

THE PAINTBRUSH

March-April 2009

San Gabriel Mountains Chapter

California Native Plant Society

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

CALENDAR

Everyone, member & nonmember,
is welcome at all of our activities

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Thursday, May 7, 7:30 p.m. Board Meeting	
Sunday, May 10, 9:00 a.m. Eaton Canyon Plant Walk	
Thursday, May 28, 7:00 p.m. Social, 7:30 p.m. Program General Meeting, Program: <i>Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada</i>	
*Starting with the first Mountain Plant Walk on May 2, we'll have a special treat. Continuing on June 6, July 11, August 1, and September 5, Jane Strong will conduct Mountain Plant Walks at successively higher elevations and will introduce you to different botanical delights as the summer progresses.	

LET'S GO "GREEN"

WITH THIS NEWSLETTER

You can help save trees, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce this chapter's printing and mailing costs if you agree to receive this newsletter electronically instead of by post office mail. Plus, you get the added benefit of seeing the photographs in color on your computer monitor instead of the print's black and white.

If you wish to continue with mail delivery, do nothing and you will continue to receive it in the mail.

If you opt for electronic delivery, you can choose one of these three methods to let us know:

- 1 Sign up at one of our general meetings.
- 2 Send us an email from the Contact Us page on our website at <http://cnps-sgm.org/contact/>.
3. Reply to an email which we will send to those members for whom we have an email address. (One should not rely on receiving this email because not all of the email addresses in our file are current.)

If you choose the electronic version we will send you periodic emails which let you know when the latest newsletter is available and provide a link to its location on our website. Then, with one click, you can go to the webpage, download the newsletter (as a PDF file), read it, save it, or print it. Note: You can already do this by visiting <http://cnps-sgm.org/newsletters>.

We used the Environmental Defense Fund Paper Calculator at www.papercalculator.org to determine the environmental costs of printing this newsletter. First, note that a ream (500 pages) of letter-size paper (basis-weight 20 lb.) weighs 5 lb. During the last 12 months, we mailed 1048 4-page copies. Manufacturing this quantity of paper (41.9 lb) used 147 lb. of wood and 805,000 btu of total energy, and produced 119 lb. of greenhouse gases (CO2 equivalent), 400 gal. of wastewater and 47.8 lb. of solid waste. Our 12-month printing and mailing costs totaled \$1,071.

USING NATIVES IN THE GARDEN

Accompany the Eaton Canyon Docents for a special Eaton Canyon Plant Walk and Presentation on April 12 from 9 a.m. to noon. Native plant specialist and landscape designer Orchid Black will lead a plant walk through the Native Plant Demonstration Gardens. The walk will be followed by her presentation on using native plants in gardens.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Grace Allen	Linda Prince
Joanne Beckwith	Felisa Rodriguez
Portia Besocke	Steven Smith
Joy England	Katie VinZant
John Geniesse	Wynne Wilson
Danna Graewingholt	

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING CORNER

By Barbara Eisenstein, Horticulture Outreach

Coordinator at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

In this continuing series, I answer questions that I receive from the public about garden care for California native plants.

Q. What are some of your favorite native plants suited to the San Gabriel valley and foothill region?

A. I am so glad you asked because I definitely have favorites based primarily on my own gardening experiences in South Pasadena. The following are the first five trees and shrubs of a much longer list.

1. Beginning with trees, the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) is a moderately fast growing, broad evergreen oak that provides refreshing shade for many of our streets and homes. With little summer water, it grows into a healthy broad tree in less time than most people expect.



Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
© Gabi McLean

2. Another beautiful tree is the California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*). This small tree, or large



California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) © Barbara Eisenstein

shrub, provides interest throughout the year. In early spring it has clusters of fragrant pink or white flowers. These are followed by large buckeyes (nuts) that can hang on the tree for a few months. As summer approaches, unirrigated trees drop their leaves, transforming into a white skeleton with ornamental buckeyes dangling from the ends of branches. In mid winter, when the first rains come, the buckeye begins to leaf out with youthful, almost electric green palmate leaves, and the cycle begins anew with the formation of flower buds.

