

THE PAINTBRUSH

MAY-AUGUST 2006 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat., May 13, 9:00 a.m.: *Field Trip to San Dimas Experimental Forest* led by Mike Oxford

Sun., May 14, 9:00 a.m.: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* led by Cliff and Gabi McLean

Thurs., May 25, 7:30 p.m.: *The Ecology of California Grasslands: Native Grasses, Annual Wildflowers, and Alien Invaders* with Paula Schiffman

Sat., June 10, 9:00 a.m.: *Field Trip to Fish Canyon Falls* led by Cliff and Gabi McLean

Sun., June 11, 9:00 a.m.: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* led by Clem Padick

Thurs., June 22, 7:30 p.m.: *Arroyo Seco Restoration* with Jeff Chapman

APRIL FIELD NOTES

By Gabi McLean

It was only in mid-February that we treasured the winter storms after weeks without precipitation. Since then though, we have had plenty of water falling from the sky. It seemed to rain mostly on weekends and so we ended up hiking during showers quite a bit in the last eight weeks. I enjoyed being in the wilderness, the cool air blowing hard at times, driving rain one moment, hail another – and then sunshine, dramatic clouds casting shadows over the hills and snow-capped mountains, and the mood shifting by the second.



Evey Canyon. Photo by Gabi McLean

We were looking for signs of the changing season. Flowering annuals were sparse when compared with their abundance in the previous year, what we attributed to a combination of reasons. Last year's exceptional wildflower season was partly due to the fires. They had cleared the brush and exposed the soil, providing space and light to seeds that need those conditions, and provided the smoke and ashes that some seeds need to germinate, the seeds of the "fire followers". After just one season, the earth was no longer bare and so we missed most of the fire followers. In addition, the uncharacteristic weather pattern – early rain in October, then a dry spell until February, and unseasonably hot in January – could well have aborted a first crop of wildflowers. But we found other signs of spring, recovery, and renewal. There were buds and flowers on shrubs and trees, fragrances of new growth and fresh foliage, insect sounds and other signs of wildlife, moisture in the air, and now and then even sunshine.

We explored the areas that we had visited last year in April, just six months after the fires. In Placerita Canyon at the northwestern edge of the San Gabriel Mountains, I remembered the Whispering Bells, Yellow-throated Phacelia, Popcorn Flowers, White Pincushion, Bluedicks, many mounds of Miner's Lettuce and Wild Cucumber covering the scorched hillsides. We had enjoyed seeing Shiny Lomatium, White Snapdragon, and Yellow Monkeyflower. This year, Deerweed and Yerba Santa, along with the resprouting shrubs of Chamise, Scrub Oak, Redberry and Toyon, were dominating the hills. None of these shrubs were in bloom yet, except for one Holly-leaf Redberry whose yellow-green flowers covered the stems in such profusion that we first did not recognize

the species. We found quite a few very young White Pincushion plants, and just a few Whispering Bells that were in bud but not in flower, along with one or two Little Blazing Stars. On the firebreak at Manzanita Mountain, I discovered several thick bundles of sulfur-yellow flowers, just four inches tall and easily crushed by bike riders scurrying up the ridge, was the root-parasite Clustered Broomrape, *Orobanche fasciculata*.



Flower and leaf,
Fire Poppy,
Papaver californicum.
Photos by Gabi McLean



In Evey Canyon, I remembered the field of Fire Poppies exactly one year ago. The leaves reminded me of Baby Blue Eyes or Fiesta Flower leaves. It was just such an impression to find the deep-orange flowers seemingly floating in mid-air. The drooping buds belied the open flower reaching proudly up in the sky. This year, we were looking for those rare beauties again but we didn't find a single one. We did encounter Rock-Cress in flower, Bee Plant in bud, and most encouraging, the oaks are coming back! The dense new growth on the main trunk and branches shows how resilient these trees are. The ghost forest is well on its way to becoming a

vibrant oak woodland again! Our joy was only dampened by the many introduced grasses, mustards, and thistles that had invaded the oak understory. Yes, there still were our native Popcorn Flowers, Baby Blue Eyes, Purple Nightshade, Currants and Gooseberries, and other native annuals and shrubs, but the competition is fierce and the outcome still remains to be seen.

