Native Gardener’s Corner—
Member’s Tips, Tricks, and Techniques

This column is a regular newsletter feature offering chapter members and local experts a chance to briefly share information on many things related to gardening with natives.

The request for this edition is: “Do you have a favorite California desert species you like to use in your native garden?”

Christopher Reed: “I can’t resist showy brittlebush (Encelia farinosa) with its gray foliage and classic yellow daisy flower—with bees galore. It does well in Laguna if the soil is sandy and the sun shines.”

Leon Baginski: “I have an entire planter bed that is desert sand and DG. It is planted with different members of opuntia and Ferro cactus species. Ocotillo, Joshua tree, desert agave and desert mallow are also represented. No matter how hot and dry the weather, these plants hold their own.”

Laura Curran: “I like my Opuntia littoralis, especially because Ron Vanderhoff said it is probably one of the only Opuntia in the Corona del Mar flower streets. I also have a tall Manzanita which I’ve shaped as a bush with a lacey look and it is a point of interest for the neighborhood.”

Christiane Shannon: “The plant that jumps to my mind is Artemisia tridentata or Great Basin Sagebrush. It is doing really well for me because the soil in my garden is not the typical clay or loamy soil that most gardeners deal with in the county. It is sandy, rocky to about 4 feet deep with the reject material from an active gravel pit that was located just below our hill. It can take a little watering in the summer and does not need any in the winter. It grows quite large, the light grey foliage always looks good, and the pleasant aroma from the leaves is very similar to that of Artemisia Californica or Coastal Sagebrush that grows in my garden as well.”

Linda Southwell: “I have two desert species that I love: Desert Willow (Chilopsis linearis) and Desert Lavender (Condea emoryi formerly Hyptis emoryi). Desert Lavender was an early success when I started my native garden. I have planted more since. They love to be pruned, fit well in narrow spaces, are happy with hot summers, easy to grow, especially with good drainage, and have a lovely scent.”

Sarah Jayne: “One of the loveliest of the spring annuals wildflower show is Phacelia campanularia—Desert Bluebells. Native to the southern Mojave Desert and the northern Colorado Desert, it is regularly cultivated in this area and is often available at Tree of Life Nursery. Another favorite is Desert Willow—with a caution: It is self-mulching therefore should not be planted next to a sidewalk.

Dan Songster: “A few come to mind. Desert Willow (Chilopsis linearis), a modest sized tree with late summer flowers almost Orchid like in their...”
beauty. Baja Fairy Duster (*Calliandra californica*)—delicate looking foliage with summer and fall staminate flowers that the hummingbirds love. And the two mallows, Desert Mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), and Palmer’s Indian Mallow (*Abutilon palmeri*) both of which are densely cloaked with intensely colored flowers. Oh, and an honorable mention for Jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*) that will grow anywhere and form a nice tough hedge or screen. All of these are tough plants that are easy to grow!”

Bart O’Brien: “It is really surprising how well many of them do – even up here in the Berkeley Hills – but I’m also thinking about those that did well at CBG/RSABG in Claremont.

*Abutilon palmeri* – Loves heat, does best with some summer water. Outstanding velvety foliage and cantaloupe melon-colored flowers. Can reseed in gardens with well-drained sandy-gravelly soil, but never a pest.

*Justicia californica* ‘Dick Tilforth’ – this was originally collected (with permits!) from Deep Canyon. It appears to be rather hardy as they were in a cold pocket at Rancho and they appear to be fine here. Bright clear yellow flowers in abundance. Grey-green stems. With some water, it blooms lots longer.

Penstemons – there are a plethora of garden-worthy desert penstemons! All want full sun; good drainage and good air circulation are important. Most are short-lived. *P. clevelandii* has rich magenta-colored flowers and flowering plants are usually around a foot tall. *P. stephensii* is usually taller and redder than *P. clevelandii*. *P. thurberi* has open-faced flowers that look a bit like phlox and linear leaves – plants at RSABG/CBG were surprisingly long-lived (up to 10 years). The plants look rather wispy, so it’s best to plant them with or near another plant. *P. thompsoniae* is a small rock garden treasure with gray foliage and dark purple flowers – plants are only up to about 3 inches tall and spread to about a foot across. Delightful in a large container. There are many other species, but the above are some of my favorites.”

