



# THE PAINTBRUSH

MAY – JUNE 2007 NEWSLETTER

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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## DATES TO REMEMBER

**Sun., May 20, 9:30 a.m.:** *Plant ID Walk, Verdugo Mountains*, led by Liana Argento

**Thurs., May 24, 7:30 p.m.:** *Plant Communities of the San Bernardino Mountains*, with Scott Eliason

**Sun., June 10, 9:00 a.m.:** *Eaton Canyon Plant Walk*, led by Clem Padick

**Fri.-Sun., June 15-17:** *Nature Knowledge Workshop*

**Sun., June 24, 9:00 a.m.:** *Eaton Canyon Hike to the Falls*, led by Gabi and Cliff McLean

**Sun., June 24, 9:30 a.m.:** *Plant ID Walk, Cobol Canyon*, led by Liana Argento and Bob Muns

**Thurs., June 28, 7:30 p.m.:** *Early Natural History Clubs of Southern California prior to the 1950s*, with Gary Wallace

**Sun., July 29, 9:00 a.m.:** *Icehouse Canyon Botany Walk*, led by Ginny Heringer

## BOTANIZING IN THE SAN DIMAS EXPERIMENTAL FOREST

By Terry Keller

In May of 2006, several chapter members enjoyed an outing into the San Dimas Experimental Forest (SDEF). The excursion was led by Mike Oxford of the U.S. Forest Service. During the event, many members present expressed an interest in returning to the SDEF to botanize. This February, four members of the chapter met with Mike Oxford and two other representatives of the

Forest Service. We made arrangements to conduct plant surveys within the SDEF. Our research efforts are summed up in the following proposal: We will work towards an updated list of the vascular plants in the San Dimas Experimental Forest, using older published lists as a reference. In addition, we will look for and document any Agency-listed sensitive species, Federal-, State-, and CNPS-listed. The chapter has been issued an entry permit and an access key. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact one (or more) of chapter members Terry Keller, Cliff McLean, Mickey Long, and Rick Fisher. Due to conditions of our research arrangement, at least one of the above listed members must accompany each entry into the SDEF.



View of Mount San Antonio from within the San Dimas Experimental Forest. Photo by Gabi McLean

## JOINT FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

This spring the Sierra Club's Natural Science Section has invited us to join their walks into the local mountains and to share our common interest about the various native flora that abound within them. These events are posted in the Notices of Outings section on page 4 of this newsletter for directions and easy access. Please contact the people in charge of these walks to let them know you will be joining them. Contact numbers for the leaders are listed. For additional information, please contact Gabi McLean at 626-966-0580.

## CHAPTER EVENTS

Meetings are held at Eaton Canyon (see 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.

Eaton Canyon Plant Walks are held on the second Sunday of each month at 9:00 a.m., except during July and August. See Dates to Remember on page 1.

## PROGRAMS

**Thursday, May 24, 7:30 p.m.:** *Plant Communities of the San Bernardino Mountains*, with Scott Eliason. The San Bernardino Mountains constitute one of the great biodiverse areas of North America, where desert, alpine, and coastal influences converge. Scott's talk will include the specially-adapted carbonate-loving plants growing in the area. Scott is a biologist for the National Forest Service.

**Thursday, June 28, 7:30 p.m.:** *Early Natural History Clubs of Southern California prior to the 1950s*, with our own Gary Wallace. In developing his interest in the history of botanical and other natural history studies in Southern California, Gary has found evidence of numerous nature-related clubs and other organizations dating back to the late nineteenth century. Some of them made important contributions in their respective fields of interest, and yet we know little about who they were, and few of their publications have been handed down to us. Perhaps even you can help uncover this fascinating history. Gary is a botanist with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and a Research Associate at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

## 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.

**Q:** One website states that it is fine to plant all natives at any time of the year, and another recommends planting woody shrubs and trees during the late fall and winter only. Why are there so many conflicting recommendations on gardening with native plants?

**A:** Information on gardening with native plants comes from many sources and locations. Even if we limit

ourselves to southern California alone, gardening conditions vary dramatically by location. For example, in Long Beach, one home, shrouded in fog, may rarely see the sun, while another a few blocks north, may be hot and sunny much of the time. In addition to climatic variations, soil types in southern California are also quite variable. At Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, we have heavy, poorly-drained clay soils on the mesa, and well-drained alluvial soils to the east and north. Even within a small home garden, conditions vary due to microclimates. Because of all of these variables it is difficult to give consistent gardening recommendations.



