

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY San Diego Chapter Newsletter



January 13-17, 2015 Early Registration is Open!

Event Dates

Jan 13-14 – Preconference workshops and field trips
Jan 15-17 – Conference

Jan 16 – Banquet

- * Over 200 accomplished presenters in 22 sessions.
- * Research and Chapter Poster sessions.
- * Special Student session.
- * Visit the website for more, more, more info!

Venue

DoubleTree by Hilton, San Jose 2050 Gateway Place, San Jose, CA 95110

Visit the conference website for more info, including the conference sessions and highlights:

http://www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2015



Otay Mesa mint (*Pogogyne nudiuscula*). Photo by B. Stephenson

No Chapter Meeting in August

FALL PLANT SALE

Saturday, October 18 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. CNPS Members Only 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Everyone

Casa Del Prado Courtyard

(across from the west entrance to the Natural History Museum)

Balboa Park

Preordering for the plant sale will be available only for CNPS members from Sept. 1 – Sept. 15. Details will be announced on the Chapter website and listserve.

The plant sale committee is always looking for help. Some jobs can be done on your own time while others work in groups. It's a great way to meet people who have an interest in native plants and get more involved with the chapter. Following is a list of tasks but there are more, so just contact us if you want to get more involved:

- Packaging and labeling seeds
- Growing and watering plants at a nursery near central San Diego
- Publicizing and promoting our sale, contacting news outlets, etc.
- Food coordination: Setting up food for the volunteers on plant sale day, solicit donations, etc.

If you'd like to get involved with one of the chapter's largest fundraisers, please join us. Plant Sale Committee Chairs are **Carolyn Martus** & **Mary Kelly**, contact them at plantsale@cnpssd.org.

BOARD MEETING

SPECIAL TIME for August only: Wednesday, August 6, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. 4010 Morena Blvd, Suite 100, San Diego (Thomas Guide 1248 C4). CNPS-SD Board meetings are always the first Wednesday of the month, except when the 1st falls on a holiday. Chairpersons of CNPS-SD committees are encouraged to attend and other members are welcome to attend as observers. If you wish to discuss an issue, please email president@cnpssd.org to get your issue on the agenda.

CNPS-SD LIBRARY

The CNPS Library is having some growing pains, since it hasn't been open since 1989! We have books, CNPS newsletters, older Fremontias and an assortment of older newsletters from other related sources. At this point anyone is welcomed to browse before and after the Chapter meetings or by appointment, but only Board members and committee chairs can check books out. We have great archival papers if anyone is doing research. So, stop by the library and see what we have to offer. Contact me, the new librarian, at Pfishtein@cox.net.

~ Patricia Fishtein, Chapter Librarian

TECOLOTE CANYON NATURAL PARK



August 3; 8 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Tecolote Nature Center on the first Sunday of the month. Wear sun protection and comfortable walking shoes; bring water. Rain at 8 a.m. cancels the walk. Directions: exit I-5 at Seaworld / Tecolote exit. Go east (away from Mission Bay) on Tecolote, past the ball fields, along the driveway to the very end. Free and open to the public, and parking is also free.

RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER ONLINE

To receive your newsletter via email, please contact us at: enewsletter@cnpssd.org

Save the environment by not receiving a paper copy AND your newsletter will be in **COLOR** and have embedded links!

CONSERVATION

Conservation versus (?) Invasive Species (?)

Right now, I'm sitting here figuring out how to respond to the City of Encinitas's proposed invasive plant policy. I like it quite a bit, and I'm going to support it going into law. However, there are a couple of details that are bugging me enough to inspire this column

The details are two species: *Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *Iyonii* (Catalina cherry) and *Limonium perezii* (Perez' sea lavender). These two are on the list of invasive species, and I've got a bit of a problem with them being included.

Catalina cherry is native to the Channel Islands and a small area in Baja, and it's a close relative of the hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*) of the mainland chaparral. It's also a common landscaping tree, and apparently (from my internet searching), horticulturalists since Luther Burbank have been goofing around, hybridizing Catalina cherries and hollyleaf cherries to make "improved" horticultural plants.

