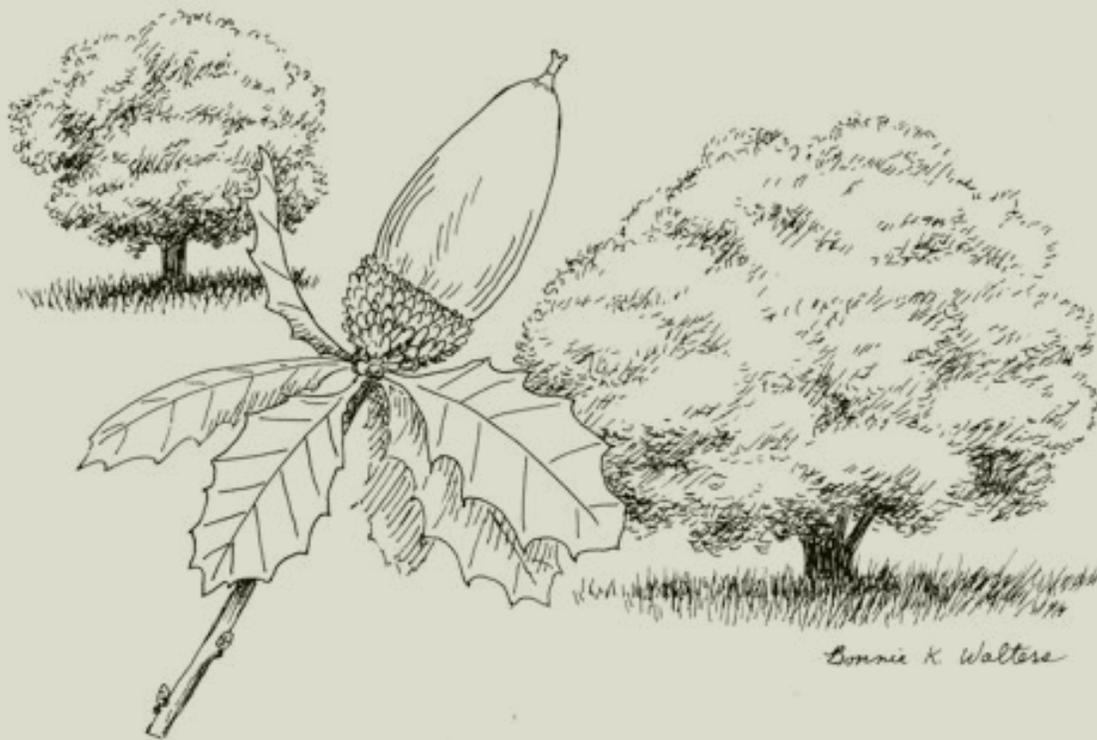


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# Obispoensis

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

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March 2013

## Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*)

Bonnie's drawing on this cover of the *OBISPOENSIS* includes an acorn, a couple of leaves and a two individual blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) trees from Shell Creek. This species of oak is extremely common in a vertical band through the center of our Chapter area. It is most common east of the Santa Lucia crest and west to the San Juan River drainage. It occurs only occasionally near the coast where it is replaced by the coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*). In the Carrizo Plain area the Tucker oak (*Q. john-tuckeri*) replaces it. I suspect all of us who know the tree know it as blue oak. Its common name refers to its bluish green deciduous leaves and/or its pale gray bark. Other names I've found include iron oak, mountain white oak, or mountain oak. The light blue/gray color is particularly evident when compared to evergreen oaks such as live-oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*, interior live oak (*Q. wislizeni*) and gold cup oak (*Q. chrysolepis*), all of which live within or near the blue oak range. But remember, both leaves and bark are quite variable in color based on where the tree grows. Leaves and bark are lighter (i.e., more gray or blue when the tree grows in open groves on sunny south and west facing slopes and darker and greener where moisture is present such as north and east facing slopes). Blue oaks prefer well drained soils so they tend to be found on foothill slopes surrounding California's Central Valley. Yes, blue oak is endemic to California, which means that it is found naturally only within the political boundaries of California.

