



Fall 1992

Vol. 2, No. 4

Insignis

Newsletter of the Alta Peak Chapter
California Native Plant Society

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Calendar of Events

<u>September 10</u> Thurs. 7 pm	Chapter Board Meeting Cort Gallery
<u>September 12-13</u> Sat./Sun.	CNPS Statewide Quarterly Meeting and Conservation Workshop Sacramento
<u>September 26</u> Sat. 6 pm	Chapter Meeting with Pot-Luck Dinner - Cort Gallery The Care of Oaks in Your Backyard, Ginger Strong, Arborist, City of Visalia
<u>October 3-4</u> Sat./Sun 10-2 pm	Plant Sale - East Bay Chapter Merritt College Horticultural Area, Oakland Largest native plant sale in California.
<u>October 8</u> Thurs. 7 pm	Chapter Board Meeting Cort Gallery
<u>November 12</u> Thurs. 7 pm	Chapter Board Meeting

Fall Meeting: Care of Oaks in Your Backyard

Ginger Strong, arborist for the City of Visalia, will share some of her extensive knowledge about growing and preserving oak trees at the Fall Chapter Meeting at 7pm on September 26. The program will follow a pot-luck dinner which starts at 6 pm.

Strong says, "I'll talk about everything-- collecting acorns, how to start them, and I'll explain different techniques to use in growing them." She will give important tips about how to maintain oaks in construction sites or established gardens so as not to disturb underground water drainage.

Strong's biggest ongoing project in the city of Visalia is the St. John's River Parkway, a seven acre oak restoration project that will include eight miles of bike paths and a restored valley oak riparian forest. Two years ago on Earth Day, five hundred valley oak trees were planted. Strong reports that these trees are now six feet tall and doing well.

CNPS members attending this program can pick up free copies of Compatible Plants Under and Around Oaks, a handy homeowner's guide to planting native species under oaks, published by the California Oak Foundation. Strong is an active member and past president of the foundation, which is now in the final process of merging with CNPS. This merger will benefit us in making available more information about oaks in California.

The Chapter Meeting starts at 6 pm with a potluck dinner. You are invited to bring any kind of food to share, your own place setting (preferably not styrofoam or paper plates), and a chair (seating is limited at the Cort Gallery).

Cry Me A River

an editorial by Catherine Cort

Summer is ending and the Kaweah River is emptying her swimming holes both of water and people. I will miss the cleansing swims graced to me for a few precious months each summer. I don't live directly next to the river yet I see myself as a "riverbank" inhabitant. I live in the Kaweah River watershed where Salt Creek drains down from Case Mountain. All of us who live in the valleys of Three Rivers share this same watershed. We are all riverside dwellers and know our own personal river, our own swimming or fishing holes, our own rocky paths at river's edge, and our own favorite pristine views of rushing water and thickets of trees.

The existence of this river system is under direct threat from our own personal indifference, apathy, misunderstanding, and ignorance. I am not presenting doomsday thoughts, I am presenting fact.

During this past spring two sites along the river in Three Rivers were bulldozed, removing many trees and riparian vegetation. Both projects were done to supposedly enhance the land for future sale. Building pads were leveled for projects not yet decided or designed. This was done, as one local real estate agent said, because future land owners have no imagination. One property owner received a citation only to have his court case dismissed because he was going to plant trees in mitigation. No follow-up has been made by the county on this mitigation to see that he had planted non-native trees which died in their inappropriate setting.

Last month the Tulare County Board of Supervisors approved a subdivision on the main fork of the Kaweah River with no discussion or questions concerning a riparian habitat zone settlement negotiated with the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) and the property owners' engineer representative. Clyde Gould, the lame duck supervisor representing Three Rivers, said the county had taken too much time on the project and it was passed unanimously granting only a fifteen foot setback from the riparian zone. This was done quickly and efficiently, ignoring strong recommendations from DFG, Three Rivers MAC, CNPS, and 273 petitioners from the Three Rivers area. The petition signed asked that no construction or septic systems be allowed in the one hundred year flood plain of the river. So I guess that means that a fifteen feet buffer zone must be o.k. as it allows no actual construction directly inside the flood zone?

It is in our ignorance and misunderstanding that we, or at least some of us, think that this limited setback is enough protection. Does this mean that a homeowner who builds on or close to the fifteen foot line will have to cut riparian vegetation down when the Fire Department requires a thirty foot clearing from all structures? Will it be o.k. for the homeowner to plant a beautiful green lawn extending to the riparian edge, a lawn whose growth is enhanced and encouraged by the use of fertilizers and herbicides that chemically poison the riparian habitat? Will it be o.k. to cut down the twenty, thirty, or even seventy-five year old sycamore trees that may block the homeowner's view of the river from a cantilevered deck extending over the fifteen foot setback line? Is it o.k. to place the leach field lines five feet away from the setback because we know that sewage drainage always stays in its engineer-designed areas and has no relationship to the river well pumping drinking water from the river below the homeowner's house? Is the well o.k. because we can just add chlorine to our water glass, sniffing aromas of swimming pool while we drink? Is it o.k. for the homeowner to proudly and confidently say "I own a piece of the river?"

The key word in the above paragraph is not river or riparian, but: HOMEOWNER. So what really is a homeowner? Is it a powerful and somewhat wealthy person who controls his or her piece of legal property? Or could a homeowner be a person who "owns up" to the responsibility of creating a home? Could the homeowner create a home that has the ability to respond and relate to the homes of others? This is a relationship that cannot be separated from other plant, animal and human homes. We are all homeowners whether we legally hold title to land or not. What we do, how we build, how we garden, how we do our laundry, etc., all falls into the shared watershed of the Kaweah River. Even our neighbors in Visalia and the greater San Joaquin Valley have our Kaweah River watershed draining into their backyards.

We cannot rely on county government to monitor our concerns. They are involved in the political

game or have salaries and job descriptions determined by politics. We cannot rely on the ethical work and recommendations of experts like DFG biologists who are expediently ignored by political views. We cannot rely on volunteer organizations like CNPS, which is struggling just to encourage membership in Tulare County.

We can only rely on ourselves, the homeowners. We have the challenge to learn about our river while it still is a river. We alone can look honestly at our individual impacts on the river. I encourage you to do this at the river's edge, looking into the water not for a reflection of sentimental notions but for the hard truths the river can teach you. Talk to your neighbors and share your discoveries. Don't build your house at the edge of the riparian habitat, create personal foot paths instead. Don't water and use chemicals on lawns or non-native trees in the shade of the river. Learn how to restore your piece of the river. Become an advocate for the river now, don't let the future water in the stream beds become only our own tears. Let the river live.

Riparian Conference

The Alta Peak Chapter is in the initial planning stages for a riparian conference to be held in Three Rivers next April, coinciding with Earth Day and the Earth Fête (fate) on April 25 and 26 at the Cort Gallery. This conference on the river will be aimed at the general public, presenting scientific information and encouraging a forum for planning for the future of the Kaweah River watershed. We hope this community conference will be applicable to other riparian issues in California. We welcome input for the planning of this conference, including possible speakers, field trip leaders, and workshop coordinators. This conference will have a minimal registration fee and will be open to everyone.

Help Save a Riparian Sycamore Woodland

Two miles up Dry Creek Road east of Woodlake, a sand and gravel mining operation is beginning to remove trees from one of the largest sycamore groves in California. The owner has a conditional use permit issued by the county in 1985, and after three extensions of this permit they have finally begun their operations. The permit had no conditions placed on it regarding the trees. It does appear that one condition has been violated by digging below the water level of the creek. They have apparently applied to the State to do this digging but the State says it has no jurisdiction, so it has gone back to the county level. Nearby ranch owner, John Dofflemyer, has been the watch dog for this situation, trying to unravel the red tape from the county on his own. Meanwhile large sycamore trees are now being cut.

We have enclosed a copy of John's petition in copies of the newsletter being sent to CNPS members. Please try to get at least seven signatures or copy the blank page first to gather more. To be more effective, address your concerns to: Tulare County Planning and Development Department, Tulare County Courthouse, Civic Center Room 111, Visalia, CA, 93291-4593. Time is running short, so please act now. Call John Dofflemyer at 597-2512 for more information.

Words to Ponder...

"Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk." N. Scott Momaday, from an article entitled "An American Land Ethic," published in 1970 in Sierra magazine.

"Meanwhile, the little pulse of life, thriving on water, still turns shining drops of water into living jewels." Jacques Cousteau, in a speech given in 1976 at the Sierra Club Annual Banquet.

