



Lawns and Drought – Alternatives and Accommodations

--Helen Shaw, ed.



One rainfall season has just ended and the next season has just begun. This seems an appropriate time to take stock. I don't think it will come as a surprise to anyone that our total rainfall for the most recent season is 4.6" in Fresno, down even from a paltry 5.6" for the previous year. Compared to our normal 11.5" this is indeed something of great concern. Our chapter's territory includes Madera and Kings Counties and I'm sure their numbers are equally depressing.

With the above in mind, I invite members to share their experiences during the past few years and their plans for future years. Have you changed your practices, given longer summer weather and less rainfall? One common response has been in our approach to lawns: we are reducing the size of our lawns; removing and replacing them with more drought-tolerant plants; or planning landscaping that does not include a traditional lawn. Approaches have been varied, ranging from long-term transition a bit at a time to more drastic time- labor- and cost-intensive measures. What has worked for you? What hasn't? What would you like to do and what do you wish you had done differently? As I hear from you, I will share with the rest of our members in this newsletter. helshaw@gmail.com

See the next article for an approach being taken by Jeanne Larson, retired field botanist and one of the original members of the Central San Joaquin Valley Chapter, renamed Sequoia, to separate it from the Northern San Joaquin Valley Chapter.

Why Lawn?

Jeanne Larson

In past years when water and time seem abundant, lawn was the easiest cover for large and small areas of bare ground (think parkway or parking strips). It is a habit we need to break. Fresno is designated a desert by its rainfall, and Mediterranean by its temperature.

While being able to convert to drought tolerant plants in Lawn's place in one big project, it is possible to convert in phases. The best place to start is the parking strip, where so much water from sprinklers ends in the gutter. While digging out common Bermuda is a tough job because the roots and runners go so deep, it can be done with a long bladed spade, or a trench shovel if you are easy on the handle.

Twenty years ago, when I moved to my present location, the parking strip Modesto Ash looked healthy, but when a main branch was hit by a truck the tree split in half, as the center was rotten. That's when I decided the parkway lawn should go and I planted two Chinese Pistache, and added wood chips for cover and water retention.

Over time the whole front yard has been converted to several more trees (Desert Willow and Crepe Myrtle), and Bee Bliss Sage ground cover along the sidewalk. Shade is now becoming a little bit of a problem for the Bee Bliss, a large clump of Mexican Sage and a Cleveland Sage as they enjoy full sun even in this sandy soil.

Before the heat came on, the Common Thyme ground cover was doing well, as well as the Mexican Evening Primrose. Those areas may be better left to a new layer of chips. Almond chips are the best, and they hopefully should be good supply with almond orchards coming out.

Shade is also becoming a problem in the backyard as a Chitalpa (Chilenses x Catalpa) has become taller, however, the bed of Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) under it is thriving. The need for sunny patches for vegetables means more grass being ripped out. Fortunately, the backyard grass is dwarf Bermuda.

~~The following has been around for a while but may have special relevance this summer

St Francis Explaining Grass to God:

GOD: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But, all I see are these green rectangles.

ST. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites! They started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But, it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

ST. FRANCIS: Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it, sometimes twice a week.

GOD: They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

ST. FRANCIS: Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

ST. FRANCIS: No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

GOD: Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

ST. FRANCIS: Yes, Sir.

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

ST. FRANCIS: You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life.

ST. FRANCIS: You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No!?! What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

ST. FRANCIS: After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

ST. FRANCIS: They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

GOD: Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

ST. CATHERINE: 'Dumb and Dumber', Lord. It's a story about...

GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis



Recent and upcoming events

Native & Drought-Tolerant Landscaping

Saturday, Aug. 23, 10AM-noon

Free Workshop -Madera County Master Gardeners
Madera Community College Center

Details: <http://ucanr.edu/maderamg>, 559-675-7879 x7210

Events posted on:

[Facebook.com/Madera Master Gardeners](https://www.facebook.com/MaderaMasterGardeners)

It is with regret we learned of a recent loss.

Verna Arnest, retired biology teacher, resident of North Fork, and long-time member of our chapter died in June. She is remembered as a strong-spirited lady who was also the nicest person in the world.

