**February Chapter Meeting: Kaleidoscopes of Life: Merced Version**

Presented by Carol Witham and Splash Volunteers

Kaleidoscopes were a favorite holiday gift for children many years ago. They displayed a quickly and constantly changing series of brilliantly colored patterns. The metaphor works for California’s vernal pool landscape, which has short-lived, weird-looking, fascinating fauna which evolved millions of years ago, and dazzling swaths of tens of thousands of tiny flowers that change from week to week through a two-to-three month season.

Nowhere in California is the vernal pool landscape as large and as pristine as in eastern Merced County. Nearly 100,000 acres of this habitat are on cattle ranches controlled by a dozen families. This area is also home to 30 rare, threatened or endangered plants and animals.

While a large portion of the eastern Merced vernal pool landscape is under some form of protection—mostly conservation easements—the area is also highly threatened. With the establishment of the University of California at Merced campus, land speculation for future housing development runs rampant. Until very recently, only regulatory agencies and the environmentalists cared about the fate of these precious jewels of the eastern Merced landscape.

In 2014, through grant funding from the Bureau of Reclamation, the Splash program debuted in several Merced schools. Sacramento Splash has been introducing local students to the wonders of nature and science through the study of the Mather Field Vernal Pools for the past 15 years. Funding from grants provided one year of field trips for Merced students and allowed the curriculum to be modified to be more Merced place-based. In 2015, the CNPS Sacramento Valley Chapter provided a second year of funding for the Merced program. We anticipate providing funding for 2016 while continuing to look for a more permanent funding source for the Merced vernal pool education program.

Please join us for a presentation on the vernal pools of eastern Merced County and an inspiring story building a constituency of vernal pool supporters.
The first weekend of January 2016 ushered in our 19th year of showcasing the beauty and benefits of native plants in the California Native Plant Demonstration Garden. We celebrated on a cold and sunny morning with six new and energized volunteers and a couple of longtime volunteers who helped with winter garden cleanup, sowing wildflower seeds, and planting new plants.

**The Year in Review**

A host of changes and activities in 2015 kept us busy. The Sacramento Historic City Cemetery is now a National Registered Historic Place. With that title came new guidelines for vegetation maintenance and visibility of cemetery monuments. This wasn’t necessarily a bad thing. The new guidelines spurred us to look at the garden with fresh eyes and closely evaluate what is working and what is not within the unique setting of the city cemetery.

After almost two decades of growth, several plants were in decline. Four years of drought had also taken a toll on even our most resilient natives. A scraggly toyon, overgrown black sages, California wild rose, chamise, and others were removed to beautify the garden and increase visibility. We were sad to see these long timers go, but they lived a good life and provided great benefits to our pollinators and songbirds.

**Current and Upcoming Activities**

Removing old plants has given us an opportunity to support our favorite local nurseries such as Elderberry Farms, Cornflower Farms, Talini’s, Fair Oaks Blvd Nursery, and Green Acres, and to discover new ones. One of our long-ago volunteers, Angela Pratt, opened up her very own nursery in late 2015, The Plant Foundry, in Oak Park. We were thrilled to discover bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*), silver carpet (*Lessingia filaginifolia*), new hybrids of mon-keyflower, and more to put in our garden. We now have over 127 different species of shrubs, perennials, wildflowers, and grasses growing in approximately 175 plots.

With the planting season complete, we’re now focused on preparations for the spring and summer tours. Our first event this spring will be Open Garden Day, held Saturday, April 9 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event is hosted every spring by the Old City Cemetery Committee and brings in speakers, a plant sale, and garden tours of the three main gardens in the cemetery including our garden.

