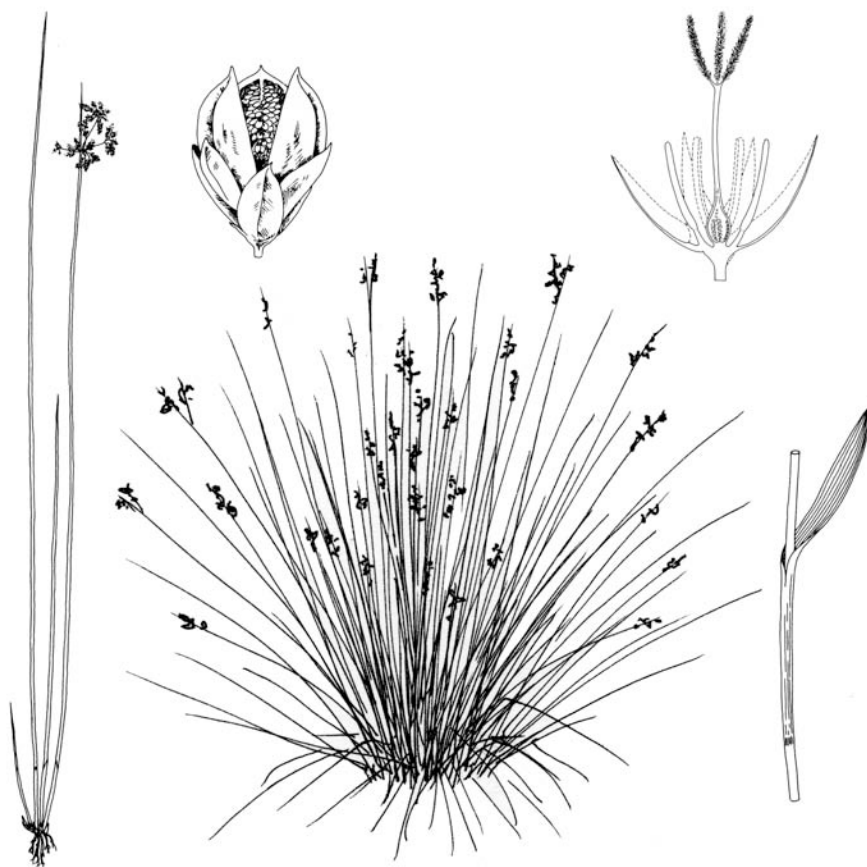


# *Obispoensis*

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



December 2009

## About the Cover

Bonnie's drawing this time represents a small portion of a group of plants commonly called rushes. True rushes are all in the genus, *Juncus*, which is one of two California genera in the family, Juncaceae. The rushes are generally classified as grass-like (graminoid) plants. In our area graminoid plants include three major families – grasses (Poaceae), sedges (Cyperaceae) and rushes. The primary characteristics that hold these three families together are their minute to tiny flowers and the unusual structure of their leaves. The grasses and sedges have minute flowers totally hidden behind one or more tiny (less than ¼ inch bracts) and are devoid of a typically recognizable perianth. In contrast the rushes have slightly larger flowers with an obvious perianth (under a magnifying glass). However, it's the unusual leaves that I want to emphasize here. Graminoid leaves consist of a basal hollow cylindrical sheath that encloses the stem and a narrow free distal portion called the blade. My guess is that some would only recognize the blade portion as the whole leaf. This is because the sheath is usually tightly pressed against the stem such that the outer layers of the sheath are mistaken for the stem surface. The sheath is most easily observed in the grasses, so I challenge those who don't believe me to go out and find a grass stem and gently pull on the blade away from the stem. In grasses, the sheath has a split down the cylinder opposite where the blade attaches to the sheath and this allows the sheath to easily be pulled away from the stem. In the true rushes (*Juncus*) the sheath is not split (closed) and in the path rushes (*Luzula*) the sheath is split (open). Why such a long discussion of leaf sheaths? It is because the particular group of true rushes being discussed appears not to have any leaves at all. First, this is because the basal leaves lack blades but do have the sheath. Note the circle drawn near the base of pair of stems to the left. This circle represents the top of a sheath. Another anomaly is the fruit cluster (inflorescence) appearing to come out of the middle of a smooth portion of stem. This is impossible! What is really happening is that the inflorescence is arising from a node hidden by a sheath. This sheath does have a blade! It is the hollow, sharp-pointed extension of the stem seen arising beyond the inflorescence attachment. "Terminal leaf blade resembling an extension of the stem" is the first characteristic in most keys to *Juncus*.

