



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

September-October 2025

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Priya Pharate

Chapter potluck, November 2024

Announcing our Favorite Annual Event Potluck Dinner

Saturday, November 1 at 5:45 PM

Setup starts 4:30 PM

Speaker: **Michael Uhler**,

Regional Parks Botanic Garden

All members are invited to join us at a social evening to celebrate the Chapter's yearly achievements. Members are encouraged to bring guests. As always, this popular dinner potluck will be held at the **Shoup Garden House in Los**

Altos. Bring your favorite dish to share with everyone. Or, you can bring drinks or wine.

Enjoy great conversation and our fabulous speaker for the night, **Michael Uhler**. Continued on page 3.

Fall Plant Sale

Our annual fall native plant sale kicks off with two online sales: the CNPS SCV Nursery (california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site) from October 11 to 13,

and the Grassroots Ecology Nursery (www.grassrootsecology.org/nursery-sales) from October 4 to 16.

Be sure to shop the online sales for the best selection!

**Then: in-person event at Hidden Villa
Saturday, October 18, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

Join us in person for a lively day on **Saturday, October 18, from 10:00am – 3:00pm** at **Hidden Villa** in Los Altos Hills, where you can collect your online orders and explore a diverse selection of plants from both the CNPS SCV Nursery and the Grassroots Ecology Nursery. Be sure to bring a box if you plan to buy plants while at Hidden Villa.

Beyond plant sales, we will host a gardening talk, a planting demonstration and a seed exchange. If you have native plant seeds to share at the exchange, please bring them, but it is not necessary to bring anything if you do not have them. There should be plenty for all.

Our Chapter store will offer books, posters and T-shirts, while Coyote Brush Studio will showcase a variety of wildflower and nature-themed products. This is also a great

chance to engage with other local environmental organizations.



Vivian Neou

Native plant sale at Hidden Villa, October 2024

Knowledgeable native plant gardeners will be on hand to address your questions about native plants and gardening. Please note that this service is intended for brief inquiries and not for comprehensive garden design requests. We provide numerous native plant resources on our website, at www.cnps-scv.org/gardening-resources, including a directory of native plant professionals who focus on native plant designs. Don't forget to check out Calscape (www.calscape.org), CNPS' searchable guide to California native plants and butterflies, which is the premier online tool for planning your native plant garden.

We are offering a special discount for new members who join in September or October: just \$30 (40% off our suggested membership fee of \$50). You can sign up at the sale or in advance at bit.ly/NPLOVER. If you join in advance, please bring a printed copy of your receipt to the membership table to receive our Chapter's 50th Anniversary pin and a Chapter water bottle (while supplies last).

For more details about the sale, visit our website at www.cnps-scv.org/fall-plant-sale-2025.

Volunteer at the Sale!

We're reaching out to everyone who can, to lend a hand with the sale. There are numerous tasks to tackle: assisting with setup before the sale begins, parking, counting attendees, box check, answering customer questions, writing sales slips, helping customers carry out their purchases and tidying up after the sale. Most of these tasks don't require specialized knowledge of plants, and you can opt to volunteer for just one or two hours, or the entire day.

To volunteer, please visit our Chapter website's Plant Sale page (www.cnps-scv.org/fall-plant-sale-2025) for a **link to our Plant Sale Volunteer Signup**. The plant sales are always a blast to be a part of and we provide lunch for our volunteers. If you have any questions, please contact Radhika Thekkath at cnpsradhika@gmail.com.

Directions: Hidden Villa is located at 26870 Moody Rd., just west of Foothill College. From I-280 in Los Altos Hills, take the Moody Rd. exit and head west. About two miles west of Foothill College, keep an eye out for the Hidden Villa sign and driveway on your left. There will be volunteers to help you find a parking spot. A short walk from the Hidden Villa driveway entrance will take you to the sale, which is happening in the Dana Center surrounding lawn. Parking is free while you attend or volunteer at the event.

