



THE PAINTBRUSH

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 2005

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Sun., Jan. 9, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Orchid Black*

Thurs., Jan. 27, 7:30 pm: *Vascular Plants of the Whipple Mountains* by Sarah DeGroot

Thurs., Feb. 10, 7:30 pm: *Chapter Board Meeting at Eaton Canyon*

Sun., Feb. 13, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Clem Padick*

Thurs., Feb. 24, 7:30 pm: *Braunton's Milkvetch, A California Original* by Betsy Landis

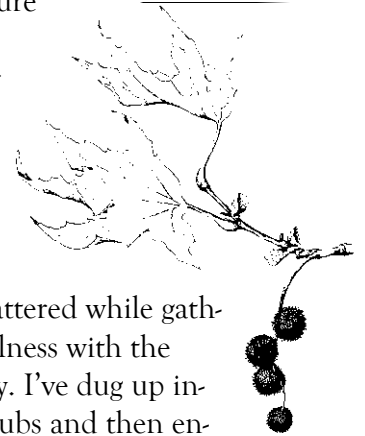
Thurs. Mar. 24, 7:30 pm: *Theodore Payne (1872-1963): How He Saved and is Still Saving the California Native Plants* by Elizabeth Pomeroy

GREEN BLESSINGS

By Kathy LaShure

Recently I sent an email to someone and added my usual closing line "Green Blessings." When I saw him in person later, he asked what I meant by my closing. It had never occurred to me that "Green Blessings" would be a mystery. Certainly not to anyone who knows anything at all about me. I often say that I have a green heart. And I like to wiggle all ten of my fingers, declaring that everyone in my family has green digits, not just thumbs. I owe so much to the Green World. It has given me healing and strength for many years. But it now occurs to me that not everyone has such an intimate and loving relationship with the natural world.

Many times in my life I have turned to Nature for healing, whether getting away from job pressures or restoring my physical health or finding a way to put tragedy behind me and move forward. I've hiked high mountain trails, going high to get high. I've pulled weeds in the Rothenberg Memorial Garden, listening to the breeze in the fall-crisped sycamore leaves as woodpeckers chattered while gathering acorns. I've slept out in the desert stillness with the Milky Way smeared across the midnight sky. I've dug up invasive ivy and planted California native shrubs and then enjoyed the birds and insects that arrive. I've studied, grown, and used healing herbs.



Some years ago I put a poem entitled "Supposition" in this space of the newsletter. You can find it again on page 7 of this edition. Back in the fall of 1998, below that poem, I asked the following questions of you. "How are you praising the universe? What are you doing for the prosperous welfare of the universe?"

These are still relevant questions. In fact, I feel that they are even more relevant today. After the November election, I knew that the natural world was going to need more advocates, more protective action, and more prayers. Since then I've been pondering what more I

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

can do for the Green World, if I'm as green as I say I am.

I do lots of small things: recycle, drive a Super Low Emissions car, garden organically, don't use toxic cleaners like chlorine bleach. I use the National Resources Defense Fund website to write letters of environmental concern. I belong to various environmental organizations. I edit this newsletter.

But somehow, right now at the beginning of a new year, these seem to be just small efforts. Though I think that if everyone did these relatively simple things or others like them, the cumulative effect would be major. Maybe I need to add some more small efforts, but maybe I need to tackle something big. Maybe there's some new way in which our Chapter can be more effective in fulfilling our mission to preserve this state's abundantly diverse flora. Maybe some of you feel this need too. Maybe we can work together. Let's keep up the praise!



SPECIAL EVENT

Sat., Mar. 5, 9:00 am: State CNPS Meeting at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont. Any member is invited to attend.

HELP WANTED

Our Chapter co-hosts the above event with the Riverside- San Bernardino Chapter. We will be providing refreshments for the morning sessions and the hospitality hour before dinner. If you can help, please contact Lyn McAfee at 626-359-5278 or LynMcAfee@aol.com.

