



California Native Plant Society  
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

# THE BLAZING STAR

January-February 2025

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## The Year in Pictures: Your Best Nature Photos of 2024

**Thursday, January 23**

**Social Hour 6:00-6:55 PM**

**Program 6:55-9:00 PM**

**Los Altos Library, Orchard Room  
13 S. San Antonio Road, Los Altos**

Our CNPS Chapter has an annual tradition: a winter celebration of the beauty and diversity of native plant habitats and their denizens, as captured in photographs by you. This year, we will meet in person on **Thursday, January 23** to view photos of notable plant and nature excursions during the previous year. All are welcome.

Join us early for our **social hour, 6:00-6:55pm**, to mingle with like-minded nature enthusiasts. The **main program starts at 6:55pm**.

If you have memorable photos to share – whether of wildflower displays in the spring or native flora/fauna later in the year – **sign up for a slot**. Slots become available for

signup on Tuesday, December 24 and remain open until Thursday, January 16: [www.signupgenius.com/go/4090F49A9A729AAFD0-46925254-theyear#](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090F49A9A729AAFD0-46925254-theyear#).

Slots are 15 minutes each; plan your photos and discussions accordingly. Presenters will receive a 1-minute-remaining alert. Presenters will be asked to submit their photos/PowerPoint slides ahead of time via Google Drive/Dropbox/OneDrive or other cloud storage. Slides will be downloaded to the presentation laptop in advance of the meeting.



Bill Lundgren

Winecup clarkia, *Clarkia purpurea*, taken along the Guadalupe Trail in Almaden Quicksilver County Park, April 2021

This in-person meeting replaces the regular Friday Zoom meeting of our Chapter's Photography Group. Learn more about this group on page 5.

## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

### Seed and Cutting Exchange + Plant Sale

**Online Plant Sale: January 20-21**  
(subject to pickup slot availability)

**Plant Sale Pickup: Fri., January 24**  
(CNPS SCV Nursery)  
**and Saturday, January 25**  
(Peninsula Conservation Center)

**Seed and Cutting Exchange: Saturday,**  
**January 25 from 1:00 - 3:00 PM**  
**at the Peninsula Conservation Center,**  
**3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto.**

This free event provides an opportunity to share and receive both cuttings and seeds of native plants. Browse the diverse offerings, ranging from easy-to-grow to hard-to-find, and go home with cuttings and seeds of new native plants! We will provide coin envelopes for seeds but do bring containers in which to carry cuttings home.

If you have native plant material from your own garden to share, please bring some. Label it to make it easy to browse – some gardeners attach helpful hints about growing; others display photos of plants in bloom. You may find it convenient to use [www.calscape.org](http://www.calscape.org) for this – there is a link on each plant's information page to make a printable sign for most native species and cultivars.

If you bring cuttings, keep them cool and moist in a bucket of water. **You don't have to bring anything if you don't have any native material to share** – there is usually plenty for all.

Several popular gardening books will be available for sale during the event, including the new *Wildflowers of California* from CNPS, *Seed Propagation of Native California Plants* (2021 ed.), by Dara E. Emery; and *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross and Bart O'Brien.

Our Wildflower Ambassadors will be giving out free seed packets and information as well.

### Online Plant Sale

There is still time to plant before the rainy season ends and we are having another online plant sale at [california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site](http://california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site), starting Monday, January 20. The store will close when we reach our pickup capacity.

In addition to plants, the nursery's online store includes Chapter T-shirts, books, labels and plant signs. **There is a minimum order of \$40.**

Pick your plants up with a *scheduled* pickup at the CNPS SCV Nursery on **Friday, January 24** or the Exchange at the Peninsula Conservation Center on **Saturday, January 25**. No drop-in pickups or sales.

The Peninsula Conservation Center is located at [3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto](https://www.peninsulaconservationcenter.org/). The meeting rooms are on the first floor.



Vivian Neou

Attendees browse the seeds and cuttings on display at last July's Seed and Cutting Exchange at the Peninsula Conservation Center in Palo Alto

### Native Plant Talks

Join us for our native plant talks, in-person at local libraries and online via Zoom and YouTube. Whether you're curious about native plants, an experienced or aspiring native plant gardener, a professional botanist or beginning naturalist, you will find something to interest and educate you in our offerings. From gardening to plant science to climate change to tours of botanical hot spots, there's something here for you.

Our virtual talks are livestreamed simultaneously to Zoom and YouTube. View talks on our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/@CNPSSantaClaraValley](https://www.youtube.com/@CNPSSantaClaraValley) (no

registration needed) or join on Zoom by registering at the Zoom link provided in each lecture's description. Most of our upcoming talks are listed below. Recordings of our virtual talks and some of our library talks may be viewed on our YouTube channel.

