
Obispoensis

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



NOVEMBER 2011

HEDGE NETTLE (*Stachys bullata*)

The plant for the cover of this *OBISPOENSIS* is found in many habitats from dry to moist and from wood edge to open fields. It is found primarily in the coastal area west of the Santa Lucia mountain divide. It's common or California hedge-nettle (*Stachys bullata*). This species is certainly not rare but it is not overly abundant either. It's widespread but snooty where it grows. The flower books and floras state that it is found in our shrub lands (coastal scrub, dune scrub & chaparral) as well as oak forests. This is true, but if one wants to find it look in these communities where the soils tend to be moist. I tend to think of it occupying the drier edge of the riparian habitat. As surface streams dry hedge nettles will move into the stream bed itself. The species can be found in relatively dry areas such as the Elfin Forest and Sargeant Cypress Forest found on West Cuesta Ridge. Both areas have lots of fog and contain plant species that are able to condense fog onto their leaves and stems. Leaves and stems, however are poor absorbers of liquid water, so the water drips off onto the soil surface where it sinks to where the plant's roots absorb it. Fog drip is a significant source of water. I remember reading a Cal Poly Biology Department senior project done for Dr. Robert Rodin many years ago. They found that rain gauges placed under the trees recorded over 20 inches more water than ones placed in the open.

The "hedge" part of the common name, I assume, comes from the habit of these plants to grow in fence rows and along roadsides, especially the old world species. The "nettle" part of the common name comes from its resemblance to the stinging nettle (*Urtica*). The surface of leaves and stems are coated by short stiff hairs. These hairs merely impart a sandpapery feel, but do not cause the rash and itching or pain of the true stinging nettle. I find it a rather pleasant feel and you have to touch them to get the pleasant citrusy odor that arises from the bruised leaves.

Stachys is fairly large (ca. 300 sp. worldwide, 8 CA & 5 SLO Co.) genus of mints (Lamiaceae or Labiatae). It contains a number of plants used as food or medicine, particularly in the Old World. The medicinal plants generally go by the common name of betony while the ones producing edible tubers go by the various names. These include chorogi, Chinese or Japanese artichoke, knotroot. I found no reference to any of our California *Stachys* species, including *S. bullata*, possessing either edible or medicinal properties. The closest I came was one suggestion that leaves might to be tried as a poultice. That is, bruise a few leaves in warm water and apply the mixture to minor wounds and rashes. This is how the various betony species are used around the world and is

the explanation for another common name for the species in this genus, woundwort.

References to hedge nettles are noticeably absent from my California native gardening books. The current *Jepson Manual* recommends that they be planted in areas where they get occasional water (3-4 times during dry season). It indicates that native hedge nettles are very hardy and might work in an area that needs stabilization. However, they caution that being hardy, they can become invasive.

— Dirk Walters, Illustration by Bonnie Walters

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Thanks to all of you who made the "Great Photography and Dessert Bash" a great success. I saw many photographs that better those on the covers of national magazines, including some submitted by a seven-year-old child. As you read this we are gearing up for our biggest fundraiser of the year, the annual plant sale, and our next regular program reflects the importance of horticulture with a presentation by Randy Baldwin, the owner of San Marcos Growers.

As I mentioned last month we are developing webpage trail guides to popular local trails that will tell you the where and when of the native plants. I am particularly interested in finding volunteers who will choose a trail, and then record the vegetation throughout the year and when they saw it. If you would like to do this and want to reserve a particular trail for yourself, contact me. You don't have to be a great taxonomist... if you see an unknown plant, take photos of it from all angles and our experts can sort it out for you.

On a closely related issue we are collecting plant checklists for trails and locations, so start compiling those for your favorite places. If you have somebody else's list on hand, send it to us along with the author's contact information and we will see if we can publish it.

CNPS and Friends of the Carrizo Plain are cooperating on a flower photograph book of the flora of the Carrizo Plain, which will feature a tad, fewer species than our just published San Luis Obispo book. We are going to try to do as much as possible in-house, and are looking for a pre-publication layout and setup person to work with the group, which is all-volunteer. If anybody has such skills please contact me.

I would like to welcome Kristie Haydu as our new Secretary, although she is already doing service as our Chapter Council Representative. I would like to thank Lauren Brown for performing the Council Rep. role for a long time, and hope she has success on the CNPS Board where she will wield terrible power and will be awesome to behold. She continues as our "Exotics" chair.

David Chipping

CONSERVATION

CNPS is supporting Morro Bay Audubon Society's plans to remove as many eucalyptus tree as possible over an extended period of time that are not contributing toward either bird or butterfly habitat in Los Osos's Sweet Springs Nature Preserve. These trees are affecting the biological integrity of the native marshland habitat, including a restoration site for one of the rarest plants in North America, the marsh sandwort. Unfortunately some local residents are opposing any tree removal on the basis of some aesthetic arguments that in the past have prevented us from removing eucalyptus in extremely rare Morro manzanita habitat of Montana de Oro State Park. Audubon is hardly likely to destroy bird habitat... duh!.

Is "global warming denial" getting you annoyed? Would you like to partake in a long term experiment to verify climate change? At the state-wide meeting in San Diego last September, we were told of some vegetation monitoring programs to search for gradual shifts of plant species phenology, such as the times of first bud, first bloom, leaf out etc. We are looking for people who regularly pass a point where they can monitor species in the wild. There is more to this that I can disclose here, but contact me if you think this could be interesting. I expect that the program will have to run for many years before trends arise from the scatter of data, but we should start somewhere.