I enjoy watching the wild lands recover and renew after fire, and observing birds, lizards, deer and tell-tale signs of other wildlife returning. And I wonder if these wondrous places will still be here for our children and grandchildren to explore and experience the many lessons of nature.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs,
To the silent wilderness.

— Percy Bysshe Shelley

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING CORNER

By Barbara Eisenstein

As Horticultural Outreach Coordinator at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, I receive many interesting questions about garden care for California native plants. This is the first of a continuing series in which I will share a few of these questions and answers with you. If you have a question of your own, please email me at rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu or call me at 909-624-0838.

Q: Why does my Mahonia not bloom? It sets buds but they don't open. Some look undeveloped/aborted, others seem OK but just don't open. The 6 shrubs are 6 years old now and look otherwise healthy but have never flowered – if I had 5 flowers a year I was lucky.

A: RSABG Grounds Manager, Bob Traut, suggests that the failure of buds to develop may be due to insufficient moisture. Are they under a roof overhang? Do they get winter water? How much sun are they getting? Sometimes plants will not bloom well if they are in deep shade. Which barberries do you have? Some of the barberries don't produce a lot of flowers, but are useful shrubs with clean, neat foliage. Does anyone else have suggestions?



Nevin's Barberry, *Mahonia (Berberis) nevinii*, used as a hedge.
Photo by Barbara Eisenstein

Q: My *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush) is quite woody beneath the top layer of leaves. Can I cut it back to rejuvenate it?

A: Yes, coyote brush responds well to a severe "haircut." At Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden we do this every few years to keep these plants looking their best. You can cut them nearly to the ground in the spring. Follow this with a dilute application of fertilizer and some water, and before you know it they will green up, looking better than ever.

Q: Can I plant natives in my garden at this time of the year?

A: There is quite a bit of debate about whether it is appropriate to plant natives year round. The best time to add California native plants to the garden is in the late fall through winter. This is especially true for those of you who live in the hotter inland areas. If you are like me, you are just itching to plant in the spring when the flowers are out, the birds are singing and the lizards are sunning themselves. Consider planting perennials, grasses, and shade-loving and riparian plants. Avoid plants that cannot tolerate summer water such as *Fremontia* and some of the *Manzanitas* and *Ceanothus*.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon (see map on back cover) on the fourth Thursday of the month with the exception of July, August, November, and December. Informal plant identification and social time 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.; programs start promptly at 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAMS & OUTINGS

Saturday, May 13, 9:00 a.m.: *Field Trip to San Dimas Experimental Forest (SDEF)* led by Mike Oxford

Due to rain in April, we have rescheduled this trip to May. The SDEF is a protected field laboratory for studies of hydrology, fire, and other topics relating to the ecology of chaparral and associated ecosystems. The trip will be led by Mike Oxford of the Forest Service, who will provide information on local flora and on some of the current SDEF research projects during an easy-to-moderate hike. We will meet in the village of Mt. Baldy at 9:00 a.m. and carpool to the trailhead. From the 210 Freeway in Claremont, exit and go north on Mountain Avenue. After a few miles, the road intersects with Euclid Ave; go straight through the stop sign and follow the road (which veers left) to continue on Mountain Ave. Drive past the Forest Service Fire Station to the next stop sign. Turn right onto Mt. Baldy Road and drive north for 4 miles. After passing a yellow blinking light, a schoolyard on the right, and a post office on the left, enter the parking area to the left of Mt. Baldy Lodge. The hike will take approximately 3 hours. Please bring water, sunscreen, snacks, and if preferred a bag lunch. If you have any questions please call Andrea at 626-353-4077.

Thursday, May 25, 7:30 p.m.: *The Ecology of California Grasslands: Native Grasses, Annual Wildflowers, and Alien Invaders* with Paula Schiffman

Paula holds a Ph.D. in Botany from Virginia Tech. She is currently a professor in the Biology Department at Cal State University, Northridge, and teaches courses on evolution, conservation biology, and plant ecology. Paula and her

students have been conducting grassland research at Carrizo Plain National Monument for about 15 years. They also do some work in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. This work has focused on the effects of invasive species on native annual wildflowers and the effects of livestock grazing on grassland species composition. Paula will discuss some of their findings in her presentation.

