



INSIGNIS

SUMMER 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

DATES TO REMEMBER: See details in following paragraphs.

June 8: Overnight, backpack exploration into Dillonwood Grove, newly acquired by Sequoia National Park.

June 22: Jordan Peak, annual expedition to see Fawn Lily, plus....

July 27: Redwood Grove, on Solo Peak

August 17: Slate Mountain Botanical Area

Sept. XX? Fall Program, not yet confirmed but stand by!

October 5: Annual CNPS Plant (Native) Sale, in Three Rivers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Farewell to Spring is fading; but it's time to mark your calendars with the walks that are scheduled over the next few months so that you can enjoy all the plants and annuals as they burst into bloom at the higher elevations. We hope you will join us for these free events and spread the word that these activities are open to everyone and not just members. We wonder if you have a favorite place you would like to share with all of us, so we can schedule a walk there next season. Our tradition September General Meeting/Program, planned to appeal to all of us who enjoy having native plants around our homes and perhaps in other kinds of landscaped situations as well, has not yet been set. So watch for the notice in our next *Insignis* newsletter.

COME TO THE RAINSHADOW: 31 May to 2 June 2002 is the CNPS Statewide Chapter Council meeting weekend, hosted by the Bristlecone Chapter. All members and their families are welcome! This is going to be a fun event in a beautiful place. We will meet at Camp Inyo near Big Pine. All are welcome at the Saturday Council meeting, where there will be valuable information-sharing and interesting discussions about native plant issues. Delegates vote, but all participate. Events planned by the host chapter--pick whatever suits your fancy:

- A field trip to McMurry Meadow near Camp Inyo on Friday afternoon;
- Dinner Friday evening;
- Chapter Council meeting Saturday
- Happy hour and dinner Saturday evening, with program about the area including "Flora of the Glass Mountains"
- Sunday field trips:
 1. Juniper Flat in the Inyo Mountains
 2. Dedecker Memorial Garden and other areas near Independence
 3. Long Valley and Glass Mountains area

The Bristlecone Chapter will have a plant sale and a display of native plants...and all this in the gorgeous and spectacular rainshadow lands of eastern California. For more information (field trips, lodging) please contact Sherryl Taylor at Sherrylt76@aol.com.

and phototropism (movements in response to gravity and light) and daily cycles of activity.

<http://sunflower.bio.indiana.edu/~rhangart/plantmotion/PlantsInMotion.html>.

A LESS PLEASANT TOPIC, Weed Wars: We are all increasingly aware of how destructive certain non-native (aka exotic, alien) plant species can be to native plants and animals in natural plant communities. Experiences trying to maintain control of weeds that spring up everywhere in our own gardens demonstrate just how difficult it is to keep ahead of these invaders. It is an even more monumental task to fight certain non-native plants once they have spread into acres of open space in public lands, parks, wetlands, forest, and almost every kind of plant community. Now a number of organizations and governmental departments are actively involved in resisting this gradual erosion of biodiversity as exotic plants take over our natural landscape. The California Exotic Pest Plant Council (CalEPPC) was established in 1992 in response to growing concerns about invasive non-native plants in the state's wildlands. (Other groups focus on agricultural lands and pests; there is some but not complete overlap in species of concern.) An expanded and updated list of species of greatest ecological concern now includes 78 plants. CalEPPC's book, "Invasive Plants of California's Wildlands" is available from CNPS. In Tulare County, CNPS participates in a Weed Management Area Council, a rather informal group that meets irregularly under the leadership of UC Cooperative Extension and USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Twelve of the most noxious agricultural pests are illustrated and described in a brochure that is available either directly from these two sources, or from your CNPS chapter.

FOR EVENTS: A table-top display is available, with space to post one or more of the CNPS Posters, information about "who we are--why we care", news clippings of interest, other pictures, or information relevant to a particular event. Alta Peak Board members and officers try to attend some of the local gatherings when the theme or goal is appropriate to our organization. If you have a suggestion about spreading the word, call Janet at 561-3461.

OTHER EVENTS: (Not CNPS sponsored, but of interest.)

4 June, Tuesday, Shuteye Peak, two rare plants, Sequoia CNPS Chapter, call Joanna Clines, 877-2218x3150. [Note: this has filled up, sorry.]
15 June, "Up the Hill to Case Mountain", offered by Sierra Los Tulares Land Trust, both as an interesting site visit and a fund raiser. Call 561-7125, option 3, to register name, address, phone, and number in party, \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members.

IN CONCLUSION: Are you curious about whom your fellow local CNPS members are? From our membership information, 33 in Three Rivers; 16, Springville; 10, Visalia; 5, Porterville; and a few each from Dinuba, Fresno, Lindsay, Exeter, Strathmore, and several from elsewhere in California and out-of-state. Most new members are recruited by our individual enthusiasm, personal friendships that share mutual concerns, and a sense of caring about natural resources that seeks to translate itself into doing something. Old, trite, but true, "and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

OCTOBER PLANT SALE, OCTOBER 5: Our next *Insignis*, to be mailed in late August and will include the traditional Pre-Order Plant List, and details of this event. As always, this is a chance for some of you who have started to know and enjoy native species in your landscapes to work with experienced salespersons and gardeners, learn more, get specific information for your own needs, and help this Chapter event. Call Janet to offer your support, and mark this date on your calendar so you don't forget to attend and purchase all you need to replenish your garden before the winter rains.