We occasionally schedule additional talks; for the current list of upcoming talks please see our website ([www.cnps-scv.org](http://www.cnps-scv.org)) or join our Chapter News email group for a weekly update on upcoming activities.

In fact, as of press time, **we've just added a talk by Stanley Gu** titled "Propagating Native Plants at Home." Stanley will speak in person on **Tuesday, January 21 at 7:00pm** at the Peninsula Conservation Center.

The organizing committee has periodic meetings on Zoom and welcomes new volunteers. If you have ideas for future talks or are interested in helping set up upcoming talks, please send a message to Priya Pharate at [priya4cnps@gmail.com](mailto:priya4cnps@gmail.com) to receive notifications of upcoming meetings.



Justen Whittall

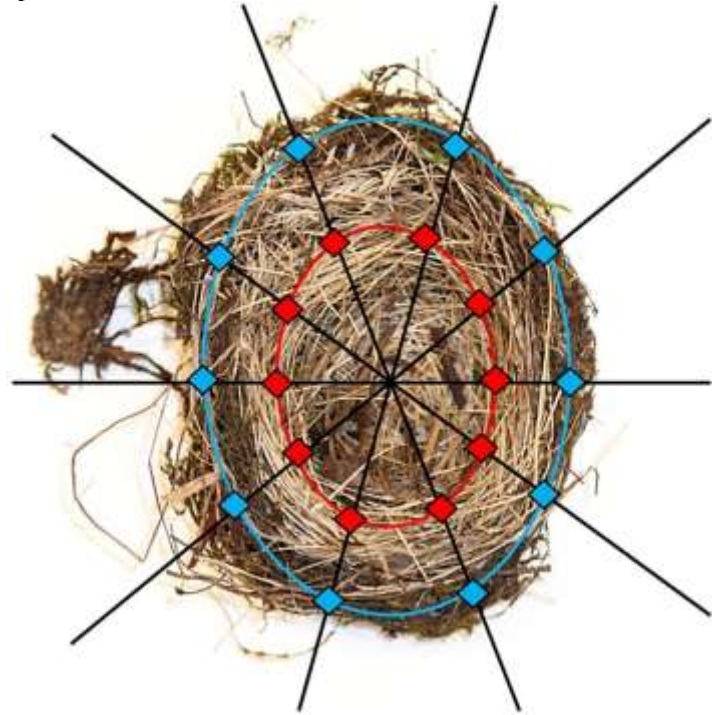
Plant material was sampled from the structure (coarse outer material) and lining (fine inner material) of this song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia maxillaris*) nest specimen

**Bird Nests as Botanical Time Capsules,  
a Talk by Dr. Justen Whittall  
Thursday, January 30 7:00 - 9:00 PM  
(Online only)**

Zoom registration: [www.cnps-scv.org/npls-20250130](http://www.cnps-scv.org/npls-20250130)

Museum nest specimens are botanical time capsules containing invaluable historical information about the plants from a specific place and time when they were built. Plants identified from historical nests can unlock new information about the ecology of extinct habitats.

In this talk, Santa Clara University Biology Professor Justen Whittall describes his research on century-old nest specimens.



Justen Whittall

Samples were systematically selected from the structure (blue oval) and lining (red oval) at equally spaced locations (diamonds)

For example, surrounding the San Francisco Bay estuary were transitional habitats - the ecological gradient between the tidal marsh and the upland. These habitats were lost during the 1900s due to human-caused land use changes, and consequently, very little is known about this former native plant community. In attempts to improve our understanding of this endangered habitat, Dr. Whittall and his team sampled ~100-year-old song sparrow and savannah sparrow nests collected along the margins of the San Francisco Bay estuary from natural history collections across the country. They were able to successfully extract DNA, perform PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction, a laboratory technique for studying DNA) and conduct DNA sequence analysis on over 200 total nest samples. From this, they have confirmed the identity of some previous plant species from the transitional habitat and added several new residents to this list.

From these investigations, it is clear that historical nest materials can be used to reconstruct lost habitats thereby contributing essential information to help guide ongoing restoration efforts.

Learn more by reading Dr. Whittall’s proof of concepts paper in PLOS ONE from 2021, online at [journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0257624](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0257624). Dr. Whittall co-authored the paper with Alex Rinkert, Ben Carter, Tracy Misiewicz, Katie LaBarbera and Dan Wenny.

**Dr. Justen Whittall** was born and raised in San Jose’s Blossom Valley. He took a field botany course at Santa Clara University and discovered that learning could be done outside the classroom. He then studied conservation



genetics of endangered monkeyflowers and columbines, particularly their spur lengths and flower colors, in light of their pollinators. He is a professor at Santa Clara University where alongside undergraduate research assistants, he studies plants – their flower color,

conservation, restoration and genomics.

