

THE PAINTBRUSH

JAN/FEB 2007 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sun., Jan. 14, 9:00 a.m.: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* led by Eva Morgan
- Thurs., Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m.: *Ceanothus* with Barbara Eisenstein
- Sun., Feb. 11, 9:00 a.m.: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* led by Tom Hood
- Thurs., Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m.: *Chumash Healing* with James D. Adams and Cecilia Garcia

CONNECTING WITH NATURE

By Gabi McLean

The end of fall seems dreary – the long weeks without rain reflect on the plants in the wild. Many shrubs and trees have lost their leaves, exposing the branches, which in turn have become brittle and dry, having changed color from a warm brown to a dirty gray. While the leaves of our local sycamores, maples, walnuts and willows change to yellow or even reddish-brown before blowing off in a Santa Ana wind, they generally just dot the landscape or frame a creek and don't provide the mass of color that people in the Eastern U.S. expect. Most grasses and other annuals have completed their seasonal cycle with their seeds and fruits already dispersed, and little evidence of their vibrant existence in spring or summer remains. Even the evergreens have a thinned canopy and the color of their leaves also reflects the lack of moisture.

So why in the world would anyone go out on a hot day – yes there are hot days in fall – and go uphill on a south-facing slope? Well, we did so because we wanted to explore a trail we had not hiked before. We did not expect much other than dust and dirt, dry sagebrush and obnoxious grass seeds, and in the canyon crevices, a little chaparral.



Twiggly Wreath Plant (*Stephanomeria virgata*),
photograph by Gabi McLean

On November 19, we went up through Mystic Canyon into Little Dalton Canyon, overlooking the Walnut Creek valley to the south and with views as far as Los Angeles and the Palos Verde Peninsula. It was moderately smoggy over the valley but looking north the sun shone brightly and the sky offered a deep blue. The trail quickly rose out of oak woodlands and rich riparian vegetation on a steep, sandy, hot serpentine into coastal sage scrub. We paid attention to the red, rocky outcrops, hoping for a glimpse of *Dudleya multicaulis*. It wasn't the right season and we didn't find any, but searching for it made the ascent more interesting. We met just a couple of hikers and felt we were all alone out there. With the sea of

houses and freeways in plain sight, yet we were in the wild. And it felt good! Yes, most plants were dry, but those didn't have our attention.



Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*),
photograph by Gabi McLean

What fascinated us were the exceptions. How gorgeous did this toyon look, generously loaded up with big clusters of those Christmas-red berries! Yellow-rumped warblers bustling in the laurel sumac. And just at what elevation were we, the laurel sumac and lemonade berry were still growing way up here, shouldn't the frost have killed them? And lo and behold, there were flowers in November! On long, leafless branches stuck the star-like, white and lavender blossoms of the *Stephanomeria*. The *Senecio* shone brightly with its yellow, daisy-like flowers. Then we found a mountain mahogany covered with its picturesque, feathery fruits. It must have been flowering just a couple of weeks earlier, just like the bright green coyote brush. Most astonishing and exciting was the discovery of a few new branches of the chaparral currant with the most exquisite pink flowers hanging in dainty little clusters from the still leafless branches that were dotted with new leaf buds. In November? We could barely recall the few raindrops that had fallen one day in October. Did it rain more here? Will these flowers survive if it doesn't keep on raining? Our many unanswered questions did not prevent us from deeply appreciating this first sign of the coming spring.

It's all in our attitude, and it's the same for people and plants alike. We look for the hidden treasures, the beauty that becomes apparent with knowing and looking past the surface, expecting to find the something worthy. And

then we do! But the discovery of the resurfacing of life in mid-November, ever so subtle in this sea of still resting plants, also brought to consciousness another concept. Not only does the drabness of fall makes us appreciate the beauty and vibrancy of spring so much more. I also realized that we need change, we need rest, and it's OK to be relaxed, and do nothing. By honoring the cycle of rest and growth, we are able to conserve and rebuild our energies for the next season when new challenges face us, new opportunities await us, and we'll shine at our best. For me, that was a very important lesson, as I usually feel uncomfortable not doing something, constantly being driven. So connecting with nature taught me once more an important lesson. It brought to my consciousness that the open space, the trails into the wilderness and especially the wilderness itself, have immeasurable value for our mental well-being. If we just listen to the messages that nature and wilderness offer, we'll be OK. We can weather a storm and start anew, we give it time and try again if it's not working the first time, or a second or third time. We need to rest and accept the change, embrace the dry season, the rains and floods to come to be able to enjoy the growth and beauty that surely will follow.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon (map on the 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.

