Simple and homely things wear best and yield most

“It is well to find your employment and amusement in simple and homely things. These wear best and yield most. I think I would rather watch the motions of these cows in their pasture for a day, which I now see all headed one way and slowly advancing, – watch them and project their course carefully on a chart, and report all their behavior faithfully, – than wander to Europe or Asia and watch other motions there; for it is only ourselves that we report in either case, and perchance we shall report a more restless and worthless self in the latter case than in the first.”

Another gem from Thoreau’s Journal (October 5, 1856). Every time I read it, I feel foolish for once keeping a bucket list. What do I find lacking in my home town? What am I looking for? Who am I trying to impress? If any good has come from the COVID-19 restrictions, it is that I have learned to find employment and amusement in simple and homely things.

Continuing in that vein, this month’s Newsletter contains contributions from four members describing simple wonders from their own backyards. Stefani Reichle leads off with a number of thriving plants that she purchased at our Fall Plant Sales in her hometown of Jamestown. Your editor shares three Plant Sale successes: – two that merge his interests in birds & wildflowers, plus a rare buckwheat from the Channel Islands that has adapted beautifully to the scorching summers in Merced. Karen Orso describes several plants that she started from cuttings and seeds. Peggy Moore shares some observations from a botanizing excursion along the Hwy. 49 serpentine corridor. In next month’s newsletter, David Campbell will present a mini-tutorial on how to start your own native plant garden. –Doug Krajnovich, Editor

July Field Trip Outlook

Although the COVID-19 infection rate remains stubbornly high in California, restrictions are being eased. Yosemite Wilderness re-opened on June 5 to holders of valid Wilderness Permits. Park lodging and other services resumed on June 11 with restrictions on the number of people and vehicles that can enter the park on any given day. For details, see: www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/covid19.htm

Because of the day use restrictions, David Campbell has decided to cancel the July 18 field trip on Glacier Point Road.

Doug Krajnovich & Peggy Moore still plan to host the High Sierra Double Header on the weekend of July 25-26, since both field trips lie outside the park and neither trip requires carpooling. Signups are mandatory. For contact information, see the Field trip descriptions on the chapter website: http://www.sierrafoothillscnps.org/field-trips/

If you are interested in the Carson Pass & Lake Winnemucca field trips, tentatively scheduled for July 19 and August 1, Bob Dean requests that you contact him to discuss contingencies: 209-754-5887, goldrushdean@yahoo.com

The Sierra Foothills Membership Coordinator position is currently vacant. If you change your mailing or e-mail address, please inform the CNPS state organization in Sacramento so that the change(s) are recorded.
Stefani Reichle (Jamestown)

“I live in Jamestown where ‘plant in full sun’ takes on a new meaning. Luckily over the 17 years I’ve lived there, my mulberry tree has grown enough to give some shade. All these plants started as 1 gallon size from CNPS sales. TOP LEFT: I originally planted the ninebark (*Physocarpus capitatus*) in full sun and it didn’t like it. It is now very happy tucked under the mulberry tree. Sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*) was happy underneath the ninebark on a well-draining slope that I tried to mimic from Table Mountain where they grow wild. TOP RIGHT: My flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*) took on a life of its own planted in full sun, and the white sage (*Salvia apiana*) beneath it is also doing well, although staying pretty small. BOTTOM LEFT: Woolly bluecurls (*Trichostema lanatum*) also needs well-draining soil on its roots. BOTTOM RIGHT: California grape (*Vitis californica*) took a couple years but now cannot be stopped, so choose carefully when you plant it. I have made juice from the harvest.” Photos © Stefani Reichle
Doug Krajnovich (Merced)

“I have attended four of the last five Fall Plant Sales. I confess that I am a terrible gardener. I cannot grow enough vegetables to feed a grasshopper. Despite my Black Thumb, 70% of my native plants have survived. Many are thriving. Two of my favorites are Scarlet Bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) [TOP LEFT] and California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) [TOP RIGHT]. Both produce red tubular flowers that attract hummingbirds. I like the fact that Fuchsia blooms in the fall, when everything else in my yard has gone to seed. (The hummingbirds like it, too!) The third plant that I chose to highlight is Red-flowered Buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande var. rubescens*). I didn’t recognize the name when I purchased two of these at the 2018 Plant Sale. When I got home, I discovered that this is a rare plant endemic to the Channel Islands [CRPR 1B.2]. Both plants look great after two years. I wonder if Jepson will declare my two plants in Merced a disjunct population?”

Range map © Calflora.
Photos © Doug Krajnovich.
Karen Orso (Wilseyville)

“I have never purchased plants at a CNPS chapter plant sale. However, I have started many on my own from seed or cuttings. CCW from TOP: Snowdrop Bush (*Styrax redivivus*) is my favorite. Nevada City Buckwheat (*Eriogonum prattenianum*) is a mound-shaped plant commonly found on lava caps. I managed to start some from seed. One plant has done very well even though it is not on a lava cap. I take care to keep it safe from too much competition from grasses and weeds. *Keckiella breviflora* makes a good companion/host plant for Paintbrush. I started the Keckiella indoors and transplanted it. Germination is easy, no special stratification required. Years later I scattered Paintbrush seeds underneath the established Keckiella shrubs and they do very well there. I believe the Paintbrush species is *Castilleja subinclusa*. I started Silver Bush Lupine from seed some years ago. It is now a large plant and puts on quite a display in late April. While it produces tons of seeds I get relatively few new plants. Maybe it is too soon to call this a success story but… about 6 years ago I purchased 10 disease-resistant Sugar Pine seedlings from the Sugar Pine Foundation (sugarpinefoundation.org). The Foundation mailed me 11 tiny seedlings of which 6 have survived. Through the summers I gave them water once a week. The Foundation advises that after 5 years they will no longer need watering. They are now about a foot tall. I am still protecting them with cages.”

