
Obispoensis

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



December 2013

Bermuda Grass *Cynodon dactylon*

It's November in a very dry year which was preceded by a dry year. Most native plants are waiting for the rains. The small amount of rain that fell in the last week in October I doubt will be considered significant, i.e., sufficient enough to initiate plant growth. So Bonnie and I have punted on the selection of the plant profiled in this issue of the *Obispoensis*. We have chosen to make a scan of an all too common grass which is generally known as Bermuda grass, *Cynodon dactylon*. According to Wikipedia, it has lots of common names in many different languages. Gardeners often refer to it as devil grass when in mixed company. I suspect they use more colorful language when they are trying to eliminate it from their lawns and gardens. The common name, Bermuda grass, reminds us not to depend on names to give us accurate information. Yes, Bermuda grass does grow in Bermuda, but it also grows throughout the warmer parts of the world. It grows on every continent that has areas where periods of low temperatures are rare or of very short duration. In the U.S. it is found in almost every one of the lower 48 states. It is especially common in the warmer half of the country. Where does Bermuda grass come from if not Bermuda? It has at least three other wild varieties and all of them, including the wide-spread variety, *Cynodon dactylon* var. *dactylon*, are found in South-East Africa. Only *C. d.* var. *dactylon* has a worldwide distribution.

It was probably introduced to the U.S. in the 18th century, whether as a lawn grass or for forage crop is not clear. The species is able to survive long periods of drought by simply "dying back" to its extensive net-like system of rhizomes (horizontal underground stems). Aerial shoots can arise from any of its multitude of nodes (region of stems that produce leaves and buds). It is this capability to form long and extensively branched rhizomes that explains its use as a lawn grass. However, its weakness is its habit dying back during drought. This means that one's nice green lawn will have brown spots or, if a Bermuda grass lawn, turn completely brown during the dry season. Bermuda grass also doesn't share an area well. It is extremely aggressive. In experiments where Bermuda grass is grown with various other herbaceous species, it inhibits the other species. In some cases Bermuda grass growth is better when paired with other species than when it grows alone. Needless to add, its aggressive growth is why gardeners refer to it as devil grass. Where there is adequate water, Bermuda grass puts much of its growth into its green aerial shoots which makes it an almost great pasture grass. Why "almost

great"? It is because, under some environmental conditions, livestock poisoning has been traced to it. The species is a prolific pollen producer so it is a major cause of discomfort by allergy and asthma sufferers.

I hope it goes without saying that Bermuda grass is not a California native and must be considered a noxious weed! It is most common in disturbed, vacant lots and poorly maintained lawns throughout the human dominated portions of our chapter area. It can also be found on roadsides and dryer edges of streams and salt marshes or wherever woody plants are widely scattered. It does seem to behave itself because it doesn't seem to compete against trees and shrubs very well. It does not spread into native plant areas as it is intolerant of shade.

The scientific name, *Cynodon*, is derived from Greek and means "dog tooth." The dog teeth are the distinctive small scale-like leaves that arise from the nodes of the rhizomes. *Dactylon* is also from Greek and refers to finger-like structures. In this case it refers to the usually 4 or 5 thin inflorescence branches which somewhat resemble the fingers of a human hand with the fingers widely separated. ☼ Dirk Walters, cover by Bonnie Walters

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Thank you to all the volunteers, the plant buyers, and especially to John Nowak and Suzette Girouard who make it all happen. The sale was successful and will ensure that our chapter will survive in good health. I particularly enjoyed having Los Osos Middle School and John Chesnut, their native plants program mentor, come to the sale.

Maybe it has been the driest of years, but it has not prevented a fine display of fall color in the cottonwoods at Shell Creek, along the Estrella and Salinas Rivers and at Cerro Alto. The trees were really spectacular at the Big Sandy Wildlife Area, which runs along the Salinas River opposite Camp Roberts. This will be a great place to visit once the rivers start flowing again, as it has a relatively undamaged riparian woodland along the banks. Access is best from the road to Indian Valley, accessed on the east side of the San Miguel bridge and following the river northwards to a cluster of communication towers where parking is available and there is easy access to the river bed.

