



THE PAINTBRUSH

MAY – JUNE 2004 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Sat., May 1, 11:00 am *Cushenbury Carbonate Flora* field trip

Thurs., May 6, 7:30 pm: *Chapter Board Meeting* at Eaton Canyon NC

Sun., May 9, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Gabi & Cliff McLean

Thurs., May 27, 7:30 pm: *Recovery from the Flames* by Terry Keller

Sun., June 13, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Eva Morgan

Thurs., June 24, 7:30 pm: *Growing a Bird-Friendly Garden with California Native Plants* by Melanie Baer-Keeley

Thurs. Aug. 5, 7:30 pm: *Chapter Board Meeting* at Eaton Canyon NC

THERE'S NO EXCUSE

by *Kathy LaShure*

It was one of those “lemons into lemonade” weeks. First, my back gave out in a major way, just as I was finishing sifting some lovely new compost—ow! Then the weather turned decidedly sullen with lightening, thunder, and, admittedly needed, rain. It was not a week for hiking. What to do on our day off? Fortunately the *LA Times* had run a piece on the botanical watercolors of A. R. Valentien. So that Friday we headed down to the San Diego Natural History Museum.

San Diego has always been a vacation town for me. Growing up in 1950s Phoenix with truly scorching summers meant escape was necessary at some point. Many Phoenicians made San Diego's beaches their goal, my family among them. So, for me even a day trip to SoCal's second largest city, feels like a vacation, all the more so when Balboa Park is the final destination.

The storminess stayed to the east that day and it was a lovely drive, complete with gloriously blooming Giant Coreopsis along one of the freeway cuts south of Camp Pendleton. We arrived in time for lunch and instead of our usual picnic treated ourselves to a delicious, relaxing lunch at *The Prado* in the heart of the park's museum complex. Then we strolled down to the Natural History Museum.

As one of the lecturers for the docent training program at The Gamble House in Pasadena, I was familiar with A. R. Valentien's work as an illustrator for Rookwood Pottery, the premier Arts & Crafts era (roughly 1895-1915) art pottery concern. I also knew that he had left Cincinnati for San Diego sometime after the turn of the last century. But I was not prepared for the exquisite watercolors on the Museum walls.

Here were 80 of the 1,094 paintings that Valentien completed between 1908 and 1918. Commissioned by Ellen Browning Scripps to paint California's wildflowers, he managed to portray 1,500 species over the decade he traveled around the state. This was a remarkable achievement considering that neither artist nor patron was a trained botanist. His years of experience at Rookwood translated well to the medium of watercolors. As curator Margaret Dykens observes, the individual plants appear spontaneously done—organic and fluid. And yet they are so accurately portrayed that Museum staff could determine in almost every case not only the

(Continued on page 3)

A BIG THANK YOU

from Kathy LaShure & the Chapter Board

Thanks to Graham Bothwell who graciously stepped forward at the March program, responding to my suggestion that Chapter computer-literate members might use their machines for Chapter activities. Graham is the new Membership whiz, keeping track of correct data so that each of you receives this newsletter.

However my plea for a new Chapter Secretary brought no volunteers. So I repeat myself. Would someone be willing to take on this not very time-consuming job? It involves taking minutes at the quarterly (Feb., May, Aug., Oct.) Board meetings and distributing the minutes to Board members. This has been done largely via email. The Secretary also writes thank you's to program presenters. Surely there's a Chapter member who's comfortable listening to others and using a word processing program.



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Plant Lover - \$100; Patron - \$250;
Bristlecone - \$1000.

CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon Nature Center (map on back cover) on the fourth Thursday of the month with the exception of Nov. (5th Thurs.).

Informal plant identification and social time from 7:00 to 7:30 pm;
programs start promptly at 7:30 pm.

NOTE: no programs or Plant Walks in July or Aug. See you in September!

BOARD MEETINGS

Any member interested in helping with Chapter activities is welcome!

Thurs., May 6, 7:30 pm: Chapter Board Meeting at Eaton Canyon N. C.

Thurs. Aug. 5, 7:30 pm: Chapter Board Meeting at Eaton Canyon N. C.

PROGRAMS

Thurs., May 27, 7:30 pm: *Recovery from the Flames* by Terry Keller, Associate Professor at Rio Hondo College, assisted by other Chapter members. In September of 2002, the Williams fire burned over 38,000 acres of the San Gabriel Mountains, including portions above San Dimas. The following spring brought resprouting of many of the burned shrubs and a proliferation of fire-following annuals. Terry lives very close to the fire line and his pictures and account of the fire and its aftermath are from that "up close and personal" perspective. Come to see the rebirth of the scorched earth in San Dimas Canyon.

