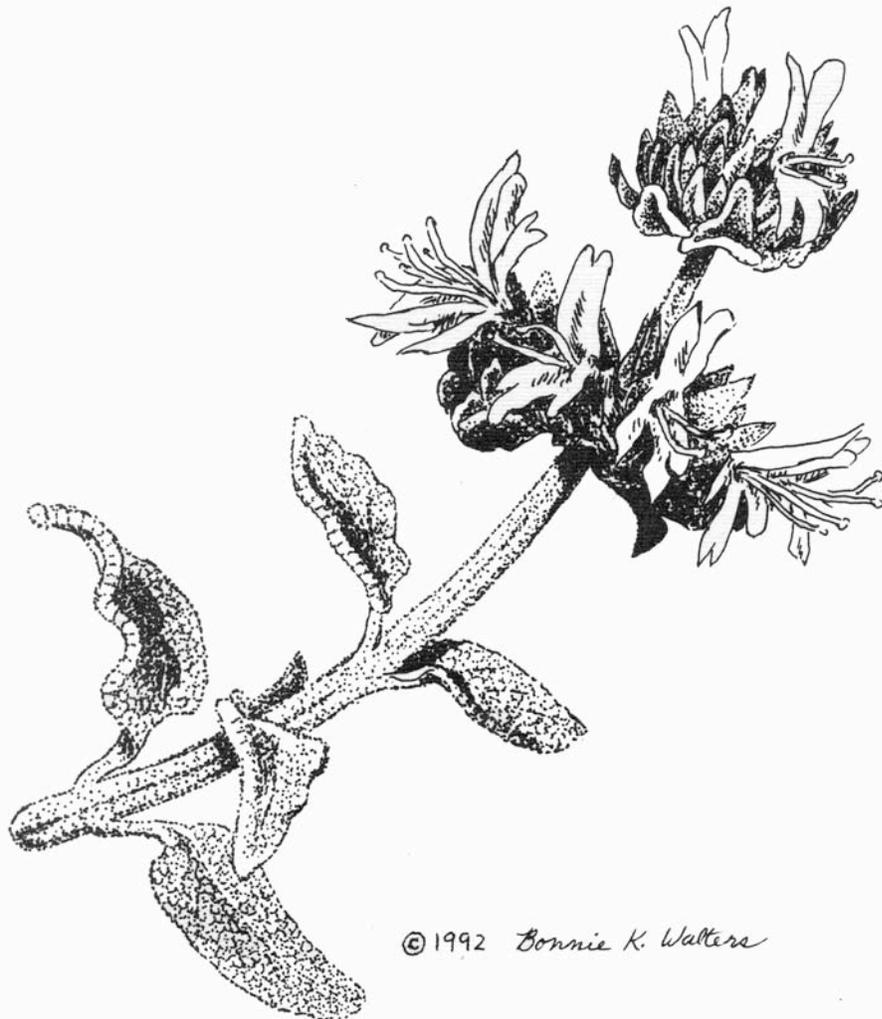


OBISPOENSIS

Newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the
California Native Plant Society for San Luis Obispo
and Northern Santa Barbara Counties



FEBRUARY 2007

Purple Sage (*Salvia leucophylla*)

The plant profiled for the cover is a shrub that is found in the southern portion of our Chapter area. It is the purple, chaparral, or San Luis sage (*Salvia leucophylla*). Bonnie drew this plant for a banquet program cover back in 1992. I have no record that it was ever used as a cover for the *Obispoensis*. I'm inclined to think she did too good a job for it to be buried forever in my files.

One of the interesting observations about purple sage is how little is written about it in my reference books. They say that it is common on well-drained, low-elevation slopes from Southern San Luis Obispo County to Orange County. Some recent references give the range from Monterey County south into Baja. I can add that it is especially common in the mountains surrounding the Cuyama Valley. I suspect this discrepancy is due to a broadening of the definition of purple sage. It occupies the same ecological position as the much more wide spread black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) found commonly throughout our area. Purple sage differs from black sage primarily in leaf color as well as flower color and size. Whereas black sage has greenish leaves (appearing dark from a distance), purple sage bears leaves that are white due to their being covered with white pubescence. Black sage has smallish white flowers whereas purple sage usually produces larger purple ones. I assume the purple in the common name refers to the flower color, but I have not been able to find any confirmation of this. The genus name, *Salvia*, is Latin for "to save" and refers to the reputed medicinal uses of the true sage (*Salvia officinalis*) which is also the "sage" used as a spice in our kitchens. The specific epithet, *leucophylla*, means white (*leuco-*) leaf (*-phylla*) and this obviously refers to the unusually white color of its leaves.

The only types of reference books in which I consistently found mention of this common shrub were floras and gardening books. The floras gave the range and technical description while the gardening books mostly mentioned it was suitable for the garden. I have had one in my garden for quite a few years now. I have to admit the particular one I have produces nice white leaves on a more or less mounded shrub. It rarely flowers and when it does its flowers are smaller than many I've seen on field trips through the Cuyama Valley. Lee Lenz in his *Native Plants for California Gardens* (1956) says the species is best used in a native plant garden as a background plant. This because it becomes large (mine is only ca. 4 feet in diameter and 3 feet high because it is growing in shallow, poorly drained adobe soil. A second problem with purple sage is that it either loses most of its leaves during the summer or they become small or both. In contrast, Bornstein, Fross, and O'Brien in their 2005 book, *California Native Plants for the Garden*, indicate that this

is one of the easiest sages to grow. Almost all of my references mention that this species hybridizes with black sage and Cleveland sage. Many of these hybrids (especially the ones with the Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*)) have become selected for the horticultural trade. These tend to have very large and extremely numerous flowers. I'm sure several of them are for sale at our Chapter's annual plant sale.