3. The toyon or Christmas berry (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) can be treated as a small tree or a shrub. With age it will become a fairly large tree, not unlike the coast live oak in form,



Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)
© Gabi McLean

though there are few old specimens around. One such tree exists in the Cultivar Garden at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. The bright red berries that appear in late fall make this plant a holiday treat. Easy to grow and well-behaved, this shrub will quickly screen a view of your neighbor's garage or provide a focal point in your garden.

4. Though not soft to the touch, the fuchsia-flowering gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*) is another shrub that I have grown to love. January and February find this plant covered with delicate, pendulous red flowers, reminiscent of the water-loving, non-native fuchsias. The contrast of the deep red flowers with the shiny, dark green leaves is very pleasant. With little to no summer water, the plant drops its leaves in early summer, revealing a twisted, thorny structure that is appealing in its own right.



Fuchsia-flowered Gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)
© 1998 John Game

5. Following these two deep green beauties, I now turn to a beloved cultivar of the manzanita genus, *Arctostaphylos* 'Lester Rowntree'. I planted Lester in my garden because I so admire the horticulturist it was named for. Its tolerance of heavy soils made it an especially good choice for my heavy loam soil, and it has not disappointed. It has been growing nicely during the three years I have had it. It flowers profusely in the winter, and its gray leaves with pinkish margins contrast beautifully with the pink, bell-shaped flowers.



Arctostaphylos 'Lester Rowntree'
© Barbara Eisenstein

These are just five of many favorites. I would be very interested in hearing about some of your favorite native plants so I can post them on our website (www.rsabg.org). In addition, I welcome questions about gardening with California native plants.

Send your favorite native plants or gardening questions to me by email at hortinfo@rsabg.org, or phone me at 909-624-0838. You can find more information on my native plant gardening web page at <http://www.rsabg.org/content/view/230/165/>

A SPRING THREESOME

By Mark Frank Acuña

Once more the circle of the year moves us from the last days of *Achchohevey Kahhoh Yowke* (Winter) and into the first wonderful days of *Hayahmoh Pahkoh Ohrohrehveh Yowkeh Mahreh Horoorah* (Spring). While the rest of the world froze through the cold days and nights of winter, the Tongva of *Tovangar* (the Los Angeles Basin) enjoyed a mild period of a few cold days as well as wondrous days of brilliant sun and warm weather.

Now the women leave their villages and towns in search of three special plants. This threesome is made up of almost insignificant flowers that can be easily missed or even seen as non-native. But the Tongva women trained their eyes to find these small but powerful medicinals.

Ororataili, known to us as Figwort or California Bee Plant and to our botanical ears as *Scrophularia californica*, can easily be missed.

Its small dark green, lanceolate, dentate leaves almost hide the tiny brownish-purple blossoms. Is this some weed that has invaded my garden? Some of us pull them out not knowing that the Tongva used *Ororataili*



California Figwort (*Scrophularia californica* ssp. *californica*) © 1989 Dianne Fristrom

roots in an infusion to reduce fever. Figwort blossoms from March to May and can be found in moist places below 600 ft. It even is found in Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral and makes a nice home in my front garden.

The Tongva names of the next two miniatures have unfortunately not survived, although who knows? Their names may be written in some old journal on an old, dusty shelf in one of the Mission archives. So much was lost, but what is amazing is how much survived.

Navarretia hamata (no Tongva name as of yet)

blossoms April to June and is found in dry, rocky slopes below 3,000 ft., in Chaparral and Coastal Sage Scrub and on the islands of *Pimu* (Catalina Island) and *Kinkingna* (San Clemente Island). The Tongva burned this little pink flower and used the ashes mixed with



Hooked Pincushionplant (*Navarretia hamata* ssp. *leptantha*) © 2004 Michelle Cloud-Hughes

animal fat for burns. You can locally find this little jewel at the Nature Center in Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale. It covers the ground in spring.

The last of the trio (again Tongva nameless) is *Heliotropium curassavicum*. Sometimes called "salt heliotrope," this odd little plant blossoms from March clear into October. It can be found in many plant communities throughout California, usually in saline or alkaline soils below 7,000 ft.

