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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

Joan Stewart

It is another springtime, and the beginning of another season of exploring, seeking, photographing, drawing, and simply enjoying the wild gardens, native plants of Tulare County. I've been collecting your ideas about field trips, and the schedule includes suggestions from many of you. If you have a place you want to share, or if you can or will lead the trip somewhere, let us know.

As the season moves from winter to spring, the fields and hillsides demonstrate a predictable sequence of blooms with always a few surprises. Last year the **Popcorn** flowers were relatively inconspicuous, but this year they begin to flourish early, and soon I suspect (this is written mid-February) they will carpet areas that last year produced only few, and scattered blossoms. **Marah's** customary amazing "outreach" growth catches one's eye here and there, and **Fiddleneck**, as expected, brightens a variety of landscapes. (Yes, I know ranchers don't appreciate this, but!!... And speaking of less desirable species, **Milk Thistle** is up, and at this stage, easily pulled.)

Many CNPS Chapters throughout the State include an article about some Special Plant in each Newsletter and in these approaching spring weeks, it is hard to single out one in particular. But....

### SPECIAL PLANT, SPRING

A month ago, midwinter, **willows** were offering a wonderful display of new leaves, distinctively different male/female flowers on separate trees/shrubs, and although these buds aren't the "real" pussywillow buds of the eastern part of the US, they certainly were well worth paying attention to. But time moves along, and we'll save that genus for another year.

On the Lewis Hill walk in February, the wavy-margined leaves, cattle-grazed or undamaged, of the **Soap Plant** caught everyone's attention. The following paragraphs are extracted from an article by Wayland Ezell, of the Sierra Foothills Chapter, who writes frequently for their newsletter.

"The Spanish word *amole* is derived from the Nahuatl word *amolli* which means soap in the

language of the Aztec (Mexico) people. My dictionary defines *amole* as 'the root of any of several plants, such as Mexican species of agave, used as a substitute for soap.' These plants also may be called soap plant or soap root.

In the Sierra Nevada foothills ..... the common names *soap plant*, or *soap root*, generally refer to *Chlorogalum pomeridianum* ..... The Jepson Manual lists five species of *Chlorogalum*, with three taxa listed as occurring in the central Sierra Nevada foothills: *C. angustifolium*, *C. pomeridianum* var. *pomeridianum*, and *C. grandiflorum*. *Chlorogalum* is from the Greek *chloros*, meaning green, and *gala*, meaning milk or juice....

The Miwok and other California Indians used *Chlorogalum* plants in a number of ways. The coarse fibers surrounding the bulb were removed and used to make brushes, such as a hair brush, a scrubber for baskets, and a brush to remove fine acorn meal from baskets. The Miwoks and others ate the bulbs after baking them in stone-lined earth-pit ovens. The slow cooking destroys the soapy characteristics and produces a nourishing food. The thick juice that oozes out of baking bulbs was used as an adhesive....

Large quantities of fresh bulbs were mashed and poured into pools to stupefy fish which were collected and eaten. ....

Other California Indians used roasted *Chlorogalum* bulbs to make a poultice for sores...freshly crushed bulbs were rubbed on the body to treat pain of rheumatism."

An interesting observation from the February Lewis Hill walk, was the extent to which the leaves had been eaten back by cattle (a preferred food?). And there were no flowers as the single flowering stalk doesn't begin to develop until much later in the year, after the more than 2' long, less than an inch wide narrow, leaves wither and dry. Then a single tall, often nearly 3' high, branched stalk produces small white lily-like flowers that open in the evening and close soon after daybreak. Because the flowering time is so much later in the year, many people do not connect the conspicuous wavy-margined leaves that remain close to the ground in early spring, with the tall flowery stem of early summer. So on Lewis Hill we noted the clumps, widespread and conspicuous, and saw flowers only in our imaginations.

# A Fire-Safe Demonstration Garden in Three Rivers

By Melanie Keeley

Residents of Three Rivers live in a fire-prone environment. What can we do to keep our land and therefore our homes fire-safe? To help answer this question, a demonstration garden of fire-safe native plants is now in place at the new California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) building located at 40900 Sierra Drive (Hwy. 198).