[Note: We were happy to get this response (with a photo) from our old friend Bart O’Brien who now manages Tilden Botanic Garden in Berkeley. —Dan]

Our Question for the Next Newsletter: “What plants and plant materials do you use to decorate your home for the holidays and how?”
Email your responses to Dan Songster at songster@cox.net. Please remember to keep replies brief so we can include most of the responses!

HOLY FIRE UPDATE

In 2019, the chapter carried out an ambitious Study of the 22,000-acre Holy Fire, which occurred in the Santa Ana Mountains between Santiago Peak and Ortega Highway. At the end of 2019 we had planned to continue our work into 2020, perhaps with a few less visits and fewer participants. We obtained extensions on our access and collection permits. Ron was out bright and early in Trabuco Canyon. We even started rudimentary planning on a Rare Plant Treasure Hunt in the late spring and were working with Amy Patton in Sacramento to make this happen.

You all know the story. Covid-19 paid a visit and everything changed. CNPS cancelled in-person meetings and field trips. Planned activities for the Holy Fire followed suite. No group trips. No carpooling. Without the later, only participants with high clearance vehicles could travel beyond the Long Canyon Gate. Regardless, a few of us have continued to examine the Holy Fire burn. Mostly myself, RonVanderhoff, and Mike Simpson. Bob Allen has been out there as well.

Ron, Mike, and I have continued to make important contributions by gathering new voucher specimens. Last year, Ron found Shelton’s violet (*Viola sheltonii*) in upper Trabuco Canyon. Mike and I visited the same site this year, a north-running steep-sided wooded drainage. We were surprised to see how extensive the population was. This appears to be the southernmost location for *Viola sheltonii* in California. Mike and I found one of the few locations for many—
flowered bush mallow (*Malacothamnus densiflorus*) in Orange County (I’d never seen the plant in the wild) above Rice Canyon. Nearby, we found the first record for Cleveland’s malacothrix (*Malacothrix clevelandii*) in Orange County. Jonathan Frank had nearly accomplished this last year when he found it a mere 15 meters from the county line in Riverside County. Our last significant discovery was in mid-June with the first Fremont’s monkeyflower (*Diplacus fremontii*) on west Horsethief Trail in upper Trabuco Canyon. This was another first for Orange County. The pretty magenta-flowered annual is known from mountains in the surrounding counties but had not been confirmed in Orange County until now.

While no official Rare Plant Treasure Hunt took place, rare plant mapping went on. The project focused on mapping Cleveland’s monkeyflower (*Diplacus clevelandii*). While previously known to be patchy in the southern reaches of the burn, the 2020 season presented whole hillsides covered with the yellow-flowered somewhat sticky perennial. Mapping it has been no small challenge, especially where it occurs on steep slopes or where mapping it required wading through poodledog bush (*Eriodictyon parryi*).

As some of you may recall, poodledog bush is a special plant. A true fire follower, it only appears on burns, gets quite large, and bears inflorescences reaching as much as 2.5 meters (8 feet) in height packed with beautiful purple flowers. Absent during the years before a fire, it will develop in the fire scar a few years, then fade away. Six to eight years after a fire, the plant is gone and will not appear again until the next burn. This happens with a lot of wildflowers but few as large as poodledog bush.

We hardly noticed poodledog bush in 2019. Mostly we found scattered, unassuming rosettes of leaves on individuals less than ankle high. As a remarkable transformation, in 2020, the plants were now 1-2 meters (3-6 feet) and formed dense stands covering whole hillsides. The robust perennials were just starting to form a “trunk” and the tall inflorescences with purple flowers. You can’t help but wonder if this transformation was magical. Where were all the seedlings last year? As Bob pointed out to me on one field trip, the native bees were loving it.

