

# THE PAINTBRUSH

MARCH/APRIL 2007 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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## DATES TO REMEMBER

Thurs., Mar. 22, 7:30 p.m.: *The Ballona Wetlands Marsh Restoration* with Lisa Fimiani and Dr. Edith Read

Sun., Apr. 8, 9:00 a.m.: *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk* led by Carol Carriere

Sun., Apr. 15, 8:30 a.m.: *Sturtevant Falls Field Trip* led by Tom Hood

Thurs., Apr. 26, 7:30 p.m.: *Rare Plants of Palomar* with Robert Laurey

Sat., Apr. 28, 8:30 a.m.: *Santa Fe Dam County Regional Park Exploration* led by Mickey Long in conjunction with Eaton Canyon Docents

## WINTER

By Gabi McLean

How eagerly had I been waiting for winter, the season of promise and awakening, when the earth soaks in the water and so do the roots and tubers and corms and bulbs and fungi; when tiny cotyledons break through the soil and announce the birth of a new plant, a dicot; when a single leaf spears the dirty crust and proclaims the arrival of a new monocot; when the temperature plunges, the mountain tops glow in their snowy caps, and the rivers run over.

Alas, no such things happened this year. January was dry and broke high and low temperature records. February

continued this disappointment and only in the last few weeks did we enjoy a meager amount of rain.

I want to ask the world to pray for rain, dance for rain, sing for rain! And treasure the water!



Red Maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*)

Photo by Gabi McLean

A visit to Chino Hills State Park was eerie, the hills covered with dry grasses and mustard. Only the steeper hillsides were clothed in coastal sage scrub and chaparral, and the north facing slopes showed the only hints of green. The creek beds were dry. Near the ranch, below a few gnarly-looking and leafless sycamores, a trickle of water collected but was heavily soiled with oil. We heard frogs croaking but could not imagine how they could survive in that dirty water. On the trail was a large, dead garter snake, its head smashed. I clung to the only encouraging sights - a few new, wavy leaves of soap plant and one single, parallel-veined leaf of what we assumed was a mariposa lily. After searching for signs of life, we also noticed that the vegetation on the other side of the fence, outside the park, was even more dismal than on this side of the fence. Outside the park, cows were still grazing and everything was eaten clear to the ground. Inside the park, small shrubs were clinging to life, searching for moisture and - like the grasses and trees

and people and animals – waiting and hoping for water - life-giving, most precious water.

When we went into the San Gabriel foothills, which have had just a little more rain, we could clearly see the difference. Manzanita was flowering, some of the mountain mahogany had fruits, and the hoaryleaf ceanothus was in bloom. A few willow catkins emerged despite the weather extremes. Some of the laurel sumac had succumbed to the bitter cold or showed visible damage. In Eaton Canyon, an Anna’s hummingbird perched on her nest in a coast live oak and tiny little red maids shone brightly at the trail’s edge. That little patch of color gave me hope. All is not lost; I know the plants will come back, as soon as we get some water. So go and pray and dance and sing for rain – and don’t waste a precious drop of water!

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## CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon (map on the back cover) on the fourth Thursday of the month with the exception of July, August, November, and December. Informal plant identification and social time 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.; programs start promptly at 7:30 p.m.

## PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS

**Thursday, Mar. 22, 7:30 p.m.:** *The Ballona Wetlands Marsh* with Lisa Fimiani and Edith Read, Ph.D.

Both Dr. Read and Lisa Fimiani have very interesting information regarding the native plants now growing in the Ballona Wetlands Marsh, the history of the marsh, and plants in the surrounding areas to the marsh.



Heart-leaved  
Penstemon  
*(Keckiella  
cordifolia)*  
  
Photo by  
Andrea Edwards

**Sunday, Apr. 15, 8:30 a.m.:** *Field Trip to Sturtevant Falls* led by Tom Hood

We will meet in the Chantry Flat parking lot at 8:30 a.m. I trust that this early hour will increase our chances of finding a place to park in the lot. Please remember to car pool if possible with someone who has an Adventure Pass, or if you have a pass, please have it in your car. If you do not have an Adventure Pass, day passes cost \$5.00 and can be purchased in the parking lot. Please wear comfortable clothes, bring water and lunch or snacks, and most important, a hat and sunscreen. We will walk down the old fire road to the trail, and then on to the waterfall. Numerous plants should be in bloom at this time, including Rock Roses, Bladder Pod, Yucca and many more local residents.