Saturday, June 10, 9:00 a.m.: *Field Trip to Fish Canyon Falls* led by Cliff and Gabi McLean

The hike to Fish Canyon Falls is shaded by sycamore, bay, bigleaf maple, alder, willow, and coast live oak trees, lined with ferns and poison oak, and surrounded by chaparral-covered slopes. We are hoping to see the rare *Dudleya densiflora*, endemic to the San Gabriel Mountains, and it should be in flower! Directions: From the 210 Freeway, traveling west: Exit at Irwindale Avenue in Irwindale; turn right (north) and go 0.2 mile; turn left (west) on Foothill Blvd and go 0.7 mile to Encanto Parkway; turn right (north). From the 210 Freeway, traveling east (or the 605 Freeway traveling north): Exit at Mt. Olive Avenue in Duarte; turn right (east) on Huntington Drive and go 0.6 mile to Encanto Parkway; turn left (north). Once on Encanto Parkway, drive north 1.3 miles, where you pass the entrance to Encanto Equestrian Center. Drive another 0.2 mile, and park in the dirt lot on the left side of the road. Jasen Talley from Vulcan Materials has volunteered to provide shuttle service from the parking area through the quarry to the trailhead. The hike is 4 miles round-trip with a 900-foot elevation gain, and will take approximately 3 hours. Please bring water, food, and sunscreen. If you have any questions please call Andrea at 626-353-4077.

Thursday, June 22, 7:30 p.m.: *Arroyo Seco Restoration* with Jeff Chapman

Jeff will speak on the Arroyo Seco restoration and the Arroyo habitat, as well as how the Arroyo Seco is being affected by planning. Jeff's position as Arroyo Seco Watershed Coordinator is a program of the Arroyo Seco Foundation funded by the California Department of Conservation. A local native, he has served as a teacher and naturalist for the National Audubon Society Center at Debs Park and for the Catalina Island Conservancy.

<http://cnps-sgm.org>

Check your Chapter's website frequently for up-to-date information on Chapter events and for links to other organizations' field trips and classes.

INCONSPICUOUS JOYS:

Mushrooms and Lichens

By Marc F. Acuña

Now that we are in the late days of spring and the Tongva plant world seems to dry up and almost disappear, I'd like to draw our attention to two wonderful gems: Sesoamaka, which was collected in spring, when the oak woodlands had been drenched with the winter rains, and the endless variations of Totoekomuk spotting, occurring year round in the canyons and gullies of the Los Angeles mountains.



Wood Blewit, *Lepista nuda*.

Illustration from David Arora's *Mushrooms Demystified*

Sesoamaka (mushroom) was a special delicacy. Gathered in spring, the stems and heads were cooked on hot stones or baked in simple earth ovens. But the best use was mixing the pieces into acorn mush. Weywish with sesoamaka was a great treat. Of all the varieties of delicate fungi, the favorite was *Lepista nuda*, its pink cap begging to be picked and relished.

The opposite of the moist, simple mushrooms are the hard tree, rock, and boulder spots of lichen found in caves and fissures, canyons and gullies, from the San Bernardinos to the Santa Monicas, the San Gabriels and the rock surfaces of the Verdugos and San Rafaels. Some Tongva shamans would travel north to the lands of the Kawaiisu to trade for *Ramalina menziesii* (Lace Lichen), for it was said that this powerful lichen could cause rain. In the San Bernardino Mountains, *Letharia vulpina* was gathered to use as a poultice for inflammations and for its wonderful yellow dye. It was also made into a poison for arrow tips.

During hard times when food was scarce, the Tongva, like many of their neighbors, resorted to scraping the rock spots for food, boiling the oranges, yellows, blacks, whites, and grays into thick soups. Lichens were always available year round, and the locations were noted with loving care. Royce Canyon in the Griffith Park area of the Santa Monica

Mountains was such a special place. Tongva villagers from Ha.a.hamongna, Yangna, and Maungna came here to gather the spots that Coyote left on the rocks for his people. In the great stone outcroppings overlooking the Chumash village of Homaliwu, which the Tongva called Ongobehangna, enormous lichen growths splatter the orange-golden boulders, dazzling in their multicolored Jackson Pollock stains.

SWOONING FOR THE MOON

By Carmen Wolf

Illustrations from *The Jepson Manual* (1993)

As the weather begins to warm and signs of spring surreptitiously sprout, the time is ripe to make plans for future relaxing under the stars alongside a garden designed to complement outdoor evenings.

