

# Carpenteria

CNPS SEQUOIA CHAPTER



January 2021  
www.cnps-sequoia.org

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## INTRODUCTIONS

### NEW CHINA CREEK VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

--Silvia Montoya-Gomez

I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Silvia Montoya-Gomez and I will be the new China Creek Volunteer Coordinator. Despite stepping down, Warren Shaw has promised he will still be active at China Creek.



From information management to coordinating workflows, I have a wealth of program administration experience. I grew up in a volunteer family and enjoy volunteering to support my community and learning new things. I look forward to volunteering with the California Native Plant Society and continuing the Sequoia Chapter's good work at China Creek Park.

I hope to see you all at China Creek.

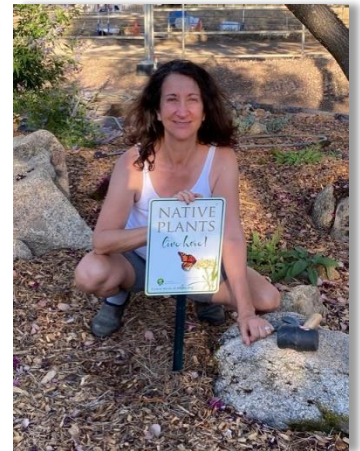


### NEW HORTICULTURAL CHAIR

--Leslie Lipton

In 2000, I awakened to California native plants while living in Los Angeles. Following their siren call to a remote, overgrazed mountain property in Kern County, I became obsessed with restoring native habitat. By 2005 the yard sang with beauty, and by 2010 it was a symphony. Wildlife of all types showed up, and my home was transformed.

After moving to our area in 2013, I went to work on my Yosemite Lakes Park (YLP) acre, now a maturing landscape of drought-tolerant, deer proof, mostly fire-safe plants that provide habitat for countless critters of all kinds.



A couple of years ago, neighbors began pulling into my YLP driveway as I worked on the garden out front. The California native sages and deergrass I planted, against our foothill backdrop of live oaks and granite boulders, caught their eye. "The deer don't eat that?" they asked. After I posted my "Native Plants Live Here" sign, I became known as "The Native Plant Lady." I've been called worse.



After an outcry from community members, and with the support of my organizing partner Jeannie Cosby, last fall I gave our first community presentation on using California native plants in YLP gardens, and our group "Native Plants Live Here" (NPLH) was born. We are currently eighty-five strong, sharing a common desire to create beautiful, sustainable gardens on our properties, often frustrated by years of gardening failures and open to a different way to garden.

(Continued on next page.)

## INTRODUCTIONS (continued)

Through meetings, classes, a website, and social media, members, the majority of whom start out wondering “what is a native plant?”, are coming to understand and embrace California native plants, and loving the results. Finally, there is hope and optimism for bringing life and color to their yards.



As your new Horticultural Chair, I embrace both our Coarsegold and Sequoia chapter missions. While introducing NPLH members up here to the work of CNPS, I hope also to provide the Sequoia Chapter with an outlet for horticultural excitement and best practices. This newsletter and the Sequoia chapter website will contain info about upcoming meetings. Please join our “Native Plants Live Here” website ([www.nativeplantslivehere.com](http://www.nativeplantslivehere.com)) and Facebook group.

Last winter a group of us installed a California native demonstration garden in our community. “Salvia Creek Garden” is a thriving exemplar of how to garden for success and habitat. It brings so much joy! We would love to have you come visit.

## TRANSITION

### China Creek Leadership Transition

-- Warren Shaw

After more than 15 years of serving as the Volunteer Coordinator of the China Creek Project, I began actively seeking a replacement this year, and at our annual volunteer meeting in November, Silvia Gomez-Montoya stepped up and said she’d like to give it a try. Silvia and I have met and discussed the duties and responsibilities of the job, and she says she’s ready. It is my intention to remain active and do whatever I can to help Silvia get off to a good start; but, I’ll also be careful not to interfere with new ideas and fresh directions as she takes over.



## IN MEMORIAM

### Messages in Honor of Thelma Valdez

#1--Warren Shaw

Thelma Valdez: a tiny woman with a million-dollar smile, warm brown skin, salt and pepper hair so thick China Creek ticks couldn’t penetrate it, an incisive wit, and a soft heart for wild things, both flora and fauna; she died of a rare form of cancer in the waning days of 2020.

Thelma had been a member of Sequoia Chapter since 1994. She served many roles in that time; among them Newsletter Editor, Membership Chair, China Creek volunteer, Chapter Treasurer, Chapter Webmaster, and — most notably — Plant Sale Coordinator. Her passing will leave a huge void in the life and functioning of the chapter, as well as in those of her family and the community.

She told me once she didn’t like most people (we were exceptions). However, her geodesic dome on five acres near the foothills east of Clovis, where she lived with her husband Nye and her aging mother, was surrounded by well-loved and carefully tended California native plants.



