



# The Shooting Star

SIERRA FOOTHILLS CHAPTER

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

MARCH 2015 Page 1



Fall Plant Sale, 2014

Photo: Val Myrick



Corsa Garden Tour in 2014

Photo: Jennie Haas

## MARCH 5<sup>th</sup> GENERAL MEETING @CNPS NATIVE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

This month we will be having our general meeting at the CNPS Native Demo Garden which is located at the Sonora Dog Park. **It will be starting 1 hour earlier at 6 pm.** Our guest speaker will be Stephanie Garcia, CNPS Board Member and Master Gardener. Her talk will include information on the plants currently growing in the demo garden; this past November, we added more than a dozen plants. She will also have a handout of plants from past CNPS plant sales that will include general information, sun, and water needs, along with the natural habitat for each plant.

The garden is located at the Sonora Dog Park and is open to the public. Easy to get to: on Greenley take Cabezut Road. Take 2<sup>nd</sup> left onto Covey Circle. Sonora

Sunrise Rotary Dog Park is on your right just past the Quail Hollow Storage Unit. Come by anytime, there is a nice table and bench under the oak trees. Enjoy!

## CNPS GARDEN TOUR March 29, Noon to 2 pm

Once again Deana Corsa is graciously opening up her beautiful Phoenix Lake garden for a guided tour. Her garden has **been on the Master Gardener's Annual Tour** twice over the past ten years. This is the same one we toured last September. Only this time, we should be just in time to see many of the natives blooming. This is a great opportunity to get ideas for planting natives in your own garden. During our tour, we will talk about the natives growing through out **her expansive garden.** **Don't miss this opportunity to see, in person, natives growing amongst oaks, pines, and cedars**

in a garden setting. If you have any questions email Stephanie at [sigarcia@mlode.com](mailto:sigarcia@mlode.com)

Directions: 15575 Buena Vista Avenida, Sonora

From Sonora: Hwy 108, take Hess Ave; LEFT on Hess; RIGHT onto Phoenix Lake Road; Turn LEFT on De Los Portales, at the main, Phoenix Lake entrance; RIGHT onto Paseo De Los Robles; RIGHT onto Buena Vista Avenida; Park in turn about beyond driveway

## Yosemite Forum Speaker March 10

Stephen Hart, University of California, Merced, Ginormous trees have big effects: The influence of giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) on soils on March 10. He will speak at 3:40-4:30 in the East Auditorium in Yosemite Valley.

If you change your mailing or e-mail address, be sure to send a note to Jennie Haas. This will keep your newsletter on time!

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*Dedicated to the Preservation of  
California Native Flora.*

## FIELD TRIPS

The field trip committee met on Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> and planned the 2015 field trip schedule. **We're taking into account the dry, warm January** which has spurred some plants to start leafing out early. Ann Mendershausen reported that poppies in the Merced Canyon are already forming buds. The poppy bloom there last year was really good with a similar weather pattern. Plants appear to be about a month ahead of schedule so we're timing our trips accordingly.

Our March field trips are detailed below. Future field trips that you can look forward to include a hike on the Moss Creek trail in the Merced Canyon (April 4), a hike on the Westside Railroad Grade trail (April date TBD), and the Abernathy Lava Caps (April 25). The entire field trip schedule will be published in the April Shooting Star.

For all field trips: bring lunch, water, sunscreen and appropriate clothing and footwear. Hiking level varies with each trip. Your trip will be enhanced by bringing field guides and magnifying lenses, although these are optional. Carpooling is encouraged. Call ahead if the weather looks iffy. Check [http://www.twitter.com/SIE\\_CNPS](http://www.twitter.com/SIE_CNPS) for updates. Our field trips are open to everyone. Bring a friend or two. It is Chapter policy that pets are not allowed on our field trips. We appreciate everyone's adherence to this policy.

If you would like to be on our field trip alerts e-mail list, send an e-mail to Jennie at [jhaas953@gmail.com](mailto:jhaas953@gmail.com).

**March 28 – Highway 49 Bagby Serpentine.** Leader: Ann Mendershausen. Hiking level: easy. **We'll visit the belt of serpentine that snakes along Highway 49 from Coulterville south to Bagby.** The early spring wildflower displays can be spectacular. **We'll meet in Coulterville on Highway 49 in front of the park just north of the Jefferson Hotel at 9:30a.m.** For more information about the trip, contact Ann at 209-742-7734 or [ralphr@sti.net](mailto:ralphr@sti.net).