David Chipping

CHAPTER MEETING

Thursday, November 3. 7 pm at the Vets Hall, SLO, Grand Ave. & Monterey St. Horticulture Program: Randy Baldwin and His Favorite California Native for the Garden

Randy Baldwin is a partner and General Manager of San Marcos Growers, a wholesale nursery in Santa Barbara, California known in the nursery industry for the diversity of plants that it grows and for the introduction of new plants suitable for cultivation in California. Randy has worked for San Marcos Growers for over 30 years and prior to this worked for a Santa Barbara retail nursery while completing a BA in Environmental Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. In his spare time Randy speaks to groups about his love of plants and writes the web pages for the San Marcos Growers Horticultural web site. Randy and his family live in a turn of the century farm house on the nursery property. The gardens surrounding the house are a demonstration garden of many of the grasses, flax and drought tolerant plants that San Marcos Growers is known for. These gardens have been photographed often and have graced the pages of several books, magazines and calendars.



Randy Baldwin



Saturday, November 5, 9:00 am, Rinconada Trail. Join a hike to Bell Mountain via the Rinconada trail in Los Padres National Forest, passing through oak and gray pine woodland, a diverse chaparral habitat, and serpentine endemics, arriving at Bell Mountain (ridge-top) with 360° views from Paso Robles to Northern Santa Barbara County. Total distance is 5 miles with an elevation gain of 800 feet, and a total hike time of 3.5 hours. Meet at the trail head, approximately 10 miles east of Hwy 101 on Pozo Road (3 miles beyond the turnoff for Santa Margarita Lake). A sign marks to turn off from Pozo Road on the right hand side. Bring adequate water, snacks, and dress in layers for the weather; a hat and sturdy shoes are advised. For info, call Bill at (805) 459-2103, bill.waycott@gmail.com. The plants, animals, and the geology of the area will be topics during the hike. This is a joint hike with the Sierra Club.

Sunday, November 13, 9:45 am, Cal Poly Tree Walk. This is a 2 hour stroll around the center campus pointing out beautiful landscape trees from all around the world. Meet in front of the Kennedy Library located at N. Perimeter Road and University Drive. Parking is free on Sunday in student and staff lots. Heavy rain cancels. Call leader Al Normandin at 534-0462 should you need additional info. If you have a copy, please bring Matt Ritter's new book, "A Californian's Guide to the Trees among Us", Heyday Books, April 2011.



We are starting this fall with a new website and online bookstore at www.cnpslo.org. The new site provides current chapter information along with some history, and we will continue to add content focused on delivering native plant education and resources for our community. We now have more than 60 books available for purchase online and will be adding t-shirts and other merchandise as well. If you would like to contribute photographs (always needed) or content to the site, or comment on the new look, please send an email to judi@judiyoung.com.

Judi Young, Webmaster

A Very Warm Welcome to New Chapter

Members: William Lorenzen, Lisa Marrone, Mirelle Rabier, Sheryl Reimers and Carla Sanders

And a Very Big Thank You to our Chapter Members who have renewed since late spring and during the summer:

Sylvia Alcon, Karen Almas, Jane Baker, David & Anne Bauer, Ray Bedford, Gifford Bland, Marilyn Britz, Lauren Brown, Bill Bouton, Merry Bridges, Dagmar Collins, Emily Coombes, Polly Cooper, Laura Cornett, Meg Crockett, Larry Davidson, Tom Edell, Melinda Elster, Greg Frugoli, John & Esther Gowan, Marnie Greene, Susan Grimaud, Sherman Griselle, Marlin Harms, Kristie Haydu, Jim Healy & Leslie Mosson, Heather & Jim Johnson, William Johnson, Steve Junak, David Keil, Mary King, Jean Kuntz, Teresa Lees, Merril Lynn, Judy Neuhauser & John Chesnut, Karen O'Grady, Karen Osland, Linnaea Phillips, Sandra & Louis Pitelka, Anne Power, Janine Rands, Lois & Peter Richerson, Kathy & Hal Schartz, Steve Schubert, Amy Sinsheimer, Holly Slettland, James Smith Family, Jan Surbey, Pam Thomas, Julie Thomas, Erik Weir, Patricia Wells, Eleanor Williams and Aleksandra Wyzdga



Trichostema lanceolatum

BOOK NEWS

Books for Gardeners- If you like to putter in the garden with native plants these two books need to be on your bookshelf. First is California Native Plants For The Garden by Bornstein, Fross and O'Brien. This book is an encyclopedia of the most available and garden friendly natives for home gardeners and gives fine descriptions of each plant with many photos. The second book is Designing California Native Gardens by Alrie Middlebrook and Glenn Keator. This wonderful book breaks down the various locales in California and describes plants found in each. If you live in an oak woodland, redwood forest, grassland, desert, etc. you'll be able to find the plants which will thrive in each area.

If you would rather mix your native garden plants with plants from the Mediterranean climate areas then Plants and Landscapes of Summer Dry Climates is the book for you.

Two other books specifically aimed at southern California gardens are: Southern California Native Flower Garden by Susan Van Atta. Susan gardens in Santa Barbara and has put together an excellent little book. The other book is Landscaping With Native Plants Of Southern California by George Miller. This seems to me to be a book appropriate for people living in the drier parts of our county such as Paso Robles, Creston, and Shandon.

So drop by the book table at the next meeting and don't forget our plant sale. See you soon. -Heather Johnson

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!

Visit the websites: www.cnps.org and www.cnpslo.org

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Native Plant Sale

Flowers - Shrubs - Trees - Seeds - Books
Native Plant Information



Saturday, November 5, 2011, 9 am to 2 pm
Pacific Beach High School
11950 Los Osos Valley Road, San Luis Obispo

Directions: Coming from either direction on Los Osos Valley Road, turn on to Garcia Drive and immediately turn right onto the frontage road. The high school is down the street on the left.

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
California Native Plant Society*
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