



# INSIGNIS

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTA PEAK CHAPTER  
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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## President's Message

*Joan Stewart, President Alta Peak Chapter*

The last couple of weeks have brought an explosive springtime burst of growth and flowering over the hills and fields around us. Wherever I have driven or walked there is color, orange of the *Amsinckia*, a deeper, more intense and flaming orange of poppies, white expanses of the popcorn flowers (these and *Amsinckia*, fiddleneck, are in the same family....flowers have same pattern as the garden forget-me-not), with patches of reddish-purple owls clover, and blue *Dichelostemma* (a.k.a. bluedicks, brodiaea, many common names). Less startling, the clear bright yellow of mustard that has been around for past weeks. And green, green, dazzling in the overall effect.

I sit down to a calendar and try to develop schedule of CNPS walks, hikes, field trips for coming months, not easy task. The resulting calendar (see insert) lacks specifics of destinations, since sitting here in March, it is not possible to predict what will be (first) accessible later in season, or (second) what will be in bloom on any given date. So sites and details of where, when to gather can be filled in as time goes on by calling me. Note that most of the walks to meadows let us drive close to trailheads, so there will be very little walking involved. I hope this will let many of you, unwilling to commit to strenuous hikes, join us to enjoy meadow botany-and-botany.

The program with Sylvia Haultain of Sequoia National Park, in February was another lovely evening among friends, and a chance to "visit" places that are examples of this year's theme... Wet Places, otherwise termed fens, meadows, bogs, streamsidings... For those of you who missed being with us, the "business" part of the meeting (a few brief sentences before

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## Native Plants in The Southern Sierra Nevada

*Peyton Ellas, originally published in the Southern Sierra Messenger and here edited for length. Thanks to Peyton and the Messenger.*

I was recently given a copy of *Sightings* by Sam Keen, a small book filled with observations and connections with nature. I keep murmuring "yes," as I read passages like, "...I began to feel that I was living among familiars who shared a habitat, that I was a member of a diverse community that included local deer, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, mountain lions, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and myriad species of birds." And this one, "...insects, birds, mammals, and amphibians in healthy habitats occupy sonic niches that allow each creature to express its voice without competition from others."

As good books often do, questions are posed to which there are no clear answers, only honest ones, which each reader must come to her/himself. So, just what are we trying to accomplish with our landscapes, gardens, yards, properties?

When we design landscapes—artificial pretenses of nature-- we certainly strive for healthy plants. But is that the same as a healthy habitat? If "healthy habitat" is the goal, how are our choices of plants, plant-care products, gardeners and maintenance goals affected? Does it affect the very design of our landscapes, or our choice to design at all?

If we are living among familiars, can we also be in competition, with the mountain lion, coyote, fox and deer who eat food meant for us, with the raccoons, snakes and herons that eat the fish out of our carefully constructed water gardens, with our neighbors who might have landscaping goals far different than our own?

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introducing Sylvia) consisted in asking if anyone had any old or new business to bring up, a formal opening and closing statement, and "Thank You's" to the evening's Hostess Committee headed by Barbara Otter, to Billie Chandler who prepared the flyer with meadow photograph, to Erik and Janet for publicity, and an invitation to check out the books, posters, and hand-out materials on the table in back of room.

Then Sylvia took the floor, with one after another photograph of what our high elevation meadows look like, early or later in the season, in many different areas of our back country, before and after various human uses (sheep and cattle grazing, pack stock grazing, criss-crossing trails). She also introduced some of the restoration work that has taken place in these meadows. We hope that we will be able to offer at least one hike to see and hear about some of these projects.

An announcement you've heard before concerned the fact that only a few of our nearly 100 Tulare County members actually help with the business of keeping the Alta Peak Chapter running. Because we are part of a State-wide organization there are obligatory responsibilities: holding a minimum number of open meetings or gatherings (field trips count) each year, election of officers at specified intervals, regular reports to state office, and speaking out on issues that affect the native plants of our region. A Chapter board, elected and volunteer "officers", is authorized to make decisions on behalf of the Chapter, whether Board meetings are conducted by face-to-face gatherings, or otherwise. It is not easy to fulfill these requirements with the few people who have stepped forward to lead our group.