**Work Parties and Volunteer Opportunities**

Work parties are typically held on one or two Sundays a month, 9 a.m. to noon. Large and small garden tools are available for volunteers to use who don’t have their own and beverages and snacks are provided. Work party dates are posted on MeetUp.com under California Native Plant Demonstration Garden and on Facebook under the same name. You can also be placed on my email notification list. New volunteers are always welcome to come out and just garden and/or help with coordination duties. Opportunities include:

- **Work Party Leader**—lead a work party once a month/every other month
- **GIS Database Manager**— maintain our plant inventory in ArcGIS
- **Event Planner**—help plan and coordinate occasional events and tours in the garden
- **Garden Plotter**—come out and weed, prune, plant, and water

For more information about work party dates and volunteer opportunities, contact Cassandra Nguyen Musto at cupsgarden@gmail.com or (916) 678-0317.

The garden is open 7 days a week and can be visited any time. With the rains that have finally arrived, this spring promises to be especially beautiful. Be sure to come and take a walk through the garden to enjoy the show.

Visit the Stockton subchapter’s website for latest news: eepurl.com/u8mNj
Use this link to subscribe to the Stockton sub-chapter e-mail list: eepurl.com/uu5Tb

CNPS members living in Stockton who would like to find others in the area to carpool to chapter activities in Sacramento should contact Nadia Zane, (209) 931-5151.

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**California Native Plant Society**

*Sacramento Valley Chapter Stockton Subchapter*

Visit the Stockton subchapter's website for latest news: eepurl.com/u8mNj
Use this link to subscribe to the Stockton sub-chapter e-mail list: eepurl.com/uu5Tb

CNPS members living in Stockton who would like to find others in the area to carpool to chapter activities in Sacramento should contact Nadia Zane, (209) 931-5151.
One of the most startling finds of a new plant species in California was the discovery of the Shasta Snow-wreath, *Neviusia cliftonii*, in 1993 just in time for it to be included in the Jepson Manual.

The Snow-wreath is a good-sized shrub (to ten feet) in the Rose family with showy white flowers (stamens and occasional petals) growing in often shaded mesic habitats mostly around Shasta Reservoir. Its only close relative is the Alabama Snow-wreath, which grows only in the U.S. southeast.

The presence of such a large, conspicuous, and previously undescribed species made the news. See Fremontia Vol. 22(3): pp. 3-10, 1993 & Vol. 33(2): pp. 26, 2005. It also made the Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California or Elsewhere Rank 1B.2 (fairly endangered in California status).

It got my attention when I read a report on the April 2015 Shasta Discovery Day in the Botanical Electronic News (BEN). It concluded with the following post script:

On Thursday, September 17, 2015 Barbara [Ertter] wrote to the BEN Editor: “I was just in touch with Julie Nelson [USFS], and she indicated that half the known populations would be completely or partially inundated by raising the dam. A few small populations would be completely lost. Since these are right on the edge of the existing full pool line, they are probably remnants of formerly larger populations. Of course, we’ll never know how much the original population was flooded when the original dam was built.”

A quick review of the unreleased draft of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act report, previously obtained by a Freedom of Information Act request, revealed some of the details: “Shasta Snow-wreath would especially be threatened by the raising of Shasta Dam ...11 of 24 known sites of the plant species would be partly or completely lost within the inundation zone with one more impacted by relocation actions... Another 11 occurrences of Shasta Snow-wreath are threatened by non-project related activities due to their locations near roads, trails, and logging activities... Thus, only one occurrence of the Shasta Snow-wreath is not threatened by the SLWRI [dam raise] or non-project related activities...” (F&WCAR, p. 164)

Fortunately, the dam raise is illegal under California law because of the protection of the McCloud River in the State Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It is also illegal to fund the dam raise with Proposition 1 funds.

**Shasta Snow-wreath Threatened by Water Interests**

**By Ron Stork**

Unfortunately, in 2013 the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California made repealing the protection and funding prohibitions as a legislative priority. Earlier, in 2007 the Westlands Water District bought about 3,000 acres of land along the McCloud River to, according to the Redding Record Searchlight, “protect its interests along the river and around Lake Shasta.”

These guys are heavy hitters with aspirations to receive water or more water from the Sacramento River, the river dammed by Shasta Dam. Let’s hope that decision-makers in the legislature can keep a warm spot in their hearts for the Shasta Snow-wreath.