Directions: Take the 210 Freeway either east or west to Santa Anita Avenue. Go north on Santa Anita to the end (it ends at Chantry Flat), and park wherever you can. We will meet near the fire road entrance.

**Thursday, Apr. 26, 7:30 p.m.:** *Rare Plants of Palomar* with Robert Lauri

Robert is a doctoral candidate who gave us a great talk on the Native Orchids of California last year. This year’s focus on the rare plants of Palomar is expected to be just as informative and fun as last year’s talk.

**Saturday, Apr. 28, 8:30 a.m.:** *Field Trip to Santa Fe Dam County Park* led by Mickey Long.

This trip, open to both CNPS members and Eaton Canyon Docents, will explore the last of the unique alluvial scrub natural community in the San Gabriel Valley. The walk will wind through 400 acres of terraces on the San Gabriel River flood plain, full of plants and animals that are declining elsewhere. The leader plans to discuss the ecosystem as a whole, plants, birds, reptiles and the interesting successional vegetation levels tied to river geography. Resident cactus wrens, migrant birds, huge laurel sumacs and giant Whipple yuccas will be seen.

Directions: Take the 210 Freeway eastbound from the Pasadena area to the Irwindale Avenue off-ramp. Travel south on Irwindale to Arrow Highway, then turn west (right) to the Santa Fe Dam entrance-drive on the right. Meet (8:30 a.m.) at the base of this entrance, for carpooling into the Park and up to the Nature Center parking lot at the north end of the basin. Wear good sturdy shoes or boots, and a hat, and bring water. Be prepared to share the entrance fee of about \$6 per car.

## NATIVE PLANT GARDENING CORNER

By Barbara Eisenstein

Please call Barbara at 909-624-0838 or e-mail her at [rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu](mailto:rsabg.hortinfo@cgu.edu) with any questions or concerns you may have regarding native plant gardening. Please let her know that you are from our chapter. She is always interested in new questions for this column. The comments provided in this issue concern this last winter and the effect it had on native plants in and around our area. They are observations from contributors who have native gardens and reply to some of Barbara's advice on how to protect native plants from frost damage.

**Los Angeles area:** Thank you so much for getting in touch with everyone and compiling this information. I apologize for not responding sooner, but I hope my experience is useful nonetheless. I live in Highland Park (NE Los Angeles) and had freezing temperatures and frost. The birdbath on the north side of the property was frozen for a couple of days. Unfortunately, I don't know what the exact temperature was. I had no problems with any of my plants – *Arctostaphylos* 'Ian's Bush'; A. 'Howard McMinn'; *Baccharis pilularis* 'Pigeon Pt'; *Ceanothus maritimus*; C. 'Yankee Pt'; C. 'Joyce Coulter'; C. 'Concha'; *Salvia* 'Poza Blue'; S. 'Allen Chickering'; *Eriogonum arborescens*; *E. fasciculatum* 'Bruce Dickinson'; *E. grande rubescens*; *Atriplex canescens*; *Sphaeralcea ambigua* 'Louis Hamilton'; *Leymus condensatus* 'Canyon Prince'; *Muhlenbergia rigens*; *Artemisia californica* 'Montara'; *Rhamnus californica*; *Sambucus mexicana*; *Keckiella cordifolia*; *Calliandra californica*; *Zauschneria cana*; Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*); *Penstemon* 'Margarita BOP'; *Lotus scoparius*; *Encelia californica*; *Galvezia speciosa*; *Sisyrinchium bellum*. All, with the exception of the Toyon, are well-established plants, which may have something to do with the success rate. I'm not sure though.