As a result, we're now in a weird position. On the one hand, Catalina cherry (and artificial hybrids) are promoted as drought tolerant native trees. On the other hand, it looks like some in the invasive plant removal crowd now think of Catalina cherry as a danger to native hollyleaf cherries, because it will contaminate their genetics and hybridize them out of existence.

Yes, that's a bit mocking, but if we're talking about Encinitas, we need to ask some difficult, perhaps mocking, questions. Where is the endangered population of hollyleaf cherries in Encinitas that's being threatened by Catalina cherries? I assume it's there due to its inclusion in the ordinance, but looking at the San Diego Plant Atlas, I don't see a record of *Prunus ilicifolia* of any subspecies from within the City of Encinitas.

The bigger problem is that there are a lot more hollyleaf cherries in the wild than there are Catalina cherries. If anything, I'm worried about hollyleaf cherries swamping out Catalina cherries, and I know that this concern has been expressed in the past.

Thing is, Catalina cherries are bigger and (at least in my experience) make better street trees in cultivation. It's a problem for CNPS-SD's native plant proponents to be telling people to plant more Catalina cherries in their yards and streets, while our weed warriors tell those same people to kill them because they're invasive weeds.

It also reeks of the kind of genetic purity paranoia that we really don't need for any species. Catalina cherry is native to Los Angeles County (Catalina Island) and Orange County (San Clemente Island), as well as Baja. Is anyone really going to speak up and say that it's not native to the California Floristic Province, and we don't want its kind around here? The only good reason to restrict its horticultural use is if there's solid evidence of wide-scale hybridization between hollyleaf cherries and Catalina cherries, and that the offspring have problems surviving (and note, they're the same species, so interbreeding is considered normal). If there's good evidence that this is happening, bring it forward. I'm still looking for that evidence.

We need a single message here. Is Catalina cherry good or bad? I'd suggest that, as a street tree in Encinitas, it's good. I don't see its bad side yet, although my opinion could easily be changed by evidence.

As for Perez' sea lavender, it's definitely non-native, and it's definitely spreading in some areas of sea bluff and road margins. It's also widely sold in the nursery trade. So why should we care if it's treated as a weed?

Well, in its native range (Tenerife, in the Canary Islands), according to the IUCN red list, its entire wild population consists of about 280 plants in one goat pasture of 1.25 km², and apparently those plants are not doing well. There are thousands more Perez' sea lavender in San Diego than there are in its native range.

Currently, researchers (with whom I'm working) suspect that the difference may be that the Tenerife plants are being grazed by goats and hammered by disease, while neither is happening here in San Diego. That's a hypothesis they'd like to test next year, but in the meantime, it's a minor weed here, and an unprotected threatened plant in its native range.

Is it okay to eliminate Perez' sea lavender from our coasts? Unless it is protected in its native range, in coming years, it may turn out that the only place it's found is in cultivation. At that point it loses any legal protection, and if we get rid of it, the species goes extinct. Is that what we want to do?

Now this might all sound hypothetical, but there's another problem that feeds in: climate change. Our notions about what's native and what's invasive depend on the idea that plants have a static range. If they're outside that range, they're invasive, while if they're inside that range, they're native. Unfortunately, with severe enough climate change, which is what we're going to get if we continue with business as usual, every species is probably going to have to move to find new habitat or die trying. We're only beginning to see these

range shifts happen, but unless we get human carbon emissions under control, range shifts will accelerate over the next century, as will extinctions that occur when those range shifts fail to happen.

What do we do about island plants during climate change? I've already noted with the Catalina cherry that island plants are more easily ghettoized onto their particular islands (and note that while Catalina cherry grows on the mainland, those populations are in Mexico, which also makes it look non-native). It's not clear whether Catalina cherry will be able to survive climate change on Catalina or San Clemente, and it's rather more likely that Perez' sea lavender will not be able to survive on Tenerife. Do we let them go extinct, or do we try to help them survive as non-natives?