Thurs., June 24, 7:30 pm: *Growing a Bird-Friendly Garden with California Native Plants* by Melanie Baer-Keeley, restoration horticulturist for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and former President of this Chapter. Melanie will present a program on developing a native plant garden to attract birds and wildlife. Colorful slides will illustrate features of many native plants, and combined with a description of their cultural requirements, will enable the audience to plan and structure a wildlife-welcoming, hardy garden. This program will be a good source of ideas for your fall purchases at the next *Under the Oaks* fund raiser in November.

OUTINGS

Sat., May 1, 11:00 am *Cushenbury Carbonate Flora* field trip led by Scott Eliason, Mountaintop District Botanist, San Bernardino National Forest, (Jane Strong, local contact at 626-570-0891 or zelicaon@earthlink.net). Meet at the intersection of forest road 3N03 and Highway 18 (about half-way up or down Cushenbury grade depending on the direction you come). There is a large turnout on the east side and a sign that says "Cactus Flats". High clearance vehicles will be more comfortable on the road, but passenger cars are possible. The drive takes 2½ hours from Pasadena. For carpool info contact Cliff McLean at cliff.mclean@verizon.net or 626-966-0580. Bring Adventure Pass, lunch, water, hat, etc. Weather can be variable. Lots of interesting information about these carbonate plants can be found at: <http://cnps-sgm.org/cushenbury.html>.

Sun., May 9, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Gabi & Cliff McLean

Sun., June 13, 9:00 am: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* with Eva Morgan

OTHER OUTINGS

Be adventurous like A. R. Valentien! Set out to see some places and flora that are new to you. If you're traveling in California this summer, consult the CNPS website, www.cnps.org, to see what the Chapter closest to your destination is offering. Here are some samples.

Sat., May 8, 9 am–2 pm; San Jacinto Wildlife Area and Upper Salt Creek Reserve, Leader: Dave Bramlet, Southern California Botanists.

The CDFG San Jacinto Wildlife Area is well known for a diverse alkali playa-grassland flora and a number of sensitive plant species, especially the San Jacinto Valley crownscale (*Atriplex coronata* var. *notatio*). The alkali habitats were relatively dry this year, and large wildflower blooms would not be anticipated. However, we will search for a number of species that are sensitive or unique to these alkali communities. See www.socalbot.org for details and directions.

Sat., May 22, 9 am, Liebre Mountains, Los Angeles County, Leader: Steve Boyd, Southern California Botanists

The Liebre Mountains are part of the western Transverse Ranges and form the southern boundary of the western-most portion of the Mojave Desert, the Antelope Valley. On this trip we will be concentrating on the diversity of plant assemblages found on the northwestern flank of the range. Here we'll see an exceptional number of *Quercus* species, as well as the southern limit of the foothill pine association. Grassland areas often support spectacular displays of wildflowers. See www.socalbot.org for details and directions.

Sat., June 12, 8:45 am, Mt. San Jacinto State Park Hike, Leaders: Katie Barrows and Lorrae Fuentes, Riverside-San Bernardino CNPS.

Enjoy the cool air and explore the flora of the San Jacinto Mtns. at 8500 ft. We'll ride the Tramway to the State Park & Wilderness, then take a hike to enjoy high elevation spring wildflowers, trees, and shrubs. Bring warm, layered clothes, sun protection, water, lunch, field guides, camera, good hiking shoes. Group rate of \$18.70 per person with 10 or more persons; reserve by contacting Katie at 760-564-2413, kate.cnb@verizon.net or Lorrae at lorrae.fuentes@cgu.edu. Arrive at Valley Tram station by 8:45 am to take 9:00 am tram car. Take I-10 to Hwy 111, travel 8 miles south toward Palm Springs to first signal, turn right at Tramway Rd. and continue 4 miles.

Sat., July 24, 9 am, Solitude Canyon, Leaders: Cathy Rose and Tony and Sherryl Taylor, Bristlecone CNPS (eastern California)

You'll be surprised that this quiet, pristine canyon is so close to the town of Mammoth Lakes—just behind the Sherwins. Meet at the Coldwater Creek trailhead parking area for a strenuous climb to a volcanic plateau with views of the Mammoth Lakes basin and beyond. We'll take a break, identify alpine and sub-alpine species, and perhaps hike to a red volcanic dome for even more vistas. As we descend into beautiful Solitude Canyon we will find very large white and red fir and aspen in the drainage and, we hope, an abundance of native plants in bloom. This is an "on-and-off-trail" hike. Wear good boots and clothes for changeable weather, bring lunch and plenty of water and definitely your camera. We will have left cars at the bottom of the canyon to transport drivers back to their cars. For more details, contact the Taylors at 760-924-8742 or sherryt76@aol.com.

