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: “What native plants do you use successfully in containers?”

Elizabeth Wallace: “I have three Dudleya pulverulentas (chalk dudleyas) growing in a container on my front window ledge. The only water they receive is when I set the containers on the front sidewalk during winter rains. I also grow Eriogonum giganteum in large pots since it seems St. Catherine’s Lace doesn’t grow well in my clay soil but seems to thrive in pots. I give these beautiful specimen plants supplemental water every three to four weeks, plus a refreshing spray.”

Terry LePage: “Two years ago our renter potted up some of our California Strawberries, Fragaria vesca. He has moved on but the strawberries persist, lushly leafed and blooming and fruiting (modestly) all year long in full sun with twice-a-week water. The tiny flavor-bomb berries are a wonderful reward for watering my potted plants!”

Nancy Harris: “This may sound like a no-brainer, but my success has been using Dudleya and California Native Cactus. Cactus, of course, can also make a wonderful security wall. Neither seems to need much depth of soil and almost no water, which can be a problem with pots if you are not attentive. Also, some red monkeyflowers have found their way into some wayward pots and have survived several years with very little attention.”

Brad Jenkins: “An unexpected success so far is Tecate Cypress in a whisky/wine half barrel. We have about 7 years so far and looking good—but only 7 feet tall.”

Mark Sugars: “Strawberries are a pretty typical container plant, and I have had luck with Fragaria vesca in pots.”

Rama Nayeri: “This is a good one. I have grown Pacific Wax Myrtle, Ceanothus Concha, Dudleya and Yerba Buena in containers without issues. I have also had really good luck growing Dudleya indoors in containers on the kitchen window sill.”

Laura Camp: “Pretty much just Dudleyas and cactus. I’m really bad at regular watering.”

Ron Vanderhoff: “I especially like native succulents in containers, including various cacti, Dudleya, Opuntia, Euphorbia misera, etc. I have had a Dudleya hassei in a nice terra cotta hanging basket that I planted probably ten years ago. I don’t think I’ve watered, fertilized or touched it in nine years. It’s beautiful. What more could one ask for in low-maintenance, low water native plant gardening?”

Chuck Wright: “So sorry fellow native plant lovers. I used to do pots but salt build-up from our ‘lovely’ water inhibited happy healthy plants. I hate to see anything suffer and so if it is not in the ground I don’t grow it. My hat is off to those that do.”

Dan Songster: “Lots of natives do well in containers including succulents, ferns, bulbs, and a lot of perennials. But just for the fun of it I like growing a few manzanitas in fair sized pots. I control the drainage of course with good soil with lots of pumice, and watering is by hand for the most part. Some of the types that do pretty well in containers include ‘White Lanterns’, ‘Big Sur’, ‘Weber Garden’ and also the species, Arctostaphylos buxifolia and A. ophiu-risidis. Various cultivars of both Arctostaphylos uva-ursi and A. pajarotermis have also done quite well over the years for me as long as they don’t dry out for too long.”

Although he is up in Oakland, Pete Veilleux of East Bay Wilds Nursery gives good advice in this article: https://www.cnps.org/gardening/patio-and-container-gardens-5423

Our question for the next newsletter: “If you would be a native plant in another life, what would you choose to be and why?”

Email your responses to Dan Songster at songster@cox.net. Please remember to keep replies brief so we can include most of the responses!

CONSERVATION

OCCNPS is honored to receive the 2018 Green Vision Award, given by the Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks for conservation work in OC. 

HOBO-ALISO: A new/revised Fuel Modification Project (Design Review 18-2323 and Mitigated Negative Declaration)
has been proposed for Fuel Modification Zones 10 and 11, located on/around Hobo-Aliso Ridge. These two Zones are of particular interest because they encompass open-space portions of the Ridge’s San Onofre Breccia, which hosts:

1. A distinct vegetation type, Southern Maritime Chaparral, which is otherwise found in the U.S. only in San Diego County.

2. The only U.S. population of Big-Leaved Crownbeard (*Verbesina dissita*, CRPR 1B.1); the rest of its world population grows in northern Baja.

The Design Review Board discussion on these Zones can be seen on the City of Laguna Beach's website under Meetings, Agendas and Minutes, item #6 in the video, starting at 2:51:44. OCCNPS’ comments on the proposed fuel modification practices are themselves commented on in the video.

