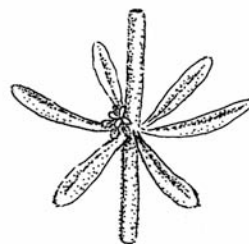
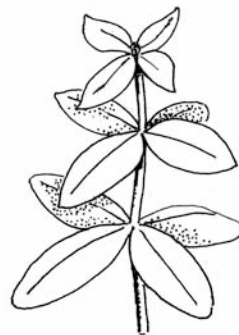
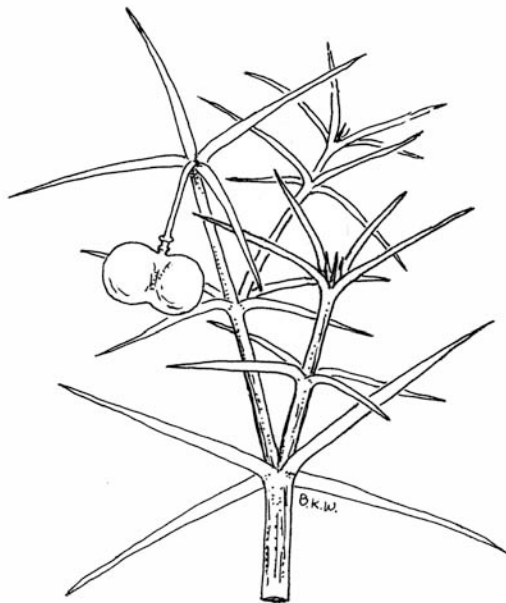

Obispoensis

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



DECEMBER 2008

Bed straws (*Galium*)

The three species of plants discussed this time are all members of the genus, *Galium*. Although this genus has had many common names applied to it, bedstraw is the one most universally used. When Yolanda Waddell suggested this plant some time ago for the SWAP Newsletter, I felt it would make a short, easy discussion. However, the more I worked, the more complicated the task became. First, we need a bit of background. Locally, bedstraws come in three different and easily recognized forms based on their stems and leaves. Bonnie has drawn these three forms for the cover. The most distinctive is the one with the whorl of four extremely narrow, needle-like leaves, most of which are longer than the space between adjacent leaf attachments (nodes). This is *G. andrewsii*. It grows commonly among shrubs and under oaks and is readily distinguished from any of the 11 or so other SLO County bedstraw species. Dr. Hoover, in his *Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County*, says this species is the most common one locally. The other two species shown have broader, flat leaves. The second most common species in the coastal region is listed by Dr. Hoover as *G. nuttallii*. The last species pictured is the only annual and, as shown, usually has six leaves per whorl. It is also the only non-native species pictured – *G. aparine*. *G. aparine* is quite common along semi-shady paths and streams as well as a garden weed throughout the county.

Okay, why show three? Well, first when I looked up *G. nuttallii* in *The Jepson Manual*, the current authority on California plant identification, I quickly realized the species bearing this name is restricted to Southern California and should not be growing in our area. A little more digging showed me that the taxonomy of the genus has been recently revised. It appears the plants Hoover called *G. nuttallii* should now be called *Galium porrigens*. Why “should” and not “is” called? There are several species of locally common four-leaf per whorl bedstraws. The characters used to distinguish these species are easy to overlook. The difference between *G. porrigens* and equally common *G. californica* is whether the very thin stems are woody only at the base or more-or-less extensively woody. This is a character that doesn’t show up in photographs! The shape and size of leaves as well as the amount and nature of “hairs” on the stem and leaves are quite variable depending on whether they grow in sun or shade. This causes the variation to overlap among the species. The difference between these two species and *G. angustifolium* is whether the fruits are covered with stout, re-curved bristles or not. Each of these three pictured species is divided further into several varieties which also makes easy identification difficult. For example, one of the varieties of *G. porrigens* differs from the more typical varieties by having yellow as opposed to white petals.

Earlier it was mentioned that several common names have been applied to this genus. So far I’ve found goose-grass, cleavers, catch-weed, hay-ruff, mutton-chops, scratch-grass, grip-grass, robin-in-the-hedge, and sweet-hearts. Goose-grass refers to the plant’s extreme desirability as a forage plant. One place one does not

