Native Gardeners’ Corner—Members’ 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 question for this newsletter is: “Many of us had a terrible time with non-native ants this past summer and fall. What (if anything) did you do to combat them successfully in your garden?”

NOTE: Recently Greg Rubin, a San Diego based landscape designer and installation expert spoke to our chapter. With his broad experience with natives and successful landscape designs, he has dealt with all manner of problems. In his talk he emphasized the critical role that non-native Argentine ants play in the importation and support of various sucking insects like aphids and scale to the detriment of our native plants, especially in garden situations. The following is Greg’s “brief” response to the question about ant problems in the native garden.

Greg Rubin—“As you probably already know if you attended our recent presentation with the Orange County Chapter of CNPS, Argentine ants may be one of the single greatest causes of mortality in native landscapes. Although there are certainly lots of other reasons plants can die (overwatering, underwatering, fertilizer, root pathogens), I usually start by looking for ants. If they are present, especially in the rootball, then I treat the infestation first, and that often resolves the issue. I’ve even been able to save dying Ceanothus!

Without getting into too many details, if the plant is in imminent danger of collapse, I first pull the mulch back from the base and wait a little bit to see if the ants start to swarm. Other indications would include weeds (like Veldt grass or spurge) growing right around the base of the plant, and general instability (looseness) of the root crown. When ants nest they remove soil from the roots so they can attach sucking insects like scale and aphids, which begin to weaken and eventually kill the plant below ground. You may also see direct evidence of scale on the lower trunk or even up in the branches.

A plant that has begun defoliating may need immediate attention in order to save it. This usually involves using some form of insecticide that has both systemic and contact effects. I only spray the plant itself and about 1.5X the shrub diameter on the ground. Because this can be harmful to pollinators, including bees, it is essential that this only be applied when the plants ARE NOT BLOOMING! Since there is a 1-3 month residual, you don’t want to spray after about the end of October for spring bloomers. Fortunately, ants are usually dormant during the cooler winter/spring months.

I have found that the most effective long-term approach with the least potential for harm is to use baits. Advion arena bait stations can be placed along the trails, up to 3-4 per area for heavy infestations. Gourmet liquid ant bait is another product that is dispensed in KM Antpro stations (or similar) and is approached differently. Stations are usually set up in a grid about 50-75 feet apart and must be shaded. You can use a slightly tilted bucket if there is no natural shade in the particular spot. I like to use both methods together as ant appetites seem to switch between protein and sugar (Advion is peanut butter based and GLB is more sugar based). The good thing about baits is that they are dispensed in a way that targets Argentine ants and not native ants.

There are other very promising approaches on the horizon but they still need to be tested and vetted for effectiveness and safety. Best of luck in the ant wars!”

Laura Camp—“Combat Max Ant-killing gel, active ingredient Fipronil, is working well for me, indoors and out. Apply a small amount (out of direct sun) in the ants’ path every 5 feet each day until the trail disappears. Follow directions on the label!”

John Gossett—“I have not had an ant problem this year, perhaps I go drier than most? I have not watered the backyard this year with the exception of some new plants a few times in the spring, and the front has only gotten three waterings this year.”

Leon Baginski—“Liquid ant bait that comes in a small self-contained dispenser. Cut off one end and the ants just line up, drink the stuff, take it back to their queens and slowly you can watch the size of the ant trails decrease. Took several boxes of the stuff but it had an impact.”

Alan Lindsay—“Until I heard Greg Rubin’s talk my only concern about ants was keeping them out of the house—I have my own discovery and drenching method to help control those populations of ants. I have only used Advion...”
once and it was inside the house on the kitchen counter. I put several beads of it on the splash board and it did exactly what Greg said it would. It attracted more ants and by morning they were gone and never came back. I plan to try this product outside now.”

Dan Songster—“Ants have been an ongoing problem, giving aphids, scale, mealybug, and other pests a helping hand by moving them around on some of my native plants. We also know they tend to fight of any good insects that want to eat those pest. Dry conditions in the last few years have helped slow this damaging process but they are still a problem. Bait stations used as directed seemed to slow them quite a bit.”

Our question for the next newsletter: “What is the best garden-related gift you have ever received?” Email your responses to Dan Songster at songster@cox.net. Keep replies brief so we can include all of the responses!

CONSERVATION

ON NATIONAL MONUMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE SANTA ANA MTS AND OC

The two different, but overlapping, proposals are still in play to designate part or all of the Santa Ana Mountains as a national monument.