Seed and Cutting Exchange + Native Garden Viewing + Learn to Propagate Cuttings

Saturday, September 20

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Kirk Park, 1601 Foxworthy Ave., San Jose

See parking details below

We have an exciting new venue for the September Seed and Cutting Exchange: The Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden in San Jose. We have reserved the park's picnic area for the event.

Come explore the 14K square foot native plant garden at Kirk Park. There will be garden docents onsite and a nearby picnic table area with free seeds and cuttings. Live examples of many of the cuttings available can be viewed in the garden itself!

We will have live, interactive cutting demonstrations, so you can learn to start your very own cuttings at home. You may also bring your own containers for transporting cuttings.



Our Wildflower Ambassadors will be distributing free seed packets and information. Seed packets will include both wildflower annuals and perennials. Some of the individual annual wildflower packets include lupines, clarkias, tidy tips and more! For unpackaged, loose seeds, small coin envelopes will be provided.



Michelle Deandrea

Kirk Park Native Pollinator Garden, August 2025

It is not necessary to bring anything if you do not have native material to share. However, if you have native plant material from your garden that you would like to share, please bring it along. Be sure to label your contributions for easy browsing – helpful growing tips and photos of the plants in bloom are appreciated. You may find it useful to use Calscape.org for this purpose; there is a link on the plant's information page that allows you to create a printable sign for most native species and cultivars. If you bring cuttings, please ensure they remain cool and moist in a bucket of water.

Contact kirkparkgardens@gmail.com with any questions.

Street Parking: From Foxworthy Ave., turn left on Briarwood Dr., and go about a block. The park is on your left. Park along Briarwood Dr.

Online Plant Sale Starts September 11

Online Plant Sale: September 11-12
(subject to pickup slot availability)

Plant Sale Pickup: September 17
(CNPS SCV Nursery)

Our nursery is bursting with a great selection of plants, and we are having another online plant sale, at california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site, starting **Thursday, September 11**. Get your plants before the October rush! Limited supplies of some plants may mean that they will not be available in October. The store will close when we reach our pickup capacity. In addition to plants, the nursery's online store includes 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 **Wednesday, September 17**. No drop-in pickups or sales please.

Announcing our Favorite Annual Event Potluck Dinner

Saturday, November 1 at 5:45 PM
Setup starts 4:30 PM

Continued from page 1:

Enjoy great conversation and our fabulous speaker for the night, **Michael Uhler**. Michael is the curator and horticulturist of the Sierra Nevada section at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Regional Park. He will talk about his search for alpine plants in the Sierra Nevada.

This is a great opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals, Chapter leadership and other volunteers. The evening includes a fun silent auction and shopping for books and other items from the Chapter store. An RSVP is not required, but if you know that you are coming, we would love to hear from you in advance, so we can plan accordingly. You can RSVP and sign up to help with setup or cleanup here: www.cnps-scv.org/potluck-signup.

Book and Silent Auction Donations Welcome!

Is it time to clean out your library? Although we are ordering fewer new books for our Chapter sales, we welcome your used books to sell at our potluck and other events. We're looking for native plant field guides, floras, gardening books, hiking guides and natural history books. For the potluck silent auction, we also welcome art, textiles and other nice items. Contact Judy Fenerty at judy@fenerty.com to arrange pick-up/drop-off.

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

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 yourself in our offerings. From gardening to plant science to climate change to tours of botanical hot spots, there's something here for you.

Recordings of our virtual talks and some of our library talks may be viewed on our YouTube channel, at www.youtube.com/@CNPSSantaClaraValley.

We occasionally schedule additional talks. You can learn about these talks by subscribing to our Chapter News email list. To subscribe, see "Stay in Touch" on page 11.

