
Obispoensis

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



December 2018

Salvia spathacea (Hummingbird Sage)

The cover of this OBISPOENSIS is another beautiful water color by Heather Johnson. When I chose this beautiful and accurate representation, I expected that I could just go to my archive and update an article I had already written. To my surprise, Bonnie hadn't drawn and I hadn't written anything about it. I'm going to use the excuse that Hummingbird sage is so distinctive and so common that we took it for granted that everyone already knew it. It was one of the first California wildflowers I learned after I arrived in California from the Midwest. In our area Hummingbird sage can grow in an extensive mat. Its leaves are large (10 in (20 cm) long and 3 in (8 cm) wide). The leaf surface appears quilted. Its family affiliation (Mint or *Lamiaceae* or *Labitae*) is shown clearly in Heather's water color. Its large red, two-lipped tubular flowers appear in our area by March and last well into summer and are borne in tight clusters; the clusters climbing upward resembling the balconies of an oriental pagoda. The two stamens and single style extend from under the upper lip in succession. The stamens appear first and after all the pollen has been removed they are replaced by the stigma at the end the style. Mint family characters also shown are the opposite leaves and the square stem. Unfortunately, the characteristic mint odor characteristic of this family is fruity (I smell lemon), but either way it's not discernible in Heather's art.

I've found three common names for this mint. They are crimson sage, hummingbird sage, and pitcher sage. The first two names are readily explainable. The usual flower color is dark red (crimson) and red is the color of flower that hummingbirds frequently visit. The name, pitcher sage, requires a little history. When I came to California in the late 1960s, the only wild flower books readily available were authored by the Southern California botanist, Phillip Munz, and emphasized Southern California common names. In those books *Salvia spathacea* was given the common name 'pitcher sage'. So, we botanical oldsters probably remember it by that name. However I remember that hummingbird sage was always the name used on field trips in our area even then and the name, 'pitcher sage' was used for a completely different shrubby mint, *Lepechina calycina*, which grows in the interior mountains of our chapter area.

Based on my observations and the numerous accounts on the web, hummingbird sage has a place in a California Native plant garden, especially gardens away from the coast. It prefers partial shade, but where it doesn't get too hot it can tolerate sun. It even does well under oaks. It even prefers clay soils rather than sand. For areas that have many deer, they seem to avoid eating it. Its large flowers with lots of nectar make it great for attracting and feeding hummingbirds. I suspect the best situation in which to plant them would be an area that is visible, but little trod upon. Here it can even become a sort of ground cover. I found no real references for its use in medicine other than for ailments in which its wonderful odor might be helpful. According to the book on Chumash Ethno-botany, the Cumash didn't have a name for it although the early Spanish settlers did. Some suggested it might make a decent tea. No member of the genus, *Salvia*, was in any of the indices of books on poisonous plants I have in my library.

Dirk Walters

THE GARDEN CORNER

Botta's pocket gopher

Last month we discussed California ground squirrel problems, this month I will focus on the gopher aka Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*). For most of us, gophers can sometimes be a headache but a livable one. They come and go between you and your neighbor's yard, only losing a couple of plants a year. For yards like these I recommend using gopher root baskets. These baskets are designed to last for years and will allow the plants some long-term safety against limited attacks. The wire baskets come in different sizes to fit whatever you plant; 1 qt., 1 gal., 3 gal., 5 gal., and 15 gal. Place the wire baskets around the roots

before planting. I prefer not to ever use gopher poison, as the likelihood of some non-target animal eating the dead gopher is not acceptable.

For those who have a severe problem with gophers, I recommend using a gopher gasser. The gasses will travel down the tunnel and the gopher will succumb to carbon dioxide. The most important thing in using gopher gassers is the soil must be well irrigated. The water will trap the smoke inside the soil particles allowing the gasser to be more effective.

I have to mention gopher trapping. There are many traps to choose from, its up to you to consider trapping. I do trap gophers but only in those yards that have severe infestations.

If you have any direct questions, you can always contact me at gritlys@gmail.com. Until then, Happy Gardening;

John Nowak, Plant Sale co-Chairperson.



Photo: Project Noah

Growing Native Plants from Seeds is Fun

By Linda Poppenheimer

For a native plant novice like me, joining the California Native Plant Society seemed like a good idea so I became a member of the San Luis Obispo chapter. My spouse and I attended our first meeting a year ago last October. That is where I met Marti and the real fun began.