Landscaping With Natives: Fall Is For Planting!

by John Moore, Native Plant Landscaping Chair

So you've decided to include native plants in your landscaping plans. Whether you are planning a border of evergreen shrubs to screen your pool or a total remodel of your front yard to cut down on essentially unused lawn area, if you intend to include California native plants in your landscape then your efforts will be most successful if you tackle the job in the near future, during the fall months.

Most native plants (with the exception of those found at higher elevations) have adapted to the dry summers and wet winters of our Mediterranean climate by slowing their growth and going somewhat dormant in the heat of summer. Much of the active root initiation, shoot growth and flowering occurs during the cooler, damper months between October and May. It greatly simplifies our task of growing native plants if we adapt our garden schedules to their growth cycles. By planting in the fall, starting some time after the worst of the heat is over, the plants have a chance to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and rains (hopefully) to establish on the site before the onslaught of warm summer temperatures. (While October, November, into early December are recommended, any time up through early April are suitable in our warm, interior climate.)

Where do you find native plants? Forget about digging up your own, not just because it is unethical and threatens native stands, it is also impractical because of the failure in reestablishing the collected material. If you want to grow plants from your locale, you might start by modest collection of seed, but make sure you are not contributing to the addition of a plant to the endangered species list.

Nurseries that specialize in native plants are rare but not impossible to find. (See the list at the end of the article.) Many "mainstream" large, wholesalers are growing some of the more garden-tolerant of the cultivated varieties and you may find a "Concha" Ceanothus or a "Howard McMinn" manzanita showing up in your local garden center. Retail nurseries can usually obtain native plants upon request, but some nurserymen's knowledge of natives is limited to coast redwoods or their inexperience leads to advice like "you can't grow manzanita here" as I was told in Visalia. Another source is the plant sales held by many of the California Native Plant Society Chapters.

Plant one gallon containers where available. While the immediate effect may not be as dramatic, the one gallon plants establish rapidly and will often outgrow a plant from a five gallon container within two years. Avoid overgrown "bargain" plants which usually are rootbound or stunted from being in the container too long. Forget about soil amendments or fertilizers when planting.

Use drip irrigation where possible. Move emitters out from the plant after the first season to avoid a saturated soil in the area around the trunk. Sprinklers can be used, but the key point in irrigating natives in the summer is to water infrequently (1 - 4 week intervals, depending on soil type and temperature), letting the soil surface dry out between irrigations. After the first winter (when regular irrigation is suggested during the establishment phase), no watering is needed between November and March unless drought is severe. The soil level should be graded if necessary to avoid any water standing on the surface ("puddling") up close to the plant for extended periods of time.

Weed competition may be controlled somewhat by pre-plant application of Roundup or complete cultivation. Once planting has commenced, a thick mulch of shredded bark or wood chips with or without a "weed fabric" barrier underneath will help with weed control. Especially during the establishment of a new planting, the application of a pre-emergent herbicide several times during the year will cut down on the need for hand cultivation. Since these herbicides (which keep the germinating weed seeds from growing) require a good "watering-in," application in October and again in late March usually allows for the assistance of rainfall to aid in incorporating the material onto the soil surface.

Native Plant Landscaping Book Reviews

by Heidi Schantz

As cooler autumn weather approaches, so too does propagation time for native plants. Seeds are ripening and many woody plants are approaching the optimum physiological state for taking cuttings. In order for us to cover all the possible propagation techniques here, we would have to write volumes! Instead, the following book reviews should provide any interested gardener with the information necessary to start propagating their own natives. The publisher's address has been provided for each book to facilitate ordering.

Plant Propagation, Phillip McMillan Browse, 1988. Simon & Schuster, Rockefeller Center, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

This book is an excellent step-by-step guide to many propagation techniques. The text is accompanied by clear illustrations of the techniques covering tools, sanitation, and propagation by seed, cuttings, roots, modified stems, leaves, layering, and grafting. The one drawback I see in this book is the heavy reliance on fungicides and other chemicals. There is no substitute for proper hygiene during propagation, and many of the chemicals described in the book may be unnecessary for the home gardener. Explore alternatives! Illustrations in the book also depict people using fungicides without proper safety equipment such as gloves. Overall, however, I think this book would be an excellent starting point for any native gardener. This text, and other helpful books, can be ordered from the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation, 15185 Murphy Ave., San Martin, CA 95046, (408) 779-3303.