Dirk Walters, illustration by Bonnie Walters

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Obispoensis is published October through June except January. Items for submittal to *Obispoensis* should be sent to rhotaling@charter.net. The deadline is the 10th of each month. Botanical articles, news items, illustrations, photos, events and tidbits are welcome!

Visit the websites:
www.cnps.org &
www.slo-cnps.org



Bishop pine

President's Message

Hello SLO Chapter members: I want to thank you for electing me president and I look forward to serving you in 2007. I also want to thank all the chapter board members and committee chairs that served in 2006 and will serve in 2007, whose help really make this job more fun than work. I know there will be a lot of fun field trips ahead and a few special events. I'm sure it will be a great year. See you at the banquet. Lauren Brown.

PS: CNPS has a new website - If you have internet, please check it out.

Conservation

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. During December the SLO Board of Supervisors did not bow to heavy pressure from agriculturalists to gut the trails plan out of the General Plan's Park and Recreation Element, but decided that it would not implement any legally binding protection for oaks. I think we can expect a continuation of the developer friendly three vote, environmentally friendly two vote split on the Board during the next year. Things have definitely become greener in Atascadero, which has just completed a GIS based survey of its native trees, and has some strong ordinances in place that may be so easily be worked around as they were on the old council. We still don't know what is going to happen in the Carrizo Plain, as there is no evidence yet that a new BLM administration in Bakersfield will pay any more attention to science than they have in the past. As Neil Havlik, ex CNPS chapter president and chair of the Carrizo Plain Advisory Committee pointed out in a letter to that Committee in 2004, the amount of residual dry matter that was being left on the range was totally insufficient to support wildlife. Our chapter will be working to make BLM pay attention to its mission, and not just to grazing interests. BLM has never provided any science to defend its current grazing practices. As we go to press on this letter, the EIR on Santa Margarita Ranch is out. I need a panel of people who know where the resources are on the ranch to help me review it... all I have is an old constraints analysis from a decade or more ago. Please draw my attention to any conservation issues that are being ignored by our chapter, and also consider helping out and let me know where you think your strengths might lie. David Chipping

Field Trips

by Mardi Niles

Saturday, February 24, 10:00 a.m. Field Trip to Coon Creek in Montana de Oro State Park to see the Giant Trillium. Barb Renshaw and Mardi Niles will lead this trip. Those coming from the SLO area will meet at SLO Vets Hall at 9:00 a.m. To get to

Coon Creek take the Los Osos Valley Road and travel through the town of Los Osos into Montana de Oro State Park. We will meet at the parking lot at the south end of Pecho Road. There are restroom facilities here. Wear sturdy shoes, dress in layers and bring water. You may want to bring a lunch to enjoy at the picnic tables at the parking lot when we return from Coon Creek. For additional information contact Barb Renshaw at 534-1865 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

Saturday, March 3, 9 a.m., Late Winter Burton Mesa Chaparral Field Trip at the La Purisima Mission:

The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) will hold its annual winter field trip to the Burton Mesa Chaparral (BMC) on the La Purisima Mission grounds Saturday the 3rd. Meet at the east end of Burton Mesa Blvd. in Mission Hills at 9 a.m. for a chance to see the early bloomers and interesting scenery. To reach Burton Mesa Blvd., get on Highway 1 north of Lompoc. At the signal where Highway 1 turns down hill towards Lompoc, take Harris Grade Road north to Burton Mesa Blvd., and turn right (east). For more information call Charlie Blair at 733-3189.

CNPS Desert Field Trip – March 11-16

Mark your calendars for the week after the CNPS Chapter Council meeting weekend (March 9-10) at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens. Steve Hartman will be leading a week-long trip to the far southern California deserts including Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Algodones (Imperial) Sand Dunes, and the Chocolate Mountains vicinity. While big annual wildflower displays are unlikely, the trip will take us to rare trees and shrubs and unusual habitats. Destinations Sunday-Wednesday are for all vehicles. Camping and travel on Wednesday night, Thursday and Friday require off-road 4-wd vehicles. Morning meeting points on Sunday through Wednesday will be established, so persons wishing to stay in hotels can do so. For those attending the Chapter Council meeting, a car caravan will leave RSABG at 10 a.m. on Sunday. Reservations required! Contact Steve by email at naturebase@aol.com or leave a message at (818) 881-3706. Additional details will be sent to you once you make your reservation.

Meetings

San Luis Obispo Chapter Meeting: Thursday, February 1, 2007, 7:00 p.m. "Butterflies and Plants" given by Bill Bouton. Meet at the Veterans Hall, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit 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 and conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal, *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin*, which gives statewide news and announcements of the Society activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



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Photo by Mark Brunschwiler

Mushroom collectors on the Fungal Foray field trip at the Fiscalini Ranch, Cambria, Dec. 16, 2007