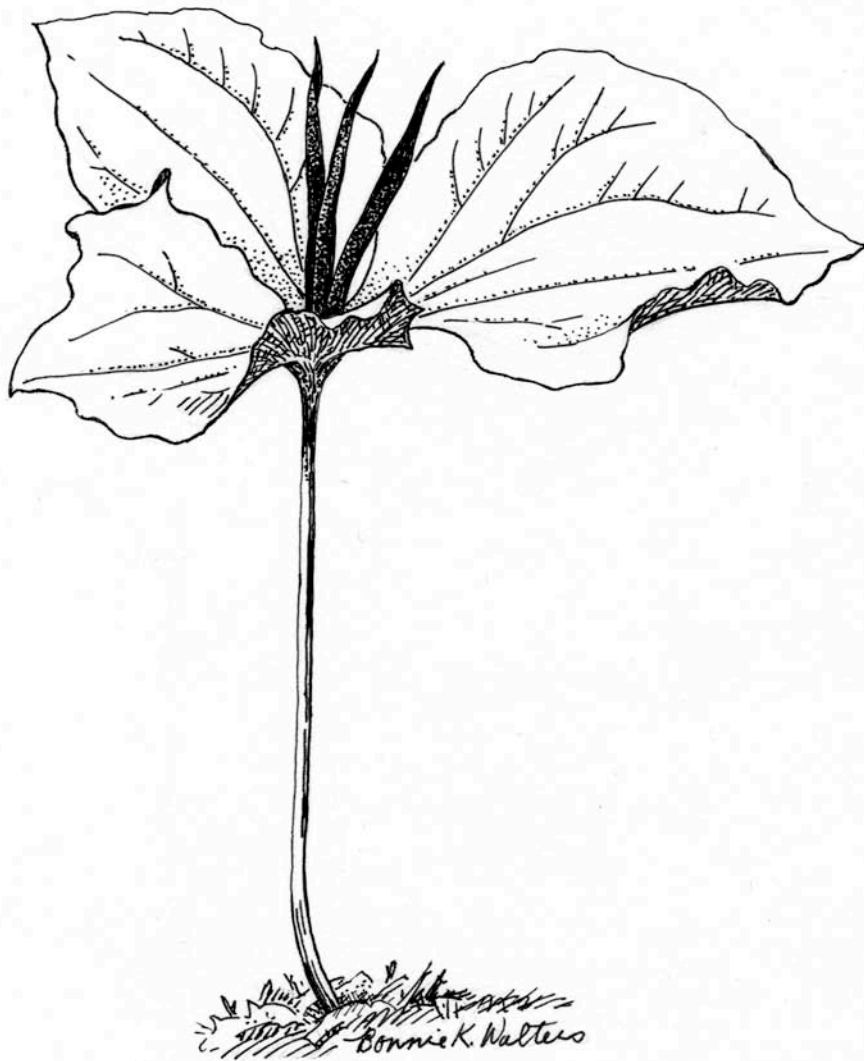


OBISPOENSIS

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



MARCH 2007

ABOUT THE COVER

The plant chosen for this month's cover is a spring wildflower that I suspect everyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with native wildflowers will recognize. It is our local wake robin or *Trillium angustipetalum*. This is the only trillium in our Chapter area. It has a very interesting distribution. It is distributed through Northern California and then south through the Sierra Nevada. Then the distribution 'jumps' to the San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County coastal mountains. It is not found in the area in-between. There are a few other plants that have this same general distribution such as the pond lily (*Nymphaea polysepala*) and the chinquapin (*Castanopsis chrysophylla*). What accounts for the distribution? I have no idea although a case could probably be made for transplant by native peoples, at least for the pond lily and chinquapin, which have edible nuts. Trilliums were used as spring greens and their rhizome-tuber was used as an emetic. Although wake robins are relatively common throughout their range, they have a very spotty distribution. That is, unless you know where a population exists, you could easily not run across them. Because they are so distinctive and localized, it is always a treat to find a population. Many do not know it can be found in our area because it blooms from December through March before many of us realize that the spring wild flower season has started. For these reasons, I hope that none of us will actually attempt to utilize them.

The genus name, *Trillium*, is derived from the base "tri-" meaning three. According to *The Jepson Manual*, this refers to the only three leaves that members of this genus produce. But it could also refer to the three sepals, three petals, and ovary with three seed chambers. Several of my references describe the weak fetid odor of its flowers. This odor along with the dark red color of its petal would lead to the prediction that this wake robin is pollinated by carrion flies or beetles. The species epithet, "*angustipetalum*" refers to the very narrow (angusti-) petals (*petallum*).

