



# Insignis

*Newsletter of the Alta Peak Chapter, celebrating and supporting the native plant communities in Tulare County, serving the Central Valley and Sierra Nevada Mountains and Foothills.*

Volume 23, Number 2

June 2013

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## Summer Field Trips

*Springville Area by Joan Stewart*

First, as we are all aware, the weather-- winter, spring-- has not supported a lot of annual growth or survival of wildflowers, and the blooming of perennials has been spasmodic. The trek up Jordan Peak for June is cancelled. Because of lack of the hoped for trailside and peak-top growth (plus the uncertainty about trail condition), we will not make this climb. Next year? Quien sabe!! If Long Meadow is too dry in the next few weeks, it may not be worth the time or gas to go there. As noted in the earlier field trip mailing, call to confirm when the date is closer. I will scout it out late June for a possible July 6 field trip. Call 559-539-2717 for details.

*Three Rivers Area by Melanie Keeley*

**August 17: Mineral King Flume with Melanie Keeley**

We'll explore foothills vegetation and meet at the Three Rivers Veteran's Memorial Building at 8:30 am, then caravan up Mineral King Road to the flume (approximately 2,500' elevation). There are boards and hand rails along the center of the flume, so it is a very safe, easy, enjoyable walk. It is a great way to be outdoors, yet remain cool during the heat of the summer. And it is a scenic route with beautiful views without ticks, weeds or snakes! Come prepared with hats, comfortable walking shoes, sunglasses, sunscreen, snack/lunch and water.



*CNPS Field Trip last summer at Ash Mountain in Sequoia National Park with Melanie Keeley*

## New President's Message

*Greetings from President-Elect, Melanie Keeley*

Out going President, Joan Stewart, has nominated me to be the next president of the Alta Peak Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, to which I have enthusiastically consented (to be officially nominated at the Chapter Board meeting on June 5 and approved at our next general membership program). I particularly would like to thank not only Joan, but Janet Fanning and Elsie Cort for their devotion to this chapter and organization. They have contributed so much over many years and deserve our appreciation.

I am truly excited to accept this position. I fully believe at the state level, this organization has got it right. Their worthy mission—to protect and preserve native plants and natural habitats for future generations through appreciation, conservation, education and research—needs to be re-committed to now more than ever. Ten thousand members strong, this organization has the power, knowledge and incentive to fulfill its goals. Much progress has been made, yet more challenges face us.

At the local level, the Alta Peak Chapter also has a lot of work to do. What we opt to focus our time and efforts on, related to the state organization's mandate, is determined to a large extent by the interests of our membership. I encourage you to contact me with your concerns along with ideas you have to make this chapter *your chapter*. Your investment in this organization will ensure its multi-layer success.

My Alta Peak Chapter presidency is not the only change that will occur on our Board. To cover the southern end of the chapter's range, Joan will be acting as the Springville liaison. Fortunately, she also has a strong interest in continuing to be the chapter's Conservation Chair. With her educational background in botany, Joan can and has made informed, constructive comments on countywide environmental documents, protecting our resources.

Elsie will remain in the role of Vice President. She is immensely valuable to us in her ability to communicate the chapter's interests in all forms of media. If you haven't already seen our Facebook page, go to [facebook.com/altapeak.chapter](https://www.facebook.com/altapeak.chapter) and our website at [altapeakcnps.org](http://altapeakcnps.org), please take a look. These are the best forums to get up-to-date event information and timely interactions with the board members. Upload your plant pictures for identification (we'll try!) or let us know of notable sightings, so we can all share, learn and enjoy the botanical bounty of the Sierra Nevada.

Additionally, Elsie edits this chapter newsletter, *Insignis*, with contributions from our Board members. If you have relevant contributions, whether about field trips, or information from other environmental organizations, we may be able to publicize this information to the benefit our members.

Ann Huber will be joining the Board and relieving Janet Fanning of her enduring duties as Treasurer. Janet will, however, continue to keep track of membership, along with poster and book sales.