We found the proposals to be generally reasonable for fuel modification in native Coastal Sage Scrub vegetation in the Wildland-Urban Interface. However, we had several big caveats:

• The work should be done by crews trained to work in CSS.
• The crews’ supervisors should be knowledgeable about CSS’ growth patterns and ecology.
• The crews (and their supervisors) should be hired on the basis of their proven knowledge and training to work in CSS, rather than on their low bid.
• Successful fuel modification by goat-grazing requires that the goatherd, and the entity that contracts with him/her, be very clear on the limits of the site and the plants in the site that the goats are to eat.

In the video discussion, the Laguna Beach Fire Dept. representative states that they already arrange with Laguna Canyon Foundation biologists to do training such as outlined above.

We also objected to the limbing up of large native shrubs, which is discussed as a Fuel Modification practice. The large native shrubs, including but not limited to Laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), are essential members of CSS habitat. They should be pruned down, not limbed up. They want to be large shrubs (branches and foliage from ground level to top), not small trees (distinct trunks with branching and foliage some feet above ground level). If limbed up, these species all will immediately throw out sprouts from the base and try to be shrubs again. Which means periodic, perhaps annual, removal of the basal sprouts in order to maintain the limbing-up. Which work should be done by trained and knowledgeable people—see caveats stated above.

In the video discussion, the Laguna Beach Fire Dept. representative states that they no longer do limbing-up (or, at least, not the heavy limbing-up done in the past—which is obvious in the old shrubs in long-maintained parts of the fuel mod zones). They plan to consult with Laguna Canyon Foundation biologists on incorporating pruning-down where appropriate.

SO: the video discussion sounds like OCCNPS’ comments and suggestions on this issue have been taken reasonably seriously by City personnel. Which is gratifying! Now, to see if the action matches the words.

—Celia Kutcher, Conservation Chair

**A Trip to San Nicolas Island**

If you like islands, dirt, and cactus, this how you can enjoy all three—Fun Field Trips to see seals included.

In October 2018, I joined Channel Islands Restoration for a trip to San Nicolas Island. For thousands of years, San Nicolas was the home of the Nicoleño people. Today, the Island is known for hosting Naval Communications operations, and for having the second longest air runway in Ventura County.

Our group of 14 people flew from Pt. Mugu to Nicktown, where the US Navy has its operations. After visiting the Nursery and learning about the project, we spent the next five days planting a highway for night lizards, with extensive planting of *Opuntia litoralis* and related species. The crew dug over 1,200 holes! The project leaders provided careful direction and everyone worked together. I still have a few cacti spears in my skin; when you plant 600 cactus, it doesn’t matter how careful you are you will get stuck.

After each planting day, we went on a supervised tour and saw wildlife, including seals, sea lions, and island foxes, as well as restoration areas. All activity on the Island is restricted and trips outside of the direct project site are completely at the discretion of the Project Manager. Visitors are not allowed to leave Nicktown unsupervised.

We stayed in Nicktown at a hotel managed by the Navy. Flight and hotel expenses were covered for volunteers; donations are welcome, of course. CIR sponsors many tours and work projects for native plant restoration in Ventura County ranging from ½ day to multi-day. Trips to the Islands require completion of a security check through the Navy. CIR manages the process, which can take several weeks, so if you are interested in the multi-day trips, it’s a good idea to plan ahead. Starting with a 1-day workday can be a good way to get your feet wet. For more information about CIR, go to their website at cirweb.org.

—Laura Curran
2019 Native Plant Field Trips—January through March (go to occnps.org to see the full year)
Most field trips are free and open to all, but read the trip outlines for parking/entrance fees or pass requirements and be sure they fit your physical abilities. OC CNPS field trips are focused on the interpretation, identification, appreciation and conservation of our diverse flora and the ecosystems they support.

**Trips change! Always check www.occnps.org/explore for more current information.**
Rain cancels – check the website after 7 pm the evening before the trip for final updates.

**Sunday, January 13: Fungus Foray along Long Canyon Road with Joanne Schwartz**
Joanne Schwartz, a mushroom expert and OC CNPS member, will lead a hunt for interesting mushrooms and fungus within the beautiful oak forests, chaparral and sage scrub habitats of the Santa Ana Mountain foothills. The area of our foray will be the oak woodlands and adjacent meadows near the intersection of Hwy 74 and Long Canyon Road, in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mts. This is an area often rich in fungi. This is a picturesque area with level ground, easy access and should be accessible by all.
Meet 8:30 AM sharp in the parking lot at Bravo Burgers, 31722 Rancho Viejo Rd., San Juan Capistrano (just off Hwy 74 near I-5) or meet at the trip site at 9:00 AM. From I-5 travel about 20 miles East on Hwy. 74 until you see Long Canyon Road on your left and a large grassy meadow on your right. Turn left onto Long Canyon Road and park in one of the turnouts just a couple hundred meters down the road.
Joanne Schwartz is an amateur mycologist and local mushroom expert. She has collected and photographed fungi throughout the world and has participated in field studies in Peru and Bolivia as well as California’s redwood forests.