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 to receive notifications of upcoming meetings. By the way, the **next quarterly program meeting will be Monday, October 13, 7:00 – 8:30pm on Zoom.**



Shelkie Tao

A Western monarch butterfly over a native milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) in a Cupertino community garden

Gardening for Monarchs A Talk by Shelkie Tao (In Person Only)

Monday October 27 7:00 - 8:30 PM, Sunnyvale Library Program Room, 665 W. Olive Ave., Sunnyvale

Since the 1980s, Western monarch butterfly populations have plummeted by more than 95%, putting this iconic species at risk of disappearing within our lifetime. In this talk, we'll explore the fascinating life cycle and epic migration of the Western monarch, uncover the key reasons behind its dramatic decline and highlight the urgent need for action. You'll learn how habitat loss, pesticides and climate change have shaped their struggle – and, more importantly, what each of us can do to help.

From planting native milkweed to creating pollinator-friendly gardens, we'll look at simple yet powerful steps that can make a difference. Whether you're an experienced gardener or just getting started, you'll leave inspired to turn your outdoor space into a haven for monarchs.

Shelkie Tao is a landscape designer and founder of WaterEfficientGardens.com, an online design service specializing in low-water, California native and pollinator-friendly gardens. She has designed numerous pollinator habitats where monarch butterflies have been successfully observed, contributing to their conservation. Before founding Water Efficient Gardens, Shelkie spent over a decade in the Silicon Valley high-tech industry. She holds a Certificate of Achievement in Environmental Horticulture and Design from Foothill College and an MBA from the UCLA Anderson School of Management.



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 next meetings will be on **Fridays, September 26 and October 24 at 7:00pm**. You can learn more and join the email group at: www.groups.io/g/cnps-scv-photography.



Charley Pow

Honey bee (non-native) on toyon flowers, July 2025

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 this photo of one of many non-native honey bees he found buzzing around the toyons blooming in his Los Altos home garden.

Native Plant ID

Native Plant ID was originally Keying with Natives and met once a month to work with botanical keys to identify samples brought in by various participants. With the increasing improvement of photo identification apps, interest in using keys seems to be waning. Over the past year, we have had a variety of presentations related to identification of specific plant groups including oaks, conifers, the chicory tribe, manzanitas, lupines and salvias. We also had a presentation on scientific plant names and their meanings.

This format seems to be popular, but it requires finding people with expertise to speak on these topics. If you or someone you know would like to **make a presentation for Native Plant ID**, please contact Janet Hoffmann at janet@cnps-scv.org. We are **looking for speakers for our next meetings on September 23 and October 28**.

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. The meeting rooms are on the first floor. Join other native plant enthusiasts in a fun and educational atmosphere as we hone our skills at plant

identification (aka "keying"). For details on upcoming meetings, contact Janet at the above email address. If you have plant samples that you would like the group to identify, always feel free to bring them to these meetings.

GROWING NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

Garden Submittal Deadline October 31

The Growing Natives Garden Tour (GNGT) is looking for new gardens as well as returning gardens for the 2026 Tour. The tour dates for 2026 are **Saturday, April 18**, for gardens in the southern part of our area and **Sunday, April 19**, for northern gardens.

The deadline for garden submission is **Friday, October 31**. We encourage all home, school and community gardeners to submit their application.

We require that California natives be the focal point of the garden, with at least 70% of the garden being native plants. The gardens must not contain invasive plants and we encourage gardens that demonstrate sustainable gardening practice and show water conservation and habitat value for wildlife. Aesthetically pleasing design is another quality we look for, whether your garden is do-it-yourself or professionally designed. Our garden teams will be reviewing gardens starting October to December.



Garden owners or managers from southern San Mateo County and Santa Clara County are encouraged to apply. To do that, visit GNGT.org, scroll the page up a bit, then tap/click on "Submit Your Garden for the 2026 Tour."

SCHOLARSHIPS

2025-2026 Research Scholarship Applications are Open

Our Chapter offers scholarships to both graduates and undergraduates doing research on native plant or plant community conservation, plant ecology, plant systematics or rare plants that grow in Central and Northern California.