The garden is an excellent example of cooperation among several community organizations and individuals. Together, they pooled their knowledge and resources and swiftly completed this important project. Under the leadership of president, Lou Tidwell and its civic pride committee, The Three Rivers Redbud Garden Club made this their project of the year. Other community groups aiding in planning and facilitating the project were California Native Plant Society (CNPS), Alta Peak chapter president, Joan Stewart, and treasurer, Janet Fanning; National Park Service forester, Tom Warner; horticulturist, Melanie Keeley; and CDF fire captains, Stephen Green, Kirk Granberg, and Alan Sherer. Funding for purchasing nursery plants was provided by the garden club, but many members provided plants from their private gardens. Staci Young at the Sierra Garden Center in Three Rivers and Intermountain Nursery in Prather discounted prices for the project. Support for materials was given by the Three Rivers Volunteer Ambulance Company. CNPS provided aviary wire for gopher and deer protection and a host of supplemental trees and plants were donated by the Park Service.

On planting day, at least 35 energetic and motivated volunteers from these organizations, as well as Three Rivers Volunteer Fire Fighters, Mountain Home Conservation Camp workers, and a handful of Three Rivers School students, all pitched in. All toiled to sculpt a dry riverbed, plant sheltering oaks, redbuds, California lilacs and many other beautiful native plants. The fire-safe planting area was not confined to the demonstration garden itself. Work continued behind and on both sides of the buildings. Oak acorns and hardy native shrubs were planted on the difficult terrain by the conservation camp laborers under the guidance of Steve and Kirk. Garden club members planted over 100 bush lupine seedlings on lower slopes. In total, more than 400 plants found a home at the fire station!

The garden itself is now in place and can be viewed daily without an appointment. Individual plant identification tags are being prepared. Brochures for a self-guided tour, as well as informative take-home brochures detailing plants and explaining the basic fire-safety principles used in the garden are also planned. As the garden matures, the plantings should provide an attractive example of a drought tolerant, easy care, fire-safe native garden.

## Preparing your Landscape for Fire Season

The first line of protection against wildfire can and should be your landscape. With thoughtful selection, placement and especially maintenance of native vegetation, a fire can be significantly slowed or deterred. Having a fire-safe landscape is a responsibility that comes with living in the hot, dry foothill regions of California. Proper maintenance in mature gardens and sound planning of new plantings affects not only our properties, but also, those of adjacent neighbors. And now is just the right time of year to assess the condition of your land and formulate a plan of action, using the general principles below.

When preparing your property for the upcoming fire season, keep in mind that *management* of the existing native vegetation within 100' of structures is the best investment of time, money and effort. Cut out dead branches and thin twiggy growth from shrubs and trees *annually*, to open up each canopy and reduce burnable fuels. Raise shrub and tree canopies up 1/3 of total height, removing branches on or near the ground to discourage surface fires from igniting them. Branches over-hanging rooflines or decks should be pruned back as well. Selectively remove individual shrubs, spacing each approximately 10-15' apart, attempting to isolate and protect mature specimens. In some cases, shrubs can be reduced in height (to approximately 2') to make them less hazardous. In hillside areas, if a shrub must be removed for spacing purposes, it is important to retain the root mass to bind & stabilize soil to prevent erosion. As the annual herbaceous vegetation dries, cut weeds, and grasses close to the ground—especially those surrounding shrubby vegetation as well as ones located within 100' of structures. Remove excess leaf litter at the base of shrubs from time to time.

## Planning New Native Landscapes

When planning a *new* native landscape, the species of plant selected is not nearly as important as its profile and placement. Between shrubs and trees, which should be distanced about 15' apart, place low volume, low profile groundcovers (to 2' high) to minimize flammable annual weedy growth. However, avoid planting highly combustible trees (such as pines and junipers, and the non-native eucalyptus and acacia) near structures.

While it is true that wild plants from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains have adapted to and benefit from fire, it is important to retain the natives as much as possible. Not only do they provide essential functions such as slope stabilization, wildlife food and cover, as well as watershed protection, they endow us with an invaluable natural heritage truly unique to this community.