### Passing the *Insignis* Torch...

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter and helped publish it.

We will be unable to continue as Newsletter Editors, so we're looking to pass the torch on to someone else. You can have the templates that we've been using or find your own style.

If you're interested, email Erik at [alta.peak.cnps@gmail.com](mailto:alta.peak.cnps@gmail.com) or call 561-4841.

What has all this to do with native plants? Planting a seed, from which grows a plant that will either contribute to a healthy habitat or help destroy one, is the first choice. Working with native plants is a way I can support dwindling wild lands and attempt, however meagerly, to be part of a diverse community in a healthy habitat. Others have their own reasons; still others choose to work with tried-and-true exotic plants.

"We live in a lonely world," writes Keen. Attempting to create a healthy habitat, rather than a beautiful yard (green lawn, lots of blooming flowers, trees that never make a mess or grow an errant branch), is my way of feeling less lonely on this planet. It is always an experiment, a constant re-thinking, and trying to better understand natural forces. I am profoundly grateful for others in my community who are participating in this experiment with me. ❖

Can anyone else find a place in a busy schedule to consider helping fill some of the gaps in the list of Board positions on back of this newsletter?

From the sign-up sheet at the February meeting:

### SHARE THE FUN: TASKS TO KEEP CNPS ALIVE IN TULARE COUNTY

**Field Trip Planning:** Help plan where, when, and what places you would like to visit. Do you know special spots where we might see special plants?

**Program Planning:** Do you have ideas for programs, speakers, topics you would like to hear more about?

**Newsletter Content and Editing:** Can you help publish this newsletter?

**Conservation:** Are you curious about how rare and special plants and plant communities are preserved in the county and the rest of the state? CNPS is being asked to comment on the updated Tulare County General Plan AND to take part in the collaborative process for developing a Management Plan for Sequoia National Monument, as well as other projects. Our comments refer strictly to plant issues, and rely on available data to substantiate statements about the consequences of management alternatives. ❖

## Native Plant Garden Tour

April 19, 2008

9 A.M. – 1 P.M.

The public is invited to take a self-paced tour of several gardens featuring California native plants in the Springville and Porterville area on Saturday, April 19, 2008. Tour hours will be from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. From newly established to mature gardens, visitors will have an opportunity to share stories, learn hands-on tips and be inspired by the gardeners and property owners themselves, while seeing many species of native plants in garden settings. Participating gardens include both small and large sites, with a variety of styles, soil types and microclimates, giving visitors an opportunity to see a variety of native plants in realistic settings and conditions. Admission is Free.

Maps and brochures will be available at Jenuine Junque, 35738 Hwy 190, Springville and at Cal Natives Nursery, 806 W. Westfield Ave., Porterville beginning at 9 a.m. on April 19. Cal Natives Nursery will have native plants for sale to the public during the tour hours.

“Hearing from the gardeners themselves about how a particular plant type functions is a valuable resource for anyone interested in using native plants in their landscape,” said Peyton Ellas of Quercus Landscape Design, sponsor of the event. “Seeing the plants in a real garden setting, rather than in a nursery container or in a catalog photo, is a great way to really visualize it in your garden. The participants are all really generous to open up their gardens for this tour. We all are looking forward to the event as a fun way to meet others interested in California native plants and to share our experiences with these wonderful plants.”

The planned tour includes three gardens designed by Quercus and several that were designed and installed by the homeowners themselves. For more info, contact Peyton Ellas at (559) 202-8351 or [peyton@quercuslandscapedesign.com](mailto:peyton@quercuslandscapedesign.com).