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species but also the subspecies.

As I moved through the gallery, I was amazed at the absolute beauty of this work—tiny details delicately illustrated, lighting effects soft and subtle, colors accurate and pleasing, insect-chewed leaves or ragged stems left as a testament to the subject's vitality, the sheer number of cactus spines, alien grasses painted with the same intense focus. I circled back to look again at the sheer, luminescent petals of *Opuntia basilaris*, the fine mottling of a Thimbleberry leaf, the soft sweep of a spray of blooming *Ceanothus prostratus*, the varied markings and color variations in the several paintings of *Calochortus venustus*. Here was the work of a man enamored of our State's varied flora.

Yet this astonishing body of work had rarely been seen by anyone and had languished in storage since 1933. When Margaret Dykens, Librarian at the Museum, discovered the paintings during her survey of the archives in 1998, she knew the time had come for them to reach out to the world. With generous funding from Museum docent Eleanor Navarra and her husband Jerome, the exhibit "Plant Portraits: The California Legacy of A.R. Valentien" was born. It will be on exhibit at the San Diego Museum of Natural History until Sept. 7. For complete information call 619-232-3821 or visit the Museum website at www.sdnhm.org.

So there's no excuse not to explore our State's botanical treasures, even if you're not up to going on a hike. A day trip to San Diego might be just the outing for you. I know I plan to go back this summer. But I'm planning some hikes as well.

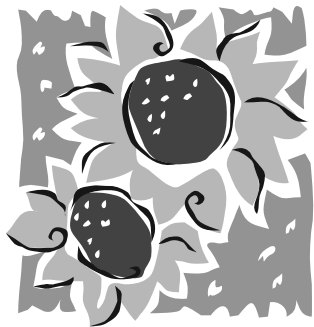


NATIVE.NET

Did you ever wish you could just go online to see what the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) has for a particular topographic quadrangle, including occurrences that have been reported but haven't yet been entered into the CNDDDB (the "data backlog")? Well, now you can.

The CNDDDB has recently developed an online Quad Viewer. The Quad Viewer allows the user to generate lists of rare plants, animals and natural communities by USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle. To use the viewer, go to <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/whdab/> and click on the left link "Quad Viewer." Follow the instructions that come up when you first launch the program or by clicking the Help tab once the viewer is open. There are separate buttons for the data already processed in the CNDDDB and for data still to be processed. In addition, there are tools that generate lists from a nine-quad area (the quad you pick plus the eight surrounding quads) for CNDDDB data and the backlog, respectively. These data will be updated monthly.

Roxanne Bittman
Lead Botanist
Calif. Natural Diversity Database
Calif. Department of Fish and Game



WILAKAL: The Glory of the Hillsides

Eriogonum fasciculatum California Buckwheat

By Mark F. Acuña, Gabrieleno-Tongva with illustration from Munz' *A Flora of Southern California*

It is now mid spring, *Yamore takap comock urker*, and the hillsides and chaparral are ablaze with the pink and white blossoms of *Wilakal*, California Buckwheat. The bright green leaves of *Eriogonum fasciculatum*, will darken to a deep almost blackish green and the blossoms, after pollination, will darken to a rusty brown that will turn our hillsides into a fantasy of color, letting us know that spring is almost over and summer is on its way. It is always time to gather *Wilakal*, for it offers us a variety of uses.

The early spring leaves and shoots were eaten raw. *Wilakal* seeds were mixed with the seeds of *Mentzelia affinis*, *Yatatko Amaman*, ground and eaten.