-Thelma at China Creek-

## IN MEMORIAM (continued)

She fostered orphaned crows and greatly admired crows for their communal nature as well as their independent spirits. She kept a dish filled with cat food in her barn for a skunk that visited regularly. She cared lovingly and patiently for rescue dogs and feral kittens, and fed clippings to the longhorn steer across the road.

She worked for many years as a technical writer for medical software, and was a board member of the Foothill Conservancy and the Clovis Community Garden, where she often presented seminars on the care and feeding of California natives. She was a fine artist, indeed, and was taking art classes right up to her last days.

Some random observations: she once worked as a cook in a restaurant in Ireland; she always thought of herself as Hispanic until DNA evidence revealed her to be mostly Native American; she was a resourceful and inventive cook, always trying new things and coming up with vegetarian variations of old classics; and, she was physically amazingly strong. Once she and I were mowing the trail at China Creek, each with a heavy power line trimmer. At the end of the day, after struggling to load mine, I went to help her, and was dumbfounded to discover she had already loaded hers.

Thelma was, in short, a unique and wonderful person. Sequoia Chapter and the community will miss her deeply.



### #2--Laura Castro

I am not going to pretend that I knew Thelma well. Most of my contact with her was through our chapter board meetings, the chapter plant sale, and email exchanges regarding the newsletter or chapter business. Indeed, she is one of those people that one wishes one had gotten to know better.

About three years ago, I had the immense pleasure of going to her home and picking a kitten from a big litter that she was rearing; they had been born strays, born under a clump of deergrass, I believe, in her back yard. I chose the spunkiest kitten, the one whose personality would complement the sluggish cat I already had. I didn't get to take the kitten home right away, no. This conscientious woman made sure that my chosen kitten got its shots and was fixed before I got to take it home. Thelma gave me a great gift in this kitten, who will always be a delightful reminder of a person I appreciated, albeit from a distance, and of, sadly, how fleeting life can be.



In June of this year, in an email exchange, Thelma let me in about her progress with chemotherapy. Even then, during what I imagine was a scary and disconcerting period in her fight to get better, her tone was upbeat. She still had the selflessness and kindness to write that she hoped my family and I were doing well during the pandemic. It never occurred to me that she could be gone six months later.

I noticed something in Thelma that you don't see in most people; there was an assertive confidence and strength that made her a natural leader, a frankness, a joyful modesty, and, in my perception, one of those brains that always has its wheels turning, as well as a fierce desire for people to show the best of themselves. I imagine that Thelma did just that in everything she did...including during her fight with cancer...showed the best of herself to both humans and God's other creatures.



Photo by Thelma Valdez

Alas, one of Thelma's last contributions was a lovely piece she wrote about Jeanne Larson, who we unexpectedly lost in early September of 2020. Thelma made many wonderful contributions to the newsletter, including the beautiful native plant photo pages she used to put together. Besides taking fantastic photos, she had a talent for drawing in her readers; there was a certain charming whimsy in her style and the way she wrote about her garden. In her very last submittal (October 2020), Thelma's last line read, "My stands of deergrass are in bloom right now and this morning I stood in the early morning sun to watch and listen as bees crawled up and down the new blossoms packing on the pollen."

We grieve the loss.

# CHINA CREEK REPORT

## November 2020 Work Party

--Warren Shaw

Our November work party, the last of 2020, was different. We asked the volunteers to choose an area of the Park they hadn't had a chance to see before, to take advantage of the beautiful fall day, and to go explore, taking a shovel in case they found weeds that needed attention, but focusing mainly on the features of the chosen area.

At 10:00am we had our usual break with coffee and muffins, followed by a discussion of the future of the China Creek Project, including a transition to younger, more vigorous leadership. More of this in a later report.

The year 2020 has been a lousy year in many respects, with a pandemic, a nasty, divisive election campaign, disastrous fires, civil unrest, a brutally hot summer, etc.

Surprisingly, it's been a good year for the Project. We were awarded a grant from the Rose Foundation that we used to purchase our own mower for the trail and a shipping container



Photo by Mary Layman

to store the mower and other tools and supplies. We were given space on Park neighbor, Kathy Yamamoto's, property on which to set up the container, we received donations of tools from Kathy, Hank and others, and we have been able to make a good start on organizing the container. Our volunteer participation has increased (no doubt in part as a result of intern Kelly Damm's publicity efforts) and various people (too many to list here, but we'll share their names as reorganization is completed) have stepped up to take on various responsibilities. In addition, we were able to form a planning committee of qualified people to develop a scientific plan for future work in the Park, and we expect to have at least a draft plan to start the year in 2021.

Further, though we had to skip work parties for several months due to Covid-19 restrictions early in the year, we still made serious inroads on the weed population, maintained the trail, and kept up with our usual work in general. Our increased volunteer participation certainly helped with this.