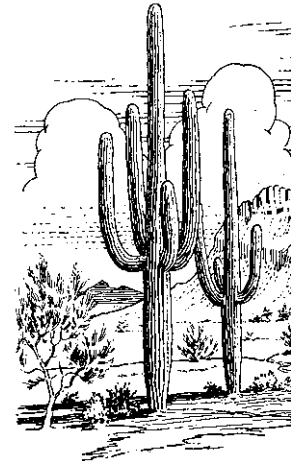
CHAPTER EVENTS

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 is from 7:00 to 7:30 pm; programs start promptly at 7:30 pm.

PROGRAMS

Thurs., Jan 27, 7:30 pm: *Vascular Plants of the Whipple Mountains* by Sarah DeGroot, PhD candidate, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

The Sonoran and Mojave deserts meet just north of the Whipple Mountains, which are situated in southeast San Bernardino County, California, along the Colorado River and adjacent to Arizona. Plant collections in the area have yielded primarily California Sonoran plants, but also several Mojave and Arizona plants. Packrat midden data yielded clues about what plants were present 13,810 years ago. Climate data suggests that summer rainfall is a factor underlying the vegetational differences between the western and eastern portions of the Sonoran desert. Three taxa new to California's flora were documented in this study.



Thurs., Feb. 24, 7:30 pm: *Braunton's Milkvetch, A California Original* by Betsy Landis, President of the LA/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter. What began as a reader's agitated response to an article Betsy wrote for her Chapter's newsletter triggered a lawsuit against Ventura County and a six-year hunt for clues to the history and lifestyle of a very beautiful, very Californian plant. The entire world population of Braunton's Milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) occurs in four relatively small areas: the Simi Hills; the Santa Monica Mountains; above Monrovia in the San Gabriel Mountains; northern Santa Ana Mountains. Come find out why!

Thurs. Mar. 24, 7:30 pm: *Theodore Payne (1872-1963): How He Saved and is Still Saving the California Native Plants* by Elizabeth Pomeroy. This talk will relate some stories of this industrious Englishman, who arrived in California at age 21 and spent a lifetime preserving and making available our native plants. His engaging personality and some of his cultivation secrets will be revealed. Liz is the editor of the new book *Theodore Payne in His Own Words: A Voice for California Native Plants*, which gives an entertaining view of Southern California lands and people from the 1890s to the 1940s.

BOARD MEETING

Thurs., Feb. 10, 7:30 pm at Eaton Canyon Nature Center

OUTINGS

Sun., Jan. 9, 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Orchid Black

Sun., Feb. 13, 9:00 am: Eaton Canyon Plant Walk with Clem Padick

Check our website <http://cnps-sgm.org> for other organizations' trips.

REJUVINATING THE GARDEN

By Daniel Geiger with illustrations from *The Jepson Manual*

On December 12, 2004 a dozen gardening enthusiasts gathered at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center's Becky Rothenberg Memorial Garden for some hands-on instructions on planting California native plants. The workshop was guided by Gabi and Cliff McLean with the participants digging in under ideal weather conditions.

The garden is set up at Eaton Canyon to generate interest in using native plants for gardening. In order to achieve this goal, a number of objectives have to be met: natives are shown; no excessive watering should be required; the garden should look appealing throughout the seasons and invite emulation at home.

First, the garden had to be prepared for planting. Some overly large shrubs such as a mule fat (*Bacharis salicifolia*) and a California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) were removed for aesthetic reasons. Masses of the alien and invasive sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*) were removed from the more grassy areas and among the large prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia littoralis* =? *O. vaseyi*).



