



CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
San Diego Chapter Newsletter

CHAPTER MEETING

**Tuesday, July 19
Casa del Prado Room 101
Balboa Park**

**Join us for a *THANK YOU* to
the Sponsors of our 2016
Native Garden Tour!**

We would like to show our appreciation by dedicating our July General Meeting to the generous sponsors of our 2016 Garden Native Tour. The format will be casual. Sponsors will setup tables around the room with their products/ messaging/ marketing materials for display and will be available to talk with members.

Greg Rubin (California's Own Native Landscape Design, Inc.), Shirley Moors (Walter Andersen Nursery), Paul Hunyady (North Park Nursery), Roberto Flores/Teresa Everett (Moosa Creek Nursery), Susan Krzywicki (Krzywicki Consulting and Rainscape), Candace Vanderhoff (SoloBee), and Laura Camp (Tree of Life Nursery) will all be available to talk with you!

Members can visit the tables between 6-7 p.m.; sponsors will give brief presentations to the whole group between 7:00-8:30 PM. Stay to talk with each other and our sponsors until 9:00 p.m.

6:00 – 7:00 p.m. – refreshments, browsing, looking at booths and talking with our sponsors, & socializing.

7:00 – 8:30 p.m. – presentations.

Chapter meetings are free and open to the public.

Seed and Bulb Sorting Party

Sunday, July 31 from 10 a.m. – noon

Saturday, August 20 from 10 a.m. – noon

Mark your calendars for the seed and bulb team's next sorting parties where we sort and label seed we sell at the October Plant Sale. The meetings will be at the **Tecolote Nature Center** (5180 Tecolote Rd, San Diego).

Please email cnpsd.sd@gmail.com if you would like to join us! No experience necessary!

GARDEN STORIES

Sue's Garden

Several years ago I started the process of removing an old Bermuda grass lawn from my property. At that time I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. For a couple of years I went through a bunch of ideas.

In 2015 I decided I wanted to put in a bio-swale and natives. Big decision for one such as myself who has no spatial sense and can't visualize just what I want. I began to lay out the swale with rocks I had dug up here and there and gradually an idea took shape. After trying to dig the swale myself, I decided I needed to find an expert, which I did in Leo and crew. Leo came over and checked it out, we talked about my idea and set a date for the "installation". The day arrived and they went to work. In a matter of hours my swale was in place and everything was as I wanted.

The next step was to request a Design Charrette from the Garden Committee (GC) of CNPS-SD. Each year the GC has a small contest and one person's garden is chosen for the charrette. In Oct. 2015 I was honored to win and a date in November, 2015 was set for the design. Committee members showed up that evening and we set out to discuss my "vision" and everyone began to suggest plants. One member kept track of all

the suggestions along with where the plant(s) should go. Then we all sat down and worked on actually putting it on paper. Greg Rubin took it home with him and then e-mailed me a drawing of the layout and a list of plants.

We had set up a planting date for December 8, 2015. I got busy making a list of the plants and how many of each plant were required. Then I called around to the various native plant nurseries to see who had what plants. The week of the planting I visited each of the nurseries and gathered the plants. Luckily, I was able to get all but one plant.

On Saturday morning, Dec. 8th, about 6:30, I went out and placed all the plants where they were supposed to go, in preparation for the arrival of all the wonderful volunteers who were going to make this possible. Around 8:00 a.m. people began to arrive and we started digging the holes. Plants were placed and watered in well. Due to this enthusiastic crew, by 11:30 a.m. everything was planted and thoroughly watered; stepping stones were in place; and VOILA!!, I had the very early beginning of what you see in the photos attached (taken on May 11, 2016).

In January and February we had the two big rains. The swale filled to the top – but within 3 hours or so it had all soaked down into the ground. And the plants slowly started growing.

By early May almost every plant had doubled in size – so is considered to be “established”. There is no irrigation system and the garden is watered very lightly, like a little summer shower, once a week.