A great deal is known about the ecology of the blue oak. So much that it is difficult to choose what to emphasize in a general piece such as this. When I did a web search of *Quercus douglasii* a fantastic tell all forest service website headed the list. The web address of this site is <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/quedou/all.html>. One thing I will mention about the web site is that the small amount of stuff I knew already I noted was correct. This leads me to conclude that the vast amount of detail I didn't know is also true. One item worth mentioning is the ground cover of herbs Bonnie has drawn around the base of the oak trees. The species found in this area within the drip line of the tree's canopy are quite different in composition and abundance from the species outside the drip line. Several hypotheses have been proposed for this phenomenon. First, the deep roots of the oak bring up nutrients from deep in the soil where they are below the reach of the shallower-rooted herbs. Because the leaves are a "leaky" system, some of the water soluble nutrients get deposited on the surface of the leaves where they are washed off and drop to the soil under the tree. It has also been noted that during the hot parts of the day, cattle seek shade under the trees. While there, they deposit undigested or unabsorbed nutrients under the tree. Either way, it is hypothesized that there is higher nutrient availability under the tree's canopy than outside it.

I will make just a quick note on native California peoples use of the blue oak acorns. All writers discussing California native ethno-botany acknowledge that acorns of this species and most other oak species were gathered and used. In a list of acorns used by the Native Californians that I found on the internet, blue oak tops the list. Essentially all references refer to it as producing the "sweetest" acorn. I assume that means it has the best flavor, which should mean it has the lowest tannin content. Tannins are complex chemicals that are not only bitter tasting, but also interfere with digestion by creating blockages in the digestive tract. Since tannins are water soluble, they are removed by leaching. Native Californians usually leached acorn meal by placing it in a basket and then placing the basket in running water. I've heard people ask where they found the water for all the required leaching. Today, if one wants to eat acorns, one must use treated tap water. That would prove to be quite expensive. One must remember that pre-European Native California populations were relatively small and scattered. There was no Mexican or European style field agriculture (except within the Colorado River Valley) in California. There was habitat manipulation as was discussed by our recent banquet speaker, Kat Anderson, but the smaller population and low impact vegetation manipulation would mean that most streams would flow longer into the dry season and be less polluted than we now find them today. They could simply have been able to put their acorn meal filled baskets into any nearby water course with no ill effect. ✨ Dirk Walters, illustration by Bonnie Walters

## President's Notes: Our Past Year in Review

Every year the Chapter President has to deliver a "Chapter Report" to the state Sacramento office, and in doing so I am amazed at what we have accomplished.

We brought you eight program speakers, half of which came from outside the county. New this year were the three very successful plant mini-workshops before the main program in May, June and December. Each meeting started with a social time and excellent refreshments.

Two scholarships of \$500 each were awarded to Cal Poly students through the chapter's Malcolm McLeod Scholarship program. The Los Osos Middle School's 7th grade science education native plant propagation and planting program is run and coordinated by our Board member. Plants were provided for Audubon's Sweet Springs Nature Preserve restoration.

We had an incredible twenty field trips during the year, which requires the planning, coordinating and publicizing efforts of a board member. These have given members and the public the enjoyment of beautiful floral discoveries in this county and neighboring ones. CNPS volunteers had booths at Earth Day, the Cambria Wildflower Show, the Santa Margarita Wildflower Festival and Paso Robles

Festival of the Arts. A group has worked with the Chimineas Ranch Foundation in planting a native plant garden.

Add to that the time taken by volunteers at such events as the plant sale and banquet, the behind-the-scenes work that goes into newsletter production and distribution; the continual updating and information provided on our web site; the financial management by our treasurer, and works by committees such as Conservation and Horticulture. Our sales selection of nature books is one of the best in the county, if not the state.

In short, volunteers make the chapter. To help things along for 2013, we have received a generous gift from Mid American Solar and Topaz Solar Farms to help our operations.



*Cardamine californica*

CNPS is a wonderful organization. Thanks for being a part of it. Now let's hope the Carrizo Plain gets some rain. ✨

David Chipping

## Chapter Meeting

Thursday, March 7, 7:00 p.m. Atascadero Library, 6850 Morro Road (Hwy. 41 West), Atascadero.

Bruce Delgado on the Flora and Fauna of Fort Ord National Monument, with special attention to management and restoration issues.