Native Plant gardeners often would like to transplant wake robins to their native gardens but this is more difficult than it would seem. Few transplants during the growing and flowering season are successful as the plant uses last year's tuber or vertical rhizome to produce this year's plant. After flowering, it concentrates on producing it's new one. And then, shortly after flowering, its shoot dies and the plant totally disappears. The best time to transplant is to dig up the rhizome during the dormant period in the late spring and summer when they are completely hidden under ground. So the best way to enjoy them is in the wild. Hopefully all will want to join our Chapter on its Wake Robin Field Trip scheduled for February 24 to Coon Creek Canyon, Montano de Oro State Park. Oh, besides our local *Trillium*, we will be seeking other plants that flower before we are ready for them. – Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

CONSERVATION

– SANTA MARGARITA RANCH –

By David Chipping

The massive Santa Margarita Ranch Draft EIR has just been released, and seems at first glance to be a high quality evaluation of a terrible project. Due to a past agreement with SMART (Santa Margarita Area Residents Together), the document examines in a detailed way a proposed Tentative Tract 2586- Agricultural Residential Cluster of 112 lots of 1-3 acre in size (not exactly a tight cluster!) within a 3,778 acre part of the 14,000 acre Ranch. The SMART agreement required the DEIR to address the vaguely defined total development which would add more than 400 homes, 36 holes of golf and facilities, a guest ranch; lodge, restaurant, nine wineries, amphitheaters, three places of worship, and a whole lot more. Unfortunately the DEIS cannot calculate impacts beyond Tract 2586, as the developers give no details. Because of this, there is inherent weakness in the DEIS in its inability to be able to quantify cumulative impacts, and to discuss tradeoffs between Tract 2586 and the rest of the development. Tract 2586 alone has an amazingly high eleven Class I Impacts that are 'Significant and Unavoidable', and would require a "Statement of Overriding Consideration" under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Tract 2568 places the bulk of the houses in the hills along Highway 58 opposite the Santa Margarita graveyard and the 58/Pozo road junction. These are beautiful oak covered hills where the developers will remove between 200-400 oaks (oaks occupy a third of the Tract), and destroy populations of List 1B *Calochortus simulans*, and adjacent Valley Needlegrass Grassland. Most of you would recall the wildflower carpets that are common on these hills, and which are not even addressed in the DEIR. Most of the other grasslands are being ploughed into vineyards, which will have terrible impacts on grassland species of animals, particularly raptors. Time and space does not allow a more expansive discussion at this time, but I am developing an internal CNPS task force that will also interact with other conservation groups. Call me if you want to work on this. We need to know if any botanic resources were missed in the DEIR. Call John Chesnut on rare plant issues, and myself on anything else. Do so in the next month.

You can download the DEIR from http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning/environmental/envnot/Environmental_Impact_Reports_2007.htm> In other planning issues, the availability of groundwater is setting up to be the prime controller of growth in Los Osos and on the Nipomo Mesa. More on this later.

GETTING OUR CHAPTER

“DIGITAL READY”

We need your help and generosity. As most of you have noticed, nearly every one of our meetings is a graphic presentation involving (continued on next page)

projectors and screens. It is also obvious that the era of the 35mm slide has been replaced by the digital camera. Showing digital pictures, PowerPoint presentations and the rest requires that CNPS have a digital projector. Up to this time we have been relying on borrowed projectors, but opportunities for this are fading and we really need to get a bright 1000-2000 lumens projector for meetings. These cost around \$1,000 (and the bulbs between \$200-300), which is a big hunk of our annual income. While we will provide some money from our rainy day funds, we could use all the donations we can raise from members. If you would like to contribute, however small the amount, send checks to CNPS, addressed to CNPS Projector Fund, P.O. Box 784, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. We will publicly thank you, unless you wish to remain anonymous.

Meetings

San Luis Obispo Chapter Meeting: Thursday, March 1, 2007, 7:00 p.m. The speaker is Dr. Matt Ritter, Director of the Cal Poly Plant Conservatory. Dr. Ritter will talk about his recently written book, *Plants of San Luis Obispo, Their Lives and Stories*, a natural history guide to plant life in the San Luis Obispo area. Meet at the Veterans Hall, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