LOOKING BACK: Once again the **Flume Walk** was doomed by bad weather. Maybe this is a way of rainmaking? But we will try again, another year. The **Vernal Pool Tour** in April took us to five distinctly different sites throughout Tulare County, and beyond the inherent contrast that is a result of different underlying soils, we were able to note changes that follow from use of grazing and burning as management tools. We are grateful to Rob Hanson of COS for planning the day and leading us. **River Ridge**, a property west of Springville that has been recently bought by two local CNPS members with the intent of preserving it as natural and range land, was visited and enjoyed by many on 13 April. One longer hike followed trails and roads across the North Fork (Tule River) through an irrigated pasture, into oak woodland/grassland, and on up into a mixture of oaks and chaparral vegetation. As we climbed, the variety of understory shrubs and blooming wildflowers changed, letting us recognize a range of taxa. There is access up to the top of Mt. Lumreau, and the land adjoins the National Forest/Monument Land, offering opportunities for trails that keep going! It is this linkage with other public lands, besides the variety of different vegetation communities, the inclusion of an entire healthy watershed/ecosystem, that makes this property an extremely valuable sample of our foothill region. The owners plan to make it available for community recreational and educational uses and will continue the kind of grazing management that has kept it open and diverse.

TULARE COUNTY SPECIAL SPECIES: Work continues to collect suggestions of the plants we want to put on this list. Other areas in California are developing the same general idea, that locally there may be species or populations that are indeed very special and unique for that part of the state, although from a broader perspective more widely distributed or common. We'll keep you posted as this project moves along.

FOR FUN: (Borrowed from another chapter's newsletter.) "Science" magazine frequently summarizes great botany-related websites. From the 18 January issue, here is something that might interest many of you, certainly teachers? "Plants can't run, jump, fly, or swim, but they are still more active than many baseball players. Screening at "Plants-In-Motion", [see Web address below], are 21 time-lapse movies that reveal the almost imperceptible movements of plants. Tended by botanist Roger Handgarter of Indiana University, Bloomington, the site captures plants in action: roots snake through the soil, flowers furl and unfurl, bean plants deploy their leaves in the morning and tuck them away at night. Like spectators at the Kentucky Derby turning to watch the horses pass by, a row of tomato seedlings swivels in unison, stimulated by light shining from the side. The films illustrate concepts such as geotropism

Cultivating Native Plants
Ceanothus of the Sierra Nevada
By Melanie Baer-Keeley
Restoration Horticulturist
Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

The genus, *Ceanothus*, commonly called California Lilac or ceanothus, is appreciated the world over for spectacular flowering shows, diversity of form and tolerance to dry, difficult growing conditions. While 60 species occur globally (predominantly throughout the western U.S.), over 40 are native to California. Honey-scented flower clusters range in color gradations from pale blue to deep violet, white (rarely pink) and in size from abundant button-sized clusters to dramatic eight-inch bouquets. *Ceanothus* can be found in countless combinations of shape and stature from the ground-hugging *Ceanothus prostratus* (Squaw Carpet) to the beautiful, billowing 20-30' tree, *Ceanothus arboreus* (Catalina Feltleaf *Ceanothus*).

Plant Placement

California lilacs inhabit virtually every unique corner of this state. Over time, each population has had to adapt to its site's environmental and climatic peculiarities. So, the key to cultivating this genus is to emulate the conditions to which the plant or its predecessors has already adapted. This information can be garnered from the original site itself, from habitat descriptions in books (see references below), or from plant specialists.

After collecting this information, evaluate your own planting areas' slope aspects and grade, soil types and moisture levels, as well as sun/shade exposures to suitably match plant needs to planting location. The plants are somewhat flexible in their planting requirements, however. While most ceanothus thrive in hot, sunny locations, some species derived from coastal or high elevation origins, are tolerant of shady conditions in hot, arid climates. Determining the culture of any plant begins in this way. It is a fascinating puzzle to be pieced together!

Watering

Follow seasonal rhythms as nature does, by establishing plants early in the fall (at any elevation), to take full advantage of precipitation. This gives the plant the best opportunity to develop its root system, its main prospect for survival, before the hot weather arrives. Deep water in the cool of the day, never when temperatures are soaring. And irrigate through the first few summers and in case of drought. An inexpensive moisture meter, available from most garden centers can give a good indication of the soil's subsurface moisture levels and when to water. With most ceanothus, the soils should register on the dry side before watering.