Thankfully, Joy Semple will remain as Recording Secretary.

Cathy Capone, proprietor of Cal Natives Nursery in Porterville, will continue her outstanding work as Horticulture Chair. We are grateful that she is willing to continue as such.

Betty Avalos, Education Chair, will also remain on the Board. Formerly a school principal, Betty contributes many years' experience along with valued insights to our board. She is currently spearheading efforts to implement a new Alta Peak Chapter scholarship and grants program. (We want to encourage budding botanists!)

Another significant change in the Board is that future Chapter field trips will be planned by a collaborative group with botanists, Joan Stewart, Ann Huber and Sylvia Haultain.

All in all, I am enthused and energized. I am looking forward to working with our devoted Board members, who are already generating many new activities! I hope to increase and engage our membership and I would like to see greater cooperation with other environmental organizations. To accomplish these ends, expect that I may be contacting you to participate in our chapter's events and field trips. The more involvement from you, the more this chapter can ultimately offer and accomplish. To begin with, I ask now that each of you encourage those you know to join the California Native Plant Society with association to the Alta Peak Chapter. You can easily add or renew membership at [cnps.org](http://cnps.org).

The flora here in the Sierra Nevada is amazing and beautiful. It inherently deserves to be admired, studied and when necessary, protected!

### Alta Peak Chapter Board Meeting

June 5, 2013 at 3 pm

This meeting will include a discussion about the new direction and activities of the Chapter. Several long term Board members would greatly appreciate help from other members to shift tasks and generate help and energy.

*Held in Springville at the home of Joan Stewart.  
Call 539-2717 for directions and more information.*

**Please Join the Chapter Board of Directors!**

**All Chapter members welcome.**

(Some of us will be meeting earlier, around 1 pm, to share a sack lunch and some river time.)

## Out-Going President's Message

by Joan Stewart

Alta Peak Chapter is holding a board meeting on June 5 at my home east of Springville. This will be an important gathering of officers and committee chairs (see listing in this *Insignis*) and is open to other interested members.

One of our over-riding concerns is finding new people to help us fulfill our mission here in Tulare County. Where are you, members, concerned about our native ecosystems to step up and help fill some of the positions? Our membership list continues to indicate that there are a good number of county residents who care about CNPS' mission. We plan to nominate officers on the 5th, but officially they need to be approved at the next Chapter meeting, planned for the Fall. Committee Chairs need support, active contributions of time, and ideas.

We would like to consider elected officers (President, VP, Treasurer, and Secretary) plus Committee Chairs as a "Leadership Team", with all members actively involved as much as reasonable.

Melanie Keeley has worked with me over past months, exploring the thought of taking on the President's tasks for Alta Peak. And now she is willing to accept the nomination and work with me for the transition over the coming weeks. She has been involved in CNPS for many, many years. I have known her work from past years in southern California. See her New President's Message in this *Insignis* and know how grateful I am to be able to turn over some of the responsibilities for Chapter maintenance to someone as capable and willing as Melanie.

Betty has reviewed what might be a new outreach education project... a scholarship for local persons interested in what CNPS tries to do. We'll learn more about this in coming weeks.

## Conservation Report

by Joan Stewart

We still wait for the final Sequoia National Forest Plan. The Sequoia National Monument Plan has been finalized, and we had no comment on the way conflicting demands, issues, were resolved. Nothing can ever satisfy everyone.....As reported in the local Porterville Recorder on May 23, two questions remain to be resolved, both dealing with fire—How to manage the urban/wildland interface and the use of fire, mechanical treatments as preventive activities.



