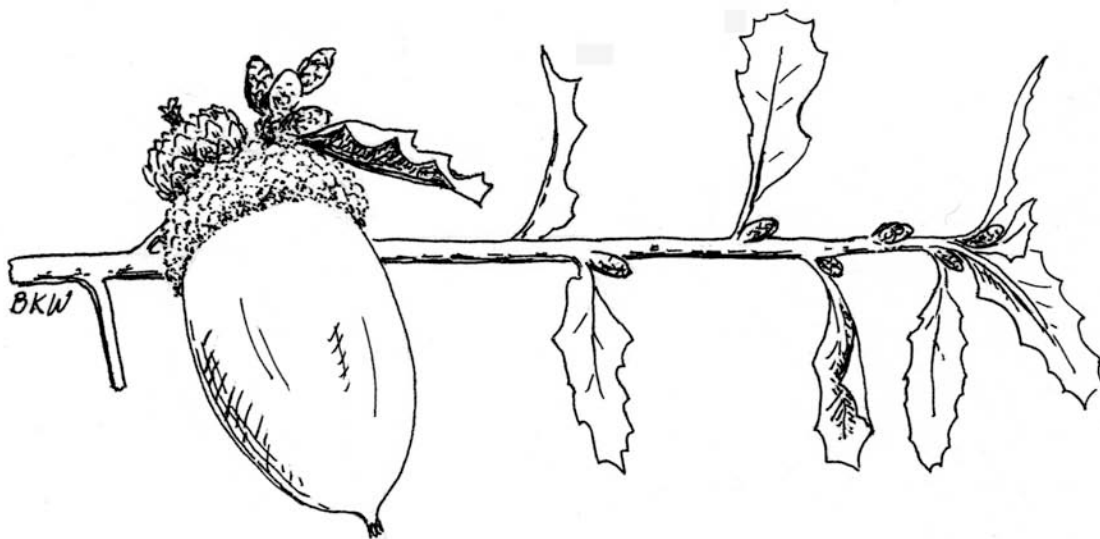

Obispoensis

Newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society



MARCH 2009

Common Scrub Oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*)

Bonnie's cover drawing is of the scrub oak that always seems to be in full fruit around Morro Coast Audubon's Condor Lookout at Hi Mountain when they hold their open house in the fall. I have attended sporadically over the years and every time I have, the resident scrub oaks have been covered with acorns. The acorns are large, ca 1 in. (25 mm) long by ½ in. (15 mm) wide. The base of the acorn often seems to be constrained by the thick, warty cup. The fall leaves are a shiny dull green instead of the glossy bright green the identification manuals indicate they should be. I'm putting this up to surviving a long, hot dry season in chaparral. The leaves are also usually few in number at that time of the year so I'm also guessing that they are somewhat summer or drought deciduous. I know, the books say that this scrub oak is evergreen. But, as Bonnie's drawing shows, there are still enough leaves on the twigs to be classed as evergreen.

Why did I say, "this scrub oak"? If you look up scrub oak in Hoover's *Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County* or any other identification manual of similar or earlier vintage they would say we have only two or sometimes three scrub oaks in our Chapter area. All would have listed leather oak (*Quercus durata*) and scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*). Others, but not Dr. Hoover, would have listed desert oak (*Quercus turbinella*). I'm guessing Dr. Hoover felt quite strongly that the desert oak was just a minor variety of the scrub oak because this is one of the few cases where he wrote two quite long paragraphs justifying it. In the current *Jepson Manual*, not only is the desert oak recognized but three other "scrub" oaks have been separated from the old "*Quercus dumosa*". Currently, the name, *Quercus dumosa*, is not applied to any of our area's scrub oaks, but is re-

stricted to plants growing in extreme southern California into Baja. Its common name is now Nuttall's scrub oak. The leather oak is still here and growing happily on its serpentine soils. As you might guess, desert oak (*Quercus turbinella*) is alive and well in the desert mountains of extreme eastern San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties. Our most common shrub oak, not growing on serpentine or on desert slopes is *Quercus berberidifolia*. This species has also inherited the common name, scrub oak. It is not only our most common scrub oak but also is the most wide ranging scrub oak in the state. If you think that this is a lot of ink to be wasted on a solved taxonomic problem, I might point out that not only do all of these species intergrade among themselves where their ranges overlap but they also interbreed with closely related tree species. I guess I'm justifying someone feeling uncertain about their identification of any scrub oak off of serpentine.

