



The Shooting Star

SIERRA FOOTHILLS CHAPTER

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

JULY 2015

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Wildflower displays along Cherry Lake Road

Photos: Quinn Young

SAVE THE DATE

September 12 our chapter will be holding another Native Plant Symposium. This one will focus on the drought, drought in the foothills of the Central Sierra and planning, planting and maintaining a native plant garden..

We're fortunate to have, as our morning keynote speaker, Janet Cobb of the Ca. Oak foundation. She will talk about oaks, oak woodlands and the drought and what's being done to protect and preserve our oak resources. There will also be a discussion regarding the drought and invasive plant species and the impact the bark beetle infestation is having in our conifers forests.

The afternoon session will feature Alrie Middlebrook, author of "Designing Ca. Native Gardens". The afternoon's efforts will focus on the individual garden, garden

structure, planting schemes for natives and plant selection. There will be a panel of local experts to discuss using natives in our gardens will use local gardens to illustrate their points.

We're proud to be partnering with the Tuolumne County Master Gardeners and the Tuolumne Utilities District.

The Symposium will be held at the Tuolumne County Fairgrounds. Because we could only reserve one of the smaller buildings, seating will be limited. If this is something you'd like to attend make your reservations early. There will be a more detailed announcement in the Aug. newsletter. Have a great summer.

- - *Bob Dean, President*



June 20th - Pilot Peak Field Trip

**July 11 – Saddlebag Lake/
Twenty Lakes Basin**

July 25 – Warren Canyon

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

Field Trips



Some years we can't seem to catch a break. I don't think any of us would be so bold as to complain about the recent rain and snow storms in this terrible drought. But maybe it would be okay to be just a little wistful about having to skip another field trip due to conditions. The May 30 Hammill Canyon field trip was cancelled due to Herring Creek Road being closed at Fiddler Green. The weather was fabulous but there was little to see between Highway 108 and the gate at Fiddler Green.

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 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.

June 20 – Pilot Peak. Leader: Barry and Judy Breckling. Hiking level: moderate (about 3 miles with 700-foot elevation gain). Much of the Pilot Peak area burned in the Rim fire, so we should see some interesting plants. We'll see how the tiny, rare Yosemite Woolly Sunflower, *Eriophyllum nubigenum*, has fared after the fire. Meet at 9:00a.m. in the Groveland Library parking lot (next to Mary Lavaroni Park on Main Street, Highway 120). For more information, contact Barry and Judy at (209) 878-3041, breckling@garlic.com.

July 11 – Saddlebag Lake/Twenty Lakes Basin. Leader: Tom Reyes. Hiking Level: arduous due to the very high elevation. View a huge diversity of wildflowers in a beautiful setting of alpine lakes and meadows. Located at the convergence of granite and metamorphic rock types and nestled between Mt Conness, Shepherds Crest and Tioga Crest, this basin is a gem of the High Sierra. We will take the water taxi across Saddlebag Lake to surpass a 1.5 mile hike along talus (or not if you're up for it!). Meet at 10:00a.m. at Saddlebag Lake Resort located up a well-marked dirt road 2 miles east of Tioga Pass. For more information, contact Tom at (818) 554-6616, tpreyes87@gmail.com.

July 25 – Warren Canyon. Leader: John Little. Hiking level: arduous due to the very high elevation. It helps to spend a day or more at altitude before the event. We'll follow a trail through a series of meadows, some possibly wet, with a wide variety of alpine flowers. The first part of the trail is nearly flat; further up there is some climbing, rewarded with several mutant specimens. Warren Creek is about 1 mile east of Ellery Lake, a bit east of Tioga Pass. We will meet at 10:00a.m. at or near the event site. Since parking at the site is tricky, detailed directions will be provided later. For more information, contact John at (520) 327-8973, or (209) 742-5196 closer to the event time, jlittle@email.arizona.edu.