From this, the Tongva made a strong decoction for diarrhea. The roots were boiled into a thick tea and used as a gargle for sore throat. The Santa Fe Dam area is home to a little community of this strange, little borage.

So we enter spring. But instead of rejoicing in all the flashy blossoms, take some time to enjoy the miniatures.

They may take a bit of looking, but what wonders will be found!



Heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*)

© 2003 Charles E. Jones

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CHAPARRAL: CALIFORNIA'S QUINTESSENTIAL PLANT COMMUNITY

PART 2: WILDFIRES

By Dr. Ronald D. Quinn

Wildfires are natural events in the sense that virtually all chaparral burns sooner or later and has done so for millennia. All of the plants and animals of chaparral must have some way to survive fire or return after fire; otherwise, they would not be present. Most of the shrubs have root systems that produce new stems from the burned base of the plant soon after fire.



Stems sprouting from the base of a burned Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*). © Terry Keller

All chaparral plants can regenerate from seeds that may lie safely buried in the soil for many years. Some species of seeds germinate only after being physically stimulated by fire, either from smoke or from heat. Thus seedlings begin to grow at the very time when fire has cleared away the dominant shrubs, which would otherwise monopolize most of the sunlight, nutrients, and other resources. Some of these plants are fire-following annuals that grow only the first year



Wild Canterbury Bells (*Phacelia minor*). Photo taken six months after the 38,000 acre Williams fire in the San Gabriel Mountains in September 2002. © Terry Keller

after fire, while others live a few years longer until they are overgrown and replaced by shrubs. Thus the condition of the plant community of chaparral marks the fire cycle, both by the mix of species actively growing and by the structure of the vegetation. The animals of chaparral respond in one way or another to the changing vegetation, so that they, too, are products of the fire cycle.



Photo taken about one year after a fire in the eastern Sierra, four kilometers north of June Lake Junction. The annual *Phacelia bicolor* came out in profuse carpets within the burned area.

Many Californians notice chaparral only when it is aflame. As the population of the state steadily grows, more and more urban development spreads to the very edge of, and even within, chaparral. From the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the backcountry of San Diego County, this has created problems with public safety.



Williams Fire, as seen from the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area. © 2002 Tim Baal.

Chaparral wildfires that ignite during dry and windy conditions can rush toward urban areas with astonishing rapidity and intensity, spreading so quickly and erratically that it becomes impossible to protect all structures and people. These huge fires often develop

into firestorms, creating ferocious winds that blow fire across barriers as large as freeways and golf courses. These wind-driven conflagrations can become urban fires that level entire neighborhoods in a matter of minutes. There have always been fires like this, but they have been less important to human beings before the recent, extensive contact between city and chaparral. Fire safety specialists call this contact zone the urban-wildland interface, and it can be a dangerous place when fire descends upon it.



Driven by powerful Santa Ana winds, wildfires raged near Los Angeles in mid-October 2008. The 19,500 acre Sesnon and Marek fires were at the northern edge of the San Fernando Valley. The arrival of calm winds kept the larger, Sesnon wildfire from making a run toward the sea. (NASA Earth Observatory image)

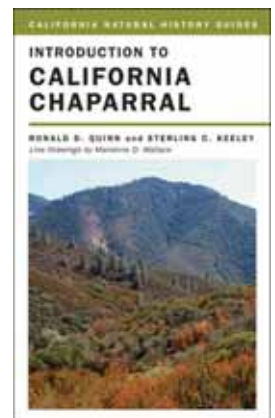
There are many things that can be done to lessen this danger, ranging from land use planning to creating a safety zone and evacuation plan for individual structures. Like so many public policy issues that are large and complex, it is easier to understand this problem than it is to solve it. Individual residents, neighborhoods, and cities can and do undertake measures to improve safety at the urban-wildland interface on a local scale. Just as in the case for preparing for other types of possible emergencies, it is in everyone's interest to be informed and participate in these efforts.