In Altadena a garden appears to have had little or no damage to the following plants installed 18 months ago: *Heteromeles arbutifolia*; *Fremontodendron*; *Ceanothus* 'Yankee Pt'; C. 'Concha'; *Verbena lilacina*; *Salvia* 'Poza Blue'; *Baccharis pilularis* 'Pigeon Pt'; *Leymus condensatus* 'Canyon Prince'; *Festuca idahoensis* or *californica*, I'm not certain which one they have; *Eriogonum arborescens* (light burn); *Arctostaphylos* 'Ian's Bush'; *Muhlenbergia rigens*; *Platanus racemosa*; *Cercis occidentalis*.

**Upland:** My *Abutilon palmerii* looks pretty crummy but the lower foliage looks intact. The island verbena looks

great and so does the St. Catharine's Lace. My lantana looks ghastly.

**Los Angeles:** Thanks for the frost info. Our lowest temperature was 27 degrees Fahrenheit. However, frost hit in all sorts of cold spots in various parts of our canyon over about a week or two of low temperatures (34 to 37 degrees Fahrenheit). I took photos of the ice layers in the birdbath for two or three days. As you noted, *Malosma laurina* suffered. *Rhus ovata* X *R. integrifolia* got nipped where the cold wind hit it. I noted more tip damage where native shrubs had been pruned late in the year or lollipopped too severely for brush clearance. Probably a thicker canopy would have helped them. I have one young fairy duster in a protected location that wilted a little, but then came back with new growth as soon as the weather warmed and I watered it. My *Encelia californica* and *Salvia leucophylla* did not show any damage.

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"To sit in the shade on a fine day and look upon verdure is the most perfect refreshment." – Jane Austen

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Box Elder  
(*Acer negundo* var.  
*californicum*)

Illustration from  
*The Jepson Manual*  
(1993)

## SUGAR AND LOVE, PRAYERS & MUSIC:

*Acer negundo californicum*, Box Elder – SIVILY

By Marc Acuna

We are now in the early days of spring, the times known to the Tongva, the indigenous people of the Los Angeles Basin, as "Ysah.moh.reh.tah.tah.peh.coh.mohk.urr.kerr". The month is "Yahr.mahr", "Big Tree Sprouting Time".

*Acer negundo* “Sivily” is beginning to bleed out its sap and the Tongva men of the villages journey up into the San Jacintos and San Bernardinos, asking permission of the peoples of those mountains, the Kumitaraxam and the Kokoemkam (the Cahuilla and the Serrano). Sivily is found along streams and bottom lands below 6,000 feet in the Yellow Pine forests. When permission is granted, the Tongva begin to collect the sweet sap. Later the women will boil it for springtime sweets.

The leaves are collected by some of the medicine men and women to make into “love medicine”. There is always someone who feels the pains of unrequited love and who needs a little extra power to win his or her love. Some of the leaves will be brewed into a refreshing drink, others into a potent love salve, and some will be burned in offerings. Other medicine people will collect inner bark and shred it for use as an emetic.

Shamans will gather pieces of wood fragments to add to sage and artemisia for spiritual medicine. Twigs will also be collected for they form the prayer-sticks to which feathers will be attached, and then the prayer-sticks will be hung in the branches of Cottonwood trees to twist and bend in the wind with the leaves of that sacred tree. Other men will collect wood from Sivily to carve into small bowls; others will make harpoons out of the fine slender poles of this wonderful tree. These harpoons will be highly prized as trade items with the coastal Tongva. Musicians will make clapper sticks and flutes from the shoots and small branches.

Even the charcoal is saved and collected for it will be used for tattooing.

Throughout March and April, Sivily will blossom. The three major mountain tribal peoples will harvest and sing their collecting songs as spring begins. In the autumn, the brother Sivily, Big Leaf Maple, will be harvested.

## NOTICES

**Sunday, March 25, 10:00 a.m.:** Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Natural Science Section, O-rated hike through Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden led by Bob Muns and naturalists Liana Argento and Margot Lowe.

**Sunday, April 22, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.:** *Grow Native Garden Tour.* Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont. This is a great way to get ideas of how to plan and plant your native garden. Meet at Wisura Gate.