We will elect a new chapter board at our January 25th program night. The nominees are:

President: Gabi McLean
Vice President: Terry Keller
Treasurer: Graham Bothwell
Secretary: Carol Carriere

If you wish to nominate persons other than those listed, please mail their names to me prior to January 20th:

Tom Hood
9834 Karmont Avenue
South Gate, CA 90280

The election will be decided by voice vote at the meeting. Other board positions listed on the back page are appointed by the elected board. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these positions, let us know at the meeting on January 25th.

PROGRAMS

Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m.: *Ceanothus* with Barbara Eisenstein.

Barbara is the coordinator of the Horticultural Outreach and Information Center at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Before joining Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Barbara was at Rutgers University where she worked with high school teachers, university faculty, and scientists producing educational materials on topics of current scientific interest. Barbara's horticultural background derives from course work at Mt. San Antonio College, volunteer work in the Cultivar Garden at Rancho, and her own native plant garden in South Pasadena.



Special note: Abrams' Alumroot (*Heuchera abramsii*), photograph by Michael Charters. Please refer to the Fall 2006 issue of "The Paintbrush" in July Field Notes. This is the plant that Michael shot a picture of on the slopes of Mt. Baldy but did not have positively identified at that time.

Thursday, Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m.: *Chumash Healing* with James D. Adams, PhD and Cecilia Garcia

James is an Associate Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Southern California, School of Pharmacy. He received his PhD in Pharmacology from the University of San Francisco in 1981. He has over 150 scientific publications and has conducted research on Parkinson's disease, stroke, and medicinal plants of the west. Cecilia is a Chumash healer. She was taught by her grandparents on both sides of her family who were all Chumash healers. Cecilia has co-authored a book and several articles for medical journals on Chumash healing.

"We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING CORNER

By Barbara Eisenstein

Please call Barbara at 909-624-0838 or e-mail her at rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu with any questions or concerns you may have regarding native plant gardening. Please let her know that you are from our chapter. She is always interested in new questions for this column.

Q: *I have a mature coast live oak tree in my backyard. What can I plant beneath it?*

A: A mature native oak is a treasure for your home and landscape. Any change to an existing oak's environment is a gamble. Some trees will survive while others will not, and it can take several years for improper care to result in noticeable decline in your tree's health. If you are going to landscape near an oak, plant as far from the tree as possible, and definitely beyond the drip line. Do not use plants that require summer irrigation and plant during the late fall and winter to minimize the need for summer watering during the establishment period.

Some of the perennials that do well near oaks are coral bells, such as *Heuchera maxima*, *H. 'Opal'* and *H. 'Wendy'*, Douglas iris (*Iris douglasiana*), California fescue (*Festuca californica*), and California melic (*Melica imperfecta*). Shrubs that are found in oak woodlands include barberry (*Berberis (Mahonia) spp.*), silktassel (*Garrya elliptica*), holly-leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*) and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). For a more complete list, check out FAQs in the horticulture area of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden website: <http://rsabg.org>.



Holly-Leaved
Cherry (*Prunus
ilicifolia*),
from Munz's *A
Flora of Southern
California* (1974)

Q: How often should I water new plants during the first winter that they are in the ground?

A: Improper watering is one of the biggest reasons for plant failure. In fact, overwatering, especially while native plants are not actively growing, during the hot summer months, is a major problem. On the other hand, we often forget that many California native plants do most of their growing during the cooler, damper winter weather. A slight misting or a little drizzle will not provide enough water. This is especially true for young, unestablished plants, but even mature plants benefit from infrequent, deep watering during dry winters. If we do not get a good soaking rain for more than a couple of weeks, you may need to provide supplemental irrigation.

After planting natives during the winter season - the best time to plant in Southern California - it is important to water your new plants thoroughly to make sure that they settle in and their roots are completely wet. Through the first season your plants should not be allowed to dry out totally. Water well and then allow them to dry partially. If the plant is drooping and the soil is dry be sure to water immediately.

The roots of plants absorb water in the form of vapor from pockets in the soil. For this reason it is best for the soil to be watered thoroughly and then allowed to dry. A thorough watering ensures that the entire root ball receives water. Allowing the soil to dry creates good conditions for the absorption of water by the root hairs, and it reduces the likelihood of root rots from soil pathogens.