Students researching topics related to native plant and native habitat conservation in the San Francisco Bay Area

are encouraged to apply. Applications are due **Friday, October 24**, at midnight. Check www.cnps-scv.org/research-scholarships for more information.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Conservation Committee

Our Chapter's next Conservation Committee meetings will be held over Zoom on **Mondays, September 8 and October 6**, 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 or (650) 804-6162, or Conservation Chair Judy Fenerty at judy@fenerty.com. If you are interested in joining our committee meetings on Zoom, please email Carolyn for the link.

CHAPTER SERVICE OUTINGS

Our Chapter leads several ongoing habitat restoration and city native plant garden projects. The workdays depend on the project; read on to find the schedule and how to volunteer at each project. But first, let's learn how Chapter members volunteered in July at a planting of new native plants at San Jose's Rainbow Park Native Garden.

Chapter Members Volunteer at Rainbow Park Native Garden

On July 19th, San Jose's Adopt-A-Park program hosted a volunteer day to revitalize the native garden at Rainbow Park in West San Jose (Rainbow Drive & Donington Drive). Around 30 volunteers participated, planting 40-50 native plants and adding fresh mulch. The plants were donated by the non-profit Beautiful Day. Several members of our Chapter, including Kathy Kleinsteinber, Shelkie Tao, and Carol Mattsson, were among the volunteers.

In the month following the event, Shelkie, Carol and other volunteers have been regularly deep-watering the new

plants. Despite several days with temperatures over 90°F, the plants are thriving and establishing themselves well.



Shelkie Tao

Volunteers deep watering newly planted native plants at Rainbow Park Native Garden, San Jose, August 2025

Additional help is needed with watering until the beginning of September, when the plants will be fully established. If you live in West San Jose and would like to volunteer, please contact Shelkie Tao at shelkie@waterefficientgardens.com.

You can learn more about Shelkie and providing habitat for rare monarch butterflies, by attending her upcoming talk on the topic Monday, October 27. Learn more on page 4.

Alum Rock Park Restoration

Come help us weed non-native, 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 every **Monday and Wednesday at 8:30 am**, and on the **second Saturday morning** of each month. No experience is necessary. All tools and instruction will be provided. Please bring a filled water bottle, snacks, sunscreen, sunhat and insect repellent if you need it; wear trail/off-trail footwear, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt.

Lately we have been clearing weeds that grew extra tall as a result of last spring's abundant rainfall. We have also started some pruning for fire mitigation. The City of San Jose cannot fully staff their parks even to keep the trails clear of non-native thistles, so there is plenty of work for project volunteers. New volunteers are welcome!

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. You will see Alum Rock Park Trail Crew as one of the options. The next **Saturday** workday is **September 13, from 8:45am to noon**.

For the Monday/Wednesday workdays, our actual meeting spot can vary and on rare occasions we may cancel due to weather or dangerous conditions. **Please contact Todd Hayes at ultratoddh@gmail.com before you attend**, for more information and instructions on where to park.

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.



Bill Lundgren

A pair of young green herons, photographed during our Chapter's Bird and Plant ID walk at Lake Cunningham, June 2025

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, mainly weeding and mulching year-round, but some planting in winter. For **details, directions, a waiver for first-timers and to RSVP**, see our Chapter's Meetup page at www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter.

Edgewood Restoration

Help restore habitat at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve, near Redwood City, known for fabulous wildflowers and amazing diversity. Weeders see far more than weeds: they 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**. During Daylight Savings Time we also weed on **Wednesdays at 5:30pm**. For an overview, please visit 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@friendsofthewood.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 or (650) 854-7125. For questions about Wednesday sessions, contact Alf Fengler at afengler@pacbell.net.

Cataldi Park Native Garden

Join us to restore habitat in San Jose's Cataldi Park. This project aims to remove invasive plants and restore California native plants in a 1/2-acre area on the western end of Cataldi Park in San Jose.

Volunteer work days take place on **Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00am**. New volunteers are welcome; City-issued guidelines are followed.