When we arrived at the San Luis Obispo Veterans Hall for the meeting, there were several folding tables set up containing bowls, cups, and bags filled with native plant seeds. I spotted a box with little brown envelopes and another with tiny pencils. Some people were pouring small amounts of seeds into envelopes and writing on them.

We did not have any seeds to share so we were standing there not sure what to do when Marti approached me. Marti assured me that it was not necessary to bring seeds to participate and she encouraged us to select some seeds to try growing for our yard.

Walking up to one of the tables, I realized that we might have some difficulty identifying the seeds because the containers were labeled with botanical names. Sigh.

My spouse noticed one that said *Lupinus succulentus*. Aha, surely that must be a lupine. Every year, I admire the lupines that grow on the surrounding hillsides and I was excited by the prospect of growing some myself.

We asked someone and learned that yes, the seeds were lupines. We carefully put some seeds in an envelope and labeled it.

Moving on, I found Marti's seed stash. I was pleased to see that she had attached pictures to her seed packets and included their common names. I recognized the photo of the tidy tips and we carefully poured some itty-bitty seeds into another envelope.



A buckwheat grown from seed after 8 months
photo: Linda Poppenheimer

With help, we identified three more species of seeds to try including California buckwheat, coffeeberry, and purple needlegrass. Why I waited until January to sow the seeds remains a mystery. I placed the pots on the deck outside of our dining room so I would remember to water them periodically.

The day I spotted the first tiny lupine seedling poking its head through the soil, I was almost giddy with excitement. Other seedlings soon joined it. Watching the plants grow, develop buds, and then unfurl their flowers was fascinating. Only one of the California buckwheat seeds germinated. It grew into a small plant that seemed ready to graduate to the yard this fall so I planted it in a small fenced-in section of our yard to safeguard it from hungry deer.

There is something magical about growing a native plant with your own two hands. Perhaps it is because it connects us to a time when people lived in harmony with the rest of nature.

If you would like to read the whole story, here is the link <https://greengroundswell.com/growing-native-plants-from-seeds-is-fun/2018/10/22/>.

SEED EXCHANGE NEWS- Marti Rutherford

Thank you to all who participated in the seed exchange. We ended up with more than 70 species of plants. It gave many the opportunities to experiment with different plants than normally found. Some of the extra seeds were packaged to sell during the plant sale. There seemed to be a good amount of interest. Of course we did not have everything people wanted. Next year let's aim for seeds of *Ceanothus* too.



Marti's Seed Table at the Plants Sale: Photo David Chipping

CHAPTER MEETING Dec. 6th 2018 - Thursday - 7:00 pm

Veterans Hall, Monterey and Grand, SLO

Mixer and Browse Sales Table 7:00 pm, Program 7:30 pm

Carrizo Ecological Reserves

George Butterworth, author of *Plants of the Carrizo Plain*



George grew up in the Central Valley. Among his first memories were cattails and red-wing blackbirds, and crops and orchards. He spent 30 years in Southern California, graduating from UCSB in history. He taught tennis for many years. He came to the Carrizo Plain in 1993 and started collecting plants and enjoying the nature. When California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife acquired south Chimineas in 2001, he worked on the botany there as a volunteer. This led to his getting on the payroll. He continues to botanize both the Chimineas and Carrizo Plain, and was a major force in producing the digital *Plants of Carrizo Plain* book. A great number of the photo illustrations are by George.



Sunday, December 16th, 9:30 am, Bill Deneen Memorial Hike to Point Sal and Get-Together – please note the change of date! As a way to acknowledge the contributions of Bill Deneen and to remember him, we are planning a hike to his beloved Point Sal. We will hike to the ridge and then to the beach, though hikers can choose to go as far as they would like. The total distance is up to 10 miles with more than 1,000 ft. elevation gain – so it is easy to strenuous, depending on the length chosen.

After the hike, hikers and non-hikers alike will meet at La Simpatia Restaurant (827 Cabrillo Hwy, Guadalupe) at 2:00 pm, to eat, trade stories, and remembrances. Bring a story and any pictures or memorabilia you would like to share.