Gabi and Cliff explained and demonstrated the proper planting procedures for natives, from pre-soaking the planting hole, over the importance of compacting the soil to remove air pockets, to building the moat for post-planting watering. Next, an intrepid volunteer committed an inevitable but instructional mistake, namely planting too high. A debate about the virtue or lack of necessity to use gloves ended up in a dead-lock. The participants, some CNPS members, some from the general public, set out to try their hands at planting the natives, 50 plants in all. Five plants of ten species each were placed by Gabi and Cliff, including lower growing types of sage (*Salvia* cultivar), four Penstemon species, some bush sunflowers (*Encelia californica*), and a bushmallow (*Malacothamnus* sp.). The smaller plants were placed close to the path, while the larger species were planted further to the back. The soil proved to be quite variable from perfectly smooth and rich to minor gravel and rock pockets. The plants were interred quickly with the many hands.

In order to make the garden attractive throughout the seasons, some wildflower seeds were provided. The garden patch, though, was moderately covered with grasses, which make it hard for the native flowers to flourish. Therefore, the whole ground was loosened up with hoes, taking great care not to plow under the new perennials. Time was taken out from this invigorating activity to sample the excellent fruit bread Gabi kindly provided and to observe three woodpeckers on a palm tree nearby. The CNPS-



SGM Rainbow Wildflower Seed mix was sown out. In early spring you should be able to see farewell to spring (*Clarkia bottae*), Chinese houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), baby blue eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*), royal penstemon (*Penstemon spectabilis*), wild canterbury bells (*Phacelia minor*), and wild heliotrope (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*).



Throughout the day Gabi and Cliff answered all sorts of questions about gardening in general, specific plants, and particular garden situations. Their expert information certainly sparked the imagination and enthusiasm of the participants as well as some passers-by. Thanks to Gabi and Cliff for leading this all-round winner event.



"If it is wild to your own heart, protect it. Preserve it. Love it. And fight for it, and dedicate yourself to it...It doesn't matter if it is wild to anyone else: if it is what makes your heart sing, if it is what makes your days soar like a hawk in summertime, then focus on it. Because for sure, it's wild, and if it's wild, it'll mean you're still free. No matter where you are."

—Rick Bass

Under the Oaks Recap

by Kathy LaShure, Event Chair

This year's fund raiser got pushed into December due to a scheduling conflict but the later date was not a problem. We had cool, crisp weather with the increasing promise of rain as the day progressed. But nary a drop fell until after closing time. What luck!

More plants were ordered and more wildflower seed packets prepared than for last year's event. At the end of the day only 30 some plants and no seeds remained. We had a steady flow of customers all morning, in spite of the USC-UCLA game at the Rose Bowl. Not everyone puts football ahead of native plants it seems.

I'd like to say a big *Thank You* to the crew who worked so hard to make this such a successful fund raiser for the Chapter: Graham Bothwell, Virginia Iser, Terry Keller, Rich LaShure, Lyn McAfee, Cliff and Gabi McLean, Bernie and Bob Mateer, Eva Morgan, Elizabeth Schwartz, Jane Strong, and, most especially, master plantsman Rick Fisher who ordered the plants, wrote the catalog and new plant lists, and helped customers make their plant choices.

Thank you also to everyone who purchased plants and seeds. I hope that all the plants will be happy in their new homes. Native plants and the resulting bird and insect visitors/residents can provide many years of enjoyment. Please come back next year (in November again) for *Under the Oaks V*. We'd like to continue our winning streak and get even more California native plants into home landscapes.

A SEASON OF BERRIES

Heteromeles arbutifolia; Toyon

By Mark F. Acuña, Gabrieleno-Tongva

Illustration from The Jepson Manual

As we enter the dark season of Winter, we can celebrate that entrance into the cold times as did the Tongva in their villages throughout the greater Los Angeles Basin. We withdraw into our homes and tell stories to our children. It is the great season of mending and learning. A time of family withdrawal from the outer world into the spiritual world of "Coyote Tale" time. In Spring, the physical world, *Yohúeeturhur*, will renew itself and the people will celebrate that return. But now in the cold times, in the months of "Whistling Wind" and "Cold and Last Hunts" the people rejoice in the harvesting of the bright red *Ashuwet* berries, the Toyon.