Activities depend on the season. We start planting in late fall after the first rain and continue into the winter months as needed. Spring is the time for controlling weeds and taking care of the young saplings. During the summer and early fall, we irrigate/water the plants, prune established plants and sheet mulch adjacent areas in preparation for planting. As of July, the project had fully used up the 50-cubic-yard mulch pile provided by San Jose Adopt-A-Park and park staff last year. It has been extremely helpful in controlling weeds.

Wear a hat and garden shoes and bring water to stay hydrated. Work gloves will be provided.

For details, directions, a waiver for first-timers and to RSVP, see our Chapter's Meetup page at www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter.

Kirk Park Pollinator Garden

Community volunteers regularly care for this native plant garden at Kirk Park in San Jose. We are always happy to have help at the garden! **We meet regularly on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00am**, weather permitting, for light maintenance such as weeding, watering; and occasionally we have plants or seeds to plant or mulch to spread.

The park is open every day, so please come visit! The garden is located along the north edge of the park. If you would like to help out, please sign up for our **Saturday workdays** on the [CNPS-SCV Meetup page](#). If we know you are coming, we can be sure to have tools available for you to use. We can also notify you if, for some reason, we will not be meeting. New volunteers will need to fill out a form for the City.

On Saturday, September 20 at 11:00am, the Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden will be the location for one of our Chapter's popular **Seed and Cutting Exchanges!** **For that day only, we've canceled our regular Saturday garden maintenance.** Learn more about the Seed and Cutting Exchange on page 2.

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 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 page**, here: 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 page and tap/click the "Attend" button to reserve your spot.

Sun, Sept 21, 9:00am - Noon Bird and Plant ID Walk at Lake Cunningham Park (San Jose)

With the onset of Fall, join us for a beginner's bird and plant identification walk through Lake Cunningham Park. This lake is a major destination for waterfowl and migratory birds and its Native Garden draws many birds due to its habitat value. On this walk, Vicki Silvas-Young will show you how to identify the common and some migrant birds of this area, while Arvind Kumar will identify the native plants that they depend on for food and shelter.



Arvind Kumar

Bird and Plant ID walk at Lake Cunningham, June 2024

The distance is 2 miles round-trip on a level path. Bring a hat, water, your bird and plant lists and binoculars. Wear comfortable walking shoes. **Parking fee is \$6, credit card only.**

RSVP is required to join us for the walk. No drop-ins please and space is limited. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section to **RSVP on Meetup**.

Meet at the Marina parking lot at **9:00am**. **Driving directions** and parking tips are provided on [our Chapter's Meetup page](#). This event is cosponsored by CNPS, Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority.

Sat, Sep 27, 10:00am – 12:30pm Fire Ecology and Forest Management (Loma Mar)

Join Vivian Neou and Ray Curiel on an excursion at the northernmost edge of the CZU Lightning Complex Fires of 2020. We will walk along Old Haul Road, one of the fire

breaks. Along the way we'll discuss details of the fire's impacts to Pescadero Creek County Park, in addition to historic logging impacts, fire ecology and the natural role it plays in forest health. We'll contrast how understory plants such as ceanothus, huckleberry and more responded to the burn as compared to those that were not touched by fire.



Vivian Neou

Old Haul Road in Pescadero Creek County Park, that served as a fire break. Trees on the left were in the fire, trees on the right were spared. August 2025

We'll also talk about the San Mateo County Park Department's plans for forest management to improve ecosystem health, and how the department is planning to implement work from the County's Climate and Habitat Resiliency Plan for the park. To learn more about the plan, visit www.smcgov.org/parks/pcp-climate-habitat-resiliency.

The hike will be 3 miles in length with some moderate uphill stretches. The closest restrooms are at nearby Memorial Park (approximately 0.4 miles up the road past the trailhead, as you approach the trailhead from the north), so plan on arriving a little early to use the facilities there if needed. There is no water on the trail, so fill water bottles in advance. Bring layers as it can be cold.