Directions to Point Sal: from Hwy 101 exit Hwy 166 west towards Guadalupe. Turn left on Highway 1, then right on Brown Road. Continue on Brown Road until the gate. Park at the gate. Make sure to leave no valuables in your car, there have been break ins. Dress in layers, bring hat, sunscreen, plenty of water, snacks. Contact Andrea 805-934-2792, or Carlos 805-546-0317, or Bill 805-459-2103. Rain cancels the hike, but not the get-together at 2:00 pm.

2018 Plant Sale Thank You

Suzette and I once again want to thank all the volunteers who came to help at this year's plant sale. Even though the high temperature caused some problems, the sale was well visited. Many customers came to purchase books, plants, and seeds. Thanks to our marvelous crew we had another successful plant sale.

Once more, thank you all that helped, the names are too numerous to mention. We look forward to next year's sale already. Have a great winter season and happy gardening. John and Suzette

HOLD THE DATE!
CNPS ANNUAL BANQUET

JANUARY 12, 2019
MORRO BAY VETS HALL

DETAILS IN MID-DECEMBER

The latest edition of our monthly newsletter Obispoensis is available for download as a PDF file from the link below. Find out about upcoming events, field trips, local issues impacting native plants, invasives to be on the watch for, horticulture tips for growing natives, contact info and more in each issue:

<http://cnpsslo.org>

Having trouble opening the file? You need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your device. It can be downloaded here:

<https://get.adobe.com/reader>

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

Bill Waycott

In past issues of *Obispoensis*, I have noted some of my observations on the impact of invasive plants in our state – their negative effects and a bit on their historical introductions. My musings on the origins of such a domineering presence by these plants, led me to machinations on how alterations to our California landscape invariably trigger chronically weedy areas that don't seem to ever go away. It is unfortunate that once the native landscape is significantly altered, invasives race in and dominate for,well, forever!

There are examples of this all around us, where invasives out compete their native counterparts by germinating earlier, by flowering earlier or flowering later, by flowering more abundantly, or by simply over growing them. In fact, I'd be willing to wager that every time a land parcel on the Central Coast is disturbed, its ability to return to its former, diverse self is seriously hindered, if not eliminated. Can someone show me a landscape that has successfully regenerated to its former self after significant disturbance?

An excellent example of how permanent the impact of disturbance can really be, is clearly illustrated along the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way, not far from my house, where it winds through vineyards south of the SLO County Airport. According to historical records, that rail line was completed in 1895. As one walks through the area today, it is choked with the usual cast of characters; two species of mustards (*Brassica sp.*), wild oats (*Avena sp.*), bristly ox tongue (*Helminthotheca echinodes*), prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), purple vetch (*Vicia villosa*), Canadian horseweed (*Erigeron canadensis*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*), curly dock (*Rumex crispus*), and a Class B noxious species, Russian knapweed (*Rhaponticum repens*); all of this along with an occasional coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*).

So, for more than 120 years, this area has been left to the quirks of nature to restore itself to its former self. And in a century's time, only a few coyote brush grow there, along with a gang of opportunists, better able to thrive than the natives they've replaced. Like the zebra and quagga mussels in the Great Lakes, and the Asian collared doves in North America, the introduced and now naturalized exotic plant species are here to stay, at least for the conceivable future.

As we approach land development going forward, we now know that if we disturb the land, the chance of realizing a full restoration event on that parcel is next to impossible. We also know restoration is an expensive proposition (plants, irrigation, and management), that more than likely will end in failure, as well. It is tough! Hence, the more competitive, more aggressive introduced species that abound in disturbed areas here, are now actually part of the "new normal" – they're here to stay. The way I see it, it's time we welcome these visitors as permanent residents in this environment, and therefore, integral participants in our California landscape.

Invasive Species Report- Mark Skinner

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

The extremely invasive *Foeniculum vulgare* is in the carrot (*Apiaceae*) family. It is native to Southern Europe and is problematic in coastal California and is also present throughout the western US all the way to Texas. I've encountered Fennel on Santa Catalina Island and Santa Cruz Island. Clusters of Fennel may be found in disturbed areas, mostly roadsides and fields. Fennel is an aromatic perennial with a thick deep taproot and which grows to 5 to 10 ft. tall forming dense stands producing thousands of seeds that birds and rodents consume. Seeds may survive several years. Feral pigs are attracted to it and love its roots! Fennel crowds out native plant species and can drastically alter the composition and structure of many plant communities, including grasslands, coastal scrub, riparian, and wetland communities. The cultivated varieties of Fennel are seldom invasive. The leaves are finely dissected and the plants produce yellow flowers on compound umbels. Fennel is a difficult, labor intensive plant to control. Small infestations can be dug out. Large plants are hard to dig out. Preventing seed production by lopping stems is vital so cutting Fennel repeatedly is advised. Grazing with goats can knock the plants down. Burning doesn't work because Fennel quickly recovers, but if linked with herbicide treatment may be an effective method.



