



China Creek Update

Warren Shaw



Weeds, weeds, weeds! We devoted almost all our time and energy to pulling, hacking, hoeing, and otherwise doing everything we could think of to discourage, disenfranchise, and discomfit weeds -- especially exotic thistles -- and most especially Yellow Star Thistle, during our February workday. We also cleaned up around the kiosk, replaced the paper sign at the gate, and the post for station one, and checked on the effects of our spraying in the southeast section (so far, so good).

We were, at first, unhappy to discover the garbage can missing, but then delighted to discover it had been carted off by a neighborhood girl to be painted. Our delight has faded somewhat with today's news that the can, with a beautiful portrayal of the big dead oak in the southeast section of the Park, had been caved in by vandals. Sigh!

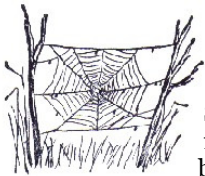


Next Workday:

However, on Saturday, April 17, from 8-12, we'll forge ahead, despite the efforts of our local knuckleheads, continuing hand weed work in the southwest section, and perhaps, some touchup spraying in the the north and southeast sections.

It should be a gorgeous spring day, and a great time to fight the good fight. We'd love to have your company. Call (855-4519) or email <warshaw@netptc.net> for directions or other information.

Observations



Rain and sun and rain and sun., and more rain. Who among us doesn't appreciate the rains brought by an El Niño year? Warren Shaw says that at about 2,000 feet in the foothills all the blue oaks have leafed out now but not yet acquired their "blue" summer color.

The effect, combined with the burgeoning annual grasses, is a green that, in bright sunlight, is so intense it almost hurts your eyes.

Buckeyes have made green "candles" which will, no doubt, pop out with luxuriant, sweet smelling white blossoms in two or three weeks. He saw the first Ethurial's Spears last week and California poppies are still bright in patches, Blue Dicks are abundant, but popcorn, redmaids, and fiddleneck are fading away. Some redbuds are still full of blossoms; others are fading and leafing out. Despite a very early start, many species seem to be running late this year, and he expects the foothills to have pretty things happening well into June.

It's always a fun surprise when a native I planted the prior year seemed to be doing fine through the hot summer but didn't grow much above ground. So I accepted that it would just never grow to be large. And then after a year (or two!) of getting its roots established, along comes a good rainy season and all that underground growth is ready to produce an overnight success.

Allowing a plant time to develop a strong root system is so important. And as quickly as time passes, your plant will be established before you know it.

-- Editor

Water-wise Plant Exchange Saturday, May 8, 8 a.m. to noon

Gardeners are encouraged to donate water-wise plants, cuttings, bulbs, and seeds. Stop at the CNPS table Fresno State Horticulture Greenhouses, CSUF, 3150 E. Barstow Ave. just east of Chestnut Avenue in Fresno.

Chronicling Windshield Wildflowers

Jane Pritchard

No matter how early I get up, I manage to fool around and be late. So I decided to eat breakfast at the Blossom Trail Café. I got there early and chose a seat with a view of the door so I would see Helen when she arrived. After a while I saw the waitress talking with someone whose elbow looked like Helen's. We had both missed seeing each other and joined up at my table because it was covered with books. The food and coffee were very good.

A five-car procession went east on Belmont to enjoy the wildflowers on a gorgeous day. At our first stop (mile 11.4) Belmont had become Trimmer Springs Road just before it winds along the Kings River. Bush lupines were loaded with lavender blooms. Trees were valley oak, interior live oak, blue oak, and foothill pine. Closer to the river grew western sycamore, cottonwood, willows, and a ponderosa pine whose seed probably had floated down the river from a higher elevation. This proved to be an inquisitive and interested group. All those eyes saw lots of plants to ask about – including the top of a pine in the distance. I didn't know what it was and think it is an introduced hybrid. I have sat under it in Winton Park watching the river and swallows.

Second stop was mile 12.0. We pulled over to the left side of the road by the white cement barricade. Blazing star had buds ready to open - no flowers yet. Inkspots had large jewel flowers coming up the stalk that is capped with dark purple. Yellow-orange flowers of western wallflower had a delicate sweet smell.

Breakfast coffee started pressing. We took advantage of the restrooms at Doyle's Market (mile 12.5). The ground was covered with pineapple weed which is prevalent in disturbed areas like many introduced plants. However, pineapple weed is native to western North America. The mashed flowers smell like Scotch tape when it first came out.

We passed through what was left of the town of Piedra. No trace is left of most of the buildings that used to be there. Next stop was mile 14.9 near a creek bed filled with river rocks and caespitose poppies. The roadside and fields were covered with introduced vetch, blue dicks, needle grass, popcorn flowers, fiddleneck, birds eye gilia, California thistle with flat-topped, rose-colored blooms, and white-netted foliage of milk thistle (Mediterranean native used as a coffee substitute). Across the road we saw the little plantain (*Plantago erecta*), pepper grass, shepherd's purse, goldback fern, and poison oak.

