**Native Gardeners Corner—Members’ Tips, Tricks, and Techniques**

This column is a regular 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 issue is: **“Which native plant have you tried but failed to grow, but won’t give up on?! Oh, and why do you still want to grow the darn thing??!”**

**Greg Rubin**: We have a very small internal nursery where we experiment with growing things that are difficult or impossible to find at most suppliers. The two plants we have struggled with are *Dendromecon harfordii* (everybody is experiencing problems with this one) and *Berberis pinnata*. The second is a plant that is local to Southern California, is very colorful, and fairly compact in size. It has done very well once planted out, and it's much better suited to suburban landscapes in this region than say "Golden Abundance" (which I do like, but needs a fair amount of water and is huge). As far as plants that have been difficult to sustain in landscapes, the problems appear to be more environmental than species related. Hotter summers with longer heat waves with insufficient cooling at night are leading to higher mortality rates, especially in the more northern evergreen species typically used as foundational plants in native landscapes. These same conditions are promoting the spread and longevity of Argentine ant colonies, which often nest in the roothballs of our plants, plasting the roots with sucking insects and apparently spreading diseases like root rot and wilts. Plants in the *Malvaceae* (including Fremontodenron), *Rhamnaceae* (including Ceanothus), and to a lesser extent *Ericaceae* (including manzanita) seem especially vulnerable. Timely aggressive treatment has often been able to reverse these potential losses. So, Cal., desert, and Baja species seem to have better mortality rates down here.

**John Gossett**: I love manzanitas, but I keep trying to grow varieties that need some water in my back garden that never gets watered. This falls somewhere between wishful planting and not thinking clearly.

**Sarah Jayne**: Sometimes it's for the best that the plant one craves just will not grow. I really wanted Matilija Poppy and tried three or four times to get it started in my 30x30 garden. Well thank goodness it didn't!

**Dan Songster**: “Well, wooly blue curls are short lived for me but too wonderful (fragrant, great cut flower, and lovely!) not to keep trying. Mariposa lily bulbs keep getting nibbled by the rabbits or dug up by the squirrels (need to put some wire mesh down over them I guess) but what a reward when they do survive and bloom. Of course, there are certain large manzanitas that I would love to grow, but various fungi interfere with the health of those plants in the heavier soils of the garden. Who does not love the sculptural bark of the manzanitas when on full display! I keep trying new things with decomposed granite, etc., to encourage longer life with California’s iconic shrub.”

With planting season approaching, our question for the next newsletter is: **“What native shrub or tree do you grow (or want to grow) that will provide food for the bugs that feed the majority of our nesting birds?”** Email your responses to Dan Songster at songster@cox.net.

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**DAVE BRAMLET, 1954-2018**

Southern California botany has suffered a great loss with the untimely passing of Dave Bramlet. He was one of the most knowledgeable and experienced botanists in OC and all of SoCal. In addition, he was knowledgeable about insects, plant communities, and much more, and an expert on vernal pools and clay and alkali soil vegetation. He always readily and cheerfully shared his knowledge with all who were interested.

He was among the founders of OCCNPS in 1981-82, and its president from 1985 to 1990. For several more years, he was the chapter’s Conservation and Rare Plants Co-Chair (with Fred Roberts). They continued as Rare Plants Co-Chairs after I became Conservation Chair, and continued to contribute expertise to many chapter letters commenting on environmental issues in OC and beyond.

Dave was also a long-time Board member for Southern California Botanists, and a popular field trip leader. He was an independent botanical consultant, and a research associate at Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden.

Dave quietly contributed so much to knowledge about and conservation of native plants throughout SoCal. We miss him.

—Celia Kutcher
OC PARKS HISTORY IN NEW VIDEO SERIES

OC’s regional park system is one of the County’s most interesting, appealing, and unique features. The system is the result of a legacy of park stewardship that began in 1897 with the establishment of Irvine Regional Park—the first park of its type in California.

Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks (FHBP) has recently released a 14-part series of videos that relate the history of OC Parks and of each OC Parks facilities: parks, harbors, beaches, historic sites, and trail systems. The comprehensive history was produced for FHBP by Eric Jessen, retired OC Parks’ Chief of Planning, Acquisition, and Development. Much of the material in the videos comes from Eric’s personal archives and recollections, and his narration of the presentations adds the color and insight that can only come from someone who had a big part in it all. The videos may be viewed at www.fhbp.org/news/videos/.

OC PARKS FUNDING AGAIN IN PERIL!

Between 1994 and 2017, a total of $250 million was redirected from OC Parks’ budget toward paying off OC’s bankruptcy. Parks’ capital improvements, land acquisition, and deferred maintenance suffered during those 23 years. With the bankruptcy finally paid off, there was a great sense of “now we can get things done” among Parks’ staff and supporters, and plans to do so began to be put into motion.

Planning to revitalize Dana Point Harbor’s aging facilities has been under way for a decade-plus. The harbor was under the old OC Harbors, Beaches and Parks Dept., so came under OC Parks when the old HBP Dept. was reorganized as OC Parks. DP Harbor revitalization was to be a public/private partnership and revenue-neutral—not impacting OC Parks budget. However, in July, the OC Board of Supervisors approved a DP Harbor Revitalization Plan that will get much of its funding from OC Parks’ budget—nearly $500 million over 66 years. In other words: after barely a year of a fully functional budget for OC Parks, the Revitalization Plan proposes to use nearly $7.6 million annually for just the Harbor.