We will meet at Hoffman Creek Trailhead along Wurr Road at **10:00am**. The address is 1400 Wurr Road, Loma Mar, CA 94021 but using Hoffman Creek Trailhead is more reliable for locating the site.

RSVP is required to join us for 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**.



Vivian Neou

Sally Casey and Melanie Cross in conversation at the CNPS-SCV nursery, January 2016

IN MEMORIAM

By Vivian Neou, Chapter Co-President

Melanie Cross, a cherished member of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, passed away at the end of May. Melanie was a dear friend, a steadfast supporter of our garden tour, a cornerstone of our Chapter's nursery, an exceptional and inspiring native plant gardener and an all-around amazing person. Melanie had a remarkable talent for nurturing both plants and people. Being with Melanie, particularly in her garden or at the nursery, was a guaranteed way to brighten your day.



Melanie with Jean Struthers at CNPS-SCV nursery, October 2023



Melanie at CNPS-SCV Nursery, February 2019

After joining CNPS in 1997, Melanie quickly emerged as a vital contributor to the Chapter's horticultural initiatives. When the Chapter began hosting native plant garden tours, she was among the first to offer her garden as part of the tour. Her knowledge of native plants, combined with her meticulous approach to selecting and arranging them, turned her one-acre garden into a stunning native plant exhibit, providing the new tour with instant credibility. She became the tour's quiet champion and

backbone, consistently sharing her garden over the years, including this year's event. Her garden motivated many tour attendees to start or enhance their own native gardens.

Melanie's support for the tour extended beyond her garden – she was a gracious hostess, regularly inviting the tour to hold the annual volunteer potluck at her home. This generosity extended to volunteers from another area that was close to her heart – the CNPS SCV Nursery.

Jean Struthers, the nursery manager prior to Melanie, founded the nursery and managed it for nearly twenty years. Jean maintained high standards and it was only Melanie who could fulfill those expectations, enabling Jean to retire from her position as nursery manager.

Alongside her extensive knowledge of plants, Melanie's dedication, compassion, expertise, consideration and careful attention to detail made the nursery a friendly and pleasant environment for volunteers. She matched volunteers with tasks that fit their abilities and passions, engaging them in the decision-making processes related to the nursery's management. A wonderful cook, she would sometimes bring in delightful snacks to share and she organized an annual potluck in her garden for the nursery volunteers.

On workdays and during nursery events, she consistently arrived early and stayed late, often stopping by on other days as well. When phytophthora emerged as a threat,

necessitating a complete overhaul of nursery procedures and a facility remodel, Melanie took the initiative to identify what needed to be done. It was a monumental task and she shouldered the majority of the workload. Her husband, Peter Cross, often helped with the many projects that she led.



Melanie demonstrating phytophthora Best Management Practices, September 2016

When she realized being nursery manager was becoming too much for her, she notified the board that she needed to resign, but stayed on for several months to ensure a seamless transition for her successor. Despite stepping down as manager, she continued to support the nursery. After a brief hiatus, she resumed volunteering. She was like a fairy godmother, overseeing the nursery needs and tending to matters that required attention. She was always ready to answer questions and offer guidance and she continued to provide high quality propagation materials from her own garden for the nursery. Her generosity and kindness significantly enhanced the nursery in countless ways.

Melanie was also engaged in other Chapter activities, joining field trips and attending talks. She was a true gem, and we deeply feel her loss. A fund has been established in her memory to sponsor a picnic table and garden fund at Bol Park in Palo Alto, the site of another of Melanie's projects. Visit www.gofundme.com/f/melanies-garden if you would like to make a contribution in her memory.

Credit for all photos in this article goes to Vivian Neou.



No you can't eat that! Melanie herding goats away from the demonstration native plant garden outside the CNPS-SCV nursery, March 2018

ANNOUNCEMENTS

News and Activities from Other Organizations

Bioblitzes

There is a wonderful bioblitz coming up on September 7 that is part of California Biodiversity Day. It's at Shady Oaks, in the Edenvale/Silver Creek area of San Jose, where there are lots of interesting oak galls this time of year.