My neighbors are complimentary and I am hoping that this small “demonstration” garden will encourage others in my neighborhood to install natives for habitat and beauty.

~ Sue Marchetti, Board Member



Sue's Garden photos.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Alice Chary Darla Reams
Trudy Gingery Ashley Tuggle
Dinia Green Barbara Williams
Laura Keener

BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, July 6, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. 4010 Morena Blvd, Suite 100, San Diego (Thomas Guide 1248 C4). CNPS-SD Executive Board meetings are always the first Wednesday of the month, except when the 1st Wednesday falls on a holiday. Members are welcome to attend as observers. To add an issue to the agenda, please email president@cnpsd.org.

Summary of June 1 Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

The Treasurer (Connie di Girolamo), Mike Gonzales and Bob Byrnes met with our investment advisor and provided their recommendation at the June 2016 Board meeting. The Board voted to liquidate our Franklin Templeton fund, which is not making money, and reinvest our funds in a corporate active asset account at Morgan Stanley, with half going in a money market account and half in a preferred securities account.

The Chapter's annual report was submitted to the State CNPS on June 1.



The Board voted to enter into a contract with Matt Helbig for an introductory web video about native gardening. This may be the first of a series of web videos.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

~ **Bobbie Stephenson**, President

NATIVE GARDENING

Native Gardening Committee

July 13. Meets 2nd Wednesday of each month. Info: Mike Gonzales at gardening@cnpsd.org.

Old Town Native Plant Landscape

Saturday, July 9: Work Party - 1 to 3 pm.
Big and Little Plants Call for Attention in Old Town Party.

In the summer a lot of our native plants are semi dormant, taking a siesta. It is a good time to prune the big ones if they need it. Bring loppers and/or a tree saw if you have one and get coaching about how to do it well.

At the small plant scale, the narrowleaf milkweed reached maximum size in summer last year too and then the monarchs laid eggs and the caterpillars gobbled all that growth and turned it into butterflies. Come watch a caterpillar do its part.

The landscape is at the corner of Taylor and Congress. Park in the Cal. Dept. of Transportation parking lot on Taylor Street, or come by trolley or train. Bring water, sun protection, gloves. We have some tools to share.

Questions or for info, contact Kay at fieldtrips@cnpsd.org.

Saturday, July 16, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Morning Pruning Party! Followed by a No-host lunch nearby. Our young Coast Live Oaks are due for a trim. If we do it in the cool of the morning, we're hoping some of you who can't get to the afternoon work parties will join us. After we take care of them, we hope you'll join other pruners for a no-host lunch nearby. Bring your loppers and tree saws if you have them, gloves, water, and sun protection.

We expect parking to be easy in the lot next to the native plant landscape, between the landscape, Taylor, and Calhoun streets. If parking is tight, the Cal Trans lot

across Taylor Street allows free parking on weekends. Questions? Contact Kay at fieldtrips@cnpsd.org.

TECOLOTE CANYON NATURAL PARK



Would you like to lead a nature walk in Tecolote Canyon once/month? Please contact Kay at fieldtrips@cnpsd.org.

SAVE THE DATE

Garden Native Workshop Saturday, September 10, 2016

We are planning our day-long fall workshop (formerly symposium), so save the date! We will offer talks, hands-on sessions, and valuable information by native gardening experts. The Fall Plant Sale will follow on October 15 (see below).



Fall Plant Sale Saturday, October 15, 2016

The plant sale committee is always looking for volunteers. We work throughout the year planning the sale. Some jobs can be done on your own time while others require volunteers to work in groups. Some of the volunteer tasks include:

- Publicizing and promoting our sale, contacting news outlets, etc.
- Coordinating food: Setting up food for the volunteers on plant sale day, soliciting donations, etc.
- Packaging and labeling seeds.
- Propagating plants – help the plant propagation committee grow plants for the sale.

If you'd like to get involved with one of the chapter's largest fundraisers, **please join us by sending an email to plantsale@cnpsd.org**.