**March 29 – Corsa Garden Tour.** Leader: Owner Deana Corsa. Hiking level: easy. Deana Corsa has once again graciously invited us for a guided tour of her garden to view the many native plantings growing among beautiful oaks, pines and cedars at her Phoenix Lake Estates home. We should be just in time to see many of the natives blooming. This is a great opportunity to get ideas for planting natives in your own garden. Meet at noon at 15575 Buena Vista Avenida, Sonora. Directions: from Sonora, drive east on Highway 108, turn LEFT on Hess, RIGHT onto Phoenix Lake Road, LEFT onto De Los Portales at the main Phoenix Lake entrance, RIGHT onto Paseo De Los Robles, and RIGHT onto Buena Vista Avenida. Park in the turnabout beyond the driveway. The tour will last until about 2:00pm. For more information, contact Stephanie Garcia, [sjgarcia@mlode.com](mailto:sjgarcia@mlode.com).

- - Jennie Haas, Field Trip Coordinator

## President's message

**Belated Happy New Year.** I'm astounded how time flies when you're not paying attention. There have been lots of distractions recently including a welcome deluge. We measured almost 8 inches at our place over the last rain event. **Not nearly enough but, right now at our place, we're actually ½ inch above last year's rain total.**

**There are three things I'd like to pursue this year. If you've been paying attention, you'll notice that our invasive plant problem isn't going away.** There will be a couple of programs in the near future to begin the discussion about what to do. If any of you have any ideas or suggestions about combating invasives please share them. The NRCS should be completing their extensive soil survey for Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties this year. Soils are frequently overlooked in the context of the plant types that grow in them. **Hopefully we'll begin an education process to make the soil/plant connection.** Another activity we've already begun and I hope will take off is an educational program for our public schools. **We've donated plants to start a native plant garden at the Waldorf School.** I've been talking with some staff members at Sonora to try to set up a similar program. Stay tuned and if you have an interest in getting involved, contact me.

**Another thing I'd like to get from you all is the identification and location of drifts of native plants populating our roadsides.** I've spoken with Public Works folks at the county offices and they would be willing to work with us to avoid spraying herbicides on these drifts if we can mark them. **That's a lot of work but we'll need to have the locations before we can begin to set up any protections.** The first step will be identifying these locations first and that's where you can help.

Last, but not least, we need the membership to step up and participate in some of the critical board positions that are no longer filled. We need a Conservation Chair or at least a few of you to step up and be on a committee. Late last fall we lost our Education Chair when my friend, our friend, Steve Stocking passed away. He was a familiar friendly face at all of our plant sales as well as a frequent presenter at numerous Chapter programs. His contribution to the understanding and appreciation of natives will never be surpassed. **We can't replace Steve but we can carry on his work and I'd love to see someone or ones step up and continue the process.**

**What I've listed above may seem somewhat ambitious but it needs to be done if we're ever going to make a difference for our native plants.**

**In closing, planning is under way for Fall Symposium.** I believe it's slated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat of Sept at the Sonora Fairgrounds. Details to follow as some of our planning begins to coalesce. Stay tuned.

- - Bob Dean

## SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

**This year's Spring Native Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, April 11, from 10 am to 1 pm.** It will be held on the grounds of the Calaveras County Water District located off of Pool Station Road in the Reed Business Park, in San Andreas.

We will have the same selection of rare high quality plants for sale as well as a fine selection of books and material that every gardener and native plant lover should have in their personal library. The Central Sierra Chapter of the Audubon Society will also be setting up their bird houses and feeders and books.

**We'll be recruiting volunteers to help work the sale, so if you have an interest contact Stephanie Garcia or Judy Dean.** There will also be a sign up sheet at the next Chapter meeting which will, by the way, be at the CNPS demonstration garden.

Please contact Judy of Stephanie with any questions.

## Tributes to Three Friends of the Plants

The month of January was a tough one in our local world of botany. We lost two local friends of the plants and one eminent botanist who was raised locally and contributed to the greater understanding of our local flora. We wish to recognize the contributions of all three:

**Chet Stone** was a charter member of our Sierra Foothills chapter. Chet and his wife Shirley were prominent members for many years helping with plant sales and attending and leading field trips. Our first growing area was on their property. Chet was a Forester with the Soil Conservation Service until his retirement. He liked to grow native trees and shrubs from seeds and donated the seedlings to our chapter for our plant sales. Two of the species which he grew were western redbud (*Cercus occidentalis*) and California nutmeg (*Torreya californica*). Chet never held a chapter office but he attended the general meetings for many years to hear the programs. Chet was 84.

