



# INSIGNIS

SPRING 2002

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## CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ALTA PEAK CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

*Please send changes of address to Membership Chair,  
Janet Fanning, 41118 Blossom Dr., Three Rivers, CA 93271*

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

I want to thank everyone who made the October Plant Sale such a success in attracting new members as well as replenishing our bank account: Gwen Warner, Elli Norris, Don Peter, Ken Olsen, Peter and Carol Clum, Marilyn Messa, and James Gessner. A special thanks to Melanie Keeley and William Tweed for fielding all the questions of our patrons. It is so satisfying to see so many people using native plants on their property. I am hearing complaints here in the foothills that some people are losing their exotics due to this continued light frost we are getting every morning. Due to this, I expect we'll have even more customers at our next plant sale.

With all the rain and such a mild (so far!) winter, I am looking forward to a wonderful display of wild flowers in the foothills. Hope to see you all at our February meeting, and later on our wildflower walks. We welcome Rachel Katz, Jean Loscotoff, Martha Widmann, Kathlyn Everett, and Jacqueline and Ronald Zanini who have joined CNPS over the past several months.

### GEOLOGY OF THE SOUTHERN SIERRA--FOUNDATION OF THE LANDSCAPE

Speaker, JIM BISHOP, 7:00 PM, 22 FEBRUARY, SPRINGVILLE VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING, 35944 Hwy 190, Springville.

This year we offer to you as members, your friends and neighbors, and the community, a program that considers the 'foundation' of our plant resources, the soils and geology of the area. Major geological features of our area, the rocks and landforms, their geological history. Major geological influences on soil formation and the effects that especially limiting soils can have on the plant communities that live on them.

Jim Bishop grew up in Bakersfield and knows this foothill part of Tulare County from early hiking and fishing experiences. He earned an MS in geology from Fresno State, with a study of the Sierra foothills, and retained his fascination with rocks and earth science throughout a career with CDF. His wife is a botanist, and he has come to share with her a broad ranging interest in interrelationships between physical and biological systems. We will have available CNPS Wildflower Posters, membership applications, and books, along with the obligatory lemonade and cookies! See you there.

### **VOTE YES ON PROP 40.**

California contains one of the most biologically diverse landscapes in the world. Yet rapid population growth and development threaten the well being of the state's animal and plant species, as well as the habitats and resources that they depend on for survival. The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40) will provide essential funds to help preserve California's ecosystems and habitats, and improve our ability to enjoy already-protected natural areas that are accessible to the public.

Proposition 40, scheduled for the March 2002 ballot, will provide \$1.275 billion for land conservation and improved air and water quality, and \$1.325 billion for California's State and local parks, and historic and cultural resources. This means recreational opportunities, wildlife preserves, and quality-of-life improvements for all.

Further information, including fact sheets, summaries and a list of endorsers, is available at [www.cnps.org](#). Your help is needed to pass this important measure. Please contact Bryan Blum at 916-313-4539 for more information on how you can help the campaign. Vote Yes on Proposition 40 on March 5, 2002! This bond measure has CNPS support statewide.

### **CHAPTER ELECTIONS.**

At the Chapter Board meeting on 14 January 2002, the board unanimously nominated existing officers to continue in current positions for the coming year. This slate will be recommended to chapter members for formal approval/election, at the forthcoming February meeting. Nominations may also be made from the floor, but only with permission of the person being nominated.

Also, at this meeting, or at any time, by contacting Janet Fanning, President of the Alta Peak Chapter, we welcome your suggestions for agenda items for Board meetings, programs, or our series of field hikes/trips.

### **CNPS RARE PLANT INVENTORY.**

The Sixth edition is now available. This long-awaited publication shows continued decline of the state's magnificent native flora, with nearly 33% of the taxa now considered rare, endangered, or uncommon. The Inventory summarizes latest information on over 2000 plants and is indispensable for those involved in working with California's natural plant resources. The California flora...is the largest and most spectacular assemblage of plants in North America. More than one third of the state's native plants are found nowhere else on earth, and nearly one fourth of all the types of vascular plants that grow in North America occur here". We will have copies available for purchase at the February 22 program; after that you can arrange to get one from chapter stock by calling Janet Fanning, or order directly from the Sacramento CNPS office (916-447-2677).