I am only going to discuss the perennial members of *Juncus* that produce only leaf sheaths at their stem base and a terminal leaf blade appearing as continuation of the stem. This type of rush comes in two growth forms depending on the length of underground horizontal stem (rhizome) produced before sending up a new aerial stem. The drawing to the lower right shows what happens when the rhizome is so short as to be practically non-

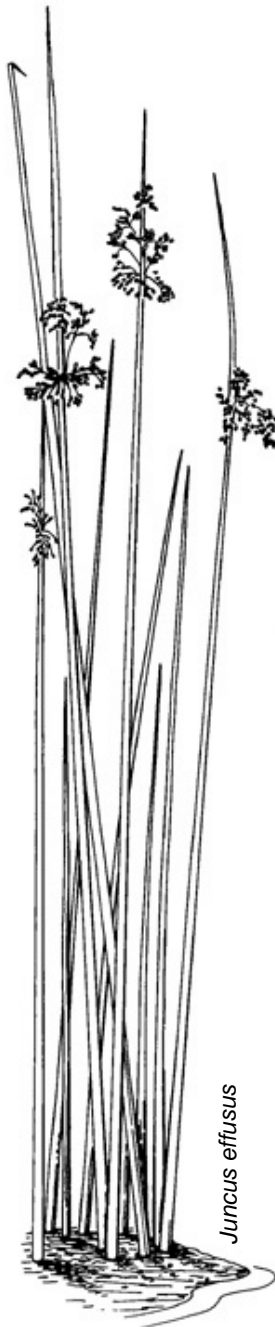
existent. This growth pattern produces a clump. Longer rhizomes produce isolated stems that sprout-up over wide areas.

In our area we have three common "clump" rushes and two common "turf" rushes. The tallest and most restricted of the clump rushes is what I call pike rush (*J. acutus*). It is found only at the upper edge of the salt marshes around the south side of Morro Bay and in a few dune depressions from Morro Bay South. The other two clump rushes are to be expected in almost every seasonally moist habitat from pasture to woodland. The taller of the two has green stems, is distributed throughout the Southwestern US and is known as the common rush (*J. effusus*). The shorter one is restricted to California, has gray-green stems, and is commonly known as California

rush (*J. patens*). The most common "turf" rush produces aerial stems that are less than a foot high and is currently being recommended as a native substitute for lawns and groundcovers. It is *J. lesseurii*. The last long rhizome rush produces very tall thin aerial stems as well as long, thickish orangey rhizomes. This is the basket rush (*J. textilis*) whose rhizomes were used extensively by Native California peoples in their exquisite basketry. Dr. Hoover records this rush as growing in only two localities in SLO County.

All rushes prefer moist to wet soils, but at least the ones specifically mentioned above well also tolerate moderately dry soils. The clump rushes offer unusual décor to a landscape whereas the turf rush can produce a dark green cover over an area not heavily trampled.

— Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters



## President's Notes

The "Wildflowers of San Luis Obispo" is ready for you to purchase for holiday gifts. Amaze the recipients with a mass of astoundingly lovely photos and the ability to impress their friends with flower identification that can be applied to a large area of the Coast Ranges. Our December program will feature a digital picture "slide" show of the contents and the many stories behind the plants and their photographers. Our profuse thanks to the authors, Neil Havlik for getting this project going and Terri Dunivant of Gaia Graphics for the great production values. The January banquet will be a potluck, as we are trying to keep your costs down and maximize attendance. Our speaker, Bruce Pavlik is a coup for us, especially as he is about to take a position with that most famous center of botanic research, Kew Gardens, in England. Bruce is the author of "The California Deserts: An Ecological

Rediscovery", which will be the subject of his talk. In other news our plant sale went without a hitch and was very successful. The book table did very well, thanks to Heather's excellent and varied inventory, and is the place to come for harder-to-find on botany and general ecology. Another gift idea!