The November work party concluded with our annual "Thank You!" lunch, which we managed safely by having volunteers order from a photographed menu at break time. Then we called it in and picked it up. With plates on our laps, we ate in socially distanced chairs as we rested pleasantly under the oaks. It was a great way to end a great year (in the Park at least).

Our first work party of the "Spring Semester" is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, January 23 from 9am to 12pm (please note "winter" hours). Please, give some thought to joining us in getting the year off to a good start.

## Upcoming Webinar Classes

### •January 12, Life Linked to Land Tuesday, 7:00 – 9:00pm

Location: Zoom Webinar; by Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter

- Learn about the benefits of locally sourced plants with an overview of Theodore Payne Foundation's Local Source Initiative and Long Live LA Conservation Seed Bank.
- Presentation includes profiles of some of LA/Santa Monica plant species and how they can be incorporated into urban landscapes.

Information: <https://lasmmcnps.org/>

### •January 14, Charles Birnbaum, Falsa: Interviewed by Larry Weaner 1:00 – 2:30pm

### •January 19, Restoring Native Habitat One Schoolyard at a Time Tuesday, 7:00 – 8:15pm

### •January 26, Research Into Landscape Tuesday, 1:00 – 4:30pm

### February 2, Navigating Race & Inclusion in Community Gardens Tuesday, 12:00 – 1:30pm

Location: Zoom Webinar; by New Directions in the American Landscape



Photo by Larry Weaner

Cost: Free to \$78, depending on course.

Information: <https://learning.ndal.org/courses/>  
& <https://ndal.org>

### •February 3, Fire and Ecosystem Resiliency Wednesday, 7:00pm

Location: Zoom Webinar; by Milo Baker Chapter

- Presentation will provide a brief survey of some of the ecological effects of vegetation fires, in particular the renaissance of Sonoma County native populations following recent burns.
- Learn about the pros and cons of past management practices.

Information: <https://mountlassen.cnps.org/>

## Membership

Thanks to new and renewing members.

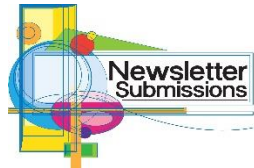
If you require corrections or additions to your membership information, contact Cherith Merson at echerith@gmail.com.

The Sequoia Chapter serves Fresno, Madera, and Kings counties.

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](http://www.cnps.org) and click on the JOIN button.

### Next Newsletter: February 2021

Send newsletter suggestions to Laura Castro at [lacastror@outlook.com](mailto:lacastror@outlook.com). The deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is **Friday, January 29, 2021.**



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<b>Rare Plants Coordinator</b>		vacant
<b>President</b>		vacant
<b>Hospitality</b>		vacant



## JOIN THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY RENEW

Membership includes the quarterly CNPS journal, *Fremontia*; the quarterly *Bulletin* which gives statewide news 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, Fixed Income ..... \$25
- Individual ..... \$50
- Plant Lover ..... \$120
- Supporter ..... \$500
- Patron ..... \$1,000
- Benefactor ..... \$2,500
- Steward ..... \$5,000
- Guardian ..... \$10,000

**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*

January 2021

## CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY SEQUOIA CHAPTER

c/o Laura Castro ♦ P.O. Box 414 ♦ Fresno, CA 93708

### *MEMBER REPORT*

#### **Plant Sale 2020**

**--Reagen O'Leary**

The online plant sale was a success considering the circumstances! We were able to get 266 native plants to 38 good homes in the Central Valley (as far south as Visalia) and surrounding foothills. Sales were down from our usual annual in-person sales during the Water Wise Plant Sale at the Clovis Botanical Garden (CBG). Even though we sold less plants, we had fewer overhead costs which made our fundraising power almost as good. Our proceeds primarily support our management and restoration actions at the China Creek Park in Centerville.

The new owners of Intermountain Nursery provided 65% of our inventory. We could not have pulled off this sale without Chris and Bev's patience and understanding as we fumbled through the online platform. We also sold 28% of the plants from Thicket & Vine in Coarsegold. Alex was extremely helpful, and he was able to provide us native plants that we have never offered before. We were also able to sell member grown plants (7% of our sales), which provided a direct donation to our Chapter. Thank you, John, Brooke, and Thelma! Speaking of Thelma, she provided invaluable help that only comes from the depth of experience of being the Plant Sales Chair for over a decade. Thank you CBG for letting us use your facility as the pick-up location. We also had a small but great crew of CNPS volunteers to help us sort the orders and ensure the customers received their plants. Finally, we could not have done this without the help of Maya Argaman, the CNPS Horticulture Outreach Coordinator from CNPS Headquarters. Maya was able to be the technology Guru that we so needed.



Photo by Janet Claassen