**Blaine Rogers** was a long time CNPS member but was better known in our community as a popular Columbia College instructor of botany and biology. Blaine always used a heavy dose of good humor in his teachings. Blaine contracted his time and botany skills to the U.S. Forest Service in the late 1970s to survey for and map local rare plants. He was instrumental in helping Forest managers understand the distribution of the local, rare endemic Tuolumne fawnlily (*Erythronium tuolumnense*) and the uncommon Bacigalupi's yampah (*Perideridia bacigalupii*). Blaine was 74.

**James ("Jim") L. Reveal** moved to Tuolumne County with his family in 1948 when he was seven years old. His father took the job of District Ranger on the Summit Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest. At the age of 9, Jim went to work for a high Sierra packer and spent the next ten years working around horses and guiding pack trips into the Emigrant Basin. He graduated from Utah State University with a bachelor's degree in botany then graduated from Brigham Young University with a PhD. While at the universities, he worked on the genus *Eriogonum*, produced a checklist of the Intermountain Flora and collected plants for the Intermountain Flora project. While working as a professor at the University of Maryland, he continued his work on the flora of the Intermountain West and *Eriogonum*. In 1989, Jim described a local, rare *Eriogonum*, *Eriogonum luteolum* Greene var. *saltuarium* Reveal (Jack's wild buckwheat), naming it after his father, Jack, the forest ranger. The word "saltuarium" is an inflection of the Latin word saltuarius which means "steward of the forest". Jim Reveal was known as *the* expert in the genus *Eriogonum*. He was 73.

-- Jennie Haas and Margaret Willits

## Traditional Uses of *Aesculus californica* ! !

*Aesculus californica*, or California Buckeye, is a survivor from prehistoric times and is endemic to California. It is found from sea level up to 4500 feet, but it is not very winter hardy. Buckeye are found in the Coast, Cascade, and Tehachapi Ranges, foothills of the Central Valley, and the Sierra Nevadas. They can grow up to 40 feet high and 60 feet wide. They like dry slopes, moist canyons, and stream banks. In early February the leaflets start to emerge in a palmate arrangement that are united at the petiole. The compound leaves attach in an opposing pattern on the stem, and the leaflets can be up to 6 inches long. From May to July, pinkish-white flowers grow in upright clusters. The odor is either sweet or foul, depending on the sniffer. Each cluster produces 1 or 2 pear-shaped smooth, brown fruits, 1-3 inches long. Inside is a large mahogany brown seed that is revealed thru the split nut, reminding some of the eye of a deer; hence, the common name Buckeye. In the heat of early summer, like many mediterranean climate natives, the plant goes into summer dormancy to conserve water. The leaves turn brown and shed, and the plant's metabolism slows down. In our area with its heat, this can happen before most other plants, and when I first moved to this area, I thought they must have been hit by some insect or virus. All parts of this plant are considered toxic to humans. Native Californians used the nuts for food, but only when acorn crops were low. They required much processing to remove the poisonous chemical aesculin. Usually they were broken open, soaked in water, pounded into meal, and leached for 10 days or more. Some baked the nuts for 8 to 10 hours, washed, mashed, and leached them. It was a very time consuming process, and on top of that, it easily spoiled, so had to be consumed fairly quickly. Buckeye nuts were also used to stun fish. Unleached nuts were mashed and added to pools of water containing fish. The poisoned fish then floated to the surface, where they were easily scooped up, and then cooked to render the poison harmless. Buckeye leaves were used as a tea to relieve lung congestion and treat varicose veins. The wood was used to make bowls. Although *Aesculus californica* has had some varied uses, my favorite is its unique beauty and adaptive practices.

Sources:

Early Uses of California Plants, Edwin K. Ball

Discover California Shrubs, Mary Ruth Casebeer

-- Stefani Reichle



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I Wish to affiliate with the **Sierra Foothills** Chapter.

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**Membership includes the journal Fremontia, CNPS Bulletin and the Sierra Foothills monthly newsletter, The Shooting Star.**