Pre-ordering information for this year's plant sale: CNPS members are able to preorder plants and have them waiting for you on sale day. Details will be posted on the chapter's website at the end of August.

~ Carolyn Martus, Fall Plant Sale Chair

CONSERVATION

Conservation Committee

July 5. First Tuesday evening of each month. Contact Frank Landis at conservation@cnpsd.org for location.

California Dreaming

You voted in the primaries, right? Sorry, it's just that this year, it's important.

I've got a confession to make. Even though I was an environmental sciences student at Berkeley back in the 1980s, I never read Marc Reisner's Cadillac Desert. I know, on the scale of things to confess, this is pretty trivial, and the only reason I'm bringing it up right now is because the book talks about the west's epic and crazy water history, and that craziness seems to be heating up again. So far as I can tell, we're in a time where people with money and influence, inside and outside government, are trying for boondoggles, power grabs, and pay-to-play schemes. Certainly these have always been around, but they're worse right now.

What I call craziness is, unfortunately, politics 101: crises are great times for opportunistic (often authoritarian) people to come in and impose their vision of what should be on a political body that's too weak to resist. Their ideas may be the essence of, well, chiropteran fecal psychosis, but if they're charismatic and domineering enough, if the ideas are attractive enough, they get put into play, for better or worse. For example, we saw this with the War on Terror and the construction of the new border fence, which destroyed a lot of conservation efforts along the border. It's not clear if all that construction made us notably safer from terrorists, but when you're afraid of terrorism, that national panic made it easy to get a lot of questionable things done, here, at every airport, in Iraq, on Guantanamo, and so forth. During drought, floods, fires, earthquakes, or whatever, you're vulnerable to someone coming along with a plan. It's easy to give into the fear and going along with the program, but that often isn't the best idea.

That's kind of the logic with the Vegetation Treatment Program (VTP), at least as far as I can tell. CALFIRE's

getting over a hundred million dollars in the state budget for vegetation treatment, they're having trouble spending it all, and they want to get out from under environmental laws like CEQA, on the unproven theory that this will make it easier for them to spend all that money and ask for more. What better way to do this than to trumpet the danger of fire, go on TV to talk about how dangerous things will be (as they do every year)? Why not trust them to keep us safe? This approach has certainly scared some CNPSers into believing that the whole state is going to burn, and that we need to lay down and let them have their way, rather than fighting them.

Indeed, the VTP would be a great program if it actually made us safer. Unfortunately (as I spent three weeks finding out again), there's no evidence that their program would make us any safer, although it would spend a lot of money to do whatever it's going to do. That's the boondoggle part of the VTP, and that's why I'm against it.

I'm all for spending money on controlled burns in some parts of the state, in doing well-planned fire clearances around homes and buildings, in protecting people and native plants. In this, I'm following not just my own desires but official CNPS policy. However, I'm not a fan of clearing big areas deep in the back country in the name of strategic fire breaks, because there's no evidence that they help, especially against the Santa Ana wind driven fires that cause the vast majority of home and human losses. I'm even more against spending hundreds of millions of dollars doing this kind of thing, because that money could be used for programs that would make us safer.

Unfortunately, it's not just the VTP.

There's a bill (AB 2087 Levine) that passed the State Assembly and is currently sitting in the State Senate that would authorize a new type of arrangement, sort of like a Habitat Conservation Plan, called a Regional Conservation Framework (RCF). The original bill was endorsed by a couple of big environmental groups, and it looked sort of like a Big Data approach to conservation planning, which isn't intrinsically a bad thing. The problem is, the bill was thoroughly rewritten just before it was passed (you can read it at <http://www.legtrack.com/bill.html?bill=201520160AB2087> . Look at all the strikeouts), and now there's a lot of language about creating "mitigation credits" (and I'm not clear what those are, but they look like habitat enhancements), that can be used, sold, or transferred. It looks like you can buy mitigation credits, and somehow mitigate the damage through a Regional

Conservation Framework.