Bruce is a California native, born in 1961 and raised near Los Angeles. He graduated in 1990 from northern California's Humboldt State University and received the Senior Man of the Year Award for his volunteer campus and community recycling leadership while a student. Bruce has worked on Fort Ord as a botanist for the Bureau of Land Management since 1993. In 2007 Bruce was awarded California's Land Manager of the Year Award by the California Invasive Plant Council. He is currently in his 15th year as chair of the Invasive Plants Committee for the Monterey Bay Chapter of CNPS. Bruce's experience has given him an insider's look at Fort Ord's botany, ecology, and reuse issues and brings a deep understanding of Fort Ord's issues. Bruce is also serving his third term as Mayor of the City of Marina, where he promotes a conservation-friendly agenda for the city and he is currently serving on the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Bruce's presentation will include slides and discussion of the rare and diverse flora and fauna of Fort Ord, habitat restoration, sheep grazing for biological benefit, wild pig removal, maritime chaparral fire ecology, and recreation opportunities and public access issues.

## Conservation Report

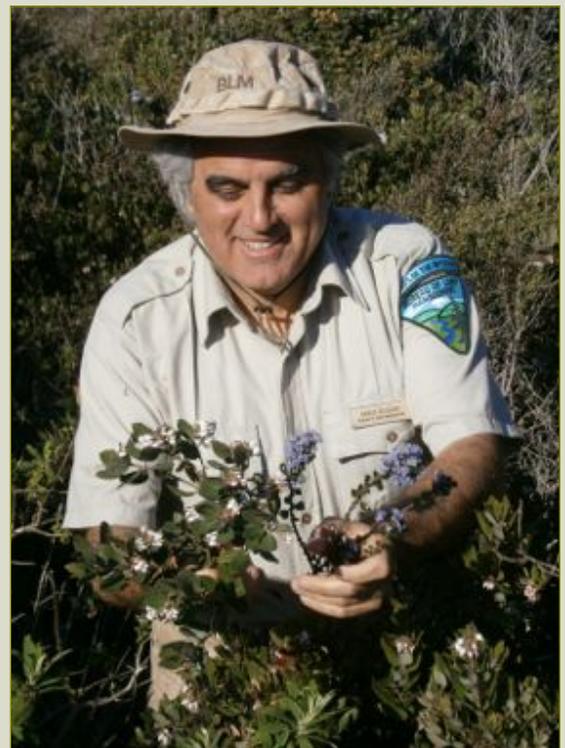
CNPS will be keeping a careful eye on westward expansion of oil fields in the central valley onto the eastern slopes of the Temblor Range, and possibly into Carrizo Plains National Monument. We are working to find out where oil leases remain active in the monument, as leases valid when the monument was created are still able to be worked. No new leases can be created, and we have not heard of any incursion at this time.

We are reviewing expansion of security fences at Camp Roberts SATCOM site, which will require 40 foot clear zones with roads, fences and lights, just like the border. One concern will be populations of *Chlorogalum reductum* (amole) that exist on the base.

Two of our chapter members met with Los Padres National Forest and we are advancing cooperation plans on rare plant management issues at Red Hill Road (*Chlorogalum* again) and the serpentine flora of West Cuesta Ridge.

As you may read elsewhere in the newsletter, the plant pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* has shown up in the waters of San Carpoforo Creek, and thus is possibly active in nearby vegetation. As the active infection agent in Sudden Oak Death, this is of great concern to us, as hitherto the disease been absent in SLO County. As it in the Big Sur area, I guess it was only a matter of time. ✨

David Chipping



Bruce Delgado

## 2012 Hoover Award Matt Ritter

The Hoover Award is given to members who have made an exceptional contribution to the local chapter, and is selected by a committee of past awardees. Our 2012 recipient is Dr. Matt Ritter.

Matt joined the chapter shortly after arriving at Cal Poly to teach botany. He was assigned to teach a course on California native plants and their communities to prospective elementary school teachers. Finding the subject fascinating, and needing a teaching aid, he wrote and photo illustrated the picture book *Plants of San Luis Obispo: Their Lives and Stories*. He encourages his students to attend our Chapter meetings in the many botanic courses he teaches, and instills in many an appreciation of both native flora and field work.

Early on Matt accepted the Chapter vice-presidency, which is a difficult and time consuming job as it encompasses the role of program chairman. It is Matt we have to thank for the high quality of our speakers, and the large number who have come to us from outside our county. These speakers, including himself, have made several fine presentations.

Our wealth of speakers comes in part because Matt is highly regarded in the academic community. He is a contributing author to the second edition of *The Jepson Manual*, and to the Flora of North America project. He is also editor-in-chief of *Madroño* (the journal of the California Botanical Society). Matt was a Kenan Fellowship awardee at the National Tropical Botanical Gardens, and teaches for the Organization of Tropical Studies in Costa Rica. As well as authoring numerous academic papers, his book *A Californian's Guide to the Trees among Us* has national distribution.