6th Annual Gardens Gone Native Tour

**April 9, 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Planning is well under way for the 2016 Gardens Gone Native garden tour. Interest in California natives continues to grow and this year’s garden tour should draw more attendees than ever. Last year we had a record 997 registered attendees. Judging from the enormously successful fall plant sale, we anticipate even more interest in this year’s tour. We have a wonderful blend of gardens that have been on the tour in the past as well as many new gardens. Registration for the tour opens at gardensgonenative@eventbrite.com March 11, 2016. The tour brochure including maps and garden descriptions will be available at that time. Won’t you share your love of California native plants with the public by becoming a volunteer docent or greeter for one of the gardens on this year’s tour? If you are interested please send an email to gardensgonenative@gmail.com. Please join us as a volunteer or as a tour participant. Also check the CNPS website for additional garden tour information: SacValley.CNPS.org/Events/Native Garden Tour.
**Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery**
2140 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova, on the American River Parkway at Soil Born Farms
By Chris Lewis, Nursery Leader
cnpschris@gmail.com

The mission of Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery is to promote awareness of the benefits of native plant habitat, encourage community involvement, and provide a source of local native plants for restoration projects as well as gardeners.

**Wednesdays Workday hours: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**
Nursery leaders are often working at home or at the Nursery earlier and later than our official workday hours. If you’d like to be more involved, talk with Chris at the Nursery or via email at cnpschris@gmail.com.

Join us for propagation work on Wednesdays and help pot up seedlings and learn various propagating techniques under the excellent direction of Robin Rietz, Propagation Manager. We treat volunteers to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (you’re also welcome to bring your own lunch). Learn about or share your knowledge of: propagating plants; landscape design and maintenance; birds, bees, or butterflies; Ecology; Ethnobotany; maintaining greenhouse and nursery irrigation; photography or videography; writing and note taking; art.

**2nd Sunday Workdays: Feb. 14, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**
Contact Pat Gilbert for details: battypatty296@gmail.com.

**Weekly Friday Walks**
We walk most Fridays, check our website for updates. Friday Walks are for seed and data collecting, plant identification, photography, and fun. The Nursery grows only plants that are native to the American River Parkway and/or around Folsom Lake. Our destination changes each week depending on the Nursery’s need and the group’s interest. SacValleyCNPS.org/FieldTrips/FridayWalks

Calendar of Events

Ongoing

2nd Wed. of the month, 7 p.m.
(Jan.–June; Sept.–Nov.)
Chapter Meeting & Guest Speaker
Shepard Garden & Arts Center,
McKinley Park, Sacramento
See page 1. Contact John Hunter,
jhunter@harveyecology.com for more
information.

4th Wed. of the month, 7 p.m.
(Jan.–June; Sept.–Nov.)
Chapter Board Meetings
CNPS, 2707 K Street, Suite 1
Sacramento CA 95816
Contact: John Hunter,
jhunter@harveyecology.com

Habitat 2020
Day and Time TBD
For information contact Glen Holstein,
holstein@cal.net; (530) 758-6787

Elderberry Farms
Native Plant Nursery
Located at Soil Born Farms
2140 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova
Wednesday Workday 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
We pot up seedlings and learn plant
propagation techniques. Peanut butter
and jelly sandwiches provided. RSVP
to Chris, cnpschris@gmail.com.

Friday Walks 9 a.m.–noon.
Plant identification, photography, art
and fun! Go to sacvalley.cnps.org, find
Friday Walks under Events and Field
Trips.