**Free to all. Physical difficulty: Easy to moderate.**

**Bring a hand lens, camera, good walking shoes, hat, sunscreen, water and lunch if desired.**
No water or restrooms. Approx. 3 hours. Leaders: Joanne Schwartz and Ron Vanderhoff.

**Important Note:** Mushrooms are particularly dependent upon winter rainfall for the best hunting. If rains do not cooperate, the date of this trip may be adjusted. Please check this website frequently for any last minute updates.

**Sunday, February 10: Dana Point Headlands with Korie Merill of the Natural Lands Conservancy.**

**Limited Attendance. RSVP required**
Join us for a beautiful walk around the Dana Point Headlands with a guided tour by staff of the Center of Natural Land Management’s Dana Point Preserve. We will begin our hike at the trailhead adjacent to the Interpretative Center at the end of Street of the Green Lantern in Dana Point. From there we will walk the entire upper headlands trail then continue to follow Dana Strand Rd as it loops back towards Street of the Green Lantern, exploring Dana Point Hilltop Park along the way. Common shrubs such as California encelia, the mounding coastal variety of California buckwheat, and California sagebrush (including the occasional striking silver-leaved form) are plentiful along with a delightful mixture of early seaside wildflowers. At the conclusion of our hike, we are welcome to visit the interpretative Center. As an added option, interested participants can meet along the end of Dana Point Harbor Dr. to check out the amazing population of Euphorbia miser growing at all levels of the cliffs overlooking the harbor. Time 2.5-3 hours, difficulty easy.

**This trip does require advance registration**, please visit this website for registration instructions approximately 30 days prior to the event. Once registered, a confirmation will be returned to the first 15 RSVP’s.

**Physical difficulty: Easy to moderate.**

**Bring good walking/hiking shoes, hat, sunscreen, camera, wildflower book/notepad and perhaps water.**
Water and restrooms are available near the parking area. Approx. 2.5-3 hours. Leaders: Korie Merill and Jonathan Frank.

**Sunday, February 24 (tentative) UC San Joaquin Marsh & the UCI Herbarium with Rebecca Crowe and Dr. Peter Bowler**

More details to come, but tentatively . . .
A two-part trip. The University of California owns and manages the approximate 200 acre San Joaquin Marsh as a part of the UC Natural Reserve system. The Reserve protects some of the last remnants of wetlands that once covered much of Orange County’s flood plain. Located in an ancient river-cut channel at the head of Newport Bay, the reserve supports a variety of wetland habitats, including marshlands, shallow ponds, and channels confined by earthen dikes.

In addition to the plants at the marsh, it is a critical stopping place for migratory birds, with more than 200 species sighted in the reserve. The University of California, Irvine Herbarium (IRVC) was established in 1965 and holds about 35,000 vascular plant collections from the western United States, especially southern California, Orange County, and Baja California.

For the visit, we will probably divide into two groups, with one group visiting the marsh and the other visiting the herbarium, then switching. Dr. Bowler is interested in initiating an aggressive re-collection and floristic survey of the marsh in 2019 and we will hear more of this ambitious effort during the visit. Ms. Crowe is in process of re-activating the herbarium and adding new collections, including those from the site of the 2018 Holy fire in the Santa Ana Mts.

Dr. Peter Bowler is well known in local botanical and environmental ecology circles. He is a Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UCI and the Facility Director of the marsh and herbarium. Rebecca Crowe is
Orange County Chapter CNPS

the UCI Nursery, Arboretum and Herbarium Manager and an Environmental Science graduate of San Francisco State University. She has a research interest in Arctostaphylos and other regional flora.

Physical difficulty: Easy to moderate. Bring good walking/hiking shoes, hat, sunscreen, wildflower book/notepad, and water and a sack lunch if you prefer. Water and restrooms are available at the herbarium/arboretum area. Approx. 3 hours. Leaders: Rebecca Crowe, Peter Bowler and Ron Vanderhoff.

Saturday, March 2: Border BioBlitz 2019 with San Diego CNPS

We are planning two trips in coordination with San Diego CNPS (see Elsinore Peak trip, March 31). One will be hosted by San Diego CNPS and other by Orange County CNPS, although everyone is welcome on both trips. These will be exciting opportunities for us to visit new areas and make new native plant friends.