Photos: David Chipping

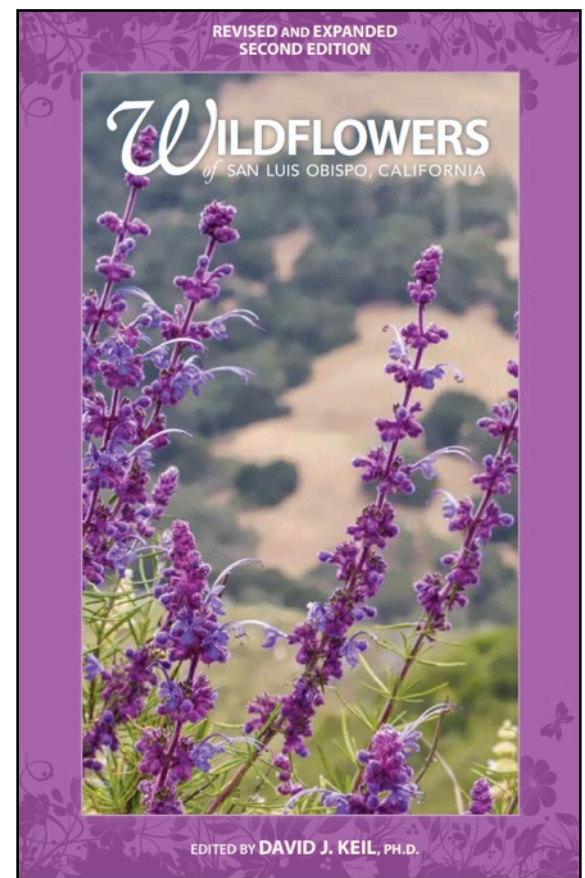


Just in time for the holidays!!



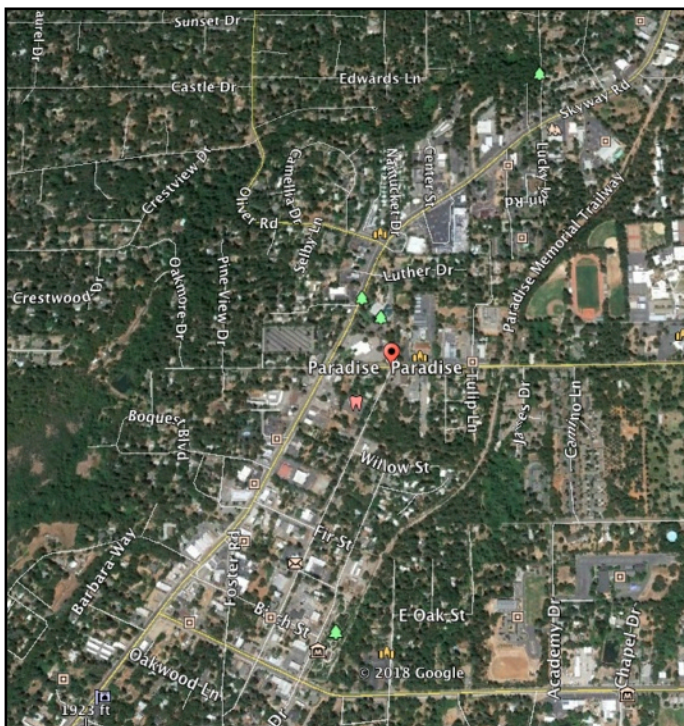
The Revised and Expanded 2nd Edition of our wonderful Wildflowers of San Luis Obispo, California has arrived! 20 new plants have been added, the SLO City open space map has been updated, including trailhead directions. The new cover photograph of Woolly Blue Curls with the distant view of an oak studded grassy hillside puts you on our Central Coast.

Just in time for your holiday shopping. It will be available at our December meeting, on our web site bookstore, and at local stores, such as Wild Birds Unlimited and Crushed Grape in SLO, Coalesce Bookstore and Natural History Museum at Morro Bay, Piedras Blancas Light House, and Volumes of Pleasure in Los Osos.