It's not a simple problem. It's taken most of a decade for Encinitas to come up with its invasive plant policy, and it will take even longer for them to come up with a more sophisticated policy that deals with climate change. CNPS needs to be part of that discussion.

We need to talk about this, to figure out what conservation means in an era of climate change. In the meantime I'm writing a comment letter asking them to take Catalina cherry and Perez' sea lavender off the list of invasives pending further research. We'll see what happens.

~ Frank Landis, Conservation Chair

NATIVE PLANT HORTICULTURE

A CNPS Nursery within City Farmer's Nursery: A New Propagation Project

A note of introduction. I'm **Jim Wadman** and I am the Chairman of the CNPS-SD Propagation Committee. I see the committee's main function as producing plants for multiple "clients" who share CNPS's vision of native habitat restoration. Along the way I think that most of the members also feel that we get an enriching education through our informational exchanges. I've had the very good luck to not have to recruit volunteers, as enough people seek us out to join. This has had the unfortunate side effect of me not actively communicating to the rest of our chapter what the Propagation Committee members are doing, except

during Plant Sale time. This article is meant to partially address that.

We have been producing plants for several years with the City of San Diego. The plants have been used in restorations in and around Balboa Park, in particular. We also have plants that we've grown at the SD City Nursery that will be ready when the site for the new Sunset Cliffs Demonstration Garden has finished going through the approval process.

In the past we have also grown natives for the annual plant sale in October. In order to continue this work, and several other non-City of San Diego uses, we've had to seek a new location for a nursery.

Dave Fleitner was instrumental in pitching the idea of asking for space at the private business called The City Farmer's Nursery. This is owned and operated by Bill Tall. Bill agreed, and he and I worked out an understanding of how this would work. He had a space picked out that gets sunlight and he provides the water, and we do the rest. This agreement was formalized on paper as a memorandum of understanding (MOU). It was then approved by the CNPS-SD Board of Directors (with some adjustments along the way), sent to the state Board and approved conditionally, and finally approved by the underwriting insurance company for CNPS.

There were several other important points of the MOU. One is that we aren't competing with City Farmer's Nursery by having ongoing daily sales. Currently we only do the one sale a year, but Bill said he was fine with us doing additional sporadic special events sales, just not continual ones. We will also be acknowledging Mr. Tall's contribution by posting the following verbiage at the site, at our plant sales in October (I asked for and received Carolyn Martus' permission before agreeing on this point), and allowing its use in any advertising he may run;

"City Farmers Nursery located at 4832 Home Ave @ Euclid Ave. in City Heights has become a partner with CNPS in using a part of the nursery to help us propagate plants for our projects and yearly sale. They have a totally organic run nursery and a nice collection of native plants for sale as well. We thank them for partnering up with us in our efforts to have a place for our propagation efforts. See more about them at www.cityfarmersnursery.com"

I'm happy to report that on July 7 we had our first work group meeting at the site. Weed and debris removal, along with some hand tool leveling of the ground, were the main tasks. I would like to repeat something that I mention too infrequently; the volunteers of the Propagation Committee are a capable and dedicated

group of people who operate well together and are knowledgeable. Their teamwork really shined in getting a lot done in a short time. This is typical of their work ethic, and I really appreciate them.

Next comes the creation and installation of a work table with lockable storage, a misting "house" with automated watering, and our first shade "house," also with automated watering. I use the word "house" in quotes because unlike in a traditional nursery these functional modules will not have much room for a person to move in or about. There will be room (and a need for) two more of the shade "house" modules. I have additional future plans for this space to facilitate plant production, but those will have to wait for now.