*Dudleya anthonyi*, shown growing on volcanic rock on a Baja California island, thrives in coastal fog, moderate temperatures, and lean volcanic soils with excellent drainage. Photo by Barbara Eisenstein, February 2007

As for whether to plant shrubs and trees all year or just in the winter, this again depends on your specific garden conditions and what you are planting. If you live in an inland area with extremely hot summers, it will be difficult for most shrubs and trees planted in the spring to become established well enough to make it through the summer. Plants from dry chaparral regions are not adapted to heat and water, and are therefore likely to succumb to root rot if you must water them frequently in the summer. These plants should be planted during the winter months to give them the best chance of survival. Will they die if you plant them in the spring? Maybe not, but overall you will have more success if you plant in the winter. In areas with more moderate year-round temperatures, spring planting can be successful, though even here, taking advantage of our mild and typically wet winters certainly makes sense.

Q: Given all of the different information on gardening with native plants, how can I tell what will work best for me?

A: Knowing where plants come from and what their natural growing conditions are can help you select the best plants for your garden. For example, plants from coastal areas are adapted to fog and moderate temperatures. They will not do well in the reflected sun and heat of a south- or west-facing wall, though desert plants will be right at home. Try to use plants from areas with similar sun, water and soil conditions to those found in your garden.

Experienced gardeners know how to “read” their plants to determine proper care. A slightly drooping bud tells the gardener it is time to water thoroughly. The leggy growth habit of another plant suggests the need for more sunlight. Gardening is a learning experience. Examine your plants and garden frequently. With time you will have increased success as you become more proficient in understanding what your plants are telling you. As your garden matures, replace less healthy plants with those that are thriving.

Finally, it should be noted that it is likely that California native plants fail in gardens most often because of too much love. Fertilizer, soil amendments and over watering can result in excessive growth rates that are unsustainable. Chaparral, scrub and desert plants prefer lean, dry conditions. If you use these types of plants, don’t baby them. They are tough and right at home in southern California.

## MIGALI AND TOHACHEAR: Milkweed and Deerweed

By Mark F. Acuña

The cool green days of spring have passed. The golden poppies have exploded their seeds. Their feathery leaves have begun to fade into a soft sage green, and begin to wither and turn brown. They lie crushed in the heat of summer. This happens in late “Sinticar” (June) and will remain so until “Cucuat” (mid-August). July is one of the months that shares its name with another month. So does January which shares its name with December. The Tongva (Gabrieleno) calendar was a complex system.

But for now, we are in Sinticar, early July, the last days of the month “when the young eagles fly”. In a few weeks we enter late Sinticar, the “brown and sear time”. But these are not days of only dull brown. Despite the heat, two wonderful plants thrive and offer their treasures to the

hills and mountain sides of the Los Angeles Basin, or as the Tongva called it, Tovangar (The World).

They are given that pejorative name “weed”. Yet they are neither, for a weed is by nature, a plant in the wrong place, and these two are if anything, not in the wrong place. They are at home.

Found below 7,500 feet in dry places, two species of *Asclepias* (Milkweed) can be found. *Asclepias californica* thrives in Yellow Pine forest, Pinyon-Juniper woodland, and our “pigmy forest,” the chaparral. It blossoms April to July. Its brother blossoms June to August. *Asclepias fascicularis* is found away from the coast and also on the island of Pimu (Santa Catalina).



Milkweed  
(*Asclepias californica*)

From Munz’s  
*A Flora of  
Southern  
California*  
(1974)

Known as Tohachear by the Tongva, *Asclepias* was boiled and eaten: roots, flowers, leaves, pods, and stems.

*A. fascicularis* was the favorite. Tohachear parts were added to Manzanita seeds and ground into a “flour”, then made into mush or baked as cakes.

Milkweed also offered its thick milky juice as use for cuts and wounds and as a lubricant in tattooing. The two species were used to treat bites: *A. californica* for spider bites and *A. fascicularis* for snake bites. Both were burned and inhaled for asthma.

But probably the most important use of Tohachear was as cordage. String and fishnets were woven from Milkweed; rabbit-skin blankets were sewn with Tohachear thread.

Tongva men wore hairnets made of *Asclepias* cordage and decorated them with shells. And paintbrushes were made from Milkweed fiber.

An excellent “weed” and also home and food for the Monarch butterfly.

A second weed thriving in the heat of “Awroreva (ah.roh.reh.vay)”, or summer as we call it, is the beautiful golden Migali (Deerweed). Blossoming from March to August, it can be found on dry slopes and fans, especially after burns, and in disturbed areas below 5,000 feet. It thrives in coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coastal strand areas and on the Channel Islands. Today it lines much of Highway 210 and many of our remaining open fields.