**Saturday, March 31, members from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., public from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.:** Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Spring Plant Sale.

**Saturday and Sunday, Apr. 7 and 8, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days:** Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Annual Wildflower Show.

*Save those photos.* We have a program planned for June where members coordinate and share their pictures of native flora taken over the course of the last year. We will post the date on a later issue of the newsletter with instructions on how to format your program to fit our presentation equipment. – Ed.

**Planning Ahead:** Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Jun. 15-17: Nature Knowledge Workshop, hosted by the Natural Science Section of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter. This event includes two nights lodging near Barton Flat, six hearty meals, and morning and evening workshops. Please contact Monica Donley at 818-988-7192 for deposit information and registration.



Fairy Lantern/Globe Lily (*Calochortus albus*)  
Photo by Andrea Edwards  
(taken on last year's field trip to Fish Canyon)

## WELCOME! New members:

Molly Brooke, Jody Donnelly, Katherine and Lewis Hashimoto, Deborah Kolodji, Shauna Turner, Cathy Walters, Davie Wikle, and Jeff Burkhart. There is a name correction for last month's newsletter: Francine Kawabe is the correct name.

We look forward to meeting you at our next program and on future field trips and outings.

## JOIN CNPS NOW!!

Learn to understand California's unique flora and help to preserve this rich heritage for future generations.

Dues are tax deductible. You will receive this newsletter, the informative quarterly journal *Fremontia*, and the statewide news *Bulletin*. If you would like to receive only this newsletter, the price of a subscription is \$5 per year.

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The newsletter of the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is published four times per year, and is free to Chapter members. Subscription rate for members of other chapters is \$5.00 per year.

## Have you forgotten to renew your membership?

Please renew so that Chapter numbers are maintained!

Thank you again to **BONTERRA CONSULTING** for printing our newsletter. BonTerra Consulting provides environmental planning, biological surveys, natural resources management, and city and regional planning services to their public and private sector clients.

<http://www.bonterraconsulting.com>

## CORRECTION:

I did not have the quote on the sign in Chantry Flat quite right. I received an e-mail from an unnamed party at the Adams Pack Station that sets the record straight. The sign has the following words carved on it:

“Take care of the land –  
someday you'll be a part of it”

I learned that the sign was carved by Chris Kasten when he was a Boy Scout. Chris is now the director of Sturtevant's Camp. If you visit the Adams Pack Station website at [www.adamspackstation.com/trivia/html](http://www.adamspackstation.com/trivia/html) you'll find a lot of information about the history of the area and some little known facts about it as well. -Ed.

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Engelmann Oak (*Quercus engelmannii*)



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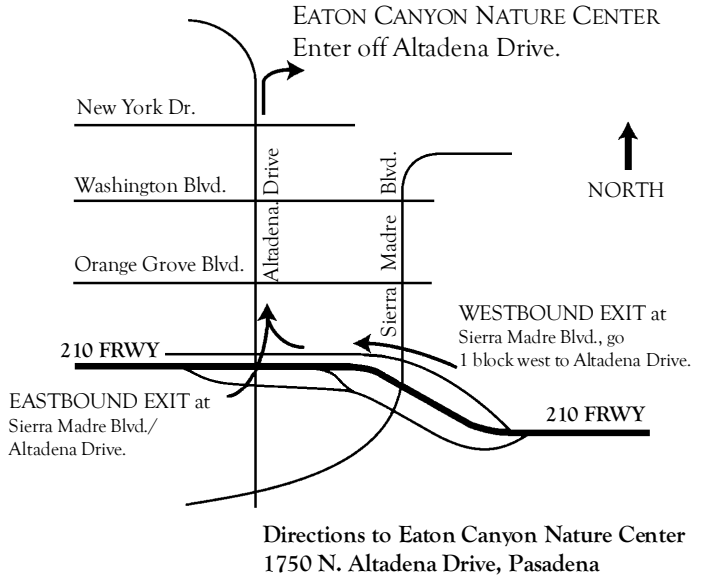
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**Dedicated to the Preservation of the California Native Flora**

*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.*



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