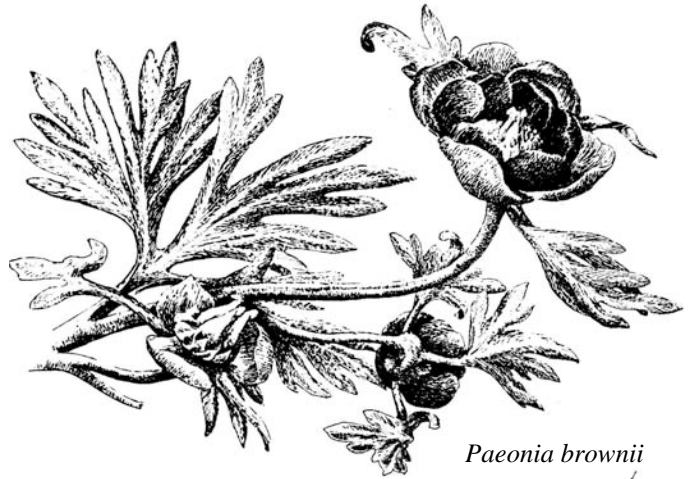
Sunday, March 18, 2:00 p.m., LVBHS, Gardening with Natives, David Fross. The March program of the Lompoc Valley Botanic and Horticultural Society will feature Dave Fross of Native Sons Nursery who will be discussing the use of California native plants in home landscaping, and the book he co-authored, *California Native Plants for the Garden*. LVBHS meets 2:00 p.m. at the Lompoc First Methodist Church at the corner of E. North and N. F Streets in Lompoc. Contact Martha Galisky, 735-4225, or Rosemary Holmes, 735-3974.

Field Trips

Saturday, March 3, 9:00 a.m. Late Winter BMC Chaparral Field Trip to La Purisima Mission. The California Native Plant Society will hold its annual winter field trip to the Burton Mesa Chaparral on the La Purisima Mission grounds. 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 to 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.

Saturday, March 24, Coreopsis Hill led by Lauren Brown. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the San Luis Obispo Vets Hall. Take Hwy 101 south from SLO. Turn right onto Hwy 1 at Pismo Beach. Continue south to Oso Flaco Lake Road, turn right and proceed to Guerra Road. Park along Oso Flaco Lake Road near the entry to the trail to Coreopsis Hill. We may have to shuttle from Oso Flaco Lake parking lot. At 9:30 a.m. we will hike to the top of

Coreopsis Hill. This is a moderate hike. Try to have your "Dune Mother's Wildflower Guide" by Dr. Malcolm McLeod for the trip. For more information call Lauren Brown at 438-4645 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.



Paeonia brownii

Saturday, March 31, Avenales Ranch Field Trip for CNPS members led by David Chipping. This will be a rare opportunity to see the spring bloom in this remote part of San Luis Obispo County. With special permission from the Sinton Family, David Chipping will lead us to the Avenales Ranch, on the west side of the La Panza Range and the Machesna Mountain Wilderness. This area is north of the Garcia Range and Garcia Wilderness and is the headwaters of the Salinas River. We will meet at the SLO Vets Hall at 8:30 a.m. and at the Santa Margarita Park and Ride on Hwy 58 east of Hwy 101 at 9:00 a.m. We will make one last stop at the Pozo Saloon at 9:30 a.m. From there we will car caravan to the Avenales Ranch. Because we will be going beyond locked gates we must stay together. Trucks, cars with high clearance or 4WD are recommended. Wear sturdy shoes, dress in layers and bring a lunch and plenty of water. For additional information call David Chipping at 528-0914 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.

Saturday, March 31, 9:00 a.m., 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 9:00 a.m. for this annual California Native Plant Society and Sierra Club spring tour of the beauties of the Burton Mesa Chaparral. Optional afternoon tour also. Sturdy shoes, lunch & liquids, camera and binoculars advised. For more information, call Charlie at 733-3189 or Connie 735-2292.

Saturday, April 7, Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek. Meet at the SLO Vets Hall at 8:30 a.m. and at the Santa Margarita Park & Ride area off Hwy 58 just east of Hwy 101 at 9:00 a.m. This is our monthly meeting for April and will be led by David Chipping and Dirk Walters. This year and in future years the Annual Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek will be named in memory of our friend and fellow CNPS member, Malcolm McLeod, (continued on next page)

who passed away one year ago to this date. We will car caravan along Hwy 58 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 will end

with lunch somewhere along Shell Creek Road. 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 (\$10) on the trip. For more information call Dirk Walters at 543-7051 or Mardi Niles at 489-927.

Hoover Award

The Hoover Award is given by our CNPS Chapter to honor a chapter member who has performed "distinguished service" on behalf of the chapter and the local flora. The selection is made through consensus in a meeting of past recipients of the award.

When we examine how CNPS is structured, it is clear that the most important functions of our statewide society are our scientific authority represented by our Rare Plant and Vegetation programs; our Conservation program, in which we fight for pro-conservation actions of government and the private sector and oppose destructive activities; and, our Education programs that involve public field trips, horticultural programs and other forms of public outreach.