Photos © Karen Orso
Peggy Moore (Mariposa)

“A friend had me join her – masked & distanced – to help identify some late-flowering things near Mariposa Creek off of Hwy 49. She took me past a small trash-filled ditch to a disturbed site past a pile of wood rounds and along an old dirt road. There, we found, amid the usual weedy foothill species, an intriguing set of annuals and perennials - all new to me. She showed me Bridges' brodiaea (Triteleia bridgesii) and largeflower bluecup (Githopsis pulchella pulchella). The brodiaea, with its distinctive, elegant, long-reaching pedicels, is at the southern extent of its range in Mariposa County. It was first collected from the Mariposa area by Joseph Congdon in 1893; that specimen is now at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Largeflower bluecup had the deepest purple flowers you could ever want to see and a white throat. We happened on another annual – one of the tarweeds but with large white flowers rather than the tiny yellow ones I'm accustomed to seeing. My preliminary ID is rosin weed (Calycadenia multiglandulosa). The last one she wanted identified – a pretty little yellow composite – I have cautiously decided was Lagophylla glandulosa. I've not spent any time on Calycadenia and similar species, and they're interesting in part due to their wide variation in color within a species (from white to pink to bright yellow), the distinctions among ligulate flower shapes, and their name changes over time. Some species of Hemizonia are now placed in either Centromadia or Deinandra by specialists using new scientific tools to look at relatedness. Our smallest tarweed, the adorable opposite-leaved tarweed (Madia minima) is now Hemizonella minima. So don't give up on ‘waste places.’ They can hold your interest for hours once many of our spring wildflowers are past.”

Photos © Peggy Moore
On June 3, CNPS sent out an e-mail with this graphic and an expression of solidarity for Black Lives Matter peaceful protesters. The statement read in part:

“The California Native Plant Society joins countless others in reaffirming our commitment to inclusion and equity. We unequivocally condemn violence against Black people and oppose outdated and racist systems that enable that violence. We believe California’s incredible human diversity is key to our shared efforts to celebrate, protect, and restore this state’s unparalleled natural diversity. Together, we restate our ongoing commitment to fighting against racial inequality and working for environmental injustice [sic], that we may all enjoy a just and safe Society that is as inclusive and diverse as our state.”

I got to thinking about certain people whom I look up to. If you read this newsletter regularly, you know that I endlessly quote Henry Thoreau and John Muir. They are two of my biggest heroes. But on the subject of “violence against Black people,” I am forced to admit that there is a chasm as wide and deep as the Grand Canyon between Thoreau and Muir. If you want to know what Thoreau thought about slavery, read his essay *Slavery in Massachusetts*. If you want to know what Muir DIDN’T say about slavery and the circumstances of Black sharecroppers after the Civil War, read *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*. I re-read *Thousand Mile Walk* last month as I was searching up a quote for the May Newsletter. I was shocked by some of the things that John Muir wrote about Blacks, then called negroes. Here are two examples, not even the worst:

September 25, 1868: “Cotton is the principal crop hereabouts, and picking is now going on merrily… The negroes are easy-going and merry, making a great deal of noise and doing little work. One energetic white man, working with a will, would easily pick as much cotton as half a dozen Sambos and Sallies.”

September 26, 1868: “The negroes here have been well trained and are extremely polite. When they come in sight of a white man on the road, off go their hats, even at a distance of forty or fifty yards, and they walk bare-headed until he is out of sight.”

It is impossible for me to believe that Muir did not know what was going on in the South at the time of his fabled walk. There is a reason that the negroes he met were “well-trained and extremely polite.” This was the time of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Less than two months after Muir wrote these journal entries, Ulysses S. Grant was elected President of the United States, succeeding Andrew Johnson in 1869. It was Grant who had the guts to take on the Ku Klux Klan. It was Grant who got the Fourteenth Amendment passed. Frederick Douglass eulogized Grant as “a man too broad for prejudice, too humane to despise the humblest, too great to be small at any point. In him the Negro found a protector, the Indian a friend, a vanquished foe a brother, an imperiled nation a savior.” Before he died in 1862, Thoreau wrote blistering attacks on slavery, gave speeches, and risked his own freedom by helping escaped slaves make their way to Canada on the underground railroad.

It pains me to acknowledge John Muir’s blind spot:—his deafening silence on slavery and its aftermath. Muir had more compassion for mosquitoes and man-eating alligators than he had for black people. I still respect Muir’s writings about plants and animals, but I am heartbroken that his universal worldview was too narrow to include oppressed peoples. [This entry reflects the personal views of the Editor. No one else is responsible for its content.]
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