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

Miner’s Lettuce
Montia perfoliata

October 2019
(cover) Claytonia perfoliata

Miner’s Lettuce

Heather Johnson has a new watercolor for us to use on the cover of this issue of Obispoensis. One might ask what is the origin of the practice of putting a different plant on the cover of each Obispoensis issue? It all started with the founder of our CNPS chapter, Dr. Robert Hoover. At the beginning of the first CNPS chapter meeting I ever attended (Fall, 1969) Dr. Hoover got up and made a presentation of what he called the “Plant of the Month”. It turned out the plant he chose to discuss was not a native plant or to even be known to exist in the wild. He discussed Franklinia alatamaha or Franklin Tree, a plant that had been collected and described from Georgia during Colonial times but after exhaustive searches hadn’t been found since. Why did he talk about a plant extinct in the wild? It had just appeared on a newly published United States postage stamp!

However, Heather’s cover watercolor is of a plant found throughout California as well as all the surrounding states. One or more of its varieties spread north into British Columbia and South all the way to Central America. The plant is seen on practically every spring field trip but, I’m reluctant to call it common. I prefer to think of it as widespread. Miner’s lettuce prefers shaded, moist, disturbed areas. It tends to be common during the rainy season and spotty other times. In the early spring, when there’s still lots of surface water, it can be found just about anywhere. I have a picture from the Shell Creek area of it growing in the crotch of a blue oak tree.

I also suspect everyone who has any experience with native plants, especially edible native plants, already knew what it is. Yes, it’s most commonly identified around the central coast as miner’s lettuce (Claytonia (Montia) perfoliata). In a book entitled Edible Wild Plants (originally, 1939) by Oliver P. Medsger, that has been in my library since my childhood, has also been called Indian lettuce, or Spanish lettuce and in Europe it’s cultivated under the name of winter purslane. All these names refer to use as a spring green. I suspect the name, miner’s lettuce, is the most recent and probably dates back only to the mid-1800s when California was over-run with miners looking for gold. I also am sure the miner’s diet was mostly tubers, grain, legumes with some meat and whisky. All of these ‘foods’ lacked enough required vitamins and minerals which would have been amply supplied by grabbing a handful of miner’s lettuce leaves on the way to a stream to pan for gold.

Heather’s watercolor is only of a couple of flowering stems which produce the leaves that were used to coin the second part of the scientific name – perfoliata. The situation where a leaf blade base appears to be passed through (perforated) by its stem is said to be perfoliate. The regular leaves are all basal and form a mound a few inches high and wide. Each basal leaf is modestly succulent and is in the shape of the spatula from your kitchen. It has a long tapering base and broad squarish or egg-shaped tip. I suspect it’s these basal leaves that were eaten.

You may also have noticed that there are two possible generic names for this plant – Claytonia and Montia. So, which is the correct genus? Also, if you go to older floras and wildflower books you will find that its botanical family seems to have changed from Portulaccaceae to Montiaceae. The name currently valid according the Jepson Manual, 2nd Ed. Is Claytonia perfoliata and is placed in the Montiaceae family. According to the Jepson Manual, the change in genus and family is referenced to a paper published in 2006. This means that the change is probably based on modern DNA sequence data as well as new technical descriptive data which was then organized using current computer classification techniques. The Jepson Manual also noted that some of the characters used required a microscope with 20X magnification which most of us don’t have. This procedure resulted in miner’s lettuce (along with a couple of other species) being moved from the genus, Montia, to the genus Claytonia which included several species of spring beauties. The remaining species in Montia remained in Montia and a new family was created for them – Montiaceae. Why didn’t the species name (perfoliata) change when the species was moved to a new genus? This is due to another rule of Botanical Nomenclature. When a species is moved from one genus to another, the species epithet moves with it unless the species epithet already exists in the new genus. If it does, the mover must come up with a new name for the species in its new location. Since the epithet, perfoliata, didn’t already exist in Claytonia, the epithet moved with miner’s lettuce’s scientific name to its new location. This rule helps keep track of name changes.