Let me know if you would like to help out with some of our varied activities. We welcome members to come and sit in on our Board meetings, just to meet us and see what we do. Give me a call (528-0914) or email me (dchippin@calpoly.edu). David Chipping

## Conservation Issues

Our Board is making a major financial contribution to the purchase and protection of Wild Cherry Canyon, which will connect Montana de Oro State Park to Avila around the rear of the PG&E Diablo Canyon properties. I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to make our chapter fiscally capable of making this donation, and to thank the present and past Boards for their sound fiscal management of the Chapter's affairs.

We have recently checked out rumors of illegal bike ramp construction on the hill below the West Cuesta Botanic Area, especially as we had to ask the Forest Service to remove similar structures a couple of years ago. We walked the Morning Glory and Shooters trails, and they are in good shape and well maintained by mountain bike organizations. Structures are being built but are within a eucalyptus grove at Stenner Springs and do not affect either natural landscapes or have visual impact.

We commented on the proposed changes to the County Grading Ordinance which would extend the greater protection of native plants given within the coastal zone to the entire county.

CNPS was asked to participate in a working session by the The National Center for Conservation Science and Policy that is using SLO County as a place where they can research how society might respond to anticipated levels of global warming over the next 100 years. Many agency biological "movers-and-shakers" and many county officials were present. Using Hadley (HADCM, from the UK), MIROC (from Japan), and CSIRO (from Australia) climatic models, they show scary increases in average annual temperature, particularly in the east county where is it likely we will lose most of our blue oak woodland as it converts to grassland. The coastal edge of the county is in better shape, although longer droughts and infrequent but larger El Nino events are in the offing.

David Chipping

## Chapter Meeting

Neil Havlik, Dirk Walters, Dave Keil, and Marlin Harms will do a presentation about the production of *Wildflowers of San Luis Obispo*. They will also be doing book signing.

Thursday, December 3, 7:00 p.m. at the Veterans Hall, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo.

## CNPS Chapter Council Meeting

The California Native Plant Society's next Chapter Council meeting will be held December 5-6, 2009. The venue is the campus of Santa Clara University, which has at its heart the historic Mission Santa Clara de Asis, built in 1777, the eighth oldest of the original 21 California missions. This website, <http://sites.google.com/site/cnpschaptercouncildec2009/home>, contains information to help you plan your attendance at this CNPS Chapter Council meeting.

Some of the highlight topics to be discussed are: revision of the CNPS Mission and Vision, continued discussion of the Policy on Native Plants and Fire Safety, a Conservation Program update, and results of the CNPS state elections.



## Field Trip

**Saturday, December 19, 9 a.m. Fungal Foray** led by David Krause, Mark Brunschwiler and Dennis Sheridan. On this morning field trip we will be looking for mushrooms growing in the Monterey pine forests of Cambria. Meet at the San Luis Obispo Vets Hall parking area on Grand Avenue at 8 a.m. Meet at the Cambria Vets Hall at 9 a.m. How to get there: Traveling north on Hwy 1, take a right at the stop light at Cambria Road, go one block to Main Street and take a left and then a left again into the Cambria Vets Hall parking lot. There is no public restroom here. 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 *Toxicodendron diversilobum*. The hike will be easy, about a 3 hour stroll through the woods. For additional information call David Krause at 927-5182 or Mardi Niles at 489-9274.



