



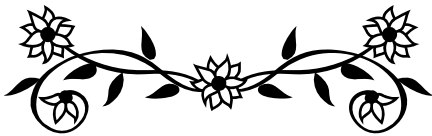
THE PAINTBRUSH

MAY-JUNE 2003 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun., May 11, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Gabi & Cliff McLean

Thurs., May 22, 7:30 pm: *What's In a Name: Does Spanish Moss Tell You Anything Useful?* by Gary Wallace

Sat., May 31, 9:00 am: *Tour of the San Dimas Experimental Forest*

Sun., June 8, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Steve Fischer

Thurs., June 26, 7:30 pm: *Rare and Unique Plants of the Santa Monica Mountains* by Tim Thomas

Sat., June 28, 2003, 9:00 am: *High Country Wildflowers Tour of the Crystal Lake Region*

Thurs., Aug. 7, 7:00 pm: *Chapter Board Meeting*

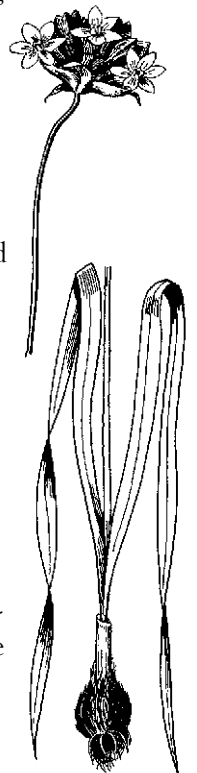
FROM THE FIELD:

Burn Area of the Angeles National Forest CNPS Fieldtrip March 29, 2003

by Gabi McLean with illustrations from Munz' A Flora of Southern California

There were about thirty plant lovers who met at the San Gabriel Canyon Environmental Education Center on Highway 39. Angeles National Forest rangers Steve Segreto and Rick Dean welcomed us. Rick led our caravan north past the west fork of the San Gabriel River and through the gate where Caltrans prevents access to the road into the forest. We were fortunate to have several plant experts with us, such as Jane Strong, Bob Muns, and Horace Birgh, who graciously shared their knowledge of our local plants.

At our first stop we parked at the edge of the road, a short mile past the gate. To the east a lush meadow on a terrace with dove lupine, eucrypta, California evening primrose, and miner's lettuce overlooked the San Gabriel riverbed, where burned and deciduous alders appeared still drab and bare. Up on the terrace though we were dazzled by blues and purples from an abundance of wild hyacinth (*Dichelostemma pulchella*, pictured to the right) and chia and by golden yellows with orange-red accents from lotus (*Lotus strigosa*) and sun cups (*Camissonia bistorta*). Popcorn flowers dotted the spectacle with white highlights. To the west, the hills were covered with the striking purple-blue of stinging lupine and Canterbury bells with the bright orange of poppies (not the California one) mixed in between. Our excitement peaked when we discovered a yellow-throated phacelia (*Phacelia brachyloba*), another "fire-follower".



It was hard to believe that this area was the site of a fiery inferno, not far from where the Curve fire started. Only the black, stretched-out limbs of the remaining skeletons of larger shrubs reminded us that this area was scorched. The scrub oak, chamise, basket bush, honeysuckle, and ceanothus had been burned, but not destroyed. Everywhere new growth was sprouting from the root systems.

As we continued north, waves of green alternated with splashes of blue, purple, and yellow on the lower hillsides, while the upper slopes still appeared barren from afar.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

At our second stop, stinging lupine (*Lupinus hirsutissima*) caught our eye. Among the yuccas, we found a variety of annuals emerging. We recognized some—like the larkspur—but not others since they were not blooming yet.

The most stunning sun cups any of us had ever seen prompted our next stop. The brightest of yellow radiated from flowers, which were almost twice their regular size. We explored the steep hillside behind the golden carpet, where

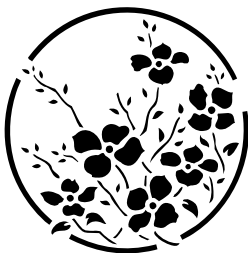
_____ thick stands of *Phacelia minor* (pictured to the left) made the species name look silly. A special treat was the discovery of several specimen of white snapdragon, with six foot-tall flower stalks reaching high into the sky.