We continued on and stopped part way up the first big hill at mile 16.3. The bank rises above the road on the right and drops off on the left. The shaded moist bank on the right had baby blue eyes, Tom cat clover, Chinese house foliage, fringe pod AKA lace pod, pretty nemophila (*Nemophila pulchella* – nemophila means shade loving, pulchella means beautiful), common madia, shooting star, foothill saxifrage, woodland star, whiteleaf manzanita, plectritus, wild cucumber AKA man-root, and spider lupine (so named because the leaflets are very narrow). Buckeyes along the other side of the road were not blooming yet.

Driving on we passed yellow flowers on single stalks of woolly mullein and several wild cucumber vines climbing over 20 feet into trees. Some years the hills are covered with poppies - not this year. We stopped by Pine Flat Lake just past the second cattle grate at mile 21.3 and crossed the road to the south-facing bank. *Clarkia* foliage is getting ready to say farewell-to-spring. *Claytonia parviflora* is a miner's lettuce with strap-like basal leaves, pink stems and foliage, with numerous short stems terminated with a white flower. Three members of the pea family were *Lotus humistratus* with fuzzy leaves and yellow flowers, *Lotus purshianus* (Spanish clover) with pink-white flowers, and bushes of *Lotus scopularis* with yellow flowers. Soap root foliage was only 10 inches long at most. This is a good year for *Pseudobahia*

heermannii which has lobed, alternate leaves. *Pseudobahia* resembles goldfields which have entire, opposite leaves. *Yerba santa* is not blooming yet but there is lots of birds-foot fern, coffee fern, blue-headed gilia, and chia.

Mile 23.1 had great photo ops of banks covered with bush lupines and other flowers with the lake in the background. Sulfur-flowered pea and balsam root had started appearing on the more shaded left side of the road. As we continued down the road, red buds appeared here and there.

At mile 26.2 we turned left on Maxon where the picnic area and restrooms are soon to be reopened, crested the hill, and stopped farther down by the cattle grate at mile 28.4. The shaded, north-facing area was carpeted with introduced *Geranium molle* with round, scalloped leaves and several plants of native *Geranium carolinianum* which is larger and has deeply dissected leaves. *Filaree* AKA storksbill belongs to the geranium family. All previous stops had lots of filaree mainly *Erodium botrys* which has purple edges on just one sepal. All filaree in this area is presumed to be introduced although its seeds were found in early adobe. Other flowers we hadn't seen were buttercup with its shiny yellow petals, woodland star, honeysuckle vines, yellow foothill violets (back of two petals are purple), and chickweed. There were more shooting stars, baby blue eyes, fringedpod, pretty nemophila, and rebud. Back uphill a short distance grow a whiteleaf manzanita with white flowers instead of the usual pink and a Sierra gooseberry bush loaded with spiny berries.

We drove on down the hill, along Maxon creek, and turned right at mile 31.9 for lunch at the house of Shaw. The lane up to their house is beautiful. New flowers we saw were buckbrush, pretty face, and the green root parasite butter-and-eggs. All areas inside the house look out on fantastic views. The living room and veranda face the south and west hills covered with yellow *pseudobahia*. Kitchen window on the east has a busy bird feeder outside. North kitchen window is level with a flat-topped granite outcrop with birds feeding on it.

For those who don't know, Helen is a great cook (who had help from friends bringing desserts, cheese, and bread). Everybody picked their view and companions and wolfed down tasty taco soup, lentil soup, organic tortilla chips, Jarlsberg cheese, French bread, homemade cookies and brownies, iced tea, lemonade, and hot coffee. I tried to be mannerly in the company of others but more soup got on my shirt than in my mouth. They peeled me away from the food, dragged me down the stairs, and threw me back into the car.

We turned right at the main road and passed lots of introduced Himalayan blackberry. The last official stop was mile 35.2 at the top of the hill. The 4-petaled yellow hill sun cup (*Camissonia graciliflora*) must like serpentine soil. It grows on Tivy and has a large flower relative to the short, fuzzy foliage. The group prowled around awhile taking in the surroundings and for most that was the end of a lovely wildflower tour and lunch.

Jim Seay and I had joined Helen in her car so we enjoyed each other's company back to the starting place. First corner down from the top at mile 35.3 had foothill lomatium and white to light purple shooting stars called mosquito bills AKA sailor caps. Along the creek at the bottom of the hill were tree tobacco from South America with last year's seeds on it and spicy-smelling spice bush full of old pods. At mile 38.8 we turned left by the corral onto Watts Valley Road. Haze had cleared since morning so the wonderful scenery had the dreamy blue mountains capped with snow in the background.