1. The Santa Ana Mountains to Sea National Monument is proposed by U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-Fullerton); it is expected that he will soon introduce a bill proposing this monument to Congress. This version of the monument would encompass about 101,500 acres of OC, principally:
   - Laguna Coast Wilderness Park
   - Aliso & Wood Canyons Wilderness Park
   - Crystal Cove State Park
   - Upper Newport Bay Nature Reserve
   - Bommer Canyon Open Space Preserve
   - Limestone/Whiting/Black Star Wilderness Parks and adjacent units of the Irvine Ranch Natural Landmarks
   - O’Neill Wilderness Park
   - Caspers Wilderness Park

   The upper watersheds of canyons that drain into Santiago and Aliso Creeks, and upper Trabuco and San Juan watersheds (north of Ortega Highway) that drain into San Juan Creek. These upper watersheds, together, encompass about 1/3 of the Trabuco District, Cleveland National Forest (OC’s backyard mountains).

2. A coalition of interested enviro groups (including representatives of OCCNPS and Riverside/San Bernardino CNPS, and organized by CalWild) have met three times since August, working to formulate a Santa Ana Mountains National Monument that would encompass the entire range. This version would have about the same boundaries as the Trabuco District, plus bordering reserved natural lands and wildlife corridors extending from them. The coalition is proposing to Rep. Royce that the two national monument ideas be blended. The non-federal lands in Rep. Royce’s proposal are now protected by the Central-Coastal NCCP, which ends in 55 years. A national monument designation would extend that protection forever. The lands’ habitat restoration and maintenance would continue as at present under a national monument designation (at least at first). That management is now supported by an endowment, which unfortunately is underfunded.

National monument designations do not automatically come with federal financial support for management. Congress must approve any such support for a given monument. Approval has been difficult in the recent political climate. A result is that CalWild must seek to fundraise in the private sector to pay for management of the public lands that it works to protect.

COAST TO CLEVELAND CORRIDOR

A Corridor stakeholders’ meeting has been scheduled for Nov. 21, 11 AM at IRC HQ. Among the topics: the relationship of the corridor to the proposed versions of the Santa Ana Mountains National Monument. More info: https://wildlifeconnector.org/the-corridor/ and http://lagunagreenbelt.org/coast-to-cleveland-wildlife-corridor/.
CHAPTER MEETINGS

Thursday, November 17—Wild about Monkeyflowers (and other California wildflowers): an exploration of monkeyflower diversity and the flora of California

Speaker: Naomi Fraga

➡ MEETS AT THE FULLERTON ARBORETUM ➡

1900 Associated Road, Fullerton

Directions: From the Orange Freeway (57) exit east on Yorba Linda Blvd. Turn left on Associated Road, then left into the Arboretum parking lot. The meeting will take place in the Visitor Center/Education building.

Come enjoy an engaging exploration of members of the genus *Mimulus*, commonly known as monkeyflowers. These charismatic plants are exceedingly diverse in western North America, especially in California with more than 100 of the nearly 200 species worldwide occurring here. However, like many genera of California plants, the monkeyflowers have recently undergone significant changes in taxonomy, leaving the name *Mimulus* virtually absent from the California flora. This presentation offers an overview of these changes and information on how to identify the three new genera now recognized in California: *Erythranthe*, *Diplacus* and *Mimetanthe*. Also included—interesting monkeyflowers that will grow in your garden.

Naomi Fraga is Director of Conservation Programs at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Her research interests include plant geography, conservation biology, pollination biology and rarity in endemism. She completed her Ph.D. in Botany at Claremont Graduate University.

Thursday, December 15—It’s Your Turn!

Back at the Duck Club, we turn the mike and screen over to you, the audience. This is your chance to share a favorite flower, voyage, or habitat—locally or anywhere else in the world. The only rule is 5 minutes so that everyone gets a turn and we get home before midnight. Look back through the year’s adventures and prepare for your five minutes of fame!

Our tech master says: “Please use presentation software such as Keynote or PowerPoint to place your photos onto separate slides, then position, resize, sequence, & add transitions. We prefer *not* to have individual photos, but if you can’t do that, send them in a standard digital format—.jpg, .png, or .psd. Videos must be in standard video format: .mov (preferred), .mpeg (ok), .avi (discouraged), .wmv (discouraged), but *not* .exe, Windows people. We don’t use speakers, so please do *not* add sound. Keep your presentation to a maximum of about 20 slides or 5 minutes. We provide the computer; bring in your presentation on a flash drive, portable hard drive, CD, or DVD. Windows users: no autoexec (.exe) files of any kind. Please arrive a little early, so we can copy your presentation to the main projecting device.”

Following a long-standing tradition, board members will provide a festive spread on the hospitality table. If you’d like to share something tasty, you are welcome to bring it.

Chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month except in July and August. Meetings usually take place at the Duck Club in Irvine. Doors open at 6:45 pm; the program begins at 7:30.