**Easy to Grow Native Plants,  
a Talk by Madeline Morrow**

**Tuesday, February 25 7:00 - 8:30 PM, Saratoga Library Maple Room, 13650 Saratoga Ave., Saratoga (Please note the change of room)**

Want to get started growing native plants? This talk debunks myths about California native plants and describes their many benefits. 25+ easy to grow native plants from trees to ground covers are presented, with a summary of planting, care and maintenance.

**Madeline Morrow** is a past President of our Chapter and a current board member. A former computer programmer, she now volunteers in her community and works extensively on her native garden. Her garden is usually



on the CNPS-SCV Growing Natives Garden Tour because she is passionate about spreading the word about native plant gardening.



*Madeline Morrow*

Three easy to grow native plants. Top: Western redbud in full bloom – easy color for your garden. Middle: coyote mint and California buckwheat – easy summer color. Bottom: Oaks and manzanita –the backbone of your garden and looks good all year.

## Photography Group

Our Photography Group is a great place to meet other native plant enthusiasts, improve photographic skills, and learn more about our native plants and best places to view them. Discussions range from photography tips to organizational ideas to plant hotspots. The group is open to all and has an active email list.

The photo group's meetings usually take place over Zoom on the last Friday of the month. Our January meeting will be replaced by the special **in-person "The Year in Pictures"** meeting, on **Thursday, January 23**, as described on page 1. Our next Zoom meetings will be on **Fridays, December 27 and February 28 at 7:00pm**. You can learn more and join the email group at: [www.groups.io/g/cnps-scv-photography](http://www.groups.io/g/cnps-scv-photography)

The group has an ongoing #MyPhotoOfTheWeek activity on the email list for group members to share their favorite shots with the group on a weekly basis. Photo Group member Charley Pow sent us the following #MyPhotoOfTheWeek from his Los Altos home garden.



Charley Pow

This Catalina fuchsia (*Epilobium* 'Catalina') is blooming well despite getting no water during the early October hot spell. A stem bears many red blossoms glowing in the afternoon sun.

Charley adds: This image is a "focus stack" of nine photos, each with a different focus point. The photos are combined to create a single image with a greater depth of field than is possible from a single photo.

## Native Plant ID

After a December break for the holidays, **Native Plant ID** will return on **Tuesday, January 28**. For our winter sessions as things start to wake up and bloom, we will look at some of the characteristics of major plant families. Feel free to bring samples of plants that you are interested in identifying from property where you have permission to collect. We will use a variety of plant books and online resources as we endeavor to improve our understanding of botanical terms used in plant identification. The Chapter has 10x hand lenses that we can use to look at small plant parts or bring your own lens. Also bring any reference books that you like to use.



Vivian Neou

Native Plant ID November meeting, where the group looked at fruits and other seed-containing structures.

Native Plant ID meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at **7:00pm** at the Peninsula Conservation Center, at [3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto](https://www.penninsulaconservationcenter.org/). The meeting rooms are on the first floor. Our next meetings will be on **Tuesdays, January 28 and February 25**. Join other native plant enthusiasts in a fun and educational atmosphere, as we hone our skills at plant identification (aka "keying"). For details, contact Janet Hoffmann at [janet@cnps-scv.org](mailto:janet@cnps-scv.org).

## Call for GNGT Volunteers on April 12 & 13

The 2025 Growing Natives Garden Tour (GNGT) is seeking volunteers for our 23rd annual garden tour, which will take place on **Saturday, April 12** (Southern Gardens) and **Sunday, April 13** (Northern Gardens). The tour hours are **10:00am to 4:00pm** each day. There will be about fifty gardens on the tour.

As a volunteer you will help to educate garden visitors about the pleasures and benefits of gardening with California native plants. Volunteers also receive a custom designed T-shirt featuring a California native plant and are invited to attend GNGT garden previews throughout the year. We ask volunteers to select a minimum of one half-

day shift. Knowledge of native plants is not required, as we have shifts for both greeters and docents.



GNGT

Docent Cathrin Callas at the children's activity table at the City of San Carlos Native Plant Garden, on the Growing Natives Garden Tour April 2024.

There will be a virtual, pretour orientation in late March, with more details to be provided to registered volunteers. To volunteer for the 2025 tour, please complete the Volunteer sign-up form at: [gngt.org/GNGT/VolunteerDispatch.php](http://gngt.org/GNGT/VolunteerDispatch.php).

## Wildflower Ambassadors

Our Chapter's Wildflower Ambassador (WFA) program promotes habitat gardening and raises awareness about our Chapter. One way Wildflower Ambassadors enhance accessibility to habitat gardening is by making wildflower seeds more readily available. They organize and support our Chapter's bi-monthly Seed and Cutting Exchange at the Peninsula Conservation Center in Palo Alto and prepare packets of wildflower seeds for distribution at events, such as the Nature's Best Hope conference featuring Doug Tallamy at Santa Clara University in November.