Matt Ritter and Dirk Walters

Matt has lead several field trips into our native habitats, grasslands and urban treescape. Following the tradition that a CNPSer is only truly happy when their face is buried in a plant key, he and Dr. Keil have run pre-meeting keying exercises that have been enormously popular. He chairs the City of San Luis Obispo Tree Committee.

The Chapter has long supported a student scholarship program. Matt volunteered to look after the program, advertising for students. He upgraded the acceptance criteria and maintains oversight. Recipients have presented their work at our meetings.

— Dr. Dirk Walters: Chair, Hoover Awards Committee

## 2013 Annual Community Award

The Nipomo Native Garden was honored with the CNPS annual Community Award at the banquet. Formed in 1993, their Volunteers have enriched our community through the restoration and development of a beautiful 12 acre Nipomo Mesa native plant garden. This award honors their commitment and stewardship to the preservation and enjoyment of California's native flora. Larry Vierhelig presented the award to Cindy Jelinek and Charlie Gulyash. See related article in our February 2013 newsletter.



Larry Vierhelig, Cindy Jelinek and Charlie Gulyash

# Field Trips

**Saturday, March 16, 2013, Annual Hike to Coreopsis Hill**, sponsored by CNPS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Dunes Center; led by Lauren Brown, Dirk Walters, and other local botanists. The hike will begin about **9:30 a.m. (please plan to arrive between 9:10 and 9:30) at Beige Road** 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 have your “Dune Mother’s Wildflower Guide” by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip. For more information call Lauren Brown at 460-6329 or 570-7993. **Heavy rain cancels this trip (light rain, bring appropriate clothing).**

If you are in the SLO area or points north, we will meet at 8:30 a.m. outside the SLO Vets Hall then head south (see directions below).

**Directions from the north:** Take Hwy 101 south from SLO. Turn right (west) at the new Willow Road off ramp (Exit 180). Proceed west on Willow Road for about 4.3 miles, to Highway 1. Turn left (south) on Highway 1 and proceed for 2.7 miles, to Oso Flaco Lake Road. Turn left (west) on Oso Flaco Lake Road for 2.5 miles. Look for a 6 ft. tall wire mesh fence and galvanized steel gate.

**Directions 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 2.5 miles to Beige Road (on left).

**Parking:** We will have people posted at the entrance of the USFWS fenced road to direct parking. The gate will be open by 9:10 and closed at 9:30. Please be on time as this gate will be locked during the hike. The Oso Flaco Lake State Park lot is another  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles west of Beige Road, if you need to use a restroom before the hike (there are none along the hike route). Parking along Oso Flaco Lake Road is hazardous and should be avoided. Note: Pets, tobacco products, or alcohol are not allowed on the Refuge, including the parking area. Pets may not be left in cars in the Refuge parking area.

**IN CASE OF RAIN:** There will be a presentation at 10 a.m. at the Dunes Center on “Plants of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes.”

**Saturday, March 2, 2013, 9 a.m., Late Winter BMC Chaparral CNPS field trip at the La Purisima Mission:** The California Native Plant Society/ Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society will hold their annual winter field trip to the Burton Mesa Chaparral (BMC) on the La Purisima Mission grounds Saturday the 2nd. Meet at the east end of Burton Mesa Boulevard

(1550 E) in Mission Hills at 9 a.m. for a chance to see the early bloomers and interesting scenery. To reach Burton Mesa Boulevard, go 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 9 Coon Creek burned area.** Meet at the Coon Creek Parking Lot, Montaña de Oro at 9:30 a.m. Walk to the end of Coon Creek and return via Rattlesnake Trail. 4-5 miles with several hundred feet vertical climb. Rain cancels. David Chipping leader.

**Saturday, March 30, 8:30 a.m., Reservoir Canyon and Bowden Ranch:** Moderate hike through wooded Reservoir Canyon and then over the backbone ridge for a fine wild flower display on serpentine soils, ending at the High School. Meet at the eastern corner of SLO High School parking lot near corner of Johnson Ave. and San Luis Drive. A few cars will caravan hikers to trailhead in Reservoir Canyon (first right turn off north Hwy 101 after leaving SLO). Hike is five miles, elevation gain of 1000 feet, total time of 3.5 hours. Once completed, owners of cars parked at the trailhead will be driven back to retrieve their cars. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers for the weather; a hat and sturdy shoes is advised. Info.: Bill Waycott, 459-2103 (bill.waycott@gmail.com). Rain cancels.