--Jennie Haas, Field Trip Coordinator

Yosemite Forum

The Yosemite Forum is a free interactive lecture series designed to bring evolving knowledge of the Sierra Nevada to the public and the park. Lectures are noon-1 pm (unless otherwise noted) on the second Tuesday of the month in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Auditorium.

2015 Yosemite Forum Schedule			
July 14	Chelsea Arnold	University of California, Merced	Rapid carbon loss in high elevation meadows
August 11	Patrick McIntyre	California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Climate change and water balance in California forests: Historic changes and future trends

CNPS SYMPOSIUM - SAVE THE DATE

The Sierra Foothill Chapter of the California Native Plant Society will be hosting a Native Plant Symposium on September 12 at the Tuolumne County Fairgrounds. The event will run from 9am to 3 pm. The symposium will look at the impact of the drought in our foothills and the oak woodland landscape. The emphasis will be on what the private property owner can do in a drought situation. Attention will be paid to plant selection and distribution - including the withdrawal from traditional gardens to the water wise native plant garden.

The keynote speaker for the morning session will be Janet Cobb of the California Oak Foundation. She has dedicated her professional life to the preservation and the continued persistence of the Oak Woodland throughout California and is passionately committed to the effort throughout the Sierra Foothills.

The afternoon session will focus on what individual gardeners can do to establish native gardens. The keynote speaker will be Alrie Middlebrook, author of "Designing California Native Plant Gardens." Additionally, local garden experts and practitioners Marlys Bell and Judy Dean will share their experiences, ideas, failures and successes on native gardening in the Central Sierra Foothills.

More information will follow regarding the details for registration and volunteering. If you have any questions, you can email Stephanie Garcia sjgarcia@mlode.com

Traditional Uses of Soaproot

Chlorogalum pomeridianum, known as Soaproot or Amole, has a wide variety of traditional uses including soap, glue, food, dye, medicine, and poison. It is found on the west side of the Sierra Nevada from southern California to Oregon below 5000 feet. It shows up in a variety of areas, but prefers dry, sandy, sunny slopes. After Fall and Winter rains, the onion-like bulb covered in coarse brown fibers, sends out long, prostrate, wavy-edged leaves. A tall flower stalk produces numerous white to violet flowers. They are night bloomers, opening in late afternoon and closing with the dawn. Their main pollinators are bumblebees and carpenter bees.

Soaproot was primarily used as soap as its common name implies. The saponins in the juice of the inner layers of the bulb, mixed with water, makes a nice lather to wash clothes, the body, and the hair. It's reported to be easily rinsed out while leaving the hair soft and glossy. The same inner juice thickened as the bulb was roasted, which made a resin or glue that was used for baskets, attaching feathers to arrow shafts, or forming a handle for brushes made from the plant's fibers. Bulbs were slow baked overnight at the edge of the fire pit, rendering a somewhat sweet tasting starch without the soapy qualities. The tender shoots also were a sweet tasting food after a slow roasting. The green sap from the leaves was pricked into the skin for tatoos (don't try this at home).

Medicinally, the juice was used as an antiseptic, laxative, diuretic, and made into a poultice for sores. The fresh crushed bulb was rubbed on the body to ease rheumatic pains and cramps. Finally, a community of Natives used the crushed bulbs as a poison to catch fish. The men dammed a stream and readied the nets, while the women threw in a profusion of bulbs. These stupefied the fish long enough for them to be gathered up in great quantities.

A versatile plant indeed, there is even a diary entry from a Donner party survivor dated February 28, 1847, saying "Solitary Indian passed by yesterday come from the lake had a heavy pack on his back gave me 5 or 6 roots resembling onions in shape taste some like a sweet potatoe, all full of little tough fibres." In my own backyard, I planted a Soaproot about 10 years ago that just this year sent up a six foot flower stock, so have patience.

--Stefani Reichle

Sources:

Bay Nature ezine, The Versatile Bulb: The Many Uses of Soap Root, Sue Rosenthal
Early Uses of California Plants, Edward K. Ball



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