The program offers volunteers an opportunity to share their enthusiasm for habitat gardening with the local community. WFA benefits include enjoying enrichment field trips and talks. You can learn more about the WFA program and **join the group** at [www.cnps-scv.org/WFA](http://www.cnps-scv.org/WFA). Or email [wildflowers@cnps-scv.org](mailto:wildflowers@cnps-scv.org) with your questions.

## Dee Himes Receives Chapter's Outstanding Volunteer Award

At our annual potluck last November, Dee Himes was honored with the Chapter's 2024 Outstanding Volunteer Award. This award is presented by the Chapter to a member who has made a significant and sustained contribution to the Chapter. It is the highest recognition bestowed by the Chapter.

Dee has been a vital member of Chapter leadership for well over a decade. She served as a CNPS SCV board member for many years and held the positions of Chapter Treasurer (2012-2014) and Field Trip Chair (2014-2018). She was active in our Keying With Natives group and gave lectures on Plant Morphology and Taxonomy that have been viewed thousands of times. She's also an excellent photographer who generously shares her knowledge. Her lecture, *Taking Close Up Plant ID pictures with a Camera Phone*, is another one of her popular talks on our YouTube channel.



Radhika Thekkath

Vivian Neou presenting Dee Himes with her Outstanding Volunteer Award at our 2024 annual potluck

Dee's support for native plants is not limited to her contributions to our Chapter. She was an active Weed Warrior at Edgewood County Park and Preserve, and was an Adjunct Instructor of Horticulture at Foothill College, where she was passionate about sharing her landscape and horticultural expertise in caring for California native gardens.

## Seeking a Treasurer

Our Chapter is looking for a treasurer to join its board in 2025. The treasurer is initially elected for a one-year term and typically serves in the position for two terms.

This is a volunteer position that involves maintaining the Chapter's finances, so some experience in financial accounting or bookkeeping is a must. We would love to hear from you if you have a passion for the environment, want to help our organization and have the requisite skills. You will be joining the board of one of the largest CNPS Chapters in the state with over 1400 members.

The new term begins June 2025 with monthly Board meetings (on Zoom now). The Chapter has a standing finance committee and this support team of (mostly) past treasurers is here to help you get started in this position.

If you are interested in learning more about this position, please contact Radhika Thekkath at [cnpsradhika@gmail.com](mailto:cnpsradhika@gmail.com).

## Welcome Debra Hiraki to Chapter Board

We are happy to announce that our Chapter has a new board member, Debra Hiraki. Deb was voted in at our December 12 board meeting. She is a retired scientist with experience in a clinical histocompatibility lab, facilitating transplants for patients. Her first introduction to and love of native plants came from a college class taught by Dr. John Thomas, who helped establish the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve and authored *Flora of the Santa Cruz Mountains of California*.



Deb's current passion revolves around monarch butterflies. Four years ago, she made her first contact with our Wildflower Ambassador Chair Jennifer Dirking, getting native milkweed seeds. The ability to attract monarchs led her back to native plants to feed pollinators. A tip from a fellow hiker led her

to her first CNPS library talk/seed and cutting exchange and a reconnection with Jennifer, who was seeking more wildflower ambassadors (WFAs).

Coupled with her interest in finding personal ways to make improvements in the environment, as a WFA, her drive is to encourage others to adopt a new perspective (finding joy) when seeing signs of caterpillars and insects (holes in

leaves). The citizen scientist in her is obsessed with observing/identifying/providing for native pollinators of all types.

## CONSERVATION CORNER

### Conservation Committee

Our Chapter's next Conservation Committee meetings will be held via Zoom on **Mondays, January 6 and February 3, from 7:00 to 8:30pm.**

This committee covers many issues affecting native plants: conservation, advocacy, legislation, habitat restoration and rare plants. The committee meets once a month to provide information and support for these conservation issues and efforts. Members of our committee work on projects throughout the Chapter area, coordinating with our state CNPS program staff and other conservation organizations.

Please join us in our important work! For questions, comments or concerns, contact Committee Chair Carolyn Dorsch at [cdorsch@cnps-scv.org](mailto:cdorsch@cnps-scv.org) or (650) 804-6162, or Conservation Chair Judy Fenerty at [judy@fenerty.com](mailto:judy@fenerty.com).

If you are interested in joining our committee meetings on Zoom, please email Carolyn for the link.

## CHAPTER SERVICE OUTINGS

### Alum Rock Park Restoration

Come help us weed out invasive plants at this natural gem of San Jose. Our habitat restoration efforts allow the native plants to "come to light."

Our workdays take place one **Saturday morning** per month. No experience is necessary. All tools and instruction will be provided. Please bring a filled water bottle and snacks; wear closed-toe shoes and long pants.