Visiting the Ash Mountain restoration native plant nursery in Sequoia National Park during a June 2012 Chapter field trip with Melanie Keeley, Restoration Horticulturist (center)

## Chapter Native Plant Sale

by Elsayh Cort

The Alta Peak Chapter's annual Native Plant Sale will be held as usual on the first Saturday in October. At the last Board meeting we discussed many ideas for revising the plant sale. We decided to keep it at its present location at the Arts Center on North Fork Drive in Three Rivers. We will be displaying the plants inside the building this year to make it easier to pick up your pre-orders and to load plants into your car.

The Native Plant Sale is a service the Chapter provides to help educate and inform the public about the usefulness and beauty of using California Native Plants in our local gardens and landscape.

Plans are being made to hold a possible native plant gardening symposium on a separate day before the plant sale. This would be the Chapter's Fall Program if it comes together. The next *Insignis*, which comes out in early September, will have all the details about this meeting. It will also include the order form for members to pre-order native plants.

The Chapter will need volunteer help the day before the plant sale and the day of the plant sale. Please consider offering your services next October.

### Chapter Website:

[altapeakcnps.org](http://altapeakcnps.org)

See newsletter in color in a pdf file here.

### Chapter facebook page:

[facebook.com/altapeak.chapter](https://facebook.com/altapeak.chapter)

## Tracking the Pulse of the Planet

by Ann Huber  
California Phenology Project Coordinator  
at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

All across the country, plant enthusiasts are following in Thoreau's footsteps by recording seasonal changes that occur in plants in their own backyards – like when the first spring flower appears, when leaves begin to turn color in the fall, or when the first fruits develop. The study of the timing of recurring events that happen in the lives of plants and animals on a seasonal basis is referred to as phenology. People have been tracking phenology for thousands of years to know when to plant crops and when to hunt and fish. Now we can add another reason to pay attention-- to help us understand how changes in our climate are affecting the plants and animals in our world.

### Phenology and Climate Change

Flowering plants are among nature's most sensitive biological indicators of global change. First-hand observations of how particular plant species respond to year-to-year changes in seasonal weather can tell us which species are more reactive to warmer temperatures and which are not sensitive at all. Phenological changes in plants can have far-reaching effects on their ecosystems. For example, if a plant begins fruiting earlier in the year than an animal that depends on it can reach it (by hatching or migrating), then those animals may find themselves short of food. And if flowers and their pollinators fall out of sync, then there are fewer fruits. Such changes are already happening for some species. In many parts of the world, springtime events are occurring earlier, and fall events are happening later than in the past. Federal records show that the growing season in much of the U.S. is two weeks longer than it was a century ago. Millions have been spent studying the effects of climate-change on crops, but relatively little is known about other aspects of the natural world (like the native pollinators that visit those crops). Especially little is known about the phenology of native plants. A better understanding of how native plants respond to changes in climate can help inform better management decisions and policy decisions.

### What is Being Done and How You Can Help

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks are one of seven national parks in California that, since 2011, have begun to monitor seasonal events in native plants. At Sequoia National Park, we are monitoring 4 native plants that represent important components of the foothills woodlands and coniferous forest: California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), mountain pride (*Penstemon newberryi*), and greenleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*). Locally, phenology monitoring has also begun at some valley schools and at University of California Nature Reserves (to learn more about what is being done in California, visit the California Phenology Project's website at [usanpn.org/cpp](http://usanpn.org/cpp)).

This effort is part of a national consortium of organizations and individuals that collect and share phenology observations with the USA-National Phenology Network (USA-NPN). The USA-NPN hit the one millionth observation milestone in 2012, and the network is hoping to collect one million observations in 2013 alone. "Just as national networks of weather stations and stream gauges are critical for providing national weather, climate, and water services, a coast-to-coast phenology science and monitoring network will be critical for understanding and predicting how plants and animals respond to global climate change, and will help us adapt to ongoing and future climate change", from the USA-NPN factsheet. Indeed, observations made by USA-NPN participants have contributed to a long list of peer-reviewed scientific publications, see [usanpn.org/pubs/](http://usanpn.org/pubs/) results. Although many of these use legacy lilac data, publications that use contemporary data collected directly through the USA-NPN are just now coming out.



