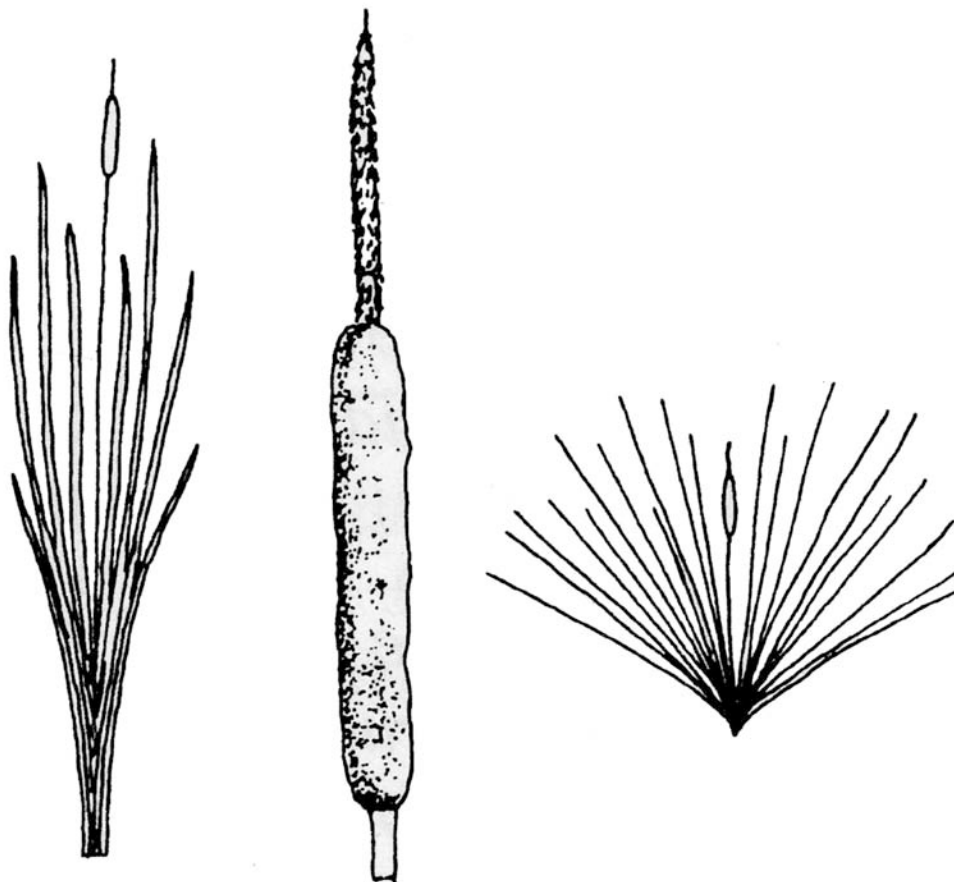

Obispoensis

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



April 2008

About the Cover

Bonnie's drawing for the *Obispoensis* cover was done many years ago for Dr. David Keil and my plant taxonomy textbook. It is the common cattail, *Typha latifolia*. It is a plant whose flowers are tiny and aggregated into very characteristic linear clusters called a spike. The male (staminate) flowers produce 1-8 stamens and are restricted to the upper half of the inflorescence. The staminate inflorescence is separated from the female portion by a clear patch where a short stretch (ca. 1 cm) of naked axis is visible. Staminate flowers are produced in spring and summer, but are relatively short lived. After the pollen is shed, they wither and fall off leaving a naked extension above the developing cattail. When pollen is produced, it is produced in prodigious amounts. So much pollen is produced that pioneers gathered the pollen to mix with pancake flour (the recipe I found said 50/50, but I found this too strong tasting so I would suggest 25% pollen to 75% flour). They called them sunshine flapjacks because of their bright yellow color. My source also praised them as a source of carotene and protein.

The female or pistillate flowers are what eventually will form the cat-tail and occupy the bottom half of the inflorescence. Each consists of a single stalked pistil, subtended by a number of bristles. The drawing to the right is of a single flower turned to fruit. However, the flower looks no different, only smaller. When the female flowers are still green, our pioneer ancestors collected, cooked and ate them like corn-on-the-cob. When the fruits are ripe, the bristles serve as a parachute. In order for a cattail seed to germinate, it must be under water. The 'fuzz' created when the fruits are dry and ready to be dispersed was collected and used for stuffing for life jackets.