Directions to the Duck Club:
The Duck Club is located in the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary next to the IRWD water treatment facility.

From the Jamboree exit of the 405:
Head toward Newport Beach. Go south (left) on Michelson to Harvard Avenue. Turn right on Harvard. At University Drive, turn right and stay in the far right lane. At Campus, turn right and stay to the right. The entrance to wildlife sanctuary is the next right. Turn left into the parking lot. The Duck Club is in the center, restrooms on the left, Audubon House on the right.

From the Culver exit:
Heading toward UCI, pass Michelson and continue on to University Drive. Turn right on University. Turn right onto Campus and stay to the far right for the turn into the wildlife sanctuary.

CONSERVATION, concluded

NEXT STEP WITH SCAG

Last Spring, OCNPS commented on native-plant aspects of the Natural and Farmlands Conservation Appendix of SCAG’s Draft 2016 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy. Now, we have been invited to participate in the upcoming Natural and Farmlands Working Group: a consortium of experts and stakeholders in the fields of habitat conservation, agriculture, and land use. The group’s goal is to provide direction for policy implementation based on strategies in the 2016 RTP/SCS. This is an opportunity for CNPS, through OCNPS, to have substantive input into policy implementation, for OC and SoCal.

—Celia Kutcher, Conservation Chair

GARDEN TOUR 2017

It’s not too late to submit your garden for consideration for next year’s tour on April 8 (and 9??). Contact us at gardentour@ocnps.org to arrange for a visit. Front yard conversions, interesting back yards, spaces large and small—gardens should be at least 50% native, the more the better. If in doubt, let us help you decide!

RARE SYCAMORE SIGHTING...

Last seen in 2014, California Impressionist Edgar Payne’s masterful portrait of sycamores in autumn is now on display in an exhibition entitled “Masterpieces of California Art”. Don’t miss it!

Irvine Museum, 18881 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine. Entry is complimentary, parking is free. Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 5.
CNPS Membership Application

☐ New member  ☐ Renewal

☐ Individual..............................................$45
☐ Family ..........................................................$75
☐ Plant Lover ......................................................$100
☐ Patron ................................................................$300
☐ Benefactor .........................................................$600
☐ Mariposa Lily .....................................................$1500
☐ Student/Limited Income.................................$25

[Organizations, please go to CNPS.ORG]

☐ Affiliate with the Orange County Chapter.

The chapter newsletter, CNPS Bulletin, and Fremontia are included. Membership is tax deductible, minus $12 for Fremontia. Make check payable to CNPS and send to CNPS, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816

Join or renew online: go to www.cnps.org, click on Join CNPS

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
City/State/Zip ____________________________
Phone/E-Mail ____________________________

Please charge my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Exp date: ________________________________
Signature ________________________________
Phone # ________________________________

CNPS Orange County Chapter

Contact Information and Teams

Officers:
President Dan Songster 949 768-0431  songster@cox.net
Vice-President Laura Camp 949 370-3303  laurac@treecoflcnursery.com
Secretary Sarah Jayne 949 552-0691 sbjayne@cox.net
Treasurer Brad Jenkins bradcjenkins@yahoo.com

Board Members:
Chapter Council Reps
Thea Gavin gavin1961@aol.com
David Pryor davidpryor@gmail.com
Jutta Burger jburger04@gmail.com
Bob Huttar huttarbob@cox.net
Celia Kutchera celia552@cox.net
Jennifer Mabley jenpod@gmail.com
Ron Vanderhoff ronv@rogersgardens.com
Rachel Whitt ronv@rogersgardens.com

Fremontia

Membership Team:
Team Leaders: Laura Camp, Interim
Volunteer Coordinator: Diane Wollenberg
Outreach Coordinator: Jennifer Mabley
Hospitality: Sarah Jayne
Greeters: Dori Ito, Jennifer Mabley
Volunteer Recognition: Dan Songster
Programs: Dan Songster
Audio-Visual: Bob Allen, Dan Songster

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

Conservation Team (Protect OC):
Team Lead: Celia Kutchera
Invasive Plants: Henry DiRocco

Explore Team (Explore OC):
Team Lead: Ron Vanderhoff
Field Trips: Ron Vanderhoff
Field Trip Logistics: Rachel Whitt

Communications Team:
Team Lead: open
Publicity: Bob Huttar
Newsletter: Sarah Jayne
eNews: Laura Camp & Rachel Whitt
Publications: Jennifer Mabley
Website: Rich Schik

Education Team:
Team Lead: Sarah Jayne
Educational Grants: Jutta Burger
School Gardens: Sarah Jayne

CNPS Orange County Chapter

Address: P.O. Box 54891
Irvine CA 92619-4891

November/December 2016

FIRST CLASS MAIL