It offers little in the way of food. Its incredibly tiny leaves were gathered and eaten raw. But it offered much in the way of medicine. The whole plant was soaked in water, providing a wash for pregnant women. And after giving birth, the mother was bathed ritually in Migali wash to purify her for her motherhood.

A mild tea was made from the entire plant and drunk as a blood builder. The roots were used in a decoction for coughs and sometimes crushed for use as “soap”. The leaves were gathered and brewed into a mild tea for chills and fevers, and into a stronger brew for coughs.

Two “weeds”, easily ignored by the passing motorist, but eagerly awaited by the lovers of our Southern California landscape. Long live the weeds!

## NOTICES OF OUTINGS

These are plant/botany-oriented events sponsored by the Sierra Club and others.

**Sunday, May 20, 9:30 a.m.:** *Plant ID Walk, Verdugo Mountains*, sponsored by the Sierra Club Natural Science Section.

Slow paced 3-4 hour plant walk to identify spring wildflowers and learn about plant uses with botanist Bob Muns and naturalists Liana Argento and Margot Lowe. Meet 9:30 am - 210 Fwy and La Tuna Canyon Rd (parking area on S side of 210 Fwy and W side of La Tuna Canyon Rd). Bring water, lunch, binoculars, hand lens, optional \$1 for plant list, optional \$1 for hand lens. Rain cancels. Leader: Liana Argento (310-370-2950; lianaargento@hotmail.com). Co-Leader: Margot Lowe.

**Friday-Sunday, June 15-17, Nature Knowledge Workshop:** The Sierra Club’s Natural Science Section invites you to join them for a weekend of enjoyment and discovery as you learn about the natural wonders that surround us. Enhance your

knowledge about our precious natural resources from professional naturalists who share their expertise in bird and bat identification, reptile, plant, geology and insect studies. From our accommodations at a streamside camp in the San Bernardino Mountains, explore three habitats – chaparral, forest and riparian – via easy guided walks led by our naturalists. Fee includes two nights lodging in dormitory cabins (bring your own sleeping bag), six full-course meals and instruction. (Tent or car camping is available.) Reservation deadline is June 1. Send check made out to “Sierra Club/NSS” along with 2 SASE (or Email address), home and work phones, names of all participants, \$138 each with Sierra Club No./\$158 non-member, to Reservationist: Monica Donley, 5551 Mammoth Ave, Sherman Oaks, CA 91401, 818-988-7192. See website [www.angeles.sierraclub.org/nss/](http://www.angeles.sierraclub.org/nss/) for reservation form. Participants must be 13 years or older (under 18 must be accompanied by an adult).

**Sunday, June 24, 9:30 a.m.:** *Plant ID Walk, Cobol Canyon, San Gabriel Mountains*, sponsored by the Sierra Club Natural Science Section.

Slow paced 3-4 hour plant walk to identify wildflowers and learn about fire ecology with botanist Bob Muns and naturalists Liana Argento and Ginny Heringer. Meet 9:30 a.m. at the trailhead (from 210 E Fwy in Claremont, exit Towne Ave N to Baseline Rd, E on Baseline to Mills Ave, N on Mills until road ends) (from 210 W Fwy, exit Baseline Rd and proceed W to Mills Ave, N on Mills until road ends). Bring water, lunch, binoculars, hand lens, optional \$1 for plant list, optional \$1 for hand lens. Rain cancels. Leader: Liana Argento (310-370-2950; lianaargento@hotmail.com). Co-Leader: Ginny Heringer.

**Sunday, June 24, 9:00 a.m.:** *Eaton Canyon Hike to the Falls* led by Gabi and Cliff McLean, sponsored by Eaton Canyon Nature Center.

This is a monthly 3.5 mile hike to the Eaton Canyon waterfall, one of the small but pretty falls in the front range of the San Gabriel Mountains. Meet at 9:00 a.m., Eaton Canyon Nature Center, Pasadena.

**Sunday, July 29, 9:00 a.m.:** *Icehouse Canyon Botany Walk*, sponsored by the Sierra Club Natural Science Section.

See riparian flowers and conifer forest on an 8-mile roundtrip, 2,600 ft elevation gain hike up the canyon to Icehouse Saddle. Bring lunch, water, hat, light jacket, and your favorite flower ID tools. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Icehouse Canyon trail head (1½ miles above Mt. Baldy Village, just off Mt. Baldy Road). Leader: Ginny Heringer (626-793-4727). Naturalists/Assistant Leaders: Gabi and Cliff McLean.