As we made our way back, I was filled with awe by the

tender beauty of the wildflowers, the resilience of the forest after the fire, the stark contrast of the many signs of destruction on one side, and the resurgence of life on the other. This visit to the forest was well worth while. If you missed it, there will be two CNPS fieldtrips to explore wildflowers at higher elevations in the San Gabriel Mountains: on May 31 to the San Dimas Experimental Forest and on June 28 to the Crystal Lake area (see Outings listing to the right for details). I certainly wouldn't want to miss the chance of visiting these sites of wonder.

Editor's Note: If you go to our Chapter website (<http://cnps-sgm.org>) you can read this article complete with Gabi's color photos.



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.

NOTE: no programs or Plant Walks in July or August. See you in September!

PROGRAMS

Thurs., May 22, 7:30 pm: *What's In a Name: Does Spanish Moss Tell You Anything Useful?* by Gary Wallace of US Fish and Wildlife Service and Chapter Board member. Where do plant names come from and why do they always seem to change? Believe it or not, there are usually really good reasons and yet other times... And, if there is time Gary will be sleuthing the misnamed plant: Missions, Botanical Gardens, Sailing ships, Earthquake, War, etc.

Thurs., June 26, 7:30 pm: *Rare and Unique Plants of the Santa Monica Mountains* by Tim Thomas of US Fish and Wildlife Service. This presentation will illustrate the interesting topographical and geological factors that have led to the overall floristic composition of the Santa Monica Mountain range, and detail for us the unique distribution of the range's rare plant species. Citing the genus *Dudleya* as an example, Mr. Thomas will also explain how paleo- and microclimates have limited, and continue to limit, plant distribution in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Thurs., Aug. 7, 7:00 pm: Chapter Board Meeting at Eaton Canyon.

OUTINGS

Sun., May 11, 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Gabi & Cliff McLean

Sat., May 31, 9:00 am: Tour of the San Dimas Experimental Forest.

See the changes that have occurred since our trip last year. The manager says there are "lots of flowers coming up". Meet at the San Gabriel Canyon Environmental Education Center on Highway 39. Donation is \$5.00 per person. No Adventure Pass needed. Please RSVP to Steve Segreto at 626-335-1251, ext 225. Identify yourself as a member of CNPS-SGM. He will give priority to our members. Limited to 35 people.

Sun., June 8, 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Steve Fischer

Sat., June 28, 2003, 9:00 am: High Country Wildflowers Tour of the Crystal Lake Region. Once again the USFS ranger/naturalist Steve Segreto, has provided us with an opportunity to seek out the wildflowers in a burn area, this time at a much higher elevation. Meet at the San Gabriel Canyon Environmental Education Center on Highway 39. Donation is \$5.00 per person. No Adventure Pass needed. Please RSVP to Steve at 626-335-1251, ext 225. Identify yourself as a member of CNPS-SGM. He will give priority to our members.

SAVE THE DATE!!

Sat., Nov. 15, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm:

Under the Oaks: Native Plants for Foothill Gardens at Eaton Canyon Nature Center. Plant & seed sale. Chapter fund raiser. If you'd like to volunteer to help, please contact Kathy LaShure at 562-693-5717 or encelia@gte.net.



PLANT PROFILE:

Achillea millefolium; Yarrow

Text by Kathy LaShure with illustration by Mimi Kamp from Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West by Michael Moore

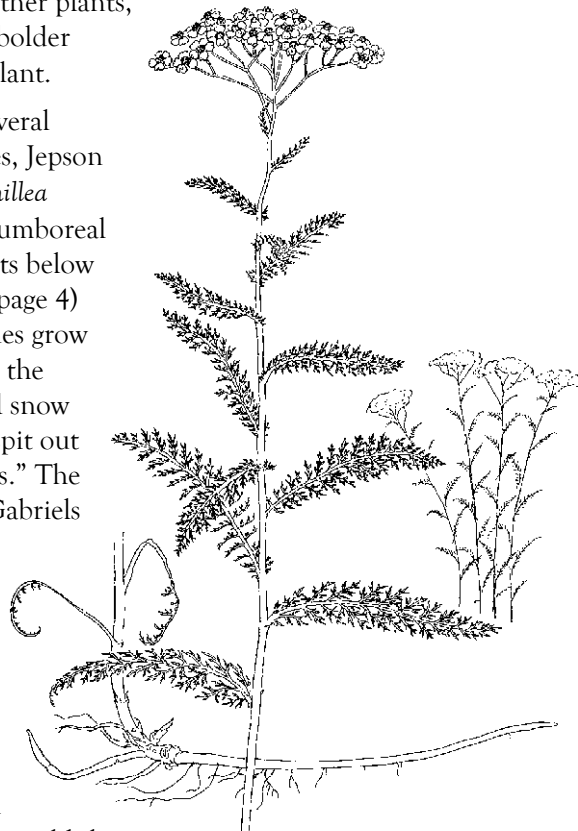
If there's one native plant that everyone can find a place for in their garden, it's yarrow. It's ridiculously easy to grow from seed, usually blooming the first year, even though it's a perennial. It's natural inclination is to make mats, but you can tame it into clumps, or you can let it make a dandy ground cover in a small area (it can even take mowing once a year). It's feathery green foliage and dainty white flowers blend well with other plants, softening brighter flowers and bolder foliage. It's a superb butterfly plant.