JUNE '14 CHINA CREEK REPORT

Warren Shaw

Our June work party took place on a Saturday nicely cooled after a hot spell earlier in the week. We were glad of the comfortable weather because we had more hand weeding to do. After glimpsing a pretty pair of white tailed kites, we all went to work in the north area grubbing out Bull Thistle rosettes and small plants, as well as the odd Milk Thistle and Yellow Star Thistle. These plants have grown slowly and remained relatively easy to dig this year, presumably because of drought. Unhappily, we saw quite a bit of new growth in small Ailanthus trees in the area, though most of the larger trees have succumbed to the chemicals we've been feeding them for the last two years. We plan a fall campaign.

After our mid-morning break, two of us split off and walked the southeast section, where we found more YST and some Bull Thistle too big to be practical to dig (requiring 10 or 15 minutes of hard work each) and decided to leave those to spray later. However, the two of us managed to cover about half of the area before quitting time at 12:00.

We also flagged a number of Valley Oak seedlings to be caged later to protect them from the cattle.



Marestalk
Equisetum arvense

Sequoia Meeting Report

May 18, 2014 – Items discussed: Membership is holding at just under 100; QR codes for China Creek trail markers; website has been updated/expanded; fall events – Intermountain Nursery harvest Festival Oct 11&12, Plant Sale Oct. 18; possible chapter event-- October 1 Meeting prior to plant sale (Planting Natives)

Our business meetings with potluck lunches are held bi-monthly under Thelma's spreading mulberry tree. Next meeting August 17. Need direction?

nmtv@unwiredbb.com

On the way home we picked up a batch of needle grass "hay," with quite a bit of residual seed, from Thelma Valdez. Later in the week we went back to the Park and spread the hay on a barish patch, hoping the cows grazing that area would find and "plant" it for us. We also took one backpack sprayer-ful and spot-sprayed the larger Bull Thistle and YST plants noted on Saturday.

Though it never pays to get cocky, we continue to be cautiously optimistic about our weed abatement results. With some help from the drought, we really do seem to be reaching our goal of reducing at least some of our worst weeds to a point where we can manage them with hand work and a minimum of chemicals. We're also very pleased with the increase in native grasses in areas previously dominated by the various thistle species. We're also pleased to note that the cows are helping us fend off a potential new infestation of Marestalk.

Our July work Party will also be on the second Saturday of the month: the 12th, from 8:00 – 12:00. We'd love to have more help in winning the weed wars. Please join us if you can. To get to the Park, take 180/kings Canyon east across Academy to Smith or Oliver. Turn south about 1/4 mi. past the school to Rainbow and Smith. Continue south on Smith about 1/4 mi. to the Park gate. warshaw1955@gmail.com

Foothill Observations

Belinda Gilbert

The foothill colors of late June are the crisp light brown of dry annuals, olive and grey-green of foliage and the rust of Buckeye leaves, which are dormant earlier this year. Summer natives are blooming, and late spring natives have seeded, and there are summer species in bloom. Members of the family, Asteraceae are awash with bright yellow flowers. *Madia elegans*, Gum Plant (*Grindelia camporum*), and the perennial, *Balsamorhiza sagittata* are in bloom, as are pink native thistles. Farewell to Spring (*Clarkia williamsonii*) is beautifully abundant this year.

Other flowers in bloom include Wand Buckwheat (*Eriogonum roseum*), Mustang Mint (*Monardella breweri*) and Sierra Monardella (*M. candicans*), Dove Weed, (*Eremocarpus setigerus*), Spanish lotus (*Amispon americanus*), and Wallflower (*Erysimum capitatum*). Buckeye trees (*Aesculus californica*) are a mixed bag this year. Some plants are blooming in June, and some are already dormant with rust-brown leaves. The Howard McMinn Manzanitas planted around my house shed leaves, and the fruit ripens this time of year. The reddish outer bark shreds off revealing a lime green inner layer, which gradually reddens again. Each species adapts uniquely to a hot, dry season.