And one can't forget the leaves and underground stem (rhizome). The leaves were woven into mats and the starchy rhizome was cooked and eaten like potatoes. The sticky sap was used as a paper paste. In his book, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, Euell Gibbons called the cattail "the supermarket in the swamps." With such a name, one would expect to find cattails growing wherever standing water is found. So if one takes a fancy to eat cattails, one will have to get wet. There are two species of cattail in our area according to Hoover's *Vascular Plants of SLO County* -- *T. latifolia* & *T. angustifolia*. The second species goes by the common name of narrow-leaf cattail. Both species are quite common and look very much alike. The narrow-leaf cattail lacks the space between the staminate portion of the inflorescence and the pistillate portion and has generally narrower leaves. The specific epithet, *latifolia* translates to broad leaf whereas *angustifolia* translates to narrow-leaf. In my experience with the two species, the narrow-leaf species is more tolerant of salt water than the common one and is therefore more commonly associated with coastal salt marshes. Dr. Hoover states the

ranges differently. He has the common cattail in coastal marshes and the narrow-leaf more in the interior. There is one last bit of technical trivia, which I just learned from *The Jepson Manual*. It is so trivial that I'm compelled to inflict it on you. The common cattail sheds its pollen in clusters of four grains whereas the narrow-leaf one shed its pollen singly. Now, that should be a cock-tail conversation stopper. Those of you who were biology majors in college or remember studying a cellular division process known as meiosis might see a bit more significance in it.

- Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

Conservation

CNPS and Morro Coast Audubon members testified before the SLO County Board of Supervisors against the Edwards/Tacker appeal that would have effectively derailed the project that would add a large area of wetlands to the Sweet Springs Preserve in Los Osos. I am glad to announce that we were successful in getting a unanimous vote of the Board to deny the appeal.

Several other EIR's have come across my desk, but none of them have a serious nexus with plants. Most threats to nature these days seem to be more indirect, such as an attempt by the developer-come-farmer community to get around land use constraints on the amount of allowable houses by 'hiring their own soil consultants' to do a dance around the NRCS soil classification that defines ag parcel size. This would enable even more houses that are currently allowed within "ag-clusters", which are usually directed into the remaining land not under ag production. This is proposed already for Santa Margarita Ranch, where the ag cluster is amongst oaks and populations of needlegrass and calochortus. CNPS will comment on this project's Supplemental EIR.

-David Chipping

President's Message

Lisa Andreano's excellent talk on lichens got an enthusiastic reception, and brings to mind that non-vascular plants are included under the statewide CNPS vision. I would therefore welcome the development of a non-vascular plants fan club, working group or whatever within the chapter, so send me your name and e-mail if you are interested.

During the spring I am running the Thursday walks, but would like to include "target of opportunity" trips as well. The problem is that I would need phone numbers and especially e-mails to develop a contacts list. PLEASE send me your e-mail address (to dchippin@calpoly.edu) or telephone # to 528-0914 if you want notice of upcoming events. In the ideal world, all chapter members with e-mail could join a news list that would address all our activities. (Continued on page 3)

I am working out the details on two such events that might take place soon at Camp Roberts. The valley oaks we planted are sprouting and need to be reflagged for installation of protective tubes, and we are being asked to help map populations of two very rare species of soap plants.

Your chapter Board has completed a revision of our by-laws which we have to post in the next newsletter prior to seeking approval at the May general meeting. I know you will get all thrilly about that. Please remember that the next Vets Hall meeting is in May. - David Chipping

Garden Notes

Now that the rains have come, we are finally starting to see the hills turn green. Within all that green we can find annual wildflowers, small herbaceous perennials and many types of grasses. In this wild setting we sometimes find plants that should not be there. We call these aliens, Weeds. When it comes to the old saying "A weed is a plant that is growing where it should not be," I think the key words here are "where it should not be." Sometimes these same weeds can invade our home gardens. When that happens we can have big problems. Veldt grass, star thistle and Cape ivy are just a few that fit nicely into this weed category. Keeping this in mind, I thought this would be a good month to write about weed control and prevention in our home gardens.