**Saturday, April 6, 2013, Malcolm McLeod Annual Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek** co-lead by Dirk Walters and David Chipping. This is our monthly meeting for April. Meet at the SLO Vets Hall, 801 Grand Ave. (corner of Grand & Monterey Street) at 8:30 a.m. and/or Santa Margarita park and ride at 9:00 a.m. Bring your “Wildflowers of Highway 58” plant guide by Dr. Malcolm McLeod or plan to purchase one for \$10 on the trip. For more information call Dirk Walters at 543-7051 or Lauren Brown at 438-4645.

**Sunday, April 7, 2013, 9 a.m., Spring La Purisima Burton Mesa Wildflower Walk:** Meet at the La Purisima Mission Parking Lot, corner of Purisima and Mission Gate Roads (2295 Purisima Rd. Lompoc) at 9 a.m. for this annual California Native Plant Society and Sierra Club spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. This is turning out to be a fair 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 at 735-2292

## Save the Dates: Sudden Oak Death Blitz - San Luis Obispo May 3, 4 and 5 (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), 2013

Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a serious exotic disease, is threatening the survival of tanoak and several oak species in California. Currently SOD is found in 14 coastal California counties, from Monterey to Humboldt. Researchers have discovered that *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes SOD, spreads most often on infected California bay laurel leaves. Some management options are available, but they are effective only if implemented before oaks and tanoaks are infected; hence, timely detection of the disease on bay laurel leaves is key for a successful proactive attempt to slow down the SOD epidemic. The purpose of the SOD-blitz is to inform and educate the community about the disease and its effects, get locals involved in detecting the disease, and produce detailed local maps of disease distribution. The map can then be used to identify those areas where the infestation may be mild enough to justify proactive management. A community meeting/training session will be held on a Friday evening; followed by collection of leaf samples by

volunteers on Saturday and Sunday. Samples and accompanying forms are then turned in at a central location Saturday and Sunday evenings. Additional information will be included in the next newsletter, or you can visit the website: <http://www.sodblitz.org>.

Training - Friday, May 3, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

SLO County Department of Agriculture  
2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo, CA

Collecting – Saturday and Sunday, May 4 and 5 (Locations TBD). All of the materials necessary for the training and the collecting over weekend will be provided.

If interested, please contact: Lauren Brown –  
[lbrown805@charter.net](mailto:lbrown805@charter.net) or (805)460-6329

Thank you, Lauren  
Chair Invasive Species Committee  
CNPS, SLO Chapter

## Greetings San Luis Obispo Chapter of CNPS!



I am currently the Graduate Student Representative for the California Botanical Society, and we are celebrating 100 years of the Society with a weekend of events April 12-14, 2013. I invite you to join us for the entire Centennial to celebrate our shared history and look ahead to the future. I would like to particularly highlight the special Centennial new membership

offer in the California Botanical Society for current CNPS members!

Part of this exciting centennial weekend will include the 24th Graduate Student Meeting of the California Botanical Society on April 14, 2013! The call for abstracts closed yesterday and I am especially proud of the diversity of research that will be presented at the Graduate Student Meeting. The Graduate Student Meeting is part of a larger Centennial Celebration occurring on April 12-14, 2013 to mark the 100 years since the founding of the California Botanical Society. Friday April 12 includes field trips to Mount Diablo and Mount Tamalpais, and the opening mixer in the historic Senior Hall at the University of California, Berkeley. Saturday is the Centennial Symposium “Botanical Frontiers: Past and Future” with invited speakers in the Valley Life Sciences Building at the University of California, Berkeley, followed by the Annual Banquet at the Hotel Shattuck in Berkeley.

Sunday is the 24th Graduate Student Meeting in the Valley Life Sciences Building at the University of California, Berkeley.

I encourage you to join or renew your membership in the Society with your registration for the Centennial! There is a special Centennial offer for current CNPS members who are becoming new members of the California Botanical Society this year. All members receive the quarterly peer-reviewed journal *Madroño* and receive full publishing page rates (5 per year) in *Madroño* - which is an excellent place to consider publishing results of botanical research! Students and members of the California Botanical Society receive discounts on tickets and registration for all Centennial events. Invite your friends! Sponsorship opportunities for the Centennial and gift memberships for students can also be donated with your membership renewal. Student membership is only \$27 for the calendar year. The student ticket prices particularly to all of the Centennial events have been subsidized by the California Botanical Society to encourage opportunities for training the next generation of botanists, and to participate in a thriving botanical community at this early stage in student academic growth. Online registration will be available until March 31; late registration prices go into effect in April.