While older floras recognize several species, sub-species and varieties, Jepson has lumped them all under *Achillea millefolium*, stating that is a circumboreal plant occurring in many habitats below 11,000 ft. Michael Moore (see page 4) says "look for it...where the Pines grow and skiers doggedly drive up in the winter hoping for some natural snow but settling for what has been spit out by a sno-cone-maker on steroids." The best place to see it in the San Gabriels is at Islip Saddle, one of Jane Strong's regular stops when she looking for butterflies.

Yarrow is a member of the Asteraceae family. So if you look closely at the cymes on the flowering stalks, you'll find numerous tiny heads each with both ray and disk flowers. In the wild these appear mainly from late spring into summer, but garden plants may bloom earlier and later. They make excellent cut flowers. The foliage is dissected, highly aromatic, feathery, fern-like, dark green. The plants have creeping rootstalks which can be somewhat controlled by limiting water (which will also limit flowering). I find that unwanted plants are easily removed. And their tenacity has proved valuable in my garden as one patch near my compost bin is regularly dug up by visiting opossums; I just pat it back down, water it a bit, and it starts growing again.

Herbalists list many uses for yarrow, harvesting the flowering stalks with some leaves. It is the standard remedy for fever, particularly for colds and flu; try it in a tea with elder flowers and peppermint. It lowers blood pressure by dilating peripheral vessels and tones those vessels. It stimulates digestion. It stops bleeding both internally (excessive menstrual flow, postpartum bleeding, hemorrhoids) and externally (heals wounds, styptic for nosebleeds). For an instant "band-aid" I've smashed freshly plucked leaves onto cuts when out in the garden.

This is one native plant I wouldn't be without.



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

Spring in California

by Kathy LaShure

The vibrancy of California's spring flora has been an inspiration to writers and painters alike. John A. Gamble's plein air paintings of shimmering fields of poppies and lupines capture their transient beauty just as Steinbeck's words do. And anyone who has read John Muir will remember the thrilling passage from *The Mountains of California* of his first encounter with the vast flower fields of the Central Valley. "The radiant, honeyful corollas, touching and overlapping, and rising above one another, glowed in the living light like a sunset sky—one sheet of purple and gold."

Although this past January was uncommonly warm and dry, the spring months brought significant rain. So we have wildflowers luring us out on trails and back roads. Try Theodore Payne Foundation's Wildflower Hotline at 818-768-3533 or www.theodorepayne.org. Another great online resource, California Wildflower Hotsheet, can be found at <http://calphoto.com/wflower.htm>. Head for the desert or the mountains or a botanical garden (see the Chapter website for a list) to enjoy the beauty that makes this truly the Golden State.

Some more Michael Moore:

Silk tassel can aid gallbladder flare-ups. Consider this scenario: it's 3:00 am after Thanksgiving dinner, which consisted of lots of dressing, gravy with lipid bubbles not quite congealed, candied and butter yams with marshmallows, cornbread with butter, plum pudding with hard sauce and several glasses of somebody's pet wine from Napa Valley, then some pumpkin pie with a delicious Crisco crust; 3 hours later at 11:00 pm, you eat some mince-meat pie and later after you've gone to bed you have dull, sulphur-green pains in your belly that just awoke you. Stand up, walk around, try to burp, and take some Silk Tassel for your gallbladder that cries out in distress, in mortal need of some more bile acids.

Our common name of Chaparral [for Creosote] makes botanists and range-management types grind their teeth in frustration; for them, Chaparral is a name for a whole biosphere of life ecology, like arctic tundra or oak woodlands. Nonetheless, it is our most common name for the plant as a medicine.