DIRK WALTERS

Moving? No Newsletter? Please Let Us Know Your New Address. Contact <dchippin@calpoly.edu> or write us at P.O. Box 784, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
Here is a brief organizational request. I had a telephone conversation with long time members after our August meeting and the presentation on landscaping with fire resistant natives. I mentioned I did not see them at the meeting and emphasized how pertinent the information was for those of us living in rural and suburban communities. Their immediate response to my comments were “What meeting? I didn’t know there was a meeting.”

At that point, I proceeded to explain that a simple request for information via our website (www.cnppslo.org) would give them access to semi-monthly updates via e-mail, from our chapter, and would have alerted them to the existence of our August meeting. So, for those who rely on the paper edition of the newsletter for all your chapter information, you are missing announcements to members throughout the year available only on computer, tablet and/or smartphone.

To request receipt of these updates, open our chapter’s website (www.cnppslo.org) Home Page, then scroll down until you see the green box on the right hand side, opposite the calendar. Type in your name and e-mail address and check “subscribe”, and you will be listed to receive the chapter updates.

For those who missed the August meeting, Greg Rubin gave a detailed presentation on landscaping with fire resistant natives. Here below, I have provided some of the key points he made during his talk. Of particular note, he mentioned several times that a native garden/landscape surrounding a structure should not be a pure, undisturbed native setting, but rather a well-managed native planting. The critical take-home point here is that a straight, undisturbed chaparral landscape is ten times more likely to ignite than a well-spaced, infrequently hydrated, low growing native landscape.

**Regarding structural considerations**, he made these points:
- no plants up against a structure;
- leave an unplanted “apron” around any structure;
- all windows should be double glazed and metal framed;
- all eaves should be enclosed;
- roofs should be made of non-flammable materials

**Regarding planting considerations**, he made these points:
- 75% of the plants are perennial and evergreen, 25% can be color spots which bloom at different times of the year
- use infrequent, overhead irrigation (not drip) every 7-10 days, similar to the effect of a light rain occurrence
- leave healthy spaces between plants, and make liberal use of rocks and paths
- use well-compacted “gorilla hair” (finely separated redwood bark) as mulch, which when compacted will not burn

**Regarding a list of recommended native species**, he gave this short list with a Southern California focus: Summer Holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia*); Channel Island Ironwood (*Lyonothamnus floribundus*); Bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*); Howard McMinn and Sunset manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos sp.*); Pigeon Point Baccharis (*Baccharis pilularis*); Blue Jeans, Frosty Blue, and Joyce Coulter Ceanothus; Santa Cruz Island Buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*); Wayne Roderick Daisy (*Erigeron “WR”*); California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*).

The CNPS state office has just released the second edition of the Fire Recovery Guide. This extensive guidebook is a treasure trove of information for Californians living in the rural and suburban areas of the state, like the communities of the Central Coast. The guide can be downloaded via this link: <https://www.cnps.org/give/priority-initiatives/fire-recovery>. A hard copy of the guide can be obtained via the state website: <www.cnps.org>.

I’ve received a lot of positive feedback from the August meeting and so we plan to repeat the event in the years to come. Please make sure you have signed up to receive chapter updates via the website to stay informed.

Bill Waycott

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**FIELD TRIPS**

**Sunday, Oct. 20th, 8:30 am, Irish Hills - Froom Creek to Ocean View.** Come explore the trails of the Irish Hills Reserve. Total distance of the hike is 6 miles, with a 900 ft. gain, taking about 3 hours. This trail passes through a wide-range of plant species growing on serpentinite-derived soils, unique to areas around San Luis Obispo. Meet at the trailhead located at the southern end of Madonna Road in San Luis Obispo. Bring water, snacks, and dress in layers for changing weather. A hat and sturdy shoes are advised. The plants, animals, and geology of the area will be discussed during the hike. Contact Bill, 805-459-2103.