Forms and **reservations** are required to volunteer. Start by visiting the City's volunteer opportunities page at [www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/parks-recreation-neighborhood-services/get-involved/volunteer-with-us](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/parks-recreation-neighborhood-services/get-involved/volunteer-with-us). You will see Alum Rock Park Trail Crew as one of the options. The next workday will be on **Saturday, January 11, 8:45am - 12:00noon**. For more information, contact Stephen Rosenthal at [sailinsteve@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sailinsteve@sbcglobal.net) or (650) 260-3450.

## Lake Cunningham Native Garden

The California Native Garden project in Lake Cunningham Regional Park controls invasive plants in a 2-acre area and beautifies it with California native wildflowers, perennials, shrubs and trees.

Workdays take place on **Saturdays from 8:00 to 10:00am**. New volunteers are welcome; City-issued guidelines are followed. The work depends on the season: in winter now, the work is mainly weeding and mulching. For **details, directions, a waiver for first-timers and to RSVP**, see our Chapter's Meetup group at [www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter](http://www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter).

## Edgewood Restoration

Help restore habitat at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve, known for fabulous wildflowers and amazing diversity near Redwood City. Weeders see far more than weeds: we get to be up close to the native plants, some of which are seen **only** by weeders.

Sturdy gloves are recommended; you might also want to bring sunscreen, water, a hat, layered clothing and wear long sleeves/pants.

We weed year-round **every Friday at 9:00am**. Our **5:30pm Wednesday sessions** will resume in March of 2025, after Daylight Savings Time resumes. For an overview, please visit [www.cnps-scv.org/restoration/edgewood-park](http://www.cnps-scv.org/restoration/edgewood-park).

**To participate**, join the email list and sign the electronic volunteer agreement, by sending an email to [weed-warriors-coord@friendsofedgewood.org](mailto:weed-warriors-coord@friendsofedgewood.org). Please check the email list for each weeding session's meeting place. For questions about Friday sessions, contact Paul Heiple at [pheiple@gmail.com](mailto:pheiple@gmail.com) or (650) 854-7125.

## Cataldi Park Native Garden

Join us to restore habitat in San Jose's Cataldi Park. We mulch, plant, weed, water and otherwise care for the native plants we've planted in this newly created native garden. Wear a hat and garden shoes and bring water to stay hydrated. Work gloves will be provided.

## Current Activities

Lately, volunteers have been adding a "Phase 2" area to the original garden. Activities to prepare the area to receive new plants include:

- Weeding to remove stinkwort, curly dock and other invasives;
- Leveling the soil as needed, by filling in squirrel burrow holes prior to sheet mulching;
- Sheet mulching the new area by laying down corrugated cardboard, then covering it 3" deep with mulch provided by the City.



*Tilak*

Cataldi Park volunteers on November 16 workday. Note planting materials and tools in the foreground.

Once even a small area has these three tasks completed, volunteers then plant new plants into the area. Volunteers also maintain the plants that survived in the "Phase 1" area of the garden. Examples include deadheading the goldenrods and phacelia. We leave cut flowers and stalks to remain around the plants, to provide food for birds and habitat for critters.

## Benefits of Sheet Mulching

Volunteers sheet-mulched a section of the garden in Fall 2023 using cardboard sheets collected from various sources. When they ran out of cardboard, they continued to mulch using just wood chips. The photo on the next page, taken in Spring 2024, shows the difference between the two mulching methods. While the sheet-mulched portion on the right is largely weed-free (except for patches around planting holes, gaps between sheets and at the edges of overlapping sheets), the portion on the left that was mulched without cardboard is full of weeds. Within a few weeks, the weeds had grown over 3 feet tall and completely obscured the planted natives. It was quite difficult to distinguish the planted native grass from the non-native grass.





Tilak

We had underestimated the weed seedbank, which would have needed a much thicker layer of mulch to control without cardboard. A layer of cardboard below the mulch is effective in preventing the germination of annual invasive grasses during the first year when the weed seeds are viable. (The weed seeds are typically viable for only a year.) The cardboard mostly degrades after a couple of years, leaving a layer of mulch on soil that is free of weeds, and allowing native plants a better chance of getting established.

### How to Volunteer

Workdays are usually held at **9:00am on Saturdays**. If you're interested in volunteering, check the dates and sign up at our Chapter's Meetup group, at [www.meetup.com/california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter/](http://www.meetup.com/california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter/).

First-timers: Please bring a signed waiver form available at [lakecunninghamnativegarden.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/2021-volunteer-service-agreement-adoptapark-version.pdf](http://lakecunninghamnativegarden.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/2021-volunteer-service-agreement-adoptapark-version.pdf).

Workdays are sometimes rescheduled or canceled. Always RSVP to confirm and check the latest updates Friday night. If you can't make it, please change your RSVP so we know and wait-listers get a chance.

### Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden And Some Brand New Park Gardens!

With the permission of San Jose's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department, we have expanded the Kirk Park garden to include parts of the entire northern and western perimeter of the park, adding significantly to our pollinator habitat!