Get to know your plants and your garden conditions by checking your garden often. Dig down a few inches and feel the soil to determine whether your plants need water. Observe your plants so that you can tell when they are thirsty before they become too stressed. Gardening is not a passive sport, you must get down and dirty to be successful!

Wild Mushroom Fair

The Los Angeles Mycological Society is holding their 23rd Annual Wild Mushroom Fair at the L.A. Arboretum in Arcadia on Sunday, February 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please visit their website: www.lamushrooms.org to view their colorful poster and for phone contact information.

— UNDER THE OAKS VI — A WONDERFUL EVENT FOR ALL AND A LABOR OF LOVE

After some gentle persuading from our chapter president Gabi McLean, I agreed to co-chair the committee that works so hard each year to make the CNPS-SGM plant sale a viable entity. This year's sale was held on December 2nd and was a great success. It seems that with each year we manage to attract more people and sell more plants. It was a wonderful experience overall.



Western Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*),
photograph by Gabi McLean

It was great to see so many people working together on the plant sale. Christina Sparrow got us to an early start by publicizing the event at local libraries, other nature centers, and local newspapers and publications. Christina also arranged for a large group mailing of 500 pieces that was sent out to the Pasadena area. It was from this group mailing and the wonderful salesmanship displayed by Gabi McLean at the membership table that enabled us to enroll 30 new CNPS-SGM members at the plant sale. Rick Fisher was great as the person behind the scenes ordering the plants and also on the front lines managing the sale of these same plants. The catalog he provided for the prospective buyers was most informative and helped guide them to what was available and what met their needs.

Color photos with plant descriptions were on display for each plant type we offered. These signs continue to be important sales and information tools. They were designed by Orchid Black and Carmen Wolf. Our wandering plant experts, advisors, and consultants available for all questions included Steve Hernandez, Orchid Black, Barbara Eisenstein, and Laura Bauer, as

well as Rick Fisher. A special thanks to the numerous other volunteers who helped not only the day of the plant sale, but also on Friday before the sale. Cliff McLean did a great job of enlisting volunteers and getting them organized so well.

Thank you to Ken Guiland for his excellent presentation entitled *California Native Plants for Wildlife*. It was a very informative program specifically related to the native plants that we had on sale.

I thank you all for making this a memorable event.

- Carol Carriere



White Sage
(*Salvia apiana*),
photograph by
Gabi McLean

A big favorite seller at all of our yearly plant sales. This plant has lots of appeal.

- Ed.

NOTICE

The Pasadena chapter of the Sierra Club will show "An Inconvenient Truth" on Wednesday, March 7th at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center at 7:30 p.m.

A TRIO FOR SPRING: ALLIUM, HERACLEUM, BELOPERONE

"Onions, Cow-Parsnip, Chuparosa"

by Mark Acuña

We are deep in the days of "Achchohevey Kah.hoh Yowke" (Winter) and moving into the first wonderful days of "Hayahmoh Pahkoh Ohrohrehveh Yowkeh Mahreh Horoorah" (Spring). While the rest of the world has frozen through the cold days and nights of winter, the Tongva of Tovangar (the Los Angeles Basin) enjoyed a mild period of cold nights and wondrous days of brilliant sun and warm weather.

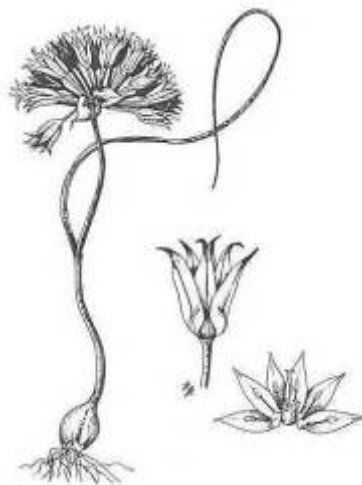
It is time for the women to leave their villages and towns in search of two special plants; and for the men to go off

to trade with the Kumitaraxam (the Cahuilla) for a succulent flower.

From March to July "Tepish" blossoms and the women find the bulbs of wild onions, gathering small clusters so as not to deplete them; Weywot (Sky Father) had told them to gather only what was needed and to maintain the land and its balance. Along the dry slopes and fields, meadows and moist banks, wild onions were found and gathered.

The bulbs were eaten cooked or raw and often added to all forms of food for extra flavoring. The old, cooked bulbs from last year, which had been dried, stored, and tied in bundles for winter, were almost gone. The new spring bulbs were waiting to be harvested. From March until July the "Tepish" would be gathered.