Orange County CNPS will pair with San Diego CNPS for a botanical “BioBlitz” of the immediate California side of the U.S. Mexico border. This is a one-day collaborative citizen-science effort to record as many species as possible along a 1 kilometer stretch on each side of the U.S.-Mexico border. Teams of independently organized researchers and community members will be documenting the stunning biological diversity of the borderlands at several key sites. Our OC/SD CNPS site will be one of the best areas along the entire border, the Western edge of San Diego County! Lots of rarities and interesting plants.

You do not need to be a plant expert! We will be working as a team and the more eyes the better! More information on the Border BioBlitz can be found here: http://nextgensd.com/border/border-bioblitz-2019/

To join the discovery, all you need is to do is email fieldtrips@occnps. Carpooling, meet-up times and other details will be provided via return email.

Physical difficulty: Moderate. Bring good walking/hiking shoes, hat, sunscreen, wildflower book/notepad, water and a sack lunch. You will need a smartphone with the iNaturalist app (free for Android or iOS). Water and restrooms are not available. Full day, but early departures are ok – do as much as you can. Team leaders: Ron Vanderhoff (OC CNPS) and Justin Daniels (SD CNPS).

Sunday, March 24: Casper’s Wilderness Park

Casper’s Wilderness Park is the Jewel of the Orange County Park system, including 8,000 acres and a wide array of habitats. This walk will head to the Loskorn Trail to the East Ridge Trail, then back again by way of the Starr Rise and Bell Canyon trails for a distance of 3.5 miles. Warning: The Loskorn Trail is steep and narrow with steep drop-offs in places. There will be an optional side trip up the Quail Run Trail to look for Palmer’s Grapplinghook (Harpagonella palmeri) on the West Ridge Trail.

Possible wildflowers at this time of year include Clematis pacifica (Ropevine), Dodecatheon clevelandii (Padre’s Shooting Star), Harpagoneal palmeri (Palmer’s Grapplinghook), Lasthenia gracilis (Sleight Goldfields), Paeonia californica (California Peony), Caulanthus heteropyllus (San Diego Jewel Flower), Camissoniopsis striigulosa (Sandysoil Suncup), Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum (Sonora Everlasting), and lots of Lupines. Near the top of the Loskorn trail there should be a variety of ferns, bryophytes and Dudleyas. At this time of year open areas may be covered with Calandrinia ciliata (Red Maids).

When these flowers open after noon, they form a carpet of red.

Meet at 8 AM at the end of Caspers Park road near the windmill. Directions: From 5 freeway, exit Ortega Highway and go east 8 miles. The entrance to Casper’s is prominently marked on the left. There is a day use fee of $5 per car or free with an OC Parks Pass. Maps and directions are available at the entrance kiosk as well. Wear sturdy shoes, a hat and sunscreen. Bring hiking poles if you use them and plenty of water. Restrooms and water at the trailhead, but not on the trail. Leader: Diane Etchison/Laura Camp.


Sunday, March 31: Elsinore Peak and South Main Divide Road (the second of our two trips with San Diego CNPS)

Elsinore Peak is the southern most of the Santa Ana Mountain peaks and offers an unusual habitat of grasslands with some coastal sage scrub and chaparral. The area near the peak is further unique due to its volcanic history and unusual foundation of basalt rock. The specific stops for our visit will depend upon current conditions and the season’s always unpredictable bloom. We may explore the area just below the peak for spring wildflowers (Fritillaria biflora, Ranunculus, goldfields, Alliums, Calochortus, Clarkia, Collinsia, popcorn flowers, monkeyflowers, lupines, peonies, Sanicula and more).

Then, we may visit the site along S. Main Divide Road of the 2013 “Falls” fire, or another location depending upon the wishes of the group. Following the burn, this was the best wildflower show in the area, with large displays of fire-following plants, including thousands of Fire poppies - Papaver californicum, Chorizanthe, Delphinium, Penstemons, Caulanthus, Emmenanthe, Lupinus and others. Meet 8 AM at the parking lot at Bravo Burgers, 31722 Rancho Viejo Rd., San Juan Capistrano (just off Hwy 74 near Int. 5). Free and open to all. Bring trail shoes, hat, sunscreen, water and lunch if desired. Leader: Ron Vanderhoff. This trip does require a USFS Adventure Pass!

Physical Difficulty: Moderate. Bring hat, sunscreen, camera, wildflower book/notepad, water and hiking shoes/boots. No water or restrooms. Plant Intensity: moderate to high, especially wildflowers. Time: Approx. 3 hours or more depending on the group.

(to be continued....)
CHAPTER MEETINGS

Thursday, January 17: 50 years and still fighting—CNPS and the magic and meaning in the fight to save our flowers.
Speaker: Dan Gluesenkamp

For over 50 years, the California Native Plant Society has protected our native plants and celebrated California’s wild gardens. During those decades the human population has doubled and conservation in California has been dramatically transformed. Against all odds, a dedicated community of plant lovers, using a growing diversity of conservation tools, has somehow managed to save most of the plants and places that make California special. As we look to the future, we see continued population growth, as well as new threats, and wonder how to save California for the future. Dan Gluesenkamp will speak about plants, places, projects, and engage in a discussion of how to learn and work together to make a real and lasting difference.

Dan Gluesenkamp is Executive Director of CNPS and works to celebrate and save California’s flora. Dan earned his Ph.D. at UC Berkeley studying native and invasive thistles. He previously worked as E.D. of Calflora and as Director of Habitat Protection and Restoration for Audubon Canyon Ranch’s thirty preserves. A co-founder of the California Invasive Plant Council and of the Bay Area Early Detection Network (BAEDN), in 2009 Dan discovered a presumed-extinct Franciscan manzanita (Arctostaphylos franciscana) plant growing on a traffic island at the Golden Gate Bridge.

Thursday, February 21: Conservation solutions on our California islands—never a simple matter!
Speaker John Knapp

The islands off the coast of Southern California each have their own beauty, personality, history, and conservation challenges. Often, the approach to safeguarding our botanical resources differs on each island. These conservation efforts are seldom straightforward solutions. Let’s travel to the islands in our southern California floristic province and look at examples of conservation challenges where the answer is not easy to make.

Join long time chapter friend, John Knapp as he considers translocations, removal of non-native rare mainland natives, eradication of introduced rare “other island” taxa, removal of historic trees, and reintroduction challenges. Also, how far do we go to maintain island-specific genetics, and iconic island species impacted by climate change? The challenges are numerous and creative approaches are needed!

John Knapp is a Senior Scientist with The Nature Conservancy working on the California Islands. For the past two decades he has developed and led several large conservation initiatives including two eradication programs targeting over 30 invasive plant taxa each. When he is not tackling invasive plants he is working with island and mainland partners to prevent the extinction of over a dozen rare endemic plant taxa across the archipelago. John’s botanical work has resulted in engaging with others on both sides of the border to address a range of conservation issues including reintroduction of extirpated plants, Argentine ants, biocontrol agents, historical ecology, and oaks and island scrub jays. If you can’t find John on one of the islands, he is either out in the desert botanizing with his family or in the garage carving soapstone or making patio chairs out of Santa Barbara Pinot Noir wine barrels.

Winter Afternoon Hike

I look west. Sigh.
Me on a ridge,
island-distracted
by a strange sun
angle that bounces
a shine--
eye-blinding--
between me and
Catalina's soft
white shoulder.

I sigh and look
back on ridges
burned to bare.
At my feet
black stumps
sprout artemisia,

Thea Gavin
Orange County Chapter CNPS

Weed Warrior Days at Starr Ranch Sanctuary

Spend time in one of the last remaining natural areas of Orange County. Volunteer work is done on select Saturday mornings, from 9 AM to 12:30 PM, primarily in riparian areas. All weed control at Starr Ranch Sanctuary is non-chemical to preserve unique habitats. This means a lot of manual work! Saturday volunteer days through May are January 5 & 19, February 9 & 16, March 9 & 23, April 6, 13 & 20 (1:30 – 4:30), May 11 & 18.

No experience is necessary—training and tools are provided.

For more information, go to starrranch.org

2019 Garden Tour—Saturday, April 13

Gardens featuring California native plants, interesting landscape and hardscape ideas, unique plant collections, attractive habitat plantings, and problem-solving designs.

gardentour@0ccnps.org

Order your new OC-CNPS Chapter T-shirt today!

The two-sided design features beautiful artwork that showcases the importance of creating native plant habitat, along with a distinctive OC-CNPS logo—you can choose which design you want on the front. Order online from the many shirt styles and colors available (including children's sizes); there’s even a tote bag to share your native plant love at the grocery store! All profits go to support our chapter's programs.

https://teespring.com/stores/oc-cnps

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Members: open

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