Known by botanists as *Heteromeles arbutifolia* and by Californians as Toyon, Christmas Berry, California Berry, or Holly Berry (giving Hollywood its name), it is *Ashuwet* to the Tongva. This wondrous shrub gives food, medicine, tools, a dye, and hair ornaments. From Autumn throughout Winter the *Ashuwet* blossoms and gives its fruit.

The bark and the leaves were made into a tea for stomach pains and produced a seasonal tonic. The bark and leaves were also made into an infusion to wash infected wounds. The leaves were mashed and applied to sores. The flowers were pulverized and steeped as a tea which the women drank. The berries were made into a refreshing cider for all to drink. The berries also produced a dye and bark also was used to dye fish nets. The berries were eaten fresh, roasted, or boiled. After boiling, the berries would be baked in an earthen oven for two or three days.

Ashuwet wood was turned into fine arrows, awls, wedges, scrapers, spoons, mashers, and stirrers. And the men wore *Ashuwet* hairsticks decorated with Flicker feathers. Toyon brightened the cold dark days of *Achocheva* with its crimson fruit as the families gathered about their hearths sharing stories through the Winter.



CLAWS AND EFFECT:

A light-hearted look at the prickles on pine cones

Text and sketches by Jane Strong

Pines are separated into a genus from other conifers by having needle-like leaves bundled together in a papery sheath. Pines are further separated into species by the number of needles in the bundle, among other characteristics.

Our Three-Needle Pines

We have three species of three-needle pines in the San Gabriel Mountains (excluding the Liebre Mountains)—Coulter, Jeffrey and ponderosa. Sometimes ponderosa is referred to as yellow pine, sometimes ponderosa and Jeffrey together are referred to as yellow pines. Jeffrey pine is the most common species in our local forest.

Coulter is sufficiently different from the yellow pines as not to make difficulties in identification. The leaves are longer and the cones heavier. In fact, Coulter cones are the heaviest in the world! But separating Jeffrey from ponderosa is not as easy.

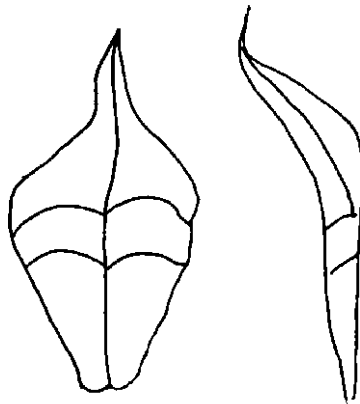
Structure of a Pine Cone simplified

What we call a “pine cone” is the female seed cone. It takes two years to form. The pine cone has a stalk that extends throughout its length. It is attached to a branch at one end and scales grow along the remainder in a spiral like a snail shell.

The female cone has two types of scales. One is the bract scale which can't be seen on these pines, but on the bigcone spruce cone it's the papery rat's-tail.

The other is the seed scale which, when mature, usually has two winged seeds resting in small impressions on the surface that faces away from the stem attachment. On the opposite surface, the one facing toward the stem attachment, the tip of the seed scale is enlarged and thickened. Sometimes there is a ridge from side to side. In the center of this enlargement is a raised area. This raised area in our three-needle pines has a prickle, variously called spike, spine, claw, spur or hook.

The central raised area with the prickle is the first year's growth, while the thickened, enlarged part is the second year's growth after fertilization. This thickened part changes shape as the cone grows but the raised area with the prickle does not. It is the shape and direction of this prickle or claw that distinguishes ponderosa and Jeffrey cones, and makes Coulter cones so wicked.

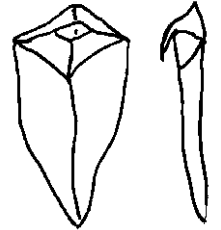


Coulter Pine Cone Scale

Claws and their Effects

On Coulter pine cones, the scale tip is strongly ridged and the raised area is elongated and curved to form **upward**-turning claws about one inch long. In jest, I carry a few of these in my backpack for defense against humans; as weapons these claws are knife-like, but not illegal.