Start by pulling together a collection of silver, gray and white-leaved and flowering plants. They will glisten in the lunar glow, and wow both you and your guests as you gather around an open fire pit or a crackling chiminea, and sip wine until all hours.

Some of the best botanical candidates for a moonlight garden are, of course, California natives. A vast number of them seem to have been designed just for this purpose. There simply isn't enough space here to list all appropriate species, so I've selected a heavenly eleven. Each one needs full sun, or part shade in the hottest areas, excellent drainage, and occasional deep watering in the summer. All are perennial and attractive to winged pollinators, making their presence enjoyable and beneficial. Plant them in the ground with the tallest in the back working your way down to the shortest in the front. Or, plop them in colorful pots on a patio, in which case they'll need water about once a week or more, depending on the heat.

Salvia apiana (White Sage) — an icon of California natives — is prized for intensely fragrant 3-4" long and 2" wide gray-green leaves that have been used in Native American traditions for years. Foliage and pale purple-tinged-white flowers beautifully reflect the light of the moon and stars. It eventually matures at about 3-5' high and wide.

Several other sages satisfy the requirements of a moonlight garden. Try these two in particular: *Salvia* 'Vicki Romo' is a compact hybrid of *S. apiana* and *S. clevelandii* that grows to about 4' high and 5' wide and has lavender-blue flowers and gray-green leaves that are narrower and shorter than *apiana*.

Salvia 'Allen Chickering,' a hybrid of *S. clevelandii* and *S. leucophylla* (also a good candidate for moonlight gardens) grows to around 4' high and wide, produces pale purple whorled flowers stacked along 1' tall stems that blow gently in the breeze.

During late summer and early fall, *Zauschneria californica* (California Fuchsia) produces some of the most stunning tubular scarlet flowers that are irresistible to hummingbirds. Fine, feathery silver leaves sparkle day and night. An arching habit makes *Zauschneria* sublimely suitable for trailing down terrace walls or crawling over the edges of large pots. Songbirds eat seeds so allow spent flowers to stick around for a while. When seeds are gone, cut back the scraggly stems.

Two species of California Buckwheat have such shockingly silver-white leaves that they can't be left out of a moonlight garden. *Eriogonum crocatum* (Saffron Buckwheat) is low and compact, reaching 1.5' high and 2' wide. Woolly white stems support 1" roundish leaves and yellow flowers that appear in flat clusters atop dainty stems from early spring until late summer.

Eriogonum giganteum (St. Catherine's Lace) looks like it is covered in old-fashioned white lace curtains when in bloom – from late spring into late summer. Broad oval leaves are 1-2.5" long and the plant can grow anywhere from 3-8' high and branch freely out to about 5' wide or more.

Butterflies and bees abound when both buckwheat beauties are in bloom and birds appreciate the seeds left after the flowers bloom.

Eriophyllum nevinii (Catalina silverlace), which matures at around 4-5' high and 3-4' wide, is a mystical match for the moon with silvery-white, finely divided fern-like leaves. Butterflies and bees utilize orange-yellow flowers that appear in the fall.



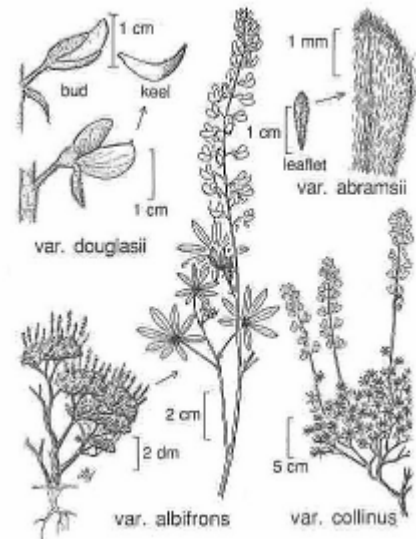
Catalina silverlace,
Eriophyllum nevinii

Leymus condensatus 'Canyon Prince' (Blue Giant Wild Rye) is a 3' high and wide striking gray-blue grass with sword-like leaves that are magnificent in massed plantings or interspersed with other perennials.

The following two native succulents will stop visitors in their tracks and shine brightly under a starlit sky. *Dudleya pulverulenta* (Chalk Dudleya) and *Dudleya brittonii* (Britton's Live Forever or Britton's Dudleya) are both compact with chalky-white, plump and pointy wide foliage and long stems of red flowers in springtime. These guys will grow right out of the side of a cliff.