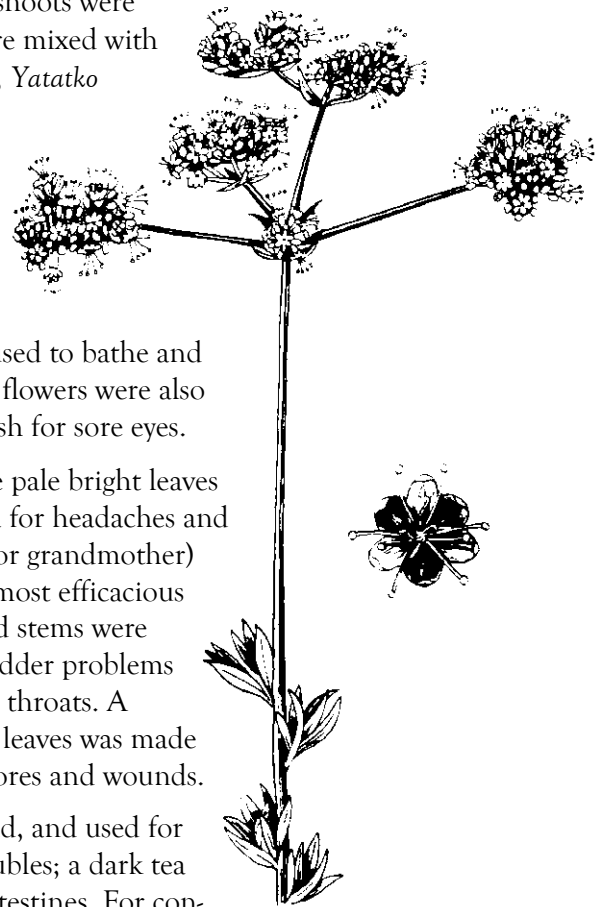
In mid spring the pale white-pink blossoms were gathered for medicinal teas. A mild tea was brewed for bronchial ailments. Such a tea was also used to bathe and purify newborn babies. The flowers were also steeped and made into a wash for sore eyes.

Before *Wilakal* flowered, the pale bright leaves were brewed into a thick tea for headaches and stomach pains. The oldest (or grandmother) plants were considered the most efficacious for medicine. The leaves and stems were made into a mild tea for bladder problems and used as a gargle for sore throats. A combination of flowers and leaves was made into a poultice to alleviate sores and wounds.

The roots were dried, ground, and used for headaches and stomach troubles; a dark tea was used to clean out the intestines. For constipation, small twigs of *Wilakal* were chewed.

But *Wilakal* was used for other purposes besides food and medicine. Branches of California Buckwheat were used to line granaries to keep the acorns dry and the stems were stripped and cleaned and used to pierce ear holes for earrings. During spring ceremonies *Wilakal* seeds were ground and scattered in processions and in ceremonial areas.

Wilakal blossoms throughout the year but is profuse in spring. It can be found on dry slopes and canyons near the coast and in the chaparral areas of coastal Sage Scrub.



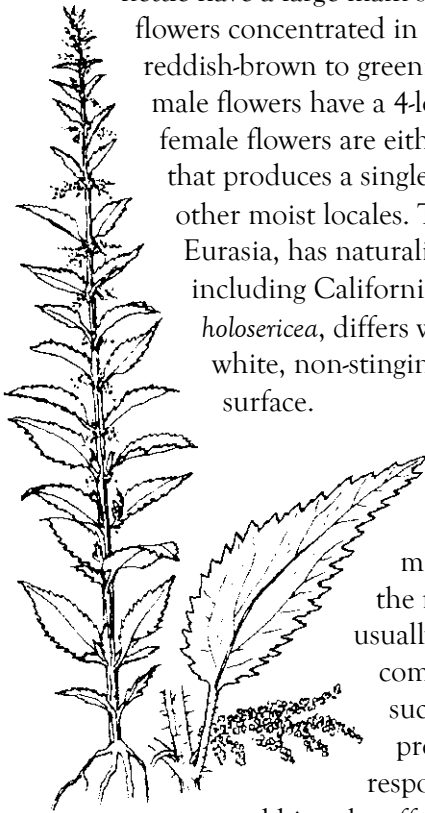
PLANT PROFILE:

Urtica dioica ssp. *holosericea* Stinging Nettle

by Kathy LaShure with illustration from *The Jepson Manual*

Anyone who has run into this plant on a hike, remembers it well. Despite bearing a slight resemblance to some Mint family members, Stinging Nettle belongs to a different family and lets you know it personally. All species of

nettle have a large main stem, leaves in opposite pairs, and flowers concentrated in clusters from the leaf axils. The reddish-brown to greenish-white flowers do not have petals; male flowers have a 4-lobed calyx and 4 stamens while the female flowers are either 4-lobed or 2-lobed and have a pistil that produces a single seed. Nettles like streambanks and other moist locales. The primary species, *U. dioica*, native to Eurasia, has naturalized through out North America, including California. Our local subspecies, *U. dioica holosericea*, differs with its narrower leaves and dense, white, non-stinging hairs on the stem and lower leaf surface.