Again, this could be good, given how sloppily mitigation banks seem to be used around here. In my case, I'm thinking about how the boundary of a mitigation bank on Del Mar Mesa suddenly wandered so that the edge is no longer going to get buried under a road; but I'm cynical. The basic problem is that HCPs, NCCPs, and mitigation banks don't seem to work all that well. They're cumbersome, sometimes ignored or abused. Why not come up with a sleek new system?

Unfortunately, it looks to me like AB 2087 is now designed to set up a market in mitigation credits. Given how the state's Cap and Trade market for dealing with greenhouse gases is under legal challenge and has a huge financial shortfall (<http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-sac-climate-change-challenges-20160614-snap-story.html>), I'm really not sure this is the right time to create yet another market-based solution to environmental issues.

At worst, mitigation credits could turn into the equivalent of religious indulgences, a pay-to-play system where developers simply destroy land on the coast, and buy mitigation credits to conserve land far away. While that might be great for far away lands, it doesn't help preserve native plants near the coast, where most of the development is occurring. I also think that I'm not alone in wanting my local species protected, however good it might feel to know that some distant landscape is also protected.

Pay-to-play may sound dire, but something like this seems to be happening in Los Angeles right now. My counterparts in the LA/Santa Monica Mountains chapter are dealing with at least nine separate destructive projects. Part of this is the current LA Mayor, who has a goal of bringing 100,000 new housing units to LA in the next five years. LA planning seems to have turned into a rubber stamp system, and the local environmental community there is fighting harder than we are. It's worth watching for here. All you have to do is get the media complaining about how unaffordable housing in San Diego is. Then there will be a push for big new developments, like, say, Lilac Hills Ranch, that say they'll solve all our problems, even though they won't produce much more affordable housing. If we're not careful and thoughtful, it's easy to get taken in by this.

The nice thing about reading Cadillac Desert is the reminder that this isn't new, that California's been dealing with this kind of craziness since the Gold Rush. California's been built on dreams of wealth and plenty,

by fears of disaster and loss. It's the essence of the real California dream.

Unfortunately, that dream has left a lot of permanent scars on the land: rivers that will be buried under the silt of reservoirs until the dams come down, depleted groundwater, vanished lakes and deltas, endangered species, huge industrial farms, massive suburbs and traffic jams, smog and canals, all that. Indeed, one reason we in the environmental community fight so hard is because California's basically been terraformed to resemble a paradise in the last 150 years. We environmentalists have realized that, to put it politely, this might not have been the smartest thing we could have done, especially if the system is supposed to last. However, we are stuck living where we're living, even if water's being pumped uphill to grow our food and water our gardens.

If you think about the long run, as I tend to, it's easy to wonder how soon it will all fall apart, and Cadillac Desert has a good lesson for all that too. Written in the 1980s, it predicted serious water shortages by the early 2000s for southern California. Those shortages kind of came and went, and southern California did not dry up and blow away. Indeed, it didn't dry up and blow away in the 1960s, as was predicted during a previous water crisis. Yes, our whole system may be fundamentally irrational, constantly surfing the catastrophe curve, but it's also maintained and sustained by a lot of money, resources, and talent. You can't predict when it will fall apart by looking at how unstable it is. It will only fall apart when it cannot be fixed, rebuilt, or upgraded any more, and it's much harder to predict when that will happen.

When you have tens of millions of people in a place, not shipping water or food to them is not an option. Because we're here, resources flow towards us. It's a crazy system, but that's the how the California Dream works: water and resources flow towards money and power, and right now, the money and power is in the cities, especially here in the south. It's a system that will work until one day it doesn't, and we'll just have to keep it from wiping out what's left of our native plants in the meantime.

~ Frank Landis, Conservation Chair

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To receive your newsletter via email, please contact us at:

enewsletter@cnpsd.org

If your email address has changed from what we have on record, please let us know.