I will make just a quick note on Native Californians' use of the scrub oak acorns. Most references discuss the importance of acorns as a dietary staple among California tribes. But almost all of them restrict their discussions to the tree species. Our recent banquet speaker, Jan Timbrook, in her book, *Chumash Ethnobotany*, acknowledges the large acorns of this species were gathered and used. My guess is that use of scrub oaks didn't get much attention because it would not be as obvious that they were being collected. You wouldn't need the 0.30

long poles to knock the acorns down. After all, most of the scrub oaks are less than six feet tall. Their acorns could just be picked off.

— Dirk Walters

Illustration by Bonnie Walters

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Our annual banquet was a great success, with an excellent presentation by Jan Timbrook on Chumash ethnobotany. I would like to thank everybody who contributed to making the evening a success. Heather and Jim Johnson were given the Hoover Award for their outstanding contribution to our chapter, and the statewide CNPS Chapter Council recognized David Krause for his long service to the chapter. Our board will be examining the possibility of doing something different for a future "yearly big bash" that might better enable people on a limited budget to attend, and I would be eager to hear your ideas.

I want to urge all of our members who are "north of the grade" to come to our next meeting which will be held in the Atascadero library. We would like to see some of you who would not otherwise make the long trek over the Cuesta Grade. If we have a big turnout, we will consider having more meetings in your area. If you had come to our February meeting, you would have heard an excellent talk on Bristlecone pines by Jim Bishop.

CONSERVATION NOTES

Our Board still has to meet with North County Watch regarding our support of their law suit against SLO County for their actions on Santa Margarita Ranch. I would suggest that members respond positively to any fund appeals from North County Watch. I have responded to the Los Osos Sewer Draft EIR, in particular to statements that Morro manzanita might be conserved through transplantation. Unfortunately everybody is trying to rush things in order to be "shovel-ready" for economic recovery money, and there seems little hope of dovetailing the project with the now-stalled Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan. I took a tour of Laetitia Winery to evaluate the landscape, and they seem to have been proposing changes that improve the project, but which are not described accurately in the Draft EIR. The original DEIR stated that as many as 300 oaks could be removed to make way for the Agricultural Residential Cluster and a changed configuration in their winery operations, and it is uncertain as to where they would put the oaks. To add to the confusion, County Engineering stated that they were considering using the winery as a mitigation location for the many oaks being cut for the Willow Road interchange project in Nipomo. It is a tangled web they weave. David Chipping

Hoover Award

The Hoover Award is presented annually to a recipient that has made significant contributions to our local CNPS chapter and the furthering of California's native flora. This year it is our privilege to present the Award to Heather and Jim Johnson.

Heather and Jim moved to this county about 10 years ago. In short time, they became acquainted with San Luis Obispo's "organizational landscape," transferred their CNPS membership to our chapter, and jumped right in. Their mark on our chapter has grown steadily through the years.

Heather is a California native, raised in the Central Valley by parents who were founding members of their community Sierra Club chapter.

The family spent summers backpacking in the Sierras. As a 1st grade teacher for 35 years, her lesson plans were designed to instill a love of science and nature in her young students. She was twice named the California Teacher of the Year.

Jim is from Kentucky. Early in his career he was actively involved with Scouting, and then eventually joined IBM.

His skills were recognized and valued, leading to promotions and transfers, and an eventual relocation to California.

After raising their blended families in the Morgan Hill area and thinking they might be ready for a change, they moved to San Luis Obispo. It is a homecoming of sorts, as Heather's family has ranched in the county, and still has a place in the Bee Rock area.