Having said all this, I find that I appreciate California chaparral as an enduring piece of the sweeping natural beauty of this diverse state. The intricacy and variety of this ecosystem, literally within sight of most Californians, should be appreciated in the same way that a New Englander regards a hardwood forest or an Oregonian an ancient stand of temperate rainforest. Half of all chaparral is on public land, usually open to all. It clothes most of the high mountain ranges in the National Forests of southern California and almost all of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Millions of us can be at a trail head that leads up into chaparral in less time than it takes to commute to an urban destination. From late autumn until mid-spring

is an ideal time to get to know chaparral first-hand. The calendar says winter, but the vegetation and animals say spring. Many plants begin to grow as soon as the rains come, and there are always flowers to admire, producing a show that changes as frequently as a movie theater's. The birds proclaim spring from the tops of shrubs. Most days the weather is agreeable, pesky flies are mostly dormant, and for those who worry about such things, the rattlesnakes are hibernating. To paraphrase John Muir, go to the foothills and get their good tidings. See for yourself how fortunate we are. Praise the foresight of federal, state, and local governments who realized that the mountains are most valuable the way they are, rather than what we might make of them. Wrapped right around this huge metropolis is a wrinkled tapestry of chaparral, full of life. Trails and vistas await you. Experiencing nature so close at hand is not an escape. On the contrary, it is a reminder of the enduring beauty and resilience of nature, which, in the final analysis, supports us all.

Part 1 of this article appeared in the January-February 2009 issue of The Paintbrush.

Ronald D. Quinn, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences and Regenerative Studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. He spoke to our chapter about "Living with Chaparral" on September 25, 2008. You can learn more about this subject in his book "Introduction to California Chaparral" (California Natural History Guides) which is available at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center, from the University of California Press at <http://www.ucpress.edu>, and from bookstores.



CHAPTER COUNCIL MEETING

Saturday-Sunday, March 14-15

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont

This is one of four meetings of delegates from the 32 CNPS chapters held each year in different communities. All CNPS members are encouraged to attend. Details haven't yet been finalized, but here's what you can expect:

- Saturday morning: Business meeting. A new CNPS fire policy will be discussed and (hopefully) approved.
- Saturday afternoon: Presentations and discussions on horticulture, gardening, education and research. The January Conservation Conference in Sacramento will be recapped.
- Saturday evening: Dinner, with a speaker. The tentative speaker is Dr. Gordon Frankie, a bee expert who has studied native bees and their relations to our urban landscapes.
- Sunday: Field trips
- Activities for family members will be arranged on both days.

When details are finalized, they will be posted at <http://cnps.org/>.

EXPLORE OUR CHAPTER'S WEBSITE: <http://cnps-sgm.org>

by Norman Ackerman

Don't limit yourself to reading only this newsletter. Explore our chapter's website. As almost everyone who uses a computer has discovered, there is a wealth of information available on the internet. Our current and past webmasters, Graham Bothwell and Jane Strong have done a masterful job of gathering links to much of the information dealing with native plants. Their drop-down menus are shown below. I've highlighted a few of the links which I encourage you to check out. (Note: The menus may change a little by the time you receive this.)

1. If you mislay this newsletter, go to the "Home" menu to find upcoming events.
2. About the time you receive this issue of The Paintbrush, you should start checking "Wildflower Reports" in the "Our Region" menu. Then you can arrange your own field trips to see spring wildflower displays.
3. You can ask knowledgeable members of our chapter for advice about gardening, but you should also check the many references in "Growing plants" on the "Native plant gardening" page. Categories include books, newsletters, webpages and online discussion groups.
4. Go to the "Our Chapter" menu and click on "Newsletter." Next you'll see "Click here for the Newsletter Archive page," where you'll find our newsletters going all the way back to the first issue in 1984. You can download them as PDF files.
5. Find out what other native plant and related organizations around the world are doing in the menu on the right.