I was once served turkey stuffed with "Sage" (actually Sagebrush) dressing, cooked up by some well-meaning folks from the city who were starting a farming commune in the most desolate land in northern New Mexico. The last time I saw them they were muttering about "navels of the Earth" and "negative Interfacing" eating Twinkies at a convenience store in Taos. On their way back to Berkeley. (Nobody was able to eat that turkey, by the way.)

[on Black Cottonwood] The winter/spring leaf buds are resinous, aromatic, and reddish brown wads of oily goo, and when dried have the unfortunate appearance of dead cockroaches, dipped in beeswax and lightly browned.

NATIVE BOOKSHELF

3 by Michael Moore:

Medicinal Plants of the Desert & Canyon West; Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West; Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West

by Kathy LaShure

No, this is not the Michael Moore who made a fuss at this year's Oscar ceremony. But he's just as famous among herbal folks. And if you're at all interested in the healing aspects of our local flora, these are the *major* books to use. Even if you're not interested in "complimentary" medicine, give one of these volumes a try; they're very informative and just plain fun. In fact, I can't think of any other plant-related books that can give you a good laugh. I had the good fortune to attend two lectures by Mr. Moore at a botanical medicine conference recently; he's just as amusing in person and I came home with copious notes.

The volume you'll want to pick up first is *Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West*; it covers all of Southern California except the desert regions and continues north into Canada. The plants include escaped exotics (which herbalists often feel have *primo* medicinal qualities because of their tenacity and adaptability), as well as natives. Each entry includes an excellent line drawing by Mimi Kamp (another fine herbalist), a listing of names (botanical and common), a detailed visual description, habitat, constituents (i.e. active chemistry), collecting information (what plant part and when), stability, preparation methods, medicinal uses, and contraindications. There are also detailed instructions for the various methods of preparation (teas, salves, poultices, tinctures, etc.).

The other volumes are similarly arranged, but with different illustrators. There is some overlap between the volumes, but not much. *Medicinal Plants of the Desert & Canyon West* has many interesting references to the herbal lore of both native peoples and those of Hispanic ancestry.

Because of my involvement with CNPS, I don't collect plants (or any of their parts) in the wild without proper permission. So I find these books to be invaluable when deciding what to plant in my home landscape. The preparation instructions are excellent to use with home-grown or purchased herbs. Even if you have no interest in trying any of the remedies given in these books, the books will expand your knowledge of the native plants you already know and help you to recognize some that you've yet to meet.

...a delicious tea. When I had my herb store in Topanga, California, I liked to brew up some Lapsang Souchang & some Hummingbird Sage for those cold, clammy February mornings, when the coastal dampness held no pleasure & I would drive to North Hollywood just to get warm.



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.

HUHERHETCHUT: The Herb the Church Sanctified *Eriodictyon crassifolium*, Yerba Santa

by Mark F. Acuña, Gabrielino-Tongva with illustration by Mimi Kamp from Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West by Michael Moore

The late winter rains have been followed by a warm sunny spring. The hills of *Tovangar*, as the Tongva called their world, have greened, blossomed, and filled the air with sweet, bitter, thick, and subtle scents. Food plants, medicine plants, sacred plants and basketry plants are everywhere. Even our modern 21st century freeways are lined with golden poppies, purple phacelias, and blue lupine. And all along the hills and gullies, valleys, and chaparral of the Los Angeles Basin one wonderful plant is sending up new growth. The indigenous Tongva would have been rejoicing that this wondrous medicinal is offering itself for the people. *Huherhetchut*, the sacred cure-all had been gifted to us by the “High Ones”.

The women would gather its sticky dark leaves and add sweet berries to make a cool refreshing drink. The bitter leaves, ameliorated by the berry juices, were made into a soothing tea both as refreshment and as a spring tonic. As the spring moved its great wheel toward summer, women gathered small quantities to dry and store for winter colds and coughs. During those coming hot summer months, *huherhetchut* leaves would be chewed as a thirst quencher. But the virtues of the plant which the Catholic missionaries would sanctify with the name “Yerba Santa” (Holy Plant) went beyond that of a mild tea.