Fake News - The President's view on the Camp Fire at Paradise, CA

David Chipping



President Trump apparently thinks that cutting large trees would have prevented the Camp Fire from being so destructive. The Google Earth screenshot on the left shows the core business area of Paradise, nearly all of which turned to ash. It is clear that there is only highly dispersed forest cover in the downtown areas, and it is clear that the tops of much of the tall timber did not burn and did not contribute to a **'canopy fire'**, which is the reason why tall tree thinning is done. The photographic evidence from the fire shows that the fire was essentially a massive, very fast moving **'ground fire'** in the business district, where flaming masses of sparks are blown ahead of the fire front to ignite anything that could catch a spark and then burn.

You can have fast, fast moving fires where there are no trees at all. The 34-Complex (283,095 acres) and Rhea (67778 acres) fires burned in grassland/cropland after a sustained drought in western Oklahoma. High wind and dry fuel made the fires difficult to control

The top photograph on the right (before and after) shows a mobile home park that burned completely, with the fire going from structure to structure. The bottom photo shows heavy foliage on the tree line behind another mobile home park, the fire having travelled quickly across the ground under the trees. These are not the skinny, burned sticks commonly seen after a forest fire.

The photo to the left shows a possible Trump-dream of what a forest should look like... massive clearcuts on timberland just north of the Camp Fire.



Photo: Weather Channel



This is Insider.com

Chapter Board Elections 2018-2019

The vote for the following slate of candidates will take place at the December meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor prior to the vote

President: Bill Waycott, (continuing); **For Vice President:** OPEN, nominations will come from the floor; **Treasurer:** Dave Krause, (continuing); **For Secretary:** Cindy Roessler.

ETHNOBOTANY NOTES: Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolium*)

Cathy Chambers

Toyon, *Heteromeles arbutifolium* is a wonderful, hardy, native California evergreen shrub. It can be a good screen in the yard, growing up to 6 feet fairly quickly. It tolerates soils from serpentine to clay, to sand. It is not as flammable as other chaparral shrubs. It is a great forage plant for bees, butterflies, and other insects, as well as birds. You will find it to be a foraging hub in your yard when it is flowering, and then the fruit will feed birds. The red berries were eaten by many native Californians as well. They also contain some cyanide compounds and must be roasted, wilted, or boiled before eaten. The hard wood was used to make many tools including bows. I remember my Mom, an east coast transplant, making wreaths for the door at Christmas. The berries are ripe in red clusters in November and December making it perfect for making holiday decorations.

MEMBERSHIP CORNER Holly Sletteland

The brilliant red berries of the Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) usually herald the advent of holiday season. And they are certainly a gift to many hungry animals in winter. It was thus rather surprising to find two large old shrubs in full bloom at the Fiscalini Ranch just a couple weeks ago. Their blossoms provided a gift of a different kind to dozens of monarch butterflies seeking nectar and water after their long journey from up north. I love native plants, not only for themselves, but for their enormous importance for sustaining wildlife.

Your gifts of membership are what sustain the chapter and ensures our vital work in conservation, education, horticulture and plant science continues to grow and flourish. I want to welcome Francis Glaser and Celeste Doiron, and thank renewing members Leslie & Charles Cohn and Kirsten Nelson.

If you want to have an even bigger impact, consider a gift membership to CNPS for someone special for the holidays. Your recipient will receive all the benefits of membership over the course of a year including Obispoensis, Flora, The Bulletin, and Fremontia newsletters, as well as opportunities to participate in field trips, informational programs and our annual CNPS banquet. It's easy to do. You can fill out the form on the back of the newsletter and send a check or go to our web site and click on About > Join > Join / Renew. You will be directed to the statewide CNPS web site. You can then choose the appropriate gift level and click on the small box that says "I wish to give a gift of membership" above the Comments section. You'll be guided through the rest of the necessary steps to establish the gift. Happy Holidays!

THE GOOD PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE CHAPTER 'HAPPEN' AND HOW TO FIND THEM

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WE ALWAYS NEED PEOPLE TO HELP OUT. OUR MISSION IS VITAL AND OUR FLORA IS AT RISK

Protecting California's Native Flora since 1965

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 journal, *Fremontia*; the quarterly *Flora*, which gives statewide news and announcements of the activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter, *Obispoensis*.



San Luis Obispo Chapter of the
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