Some bulbs were saved and used as insect repellent and for making salves for insect bites. The doctors crushed and mixed "Tepish" with animal fats for snake bites or applied it to swellings. A thick syrup was made for throat irritations. The basket weavers saved special onions to produce a red dye for decorating baskets.

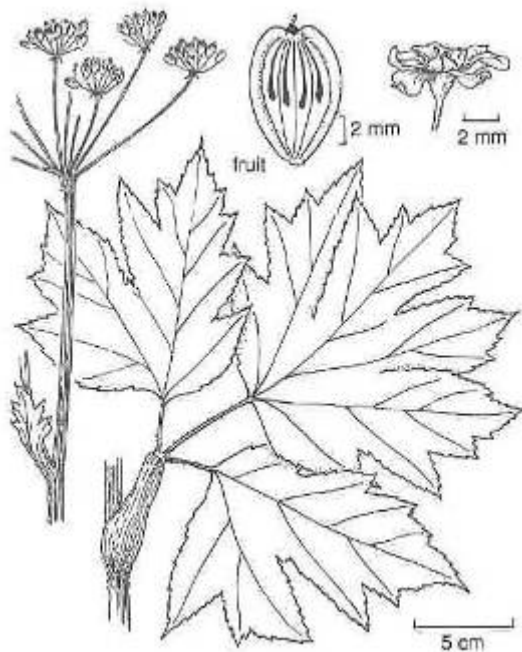


Fringed Onion
(*Allium fimbriatum*),
from Munz's *A
Flora of Southern
California* (1974)

Other women went in search for "Weywota," the sacred plant of Sky Father himself. It blossoms from April until July. They traveled up into the moist places in the San Gabriel Mountain forests in search of Sky Father's plant. While the shamans and priests placed branches of "Weywota" with their white blossoms on Weywot's altars, Cow-Parsnip was also used as food and as medicine.

The young shoots and the roots were eaten raw or cooked, gathered before the flowers appeared. "Weywota" was cooked and boiled twice, discarding the first water with its bitter taste.

Doctors made a decoction from the roots for rheumatism, and the smoke from burning roots was inhaled for bronchial problems. The roots were mashed, soaked in water and made into an infusion as a gargle for sore throats. The Tongva also knew that “Weywota” resembles Water Hemlock, which is deadly poisonous. They were careful and knowledgeable gatherers.



Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*),
from *The Jepson Manual* (1993)

From March to June “Pasily” is in bloom in the sandy places along water courses in Creosote Bush Scrub and along the west and north edges of the Colorado Desert. Called Chuparosa by the Spaniards, this beautiful plant (Beloperone or *Justicia californica*) was a trade item. The Tongva men took trade items to the Kokoemkam (Serrano) and the Kkumitaraxam (Cahuilla) in exchange for branches of “Pasily”. The succulent blossoms were eaten and the nectar was sucked providing a delicious sweet for Tongva children. The elders enjoyed the dessert from the desert as well.

Thus passed the spring with its riches of food and medicines. By June, the hot days of “Awrorehvay Kah.hoh Tahrahmeh” (summer) would change the landscape and bring new foods and new medicines.

“TAKE CARE OF THE LAND”

By Tom Hood

I had an opportunity to hike alone in the Chantry Flat area of the San Gabriel Mountains a few weeks ago. Since my layoff from work in mid-December, hiking during weekdays has become a delicious treat. Great parking, uncrowded trails, and best of all, the peaceful quiet of the forest. These are some of the inherent advantages that come with enforced semi-retirement. Hiking to Spruce Grove, I passed a sign that has stood for as long as I can remember. It has a carved inscription that (to the best of my memory) reads:

**“Take care of the land.
You’ll be a part of it soon.”**

The message is clear and concise. What really resounds with me is that in the 14 years I have passed this way on numerous hikes, the sign has never had graffiti painted on it or anyone’s initials carved into it. In this very heavily traveled section of Chantry Flat, that sometimes bears the marks of taggers, this sign has been and continues to be untouched, as if it were sacred, that it speaks to our universal humanity, our own mortality and the need to preserve our land for others who will follow us.

The sign set my mood for the remainder of my hike, enhancing my appreciation for the quiet beauty of our great local mountains, their proximity, their patient wait for winter rains, their endurance and their being. They are the gateway to my being connected to the universe.