John Chesnut, this year's recipient of the Hoover Award has made significant contributions in all three fields. Under the heading of Science, he plays a critical role in our chapter's rare plant program, which includes working with others in making a photo collection of our listed plants, Rare Plant committee field searches, maintaining databases and working with our state office and agencies such as U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Dept. of Fish and Game. Sometimes it manifests itself by going to extreme measures to locate populations of rare plants, such as wading up to his chest in the swamps of Oso Flaco Lake. He has mapped the distribution of eel grass in Morro Bay, the plant communities and distribution of Nipomo lupine of the Nipomo dunes, and is a contributor to the SLO Land Conservancy's weed control efforts. He consults with other professional botanists, and is considered a learned authority throughout the state.

Under the heading of Conservation, he has made several very significant contributions. Perhaps the most important is his work in the creation of the Los Osos greenbelt as a founding director of Morro



John Chesnut

Estuary Greenbelt Alliance, which became the lead in protecting this habitat. In this context he has been involved in veldt grass clearance, and the production of informational material for grants. He is responsible for getting the Hearst Corporation to agree to protect rare plant populations on Hearst Ranch, using earlier research by Malcolm McLeod, and was active in challenging development in Morro manzanita habitat to the Coastal Commission.

Under the heading of Education, he has worked many years with the students of Los Osos Middle School, Susie Bernstein and John Nowak on the planning, planting and maintenance of their native garden. He is a willing resource to those seeking information on native plants, and a patient tutor on taxonomic issues to the rest of us.

– David Chipping

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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!



TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE

By John Nowak

It has been three weeks since the big frost and many of you are now wondering if you should be pruning your frost damaged plants or not. The general rule of thumb is you should not. However my observations have exposed some possible deviations from this rule.

First of all, for those of you who live north of the grade or in colder regions of our county I must recommend that you not prune your plants yet. Even though the rains have recently started, there is still a possibility that we could get another round of arctic air. The frost damaged leaves and stems on your plants will act as insulation and will protect the inner most branches of your plant. When springtime comes, these inner branches will sprout new buds and it will be easy to see what dead wood to prune out.

Now for those of you who live near the coast, I feel you are not as likely to experience those below 28 degree temperatures again so I'm going to say prune lightly. When I say prune lightly I mean some of the outer most branch tips could be removed and also you could clean off some of the worst looking leaves. On plants such as *Salvia leucantha* or Mexican sage, you can cut to the ground the dead stalks and the new shoots will arise from the roots this spring.

In regard to plants not damaged by the frost, February is a good month to start doing some light shaping. Plants like buckwheat, deerweed and sage require shaping to help maintain a healthy look. Shaping is done by cutting off old, dead flower heads with hedge shears or hand pruners. I like to remove about a third of the outer most branches. Shaping will encourage your plants to become bushy and it will help them to produce more flowers this spring

Lastly, our chapter is planning a horticulture field trip this spring and I am looking for native gardens in the North Country area. If you have any suggestions please contact me as soon as possible, my contact information is in the newsletter. Also, if any of you have special questions about your native plants you would like answered, please feel free to contact me. I love to talk about plants and what I don't know I can usually find out. Until our next newsletter, have fun and happy gardening.

Visit the websites:

www.cnps.org & www.cnps-slo.org

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*.



*San Luis Obispo Chapter of the
California Native Plant Society*
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IDENTIFYING AND APPRECIATING THE NATIVE AND NATURALIZED GRASSES OF CALIFORNIA

Presented by
**California Native Grassland Association
(CNGA) and the
Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological
Restoration**



**Grass Identification Workshop: A two day
class and field course for the beginner
Southern California Workshop**
Saturday and Sunday May 19-20, 2007
UCSB Campus, Goleta, CA
8:30 am to 4:00 pm
\$ 220/members \$ 260 nonmembers

The theme of this workshop is "Grasses are fun and easy to identify". Our goal is to learn the basic skills of

identifying grasses. On the first day, we will learn about California's grassland ecology, the qualities of specific native grasses for restoration, and become skilled at recognizing the basic groups and common species through our work with plant samples in the classroom setting. We will review both the old Tribe method of identifying grasses as well as the artificial key methodology focusing on the important distinguishing traits. A valuable class syllabus binder and a basic key will be provided. The next day, we will explore local grassland, rich with a diverse assemblage of both native and naturalized grasses, and make use of our new understanding and skills. Bring a 10X hand lens, notebook, scotch tape and any field guides to grasses you may have. Recommended texts are *The Jepson Manual*, the *Hitchcock Manual*, and Beecher Crampton's *Grasses in California* (U.C. Press). Information and directions will be sent with paid registration.

**Sign up early, the workshop is limited to 35 people.
Deadline: May 5, 2007**

**Instructor: David Amme, Wildland Vegetation Program
Manager, East Bay Regional Park District**

**Contact Jan Bridges, Administrative Director, CNGA by
phone: (530) 759-8458; fax: (530) 753-1553; or
e-mail: <admin@cnga.org>**