Genevieve K. Walden  
Graduate Student Representative  
California Botanical Society  
<http://www.calbotsoc.org/symposium.html>

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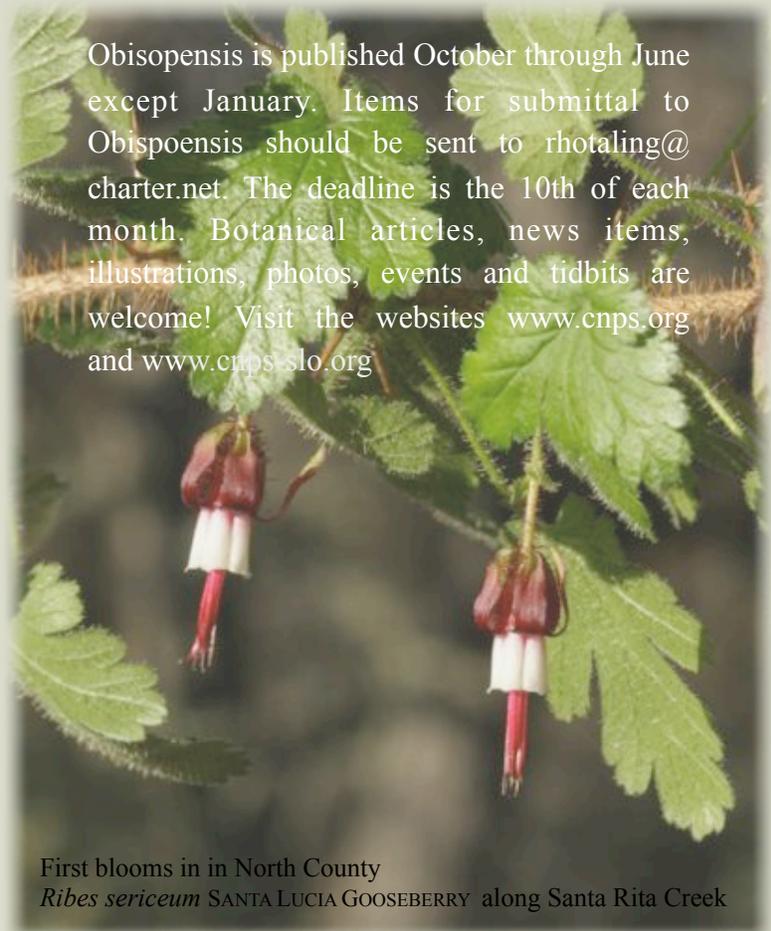
## Renew Online

You can renew your CNPS membership online using a credit card. It is also possible to set it up to renew automatically. It is quick, easy, convenient, and reduces renewal mailing costs.

Go to [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org) click on Join/Renew.

### LOST ITEM

I lost an antique silver serving fork at the banquet. It was with the ham. If you've seen it or have any information, please call 528-0446. Thank you, Heather Johnson, CNPS Booklady



First blooms in North County  
*Ribes sericeum* SANTA LUCIA GOOSEBERRY along Santa Rita Creek

## 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 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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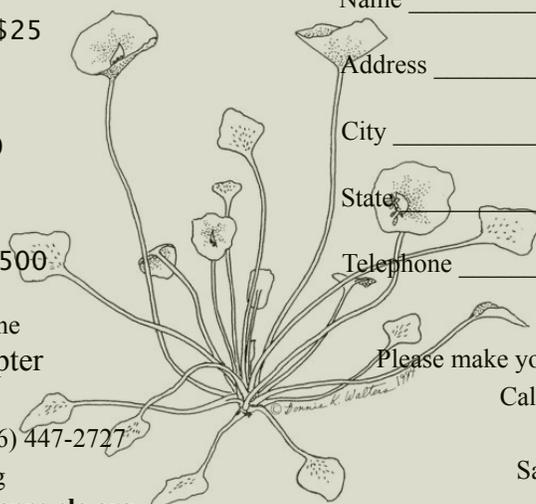
I wish to affiliate with the  
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