We did a lot of “off trail” work in 2019. In 2020 that inadvertently meant wading through forests of poodledog bush. And this brings me to its dark side—chemicals in the sticky foliage can irritate the skin. Let me assure you, this is no myth. Where my wrists were exposed, I ended up with an itchy rash for weeks. I don’t know how it compares to poison oak as I’ve never had the pleasure of experiencing that itch, but it wasn’t something I would like to repeat.

This year we will likely produce only a supplemental report but already, we are looking forward to year three on the Holy Fire.

Fred M. Roberts, Botany Team
Thursday, September 17: Crystal Cove State Park: a gem of a place for rare plants.

Speaker: Fred Roberts

In spring of 2017, Fred was asked to survey about 1,000 acres of Crystal Cove State Park. For all of Crystal Cove’s popularity, no formal baseline rare plant survey had been conducted during the nearly 40-years since the park was established in 1979. This would be the first. Most of the survey effort was focused on the 400 acres west of Pacific Coast Highway. Many of the flat mesas had been cleared and farmed in the early part of the last century and have since been largely restored to natural habitat. However, the botanical diversity is largely found in difficult to access ravine and bluff margins, and the steep slopes and cliffs immediately above the beach. While occasionally over-run by iceplant, these sites have never been plowed, tilled, or graded, and generally represent habitat dominated by coastal bluff scrub. On some ridges, as many as seven rare plant species grow together, a diversity seldom encountered in Orange County. Among the plants seen were dense tangles of aphanisma, green in the early spring, and turning into an artist’s palette of orangey-reds as the spring progresses. Obscure rare herbs, such as Coulter’s saltbush barely grow in scattered patches along the bluff margins. Colorful mats of red sand-verbena grow on the northern beaches. The highlight of the survey was the rediscovery of Davidson’s saltbush, a plant not seen in Orange County, and possibly the southern California mainland, in the last 85-years. Overall, 16 rare and sensitive plants were found during the survey. Tonight, we’ll take a look at some of these rare plants and other interesting plants found at Crystal Cove State Park.

Fred Roberts, author of Illustrated Guide to the Oaks of the Southern Californian Floristic Province (1995), Vascular Plants of Orange County (2008), and co-author Wildflowers of Orange County and the Santa Ana Mts. regions (2013) has been working with native plants since high school. He was the assistant curator of the Herbarium at the Museum of Systematic Biology at U.C. Irvine for nine years, a botanist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for seven years, primarily adding species to the endangered species list, and has spent the last 20 years as an independent botanical consultant, author, and artist. Fred has been the rare plant chair or a member of the OC CNPS Rare Plant Team since 1999 and served a stint in the slot in the 1980s. His specialties include the flora of Orange County, oaks, lilies and their relatives, and rare plants of southern California. Fred has been conducting rare plant surveys for the Irvine Ranch Conservancy and the Natural Communities Coalition for over a decade. About 24,000 acres of Orange County conservation lands have been examined during the surveys.

Thursday, October 15: Crossing the border for rare plants in Baja.

Speaker: Sula Vanderplank

While there are many rewards, there are difficulties too in attempting to rediscover plants that may still be on both sides of the US/Mexico border. Agriculture, development, and other land uses have changed things dramatically on both sides of the border. While many of the target species have been the subject of many years of conservation action in the US, for most this is the very beginning in Mexico. What is left, what will be rediscovered, and what unexpected species linger? The beginning of conservation must start with knowledge of what is there!

Sula Vanderplank is a field botanist who focuses on natural history, floristics, and conservation science in Baja California. She actively collaborates both sides of the US/MX border and serves as adjunct faculty at Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de Ensenada (CICESE) and San Diego State University. She is an active research associate at the San Diego Natural History Museum and California Botanic Garden (formerly Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden). For the last 12 years Sula has published broadly on the flora of this region including a field guide to the endemic plants and animals of the Baja California Pacific Islands, a book on quail-friendly plants, and is coauthoring a field guide to the Maritime Succulent Scrub of Baja California. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside, where she studied under Dr. Exequiel Ezcurra, one of Mexico’s leading conservation scientists.
THE PLANT QUIZ
Native Trees In and Around Orange County

Test your knowledge. Name these wildland trees; then indicate which five are NOT native to Orange County. Use the Calflora hints and Calflora.com to help you. (Answers at the end of the newsletter)

#1 Calflora hint: The entire colony burned in the 2018 Holy Fire; documented in Calflora.