find these plants is where birds (geese, chickens, etc.) and mammals graze. I suspect cleavers refers to those species, like *G. aparine*, with large fruits that readily split into two halves. Most of the names (especially catch-weed, hay-ruff, and grip-grass) refer to the re-curved “hairs” found on stems, leaves, and fruits of many of the species (especially *G. aparine*). These hairs are harsh to the touch and serve to attach to animal hair or fuzzy clothing. The plants then steal a ride as an aid in fruit/seed dispersal. Species with minute re-curved hairs and smooth, fleshy fruits are not dispersed in that way. I have no idea why they would be called sweet hearts other than if you squint at some of the bi-lobed fruits they can be made to resemble a valentine heart. Has anybody heard of a better explanation? I have not found that any of our native California species were used by Native Californians or European pioneers. However, Eurasian, Mexican and African species were used. Some of these uses by other species in the genus include roasting the fruits to produce a coffee substitute (*G. aparine* - Ireland), and a dye (*G. tinctorium*). *G. aparine* was and may still be used to strain and curdle milk — rennet. In fact its genus name is Greek for milk. The name bedstraw comes from the pioneer practice of stuffing dried bedstraw, especially one called sweet bedstraw (*G. vera*) from Eurasia, into pillows and mattresses. Dried stems and leaves are reported to give off a sweet odor which is supposed to give one sweet dreams. Sweet bedstraw has another common name - our lady’s bedstraw. It got this name because legend has it that Mary, mother of Jesus filled his manger with it.

– Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters



Galium aparine

President’s Notes

Thank you to everyone who made our plant sale a great success, especially as it funds most of our activities during the year. I hope all of you found what you were looking for, and if not, you should call John Novak and ask what he might be able to do about getting the plant for you next year. We had lots of volunteers, and thanks to John and his band of helpers everything went off without a single hitch, with even the rain holding back in spite of threatening skies all day.

If you missed Steve Ingram’s incredibly beautiful presentation on agaves, yuccas and cacti, I have to tell you that it was one of the most beautiful slide shows I have seen. Several of our veteran photographers were visibly swooning.

The Chapter is still trying to build greater depth into our Board, and have a couple of positions open. If you would like to see what we do, consider coming to our next Board meeting. There is NO obligation to take on a job, Call me at 528-0914 to talk about it.

The long awaited CNPS Conservation Conference is taking place in Sacramento in January. Take a look at the www.cnps.org web page to see what it is all about, and then maybe join the group of us that are attending.

– David Chipping

Conservation Notes

As we go to press the Santa Margarita Ranch Cluster Subdivision has been rejected by the Planning Commission, then appealed by the owner-developers to the Board of Supervisors, who wedged it into an already crowded agenda. On November 4th staff began their presentation which recommends denial of the appeal, and also pumped a 900 page response on the web that I partly digested. The staff presentation and appeal has been continued to the 18th, and I expect that a decision will be made by the time you read this. We will testify, but fear that the “fix” is in, so to speak and somebody, somewhere can “count to three.” Under CEQA the Board would have to declare a convincing argument of “overriding consideration” in allowing all the unmitigatable impacts to happen, and it boggles the mind to see what they can come up with. We are also working on the Laetitia Vineyard agricultural subdivision cluster. The election might be a blessing for native plants, as there will be some hope that the rascals trying to eviscerate the Endangered Species Act can go back to the corporations from whence they came.

Googling the Binomial

How many times have you seen a plant, consulted a Flora that had no pictures, had your eyes spin on the complex key differences between like species, and then given up? If so, try googling the Latin binomial that you think the plant might be, and you will be surprised at how many pictures you can find. Calflora and the Plants Database usually come upon the first Google page. If you want to see what a site has on a species, try this. For the rare Marsh Sandwort of Black Lake Canyon fame, I entered into the Google search field “arenaria paludicola site:ucjeps.berkeley.edu” which found the species reference at the Jepson Herbarium site. Using “arenaria paludicola site:calflora.org” found it on CalFlora. This will not work with search targets such as “green thingy” but did work on the common name “marsh sandwort site:calflora.org”. Of course, this is hard to do in the field.

– David Chipping

Field Trips

Saturday, December 6: A field trip to the Arroyo Hondo Preserve to enjoy fall colors in this majestic canyon along the Gaviota Coast. Meet at the gate at 9:45 a.m.

How to get there: Traveling south on Hwy 101, approximately 6 miles past Gaviota State Park and ¼ mile after the Vista Point Rest Area, make a U-turn at Tajiguas Landfill into the north bound lanes of Hwy 101. In ½ mile, make a sharp right turn into the Arroyo Hondo Preserve driveway immediately after CalTrans Call Box #101-412. The gate will be open, come down driveway, cross bridge and park by barn. Here we will visit one of Santa Barbara County's most beautiful canyons where the clear stream water is bordered by western sycamore and California bay laurel trees. The canyon walls tell the story of the geologic history of this region. There is also a restored adobe home that was once a stagecoach stop. We will have a tour of the preserve and habitat restoration project starting at

10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch, water, and wear or bring shoes that can get muddy and dress in layers. We will have a picnic lunch around noon and the afternoon will be open. Heavy rain on the Gaviota Coast will cancel this trip. Learn more about this area by visiting the website www.sblandtrust.org. If you have questions email Mardi Niles at mlniles@sbcglobal.net or call 489-9274.