WELCOME! New members:

Andrea Ayers, Laurie Barre, Alicia Broderick, Kim E. Cram, Susan and Frank Gilliland, Robert (Bobby) H. Goodman, Alison Hadziosmanovic, Nancy Horgan, Karen Hovanitz, Kathryn A. Marquez, Cara Jaffe, Francine Watanabe, Steven King, Candy League, Jay Lieske, Richard Loe, Marco Maimone, Robert Charles Martin, Alison McAlpine, Jenny McFarlane, Betty and Charles McKenny, Rita Mello, Terry Mills, Katie O’Brien, Rosalind Oliver, Madeline Schleimer, Madelyn Shaull, Janet Sporleder, Susan Tuemmier, Hedy Van der Fluit, and Sarah Yue.

We look forward to meeting you at our next program night and on future scheduled field trips and outings.

JOIN CNPS NOW!!

Learn to understand California's unique flora and help to preserve this rich heritage for future generations.

Dues are tax deductible. You will receive this newsletter, the informative quarterly journal *Fremontia*, and the statewide news *Bulletin*. If you would like to receive only this newsletter, the price of a subscription is \$5 per year.

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The newsletter of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is published four times per year, and is free to Chapter members. Subscription rate for members of other chapters is \$5.00 per year.

Have you forgotten to renew your membership?

Please renew so that Chapter numbers are maintained!

Thank you again to **BONTERRA CONSULTING** for printing our newsletter. BonTerra Consulting provides environmental planning, biological surveys, natural resources management, and city and regional planning services to their public and private sector clients.

<http://www.bonterraconsulting.com>



Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*), from *The Jepson Manual* (1993)

One of my favorite native shrubs, Coffeeberry stays green all year and has small but beautiful white flowers.

- Ed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER CNPS

PRESIDENT: Gabi McLean

626-966-0580 or gabi.mclean@verizon.net

VICE-PRESIDENT: Cliff McLean

626-966-0580 or cliff.mclean@verizon.net

SECRETARY: Carol Carriere

626-286-1525 or cacarriere@sbcglobal.net

TREASURER: Graham Bothwell, 626-449-8392

PROGRAMS: Orchid Black

626-794-6992 or orchidblack@charter.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Tom Hood

562-806-8206 or tomandgretchen@adelphia.net

NEWSLETTER ASSISTANT EDITOR: Andrea Edwards

626-305-8395 or adedwards8@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP: Graham Bothwell, 626-449-8392

WEB EDITOR: Jane Strong

626-570-0891 or zelicaon@yahoo.com

PUBLIC INFORMATION: Lyn McAfee

626-359-5278 or LynMcAfee@aol.com

PLANT WALKS: Eva Morgan, 626-284-0029

CONSERVATION: Rick Fisher

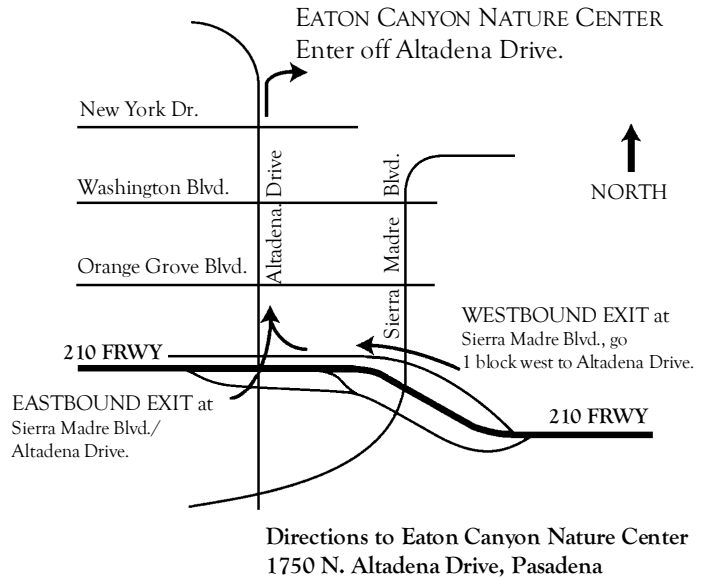
626-335-2534 or toyond@earthlink.net

RARE PLANTS: Mickey Long

mlongbird@charter.net or 626-398-5420

MEMBER SERVICES: Gabi & Cliff McLean

626-966-0580 or gabi.mclean@verizon.net



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

San Gabriel Mountains Chapter

1750 North Altadena Drive

Pasadena, California 91107-1046