Garden Work Parties at the Native
Plant Demonstration Garden
Sacramento Historic City Cemetery
1000 Broadway, Sacramento
Learn about native plants, bees, and
more while helping us maintain the
largest California native plant garden
in the City of Sacramento. Bring a
hat and water and wear garden-
appropriate clothes. Gardening tools
available for use and refreshments
provided. Free plants and seeds
are available to volunteers to take
home. For more information, contact
Cassandra cnpgarden@gmail.com

Ceanothus—Collaborative Plant
Identification Workshops
9a.m. - noon. UC Davis Herbarium
(Center for Plant Diversity)
Michael Bower, (530) 902-8721
Bring any plants you’re curious about
and the Jepson Manual. Visit
www.ceanothusfieldbotanist.blogspot.com
for more information. Email questions
to ceanothusfieldbot@gmail.com.

Other Items of Interest

Native Plant Garden Club
Tuesday February 16 and March 15,
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Carmichael Library, 5605 Marconi Ave,
Carmichael. Bring your bag lunch or
eat before you come.
SacValleyCNPS.org/Gardening/Garden
Club

Shepard Garden & Art Center
Annual Spring Sale
Saturday & Sunday March 19 - 20,
10a.m.- 4 p.m.
The Shepard Garden & Arts Center
is proud to announce its annual
spring sale. The event will be held at
the Center’s facility located at 3330
McKinley Blvd., Sacramento. This is
every gardener’s “not to be missed”
event. It is attended by not only the
Center’s club members, their friends
and neighbors, but also by people
from throughout the region.

Friends of The Chico State
Herbarium Workshops:
Mushroom Foraging and
Identification Sat. March 5

Intro to Keying Manzanitas
Sat. March 12

Rosettes, Jellies, and Frosts. In-Depth
with Four Lichen Genera
Sat. March 19
Workshops are open for registration.
For more information go to :
www.friendsofthechicostateherbarium.com

Save the Date

Wildflower Wonders Native Plant
Sale and Celebration
Saturday April 16, 10:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Elderberry Farms Native Plant
Nursery
2140 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova,
CA 95670
On the American River Parkway at
Soil Born Farms.
Wildflower Wonders planning is
in full swing. We will need more
leaders to have the day go well. If you
would be able to commit to the full
day, please let Chris know by email:
cnpschris@gmail.com

Get Your eNews Here!

The Sacramento Valley Chapter CNPS emails announcements about
upcoming events (talks, hikes, sales, and events).
The eNewsletter is another way to get information about what’s hap-
pening in our Chapter. Don’t worry, signing up for the eNewsletter
does not interrupt your Hibiscus newsletter service.
Sign up at: sacvalleycnps.org or contact Chris at cnpschris@gmail.com.
Notes from the Sacramento CNPS Test Kitchen: Volume II Walnut Pesto

In the centuries leading up to European contact, prior to the use of any agriculture in California, winter was a time of scarce natural plant foods. People relied heavily on stored acorns, supplemented by the animals, fish, and invertebrates they were able to hunt, trap, or catch. Acorns, which are abundant in the fall, are gone by January, and the glut of edible greens and seeds that will be coming up in the springtime have not arrived. For this reason, the test kitchen similarly had to rely on stored resources, in this case walnuts.

The California Walnut, *Juglans californica*, grows abundantly along our rivers in the Sacramento region. The test kitchen decided to approach this nut from a Mediterranean angle, with two Italy-inspired recipes for a walnut pesto sauce.

We began with a recipe for a Roasted Walnut Sauce, from the website of the popular NPR radio show, *The Splendid Table* ([www.splendidtable.org](http://www.splendidtable.org)). After that, we tested an Italian recipe for Pesto di Noci from the website [www.allthingssicilianandmore.com](http://www.allthingssicilianandmore.com).

Starting with the Roasted Walnut Sauce, we began by spreading 8 ounces of the nutmeats on a baking pan which we placed in the oven at 350 degrees for about five minutes, until the nuts began to darken slightly. Following the recipe, we ground the walnuts in a food processor, then added 1/2 teaspoon of ground cinnamon and a pinch each of nutmeg, salt, and pepper. We mixed 1/4 cup of olive oil, 1/4 cup cream, and 1/4 cup of muscato wine; we poured the liquid into the food processor with the nuts and ran the machine until the mixture had the right texture. It was as simple as that.