Saturday, January 3, 9 a.m. Fungal Foray led by David Krause, Mark Brunschweiler and Dennis Sheridan. We will look for mushrooms growing in the Monterey pine forests of Cambria and enjoy the beauty of Fiscalini Ranch Preserve.



Meet at the San Luis Obispo Vets Hall parking area on Grand Avenue at 8 a.m. If you plan to drive with someone else please park your car on the street, just outside the parking lot. Meet at the Cambria Vets Hall at 9 a.m.

How to get there: travel north on Hwy 1, take a right at Windsor Blvd. and an immediate right again onto Main Street. Follow Main Street to the Vets Hall (1000 Main Street), just before the stop sign at Cambria Drive, and turn right into the parking lot. Bring water, your field guides and a mushroom basket for you may want to collect some edible varieties. Dress appropriately for the weather. Be prepared for poison oak. The hike will be easy, about a 3 hour stroll through the woods. For additional information call Dave Krause at 927-5182 or Lauren Brown at 438-4645.

Meetings

Chapter Meeting, Thursday, December 4

Josh Carmichael from Carmichael Environmental will give a presentation titled: **Habitat Gardening--Landscaping with California Native Plants & Animals**. Carmichael Environmental was started in 2001 by Joshua Carmichael. He is an environmental consultant, landscape designer, and longtime resident of San Luis Obispo County. His team is made up of many Cal Poly horticulture and landscape architecture graduates and they are currently working on several ecological landscape projects from San Luis Obispo County to the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Carmichael Environmental strives to increase your quality of life and at the same time decrease your cost of living. They combine the forms of nature and the functions of life to create a landscape which is economically viable, environmentally safe, and socially responsible. Carmichael Environmental specializes in residential, commercial, and public land use planning—from organic food gardens to native habitat restorations. Josh's presentation will include pictures of local projects and design & build notes he hopes others will find helpful in their garden ventures. Carmichael Environmental looks forward to helping you choose the right materials to build a sustainable, easy to maintain, and comfortable outdoor living space.

Meet at the Veterans Hall on Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo. 7 p.m. social hour, 7:30 business meeting.

Plant Sale Thank You

Another plant sale has come and gone and I would like to take this time to say, job well done. Thanks to your help and support we made this our third best sale ever. I can't begin to tell you how happy I am. We now focus on the 2009 sale and what we can do to make it the best ever. If you have any suggestions please let me know. Once again, Thank You. — John

Horticulture News

In my last column I discussed pruning of monkey flower. I mentioned how the plant went into a somewhat dormant state at the end of summer. I also covered how this was the best time to prune any plant that goes into this state.

Now I would like to continue on this same path but with a new plant called salvia. Salvia is a large genus and there are many forms. Most are perennials but there are some annuals. Here on the Central Coast we have both shrub and ground cover types of salvia. No matter what type of salvias you have, all will require pruning (heavy at times) to keep them looking their best. I have noticed that as a plant gets older, say two or three years, it will develop a woody structure. This woody structure consists of many branches without any green growth. When you see this structure it's your first clue that it's time to prune. Another clue would be a noticeable slowing of growth throughout spring. As the plant gets older, the terminal buds will start to regenerate slower and slower.



The last clue would be a drop in flower production. Well you are in luck! Pruning to the rescue.

As with the monkey flower a heavy pruning will stimulate the buds along each of the stems to create a much more robust plant by the end of spring. The pruning rule goes as follows: first, cut the top of the plant by two thirds (2/3) making cuts near forks in the branches. Second, look at the main trunk and then to the end of

the side branch. Trim one-half (1/2) off all side branches from the trunk in a circle pattern around the plant. When you are finished, the plant will look bad. Don't cry, it should look bad. This is the sign that you have done a good job.

Next time I will continue or talk on pruning. With the cold, rainy weather coming we will need to start thinking about trimming our grasses. Until then, happy gardening.

— John

SAVE THE DATE!

GROWING NATIVES: CELEBRATING CALIFORNIA'S BEAUTY IN DRY TIMES
a two day symposium on NATIVE PLANT GARDENING

MARCH 28, 2009
Lafayette Community Center, Lafayette

MARCH 29, 2009
Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Berkeley

TALKS & WORKSHOPS
GARDEN TOURS
BOOK SALES & SEED
SALES & MORE!