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## BOOK REVIEW

By Gabi McLean

– *Flora of the Santa Ana River and Environs with References to World Botany* by Oscar F. Clarke, Danielle Svehla, Greg Ballmer, and Arlee Montalvo, published by Heyday Books, Berkeley

Ever wondered what that red stuff on Red-stemmed Filaree is? Or when the backside of the banner of *Lotus strigosus* turns from yellow to red? Did you ever want to see the seeds of Wand Mullein? Or see the detail of the male and female flowers of the California Pepper Tree, which is really from South America? If you love detail, color, pictures, facts, charts, and botanical discussion, this book is for you! If you just love color and pictures, it still is worth getting! And if you are really into botany, this book is a treasure chest! Oscar Clarke's extensive knowledge of the Santa Ana River watershed flora comes through loud and clear in this book that features 900 plant species with 3,200 images and illustrations, in a novel presentation of plants, plant relationships, and botanical basics and trivia. Diagrams and charts present a wealth of information in a concise way and in a condensed space, to the point of being hard to read with my old eyes. A section on botany basics, the botanical glossary, and eight appendices complement the presentation of plant species and make for reading for hours on end.

The presentation of plants by evolutionary relationships and phylogenetic order is an interesting approach that, right from the start, serves as a learning tool. If you could care less about how plants evolve, you'll still have fun leafing through the picture book, studying the pictures and how they compare in size with a penny, reading the tidbits on plant uses or how the plant compares with others in the area, and where they are found.

In short: this book gets definitely two thumbs up from me! On a scale of 1 to 10, I'll give it a 10- (the minus is for the small print and gray font on gray background in the charts). You'll find it on Amazon.com and in bookstores. The list price is \$29.95. Oscar himself will sell it at the Nature Knowledge Workshop in June (see announcement in this newsletter) where he will share his knowledge and enthusiasm about the natural world with all lucky participants, whether they are novices to botany or well versed in natural science.

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.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS CHAPTER CNPS

PRESIDENT: Gabi McLean  
 626-966-0580 or gabi.mclean@verizon.net

VICE-PRESIDENT: Terry Keller  
 562-692-0921 ext.-3521 or tkeller@riohondo.edu

SECRETARY: Carol Carriere  
 626- 286-1525 or cacarriere@sbcglobal.net

TREASURER: Graham Bothwell 626-449-8392

PROGRAMS: Orchid Black  
 626-794-1275 or orchidblack@charter.net

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Tom Hood  
 562-806-8206 or tomandgretchen@adelphia.net

NEWSLETTER ASSISTANT EDITOR: Andrea Edwards  
 626-305-8395 or adedwards8@hotmail.com

MEMBERSHIP: Cliff McLean 626-966-0580 or cliff.mclean@verizon.net

WEB EDITOR: Graham Bothwell 626-449-8392

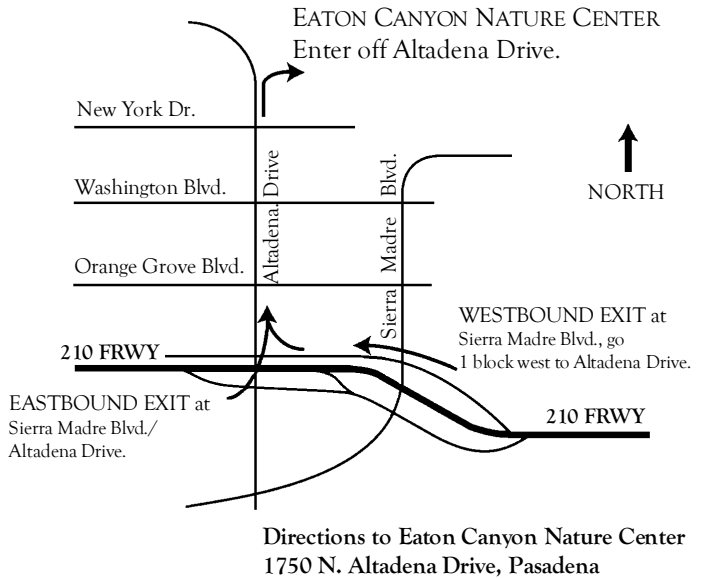
PUBLIC INFORMATION: Lyn McAfee  
 626-359-5278 or LynMcAfee@aol.com

PLANT WALKS: Eva Morgan, 626-284-0029

CONSERVATION: Rick Fisher  
 626-335-2534 or toyond@earthlink.net

RARE PLANTS: Mickey Long  
 mlongbird@charter.net or 626-398-5420

MEMBER SERVICES: Gabi & Cliff McLean  
 626-966-0580 or gabi.mclean@verizon.net



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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.*



**CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**

**San Gabriel Mountains Chapter**  
**1750 North Altadena Drive**  
**Pasadena, California 91107-1046**