Beyond providing pollinator habitat, one of our goals for this garden is community education. Not only are we

showcasing a wide variety of native plants labeled with plant names, this year we have also hosted field trips and educational scavenger hunts for school and community groups. The variety of native bees in the garden is often a surprise to many park visitors and the monarch butterflies, caterpillars and chrysalises are always a hit with both children and adults.



Kathy Kleinsteiber

A volunteer waters the Native Plant Pollinator Garden at Kirk Park while looking for monarch caterpillars

Another goal for our garden is to inspire others to create pollinator habitat at their homes and in other public spaces. This year, volunteers who have worked with us at Kirk Park have started gardens at four additional parks:

- **Bramhall Park** – On Willow Street in San Jose, the garden is along the south side of the lawn bowling area.
- **Cahalan Park** - The garden is on the corner of Cahalan Avenue and Pearlwood Way in San Jose. We are hoping to convince the City to allow us to add a Children's Pollinator Garden near the playground next year.
- **Houge Park** - The garden is near the parking lot off Twilight Drive in San Jose. It was started by a girl scout troop and park neighbors. The Houge Park neighbors have been given permission to expand to a large area on the north side of the parking lot.

*Landscape architect Stephanie Morris is generously volunteering her time to help with the design of the northern garden at Houge Park.*

- **Oak Hill Play Lot** - In Los Gatos, on Oak Park Drive, this garden is along the western edge of the park, with expansion plans for more of the perimeter of the park next year.

We are working on obtaining permission from the City to start additional gardens, hopefully to include parts of the **Three Creeks Trail** in the Willow Glen neighborhood of San Jose.



Kathy Kleinsteiber

Volunteers carry flattened cardboard boxes to install for sheet mulching at the new native plant garden at Houge Park in San Jose

Please come by and check out our expanding network of gardens! If you are interested in helping out at any of these gardens, please email us at KirkParkGardens @ gmail.com and we will put you in touch with the appropriate volunteer.

At Kirk Park, volunteers meet regularly on **Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00am**. Please sign up for our Saturday work days on the [CNPS-SCV Meetup page](#) and stop by to join our volunteer community. We would love to see you in the garden!

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Chapter field trips are free and generally open to the public. They are oriented to conservation, protection and enjoyment of California native plants and wildlife, and we adhere to all rules and guidelines for the lands on which we are visiting.

**In our region it is very important to be prepared for hiking on rugged and steep terrain, wide temperature ranges and rapidly changing conditions at any time of year. All participants should wear sturdy footwear and carry sufficient water, sun protection, food, clothing layers, personal first aid and other supplies you may need. If you have any questions about your ability to participate in a particular field trip, please contact the trip leader in advance.**

Cell service is mainly restricted to cities and major highways. To find your way to an outing, please do not rely solely on your phone.

Check our field trips page [www.cnps-scv.org/activities/field-trips](http://www.cnps-scv.org/activities/field-trips) for changes and cancellations, as well as information about newly added field trips.

For field trips listed here that require **reservations**, please visit our Chapter's **Meetup group**, here: [www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter/](http://www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter/). **We open the RSVPs one week before the event.** Find your event within the group and tap/click the "Attend" button to reserve your spot.

### **Wed Jan 8 7:00 – 8:30pm Field Trip Planning Meeting (In Person and Via Zoom)**

Please join us at our next field trip planning meeting, to identify leaders and trips with a focus on the first half of 2025 and perhaps into the summer. Please bring a list of trips that you would like to lead and be prepared to encourage others with trips you'd like to attend.

Leaders with all levels of plant experience are encouraged. One does not need to be a botanist or a plant expert to lead. Co-leaders, sweeps and folks interested in organizing and assisting with trips are all welcome.

To join us in person, please meet at the Raptor Room, ground floor, at the Peninsula Conservation Center, 3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto. To attend by Zoom, please register at [cnps-scv.org/activities/field-trips/planning-zoom/](http://cnps-scv.org/activities/field-trips/planning-zoom/).

All members are welcome to join in the discussion. For further information email field trip chair Nabeel Al-Shamma at nabeel@alshamma.com.

### **Sat Feb 15 10:00am – 2:30pm Dirca Walk at Windy Hill OSP (Portola Valley)**

Join Rare Plants Chair Don Thomas for a four mile walk to see the one of the more accessible populations of the endemic Western leatherwood (*Dirca occidentalis*). We may also see some early emerging woodland plants in flower.

There will be some moderate but slow-paced hill climbing, with a stop for lunch. We will take the Hamm's Gulch trail to see the *Dirca* near a trailside bench, which will also be our turnaround point. Along the way, we will walk through a variety of plant communities, including meadows, oak

woodland, mixed evergreen forest, redwood forest and riparian woodland.