My pasture is a palette of grey-green again this summer. Last year, Dove Weed was the most common species, but Spanish Lotus is more abundant this summer. Less abundant in number are Woolly Blue Curls, Vinegar Weed, Spurred Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum leptaleum*) and Mimetanthe (*Mimulus pilosus*). At twilight, two bucks come out to browse the plants in the pasture. They appear to be eating the Spanish Lotus with relish.

It's the hot, dry, dormant time of year when life seems to move in slow motion. The gift of the California natives is their adaptation to this season



Western wallflower
Erysimum capitatum

Shadow of the Giants

Jane Pritchard

On May 14 Peg enthusiastically took Eileen, Aaron, and me to Soquel meadow near Yosemite. A couple days previously she had seen the meadow white with flowers of *Lewisia nevadensis* (Sierra bitter root) and *Calochortus minimus* (star-tulip). The cold, overcast day we went, pavement was wet, puddles stood in dirt roads, and rain drops still covered grass and plants. Few flowers were open so Peg was very disappointed. You could tell it would have been a wondrous sight on a sunny day. *Fragaria vesca* (California strawberry) and the violet-colored *Viola adunca* (western dog violet) bloomed under the trees at the meadow edges along with foliage of yellow *Viola lobata* ssp. *lobata* (wood violet) and *Viola sheltonii* (fan violet). There was also lots of foliage of *Goodyera oblongifolia* (rattlesnake plantain). Later we got bogged down in slick mud in a futile attempt to reach Nelder Grove campground for lunch.

However, we found *Pyrola picta* (white-veined shin leaf) which might be mistaken for rattlesnake plantain. The latter has shorter petioles, more pointed leaves, and a wider white band down the main vein of the leaf.

On the drive to Shadow of the Giants we saw red *Sarcodes sanguinea* (snow plant), orange *Erysimum capitatum* (western wallflower), white *Cornus nuttallii* (mountain dogwood), pale lilac *Iris hartwegii*, rose-purple *Dicentra formosa* with dark green bluish leaves, and spicy-smelling *Rosa woodsii* var. *ultramontana* (interior rose).

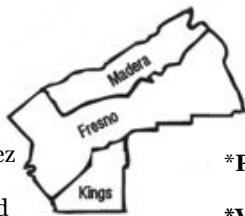
A lone *Coralorhiza striata* (striped coralroot) grew behind the outhouse beside the parking area. *Maianthemum racemosum* (false Solomon's seal) grew near *Streptopus amplexifolius* var. *americanus*. The base of each leaf sprouted a long, right-angled peduncle ending with a bell-shaped yellow-green-white flower. Streptopus means twisted foot in Greek, and the plant is named

for these peduncles. A gray *Brachymena sulcata* (rough stink bug) was sitting on a leaf but not eating caterpillars at the time. Also in bloom were the blue-purple *Lathyrus nevadensis* (Sierra Nevada pea), white *Silene lemmonii* (Lemmon's catchfly), pink *Symphoricarpos mollis* with white berries (creeping snowberry), white-violet *Hydrophyllum occidentale* (California waterleaf), *Corylus cornuta* var. *californica* (California hazel nut), fragrant *Rhododendron occidentale* (California azalea), and *Asarum hartwegii* (wild-ginger). Hartweg's ginger has a brown-purple calyx with long tapered lobes and hairy red stripes. The large heart-shaped leaves have white along the major veins. Wild-ginger was extant before insects evolved flight and is still pollinated by crawling insects. Like pipevine, wild-ginger has a long history of medical uses but can also cause problems depending on the individual and the dose.

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.



Thanks to Renewing Members

Eileen Bennett, Roland Berghold, Laura Castro, Jeff Dal Cerro, Darrel Eckenrod, Rich Gilman, Howard Latimer, John Mengshol, Marian Orvis, Karen Oulton, Dale Peterson, Lynne Rodriguez, Will Siegfried, James Snyder, Jim Tietz, Johan Van der Noordaa

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 reduces renewal-mailing costs. Visit www.cnps.org and click on the JOIN button.