I would like to congratulate Kristie Haydu on her election to the Board of Directors of CNPS. Lauren made a great contribution to the Board and I know Kristie will do excellent work. ☼ Dave Chipping

CONSERVATION

Although the developer has withdrawn the EIR for the Spanish Springs Development, and Sierra Club withdrew their suit regarding the adequacy of the document, the threat at the west end of Price Canyon remains, and it will be back once some water and traffic issues are resolved. Far scarier is a projected increase in the size of the Arroyo Grande Oilfield at the east end of the canyon. This involves adding 11 new well pads and modifying 38 existing pads to put 350 new wells in place. There will be new steam pipelines, an already approved expansion of steam generation (steam is used to warm the thick oil underground so it will flow and no fracking is proposed), a new Pismo Creek bridge and more. They propose to remove 1,650 oaks trees (yes.. you read that correctly!) and 1,200 manzanita. The Wells manzanita (*A. wellsii*) is a predominant shrub and was a List 1B.1 plant until *Jepson2* reclassified and lumped it as *A. pilosula*, List 1B.2. They also intend to destroy an acre of occupied Pismo clarkia habitat (listed as Rare by the State and Federally Endangered, a CNPS list 1B.1 plant). It is also possible that Indian Knob Mountain Balm may be impacted. CNPS will be actively commenting on the Draft EIR when it is released.

The CNPS Vegetation Program has completed a Vegetation Map of the Carrizo Plain. The map, which maps at the level of Vegetation Alliance (dominant single species) associated report can be accessed from: <http://www.carrizoscience.org/vegetation-mapping>. I attended a conference held at the SLO Botanic Garden in November that dealt solely with ongoing biological research on the Carrizo Plain. There was discussion of optimizing conditions for an array of animals, partly by managing the vegetation. CNPS must keep a careful eye to ensure that such management does not adversely impact our interests in conserving plant habitat. ☘

David Chipping

2013 Most Valuable Volunteer

Suzette and I would like to acknowledge this year's plant sale Most Valuable Volunteer. The decision was difficult because we have so many outstanding members who volunteer annually. But this year one person stands out and that person is Bill Shearer. Bill has helped at the sale for many years and has always given it "his all." From bringing plants in his truck to spending the whole day selling plants and then taking down, you could say he has done it all! Thank you for your many hours of service and kindness to customers. Bill you are greatly appreciated. Congratulations you are this year's MVV. John and Suzette

Chapter Meeting

Thursday, December 5, 2013, 7:00 p.m. at the San Luis Obispo Veterans Hall, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo

The speaker for the December meeting is Marlin Harms who will speak (and demonstrate) "Photographing our local native plants." Early December may be seen as a bit early for the April prime-time wildflower photography, but it's just the right time to exploit the Holiday Season for acquiring a piece or two of equipment to enhance the experience.



CNPS 2014 Potluck Banquet

The CNPS 2014 Potluck Banquet will be on January 25, 2014, at the Morro Bay Community Center. The program will be on the natural history of the Baja Peninsula presented by John Rebman, Ph.D., Chair/Curator of Botany at the San Diego Natural History Museum. Social hour will be at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30, Chapter business at 7:30, and program at 8. (Please note this is a half hour earlier than previous years). Cost is \$10 plus a potluck item. More information, including suggested potluck items, will be posted on our website and in a flyer mailed in January. Hope to see you there. If you have any questions, please contact Lauren at lbrown805@charter.net, or (805) 460-6329. Thank you, Lauren Brown, Banquet Committee.

Plant Sale Thank You

Suzette and I want to say, "Job well done" to all the volunteers who spent their Saturday helping at the plant sale. I am always amazed how you all turn out and really give it your all. We sold lots of plants, books, seeds and other stuff. With your help the chapter will be able to continue teaching the public about native plants and the importance of protecting them for future generations to enjoy. I also want to thank you all for wishing me a happy birthday, that really made my day. As we look forward to next year's sale, I hope you had fun and will be willing to sign up again to help. Once again thank you for making this year's sale a success. Your plant sale chairpersons, Suzette and John

Field Trips

Saturday, December 7, 9 a.m., Rinconada Trail, Los Padres National Forest. Walk to the top of the ridge for panoramic views in all directions. The trail passes through several plant communities including areas of serpentine soils. Meet at Rinconada trailhead, about 10 miles east of Hwy 101 on Pozo Road. Look for signage ¼ mile prior to the entrance to the trail head off of Pozo Road on the right hand side. Bring water and snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat, sunscreen, and sturdy shoes are recommended. For more information, call Bill at (805) 459-2103 or email: bill.waycott@gmail.com. Carpoolers meet in front of Pacific Beverage Co., 22255 El Camino Real Dr., Santa Margarita, at 8:30 a.m. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.