Do you think you might enjoy watching plants change through the seasons? If you are interested in participating, or just learning more, the National Phenology Network's website at [usanpn.org/cpp](http://usanpn.org/cpp) is a rich and user-friendly source of information. Here you can learn more about phenology or how to get started: choosing which species to monitor; registering your own backyard as a monitoring site; or finding the place closest to home to volunteer.

### Observing Your Own Backyard with *Nature's Notebook*

This project gathers information on plant and animal phenology across the U.S. to be used for decision-making on local, national and global scales to ensure the continued vitality of our environment. Scientists alone cannot collect enough data: They need your help. Join more than 6,000 other naturalists across the nation in taking the pulse of our planet. You'll use scientifically-vetted observation guidelines, developed for over 900 species, to ensure data are useful to researchers and decision-makers.

Sign up at [usanpn.org/natures\\_notebook](http://usanpn.org/natures_notebook) where you can also download mobile apps for the program.

## Growing Native Sages (Salvias)

by Cathy Capone

Salvias are useful in the garden for their evergreen foliage, wildlife values, scent and flower color primarily in the spring to early summer, evergreen foliage. I have found over several years of growing salvias in a sandy soil on the valley floor that planting a mixture of salvias gives a longer bloom period. Try to include an early bloomer and a mid to late bloomer, and you and the butterflies and hummingbirds will be rewarded with a longer bloom period.

All the salvias I grow require spring and fall irrigation. Since I have sandy soils, I water them twice a week in the hot temperature weeks and once a week during mild weather. Note that I am gardening in sandy soil which drains rapidly. If you are gardening in a soil that retains moisture, you will need to adjust the water schedule to allow the soil to dry between waterings.

When selecting salvias for your garden it is important to consider your garden space requirements. There are ground cover salvias which grow six inches tall with flower stalks to one foot or more and there are small to large bushes, like Purple or Cleveland sage, which grow to six feet or more in a garden. Although many salvias grow primarily in full sun in their native habitats, all the plants I have grown will grow in light to moderate shade in addition to full sun.

White sage is used to make smudge bundles for use in purification rights by Native Americans. Many parts of this plant were used by the native peoples. White sage leaves are striking in their light gray green color, but before you decide to plant this native sage, research the plant on the web or visit a garden with this salvia. The flower stalks are different than most native sages and the aroma is also different. This plant has special value and an uncommon quality. However, it is not for everyone.

My native plant demonstration garden contains:

- Salvia mellifera* – Black Sage (March- April)
- Salvia brandegei* - Brandegee's Sage ( March- April)
- Salvia apiana* – White Sage ( May – June)
- Salvia leucophylla*– Purple Sage ( May – June)
- Salvia clevelandii* – Cleveland Sage ( May – June)
- Salvia "Bee's Bliss"* – Bee's Bliss Sage ( March – May)
- Salvia "Dara's Choice"* – Dara's Choice Sage( March – May)
- Salvia "Poso Blue"* – Poso Blue Sage ( May – June)
- Salvia "Aromas"* – Aromas Sage ( May – June)
- Salvia "Gracias"* – Gracias Sage ( April- May)

There is extensive information on the web about native salvias. Here are two websites easy to use, providing text and images.

[laspilitas.com](http://laspilitas.com) and [calflora.com](http://calflora.com)



**Allen Chickering Sage**  
(photo by Cathy Capone)



**White Sage**  
(photo by Cathy Capone)

## State to Treat Forest Lands to Stop Wildfires

During the Christmas holiday, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, known as Cal Fire, released a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on its Statewide Vegetation Treatment Program for review and comment. This program generated much consternation because Cal Fire is seeking authorization to “treat” 38 million acres, or about 33 percent of the state to prevent wildfires based on a seriously flawed EIR. No maps are provided so it isn’t possible to tell what resources would be impacted by the proposal.

“Treatment” methods would include reducing biomass by spraying herbicides, bulldozing the backcountry, grinding chaparral, and burning. They claim this will reduce fire danger to people and property, reduce invasive species, improve air quality, increase desirable plant species, and improve wildlife habitat.

Oddly, the EIR does not mention alternative fire prevention measures that Cal Fire itself has advocated, like retrofitting structures to block ember entry points, minimizing under-deck potential hotspots, fire-safe landscape zones, and removing firewood and other flammable debris. Some of the science cited in the EIR was outdated, and it even relied on one study that was withdrawn by its authors. A concerted effort to share information and provide informed, helpful comments on the EIR included CNPS Conservation Director, Greg Suba, several CNPS chapters, including the Jepson Chapter, and the Chaparral Institute.

It is the hope of all participants that Cal Fire will rewrite its EIR and remedy all the flaws that currently make it so unworkable. It’s sad that a state agency would do such a poor job, causing many people to spend countless hours in an effort to improve the situation. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote an editorial on March 11 that Cal Fire should start over from scratch as the EIR was beyond tweaking. On the bright side, CNPS has taken part in a great collective effort to respond to a conservation challenge.

*This article based on reporting by Lori Hubbard – Dorothy King Young Chapter and Frank Landis – San Diego Chapter  
Reprinted from Spring Newsletter of the Jepson Chapter*

## Green Your Garden Seminar

**Saturday, June 8 at 1pm**

Kaweah Oaks Preserve

*Featuring students from El Diamante High School  
and Tulare County Master Gardeners*

In this FREE demonstration session, learn easy sustainable gardening techniques, home composting, and how to use native plants to save water, money and work. Learn tricks of the gardening trade!

*Presented by Sequoia Riverlands Trust*  
Call 559-738-0211 for more information.

## New Scholarship/Grant Program

*by Betty Avalos*

The Alta Peak Chapter Board of Directors is in the very early stages of developing a process for providing grants and scholarships to increase understanding of California native plants and ecosystems in Tulare County, the Central Valley, and the Sierra Nevada mountains and foothills. We are especially interested in supporting students who intend to pursue academic studies in botany, native plant ecology, conservation and restoration.

Chapter members are welcome to contribute their ideas regarding grant and scholarship application procedures and selection criteria...and to join this special conversation.

If you would like to participate in providing this opportunity to expand the appreciation and conservation of native plants in our region, please contact Betty Avalos before June 15 by email at [bvalalos@hotmail.com](mailto:bvalalos@hotmail.com) or by calling 559-561-3211.

Nature is imperfectly perfect, filled with loose parts and possibilities, with mud and dust, nettles and sky, transcendent hands-on moments and skinned knees. What happens when all the parts of childhood are soldered down, when the young no longer have the time or space to play in their family’s garden, cycle home in the dark with the stars and moon illuminating their route, walk down through the woods to the river, lie on their backs on hot July days in the long grass, or watch cockleburs, lit by morning sun, like bumblebees quivering on harp wires? What then?

...Nature—the sublime, the harsh, and the beautiful—offers something that the street or gated community or computer game cannot. Nature presents the young with something so much greater than they are; it offers an environment where they can easily contemplate infinity and eternity. A child can, on a rare clear night, see the stars and perceive the infinite from a rooftop in Brooklyn. Immersion in the natural environment cuts to the chase, exposes the young directly and immediately to the very elements from which humans evolved: earth, water, air, and other living kin, large and small. Without that experience, as Chawla says, “we forget our place; we forget that larger fabric on which our lives depend.”