Don Thomas

Dirca at Windy Hill along Hamms Gulch Trail,  
January 2022

Please bring lunch, snacks and liquid. Heavy rain cancels. RSVP is required to join the hike. No drop-ins please and space is limited. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section to **RSVP on Meetup**.

We will meet at the Portola Valley Town Center, 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley. Driving directions and parking tips are provided on the Meetup page. For questions or more information, please contact Don at donethomasd@gmail.com.

### **Sun Feb 16 10:00am – 2:00pm Walk on South Slopes of San Bruno Mountain (South San Francisco)**

Join Loretta Brooks and Chuck Heimstadt on a field trip to explore the less visited south slopes of San Bruno Mountain. With its bright landscapes of large grassland areas critical to resident endangered butterflies, we expect to see some locally rare plants that are on the Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California, which is maintained by CNPS. (Rare plant ranks are described at [www.cnps.org/rare-plants/cnps-inventory-of-rare-plants](http://www.cnps.org/rare-plants/cnps-inventory-of-rare-plants).)

From this watchlist we may see coast iris (*Iris longipetala*) Rank 4.2, coast rock cress (*Arabis blepharophylla*) Rank

4.3 and San Francisco wallflower (*Erysimum franciscanum*) Rank 4.2. We may also see the Coast onion, *Allium dichlamydeum*, and maybe in bloom mission blue butterfly host plants silver bush lupine (*Lupinus albifrons* var *collinus*) and California golden violets (*Viola pedunculata*). In addition, we expect to see niebla lichen, which occurs only in the fog belt of the California coast from Mendocino to Baja.

This area is only for the really adventuresome, as there are only fire roads and weeding trails on this side of the mountain. You will be walking on steep, rocky slopes that can be difficult to traverse, so please be sure to wear sturdy footwear.

We expect to have time to stop at the top, so bring a snack or lunch. Restrooms are only available in the parking area. No dogs are allowed in this sensitive area.



Loretta Brooks

This rock, photographed at Mount San Bruno just off Hillside Trail, is covered by two of the most common lichens in California: *Acarospora socialis* (yellow) and *Caloplaca ignea* (orange), September 2023

Space is limited. To check availability and to sign up, please email Loretta and Chuck directly at: [chuckheimstadt@yahoo.com](mailto:chuckheimstadt@yahoo.com). Details of the meeting location will be sent to participants closer to the day of the

hike. Participants will be asked to sign a waiver at the meeting place. Rain cancels.



Judy Fenerty

Footsteps of Spring (*Sanicula arctopoides*) observed on Mt. San Bruno field trip January 2022

### Thu Feb 27 – Sun Mar 2 Red Rock Canyon State Park (Mojave Desert)

Initial plans are being made for a camping/botanizing trip to the Red Rock/Lone Pine/Alabama Hills Mojave Desert. Thursday will be travel day (~7.5 hours) and the trip ends at noon Sunday. Led by Joe Cernac (biology), Patricia Evans (organizer) and Sarah Wang (whip). You could stay at the Red Rock Canyon State Park (primitive camping) or a Ridgecrest hotel.

The trip timing depends on winter rainfall and may be rescheduled to April 16-20 for better wildflower conditions, and possibly to Eastern Mojave National Park. For trip updates, visit our Chapter's field trips page, at [www.cnps-scvc.org/activities/field-trips](http://www.cnps-scvc.org/activities/field-trips).

This trip is **open to CNPS members only and is limited to 20 people**. Sign up by calling Sarah Wang at (408) 348-5857. Learn more about becoming a CNPS member at [www.cnps.org/membership](http://www.cnps.org/membership).



Patricia Evans

Observing plants on a field trip to Red Rock Canyon, March 2015

## NEWSLETTER, ETC.

### Stay in Touch!

Some late-breaking events don't make it into the newsletter and are announced electronically. Stay informed by making sure that your contact information is correct. Please visit [www.cnps-scvc.org/stay-in-touch](http://www.cnps-scvc.org/stay-in-touch) for information on how you can continue to receive email to stay informed.

This *Blazing Star* newsletter is published **mostly** online only, at: [www.cnps-scvc.org/blazing-star-newsletter](http://www.cnps-scvc.org/blazing-star-newsletter). Our next paper version will be the 2025 May-June issue.

### Did You Know?

**That there is a new book titled *Wildflowers of California*?** Look for it at our book table at one of our Chapter events, or purchase it online from CNPS. The book is a must have when you go on a wildflower walk this spring. It has an amazingly large index of flower types organized by color and then shape, to lead you to the book section to identify the exact plant that you see before you. Several Chapter members are in the book's Acknowledgements section, and Chapter member Bruce Homer-Smith is an author. We are proud of all of them.