WANT COLOR? 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://cnppslo.org](http://cnppslo.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](https://get.adobe.com/reader)
Plant Sale Announcement

With November fast approaching, it’s time once again to ask for volunteers for the plant sale. With last year’s relief from the long-standing drought, hopes are high for another rainy season. I have gone back and looked at rain records based from San Francisco and they show that normally after a drought ends California has two to three years of normal to almost normal rainfall. So keeping this in mind, fall is a great time to plant natives. So I want everyone to tell your friends and neighbors to mark the first Saturday of November (Nov. 2nd) as the plant sale.

As you might guess the plant sale is one of our biggest fundraisers and is run totally on volunteer help. I have many jobs from hard to easy, depending on your abilities, so please contact me at gritlys@gmail.com if you are interested in volunteering. Hours for set-up are from 7am to 9am, plant sale from 9am to 2pm, and clean-up from 2pm to 3pm. Early helpers get first pick on plants. But you are likely to get free plants, if you help at clean-up. Those who want to just come and watch, that is fine too. The more the merrier. In addition to plants, we will have a huge selection of books, posters, t-shirts, native plant seeds; great for early Christmas shopping!

Suzette and I look forward to seeing you all at our October meeting. John and Suzette, Plant Sale co-Chairpersons.

The Garden Corner

As we march closer to fall, it’s time to think about preparing our landscape for the upcoming rains, cold nights and of course weeds. I thought it would also be a good time to think about tearing out overgrown shrubs and trees to replace them with new plants or the same thing.

Our chapter has always targeted our plant sale for November because it is the best time to plant with the winter rains coming, hopefully. But in a perfect world we can expect rains in January through March. So, what to do? Well, here are a couple of thoughts.

First, its time to take a walk through the garden and look closely at what you have already. Are you happy? Are some plants old and need to be replaced? Take a note pad with you and write down your thoughts. Sometimes I like to do this after work, when I’m feeling relaxed. I look at the yard and think to myself, “What would look really cool here?” This could take weeks, but knowing that the rains are coming, now is the time to, as my Dad used to say ‘Johnny, put your nose to the grindstone’.

Second, prepare for the weeds, and this is best done by mulching. There are so many ways to mulch and there are some articles that say mulch can encourage weeds. In my experience, when mulch is applied too thin it is ineffective. A thick layer of three inches will put an end to most annual weeds. Perennials, such as Bermuda grass, will not be controlled with mulch, sorry.

Further, it’s important to keep an eye on pests. Many pests will show up when you least expect them. I’m going straight to Neem oil now, with a soap spray every other treatment; very effective for spider mites, thrips and aphids. For loopers, which are prone to attack oaks, I use Bacillus thuringiensis. Spray at night, because it breaks down in the sun. It only controls loopers; therefore, it won’t hurt other insects.

This brings me to my last point. Whenever we spray in the garden, even with Neem oil that is totally organic, we need to watch for bees. If you see bees, the rule is to not spray. Spray late in the day when the bees have returned to their hives.

I’ve covered a lot. So until next time, Happy Gardening; John Nowak, Plant Sale Chairperson.

Building a Chapter Photo Collection

Our chapter would like to have a high quality photo of every species in our county, as will be described in Dr. David Keil’s Flora. We would like as many pictures as possible to be usable both for scientific purposes and for use in digital media, and as such we would like to be the owners of the photos under copyright. All photo donations would retain and post the name of the photographer in any use. Most photos found via CalFlora cannot be used in any item for sale, such as digital or printed books. If you would like to donate, we can start with these species of Amaranthus: A. blitoides, A. californicus, A. hybridus and A. palmeri. Send photos to David Chipping <dchippin@calpoly.edu>.
Seed Exchange, October 3rd, 6-7pm

The summer has flown. It seems like I was just admiring the blooms on my Clarkia. Now their seeds are in little packages ready for the seed exchange and I am on to watching the blossoms on my many Eriogonums. I am waiting for the seeds to ripen so those can end up in bags for the exchange as well. In between I have been collecting from Chlorogalum, Ceanothus, Sage, Sidalcea, Silene and numerous other plants.