On a Jeffrey pine cone, the scale tip is not ridged and the raised area has a curved, J-shaped prickle that points **inward**. How convenient! J-shaped for Jeffrey.



On a ponderosa pine cone, the thickened tip of each scale has a crosswise ridge and the raised area has a straight, stiff prickle that sticks **outward**. It pokes you when you touch it.

The effect of these features is that a ponderosa pine cone will hurt and a Jeffrey won't when you press on them. Thus, we have the useful mnemonic: *gentle Jeffrey and prickly ponderosa*.



WELCOME! New members

Patricia Birdsall
David Howell
Donald & Lydia Jeffrey
Kevin Joy
Sarah Ernestine Mein
Laurie Taylor
Ken Warner

MEMBER PROFILE

Graham Bothwell, *Membership Chair*

Native plants have always intrigued me, starting with my early days in provincial Australia and continuing here in southern California. It has been a purely amateur interest, my professional training being in engineering (currently in project management at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory).

Owning a house with a garden that needed development was what started my interest in native gardening. That was in Australia's largest city, Sydney. While I had just a typical suburban yard, there was room for forty species of *Grevillea*, a spectacular genus of which only a few species are commonly seen in California gardens.

I also have a life-long interest in photography, especially of native orchids—Australia has over 900 species. These days this hobby extends to native flowers generally, primarily associated with occasional travels, mainly in North America, Australia, and Africa.

Twenty years ago I moved to the United States, where my wife Mary and I enjoy living in Pasadena. Moving here provided the opportunity to start afresh with a native garden, and to explore what was truly new to me, the world of California natives. Overall I grow a mixture of natives from various Mediterranean climates (California, Australia, and Southern Africa). The California species are clearly the most adaptable at our location with its slightly harsher climate compared to places nearer the Pacific ocean. You can see some results of this simple but satisfying garden on the internet at <http://home.earthlink.net/>

6 ~ maryandgraham.

PLANT PROFILE:

Nassella pulchra, Purple Needlegrass

by Kathy LaShure with illustration from The Jepson Manual

The news might have slipped under your radar, but California now has an official State Grass. On Aug. 23, 2004 *Nassella pulchra*, Purple Needlegrass, was so designated. Hip, hip, hooray!!

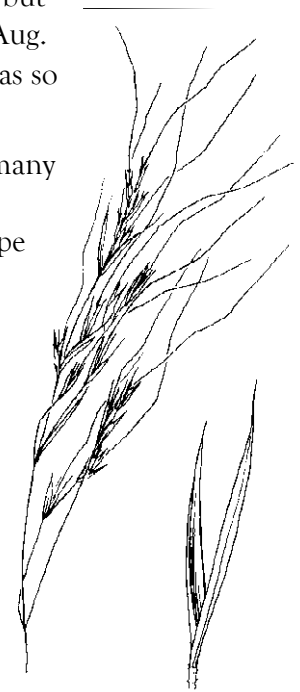
As you probably know, over the past centuries many of our native bunchgrasses did not fare well in competition with introduced grasses from Europe and the Mediterranean. As a result, many California grasslands are now dominated by these more aggressive alien annual grasses. But restoration and preservation of grasslands is now catching the attention of both the public and regulators with some natives staging a come-back, including Purple Needlegrass.

This lovely grass is found in oak woodlands, open areas, and chaparral at elevations below 5000' in the Coast Ranges from the Oregon border down into Baja, in the western Sierra foothills, and on the Channel Islands. Within our Chapter boundaries you can find it, though not in abundance, along the Lower Mt. Wilson Toll Road, at Chantry Flat/Santa Anita Canyon and in the Whittier Hills. According to our Field Trip Chair, Jane Strong, "the very best place to see *Nassella pulchra* nearby is on the Colby Trail in Glendora where the brodiaeas are. There's a whole field of it there."