With some ambition and focus, we may have these simple facilities running within a month. I like to think that I'm a thrifty person by nature, and I've wanted to keep the spending on this setup to a minimum. I've been scrounging the free classifieds and asking CNPS-SD members for help getting some of the equipment and supplies. We have received some donations and I thank the donors. In particular I would like to thank James Rader for his donation of a digital watering timer, which will be used in the mist house. This donation saved us a lot of money. I'm still seeking the donation of some hardware, in particular clean, lidded, galvanized trash cans, galvanized pipe, drip irrigation supplies, and ongoing expendables like perlite, coir (or peat moss), and also gardening tools. I have a more complete list that I will gladly email to anyone who thinks they might have something to donate. Please contact me at propagation@cnpssd.org.

~ Jim Wadman, Propagation Chair

Book Review – Native Treasures

There is an ease of depth that comes from someone who absolutely loves their topic of conversation. When it comes to California's native flora, Nevin Smith cannot hold back his sense of wonderment, love and joy. Nevin Smith's book *Native Treasures* is the personal account of a talented and highly respected horticulturalist who has spent a lifetime exploring the California wilds. What results is a very insightful book that reads more like a journal than a how-to practical gardening guide, which is exactly its charm. *Native Treasures* is the distillation of a few of Nevin Smith's "favorite things" with each chapter offering a brief overview of the genus, their common features, use and culture before diving into the nitty

gritty of individual species and cultivars. However, the uncontested value of this book lies in Nevin's talent as a writer and his ability to weave the finer, practical details of horticulture amongst an eloquent, personal experience of discovering the plant within its native terrain. It's the kind of effortless writing and intuitive plant knowledge that can leave you a little jealous! *Natives Treasures* is a great book for anyone wanting to peruse the California flora through the vantage point of one of California's best horticulturalists.

~ Zach Tanner, Member

Work Parties

Old Town Native Plant Landscape

Saturday, August 9 - Work Party - 1 to 3 p.m.

Come help other volunteers tend the Old Town Native Plant Landscape. Bring sun protection, gloves, drinking water, and your favorite tools, or share ours. The landscape is opposite the Old Town Trolley/Train depot, corner of Congress and Taylor Streets near the I-5/I-8 interchange. If you drive, you can park for free in the shade of a tree in the Cal-Trans lot across Taylor Street from the native plant landscape. Questions? Contact Kay at fieldtrips@cnpssd.org.

Point Loma Native Plant Garden

August 2 & 17, 9:00 a.m. – **noon.** Rain cancels; bring water; no facilities; tools/supplies provided. Usually the first Saturday and third Sunday of each month. Contact: Richard@sandiegoriver.org

BOTANY

A Second Maple for San Diego County

For those of us plant lovers who grew up in this area, deciduous trees bring a special fascination, particularly those that are native, beautiful, limited in distribution and representing vegetation from previous times. When they are members of the genus of maples, they seem especially noteworthy. In addition to the Big Leaf Maple (Acer macrophyllum) I discussed in the newsletter last fall, San Diego County has another species of maple, only it doesn't look like what people think of as a maple. The Box Elder (Acer negundo) is a maple tree without the

typical maple leaf form. Instead of a single leaf shaped like a star with a flattened top, the leaves are split into three and more leaflets. In San Diego County, it has an interesting distribution as it is currently understood.

In San Diego County Acer negundo was first found growing along the creek below Doane Pond in Palomar Mountain State Park back in 1940. It still remained somewhat obscure because even though it was discovered before her book was published, it was not listed in Ethel Bailey Higgins' 1949 "Annotated distributional list of the ferns and flowering plants of San Diego County", though Acer macrophyllum was. However, it is sometimes somewhat inconspicuous even though it is growing in plain sight. According to the Berkeley Herbarium Consortium records, it was discovered on Palomar Mountain ten years after its relative Acer macrophyllum was found in the much more remote and isolated parts of Castro Canyon. negundo was later discovered in La Posta in the southern portion of the County and much later still in 1989 on Hot Springs Mountain. However, the really remarkable find was made by Jerilyn Hirshberg in Coleman Creek near downtown Julian in 2007 along a road that is driven by thousands of people every day. Acer negundo is visible from the highway, yet no one collected it there before she found it. Whether those were planted would be a valid question because plantings have taken place in many areas, but in Coleman Creek it occurs along a natural drainage that fits the distribution that one would expect from this tree and there are a number of them growing there.