#2 Calflora hint: Somewhat odd for a tree, it is summer deciduous. Although common in CA, OC is near its Southern limit

#3 Calflora hint: The most widespread native tree in Orange County; from coast to mountains.

#4 Calflora hint: There’s a nice big one at 33.63906, -117.43278. (Do the little cones belong here?)

#5 Calflora hint: The only tree on this list in the rose family (Rosaceae).

#6 Calflora hint: It’s the first choice if you enter lifeform ‘tree’ and plant community ‘foothill-woodland’ in OC.

#7 Calflora hint: It’s a willow of course. Check the Calflora photos – it’s the only species with the same green color on the top and bottom of the leaf.

#8 Calflora hint: The only coastal native conifer in CA that grows South of Los Angeles.

#9 Calflora hint: The only tree on this list in the pea family (Fabaceae).

#10 Calflora hint: Although a rather common tree, there is only one Calflora records for OC.

#11 Calflora hint: The most widespread native tree in Orange County; from coast to mountains.

#12 Calflora hint: It has a California Rare Plant Rank of 4.2 (limited distribution).

One more on the next page
**SAVE THE DATE**

**Tuesday October 27**

**Wildland Plants for Urban Nature Gardens:** why local wildland plants are beneficial and support bird life in our gardens and parks. Included will be sample plants, where to get them, and tips for design.

**Host:** Sea and Sage Audubon using Zoom. For more information and registration, visit [www.seaandsageaudubon.org](http://www.seaandsageaudubon.org)

**Time:** Zoom “Door” opens at 6:30 pm. Presentation at 7:00 pm. Details for access will be made available later.

**Presenter:** Brad Jenkins

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# 13 Calflora hint: Use ‘Observation Search’, select Orange County and enter 2020-05-17 to see the location of our largest OC grove.

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**CNPS SPONSORSHIP WEEK AT TREE OF LIFE NURSERY**

**November 9—14, 2020**

Our traditional Fall Plant Sale and Membership Celebration is not an option this year, but Tree of Life Nursery is offering an alternative—a week-long sale!

During this week, all CNPS members will receive their normal 10% discount and 10% of the proceeds from all sales will go to our local CNPS chapters.

The nursery will be well stocked for the fall and winter planting season. Added this year is a line of vegetables and edibles in a new retail area, “La Finca”!

Wide paths in the retail area allow plenty of room for social distancing and facemasks are required.

**PUT IT ON THE CALENDAR**

**November 9—14**

**Monday through Saturday**

9 am to 3:30 pm

33201 Ortega Highway

San Juan Capistrano, Ca 92675

californianativeplants.com

occnps.org

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Oscar Clark’s excellent guide to the flora of the Santa Ana River and environs, which had gone out of print, has been reprinted! It is available directly from Heyday Press and here is the live link to that precious resource.

[https://shop.aer.io/Heyday/p/Flora_of_the_Santa_Ana_River_and_EnvironsWith_References_to_World_Botany/9781597140508-4706](https://shop.aer.io/Heyday/p/Flora_of_the_Santa_Ana_River_and_EnvironsWith_References_to_World_Botany/9781597140508-4706)