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## **2002 SPRING/SUMMER WALKS.**

Please call Joan Stewart (539-2717) for more information, questions, or if you have additional ideas for places we might want to visit as a group.

### **MARCH 23 - FLUME WALK.**

The Flume Walk two years ago was cancelled because of a late season storm that left films of ice on surfaces, making it risky to travel along the boards. Many were disappointed, and we assured them we would try to reschedule. We'll try again this spring.

Water from the Middle Fork of the Tule River is diverted into a flume that was first built around 1910 to service a small hydroelectric plant just east of Springville. Over the years portions of the original raised structure have been rebuilt, and in some places the water now flows through a concrete ditch at ground level. Prescribed burns have been carried out over adjacent slopes, and we will have a chance to see re-growth and post-fire recovery of vegetation, as well as to enjoy views and sensations of "flume walking".

Walking along the flume is 'easy', with hand rail/cable, level footing, but it is a raised walkway, so if you have any difficulty with dizziness, unsteady footing, or balance, this walk may not be to your liking. Please, no small children. Except for the descent on a dirt road from the forebay/penstock to the base of Mt. Lumreau on Hwy. 190, it is mostly a gentle downhill slope. Plan a car shuttle if you can--we will help organize transportation to take you back up the hill to the beginning point. Meet at 10:00 at pullout along Hwy 190 west of the PG&E power plant which is just above the fork in the road that takes you to Doyle Springs and Wishon Campground. Dress and prepare for whatever weather prevails.

### **APRIL 13 - AT RIVER RIDGE.**

This 722 acres of rolling foothill woodland (formerly part of the Negus Ranch), lies on both sides of the North Fork of the Tule River between Balch Park Road in Springville and Mt. Lumreau. The land was purchased by two local individuals (both CNPS members) with the intent of making it available for recreational and educational uses by all of us. They are placing a conservation easement on the property to keep it forever wild. The Tulare County Land Trust, SLTLT, will hold the easement and be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the property.

We are grateful to Gary and Barbara for this enormous gift to the community, and accept their invitation to offer one of our plant walks as part of an Open House for the property. We will explore the plants of the riverbank, the hillsides, and view the disturbed areas that are being studied for restoration to more natural conditions. This Saturday in April has been scheduled as an Open House for members and friends of the land trust and for neighbors, and CNPS will participate by scheduling a walk to enjoy and explore the wild gardens.

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### RIVER RIDGE (CONT'D.)

Access is via Hwy 190: turn left or north at the White Barn (Balch Park Road) and continue 1.6 miles to the entrance, just beyond the River Ridge sign on your right. We may spend as much time on the property as we choose, so bring food and water according to your own needs. We will meet at the central site at 10:15; the Open House is being announced as 10-1:00.

The Land Trust sponsors are asking a \$5.00 donation that includes a picnic lunch. CNPS members who attend only for our scheduled hike will not be asked to pay. But note that there will also be bird walks and guided tours of facilities with descriptions of the many planned activities, so you may want to do more than simply join our wildflower walk.

### MAY ?? (or maybe late April?) VERNAL POOL TOUR.

Another repeat: Rob Hansen's Vernal Pool Tour proved popular, and those unable to join us last time asked if we might 'do it again'. Rob agrees, and we will try for a date when vegetation will be closer to peak condition than it was a year ago. So even if you were with us before, we can virtually promise that this year will be different (safe enough, as no two successive spring seasons ever seem to repeat rainy/hot cycles in this part of the world!).

To make this a really noteworthy occasion, Carol Witham, from Davis/Sacramento has agreed to offer a Friday evening program at COS. She is a state-wide authority on ecosystems of vernal pools and has given programs throughout California, illustrating and describing the plants, small crustaceans, amphibians, and other organisms that are adapted to this habitat. The timing of her trip to Tulare County involves a complicated travel schedule, as yet not completely finalized as we mail this *Insignis*. You will be notified by postcard when she and Rob Hansen are able to confirm dates for the Friday evening program and the Saturday field trip. Carol is eager to visit our local sites, and will try to arrange her time to allow her to participate in Saturday's tour.

For our site visits, it is likely that a route similar to last year's will be followed--Pixley, Stone Corral (Yettem), Herbert Ranch, and several to the south of Visalia. This allows you to join us or leave us to meet your schedule for the day. Each Pool is different, that we can promise, and taken together, include a good sense of their unique diversity. These habitats also are among those that are diminishing in the Central Valley, and who knows how long they will be around for our pleasure and exploration.