A deep love of books, our native plants, and that which is special about California and its history, is on display every time our sales table is open for business. That is no



Heather and Jim Johnson

accident. Heather searches to bring us books that are unique to our interests. She shares her enthusiasm and in-depth knowledge with everyone who comes to the table. Sales contribute significantly to our chapter support.

Jim has the monumental task of getting that incredible inventory of books, cards and T-shirts, tables and weather protection loaded and delivered to the sale points. In addition, his expertise with all things technical has been a boon for us. He is now our Web page master, and chairs both the Photographic Committee and Publication Committee

With Heather's knowledge and artistic vision, and Jim's attention to detail, the local chapter continues to blossom.

We are honored that these fine people are a part of our chapter.
—Linda Chipping



Cynoglossum grande

What Are You Missing in the North County?

We take them for granted, but others around the world consider them a rarity. Come for an evening full of color – courtesy of our native wildflowers. The topic of the monthly **Chapter Meeting** of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is "Wonderful Wildflowers of the North County" by retired Cal Poly Professors David Chipping and Dirk Walters at the **Atascadero Library**, 6850 Morro Road (Highway 41), on Thursday, March 5, 2009. The social mixer starts at 7:00 p.m. followed the program at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free.

The program will be a photographic tour of beautiful and breathtaking wildflower locations in the North County with identification of some of the most common plants. Learn what plants are suited to our climate and the benefits they provide.

To aid guests on their own explorations, "Wildflowers of the Carrizo Plain Area" and "Wildflowers of Highway 58" by Cal Poly Professor Malcolm McLeod will be offered for sale along with a vast array of other plant books. Proceeds benefit CNPS-SLO.

Field Trips

Saturday, February 28, 9 a.m., Late Winter Burton Mesa Chaparral at the La Purisima Mission. Meet at the east end of Burton Mesa Boulevard in Mission Hills at 9 a.m. for a chance to see the early bloomers and interesting scenery. To reach Burton Mesa Boulevard, get to SR 1 north of Lompoc. At the signal where SR 1 turns down hill towards Lompoc, take Harris Grade Road north to Burton Mesa Boulevard and turn right (east). For more information call Charlie Blair at 733-3189.

Saturday, March 21, Hike to Coreopsis Hill led by Lauren Brown, Dirk Walters, and other local botanists. If you are in the SLO area or points north, we will meet at 8:30 AM at the SLO Vets Hall then head south (see directions below). The hike will begin about 9:30 AM and will be a casual walk through the dunes to the top of Coreopsis Hill. This is a moderate hike, about 3 hours round-trip. Dress in layers, bring water and snacks, and try to have your "Dune Mother's Wildflower Guide" by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip.

Directions from the north: Take Hwy 101 south from SLO. Turn right onto Hwy 1 at Pismo Beach. Continue southward to Oso Flaco Lake Road, turn right and proceed to Beigle Road (look for a chain link fence and gate). We will be able to park along the fenced road (USFWS right-of-way). The gate will be closed and locked while we are on the hike.

Direction from the south: Take 101 north to Santa Maria and take the Main Street exit toward the town of Guadalupe. Turn right onto Highway 1 and head north to Oso Flaco Lake Road (about 3 miles north of Guadalupe), turn left onto Oso Flaco Lake Road and proceed to Beigle Road. For more information call Lauren Brown at 460-6329.

Saturday, April 4, The Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek. Meet at the SLO Vets Hall at 8:30 a.m. and Santa Margarita Park Ride area off Hwy. 58 just east of Hwy. 101 at 9:00 a.m. This is the monthly meeting for April and will be led by David Chipping and Dirk Walters. We will car caravan from there making the first stop at the Santa Margarita Park, where restrooms are available. Traveling along Hwy. 58 we will be making frequent stops to look at wildflowers and significant plant communities. We will walk along Shell Creek Road looking at flowers and visiting spots with shell fossils that gives this area its name, Shell Creek. The morning part of the trip ends with lunch, usually sitting under a large tree in a field of wildflowers, where the informal April meeting is conducted. In the afternoon some people may choose to continue traveling to other parts of the east county, where there have been reports of good wildflower displays. If you are driving be sure to start the day with a full tank of gas. Bring water, lunch, dress in layers and don't forget your "Wildflowers of Highway 58" plant guide by Dr. Malcolm McLeod or plan to purchase one on the trip for \$10. For more information call Dirk Walters at 543-7051, David Chipping 528-0914 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