If you brush against the leaves as you're ambling down the trail, tiny, hollow hairs release their contents like mini-hypodermic needles. The cause of the resulting contact dermatitis (which usually dissipates within the hour) is a combination of uric acid, also used quite successfully by red ants, and antigenic proteins that stimulate an immune response. For relief, some folks recommend

rubbing the affected body parts with leaves of *Artemisia douglasiana*, Mugwort, which often grows nearby.

But there's more to Stinging Nettle than irritation. Once cooked or thoroughly dried it loses its stinging power. The primary species has long been used by herbalists: as a diuretic, a blood alkalizer, an anti-inflammatory astringent, for stress reduction, and hair conditioning. Recent scientific studies show that nettle root may be useful for treating prostate conditions.

Nettle leaves are very high in chlorophyll, protein, iron, calcium, potassium, manganese, and vitamins A, C, D, making it a premier food plant when prepared from young plants; it tastes somewhat like spinach. Just be sure to use gloves and wear long sleeves when handling the fresh plant. Historically, fibrous nettle has been used to make a cloth similar to linen.

Perhaps the most interesting use for Stinging Nettle is water purification. It seems that this plant is very efficient at filtering of metals, minerals and waste materials from contaminated water. It stores these substances in its fibers, thereby cleansing water supplies and making it an excellent candidate for organic waste treatment and detoxification systems. Much of what it collects can be recovered afterward from the dead plant matter. However, this means you should be careful where you collect plants for ingestion. To be safe, I'm growing it in a large pot and it is a handsome plant, a welcome addition to my herb garden, stinging and all.

El Nativo goes public

Now the general public can purchase native plants from *El Nativo Growers*, the supplier of plants for our fall fund raiser *Under the Oaks*. But this formerly wholesale only nursery, has some rules for home gardeners. You can't just drive up or call them.

Check their website, www.elnativogrowers.com, for complete ordering instructions. Click on General Public and read both that page and the Frequently Asked Questions page. After learning the rules, you can browse the website for a wealth of information on plants (particularly *Arctostaphylos*, *Ceanothus*, *Eriogonum*, *Penstemon* and *Salvia* families). Make your wish list and then check the current availability list which is updated monthly. Finally, email your request to *El Nativo Growers*. When you receive a reply, a time can be set to pick up your plants.

The main rule to remember is "**DO NOT CALL or COME.**" **Business is conducted by email only.**

But it is wonderful to have a local purveyor of native plants willing to sell to home gardeners. If you've bought plants at our Fall sale, you know that *El Nativo Growers* produces first rate plants.



Planting ground is painting a landscape with living things and I hold that gardening ranks within the bounds of the fine arts.

—Gertrude Jekyll

British plantswoman extraordinaire

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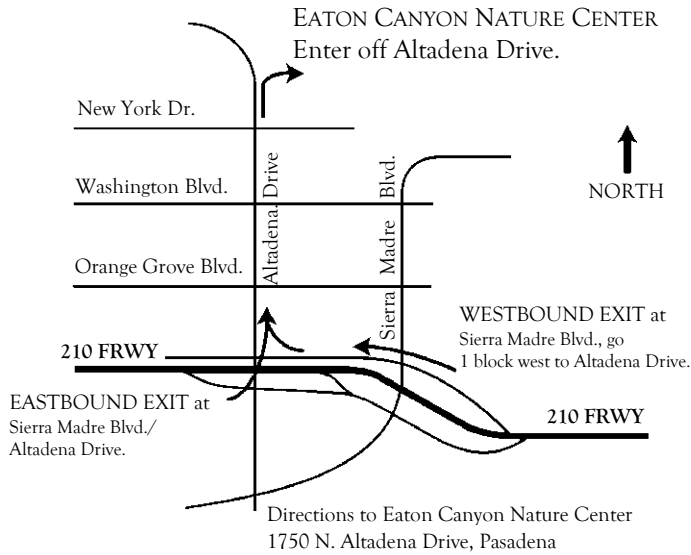
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Website: <http://cnps-sgm.org>

Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide nonprofit organization of amateurs & professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding & appreciation of California's native plants & to conserve them and their natural habitats, through education, science, horticulture & advocacy. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal Fremontia, the quarterly Bulletin which gives statewide news & announcements of Society activities & conservation issues, & the chapter newsletter.



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

San Gabriel Mountains Chapter

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED