



China Creek Update – Warren Shaw

GRASS PLANTING AT CHINA CREEK

Friday, 1-7-11 marked the culmination of the first stage of a native grass planting project we've been pursuing since September under the direction of Grass Guru Mary McClanahan. To review: with the help of cattleman Steve McDonald, last spring we sprayed an area of about seven acres of Yellow-Star-Thistle-infested savannah, with a selective herbicide (Milestone VM). The result was a very gratifying reduction in YST population. We hoped, therefore, we could introduce some native grasses to compete with the YST as it inevitably returns. At Mary's suggestion we spread mulch over about two acres, in hopes of retarding the growth of exotic annuals, though many did manage to push their way through. So, in December we got a crew together to spray the annuals with glyphosate; this proved to be complicated because quite a bit of native wild rye seemed to have sprouted in the area also, but we did our best.



Mary McClanahan pitching grass "hay"

On Friday we transported a load of "hay" harvested from Thelma Valdez's impressive stands of native grasses last fall, and spread it over the area. This was followed immediately by Hank Urbach's giving the area a light disking with his trusty tractor to get the seed in the hay in contact with the soil. We recognize it would probably have been better if we could have planted sooner, but the weather and other factors slowed us down; now there isn't much we can do but wait for Nature to take its course and hope for the best.

Next fall we plan to plant another section, perhaps mostly with Deer Grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), which consultant Jeff Davis advises is a good choice to compete successfully with YST. It is a great feeling to be able to get started actually restoring natives to the Park, where we have previously had to concentrate mainly on killing invasive exotics. (We certainly still have a lot of that to do).

Our next scheduled workday will be Saturday, January 15. From 8-12. Please join us if you can. To get to the Park take Kings Canyon/180 east across Academy to Centerville. Follow Smith or Oliver south to Rainbow 1/4 mi. Turn south on Smith about 1/4 mi. to the Park gate. Call (855-4519) or email <warshaw@netptc.net> for more information.

Home and Garden Show – March 4-6. Our table is usually in the garden pavilion near those of other plant-related organizations. It is a great opportunity for community education and outreach. Of particular interest to many who stop by is information related to landscaping with natives, given the advent of water meters. March also brings questions about wildflower viewing, planting, and identification. Help is needed for minding the table and its information brochures Friday through Sunday. An hour or two will be much appreciated by Marian and all who visit our table. Volunteers will receive free admission. Contact Marian Orvis at <mforvet@comcast.net>

Look Out Worms, Here Comes Thujone!

Jane Pritchard

I recently read the book *On Food and Cooking* (2004 edition) by Harold McGee and found out the main flavoring in absinthe is thujone, a monoterpene oil extracted from *Artemisia absinthium* (wormwood). In high doses thujone is an “energetic” laxative and toxic to intestinal parasites, thus the common name. Apparently the mugwort around here *Artemisia douglasiana* does not contain thujone.

Thujone is an aromatic compound first found in *Thuja* tree bark. Conifer resins contain thujone and other monoterpenes as a natural defense against bark beetles. Thujone also occurs in *Achillea millefolium* (yarrow), coriander, tansy, tarragon, oregano, common sage, and some mints. Tansy was brought to the U.S. from Europe because its foliage can preserve meat in summer, repel insects, and get rid of intestinal worms. In funeral winding sheets, tansy “discourages worms from entering the body.” (*Weeds and Words* by Robert L. Zimdahl)

Absinthe was popular in France in the late 1800s, got the reputation of inducing convulsions and insanity, and was outlawed in many countries in 1910. Thujone is a cumulative toxin to human nervous systems, muscles, and kidneys. Taken once, thujone is cathartic. Used repeatedly, it can cause symptoms like “inattentiveness, forgetfulness, negligent appearance, and hypersensitivity to criticism.” (*Poisonous Plants of California* by Thomas C. Fuller and Elizabeth McClintock) It looks like many people (including me) have hit the herbs and spices too hard.

Ed. Note: Under certain circumstances the sale of absinthe is now allowed in some countries, including the US. Restrictions forbid, among other things, the word “absinthe” on the label or the ingredient thujone.



Artemisia douglasiana
© 2009 Thomas Stoughton

Observations

In the foothills copious rainfall and relatively warm weather have sprouted annuals of all kinds. Fiddleneck, Blue Dicks, Ithural’s Spear, Soaproot, Fiesta Flower, and many others are up and growing. Mosses, Lichens and Fungi are showy. Blue Oaks took a short break after producing a tremendous crop of acorns but are now covered with fat buds, ready to go again. Buckeyes’ buds are swelling also, and we expect to see Redmaids in bloom and buckeyes in leaf before the month is out. Always difficult to predict, spring wildflowers could be spectacular, with all the water, or sparse because of competition with early sprouting exotic grasses. We shouldn’t have to wait long to find out.



<http://www.>

Did You Notice?

On the first page, just below our title, is a web address. But not just any web address. It is the address of our chapter's website. Thelma Valdez, woman of many talents has created this and it is now up and running. Check it out and you will see more on our restoration project at China Creek and details on the upcoming Home and Garden Show.

Click the link “Native Gardening” and see three brochures of information on using California native plants in Central Valley gardens, available as PDF files.

Thank you, Thelma.

The League of Women Voters has issued the following Call to Action:

It is important for the Board of Supervisors to hear from the public about concerns for protection of Lost Lake Park from intensive urban uses and for flexibility while continuing to develop the Lost Lake Park Master Plan. The planning needs to be accomplished without overriding influences from commercial interests in the Friant Community Planning effort.

The Friant Ranch Specific Plan for a huge 2500 residential development next to Friant calls for siting a waste water treatment plant on the river side of Friant Road adjacent to Lost Lake Park. The County is being asked to approve that site without an environmental evaluation of the impacts of that facility and without consideration of the River Restoration effort

Planning for the community of Friant and adjacent new development is proceeding in the absence of evaluation of the cumulative impacts of all new development planned for that area (i.e. Millerton New Town and Madera developments). Although a Fresno County General Plan policy calls for a Friant/Millerton Regional Plan, that has not been done, and a new Community Plan for Friant and new development seems to be premature in the absence of a thoughtful look at the region.

For the reasons above it is important to be present at the Board of Supervisors hearing on February 1 and to write Board members about your concerns.

More information, including Mary Savala's thoughtful article in the January 2011, newsletter can be viewed on the League's website. <http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

Please call Mary Savala, Natural Resources Director of LWV, at 559-431-1227 for questions or help with letter writing.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



You will probably not be surprised that 2011 has already brought us opportunities to do volunteer work for the environment. One that may interest Sequoia members is a tree planting project on the Kings River near Piedra. This is being sponsored by the Fisheries Management Program. They're preparing to plant almost two hundred native trees and shrubs along the river; oaks, sycamores, cottonwoods, etc. and would like our help. The precise date has not yet been determined, but it will be within the next month and it will be on a Saturday. If you're interested in being part of this effort, please contact Warren Shaw

559-855-4519 warshaw@netptc.net

MADERA COUNTY RESEARCH

We've received an interesting offer from Anne Lombardo of the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project, a state and federally funded study on the effects of forest thinning as practiced by the US Forest Service on forest health, water and the wildlife of the Sierra. Their southern research site is near Oakhurst. Ms. Lombardo is prepared to meet with members and share information if a time/place can be arranged. For more information, check the Project website <http://snamp.cnr.berkeley.edu>. To contact Ms. Lombardo, phone (209) 966-2417 or email amlombardo@ucdavis.edu. We're hoping Madera County members will set up a meeting with Anne and let us know when and where it will be.



Calendar items

Free/open to public

January/February

*Table Mountain Smith Basin Hike, Table Top

Hike, Discovery Trail Hike

*Fine Gold Creek Hike

*Black Mountain Hike

Sierra Foothill Conservancy

Sierrafoothill.org

Feb. 9 – UC Davis Arboretum

Guided Tour with master plantsman Warren Roberts
arboretum.ucdavis.edu

March 4-6 Home and Garden Show

Fresno Fairgrounds See page 1

March 12 Windshield Wildflower tour

Pine Flat, Watts Valley

CNPS Plant Science Workshop

February 15, 2011

Instructors: Carol Witham with assistance by CNPS
Rare Plant Botanist, Aaron Sims

Course Description: Many view the central valley as a place to get through. No so for John Muir when he first visited the area in 1686 he described it as "all one sheet of plant gold". Since Muir's time, the central valley has been invaded by a plethora of European annual grasses that have displaced much of the great displays of annual forbs. However, from intertidal mudflats in the delta to the oak savanna-ed foothills, the central valley habitats are refugia for many native species including a large number of rare, threatened and endangered plants.

This one day laboratory course will focus on identification of the rare plants of the Sacramento Valley. While much of the emphasis will be on vernal pool taxa, we will also explore those of the grasslands and riparian areas. Participants will learn characters used to distinguish the rare species beyond those used in the typical dichotomous plant key. Specific microhabitat for the species will also be discussed. Participants will receive numerous handouts to aid their future rare plant survey work.

Cost: CNPS members: \$150

Non-members : \$175

For more details and registration please go to
<http://cnps.org/cnps/education/workshops/index.php>

Attention Madera County

Our Chapter, as you know, covers a lot of territory, consisting of three counties and nearly 10,000 square miles. Attending meetings and activities, many of which are in Fresno, can be difficult or a real hardship.

At our last board meeting, we discussed the fact that there are about 20 members of Sequoia Chapter, CNPS, in Madera County, living in the city of Madera and in the foothills ranging from North Fork to Ahwahnee.

We think some might welcome the chance to connect with others to share and exchange experiences, visit each other's gardens, or attend a meeting or presentation specific to your interests.