Last but not least is the luminous *Lupinus albifrons* (Evergreen Lupine) with shimmering silver star-shaped

foliage and tall spikes of purple-white flowers in the spring. It can get quite large, ranging from about 4-7' tall and 4-8' wide, especially when in bloom.



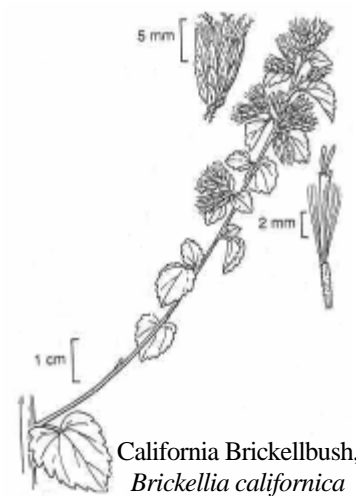
Evergreen Lupine, *Lupinus albifrons*

Feel free to experiment with other radiant natives that you may find in your travels. I haven't included any of the silver bark trees and many other species that lend themselves to a moonlight garden. The possibilities are endless. Let your imagination run wild and reap the rewards every night, all spring and summer long.

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK: Nevin's Brickellbush (*Brickellia nevinii*) – Uncommon and Overlooked

By Mickey Long

Illustrations from *The Jepson Manual* (1993)



California Brickellbush,
Brickellia californica

Within the Eaton Canyon drainage there are two species of Brickellbush, low, greenish-gray shrubs in the sunflower family. One, the quite common and widespread California Brickellbush, *Brickellia californica*, reaches 3½ ft tall, and has thin, medium-sized, heart-shaped, petioled leaves which vary from green to pale grayish green. While named for our state, where first

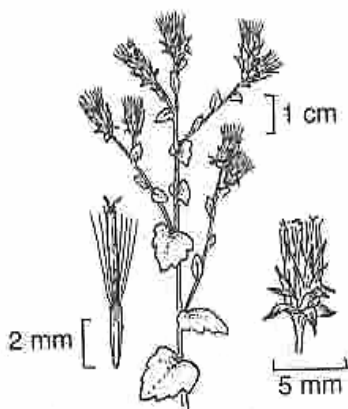
collected, the species occurs all the way to Utah, Colorado through Texas, and south into Mexico.

The other, Nevin's Brickellbush (*Brickellia nevinii*), is shorter in stature, up to about 18 inches tall, with smaller, thicker leaves attached directly to the stem, and is white-tomentose (covered with tiny whitish hairs), such that the whole shrub looks frosted. Its distribution is much more restricted, from Santa Barbara and southern Kern County through the southern slopes of the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains. Both shrubs are fall-flowering.

Discovered by, and named in 1885 for Reverend J. C. Nevin (as is the Endangered Nevin's Barberry), Nevin's Brickellbush was first found in Newhall. The species was for many years on the California Native Plant Society's Watch

List of plants to keep an eye on, but has been downgraded, or removed from this list simply because recent botanists conferring over several thousand species at different levels of rarity agree that it remains too common. Officially it has been "considered but rejected: Too common" (CNPS Inventory 1994).

If you're hiking in Eaton Canyon, or up the Toll Road to Henninger Flats, watch for Nevin's Brickellbush. It becomes "scattered but not uncommon" in the hot dry gravel of the wash in the upper third of the canyon, below the bridge. You may have to check a number of California Brickellbush to get used to variation in leaf size and the degree of the white-tomentose look. As more areas are lost to development and disturbance, the Nevin's Brickellbush will remain worth watching. Like many species, it could be upgraded (downgraded?) back to the list.



Nevin's Brickellbush,
Brickellia nevinii

THE MILD HERB: Yerba Mansa or Chivnish

By Mark F. Acuña

From coastal salt marshes to the edges of the Mojave in the Hisperia neighborhood wet areas, Chivnish, as the Gabrieleño-Tongva called this heal-all plant, blossoms from March to September. Now as the last days of spring head to the hot days of Summer with their gray, foggy mornings of June and the blistering heat of July and August, all along wet areas and in Yellow Pine forests the dark green leaves and white bracts with their strange

yellow cone-shaped flower clusters remind us of the wonderful plant world of the Los Angeles basin.