## ALTA PEAK CHAPTER Field trip/hike schedule

**March 20-25** - Sometime during this week Joan would like to climb the hill behind the PG&E plant, at the fork of Hwy 190 and Wishon Campground road, above Springville. Dirt road, uphill to 3-4000' elevation, spectacular views, special plants, and fire regeneration. Let Joan know if you want to go and she will let you know when.

**April 17 - SCICON Wildflower Festival and BBQ**  
Bear Creek Road above Springville

### River Ridge event in Springville

**April 30 - River Fair/Creek Stewardship Day, 9:30-4 PM.** Free to the public. Free lunch, snacks and beverages. Gifts to the first 50 volunteers to work on restoration projects. Entertaining and educational booths, activities. Guided tours along the river and in the pastures. Wood duck nesting box building project. Reptiles and amphibians display. Smokey Bear and more. Funded by the Sierra Nevada Alliance. River Ridge is on Balch Park Road in Springville. 559-539-0207, [www.river-ridge.net](http://www.river-ridge.net)

**May 1 - Circle J Ranch - 1:00 PM** - Nancy Bruce will take us to visit a newly discovered population of *Brodiaea insignis*, the lily that is our Chapter's logo. This species is usually found in the Kaweah drainage, with some in the Tule River areas. Circle J is located 6 miles up Balch Park Road, left turn on Yokohl Drive, left turn at the 2<sup>nd</sup> driveway, large Circle J sign. Meet in the parking lot at the old barn.

**June 18 - Jordan Peak** - This hike is dependant on the North Road at 7000' being open by then. This will be a climb through a prime sample of Red Fir Forest, into a sub-alpine zone, with the rare and gorgeous *Erythronium pusaterii*, "Fawn Lily", growing in crevices and sheltered patches near the summit of 9000'.

**Looking Ahead**, Fletcher Linton, botanist on Seq. NF, will lead a walk into the Monument, to find a late summer meadow to explore. **Late May**, we hope to go into an area of Mountain Home to enjoy the Dogwood bloom. We will inform you with a postcard when those hike dates are finalized. As always, call Joan to check on the status or details of any Alta Peak Chapter walk.

## MAY PROGRAM

**May 20, 7:00 PM, Springville Memorial Bldg.**

The program, on May 20, will be a lead-in to many of the field trips into higher elevations. Dr. Michael Kunz is a professor of botany at Fresno Pacific University and has worked extensively in Sierra forests. His program draws upon this background in the coniferous mountain vegetation and his interest in the history of the unique Sequoia trees.

Dr. Kunz' talk will take us through the history of the sequoias starting with the travels of John Muir. Muir first went through the Tule River drainage in 1875, but the big trees were already famous. The routes that Muir explored in 1875 and 1877 became the roads used by lumber companies. Logging had begun in the north and by 1905 most of the big trees in some of the northern groves had been removed. Logging of these trees continued, in some places, at some times, into the 1980's, but was ended in 1987. Truth is, in general, except for particular "middle-aged" trees, the wood is of little value for building, and was primarily used for fence posts, and grape stakes. The "redwood" that is used for patios and decks, comes from the coast redwoods, a different tree.

Dr. Kunz reminds us that the Sequoia National Monument is more than just for maintaining the giant sequoias, but is meant to cover all of the diversity of the area, the vegetation, and features that surround the groves. Because there is no clearly accepted definition of what constitutes a "grove", only general comments can be made about how many occur in any particular area. Recent compilations of data suggest that about 84 groves are presently recognized, most within boundaries of National Forests, some in the National Parks, five within Indian Reservations, one on BLM land, and 7 within State or County jurisdiction. Another publication lists 24 separate groves in the Kaweah River watershed, 12 in the Tule River drainage, and six south of here, with the southernmost being near Deer Creek east of California Hot Springs.

Dr. Kunz's talk will be on May 20, at the Springville Memorial Building, at 7:00. All CNPS programs are free and open to all, so join us with friends and neighbors who might be interested in the area's "Claim to Fame".