### JUNE 22 - JORDAN PEAK.

World-famous Fawn Lily may/may not be in full bloom on this date; but even in bud, or somewhat past it's prime, it is one of our most special flowers, and worth taking the day to seek. There are other special plants on or near the Peak, and the hike up through red fir forest is pleasant, cool, and not difficult.

### JORDAN PEAK (CONT'D.)

There is an elevation gain of about 1000 ft over about one mile with several somewhat steep portions on a good trail. Lunch on top. As before, we will meet at 10:00 at the turnoff to North Road at the end of Hwy 190 (sign there announces the Golden Trout Wilderness pack train) It's close to 24 miles from Springville. Plan on an "all day" outing, or leave early if you need to make a shorter day of it.

### JULY??.

We want to include a Sequoia Grove on our annual trip list, but at this time haven't settled on which one. If, and this is a big question, the road to Dillonwood is improved, this would be a wonderful chance to visit an almost pristine, unimproved, no-facilities grove. Right now the road is really not usable, and it would involve a 12+ mile hike.

Freeman Creek is our second least-disturbed choice, and the creek that parallels the trail offers glorious lilies in mid-summer. Call later this spring or see next *Insignis* for up-to-date information.

### AUGUST?? - SLATE MOUNTAIN.

Slate Mt. has been long discussed as the focus of a Wilderness Area, partly because of the presence of the Black Mt. Sequoia Grove, and partly because it already includes a special Botanical Area because of several plants unique to the area. Details, call Joan or see next *Insignis*.

### UNIQUE AND SPECIAL PLANTS OF TULARE COUNTY.

This is the working title of a project approved by the Board, to compile information about plants that are special for us here, by any one of several criteria. Some are rare everywhere or found only in Tulare County. Some are at the extreme northern or southern limits of their distribution, and notable for being adapted to local conditions that may be different from other parts of their range. A few need consideration because their habitats are diminishing. An initial list has been prepared from which several formats can be developed. Then we suggest that next year's field hikes/wildflower walks can focus on visits to see some of these "special in Tulare" plants.

This is perhaps a good place to insert a reminder that our Newsletter, the *Insignis*, is named for one of California's rarest, the Kaweah brodiaea, or *Brodiaea insignis*. This species is rare and found only in Tulare County in the drainages of the Tule and Kaweah rivers. It legally is treated as "eligible for state listing", thus in need of consideration and vulnerable to destruction, although at this time it is not endangered. It is a bulb, blooming in late spring, and if there is interest in seeing it (near Three Rivers), we can arrange a visit to one of the known sites later in the spring. For anyone wanting to learn more about certain groups of plants, the Jepson Herbarium in Berkeley offers a series of weekend workshops on botanical and ecological subjects, in sites around the state. For more information, call any Board member on the back of this *Insignis*.

### STATEWIDE NEWS.

From San Gabriel, of personal interest to those of us who knew Becky Rothenberg. She wrote her three botanical mysteries in a Camp Nelson cabin, and now the fourth, last of the series (Tumbleweed Murders), has been completed from the manuscript left at her death in 1998 by her friend and fellow writer Taffy Cannon. The price of the book is \$12.95. We are ordering several copies of the book and they will be available at the next meeting with a 20% discount for members.

For those unfamiliar with Becky's work, she was active in CNPS and cared deeply about plants and wildlife. Her first three mystery novels were situated in locales you will recognize--the valley floor, Porterville, Success/Kaweah Lakes, a small town that is (loosely) based on Springville, and then into the mountains above Camp Nelson. This book starts in the foothills and moves down to Bakersfield.

### CNPS STATEWIDE.

CNPS statewide has completed a reorganization that separates out most of the more technical financial and legal governing responsibilities from the "fun stuff". A newly elected Board will now deal with business affairs of the organization, while discussions of issues more directly dealing with plants will be the privilege of a Chapter Council.

This group of members, coming from Arcata to San Diego, San Luis Obispo to Bishop to Mt. Lassen and connecting valleys, will meet quarterly, hosted by individual or groups of chapters. Agendas will include development of policies and positions, reports on chapter activities of general interest, and opportunities to establish direction for state programs (plant science, education, and conservation). At these meetings, chapter representatives will exchange ideas about shared problems, needs (more active participation from members heads the list!), and local projects.