Sunday, January 5, 9:00 a.m., Point Buchon trail, Montaña de Oro State Park. The Point Buchon trail gives us access to the wide coastal shelf between the local hills and the rugged coast line south of Coon Creek. The area is relatively undisturbed and early winter wild flowers should be in evidence. Meet at the parking lot at the southern end of Pecho Valley Road, Montaña de Oro SP at the start of the Coon Creek trail. Bring water and snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat, sunscreen, and sturdy shoes are recommended. For more information, call Bill at (805) 459-2103 or email: bill.waycott@gmail.com. Rain or the threat of rain cancels.

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) Blitz - 2014

What is Sudden Oak Death: Sudden Oak Death (SOD), a serious exotic disease, is threatening the survival of tanoak and several oak species in California. Currently SOD is found in 14 coastal California counties, from Monterey to Humboldt. Researchers have discovered that *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen that causes SOD, spreads most often on infected California bay laurel leaves. Some management options are available, but they are effective only if implemented before oaks and tanoaks are infected; hence, timely detection of the disease on bay laurel leaves is essential for a successful proactive attempt to slow down the SOD epidemic.

Purpose of SOD BLITZ: The SOD-blitz is to inform and educate the community about the disease and its effects, get locals involved in detecting the disease, and produce detailed local maps of disease distribution. The map can then be used to identify those areas where the infestation may be mild enough to justify proactive management.

San Luis Obispo SOD BLITZ, 2013: In May 2013, 14 people, mostly SLO CNPS Chapter members, conducted a SOD Blitz sampling event. A total of 872 trees were surveyed and samples were collected from 89 trees. There were no SOD positive trees found during this survey.

San Luis Obispo SOD BLITZ, 2014: We need to continue the sampling in 2014. A sampling date has not been established, but our February meeting will include a presentation by Dr. Matteo Garbelotto on SOD, the SOD Blitz, including results from 2013, and preparation for the 2014 SOD Blitz. I hope we have as many interested people come to the presentation and help with the 2014 sampling. **For additional information, please visit - <http://www.sodblitz.org>**

I hope to see you at the CNPS February 6, 2014, meeting at the SLO Vets Hall, 7 p.m. Thank all of you who participated in 2013 and I look forward to working with all (and more) of you in 2014.

Northern California Botanists to Present a Symposium

On January 13 – 14, 2014, the Northern California Botanists* will be presenting a two-day symposium titled: “*Northern California Plant Life: Botany for a Changing World*”, to be held at California State University, Chico. The symposium will include an exciting line-up of topics ranging from alpine ecology to Northern California botanical discoveries, and a third day of workshops to choose from. The symposium will also include an evening reception and banquet with keynote speaker David Ackerly, of the University of California Berkeley, addressing “Climate Change and Conservation”. The symposium is open to anyone: botanical enthusiasts, professionals, and students.

For a detailed program and registration information, see: www.norcalbotanists.org



NONE OF THESE ARE IN TEXAS!

California has long been proud of having the tallest plant (Coast Redwood 379 feet), the largest plant (Giant sequoia, over 52,000 cubic feet), and the oldest tree (Bristlecone pine 5,063 years). California also had the oldest tree that reproduced by continuous cloning, a Palmer oak at 13,000 years in the Jarupa Mts, which beats out the King Clone creosote bush in the Mojave Desert (a mere 11,700 years old). California has some competition in the clone department, being beaten to the finish line by Colorado's "Pando" clone of Quaking aspen (80,000-1,000,000 years) and closely followed by two Norway spruce clones in Sweden and a Huon pine in

Tasmania that are between 9,000-10,000 years old. Fungi might have plants beat on size. A clonal colony of *Armillaria ostoyae* in Oregon's Blue Mountains extends over 2,384 acres (4 square miles). E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, of course, would consider the reader the oldest organism, along with every tree and animal who are all of the same age as you. A species is, after all, only DNA's way of replicating itself, and it has been cloning itself since life's initial start on the planet. And we are obsessed with self-replication, as our DNA seems inclined toward twerking. – David Chipping

A new species of monkey flower discovered in the Sierra Nevada!