## Plant Sale

Karen and I want to take this time to thank all of you for a job very well done at this year's plant sale. Lucky for us you all showed up ready to go and helped make this (our largest sale ever), a success. There were so many customers who showed up early that we really had to push hard to get ready on time. Most people came wanting only plants but left with tee shirts, books, or just plain good advice. I really feel that this was our best sale ever. This is good because the chapter relies so much on the income from the sale to run the rest of the year. Now we can start looking forward to next year's sale. I do hope I can plan on you signing up to help again. Once again thank you so much for making this sale so successful. Your plant sale chairpersons, Karen and John:)

Below and right, happy native plant customers leave with books and plants.



## CNPS Banquet News

Hello SLO Chapter Members, the Board has decided to take a new approach to the Annual Banquet this year and will be having a Pot Luck Dinner. In the past few years, we have been faced with rising costs for room rentals and catering, and it seems like the quality is not keeping up with the costs. Since our October meeting dessert pot luck is very successful, we thought we would try a dinner pot luck for our banquet.

There will still be a fee to cover the room cost, drinks (including beer and wine), supplies (plates, napkins, utensils), etc. We have details to work out, so if any of you have suggestions or comments, please call or e-mail me (before December 15) and I will relay those to our banquet committee (phone: 460-6329; e-mail:

lbrown805@charter.net). Please note the following:

CNPS Banquet Date: January 23, 2010

Location: Morro Bay Community Center (we will have access to a small kitchen)

Lauren Brown

## Coastal Habitat invites you to a special event: Restoring California

With the Big Sur Lodge at Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park, WildBigSur and PelicanNetwork present a reception and dinner about the California we love and are learning to restore. Our first event features the wonderfully knowledgeable and affable director of the University of California ecological reserve in Carmel Valley, Dr. Mark Stromberg, who has created a significant book, *California Grasslands*.

Reception and Dinner :

There is no cost to attend this reception. Cost for the dinner is \$65 a person. The wine paired dinner with the author will feature local native foods truthfully and exquisitely prepared by the Big Sur Lodge Head Chef Joel Manriquez.

For more information and to make a dinner reservation: WildBigSur@PelicanNetwork.net or, call Jack at 831 667-2025

Thursday, December 10, 2009, Fireside Lounge, Big Sur Lodge. Reception 5:30 pm, Dinner in the Redwoods Room 7 pm.

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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 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Botanical

articles, news items, illustrations, photos, events and tidbits are welcome!

Visit the websites [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org)  
and [www.slo-cnps.org](http://www.slo-cnps.org)

## 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](http://www.cnps.org)> Click on the JOIN button.

Happy Holidays!



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



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## *New Titles Available Now*

**California Mosses.** By Bill and Nancy Malcolm, Jim Shevock, and Dan Norris.

California has one of the most species rich moss floras in North America. During the last 50 years alone the checklist of California mosses has nearly doubled, yet the moss flora is seldom studied by botanists. The California Native Plant Society is proud to offer this color photographic guide as a portal into this truly remarkable group of plants. Designed to encourage both amateur and professional botanists to take up an interest in California's mosses, this guide contains over 2,200 color photographs and 1,100 black and white drawings illustrating all but five of the state's 600+ moss species.

430 pages 6 x 8.75 inches, Hardcover Micro-Optics Press, Nelson, New Zealand, 2009.  
ISBN 978-0-9582224-5-2 Price: \$68

California Mosses is available directly from the California Native Plant Society Sales Department at (916)-447-2677 x. 204 or on the web from [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org).

The Second Edition of **A Manual of California Vegetation**  
By John Sawyer, Todd Keeler-Wolf, and Julie Evens

California is famous for its beautiful plant displays across the landscape, known collectively as plant communities or vegetation, such as redwood forests. This guide to California's plant communities focuses on conserving both the individual species and the surrounding habitat. The vegetation classification system introduced in the first Manual of California Vegetation has since become widely accepted as the state standard. This completely updated edition has been expanded to include the following:

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This comprehensive guide will be of interest to botanists, ecologists, environmental scientists, and natural history enthusiasts—a must-have for land-use managers and conservation planners.

ISBN 978-0-943460-49-9 Price: \$82