I hope many of you have enjoyed watching the progression on your plants and that you are capturing that last stage of seed maturity before they disperse. Some of the plants that I have been nurturing out back that I am hoping to get in the ground this fall were from seeds that I obtained at our last seed exchange.

Think about what you hope to find at the seed exchange. What is that plant that you just can’t get at the nursery or our plant sale? Some of our members may be growing it at home and contributing seed to the exchange. As always you are welcome to take seed without contributing anything. The purpose of the seed exchange is to encourage the growing and planting of our native plants. Seed will not be sold at the exchange but extra seed may be packaged up for sale at our plant sale in November.

Cindy Gaulin has agreed to take on the set up for the sale this year. Seed may be brought in bulk, preferably cleaned but not absolutely necessary. We ask that seed be identified with Genus and species, location found and that it only come from California natives. Please bring a picture of the plant because not all of us recognize plant names, Latin or common. There will be empty seed packets available.

I hope to see you there at the Veteran’s Memorial Building on October 3rd from 6 to 7 pm before the chapter meeting.

Marti Rutherford

Conservation Notes

There has not been a lot of progress on the two large projects of greatest immediate concern. Chapter members attended several meetings, one of which was at the Coastal Commission, on plans to build a southern access to Oceano Dunes State Vehicle Recreation Area. There is zero indication that State Parks is changing it’s mind concerning building a campground and access roads adjacent to Oso Flaco Lake and its special, protected dune and wetland habitat. When the Environmental Impact Report is released, we will have greater opportunity to comment. The other issue, the large development at the mouth of Froom Creek at the Los Osos Valley Rd/ Hwy 101 junction, is having issues with wetland protection, and we are still awaiting an EIR on that.
New Operating Guidelines Approved by the Chapter Board
Approval by Membership sought at November meeting

Oh boy! An article about the changes we made to the Bylaws! How exciting! (snore…) Below is a brief summary of the changes made to the Bylaws, and the main change is that the “Bylaws” are now called “Operating Guidelines.” The Board approved these on May 13, 2019, and we hope the membership will follow with approval in November.

Article I: We added reference to the Statewide CNPS organization being a 501 (c) 3 organization, with Bylaws; we added the Mission of the Society; and added the geographical area of the SLO Chapter.

Article II: Made grammatical changes; Added a purpose, which is: to regulate Chapter affairs such that they are compatible with the Society’s articles of incorporation and bylaws; and added two objectives:

- Increasing public awareness of the importance of California’s native flora through public education;
- Contributing to the Society’s governance by selecting a delegate to the Chapter Council;

Article III: No changes

Article IV: Section 4 and 5 regarding Nomination and Elections moved to Article IX and revised.

Article V: Officers. Clarified the duties of the President, namely, that the President is the primary representative of the Chapter in negotiations with other organizations, unless this representation is expressly delegated to another Board member. Added duties to the Secretary’s position of ensuring the posting of minutes to the administrative file. Clarified and added to the duties of the Treasurer, including maintaining the financial accounts of the Chapter.

Article VI. Board. Changed “Executive Board” to “Chapter Board”; Added reference to “Individual Contributors”; Changed the notice for meetings of the Chapter Board from 5 days to 7 days.

Article VII. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees: This section was revised considerably, both in terms of format and content. We defined standing and ad hoc committees, named 7 standing committees (and at least 4 ad hoc), and clarified the responsibilities of each committee. There was extensive discussion about what our major emphasis was, and will be in the future, and we decided to split up the former committees into key standing committees and recognize the work of Individual Contributors, with the goal being to be as inclusive as possible in the makeup of the Board.