OCCNPS was among the signatories of a group letter, organized by Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks and sent to the Supervisors before their vote, strongly protesting this diversion of OC Parks’ budget monies. Such a diversion will affect all OC Parks’ programs, including its commitments to protect, restore, enhance the Parks’ native vegetation.

The letter states in part: “We do not believe it is in the best interest of OC, its park facilities, and the taxpayers to have such an ongoing commitment to one Supervisorial district, for the next 66 years, at the expense of all the other districts. ... No one district should raid the budget for such a district-specific project shortfall. The Fifth District may choose to allocate nearly $100 million toward the shortfall, but the other four districts should not be forced to subsidize it.”

In addition, the Environmental Impact Report is 12 years old. At a minimum, an addendum should be prepared that considers:

1  Impacts from climate change and sea level rise.
2  Cumulative impacts from ongoing redevelopment and numerous infrastructure deficiencies in the harbor’s environs.

The revitalization project must still pass muster with the Coastal Commission. Stay tuned!

BOLSA CHICA

There’s just $100,000 still to be raised to purchase and restore the Ridge and Goodpods—last pieces of Bolsa Chica threatened with development. For background, and to donate see bclandtrust.org/ridge-goodell-preservation-agreement/.

Field Trip Finale...

Sunday, November 18: Fall Color Trip: Harding Canyon, Santa Ana Mountains

Enjoy the relaxing calmness and fall color of the beautiful and biologically rich Harding Canyon creek trail. An interesting mix of coast sage, chaparral and Riparian woodland highlight this species-rich walk. A short walk up the Harding Truck trail leads to the canyon that should be mostly dry this time of the year. A nice diversity of trees can be found including California Ash (Fraxinus dipetala), Arizona Ash (Fraxinus velutina), California Bay (Umbellularia californica), and Big-leaf Maple (Acer macrophyllum). There will also be a chance to see a few uncommon shrubs such as Nevin’s Bricklebuch (Brickellia nevini) and Fish’s Milkwort (Polygala cornuta var. fishiae).

Meet 9:00 am at the parking lot just right of the Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary, obeying the signs of appropriate parking in the area. Take E. Santiago Canyon Road from either the N or S and turn onto Modjeska Canyon Road leading directly to the parking lot.

Leaders: Jonathan Frank and Ron Vanderoff.


—Celia Kutcher, Conservation Chair
CHAPTER MEETINGS

Thursday, September 20: Why Natives?
Speaker: Kristen Wernick

With so many misconceptions about native plant landscaping, it can be challenging to convince others to plant natives. CNPS has created a “Why Natives” presentation that will help you deliver a compelling story to any audience. Learn a few fun and inspiring talking points that you can share with the public at outreach events, use as a tool to supplement a talk you are giving in your community, or even try out when “selling” your native garden to your neighbors!

Kristen Wernick, Outreach Coordinator for CNPS, is a California native plant and horticulture enthusiast with a passion for teaching and engaging others in native plant gardening. She is a graduate of UCSB in Environmental Studies and has an A.S. in Landscape Design from Saddleback College. Before going to CNPS, she was a Water Use Efficiency Specialist with the Santa Margarita Water District. In that role, Kristen worked with homeowners, homeowner associations, city governments, and more to increase adoption of native plants as a means to greater water efficiency. Kristen is excited to share her passion for CA native plant horticulture with others and ultimately restore nature one garden at a time.

Thursday, October 18: From Seed To Seed—Native Plant Material Development For Ecological Restoration In Orange County.
Speakers: Matthew Garrambone and Rachel Lambert

The Irvine Ranch Conservancy’s 8-acre native seed farm currently grows 45 local plant species, each providing seed to support local ecological restoration. It’s not done with mirrors! Find out how from the people who make it happen—tonight’s two speakers.

Matthew is a Project Manager-Ecologist for the Irvine Ranch Conservancy. He oversees a variety of projects for the Science & Stewardship department, including the development of native plant material for ecological restoration. In this capacity he oversees the collection of genetically local seed from the wild, the production of native plant materials using the Conservancy’s native seed farm and plant nursery, management of the Conservancy’s physical and digital seed inventory, and development of custom seed mixes for Conservancy staff and partners. Matthew has 15 years experience working with native plants, in both applied and academic settings. He received his Bachelors degree from Northern Arizona University in Environmental Communications, with a minor in Biology and his M.S. in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from University of California Irvine, where his thesis work focused on Germination Patterns of Coastal Sage Scrub Plant Species.

Rachel is a Seed Farm Stewardship Coordinator with the Irvine Ranch Conservancy. Working with both the Community Programs and the Science and Stewardship departments, Rachel plans and hosts public and private stewardship activities taking place on the Native Seed Farm. She also trains and coordinates a specialized group of volunteers who support the Farm by taking on a range of behind-the-scene tasks. In addition to volunteer coordination, Rachel directly assists the Farm’s day-to-day functioning, which includes ensuring that plants are planted, grown, harvested and stored properly. Rachel has her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and more than eight years of experience in hands-on ecological restoration, organic agriculture, and interpretation. She is certified through the National Association for Interpretation as a Certified Interpretive Guide.

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

Directions: 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: Heading west, turn south (left) on Michelson. 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. Take the next right into the wildlife sanctuary. At the closed gates, 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 turn right into the wildlife sanctuary.