Creating beautiful water-wise gardens with California native plants is the theme of this two-day symposium. The Saturday program includes presentations on the flora of California (by botanist and author **Glenn Keator**), garden design (by author **Carol Bornstein**), the structure of the garden (by **Phil Van Soelen**, from Cal Flora Nursery), herbaceous perennials and bulbs (by plantsman **Roger Raiche**), creating a native meadow (by **David Amme**), and connecting with the garden (by **Mike Evans** from Tree of Life Nursery). The program includes a continental breakfast, lunch, and wine reception. A selection of books will be available for purchase.

The Sunday program at the **Regional Parks Botanic Garden** begins with an inspiring talk by Director **Steve Edwards**, followed by a choice of guided garden walks and workshops on plants for dry gardens, aesthetic pruning, principles of irrigation, and gardening practices. After lunch in the garden, the program continues at **Native Here Nursery** with a presentation by **Charli Danielsen** and an opportunity to purchase plants. The day concludes with an invitation to visit two **spectacular private native gardens**: the Fleming garden in Berkeley and the Greenberg garden in Lafayette.

Registration opens January 1, 2009. Members and subscribers of the sponsoring organizations receive a discount on registration fees. Please visit www.nativeplants.org for more information.

Sponsored By
California Native Plant Society Pacific Horticulture
Regional Parks Botanic Garden
East Bay Municipal Utilities District

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Announcements

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival Registration Opens

Mark your calendars for the 13th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival being held January 16-19, 2009. Registration is open now through January 5, 2009; however, space is limited for the festival itself and for many of the more popular events, so you are encouraged to make your reservations as soon as possible. Festival program brochures are available by calling the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce at 805-772-4467 or 1-800-231-0592, or you can download a brochure from the Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival web site at www.morrobaybirdfestival.org. Online registration is also available.

Sunday, December 14, 1 p.m. Ranger led hike, San Luis Obispo. Bowden Ranch, San Luis Obispo's newest open space, takes visitors to the top of the ridge above Johnson Ave. Enjoy scenic views of Reservoir Canyon, the Nipomo Dunes and Edna Valley to the south, and all the way to Morro Bay and Cayucos to the north. This trail is a steep hike to the top that will certainly get your heart pumping. Meet at the trailhead. Please wear sturdy shoes and bring water to drink. Directions: To reach the trailhead, take Johnson Avenue south and turn left on Lizzie St. Bear left at the "Y." Trailhead is up on the right at the end of the cul-de-sac.

The Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter of Small Wilderness Area Preservation, S.W.A.P.,

leads walks through the Elfin Forest the 3rd Saturday of the month. Call (805) 528-0392 for specific walk information. Wheelchair accessible.

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted) at the north end of 15th Street off of Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. For wheelchair access, please park at the end of 16th St. and proceed to 15th Street along the boardwalk. Wear comfortable shoes and long pants to avoid contact with poison oak.

Give a gift of Conservation!

Looking for a great holiday gift idea for your nature-loving friends or relatives?

Here's one that's quick and easy, requires no trip to the mall, saves gas and time, and one size fits all. Give a membership to CNPS.

Each recipient of a gift membership will receive the monthly *Obispoensis* newsletter, the CNPS state newsletter and the journal *Fremontia*. Is everyone you know already a member? Honor someone by making a donation to CNPS in his or her name. The donation can be restricted to support your friend's special interest, such as research or vernal pools protection.

As our climate changes, conserving and cultivating California natives becomes an even more important task, crucial to preserving our state's natural heritage and biological diversity. What could be a better gift than that to future generations?

Go to <www.cnps.org> Click on the JOIN button.
Happy Holidays!

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,



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Vitis californica California wild grape

Found in nature by stream banks, California grape is an adaptable and attractive addition even to dry gardens. This deciduous vine comes to life in spring with gray-green leaves that mature to green. In summer, it is laden with bunches of purple berries that attract birds the rest of the year. The small grapes have large pits, but when crushed and filtered make the best tasting juice you've ever had. In fall, depending on the cultivar, the leaves turn wine red ('Roger's Red') or yellow ('Walker Ridge'). The leafless, gnarly, sinuous trunks of mature vines form an attractive element of the winter garden, whether trained on a trellis, fence, or on the ground. In a small garden, this vigorous vine is easily controlled through reduced watering and judicious pruning. Viticulturists have used it for years as rootstock for their wine grapes due to its robustness and disease-resistance.—Arvind Kumar