Quercus Landscape Design & Garden Service is a company that specializes in designing California native plant-based landscapes, including drought-tolerant, low-maintenance and wildlife-friendly gardens. Owned and operated by Peyton Ellas, the company is based in Springville and provides services throughout the southern San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

## *The Magic of My Mountains: Memories from California's Sequoia National Forest, 1919- 1926.* By Norman L. Norris: Resurrected by Eleanor Norris

At the February meeting it was mentioned that the names of meadows we will be talking about (and will be hiking to later when snow melts) have interesting historical origins: Double Bunk, Last Chance, Bone, Nobe Young, Onion...

Eleanor Norris, an Alta Peak CNPS member, recently published a book based on the journal of her father, an early supervisor of Sequoia National Forest. Norman Norris' journal includes anecdotes about the use of meadows by horseback rangers of the 1920's and 1930's

*“I saw something that gave me a thrill: a Forest Service ranger riding the long trails out of the Nobe Young Patrol Station on a free-stepping horse. Man! That would be the life!”*

Copies of the book are available through the chapter, or contact Eleanor Norris, Publisher Tule River Country Press, 41463 Yokohl Drive,

## Field Trip: Montane Meadows of Sequoia National Park

July 19, 2008

8:00 A.M.

Join plant ecologists Athena Demetry and Sylvia Haultain on a field trip to two well-known (and one not so well-known) montane meadows in Sequoia National Park.

We'll start the day by visiting Halstead Meadow, the site of an ambitious restoration project, followed by lunch at Crescent Meadow in Giant Forest. Then we'll end the day with an amble to see the wildflowers blooming in Crescent and Huckleberry Meadows.

We won't walk more than 2-3 miles all day on this gentle tour. Meet in the Three Rivers Memorial building parking lot at 8:00 to car-pool. ❖

## 2008 Spring and Summer Field Trips and Events

Alta Peak Chapter California Native Plant Society

This Summer's Theme: Our Sierra Gems;

Mountain Meadows of The Southern Sierra Nevada

There is no charge for CNPS events. Contact other organizations for information on their programs.

**April 15:** Last day to submit comments on the Tulare County General Plan Draft EIR

**April 19:** Native Plant Garden Tour (details page 3)

**April 26:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

**May 25:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

**June 14:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

**June 28-29:** Wildflowers of Sequoia Groves. SNHA Edventure  
([www.sequoiahistory.org/sfi/sfi.htm](http://www.sequoiahistory.org/sfi/sfi.htm)).

**July 12:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

**July 19:** CNPS Field Trip. Montane Meadows of Sequoia National Park (details page 3).

**August 17:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

**August 23:** CNPS Field Trip. Location TBA, contact Joan Stewart

### Details for "Location TBA" Field Trips

Since it's not possible to predict what will be accessible or what will be in bloom on any given date, some field trip dates have been announced without specific locations. Destinations and details of where and when to meet can be filled in as time goes on by calling Joan Stewart: (559) 539-2717 or [tori2toli@ocs.net](mailto:tori2toli@ocs.net)

Note that most of the trips will be to places that are close to trailheads, so there will be very little walking involved. I hope this will let those of you who are unable to make strenuous hikes join us on field trips to the following areas:

- **Upper Freeman Creek:** Streamside meadows along upper Freeman Creek (as soon as North Road is open).
- **North Road:** Series of contrasting meadows along North Road, one of which we term Caltha Meadow, is place to see marsh marigold. Any who want more of a climb can continue to Jordan Peak for annual visit to see *Erythronium*.
- **Western Divide Highway:** Double Bunk Meadow, Crane Meadow, and other locations all close to the Western Divide Highway.
- **Onion Meadow:** a longer hike in, but site where the Giant Onion is best seen; also site for several orchids and a gentian.
- **Nobe Young Meadow:** with several orchids and depending on weather, a splendid array of species typical of these "wet" places.





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Important Planning  
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*We Need A New  
Insignis Editor* →

*Help Plan Events,  
Programs, And Trips* →

Chapter Board Members and Committee Chairs, 2008		
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Field Trips & Programs	OPEN	
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