Despite the heat of summer and early autumn, this wondrous delicate-looking perennial herb thrives and in the pre-Hispanic days was used by Tongva, Kumitaraxam, Kokoemkam, and Acjachemen (Gabrieleño, Cahuilla, Seranno, and Juaneño) as a major medicinal plant.

The Tongva and the Cahuilla (the Kumitaraxam as the Tongva called them) knew it as Chivnish, the Spaniards as Yerba Mansa. Botanists know it as *Anemopsis californica*; arriving white settlers called it Lizard Tail.

Its basic usage was as a highly prized and deeply respected cure-all. Even in the fall, a dark decoction was made from its slender bark and used as a wash for open sores. The dark, thick liquid cured ulcers, and a light tea was made from the bark for indigestion problems.

In late spring the plants were already being collected for countless "medicines". My grandfather would peel, cut, squeeze and boil the roots and use the decoction for general aches and pains. The dried roots were chewed for coughs and throat ailments. When kept dry, the roots, like those of the Peony, lasted for an extremely long time.



Yerba Mansa, *Anemopsis californica*,
from Munz (1974) *A Flora of Southern California*

An infusion of the leaves was used for chest congestion, the heat-wilted leaves were applied to swellings, and steamed leaves were used to relieve bronchial ailments. These steam-wilted leaves were sometimes made into a poultice and applied to swellings, cuts, and wounds. The warm, steamed leaves were also used to ease sore feet.

In the grand irony of history, after European contact, an infusion of roots was used as a wash for syphilis and gonorrhea. Conversely, missionaries, rancheros, explorers, and Yankee settlers all came to revere this powerful little plant, the Yerba Mansa cure-all.

Editor's Note:

I am truly inspired by the continued participation and enthusiasm exhibited by our chapter's board members and members at our program nights that showcase this wonderful state's native flora. The turnout for these events has been wonderful. The programs I have attended this and last year have been not only very informative, but beautiful to see. What really awed me last month at Ian Swift's program presentation was the amazing number of flowers, their variety, and the surprises they bring by appearing in places where they were not present in years past. Ian's humor and impressive knowledge about the flowers of Santa Clarita were delightful. I am always touched by the love that our speakers have for the propagation, expanded use, floral photo art and the conservation of our California native plants. I acknowledge Orchid for bringing us these pleasant and fun monthly gatherings.

I am also excited about our renewed commitment to hold field trips to interesting places I might not ordinarily go to on my own. The joys of discovery were with me on the field trip to Bonelli Park recently, not only by allowing me to look at what restoration of natives can do for beauty but also the impact they have in regard to habitat restoration and enhancement. Thank you, Andrea, for accepting this responsibility and for making our field trips a journey of discovery.

– Tom Hood

How glorious a greeting the sun gives the mountains!

– John Muir



Above Devils Canyon, San Gabriel Mountains.
Photo by Graham Bothwell

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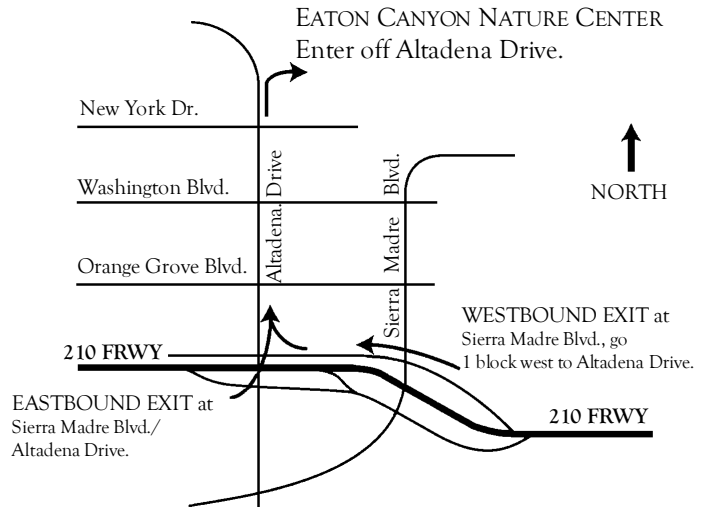
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Directions to Eaton Canyon Nature Center
1750 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena

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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