The first, most important step in our weed control plan is to identify the weed or weeds that are causing the problem. This can be easily done with books or on the web. There are two main categories to pick from, grasses or perennials (non-grass-like plants). Most plants will fit into one or the other of these categories. This is important because some weed controls will target only grasses or thistles for instance and leave other plant types alone.

After identifying our weed we must then decide the best method for control. Many people prefer to use mechanical methods. These can include hand pulling, tilling, or spading. This type of control is best done now. The soil is still moist from January's rains and the weeds come out easily. Also, the weeds are still small so hoeing and spading are very effective at this stage. For those who wish to spray, now is also the time for you to get started. The weeds are not too large so you will not need to use as much chemical now as later. The seed heads will not be matured yet ensuring that the seed base for next year will be interrupted. You should pay attention to weather reports and not spray if rain is expected in the next twenty-four hours. If you happen to be someone who uses both methods you will be extra busy hand pulling around your plants and spraying selective herbicides in areas between plantings.

The next step in our weed control plan is mulching. Most gardeners agree that mulching is very helpful against weed infestations when applied around plants during and

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before the rainy season. It is very important not to place mulch too close to the trunk of your plant. Mulch too close to the trunk can cause crown rot. Mulch should be spread starting one foot away from the trunk of your plant. The mulch may be up to three inches thick.

Last, sometime desirable plants can grow where we don't want them. When that happens they can become weeds. Often these plants are good candidates for transplanting. Luckily transplanting is best done this time of year. Simply take a shovel and dig the plant up. It can be moved to another location in the yard or put into a container. I find myself doing this a lot with oak trees which seem to come up everywhere in my yard. It's best to move plants when they are small and water them well after moving.

I hope this sheds a little more light on the dirty subject of weeds.
Happy Gardening, John

Field Trips

Saturday, April 5, 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 our monthly meeting for April and will be led by David Chipping and Dirk Walters. The Annual Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek is named in memory of our friend and fellow CNPS member, Malcolm McLeod, who passed away in April 2006. 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 on the trip. For more information call Lauren Brown at 570-7993 or Dirk Walters at 543-7051.

Sunday, April 6, 8:30 a.m., A Horticulturist's Walk in the Wild: Rinconada Trail. Hike the Santa Lucia Wilderness Mountains on the western edge of the Santa Margarita valley with a gardener's eye on native vegetation along the way. Meet at 8:30 a.m. Vets Hall or 8:45 a.m. Santa Margarita Park-and-Ride on Hwy 58 (101 N/ Santa Margarita Exit). From there we'll go on to the Rinconada Trailhead which is located on Hwy 58 just 2.7 miles past the road to Santa Margarita Lake. We'll hike up grassy slopes with abundant wildflowers, through blue oak woodlands and fragrant chaparral until we reach the summit after 2 miles. There we'll enjoy spectacular views of surrounding mountains before heading back. It can get warm here, so wear layers, maybe a hat, and definitely sturdy shoes. Bring water and snacks. Rated easy to moderately strenuous, 4 hrs. Call hike Leader Dagmar Collins, 528-7533, for additional information.

April 11, 12, and 13 (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), Vegapalooza at Chimineas Ranch. The Chimineas trip this year will be a week-end affair (a Vegapalooza) and will be held Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, April 11, 12, and 13. Explore the wilderness, find plants, share with other plant enthusiasts. There is a beautiful ranch house, spa, two kitchens, and showers. Camping is available, or there may be some beds open; this is yet to be worked out. A truck or 4-wheel is best. Additional details will be provided as the day approaches. To sign up for this trip call George Butterworth at 438-3641.

Sunday, April 20, 2008, California Native Plant Society Home Garden Tour featuring California native plants.

Tour contact person, Bill Shearer, will coordinate this tour through gardens on the Nipomo Mesa. Jeff Lenay and Laura and Jim Cornett have graciously offered their gardens to view a use of California native plants. Of particular interest at the Cornett's is what can be accomplished by a "community" of neighbors with a common vision. Our CNPS Horticulture Chair John Nowak will be on hand to provide his professional expertise. The tour will start at 9:30 a.m. in the Von's parking lot in Nipomo. Take the Tefft exit in Nipomo, continue right on Tefft and at the first stoplight turn right on Mary Ave. Go a short distance and take the first right into Von's parking lot and gather immediately to the left. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at the Cornett's. Dress as though working in the garden. Following lunch we will pot up some native plant seedlings for our fall plant sale. For additional information call Bill Shearer 481-2849

Thursday Hikes (all start at 9:30)

March 20 Reservoir Canyon riparian corridor, San Luis Obispo. Meet at end of Reservoir Canyon Road, which is a mile or so up northbound 101 from the northern SLO city limits, and approximately half way between the limits and the base of the Cuesta Grade. Look for the gap in the 101 center divider after the freeway bends westward if you are coming south on 101.