Sunday, 5 April 5, CNPS and Sierra Club Spring La Purisima Burton Mesa Wildflower Walk. Meet at the La Purisima Mission Parking Lot, corner of Purisima and Mission Gate Roads at 9 a.m. for this annual spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. This may turn out to be a fairly good year for wildflowers, annuals as well as shrubs. Optional afternoon tour. Sturdy shoes, lunch & liquids, camera and binoculars advised. For more information, call Charlie at 733-3189 or Connie 735-2292.

Plant Identification Classes

D.R. (Doc) Miller and Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve will be bringing you a series of plant identification classes in 2009 to help you understand enjoy the wonderful plant world around us. These classes will also be a great tool for viewing the annual Cambria Wildflower Show on April 25 & 26, 2009.

The class will start Saturday morning, March 7, 2009 and continue every Saturday at the same time until the end of March. All classes are from 10 a.m. until noon. You will need to attend all classes.

If you have been to the Cambria Wildflower Show or on one of Doc's many Wildflower Identification Walks on the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, you know how he brings the subject alive! If you haven't seen Doc in action, this is your chance to become enchanted.

These classes are free (but feel free to leave donations for materials and continuing educational programs if you like). Space is limited to 25 MAX for these classes and... reservations must be made by calling our office at (805) 927-2856 or return e-mail . You will be signed up on a first come first served basis.

The class itinerary is as follows:

March 7 - How to Identify Plants

Lecture: Reasons for using common and Latin names; The terms related to flowers; The terms related to flower stalks; The terms related to stems, leaves and plant form; Terms for fruits and seeds.

Lab: Collect and press plants; Using tools to examine plants; applications in examining flowers and plants.

March 14 - How to Key Plants

Lecture: Using manuals and floras; Nomenclature and classification; Using a dichotomous key.

Lab: Keying plants in the field; Collecting plants for identification; Collecting plants for herbariums.

March 21 & 28 - Getting to Know Plant Families

Lecture and Lab: Monocots and Dicots; Ferns and Conifers; Families often encountered in our area - 25 out of more than 400.

Adopt a Plant (or what do squids and plants have in common?)

by Elsayh Cort, Alta Peak Chapter

During the recent (fantastic) Statewide Conservation Conference I was strongly impacted by the simple question asked by Jack Laws in his keynote presentation at the banquet: When did you first fall in love with nature? For a long time CNPS member, this could have seemed like a rhetorical question....but maybe not. As I was driving home from Sacramento south on HWY 99 (past Turlock where I was born and where, in the 1950's, I could swing in my Grandfather's old canvas hammock from his navy days, going high up in one direction to see a large expansive view of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and swinging in the other direction to clearly see the Coastal Mountain Range, all from the backyard) I thought a lot about this question.

More about this falling in love with nature a bit later.....

I began to envision a little "project" to offer to the members of my local CNPS chapter, one where they would be encouraged to adopt a natural place, to visit it seasonally and observe its natural process, to learn about the plants growing there, to bring their kids, to take photographs and to send in reports that could be put in the Alta Peak Chapter newsletter. Even though many of our chapter members work professionally out in the field, most do it occasionally while trying to maintain busy and somewhat urbanized lives. I hoped that this idea would morph into encouraging members to have some "personal" time with the plants which have called California home longer than we have.

Then....last week I finally took the time to look up a website that I had been directed to many months ago (this was for other endeavors in my professional life) and I found myself "Squidoo'd." Some of you may know about this, as it has been around in the cybersphere for several years. Squidoo is a free-service, people-run search engine; individuals can create their own "lens" or website, without needing any particular website software loaded on their computers. The steps are easy to use, and the modular format for developing the lens is phenomenal. The "lens" is their compilation of information about any particular subject or notion (it really is much, much more). You can read about the people behind squidoo itself at

<http://www.squidoo.com/pages/about>; it was founded by Seth Godin. (www.sethgodin.typepad.com)

So what do squids and plants have in common?