Left: Box Elder (Acer negundo) along the left side of the trail. Below: Detail photo of leaves. Photos by Tom Oberbauer.



While the plants from California are sometimes referred to as *Acer negundo* var. *californicum*, though not in the latest Jepson Manual, the overall distribution of *Acer negundo* is quite unusual for a maple. It has a much wider distribution than any of the other maple species since it occurs over most of North America from Canada to New York, to California, and it even occurs as isolated

populations in Guatemala but it doesn't naturally occur up the coast of Oregon and Washington like its relative *Acer macrophyllum* does (Overton 2014). However, fossil locations of *Acer negundo* and its close relatives have been found on the Columbia Plateau and central and eastern Oregon and Washington from the Miocene and Pliocene (Robichaux 1980). Though in modern times it has become naturalized in those areas from intentional plantings, for some reason, it died out in there after the Pliocene. Could it have been as a result of the effects of the pluvial maximum periods when climatic conditions could have forced it southward? However, in the central part of its range, it is growing far into Canada where glaciers would have existed. It is difficult to say why it died out in the Pacific Northwest before modern times.

Acer negundo is a common riparian species in parts of northern and central California and grows in nice stands along the Santa Ynez River Valley on Vandenberg Air Force Base where I first saw it. The Box Elders from California are stated as growing generally 20 to 50 feet tall but the Register of Big Trees lists the record tree for the overall species at 76 feet tall with a 67-foot spread in Missouri. The location along Doane Creek on Palomar Mountain has trees that are easily over 50 feet tall or maybe quite a bit taller, but with a very slender spread.

Acer negundo is a dioecious species with both male and female trees. While maple wood is often considered of high quality and strength, Box Elder wood is softer and spongy and is not very good for firewood. It has what would be considered a relatively short life span of no more than 75 to 100 years (Rosario 1988). However, it is generally known to produce prolific viable seeds, though it will also stump sprout after mechanical disturbance. With its riparian distribution, it is not as likely to burn as Acer macrophyllum, which grows on slopes in some areas as well as in drainage bottoms. While it is often not considered with the same reverence as other maples, Acer negundo produces sap that has been tapped to make syrup (Peattie 1953). The stems are sticky and the leaves of plants that grow below the Box Elder may have a crystalized surface that appears to be the result of dried sugar water.

In addition to the naturalized trees in the Pacific Northwest, *Acer negundo* has become naturalized in Maine and Nova Scotia and parts of Europe and Russia where it is considered an invasive (Porte et al. 2011, Invasive Species Compendium 2013). Its introduction dates to the 1600s in parts of Europe and it has gradually expanded so that it is now a widespread weed tree in many riparian areas in Germany, Poland and over to the Ukraine and Russia. While it isn't as great a producer of sugary sap as some of the other true maples, Box Elder

honey is harvested in Poland and other areas of its range due to the production of its flowers.

There are a number of cultivars, including one that has mostly yellow leaves, but there have been at various times more than half a dozen varieties named just from the area of the United States and Canada, with additional varieties in the southern range in Mexico and Guatemala.

In San Diego County, it typically grows in riparian areas above 3,000 feet in elevation. Associated species include *Alnus rhombifolia* (White Alder), various willows (*Salix* spp.) and *Fraxinus velutina* (Velvet Ash or Arizona Ash). It can be distinguished from the ash by the fact that the ash normally has more than three leaflets and the Box Elder usually has three with more on occasion. The leaflets on the Box Elder are semi-pointed and somewhat serrate-edged while the ash leaflets are more rounded. In my observation, the ash trees in San Diego County have slightly more yellow in the green coloration of the leaves, but that could have simply been an observation due to specific seasonal conditions.