I am the editor of *Madroño*, the Journal of the California Botanical Society. In the most recent issue Jay Sexton, Katie Ferris, and Steve Schoenig, published their discovery of the fern-leaved monkeyflower (*Mimulus filicifolius*). It's a new species with finely divided, bi-pinnately compound leaves found in the northwestern Sierra Nevada where it occurs mostly on ephemeral seeps in rock outcrops. *Mimulus filicifolius* is highly restricted, known only from Butte and Plumas Counties within the Plumas National Forest, and should therefor be considered in future conservation strategies.

As new botanical discoveries like this one are made, revised treatments for the Jepson Manual will be published online at the Jepson eFlora. – Matt Ritter

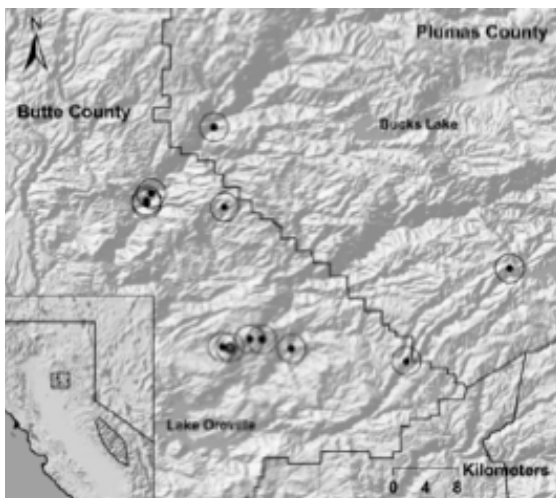


Photo by Steve Schooling



The San Luis Obispo Chapter of CNPS holds its meetings the first Thursday of

the month, October through June, except January, at the Veterans Hall, Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo. Refreshments at 7:00 and program at 7:30 p.m. You don't have to be a CNPS member to attend!

Obispoensis is the newsletter of the San Luis Obispo Chapter of CNPS. It is published October through June except January. Items for submittal to *Obispoensis* should be sent to rhtaling@charter.net. The deadline for the next issue is Friday, January 10. Botanical articles, news items, illustrations, events, and tidbits are welcome!

To find out more about the California Native Plant society visit the websites:

www.cnps.org and
www.cnpslo.org



CNPS 2015

Conservation Conference

Celebrating 50 Years
of Progress and Promise

CNPS 2015 Conservation Conference Offers Registration Rebates to Volunteers

Most of you received the Save the Date postcard in the mail recently and know that we are knee-deep in planning the Big Party, the 50th Anniversary year kick-off event: the CNPS 2015 Conservation Conference: 50 years of progress and promise! It will take place in San Jose, at the DoubleTree by Hilton, January 13-17, 2015. Workshops and field trips will be on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 13th and 14th and the scientific conference will be Thursday-Saturday, Jan 15-17. We have lots of space this year with almost the entire hotel to ourselves- meeting rooms galore and sleeping accommodations all in one building. We even have our own disco bar with stage and sunken mosh pits. It's plush and easy.

This event takes a village to put together! Several hundred volunteers contributed their knowledge and talents for the last two conferences and we will need lots of help this time too. If you would like to get in on this high energy event we have lots of opportunities for participation. Help make this an event to remember by lending your talents, be they herding cats, planning a field trip, presenting your research, or expressing your love of native flora through the arts.

There are great registration rebates available for volunteers. If you jump in on a planning committee and put in 32 hours or more over the next year, you may ask for a full rebate. If you take a smaller commitment or volunteer during the conference you will be eligible for a partial rebate. All volunteers must be current CNPS members.

Right now we need assistance for several key planning committees:

Outreach Committee- 2 people

Volunteer Coordinator- 2 people

Arts Committees –Botanical Arts, Landscape Art, Photography, Poetry reading, and Music - 2-3 people each

Audio Visual coordinators- 2 people

Field Trips Coordinators 2-3 people- should be local to San Jose or Bay Area

Silent and live auctions and Drawing - up to 5 people

Media and Publicity- 2-4 people (1-2 should be local to San Jose or Bay Area)

Local Information (things to do and see in the San Jose area)- 1 person local to San Jose or Bay Area

Santa Clara Valley Chapter liaison

East Bay Chapter liaison

If you have interest or just curiosity about any of the above, contact Josie Crawford at jcrawford@cnps.org or call (916) 447-2677, for complete job descriptions for each position.