New Section: Article VIII. Individual Contributors. We clarified the responsibilities of these important roles that tend to be carried out by individuals as opposed to committees.

Article IX. Nomination. We attempted to clarify the steps in the Nomination and Election process.

Added Article X. Limitation of Authority. No member of the Board binds the Chapter without Board approval. Lastly, text relating to Chapter Status and Commitments was removed as obsolete.

Melissa Mooney

TIMETABLE FOR CHAPTER APPROVAL OF GUIDELINES:
OCTOBER: POSTING OF CHANGES AND READ-THROUGH AT OCTOBER MEETING
NOVEMBER: VOTE BY THOSE PRESENT AT THE NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETING

Saturday, October 12, 2019, 9am – 1pm

This CNPS-SLO chapter workshop will provide a short lecture followed by field trips to local native plant gardens.

Learn about:

- Which plants tend to be available and work well
- Selecting appropriate plants based on site conditions
- Plant/soil relationships

Morning refreshments and coffee will be provided

Class size is limited and advanced registration is required. Registration is open now and ends October 4th, 2019. Cost is $30 for members and $40 for non-members. We will meet at UC Cooperative Extension (2156 Sierra Way # C, San Luis Obispo) for the lecture and first garden tour. Other garden tours will be at native plant enthusiasts’ homes in SLO. Questions? Please email David Krause dkincmbria@aol.com

Please arrive by 8:45 for check-in and breakfast refreshments. Participants are encouraged to bring a sack lunch to enjoy at the last tour stop. Reserve your spot and register using your credit card by clicking this link: http://cnpsslo.org/2019/08/landscaping-with-california-native-plants/
Invasive Species Report: Italian Thistle *Carduus pycnocephalus*

A member of the Asteraceae family, Italian thistle is an annual herb native to the Mediterranean region and is widespread in California, Oregon and Washington, however it is not found east of the Sierra Nevada. It was accidentally introduced into United States (Batla et al. 1981) and California (Goeden 1974) in the 1930s. Robbins (1940) reports it as early as 1912 near Fort Bragg in Mendocino County. It forms a deep taproot and prefers fertile, well-drained soils but is found in disturbed areas, roadsides, pastures, meadows and grasslands. It dominates sites and crowds out native species and discourages wildlife from entering infested areas. It grows well in oak savanna and can carry grass fires to tree canopies. Although Italian thistle can grow to over six feet it is usually knee high and is often present in clusters. Its leaves are white-woolly below, hairless-green above and deeply cut into two to five pairs of spiny lobes. Stems are slightly winged. The thimble-sized flower heads in pastel shades of rose, pink to purple flowers are clustered in groups of two to five covered with densely matted, cobwebby hairs. Italian thistle is bisexual and a single plant can produce 20,000 seeds in one season (Wheatley and Collett 1981). Its light seeds are spread by lodging (bent or broken stems in contact with the ground), wind, vehicles, and animals and also may spread from seed-contaminated hay and soil from infested quarries. To remove Italian thistle dig them out 2-4 inches below the soil before flowering. Mowing is a waste of time, in fact, plants cut 4 days after flowering can still produce viable seed. Italian thistle seedbank may last up to 10 years. Intensive grazing by sheep and goats is effective. A pre-emergent and growth regulator such as Milestone is one of the most effective herbicides for thistles and generally does not harm grass. Did I say don’t touch Italian thistle? Wow does it hurt! Use your thickest gloves!

Mark Skinner: Invasive Species Chair

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**Membership Corner**

Welcome New and Renewing Members: Thank you. We are transitioning the chapter membership chair at this time, and so if you joined or renewed after June, your name might be possibly be missing. Have no fear though, you ARE in the system. We hope to recognize and thank everyone in the November issue. For issues, contact LynneDee@althouseandmeade.com

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**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 California Native Plant Society
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