**CHAPTER LEADERSHIP FOR 2024-2025**

Title	Name	Email
<b>Co-President</b>	Priya Pharate	priya4cnps@gmail.com
<b>Co-President</b>	Vivian Neou	techchair@cnps-scv.org
<b>Vice President</b>	Toni Gregorio-Bunch	tidytip.lp@gmail.com
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	Janet Hoffmann	janet@cnps-scv.org
<b>Treasurer</b>	Brett Tucker	treasurer@cnps-scv.org
<b>Chapter Council Delegate</b>	Vivian Neou	techchair@cnps-scv.org
<b>Past President</b>	Radhika Thekkath	cnpsradhika@gmail.com

To see the full list of Chapter officers and chairs, please visit [www.cnps-scv.org/leadership](http://www.cnps-scv.org/leadership).



*Vivian Neou*

Doug Tallamy showing the last slide from his talk at Santa Clara University, November 2024. Remember, **We** are nature's best hope!

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR***

**Saturday, February 15**

**carol.mattsson@gmail.com or (408) 309-8314**

Santa Clara Valley Chapter California Native Plant Society  
3921 East Bayshore Road, Suite #205  
Palo Alto, CA 94303-4326



## Join CNPS Today!

Members receive the *Artemisia* and *Flora* magazines, the Chapter newsletter and other benefits listed at [www.cnps.org/membership](http://www.cnps.org/membership).

*I wish to affiliate with the Santa Clara Valley Chapter*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  New  Renew

### Suggested Membership Amounts

\$50  \$75  \$120  \$500  \$1,000  Other (\$25 min.)

Send Membership Application to:

**California Native Plant Society**

**Attn: Membership**

**2702 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816-5130**

For memberships for organizations or to become a Perennial monthly sustainer, contact [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org).

First-Class Mail

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS (page # in parentheses)

- |                   |   |                               |   |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Dec 27 Fri</b> | Photo Group photo sharing (5)           | <b>Feb 15 Sat</b>             | <b>Newsletter submittal deadline</b> (13) |
| <b>Jan 6 Mon</b>  | Conservation Committee meeting (7)      | <b>Feb 16 Sun</b>             | South slopes Mt. San Bruno walk (11)      |
| <b>Jan 8 Wed</b>  | Field trip planning meeting (10)        | <b>Feb 25 Tue</b>             | Growing Native Plants – Morrow (4)        |
| <b>Jan 11 Sat</b> | Alum Rock Park workday (7)              | <b>Feb 25 Tue</b>             | Native Plant ID meeting (5)               |
| <b>Jan 20 Mon</b> | Plant Sale online store opens (1)       | <b>Feb 27 Thu – Mar 2 Sun</b> | Desert field trip (12)                    |
| <b>Jan 21 Tue</b> | Propagating Native Plants – Gu (3)      | <b>Feb 28 Fri</b>             | Photo Group photo sharing (5)             |
| <b>Jan 23 Thu</b> | The Year in Pictures (1)                | <b>Apr 12 Sat</b>             | Volunteer at GNGT southern gardens (5)    |
| <b>Jan 24 Fri</b> | Plant Sale pickup at nursery (1)        | <b>Apr 13 Sun</b>             | Volunteer at GNGT northern gardens (5)    |
| <b>Jan 25 Sat</b> | Cutting and Seed Exchange + pickup (1)  | <b>Fridays</b>                | Edgewood restoration workdays (8)         |
| <b>Jan 28 Tue</b> | Native Plant ID meeting (5)             | <b>Saturdays</b>              | Lake Cunningham Garden workdays (7)       |
| <b>Jan 30 Thu</b> | Bird Nests Time Capsules – Whittall (3) | <b>Saturdays</b>              | Cataldi Park Garden workdays (8)          |
| <b>Feb 3 Mon</b>  | Conservation Committee meeting (7)      | <b>Saturdays</b>              | Kirk Pollinator Garden workdays (9)       |
| <b>Feb 15 Sat</b> | <i>Dirca</i> walk at Windy Hill (10)    |                               |   |

The next Chapter board meeting will be **Thursdays, January 16 and February 20 at 7:00pm** over Zoom.

Board meetings are open to all Chapter members and their guests.

For more information contact Priya Pharate at [priya4cnps@gmail.com](mailto:priya4cnps@gmail.com) or Vivian Neou at [techchair@cnps-scv.org](mailto:techchair@cnps-scv.org).

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The California Native Plant Society is a statewide non-profit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The Society, working with its local chapters, seeks to increase understanding and to preserve the rich heritage of the native flora for future generations. Membership is open to all. Individual memberships start at \$50.00 per year. If you have questions about your newsletter subscription, please contact [info@cnps-scv.org](mailto:info@cnps-scv.org). Address changes may be submitted to [membership@cnps.org](mailto:membership@cnps.org). Please put "address change" in the subject line.

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The *Blazing Star* web address: [www.cnps-scv.org](http://www.cnps-scv.org). Please print on recycled paper.

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