BOTANY

Laurel Sumac (*Malosma laurina*)

Malosma laurina is a member of the Anacardiaceae, the family with Baja California Elephant Trees (*Pachycormus discolor*), Poison Oak (*Toxicodendron diversiloba*), Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*) nuts and Mango (*Mangifera* spp.). It is a relatively diverse family but a common thread is semi toxicity. People who are allergic to Poison Oak may have a reaction to mangos and raw cashews are a problem for many people. Cashew nut oil is a known pesticide, which is extracted by roasting the nuts and the shells. Therefore, though the family has beneficial plants, the toxic nature is widespread. Laurel Sumac itself is not considered generally toxic, but some people do have a reaction to it in a manner similar to that of Poison Oak if they have a strong reaction to Poison Oak.

Laurel Sumac is known as the evergreen shrub with canoe or taco shaped leaves. In San Diego County, it is a dominant in sage scrub and some chaparral types of habitats. It is often taken for granted but it represents one of the largest woody plants in much of its range. In parts of the hills east of Poway, for example, it is a dominant plant and constitutes the greatest amount of biomass for the region.

The names for Laurel Sumac have changed over time. In Spanish, it is called Lentisco. However, the scientific name of *Malosma laurina* is relatively recent since it used to be considered a member of the genus *Rhus*. *Malosma* is a monotypic genus with no other members. *Rhus* is more well-known with up to 250 species in its broad definition.

Rhus from other parts of the world have interesting uses. In the Middle East, fruits of *Rhus* are ground into a reddish-purple powder and used as a spice to add a tart, lemony taste to salads or meat. In Arab dishes, it is used as a garnish in hummus. In Iranian, Jordanian, Kurdish and Turkish foods, sumac is used as a spice mixture. In North America, *Rhus glabra* and *Rhus typhina* are sometimes used to make a beverage by soaking the fruits in water and sweetening it. In California, many are familiar with *Rhus integrifolia*, our lemonadeberry that has a lemony taste to the fruits. Another use of members of the genus *Rhus* is tanning leather and color dyes, and sumac has been used for medicinal purposes in the Middle East as well.

The genus *Rhus* extends in the fossil record back to the Eocene roughly 56 million years ago. Fossils that are

more like *Malosma* have been found in central California from the 5 to 10 million years ago (Axelrod 1992).

Prior to the split of *Toxicodendron* and *Malosma* off of *Rhus*, there were 10 species in the western United States.

Laurel Sumac flowers are whitish cream in color and the fruits are small red berries. The plants contain a high amount of red coloration. The stems are red and the major leaf veins in the leaves are also red. The plants may grow with a single central trunk or a group of stems rising from a root mass. They are said to be able to grow to 6 meters (nearly 20 feet) tall, though most are much shorter than that. It also has a characteristic odor, which to me is sort of a woody, smoky, peppery scent.

Malosma laurina has several interesting characteristics. First, it is very sensitive to frost. It is not unusual to drive through a low canyon or valley in east San Diego County and observe the frost line by the brown leaves on the Laurel Sumac. Very shortly after being affected by frost, the leaves become a pale, crispy, pinkish rust color. However, even if top killed, it will resprout. That raises the second interesting characteristic. It is highly resistant to fires. It is not that it does not burn in the fires, because it does, but it is very quick to resprout following a fire. In fact, within a couple of weeks of the occurrence of a fire, the plant will resprout with dark red, shiny new growth that quickly turns into green leaves and red stems. It is well adapted to Southern California weather and environmental variables. It is notable that it maintains its leaves all summer, even during dry seasons, though some may die back to a limited degree if the plant is truly stressed. It is often growing in association with underground rocks which may harbor additional moisture pockets to carry it through dry periods.