The Pesto di Noci was similarly simple to make, though it required the use of a kitchen scale. We poured 500 grams of walnuts into the food processor, this time without roasting them, along with 1 tablespoon of water and two tablespoons of butter. After blending these ingredients together, we added 250 grams of ricotta cheese and a pinch of nutmeg.

In both cases, we used broad, flat pappardelle noodles, boiled separately. Instead of straining and rinsing the noodles, we pulled them out of the water with tongs to ensure a healthy coating of starch that would adhere the sauces generously to our noodles.

Our tester reported that the flavor of the Roasted Walnut Sauce was dominated by the walnuts themselves. Roasting brought out a rich nuttiness, producing a taste that one of our testers called earthy. Despite the fact that roasting reduces tannin content in walnuts, one of our tasters suggested that the sauce was rather tannic, with little to balance the strong walnut flavor.

The Pesto di Noci was better received by our testers. The flavor balanced the walnut taste, the creaminess of the ricotta cheese, and the tang of the garlic to good effect. The flavor reminded one of our tester of artichokes. Universally, our testers preferred the flavor of this sauce.

Walnuts are a great natural resource in our region. They are easy to find, widely available on public land, and are edible right out of the shell, without any need to cook or leach them. The window for harvesting these versatile nuts is past us now, but their cousin species, the English Walnut is widely available at your local farmers markets. Hopefully you’ll be inspired to try one of these tasty sauces on your next pasta night. Until next time: Buon Appetito!

If you have a recipe you would like the test kitchen to try out and discuss, please email the recipe to [editorhibiscus@gmail.com](mailto:editorhibiscus@gmail.com).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roasted Walnut Sauce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 ounces shelled walnuts, lightly roasted</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Several gratings of nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea salt and cracked pepper</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup of olive oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup cream</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/4 cup of muscato wine</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pesto di Noci</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>500 grams of walnuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 tablespoon marjoram</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 tablespoon parsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 grams of ricotta cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4 cup of olive oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 cloves garlic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon of water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt, to taste</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons of butter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinch of nutmeg</td>
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Pasta with Roasted Walnut Sauce
February 2016: Wildflower Alert! There may be a super-bloom in Death Valley this year. Due to the rain patterns in the desert this winter, things may be shaping up for a rare event that last occurred in 2005 – a spectacular bloom of flowers. The best time to see them is in March. Visit the desertusa.com website for up-to-the-minute reports. I am including photos of some of the wildflowers you may see. I especially like to explore the Jubilee Pass area.

If you wish to receive stories of my adventures on a regular basis, please contact me by email at: pamkirkbride7@gmail.com.

Note from the Editor: Our readers are terrific at plant identification. I thought it would be fun to have our readers write in to guess what species are in the photos. These photos were taken along Dry Creek in Roseville. (A colored version of the newsletter can be seen at www.sacvalley.org/Home/Newsletter) Send in your answers to editorhibiscus@gmail.com.
Submit content for the March Hibiscus by February 12!
Be sure your membership is current! See your address label for your renewal date.

FEBRUARY 2016

The Sacramento Valley chapter newsletter, Hibiscus, is published monthly, except for July, August, and December. Deadline for Hibiscus contributions is midnight of the Friday before the monthly meeting for possible inclusion in the next month's newsletter. Please send your submittals to editorhibiscus@gmail.com.

Or Current Occupant

In this issue:
2 Demonstration Garden Update
3 Shasta Snow-wreath
4 Elderberry Farms
5 Calendar of Events
6 Test Kitchen
7 Botany from the Road

Join or renew today!

FEBRUARY PRESENTATION:
Kaleidoscopes of Life: Merced Version
Presented by Carol Witham and Splash Volunteers

Wildflower Wonders Nature Plant Sale and Celebration
Saturday, April 16, 2016, 10 am to 1 pm
CNPS, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816-5113

Our chapter meetings are free and open to the public!