*Last Child in the Woods,  
Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder  
by Richard Louv*

*(Louise Chawla is an environmental psychologist and author.)*

# History of the CA Native Plant Society

by G. Ledyard Stebbins

Excerpted from *Fremontia*, vol.18, no. 4 (October 1990)

"The California Native Plant Society, Then and Now"

The founders of the California Native Plant Society are not professional botanists. They are lovers of wild plants, growing either in natural settings or in their gardens where they and their friends can admire them continuously. The hard core founders were brought together by a mission of conservation. In 1965, the East Bay Division of Parks in Oakland was threatening to discontinue the arboretum of native plants in Tilden Park, and to dismiss its supervisor, James Roof. This brought forth a series of protests and organized protest meetings on the part of citizens who loved the arboretum and felt that it served a valuable purpose in the cultural life of the area. After a vigorous campaign, they succeeded in blocking the proposed dismantling, and the victors realized that much more could be done to save from destruction the rare native plants of California. The need was great, and no other organization was meeting the challenge. Both the Sierra Club and The Nature Conservancy were sympathetic, but their energies were and are directed toward larger goals. The professional botanical societies were making gestures, but not undertaking vigorous, concerted action.

This prompted a small but highly dedicated group of plant lovers to organize our society: Joyce and Dr. Horace Burr, Jenny and Scott Fleming, Susan and August Fruge, Irja and Walter Knight, James Roof Leonora and Dr. Erwin Strohmaier, plus University of California chemist Leo Brewer and botanist W.M. Laetsch. As soon as I heard about it, I organized a Sacramento Valley Chapter and attended meetings of the main group in Berkeley, and I was elected president in 1967. Initially, the Society's plan of action was to interest other plant lovers in every way possible, to monitor the activities of private and public agencies whose plans would in any way destroy rare species or disrupt natural plant communities, to prepare whatever countermeasures might be necessary to stop them, and to seek donations from organizations and private citizens. As I became more active, I realized that, as the Sierra Club had long known, people become much more interested in conserving natural features with which they have become intimately acquainted, so that field trips should be an essential part of our society's activities. The first of these, taken by the Sacramento Valley Chapter, was to photograph rare native plants. After a few unfortunate experiences with non-member student visitors, we actively enforced the "no collecting" rule on our trips. The epithet "posy pickers," sometimes applied to our members, was never justified.

Another of our activities that became widely adopted, native plant sales, grew out of a crisis from which we rose, like Phoenix, from near oblivion. In the autumn of 1966, the core group met in a rented office from which we were in debt, in a session that at first was full of gloom and doom. All our efforts at obtaining funds had failed, and we were not attracting many new members. Then one of our more stalwart optimists made the suggestion that, from our various native gardens plus seedlings grown from seeds that Jim Roof and others had collected in the wild, we had enough stock of native plants to put on a sale. The suggestion was enthusiastically received, and for several weeks all our energies were devoted to "pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps" in this fashion. The sale was so well publicized that when we opened the gates of the sales lot in Tilden Park, people were waiting to enter and buy. The only thing that went wrong was our underestimation of the interest that we had aroused. Although the sale was publicized as an all-day Saturday affair, we were almost completely sold out by noon. Not only had we covered our debts, but also we had acquired many new members. All thoughts of disbanding were forgotten; we were definitely on the way to success.

## Alta Peak Chapter Board of Directors



WE INVITE OUR MEMBERS TO  
JOIN THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
TO "SHARE THE GOOD STUFF"  
ABOUT NATIVE PLANTS  
FOR ALL OF TULARE COUNTY!

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# Alta Peak Chapter Annual Native Plant Sale

## October 5, 2013

*Pre-order forms will be included in the next September Insignis for all Chapter members to order plants for a special early discount price.*



**Please volunteer to help!**

## CNPS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

-

I wish to affiliate with: \_\_\_ Alta Peak Chapter

Other Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Category:

\_\_\_ Student/Limited income, \$25

\_\_\_ Individual, \$45

\_\_\_ Family \$75

\_\_\_ Plant Lover, \$100

\_\_\_ Patron, \$300

\_\_\_ Benefactor, \$600

\_\_\_ Mariposa Lily, \$1500

**Mail with check to CNPS, 2707 K St., Suite 1, Sacramento,**

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