This year, the March state meeting will be at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont, June in Bishop, September in the Mt. Shasta area, and December at UC Berkeley. Each of you is welcome to attend and take part in any of these gatherings. The more of us there are from areas such as Tulare County, the more effectively our voices will be heard. Let any of the officers know of your interest in learning more about CNPS beyond the County borders.

### NATIVE PLANT SERIES.

Beginning with this issue we want to include an article about growing native plants in every newsletter...maybe an article about a specific specie, maybe one about soils, or a butterfly garden. If you want an article about a specific item, let us know.

The article on the following page was gleaned from another CNPS chapter's newsletter. Unfortunately we didn't note which chapter, but we do thank them anyway and hope it was proper for us to use it without their permission.

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## GROWING NATIVE PLANTS IN CONTAINERS

Two years ago in a moment of weakness and impulse at the plant sale, I bought a Dutchman's Pipe (*aristolochia californica*), a wonderful native pipevine that is festooned with little meerchaum pipe-like flowers in March and that is home to the larva of the black swallowtail butterfly. Not being sure if my resident herd of deer would find it as irresistible as I did, I stuck my Dutchman's pipe in a pot with a trellis in the relative safety of the area near my back door. Despite a little casual nibbling by my hoofed friends, the pipevine has thrived in its pot and this year I was rewarded with an exuberant spring display of miniature meerchaum pipes. Many of our native plants can be cultivated successfully in pots and tubs. Virtually all native plants can be grown in containers, but bulbs, grasses, succulents, perennials, and subshrubs are best suited to this method. And the results can be spectacular.

To be successful, just keep a few things in mind.

Most native plants in containers demand good drainage. So choose a pot with a hole and use a fast-draining light-weight potting mix.

In general, you should care for container-grown natives as you would other potted plants. The soil should not be permitted to dry out completely between watering, nor should it remain waterlogged.

Containers with thick walls help insulate the roots from temperature extremes. Container size will depend on the type of plants you are growing. Succulents thrive in small containers, but perennials should be planted in pots no smaller than 12 inches in diameter. Shrubby plants and plant combinations perform best in containers at least 18 inches in diameter. Avoid the black or dark green plastic containers for any length of time. These colors absorb the sun's heat and cause containers to become too hot for sensitive feeder roots.

Always water from the top and provide enough liquid so that some flows out through the drainage hole. This method ensures that the soil is thoroughly moistened, and excess water carries harmful water soluble salts out of the container.

Remember that plants that are drought tolerant will need significantly more water when grown in containers than in the ground.

Don't over fertilize. Controlled release fertilizers used sparingly and infrequently are preferable. Remember most of these plants are adapted to spartan environments.

Always keep in mind the natural habitat of your plant, and adjust your care accordingly. Does it like sun or shade? Does it normally grow on dusty hillsides or on lush streamsides?

To maintain a neat, compact appearance, many flowering perennials and shrubs should be cut back and shaped when the flowers fade.

There is no rule as to the frequency plants should be repotted. Some plants thrive if root-bound and others do not. If root growth is restricted, the plants will grow more slowly and probably will not become as large as they would in a natural habitat.

Bring a bit of wild California up close.

**Dedicated to the Preservation of the Native Flora**

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations. Membership is open to all, and includes informative publications, free field trips, programs, and discounts on books and posters. Also included is the *Bulletin*, a quarterly statewide report of activities and schedules, and this chapter newsletter. Please call the membership chairperson for more information.

**New Membership Application**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category:  
\_\_\_\_ Student, Retired, Limited income, \$20  
\_\_\_\_ Individual, Library, \$35  
\_\_\_\_ Household, Family, or Group, \$45  
\_\_\_\_ Supporting, \$75  
\_\_\_\_ Plant Lover, \$100  
\_\_\_\_ Patron, \$250  
\_\_\_\_ Benefactor, \$500  
\_\_\_\_ Life, \$1000

**I wish to affiliate with:**

\_\_\_\_ Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County)  
\_\_\_\_ Other

**Mail application and check to:**

Membership Chairman, California Native Plant Society, 1722 J Street., Suite 17, Sacramento, CA 95814

**Chapter Board Members And Committee Chairs, January 2001**

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**Insignis News, CNPS**

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