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2020 july 12 ed sullivan

ed sullivan

ed who

if you have to ask who

then you missed a really big show

tv at its best in the 1950’s

ventriloquist

what is that

or better yet

who is that

a person who could throw his voice

that is to talk without moving his/her lips

usually a doll/dummy would move its lips

most famously was charlie mccarthy

with edgar bergen providing the voice

but my favorite and best of all was the fellow and his fist

yes fist which was quickly transformed babushka like

a hanky for a scarf and lipstick for mouth and eyes

remember tv was only black and white

and i was spellbound as you watched the words tumble out of the fist thumb mouth

this memory rushed back to me recently

trailside mason 3

i stood many moments

hearing bird songs

bird calls

& seeing no birds

baffled

where did those sounds come from

clever birds

better than the ed Sullivan show

the really big show

birds throwing their voices/songs

me gaping spellbound

where are they s’allright

chuck wright

The Ed Sullivan Show (TV Series 1948-1971)

Ventriloquist, Señor Wences, from Spain

Bird song Yellow-breasted Chat, *Icteria virens*

Other unknown birds and sounds
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Membership Team
Team Leader: Laura Camp (interim)
Outreach Coordinator: Jennifer Mabley
Hospitality: Sarah Jayne
Greeters: Dori Ito, Jennifer Beatty
Volunteer Recognition: Dan Songster
Volunteer Activities: Elizabeth Wallace
Programs: Dan Songster
Audio-Visual: Bob Allen

Conservation Team (Protect OC)
Team Lead: open
Members: open

Horticulture Team (Grow Native OC)
Team Lead: Dan Songster
Plant Sale: Dan Songster, Laura Camp
Garden Tour: Terri LePage, Mabel Alazard, Jennifer Beatty, Dori Ito, Sarah Jayne

Plant Science Team (Research OC)
Team Lead: Bob Allen
Rare Plants: Fred Roberts, Ron Vanderhoff

Invasives Team
Team Lead: Ron Vanderhoff
Members: Bob Allen, David Pryor, Dan Songster

Explore Team (Explore OC)
Team Leads: Diane Etchison, Jonathon Frank
Field Trips: Kent Henry, Robin Huber, Ron Vanderhoff

Communications Team
Team Lead: open
Publicity: open
Newsletter & eNew: Sarah Jayne
Publications: Brad Jenkins, Jennifer Mabley
Website: Rich Schilk

Grants Team
O’Neill Grant: Matt Garambone
Reviewers: Bob Allen, Celia Kutcher, Fred Roberts, Ron Vanderhoff
Acorn Grant: Sarah Jayne
Reviewers: Board of Directors

ANSWERS TO THE PLANT QUIZ:
1. Arbutus menziesii – Madrone, Old Trabuco Trail, 11-18-12
2. Aesculus californica – California buckeye, Puente Hills, E Oak Cyn. Drive, 4-20-14
3. Calocedrus decurrens – Incense cedar, Falcon Meadow, Los Pinos Potrero, 10-7-12
4. Pinus contorta – Coulter Pine, Pleaseants Peak vic., Santa Ana Mts., 4-30-17
5. Lyonothamnus floribundus – Catalina ironwood, Whites Landing Overlook, CNPS, 4-28-18
6. Acer macrophyllum – Bigleaf maple, Falls Canyon, CNPS, 11-18-12
7. Salix gooddingii – Goodding’s willow, Lower Peter’s Cyn. reservoir, Orange, 10-6-19
8. Pinus torreyana – Torrey Pine, Crest Canyon Preserve, Del Mar, 5-21-17
9. Cercis occidentalis – Western redbud, Vanderhoff garden
10. Populus trichocarpa – Black cottonwood, Rice Canyon, E Santa Ana Mts., 7-5-12
11. Quercus agrifolia – Coast live oak, Nevaeh, Whiting Ranch, extreme SW tip, 7-5-20
13. Pseudotsuga macrocarpa – Bigcone spruce, Trabuco Cyn to Yeager Mesa, 8-7-11

The species not native to Orange County are #3 Calocedrus decurrens – Incense cedar, #1 Arbutus menziesii – Madrone, #8 Pinus torreyana – Torrey Pine, #9 Cercis occidentalis – Western redbud, #5 Lyonothamnus floribundus – Catalina ironwood and #2 Aesculus californica – California buckeye.
The Plant Quiz was composed and all photographs were taken by Ron Vanderhoff