For me, this is answered with---their generosity! And, their breathing room!

They are both prolific with producing seeds and exquisite diversity and beauty as they blossom and spread their roots.

And what is this Adopt a Plant notion?

The vision is for people to record and share their "personal contact" with plants, hopefully, native plants in particular. Using Squidoo, as both launching pad and home base, a lens can be created about a particular plant. Or several lenses can be created about particular plant communities and their plants. Information can be shared that is unique to the individual's perspective, botanical, and not necessarily scientifically oriented, more about the person and the plant. I call it "giving a plant a voice."

The details about the Adopt a Plant Project are at <http://www.squidoo.com/adoptaplant>, and I have created 50 plus lenses, including one for each state. For instance, California has its own platform for Adopt a Plant at <http://www.squidoo.com/adoptaplantCalifornia>. There is a hub lens at <http://www.squidoo.com/adoptaplantUSA>. And also a lens for native plant or wildflower loving artists at <http://www.squidoo.com/adoptaplantBotanicalArt>.

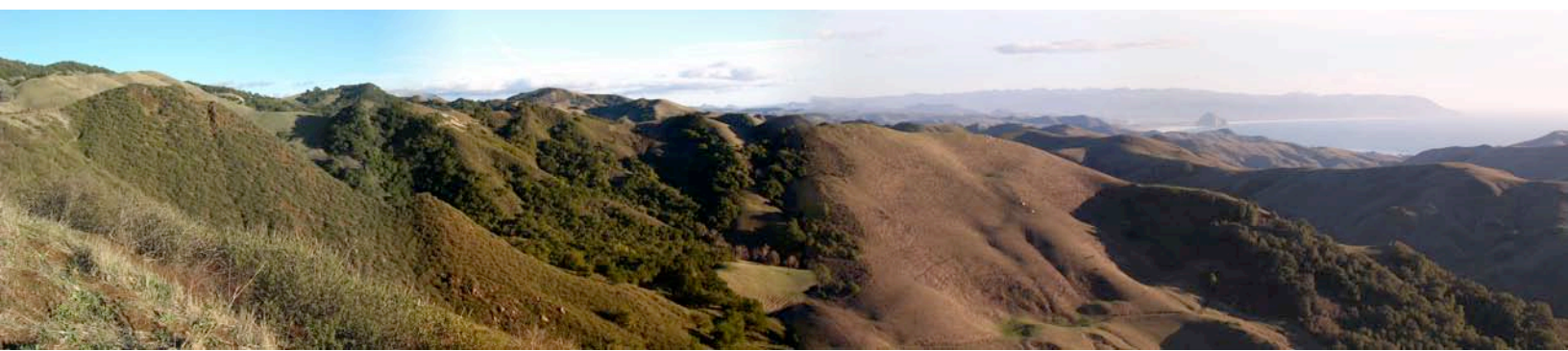
There are only two things to do to get started and join the Adopt a Plant Project:

1. Go outside and strike up a conversation with a real living native plant. Spend some time in its neighborhood.
2. Turn on your computer and go to <http://www.squidoo.com> and click on the blue button that says "Get started!"

When your plant lens is made, send it to the Adopt a Plant main lens, and it will be added to your state's Adopt a Plant list.

Better still, take a young person with you to meet the plant and create a lens with a child!

Oh, and one last thing, here is a short account about when I fell in love with nature...<http://www.edgealmanac.wordpress.com>



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 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 activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



San Luis Obispo Chapter of the California Native Plant Society

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Yellow Label Is A Reminder To Renew

If your name on the label on this newsletter has been highlighted in YELLOW, it is because our records show that your membership has expired. We hope that you will take the time to renew. Your membership supports our chapter efforts in the conservation of native plants and educational activities, an important voice for preservation of native flora for generations to come. Thank you.

Join Today!

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

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