If this sounds like something you'd like to explore enough to be put in touch with like-minded members living in your area, contact Helen Shaw, newsletter editor. Phone and email address are listed with those of officers and committee chairs.

Miner's Lettuce Gourmet Soup

--Thanks to C. Lewis L. Camp, CNPS e-newsletter Dec. 2010

This soup is a great way to use lettuce in the winter! Any kind of potato and any salad greens, but I'd recommend Miner's Lettuce!

Yield: Makes 4 servings / Active Time: 25 min / Total Time: 35 min

INGREDIENTS

1 cup chopped onions, scallions, and/or shallots
1 garlic clove, chopped
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3/4 teaspoon ground coriander
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
3/4 cup diced (1/3 inch) peeled potato
8 cups coarsely chopped miner's lettuce (3/4 lb)
3 cups water

PREPARATION

1. Cook onion mixture and garlic in 2 tablespoons butter in a 4- to 5-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add coriander, salt, and pepper and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Stir in potato, lettuce, and water and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, until potato is very tender, about 10 minutes.
2. Purée soup in batches in a blender (use caution when blending hot liquids) and transfer to a 2- to 3-quart saucepan. Bring soup to a simmer, then whisk in remaining tablespoon butter and salt and pepper to taste.

Membership

Thelma Valdez

If you require corrections or additions to your membership information, contact Thelma Valdez at nmtv@unwiredbb.com
The Sequoia chapter serves Fresno, Madera, and Kings counties.



*New and Renewing Members (as of December)

Fresno County :Birrell, Carmean, Gorman, Haffner, Irvine, Loucks, Madden Library (CSUF), Martin, Merrill, Mitchell, Peterson, Seay, Sherriffs, Van Der Noordaa

Madera County: Bredon, Daley, Hartesveldt, Koshear, Richie

The IRS considers dues in excess of \$12 per year and all gifts to CNPS as tax deductible. Renew your CNPS membership online using a credit card. As an option, renew automatically year after year. It is quick, easy, and convenient, and reduce renewal mailing costs. Visit www.cnps.org and click on the JOIN button.

Vice-President Paul Mitchell has recently acquired, on behalf of Reedley College, some copies of the 2001 edition of the publication, Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California, compiled under the auspices and direction of the Rare Plant Scientific Committee, California Native Plant Society.

If some of you could use this comprehensive and informative book, a copy is available at no cost to you.

Contact Paul – paul30@comcast.net

SEQUOIA CHAPTER OFFICERS* AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Conservation	Jeanne Larson	(see Treasurer)
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Next Newsletter: February, 2011



Send newsletter corrections or suggestions to Helen Shaw at helshaw@netptc.net. The deadline for the February newsletter is Friday, February 4.



JOIN THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



RENEW

Membership includes the quarterly CNPS journal, *Fremontia*; the quarterly *Bulletin* which gives statewide and announcements of Society activities and conservation issues; and our chapter newsletter, *Carpenteria*.

I wish to affiliate with the Sequoia Chapter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Make your check payable to "CNPS" and mail with this form to:

- New Member** **Renewing Member**

- Student, Limited Income \$25
- Individual \$45
- Family, Group, or Library \$75
- Plant Lover \$100
- Patron \$300
- Benefactor \$600
- Mariposa Lily \$1500

California Native Plant Society
2707 K Street, Suite 1
Sacramento, CA 95816-5113

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, science, and conservation.



MADELEINE'S MUSINGS

Heteromeles arbutifolia

Madeleine Mitchell



The plant I've chosen to start off 2011 is *Heteromeles arbutifolia* or Toyon; the name the Ohlone tribe of Native Americans called it. It was a source of food, medicine and implements for them. It is my annual Christmas decoration for the front of our property as it faces south on the edge of the asphalt street. It takes full sun, with no water in the summer and needs little pruning. I purchased 2 plants from Intermountain Nursery about 15 years ago; they were just a few inches tall with just one stem. They are now over 10 feet tall and make a great hedge and are interesting most of the year. White flowers in spring, then berries that are yellow at first turning slowly to red in December. Now the berries are starting to turn black, as local birds don't seem to eat them. I'll cut them off later in the month as I minimally prune the plants back from the street.

Toyon grows in the foothills throughout most of California from Humboldt County and continues south into Baja. In southern California, the city of "Hollywood" was named after it, as it was thought to resemble the red-berried European holly. As with most natives, be patient for a few years. Once established you'll have an easy to care for plant you'll enjoy for years without fertilizer, pests or much pruning.

Someone else liked our plants, too. They stopped their car at the curb couple of weeks before Christmas and cut off several clumps of berries. Paul saw a car pull up as he was walking out to his truck, but the berry thief did the deed and left quickly.



Counterclockwise from top

- Dew on Alkali Sacaton
- California Wild Grape bark
- Winter sunrise through Desert Willows
- Mushrooms
- Blue Oaks at sunset
- Foothill trees in winter
- December blossom (?)

JANUARY 2011



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