March 27 Oceano campground to look at botanic garden and dune restoration. Take Highway 1 south from Pismo Beach or north from Arroyo Grande to Pier Avenue in Oceano, cross bridge over lagoon and turn right into campground area, meet at visitor nature center.

April 3 Explore oaks and grasslands in a search for globe lilies, El Chorro Regional Park, Highway 1 opposite Cuesta College. Go past Botanic Garden to extreme end of road.

April 10 Explore the back country of Lopez Lake. Meet close to intersection of Orcutt Road and Lopez Drive. Exact route to be determined following recon.

April 17 Walk up the road to East Cuesta Ridge. Turn-off is at the very top of the Cuesta Grade on the northbound side of the highway. CAR POOL FROM VETS HALL IN SLO AT 9:15 or meet at start of road. Steep climb to top of ridge on this one! Chaparral, woodlands, knobcone pines

April 24 Quarry Trail, Morro Bay State Park. Meet at Quarry Parking lot on South Bay Blvd. Coastal chaparral, grassland, good lichens, possible calochortus. (continued on page 5)

May 1 San Simeon State Park loop. Meet at beach parking lot opposite San Simeon State Park (just north of Moonstone Drive in Cambria... not the park at San Simeon itself!) Monterey pine forest, wetlands, possible vernal pools and coastal prairie.

Upcoming Event – Mark Your Calendars!!!

Sunday, May 18 – CNPS and Audubon 3rd Annual Picnic at Santa Margarita Lake. More information will be in the next newsletter. This has been a very fun event the past 2 years. Please call Lauren (460-6329) if you want help out by leading a walk or some other fun activity.

Fourth Annual Wildflower Show



Just try to imagine the number of wildflowers that bloom between the Monterey County line and the Morro Bay Estuary to the north and south; and from the ridge of the Santa Lucia Mountains and the Pacific to the east and west. Pretty hard to do.

Then try to visualize bouquets of these flowers covering tables that fill the Cambria Veteran's Memorial Building, on Main Street, for two days. Almost impossible, unless you have been to the Cambria Wildflower Show in years past. If you have been to the show before you are probably looking forward to it with anticipation. If you haven't, it will be an extraordinary surprise. Each year the show is a marvel to behold.

FFRP will again sponsor the Cambria Wildflower Show on Saturday, April 26 from noon to 5 p.m. and Sunday, April 27 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can come see a display of fresh wildflowers collected on the day before by trained and permitted volunteers. The purpose of the show is to enhance the enjoyment and knowledge of wildflowers by identifying them and viewing them all under one roof. Each flower sample will be labeled with its botanical name and family, along with its common name.

The show will be free to students of all ages, but we will be asking others for a \$2 donation at the door to help cover the printing costs. A bibliography will be provided to everyone attending. This will be a valuable aid to those who would like to continue investigating the wildflowers they see at the show and in nature.

A species list of over 400 different plants, plant identification books, wildflower seeds, wildflower photo cards, hand crafted furniture from native sustainably harvested woods, framed wildflower photographs and t-shirts will be available to purchase.

The Wildflower Café will also be selling coffee, water, sweets and other goodies to add to your enjoyment as you walk through the display or sit awhile at a table.

Come see what all the excitement is about on the fourth weekend in April and join us for the biggest bouquet on the central coast!

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



*San Luis Obispo Chapter of the
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Chapter Meeting Programs

April 5: Malcolm McLeod Memorial Field Trip Meeting to Shell Creek

May 1: David Magney, a noted botanist and conservationist, will discuss and show us the rare plants of Ventura County, and also about how Channel Islands Chapter of CNPS managed to obtain better protection for these plants from county government. Vets Hall. 7:30

June 5: Neil Havlik, Natural Resources Manager for the City of San Luis Obispo will discuss serpentine grasslands and other serpentine flora that can be found near the city. Vets Hall. 7:30