Collecting, Processing, and Germinating Seeds of Wildland Plants, James A. Young and Cheryl G. Young, 1986. Timber Press, Inc., 9999 S.W. Wilshire, Portland, OR 97225.

This text covers propagation by seed in detail. Seed structure and development, collection, cleaning, and storage techniques, and seed germination are all covered. Another section of the book covers germination requirements of specific species and provides references for additional reading.

Seed Propagation of Native California Plants, Dara E. Emery, 1988. Santa Barbara Botanical Garden, Santa Barbara, CA.

This book provides an excellent reference for seed propagation of natives specific to California.

Growing California Native Plants, Marjorie G. Schmidt, 1980. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Growing California Native Plants gives basic instructions on how to begin propagating natives, along with brief descriptions of various propagation techniques. More attention is paid to the specifics of propagating annuals, perennials, bulbs, shrubs, and trees. Approximately 350 California species are treated in detail. Another feature of this book is Schmidt's recommendations for complimentary species to use in a garden situation. She offers species suggestions for varying garden conditions such as sunny/dry, shady dry, etc. This book is a useful guide to gardening with California natives.

(Editor's note: This book will soon be available for sale at the Cort Gallery.)

The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation - From Seed to Tissue Culture, Michael A. Dirr and Charles W. Heuser, Jr., 1987. Varsity Press, Inc. P.O. Box 6301, Athens, GA 30604 (Also available from the Saratoga Historical Foundation).

As its title implies, this is a more technical reference which covers propagation of woody plants by seed, cutting, grafting, budding, and tissue culture. Each section is followed by an extensive

reference list. Although not specific to California species, the book also contains an "encyclopedia" which contains a reference guide to propagating over 1100 woody plant species, varieties, and cultivars.

Also available: Growing Native Newsletter
 edited by Louise Lacey
 published 6 times/year
 \$30/year
 P.O. Box 489, Berkeley, CA 94701



Besides these references, questions regarding the propagation of specific species can be directed to native plant nurseries or government agencies such as the Park Service or the U.S. Forest Service which produces various technical manuals. In addition, the Redbud Garden Club has donated several books on growing California natives to the Tulare County Library in Three Rivers. Also, don't forget our own native plant landscaping chair, John Moore!

Hopefully this information will be enough to get any interested propagator started. Enjoy the cool days of autumn!

Board of Directors' Report

We are losing two of our hard-working board members this fall. Pearl Tucker, our education chair, left for Hawaii for a new teaching position. We appreciate her hard work with the Youth Poster contest, which produced several winners from Three Rivers. Heidi Schantz, our conservation chair, will be leaving some time this fall to continue her education. Heidi is the creator of our logo, an abstracted enlargement of the Kaweah brodiaea, *Brodiaea insignis*. We will miss both of these enthusiastic members who contributed so willingly to the formation of this chapter.

What this means is that we are looking for new people to join our Board of Directors. We meet on the second Thursday of each month at the Cort Gallery, except during cold weather when we meet at the home of Chapter Secretary Gwen Warner. We are aware that so far, we have mostly Three Rivers residents on the Board. We would like to encourage other Tulare County members to join us. We need conservation watchdogs in the Springville area; we have been getting a lot of material on lot splits and subdivisions in that area. We would like to become an advocate for wise planning in the future development of Tulare County. We plan to have future meetings in Visalia and field trips throughout the county. At present we are working a lot in our own backyard in Three Rivers. We are limited in numbers and cannot cover the entire county well at this time, which is why we hope that some of you will come to our board meetings and help out with the running of the chapter. We need help with our bookkeeping, membership, writing this newsletter, and planning programs and field trips. But more important is the monitoring of conservation issues in the county. Environmental issues have had minimal support from the populace in this county, and this chapter is in the pioneer stages in the environmental planning while development is proceeding rapidly.

There are small ways and big ways you can help. It may surprise you how much you learn and the satisfaction you can receive from becoming an active part of this organization. Please join us if you can.

Membership Information

If you have received a complimentary copy of this newsletter and would like to join CNPS, dues are \$18 for student, retired, or limited income, \$25 individual, or \$35 for a family membership, paid to CNPS, 909 12th St. Suite 106, Sacramento, CA 95814. Be sure to indicate that you wish to be affiliated with the Alta Peak Chapter.

If you wish to receive this newsletter without joining CNPS, send \$5 for a one year subscription to Alta Peak Chapter, CNPS, P.O. Box 245, Three Rivers, CA 93271.

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