Be sure to join this wildflower tour next year. Very little walking is involved. It would be more than worth your while even if you never got out of the car.



Quercus lobata

Membership

Helen Shaw

If you require corrections or additions to your membership information, contact Helen Shaw at helshaw@netptc.net

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

*New Members and Membership Renewals (March)

Fresno : Copp, LuValle, Miller, Poole, Pritchard
Madera : Hughes, Rivers
Out of Area : Woernle (Indiana)

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*Vice-Pres.	Paul Mitchell paul30@comcast.net	559/638-2784 (h)
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*Treasurer	Jeanne Larson jrjlars@aol.com	559/243-0815 (h)
Membership	Helen Shaw helshaw@netptc.net	559/855-4519 (h)
Programs	Jane Pritchard xxiii_xx@yahoo.com	559/323-8253 (h)
Newsletter Editor	Thelma Valdez nmtv@unwiredbb.com	559/323-8962 (h)
Hospitality	Madeleine Mitchell madeleine43@comcast.net	559/638-2784 (h)
Horticulture	open	
Education	Warren Shaw	559/855-4519 (h)
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Bee-friendly things you can do...

California is home to 1,600 species of native bees. Most are solitary in nature, do not build hives, and do not produce honey or wax for human consumption.

However, native bees are 200 times more efficient at pollination than honey bees! According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, pollinating an acre of apples requires 60,000-120,000 honey bees; the same area can be pollinated by 250-750 mason bees. Native bees can play just as vital a role in agriculture as they do in the ecosystem.

You, the home gardener, can support and rejuvenate the bee populations in your neighborhood. Dr Gordon Frankie of the University of California, Berkeley, has been studying bee habitats, and his recommendations are:

- Eliminate the use of pesticides
- Plant a diversity of nectar- and pollen-rich plants (10 or more species)
- Mass each plant in patches 1 square meter or larger
- Choose plants that bloom in succession over the seasons
- Avoid excessive manicuring
- Set aside some bare patches of soil for nesting

(excerpt from CNPS E-News – March 2010)

Next Newsletter: May 2010



Send newsletter corrections or suggestions to Thelma Valdez at nmtv@att.net. The deadline for the May newsletter is Friday, May 7.



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: _____

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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

April 2010



CALIFORNIA NATIVE
PLANT SOCIETY
SEQUOIA CHAPTER

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

Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora.
For a membership brochure call Helen Shaw at 559/855-4519.
CNPS Web site: www.cnps.org.

FEATURED CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT

Fremontia

Madeleine Mitchell

This month my Fremontodendrum is in full bloom. It's probably a hybrid between mexicanum and californicum, named 'California Glory' since I got it from a nursery. It has survived several years with some water in the summer from other nearby plants, but I lay down a thick mulch of bark to try and keep the roots dry. The Fremontia is an indicator species of desert chaparral communities. It's also found in eastern Arizona and south into Baja. The two names, Fremontodendrum and Fremontia, are both acceptable. The common name is "Flannel Bush".

Although it has a reputation for being drought tolerant and needing no supplemental water, I saw it growing in rainy England. There were two plants in full bloom in May 1997 on either side of a 2-story house and they reached the roof! According to most research I've done, it is usually a shrub from 3-1/2 to 13 ft. tall. As a tree

it could reach 30 ft. Plant it away from pathways because the hairs on the leaves can be irritating if they get on your skin.

Another interesting tidbit is that the leaves typically remain on the plant for 2 years. In years of above average rain the leaves flush out larger than normal, and then are dropped in the fall.



Water-Wise

PLANT EXCHANGE

Don't miss a free give and take of drought-resistant plants for your Fresno-friendly garden.

WHERE: Fresno State Horticulture Greenhouses
California State University, Fresno
3150 E. Barstow Ave. just east of Chestnut Avenue in Fresno

WHEN: Saturday, May 8, 2010; 8 a.m. to noon

GARDENERS ENCOURAGED TO DONATE
WATER-WISE PLANTS, CUTTINGS, BULBS AND SEEDS.

LIMITED NUMBER OF FREE WATER-WISE PLANTS AVAILABLE.

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City of Fresno,
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CSUF Horticulture Unit

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www.fresnowater.org 621-5480

APRIL 2010
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 SEQUOIA
 CHAPTER
 CNPS



Clockwise from top left

- Buckbrush (*Ceanothus*)
- Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)
- Blennosperma and Popcorn Flower
- Lichen
- Pacific Coast Iris (*Iris douglasiana*)
- Nodding Needlegrass (*Nassella cernua*)
- California Poppy (*Echscholzia californica*)
- Manzanita berries (*Arctostaphylos pungens*)
- Bicolor Lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*)