## RECENT EVENTS

### Lewis Hill – Porterville

Sandwiched between rain and fog, the 13th of Feb. proved a sunny surprise! Forty-five people signed in, and there were several late arrivals who joined us anonymously. After working our way up and west over the hillside, patches of *Fritillaria striata* were located as expected, blooming and scenting the air. A local old-time rancher calls these flowers Calico Bells, surely a descriptive and delightful name. Many of the group returned to their cars at this point (making it a two hour outing for them), while another group continued on to the western fence, where various wildflowers became denser, more colorful among the lush green grass. As we dropped over to the south-facing slope, the vegetation was thinner, lower, and rather different in composition than what had been seen on the north-facing side. Early, brilliant poppies were scattered among the rocks that encircled old magnesite mine pit sites; *Erodium*, a small *Lepidium*, *Vulpia* spp., mats of *Crassula connata*, and a few popcorn flowers accentuated the contrast between the two aspects (north vs. south). Single, or few, plants of various other species were found...e.g., a few *Allium*, *Marah*, *Mimulus guttatus* in cracks in rocks, and *Senecio vulgare* already setting seed. Other species that could be recognized by their leaves were not yet in flower, as would be predicted for so early in the season.

Lewis Hill, owned now and managed by the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (co-sponsor of the walk), once again demonstrated the combination of special soils, special plants that make it such a wonderful place. This walk will be repeated next February - it has become an annual event - so if you missed '05, watch for next year's announcement.

### DESERT BELLY PLANTS

The February lecture in Springville was presented by botanist Ileene Anderson, who spent many years working in and enjoying the Mojave and Colorado Deserts. She introduced us to species that will likely be found in our California deserts this spring. These small and short-lived plants can carpet the desert when the conditions are favorable with rain interspersed with sun and warmth.

Ileene's program was just right for a winter evening, and we even enjoyed a break in the rain for

the several hours that we needed to get there, then home again. The take-home message was that this year already is, and no doubt will continue to be, a spectacular year for our desert plants. Southern areas down near Anza Borrego State Park and into Imperial County are now in full bloom, and the next several weeks will be prime time to explore, photograph, enjoy the plants of these often dry and desolate-appearing landscapes. Many thanks to Ileene for traveling up our way.

**Ed. Note:** The national news did a report on Death Valley, which is blooming as it hasn't bloomed for many, many years. The Valley floor is covered with water and flowers that have lain dormant for as many as a hundred years are blooming this year. Conditions can change quickly, so call the Nat'l Park before planning your trip. 775-553-2200 [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva)

## WILDFLOWERS

### Editor's Picks

A new place to observe spring wildflowers is the **Wind Wolves Nature Preserve** south of Bakersfield. On the web, go to [www.wildlandsconservancy.org](http://www.wildlandsconservancy.org) and click on Wind Wolves, for a description. They are offering a three-hour vehicle tour to see wildflowers, wildlife, and much more, on March 19, 20, 26, April 2, 3, 17, 24, and May 7. Saturday tours are at 9 AM and 1 PM; Sunday tours are at 1 PM only. Picnic lunches are allowed. **You MUST make reservations** prior to any visit for both self guided tours or wildflower tours at 661-858-4505. Wind Wolves is located southwest of Bakersfield on Hwy. 166, 9.5 miles west of I5 and 13.1 miles east of Maricopa. I have more detailed directions or you can get them when you call for reservations.

While you are in the area, go on up the Grapevine past Gorman and head out to the **Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve**. According to their website ([www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) and click on Poppy Reserve) 2005 should be a very good flower year due to the abundant rainfall. I took a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class there several years ago. We were about blown off the hillsides, but saw a beautiful display of poppies, owl's clover, lupine, goldfield, and more. Call 661-942-0662 between 10 and 4 for current information before you go as weather conditions may change. The flowers bloom March through April. And there is a great visitor's center that opens in March. Take I5 south to 138 east, Lancaster Road. Drive east about 20 miles, turn south on 170<sup>th</sup> St. W., turn left where it ends and follow the road around through Yucca trees until you get to the poppy preserve on your left. You can't miss it! The hills are orange and the entrance has the typical State Park sign.

## Other Organizations

### \*CNPS Desert Field Trips

**March 20 – 25 Granite Mountains** 4WD,  
a few spaces open

**April 22 – 24 Joshua Tree Nat'l Park** Camping  
trip - Camping will be in reserved space at the  
Lost Horse Campground, space limited so RSVP  
needed, OK to arrive Sat. AM by 9AM, no water,  
pit toilet. Hiking, wild flowers, night hike,  
campfire.