The distribution of Laurel sumac is another interesting factor. It extends up the coast to Santa Barbara County and even in a few locations in San Luis Obispo County, but its center of distribution in terms of abundance appears to be San Diego County and nearby locations in Baja California. As mentioned above, it is so common in some locations that it is the dominant species in the vegetation. Understanding its sensitivity to frost explains its northern limit. Its southern limit is surprising in that it occurs in pockets in the highlands southward to near the Cape region of Baja California. However, there are a couple of notable locations for it. First, it grows on Guadalupe Island, an island that is 160 miles from the mainland and 220

miles south of San Diego. Guadalupe Island was ravaged by goats for nearly two centuries so that native vegetation was entirely removed from major portions of the island. There are a very limited number of Laurel Sumac remaining on the island, but one in particular, continued to grow out of a moderately high cliff and drape downwards more than 15 feet. Eventually, that plant broke off and fell to the slope below. However, it has since resprouted and now extends 8 or 10 feet downward once again.



Malosma laurina on a cliff on Guadalupe Island.
Photo by Tom Oberbauer.

The other interesting location is on Cedros Island. Cedros Island is a desert island with average rainfall of roughly 2 and a half inches at the southern end. It is not too far from the mainland, but the mainland is also very dry, not the landscape favored by *Malosma*. However, on the upper slopes of the island, up to 4000 feet, and on ridges on the northern portion of the island, precipitation is greater and fog condenses to augment rainfall. In those areas, *Malosma laurina* is common. In some places, it is the dominant in a chaparral/sage scrub type of habitat, and mixing with *Artemisia californica* and *Juniperus californica*. On the north, it even mixes with Cedros Island Pine (*Pinus radiata* var. *cedrosensis*), a form of Monterey Pine.

Laurel Sumac is another of the unique species that grows in San Diego County. It is much more than simply a shrub in the Coastal Sage Scrub habitats that provides for wildlife habitat. It represents a long history of presence in the northern hemisphere and is part of an ancient lineage. That plus its adaptations to the conditions here indicate its distinctiveness in this region.

~ Tom Oberbauer, Vice President

Axelrod, D. I. 1992: Contributions to the Neogene Paleobotany of Central California. University of California Publications in Geological Sciences; v. 121.

Aliza Green. 2006. *Field Guide to Herbs & Spices: How to Identify, Select, and Use*.



Malosma laurina flowers. Photo from <http://www.calflora.net/bloomingplants/laurelsumac.html>

RELATED ACTIVITIES

POINT LOMA NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

Every 1st Saturday and 3rd Sunday of the month, 9 – 11 am. Join fellow volunteers to help care for this beautiful city park in Point Loma! Gardening activities include planting, watering, weeding, trail maintenance and more! For more information and to RSVP please contact the San Diego River Park Foundation at (619) 297-7380 or volunteer@sandiegoriver.org.

The CNPS-SD Newsletter is generally published 12 times a year. The newsletter is not peer reviewed and any opinions expressed are those of the author identified at the end of each notice or article. The newsletter editor may edit the submittal to improve accuracy, improve readability, shorten articles to fit the space, and reduce the potential for legal challenges against CNPS. If an article, as edited, is not satisfactory to the author, the author can appeal to the board. The author has the final say on whether the article, as edited, is printed in the newsletter. Submissions are due by the 10th of the month preceding the newsletter; that is, October 10 for the November newsletter, etc. Please submit items to newsletter@cnpsd.org

CNPS-SD Activities Calendar July 2016

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- 7/9: Old Town Native Landscape, p.4
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- 7/19: **Chapter Meeting**, p. 1
- 7/31: Seed & Bulb Sorting Party, p. 1

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

___ Student or Limited Income \$25; ___ Individual \$45; ___ Family \$75
___ Plant Lover \$100; ___ Patron \$300; ___ Benefactor \$600; ___ Mariposa Lily \$1,500
Name(s): _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Mail check payable to "CNPS" and send to: CNPS, 2707 K Street, Ste 1, Sacramento, CA 95816-5113.

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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July 2016 Newsletter

Nonprofit Organization
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Dedicated to the preservation of the California native flora

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY – SAN DIEGO

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