Home

Coming up:

Thu., Mar. 5, Board Meeting
Sun., Mar. 8, Eaton Canyon Plant Walk
Sat.-Sun., Mar. 14-15, Chapter Council Meeting
Thu., Mar. 26, General Meeting
Sat., Mar. 28, Ecosystem Field Trip
Sun., Apr. 12, Using Native Plants: A Walk And A Talk
Thu., Apr. 23, General Meeting
Sat., May 2, Mountain Plant Walk*
Thu., May 7, Board Meeting
Sun., May 10, Eaton Canyon Plant Walk
Thu., May 28, General Meeting

Latest newsletter

Slide show from plant identification workshop, June 26, 2008

Native plant gardening

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Seeds & books by mail order
Odds and ends

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Links to native plant & related organizations

CALIFORNIA

CNPS state web site
Other CNPS chapters in California
Angeles National Forest — U.S. Forest Service
Calflora
Calphotos
California Academy of Sciences
Botany Department and their Wildflowers page
California Chaparral Institute
California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC)
California Native Grasslands Association
San Gabriel Mountains Heritage Association
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden
Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter, Natural Science Section
Southern California Botanists
Southern California Wetlands Mapping Project
Wildflowers and Other Plants of Southern California

NORTH AMERICA

Canada (and other parts of North America): North American Native Plant Society
U.S. Forest Service

OVERSEAS

Australia: Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants (ASGAP), Wildflower Society of Western Australia (with links to societies in other states)
New Zealand: Botanical Society of Otago (with links to several other New Zealand societies)
South Africa: Botanical Society of South Africa, Kirstenbosh National Botanic Garden
United Kingdom : Botanical Society of the British Isles, The Wildflower Society, Botanical Society of Scotland
Zimbabwe: Tree Society of Zimbabwe

GENERAL MEETINGS

Thursdays: Come at 7:00 p.m. for informal plant identification and a social half-hour. The program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 26, 7:00 p.m. Social, 7:30 p.m. Program
Topic: Plant Identification Workshop

Our workshop in June 2008, was so well received that we will do it again. Aided by a team of knowledgeable volunteers, you will learn to examine and identify various species representing six plant families that are prominent in the San Gabriel Mountains. Microscopes will be available to help you see important family characteristics in the many specimens on hand. Literature and other resources will also be provided.

Thursday, April 23, 7:00 p.m. Social, 7:30 p.m. Program
Topic: Tongva Maintenance of the Land

The Tongva, the indigenous people of the Los Angeles Basin, like most California Native peoples, were caretakers of the land. This presentation will deal with the relationship of the Tongva to their land, their spiritual connections, and their value system. This relationship involves the physical land, the flora, and the fauna of that land known as *Tovangar* (Los Angeles Basin).

Speaker: Mark Acuña is a Tongva elder and ethnobotanist for the Gabrieleno Tongva, the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

Thursday, May 28, 7:00 p.m. Social, 7:30 p.m. Program
Topic: Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada

Stephen Ingram's multimedia presentation explores some of the unique attributes of the cacti, agaves, and yuccas and highlights what makes them such intriguing components of our native plant communities. With stunning images of their colorful blossoms and unusual growth forms, his program showcases a number of species and varieties that occur in California's deserts and coastal areas.

Speaker: Botanist, writer, and photographer Stephen Ingram has created a detailed, highly readable, and beautifully illustrated natural history and field guide, *Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada*, a reference book that can be enjoyed by novice and expert. Following the presentation, Stephen will sign copies of this new book from Cachuma Press.

ECOSYSTEM FIELD TRIP

Explore a Unique Alluvial Scrub Natural Community

Saturday, March 28, 2009, 9:00 a.m.- noon
Santa Fe Dam County Regional Park, Irwindale
Leader: Mickey Long

This trip will explore the last of this unique alluvial scrub natural community in the San Gabriel Valley. The walk will wind through over 400 acres of terraces of the San Gabriel River flood plain, full of plants and animals that are declining elsewhere. Mickey plans to discuss the ecosystem as a whole: plants, birds, reptiles, and the interesting successional vegetation levels tied to river geography. Resident cactus wrens, huge laurel sumacs, and giant Whipple yuccas will be seen.

