to your home landscape? They are tough and rapid growing, making ideal screens and slope retainers. Or you could use just one as a specimen plant, surrounded by plants with fine-textured foliage such as *Achillea millefolium* or prostrate forms of *Artemisia californica*. You might have some trouble locating our local species for purchase but it's more northerly cousin, *Garrya elliptica*, is widely available, especially the cultivar "James Roof" (which has truly spectacular foot-long catkins). You can find a fabulous photo of another cultivar, "Pat Ballard", looking like a garland-draped Christmas shrub, on the website of the Bellevue (WA) Botanical Garden (www.bellevuebotanical.org/frame/plantmonthindex).

Besides its attractiveness, Silk Tassel offers another plus: herbalists consider it to be an effective antispasmodic and pain reliever. Consult Michael Moore's excellent *Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West* for a complete discussion of preparations and treatments.

MEKÁCHA.A

California's Golden Poppy

By Mark F. Acuña, Gabrieleno-Tongva

Illustration from *The Jepson Manual*

It is now the last month of winter. Already the lacy leaves of *Mekácha* are seen everywhere in the grassy and open places. Where the villages burned grasslands to insure better grasses for basketry work, the explosion of *Mekácha* is especially noticeable.

The Tongva women are out gathering the leaves before the flower blossoms. The late winter, early spring vegetation is the best for eating. Once the flower blossoms the medicine people would follow the women into the fields to harvest the golden flowers. But for now the leaves are being gathered. They will be leached carefully, cooked, and eaten. Later, the women would gather flowers but would leach and wash them extensively because these flowers are under the protection of *Manit*, the High One of visions and dreams. To misuse the flowers by not carefully washing, leaching, and soaking might endanger the community.

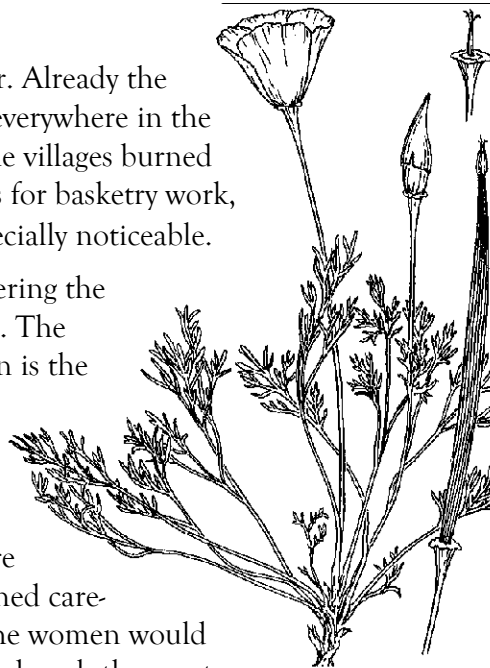
The medicine people, men and women, come now to gather the roots which are used for their stupefying effects. The roots are dried and ground and used in healing ceremonies. The patient would be given dried *Mekácha* roots as a drug to enhance the healing process.

If the medicine person was an expert in *Mekácha*, she would use the juice of the roots for stomachache, carefully doling out the proper amount. The juicy sap was also used for headaches and applied to sores. That usage also required care and attention. If a villager asked for medicine for a toothache, cuttings from the roots were applied directly on the affected tooth.

Mothers would cook up a decoction of the flowers for use in killing hair lice, and midwives would apply scrapings of the roots to the umbilical cord of a newborn baby to stop the bleeding and to heal the navel.

The medicine people knew that the roots could cause vomiting and that all parts of the plant were toxic. Therefore, usage was done with great care. Pregnant women were never allowed to use *Mekácha*. This golden flower blooming from February to September would lure them with its beauty, but deep within the shining blossom lurked the ways of *Manit*.

But now the hills are covered with the lacy leaves; in a few places, the blossoming has already begun. Soon the entire world of the Tongva would be ablaze with the shining gold of the California Poppy.



Nonhorticultural people may look blank when you speak of "native California flowers," but they generally come to life if you mention California Poppies.

—LESTER ROWNTREE

Flowering Shrubs of California, 1947



WELCOME! New members

Sean McFeely

Scott Randles

Thank You to renewing members

Please consider renewing at a higher level. Your support of our native flora is much appreciated!



ELECTIONS AHEAD New Blood Needed

At the June 26 meeting the Chapter will elect Board members. The slate will be published in the next newsletter. But the Board is looking for new at-large members to serve along with the elected officers and Committee chairs and help with the work of running the Chapter. The Board meets 4 times a year, in Aug., Oct., Feb., and Apr. If you are willing to serve in this capacity or help with a particular committee, please contact President Lyn McAfee at 626-359-5278 or LynMcAfee@aol.com.

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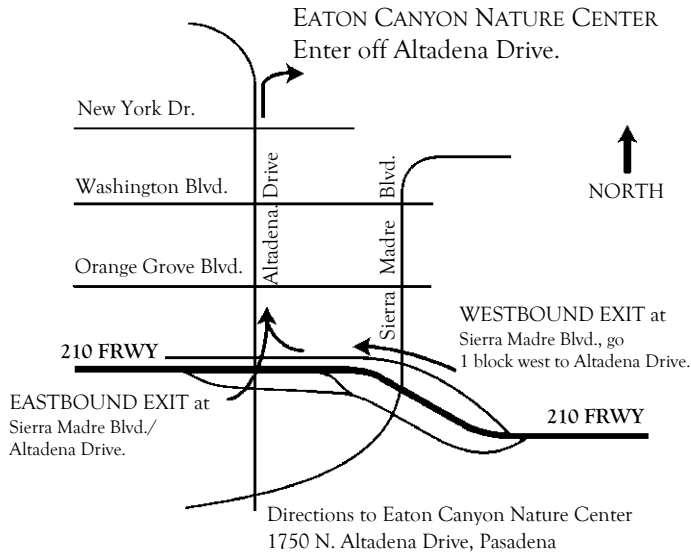
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Chapter Website: <http://cnps-sgm.org>

Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs & professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding & appreciation of California's native plants & to conserve them and their natural habitats, through education, science, horticulture & advocacy. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal Fremontia, the quarterly Bulletin which gives statewide news & announcements of Society activities & conservation issues, & the chapter newsletter.



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
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