With publication of *The Jepson Manual*, Purple Needlegrass was moved out of the genus *Stipa* into the genus *Nassella*, which also includes Foothill Needlegrass (*N. lepida*) and Nodding Needlegrass (*N. cernua*). All three species sport long thin awns, hence the common name, Needlegrass. In some locations all three species occur together.

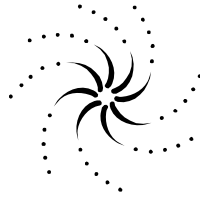
Our new State Grass is a clumping perennial bunchgrass with leaves 12" - 40" long. In late summer when alien annual grasses have turned tawny and golden, Purple Needlegrass hummocks are quite obvious with their still verdant green foliage. From March through May it sports graceful inflorescences with long, purplish, twice-bent awns that extend from the flower tips. A large stand of *Nassella pulchra* in bloom will have a decidedly purple cast, a beautiful sight for sure.

As the most widespread and common of the native perennial bunchgrasses, Purple Needlegrass is certainly worthy of the honor bestowed upon it this past year. Watch for it when you're out hiking and say "Congratulations."

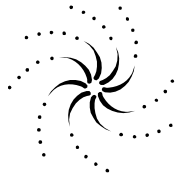


Supposition

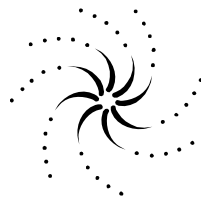
Suppose the molecular changes taking place
In the mind during the act of praise
Resulted in an emanation rising into space.
Suppose that emanation went forth
In the configuration of its occasion:
For instance, the design of rain pocks
On the lake's surface or the blue depths
Of the canyon with its horizontal cedars stunted.



Suppose praise had physical properties
And actually endured? What if the pattern
Of its disturbances rose beyond the atmosphere,
Becoming a permanent outline implanted in the cosmos—
The sound of the celebratory banjo or horn
Lodging near the third star of Orion's belt;
Or to the east of the Pleiades, an atomic
Disarrangement of the words,
"How particular, the pod-eyed hermit crab
And his prickly orange legs"?



Suppose benevolent praise,
Coming into being by our will,
Had a separate existence, its purple or azure light
Gathering in the upper reaches, affecting
The aura of morning haze over autumn fields,
Or causing a perturbation in the mode of an asteroid.
What if praise and its emanation
Were necessary catalysts to the harmonious
Expansion of the void? Suppose, for the prosperous
Welfare of the universe, there were an element
Of need involved.



—Pattiann Rogers (from *Firekeeper: New & Selected Poems*)

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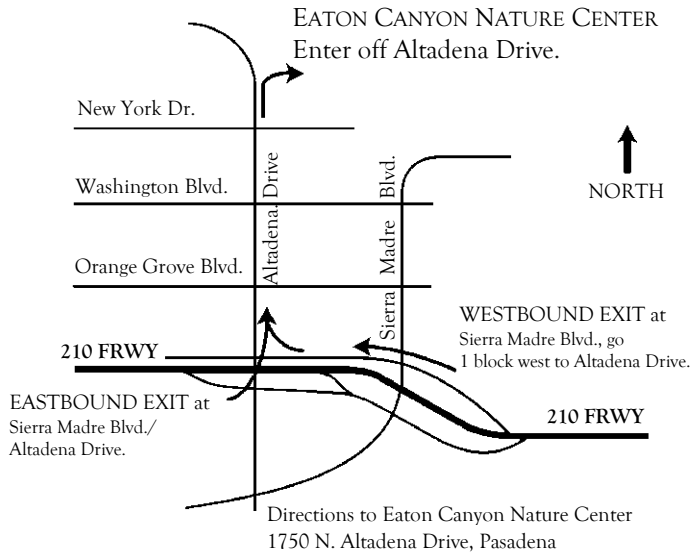
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Website: <http://cnps-sgm.org>

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.



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