For either of the above trips, for more information and  
itineraries, contact Steve Hartman at  
[naturebase@aol.com](mailto:naturebase@aol.com) or call 818-881-3706.

### \*River Ridge – Springville Gary Adest

**April 30 – River Fair**

**May 7 – Porterville Garden Club** Springville Tour

**June 19 – Father's Day** Concert and Picnic  
benefit for the Springville Friends of the Park.

### \*Tule River Parkway Association

Cathy Capone <[ccapone@eudoramail.com](mailto:ccapone@eudoramail.com)>  
783-0201

**March 19 – Tree Planting** at Trailhead Park 9:00

**April 16 – Docent Lead Riverwalk** 9:00

**May 14 – Annual Dinner** meeting 5:30 PM

### \*Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Jane Caputo <[jane@sequoiariverlands.org](mailto:jane@sequoiariverlands.org)>

**March 26 – Herbert Preserve** Tour (vernal pools)

**April 23–Dry Creek Preserve** (quarry restoration)

**May 28 – Homer Preserve** (range conservation)

**June 25 – Kaweah Oaks Preserve** (birds)

### \*Tulare Co. Audubon Society

**Meetings:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of month, call: Mary Merriman,  
732-5459

**March 18 – Peregrine Falcon** monitoring in So. Sierra  
Nev.

**April 15 – Threatened and Endangered Species**

**May 20 – Wind Wolves Preserve**

**Field Trips:** Kim Kuska, 783-2486 or Gary Lindquist,  
734-0833.

**April 10 – Drumm Valley and Elderwood** – Wildflowers  
AND birds.

**May 7 – 9** – Three day bird watching trip to the **Mojave**  
**Desert.**

**May 28** – S. Fork of the **Kaweah R. and Ladybug Camp**  
– Birds and more wildflowers.

**June 4** – **Dinky Creek** and Chawanakee Meadows –  
Great Grey Owl and others.

## AND, to repeat from the winter issue;

New volunteers for jobs in the local  
NCPS Chapter are always needed. You are  
needed for planning field trips, programs,  
growing native plants for the Plant Sale, and  
helping Joan with Presidential tasks. If you are  
willing to help in even a small way, contact Joan  
at 539-2717 or e-mail at [tori2toli@ocsnet.net](mailto:tori2toli@ocsnet.net).

A new **OUTREACH** person is needed. The  
chapter has an information display that needs to  
go to other events along with people to answer  
questions. If you are interested in helping out in  
this way, please contact Joan. She can also  
clarify what the job's duties entail.

## NEWSLETTER ~ New Editor

The newsletter has a new editor. My  
name is Jean Loscotoff and I am a resident  
of Springville. The newsletter is published 4  
times a year at the beginning of each  
season. If you have any articles of interest  
that you would like to see in the newsletter,  
field trips from other organizations that  
need announcing, or other upcoming  
events, please let me know by phone,  
539-1226, e-mail, [loscotoff@hotmail.com](mailto:loscotoff@hotmail.com),  
or mail, 41045 Balch Park Road, Springville,  
93265.

## California Native Plant Society

### 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 are 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 _____	Membership Category
Address _____	___ Student, Retired, Limited income - \$20
City _____	___ Individual, Library - \$35
State _____ Zip _____	___ Household, Family, Group - \$45
Tele. _____	___ Supporting - \$75
<b>I wish to affiliate with:</b>	___ Plant Lover - \$100
___ Alta Peak Chapter (Tulare County)	___ Patron - \$250
___ Other _____	___ Benefactor - \$500
<b>Mail application and check to:</b>	___ Other - \$1000, \$2500, \$5000, \$10,000

Membership Chairman, California Native Plant Society, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816

### Chapter Board Members and Committee Chairs 2005

PRESIDENT: Joan Stewart – 559-539-2717 37759 Highway 190, Springville, 93265 <a href="mailto:tori2toli@ocsnet.net">tori2toli@ocsnet.net</a>	CONSERVATION: Elsie Cort – 559-561-4671 PO Box 245, Three Rivers, 93271
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### Insignis News, CNPS

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