Propagation

Because of the demand for the features that this plant brings to the landscape, horticulturists have produced a staggering number of ceanothus hybrids and selections of all descriptions. These cultivated varieties or 'cultivars' are propagated vegetatively to retain desirable characteristics. While not difficult to root, soft-wood cuttings require fairly precise conditions for success: heating beds, ambient humidity, porous, sterile media and high dosage rooting hormones. Unfortunately, instead of truly local native species, these horticultural varieties are what are most commonly found in nurseries today.

Propagating wild-grown California lilacs is best done with seed. The seed explodes out of its capsules in early to mid-summer, so collect capsules as they dry, letting them after-ripen in a sealed brown paper bag. Once dry, roll capsules in the bag with a rolling pin to help free the seeds. Clean and separate out the seeds from the chaff. Pour almost-boiling water over seeds in a container, letting them soak overnight in the cooling water. Drain the water and repeat treatment. If the plant species comes from high elevations, refrigerate the seeds amidst moist (not soggy) peat moss for about 2-3 months; then plant by firming seed/peat mixture on top of well-draining potting mix-filled flats. Otherwise, if plant species comes from warmer climates, plant seeds into flats immediately following the hot water treatments, by pressing the seeds into the media. Seed depth should be the diameter of an individual seed. Keep

soil moist until germination, which should occur mid- to late-summer. Once 4 to six pairs of leaves arise, transplant to deep pots with very well-draining soils: 2 parts potting mix to 1 part perlite. Water more sparingly now. Please remember, however, that plant collecting on state or federal land is prohibited without a permit.

Sierra Nevada Ceanothus

Throughout the Sierra Nevada, there are eleven ceanothus species, with seven of those located in our region, the Southern Sierra. Brief plant descriptions and typical habitat are listed below.

C. cordulatus, Snow bush-White flowers, blooms May to July, leaves alternate 1"-2" entire, 4'H x 6'W mounding, 3000'-9500' dry open areas, N, C, & S SN.

C. cuneatus, Buckbrush-White flowers, blooms Feb-April, leaves opposite, small, leathery, 7'H x 5'W stiff & erect, below 6000', dry slopes, N, C, & S SN.

C. diversifolius, Pine Mat, Light blue to white, few-flowered, blooms May-June, leaves alternate, ovate, 1'H x 4'W trailing, 3000'-6000' dry openings in pine forests, N, C & S SN.

C. fresnensis, Fresno Mat, Flowers blue, in small clusters, blooms May-June, leaves opposite, leathery less than 1", 1'H x 6'W, 3000'-6700', Dry ridges, N, C SN.

C. integerrimus, Deer brush-White or blue, rarely pink long 5" flower clusters, blooms May-July, leaves alternate, 1"-2" ovate, 12'-15'H x 10'W erect, below 7000', yellow pine belt, N, C, & S SN.

C. leucodermis, Chaparral Whitethorn-Pale blue to white 6" flower clusters, buds magenta, blooms April-July, stem waxy yellow-green, leaves alternate, oblong to 2", 12-15'H x 8'W, Below 3500', dry rocky slopes, foothills, N, C, & S SN.

C. parvifolius, Littleleaf Ceanothus, Flowers pale to deep blue, blooms June-July, leaves under 1", entire, alternate, 3'H x 5'W spreading, 4500'-7000', yellow pine & lodgepole forest, N & C SN.

C. pinetorum, Kern Ceanothus, White to Light blue flowers, less than 3'H x 15'W, rooting at nodes, leaves opposite, less than 1", coarse-toothed, Uncommon, 5400'-9000', Open pine forests, S SN.

C. prostratus, Squaw Carpet, Deep or light blue flowers, blooms April-June, 2-6"H, spreading to 8' by node-rooting, serrated leaves opposite, 1/2", coarse-toothed, Uncommon, 5400'-9000', yellow pine/forest floor, N & C SN.

C. tomentosus, Woollyleaf Ceanothus, Electric blue flowers bloom April-May, alternate leaves dark green, round, toothed, 7'H x 7'W dry slopes to 5000', shrubby, dry slopes, N & C SN.

C. velutinus, Tobacco Brush, 2"-4" White flower panicles, elliptical leaves alternate to 2", Height to 6' spreading, 3500'-10,000', lodgepole/fir forests, E & W SN.

Botanical Resources

For more intensive information on Ceanothus, tap into two fantastic Cal Berkeley resources: <http://www.calflora.org> to view photographs of most of these species, and the Jepson Herbarium website, located at http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/online_resources.html for specific plant distribution maps and a lot of other great botanical information. Additionally, for a concise, comprehensive list of the attributes and culture of horticultural cultivars, download the "Ceanothus Guide" from El Nativo Grower's website <http://www.elnativogrowers.com/ceanguide.htm>. Don't miss the relatively new Native Plant Network website for specific propagation techniques: <http://nativeplantnetwork.org>. And lastly, three other excellent books were used in researching this article: "Sierra Nevada Natural History" by T. Storer & R. Usinger, "A Sierra Nevada Flora" by N. Weeden, and "The Jepson Manual" edited by J. Hickman.

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

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Insignis News, CNPS

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