The last weekend in June of this year, I drove up to Palomar Mountain and hiked down to look at the Box Elders. They grow in one of the most idyllic locations in San Diego County where the greenness is overwhelming. Along the trail, Rubus parviflorus (Thimbleberry), Frageria vesca (Wild Strawberry), and Rubus ursinus (California Blackberry) grow with Pteridium aquilinum (Bracken Fern) in the midst of Amelanchier utahensis (Western Serviceberry) and Euonymus occidentalis var. parishii (San Diego Burning Bush), and Alnus rhombifolia and Cornus occidentalis (Creek Dogwood) and Salix lasiolepis (Arroyo Willow). These are in the bottom of the stream but surrounded by Calocedrus decurrens (Incense Cedar), Abies concolor (White Fir), Quercus kelloggii (California Black Oak), Quercus chrysolepis (Canyon Live Oak) and *Pinus ponderosa* (Ponderosa Pine) a little farther down the trail. The average precipitation at this location is at least 40 inches per rainfall season based on the data from the Palomar Ranger Station, and even in this drought year, the stream was flowing. A day later, I drove through Julian and observed the Coleman Creek population with all of its green brightness.

We may not yet know the entire distribution of this tree in San Diego County. It may grow in some isolated or even not so isolated montane riparian habitats in the County where there is plenty of moisture. We should all keep our eyes open to its presence anywhere in the Cuyamaca Mountains, Mount Laguna, Volcan Mountain or even near Pine Valley, anywhere nicely developed riparian habitats exist. At the moment, it also appears to be a species that does not go farther south in the

Peninsular Ranges than San Diego County, though it grows in Central America along the main Cordillera. Like the other species more common in northern areas, at least along the west coast, it must have been more widespread during periods when rainfall was greater during the Pleistocene. The locations in San Diego County where *Acer negundo* persists are representatives of a different time but it does seem to occur in some of the most lush woodlands that we have in this County.

~ Tom Oberbauer, Chapter President

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Box elder (*Acer negundo*) leaves and fruit. Photo by Tom Oberbauer.

The CNPS-SD Newsletter is generally published 12 times a year. The newsletter is not peer reviewed and any opinions expressed are those of the author identified at the end of each notice or article. The newsletter editor may edit the submittal to improve accuracy, improve readability, shorten articles to fit the space, and reduce the potential for legal challenges against CNPS. If an article, as edited, is not satisfactory to the author, the author can appeal to the board. The author has the final say on whether the article, as edited, is printed in the newsletter. Submissions are due by the 10th of the month preceding the newsletter; that is, March 10 for the April newsletter, etc. Please send submittals to newsletter@cnpssd.org.



Annuals, like these Chinese houses (Collinsia heterophylla), add a lot of color to native plant gardens in the spring. In San Diego County the species grows naturally in shady places on north slopes, under trees, etc. It is easy to grow from seed and is known to self-sow each season. Scatter the seeds on loosened, weed free soil and then compress the seeds into the dirt. Do not cover seeds with dirt. Photo by Bobbie Stephenson at the Garden

RELATED ACTIVITIES

2014 Cal-IPC Symposium

"Wildland Weeds & Water" Oct. 8-11, 2014 – CSU Chico

Registration is open for this annual symposium, which features presentations and discussion groups on the latest information in land management in these times of drought. For more information see http://www.calipc.org/symposia/index.php.

CNPS-SD Calendar August 2014

8/2: Point Loma Native Garden Work Party, p.5

8/3: Tecolote Canyon Walk, p. 2

8/6: **Board Meeting**, p. 2

8/9: Old Town Native Landscape Work Party, p.5

8/17: Point Loma Native Garden Work Party, p.5

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	Stu	_Student or Limited Income \$25;Individual \$45;Family or Library \$75	
	Plant Lover \$100;Patron \$300;Benefactor \$600;Mariposa Lily \$1,50		ily \$1,500
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CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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