Sequoia Chapter, CNPS
thanks Derrel's for their support

SEQUOIA CHAPTER OFFICERS* AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

*President	open	
*Vice-Pres.	Warren Shaw warshaw1955@gmail.com	559/451-1256 (h)
*Secretary	Marian Orvis mforvet@comcast.net	559/226-0145 (h)
*Treasurer	Jeanne Larson jrlars@aol.com	559/243-0815 (h)
Membership	Thelma Valdez nmtv@unwiredbb.com	559/323-8962 (h)
Field Trips	Jane Pritchard xxiii_xx@yahoo.com	559/7652910 (h)
Newsletter Editors	Warren&Helen Shaw warshaw1955@gmail.com helshaw@gmail.com	559/451-1256(h)
Hospitality	Madeleine Mitchell madeleine43@comcast.net	559/638-2784 (h)
Horticulture	open	
Education	Warren Shaw	(See Newsletter)
Rare Plant	John Stebbins johnst@mail.fresnostate.edu	559/297-0144 (h)
Plant Sale	Marian Orvis	(see Secretary)
Conservation	Jeanne Larson	(see Treasurer)
Directors at Large	Jim Seay Belinda Gilbert Michele LuValle	jnjseay@gmail.com belinda@sti.net luvalle@mcn.org

Next Newsletter: Sept. 2014

Send newsletter corrections or suggestions to Helen Shaw helshaw@gmail.com The deadline for the Sept. newsletter is Friday, Sept. 5



JOIN



THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



RENEW

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

I wish to affiliate with the Sequoia Chapter.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

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

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

- New Member
- Renewing Member

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.

CARPENTERIA

July/Aug. 2014



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY SEQUOIA CHAPTER

c/o Jeanne Larson ♦ 3457 Redlands ♦ Fresno, CA 93726

SAVE THIS DATE!
Saturday, Oct. 18
Plant Sale 8 AM -12

MADELEINE'S MUSINGS

Madeleine Mitchell

Paul and I took a day trip to San Luis Obispo to see a Cactus and Succulent show in late May. We then went to Los Osos Oaks State Natural Reserve, part of CA State Parks. This is a 90 acre grove of dwarfed, 800-year-old coast live oaks in an ancient dune habitat. It is located eight miles west of SLO and five miles east of Morro Bay. So I thought I'd share some photos and thoughts with the group and hope you find the time to take a walk through this centuries-old oak woodland. There are unusual varieties of plants, animals, and biotic communities. The moss-draped, fantastically gnarled trees are beautiful and we enjoyed the walk. We saw many wildflowers, and shrubs along with the oaks. If you are going to the coast this summer you might enjoy this shady retreat. The sandy trail just a mile and a half long.

Five major plant communities exist within the natural reserve. 1.Coast live oak woodland: multi-trunked trees around 20 feet high, covered in lichens and mosses. 2.Dune oak scrub: Smaller, 6-8 foot live oak trees stunted due to mineral depletion, sandy soil and lack of moisture. 3. Coastal sage scrub: Semi woody shrubs, sagebrush, black sage, holly-leaf cherry, mock heather and coast buckwheat. 4. Riparian woodland: Streamside areas of Los Osos Creek feature tree species, sycamore, arroyo willow, red willow and black cottonwood. Western dogwood and stinging nettle thrive where riparian trees are sparse. 5. Central coastal scrub: Shallow, rocky soils grow dense-crowned shrubs from three to six feet high. Sticky bush monkey flower and rash causing poison oak thrive here.

The reserve is on Los Osos Valley Road and the website for information is www.slostateparks.com.

The El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area is also nearby. Their web site is www.elfin-forest.org. We'll see that next time we are in the area.

PS. Some of the information listed was taken directly from the brochure



False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)



Rough Stink Bug (*Brachymena sulcata*)



Wild Ginger (*Asarum hartwegii*)



Common Woolly Sunflower (*Eriophyllum lanatum*)



Nelder Grove in June

Photos by Eileen Bennett



Sierra Bitterroot (*Lewisia nevadensis*)



California Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)



Western Dog Violet (*Viola adunca*)



Twisted Stalk (*Streptopus amplexifolius*)



Iris (*Iris hartwegii*)



July-August 2014 Sequoia Chapter CNPS



California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*)



Blue Curls (*Trichostema lanceolatum*)