Cosponsored by Bioblitz Club and Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful. To learn more visit www.bioblitz.club/event-info/fall-bioblitz-at-shady-oaks-park-california-biodiversity-day-3.

There's another bioblitz near Milpitas, along Coyote Creek Trail, on October 25. Cosponsored by Bioblitz Club and Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful. To learn more visit www.bioblitz.club/event-info/bioblitz-at-coyote-creek-trail-near-mccarthy-rd-5.

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-scv.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-scv.org/blazing-star-newsletter. Our next paper version will be the May-June 2026 issue.

Did You Know?

That the most fun and social way to learn about native plants is by volunteering for the Chapter? There are so many ways to volunteer, each matching a different interest and passion. You can choose your favorite activity and help the Chapter care for the local ecology while expanding your personal knowledge of native plants and their habitats.

If you like volunteering at a public park where Chapter members maintain a native, habitat-friendly garden, then you have options like Cataldi Park, Kirk Park and Lake Cunningham. Check the calendar on our website, www.cnps-scv.org or join our Chapter News list by sending an e-mail to: cnps-scv-news+subscribe@googlegroups.com, to see workdays at these parks.

For a more complete list of all possible volunteer positions, visit www.cnps-scv.org/about-us/volunteer-opportunities.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP FOR 2025-2026

Title	Name	Email
Co-President	Priya Pharate	priya4cnps@gmail.com
Co-President	Vivian Neou	techchair@cnps-scv.org
Vice President	Toni Gregorio-Bunch	tidytip.lp@gmail.com
Recording Secretary	Janet Hoffmann	janet@cnps-scv.org
Treasurer	Paul Markley	palmsist@gmail.com
Chapter Council Delegate	Vivian Neou	techchair@cnps-scv.org
Past President	Radhika Thekkath	cnpsradhika@gmail.com

To see the full list of Chapter officers and chairs, please visit www.cnps-scv.org/leadership.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR*

Saturday, October 18

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.

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.

First-Class Mail

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (page # in parentheses)

Sep 8 Mon	Conservation Committee meeting (6)	Oct 24 Fri	Photo Group photo sharing (4)
Sep 11 Thu	September plant sale online starts (3)	Oct 24 Fri	Research scholarship applications due (5)
Sep 20 Sat	Seed & Cutting Exchange Kirk Park (2)	Oct 27 Mon	Gardening for monarchs – Tao (4)
Sep 21 Sun	Lake Cunningham bird & plant walk (8)	Oct 28 Tue	Native Plant ID meeting (5)
Sep 23 Tue	Native Plant ID meeting (5)	Oct 31 Fri	GNGT garden submittal deadline (5)
Sep 26 Fri	Photo Group photo sharing (4)	Nov 1 Sat	Annual potluck dinner (1)
Sep 27 Sat	Fire ecology field trip (8)	Mon Wed Sat	Alum Rock workdays (6)
Oct 4 Sat	Grassroots Ecology sale online starts (1)	Wed & Fri	Edgewood restoration workdays (7)
Oct 6 Mon	Conservation Committee meeting (6)	Saturdays	Lake Cunningham Garden workdays (7)
Oct 11 Sat	Fall plant sale online starts (1)	Saturdays	Cataldi Park Garden workdays (7)
Oct 18 Sat	Fall plant sale at Hidden Villa (1)	Saturdays	Kirk Pollinator Garden workdays (8)
Oct 18 Sat	Newsletter submittal deadline (11)		

The next Chapter board meetings will be **Thursdays, September 18 and October 23** 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 or Vivian Neou at techchair@cnps-scv.org.

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. Address changes may be submitted to membership@cnps.org. Please put "address change" in the subject line.

The *Blazing Star* web address: www.cnps-scv.org. Please print on recycled paper.