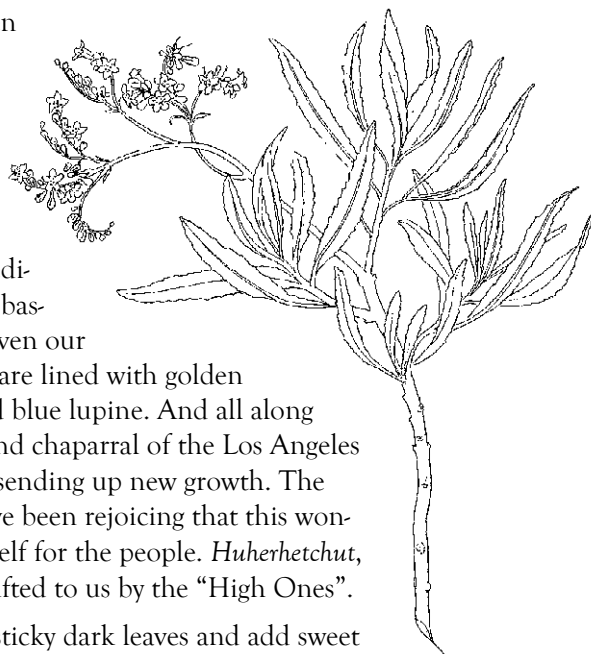
Huherhetchut was a prime medicinal for the Tongva. Everyone knew its power and medicine people and the common folk all gathered and used this ubiquitous and wonderful plant.

The leaves, both fresh or dried, were boiled into strong teas for coughs, sore throats, stomach aches, diarrhea, asthmatic problems, and as a blood purifier. A thick brew was boiled and used as an expectorant to cough up phlegm.

Fevers and rheumatic pain were alleviated by a liniment made of leaves and stems. Fresh leaves were pounded into poultices for sores, swellings, insect bites, and even for poison oak rashes. Such poultices were applied to exhausted limbs and to fractured bones to reduce swelling. Bronchial spasms were soothed by smoking dried *huherhetchut* leaves as a tobacco.

And branches of this aromatic evergreen shrub were hung in “sweat houses” for general purification. The heat and steam combined with the bitter-sweet odor of the “holy herb” to raise the spiritual values of a family sweat.

Still today, this ever-present hillside plant is gathered by the Tongva. No home botanic is complete without the sticky dark green and silvered leaves of *huherhetchut*. Grandmothers make us our spring teas and smile as we grimace from the bitter taste of this wonder of many uses.



ELECTION AHEAD!

Although most of us think of November as “election time,” this Chapter has found that voting for Board members works best in the month of June. That allows the Board to work over the summer on plans for programs and the fall fund raiser, *Under the Oaks*.

So here’s the slate of officers you can vote for on June 26:

President: Lyn McAfee
Vice President: Cliff McLean
Secretary: Steve Fischer
Treasurer: Virginia Iser

The remaining Board members are appointed or volunteer themselves. As always, we can use more person power, so if there’s a job you’d like to help with, just let Lyn or Cliff know (see the back page for their contact information).



Here’s hoping each of you have some excellent plant adventures over the summer.

WELCOME! New members

Deb & Robert Benada
Patrick Houser
Victoria Rudolph
Carolyn Small

Thank you to all renewing members.

Please consider upgrading your membership category to a higher category when you do renew. Your support of our native flora is appreciated.

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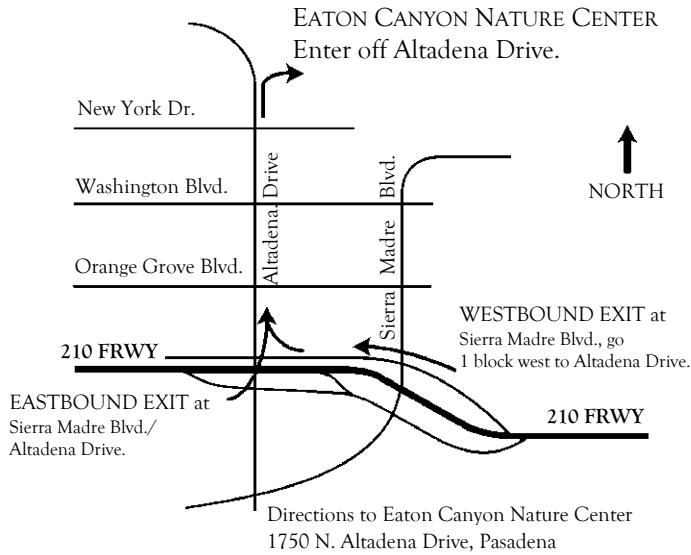
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Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

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.



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