Take the 210 Freeway east from the Pasadena area to the Irwindale Avenue offramp. Travel south on Irwindale to Arrow Highway, then turn west (right) to the Santa Fe Dam entrance drive on the right. Meet (9 a.m.) at the base of this entrance for carpooling into the Park and up to the Nature Center parking lot at the north end of the basin. Wear sturdy shoes or boots and a hat, and bring water. Be prepared to share the entrance fee of about \$6 per car.

EATON CANYON PLANT WALKS

- Sunday, March 8, 9:00 a.m. Leader: Cynthia Null
 - Sunday, April 12, 9:00 a.m. Leader: Orchid Black (Also see Using Natives in the Garden on page 1.)
 - Sunday, May 10, 9:00 a.m. Leaders: Gabi & Cliff McLean
- Meet at the flag pole in front of the Eaton Canyon Nature Center. Then go on a leisurely walk (about 2 hours) through the native plant garden that surrounds the Center and into the nearby wild areas. The walk is different each time — what's leafing out, flowering, in seed, etc. determines what your leader will talk about — and different leaders bring different points of view.

BOARD MEETINGS

- Thursday, March 5, 7:30 p.m.
- Thursday, May 7, 7:30 p.m.

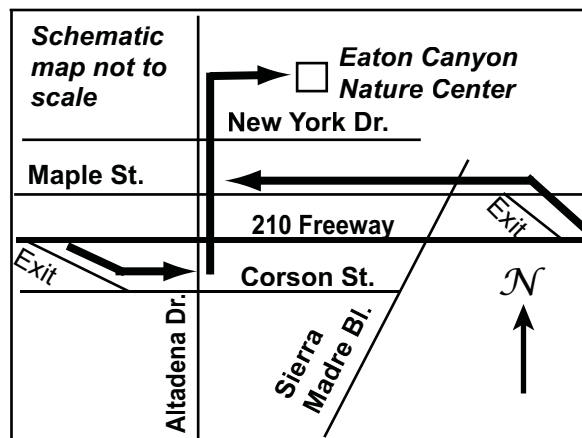
We meet at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center on the first Thursday of January, March, May, September, and November. Even if you're not a board member, come and participate. We can always use new points of view.

DIRECTIONS TO EATON CANYON NATURE CENTER

1750 N. ALTADENA DR., PASADENA, CA 91107

DRIVING EAST ON THE 210 FREEWAY

Take Exit 28 toward Sierra Madre Bl./Altadena Dr., continue onto Corson St., turn left at Altadena Dr., go north 1.6 miles., cross New York Dr., and turn right to Eaton Canyon Nature Center.



DRIVING WEST ON THE 210 FREEWAY

Take the exit toward Sierra Madre Bl./San Marino, cross Sierra Madre Bl., continue on Maple St., turn right at Altadena Dr., go north 1.6 miles., cross New York Dr., and turn right to Eaton Canyon Nature Center.



Join CNPS Today!

Members receive the *Fremontia*, the *Bulletin*, and the chapter newsletter. For a list of membership benefits, visit www.cnps.org/membership

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Chapter _____

Membership Level (check one):

- \$45 Individual
- \$75 Family
- \$100 Plant Lover
- \$300 Patron
- \$600 Benefactor
- \$1500 Mariposa Lily

Areas of interest:

- Advocacy
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- Conservation
- Education
- Gardening
- Plant ID
- Volunteering

*Donations above the membership level are gratefully accepted.
Dues and donations are tax-deductible.*

*Make your check payable to "CNPS" and mail it with this form to:
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Instead of using the form on the left, consider joining or renewing your CNPS membership online with a credit card.

Go to <http://cnps.org>, click on "Join CNPS" in the right column, then fill out the form, and pay with a credit card.

As an option you can set it up to renew automatically year after year.

It is quick, easy, convenient, and reduces the cost of mailing renewal notices.

Did You Know?

As a CNPS member, you can get \$6 off an annual subscription to *Pacific Horticulture*, the widely read journal of western gardening. Find out about these and other member benefits by visiting



www.cnps.org/membership

Join or renew today!



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