



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

March - April 2026

Growing Natives Garden Tour
Saturday April 18 and Sunday April 19
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM Both Days



Cynthia Gingerich

Growing Natives Garden Tour (GNGT) is a free, self-guided tour of gardens in Santa Clara County and San Mateo County featuring California native plants. Sign up to tour the gardens or volunteer as a docent or greeter!
Read more on page 9.

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Fiftieth Annual Wildflower Show
Saturday April 25 9:30 AM – 4:00 PM
West Valley College in Saratoga

Join us for our Chapter's annual Wildflower Show on **Saturday, April 25 from 9:30am – 4:00pm** at West Valley College in Saratoga. This family-friendly event features hundreds of native wildflowers and plants on display as well as a variety of activities for all ages. The event and parking are all free to the public.

Our keynote speaker this year will be **Kat Anderson**, author of *Tending the Wild*. Other talks and workshops will offer the opportunity to learn about bioblitzes, wildflower arrangements, macrophotography and more.

Attendees will also be able to take tours of the Vasona Creek Restoration Project and the Biology Department's Moon Garden. A selection of native plants and native plant art, T-shirts, books and other related goods will be available for purchase.



Vivian Neou

Visitors view live plant displays at Chapter Wildflower Show. West Valley College, April 2025

West Valley College is located at 14000 Fruitvale Ave. in Saratoga. For more information see the schedule at www.cnps-scv.org/wfs in April.



Vivian Neou

Plant runners setting up 2025 Wildflower Show

Volunteers Needed for Wildflower Show

Our show depends on volunteers. We are looking for help on **Friday before the show** and Saturday on show day:

- Show set-up
- Transport of items to and from our PCC office
- Plant runner
- Table tidy-up
- Greeter
- Assist with book sales
- Show takedown

If you'd like to help, please sign up at www.cnps-scv.org/volunteer-wfs.

We are happy to accept your used **plant books** to sell at the show. Contact Judy Fenerty at judy@fenerty.com by **Monday, April 20** if you have books to donate.

Chapter Elections – Vote in May

We conduct our annual election for Chapter Officers in May. We invite Chapter members who wish to contribute to the Chapter to consider running for a position. Anyone interested in running for office can **self-nominate by completing the form** at cnps-scv.org/self-nomination by **Saturday, March 28**. The new term will commence on June 1, 2026.

The five positions available are described below. The volunteers elected to these roles will form the Chapter's

Executive Committee and will be part of the Chapter's board. Board meetings are open to everyone, and we encourage anyone interested in one of these positions to attend a board meeting before running.

President/Co-President: The president or co-presidents are responsible for preparing the agenda for and presiding over all meetings of the members and the Board. This role requires 5 to 10 hours per month.

Vice President: The Vice President assumes the President's duties when needed and may lead an occasional monthly meeting of the Chapter board. This role offers flexibility in selecting additional responsibilities – with the wide array of Chapter activities, there are multiple areas of interest to explore, allowing the Vice President to gain deeper insights into the Chapter's operations and the chance to forge stronger connections with the members who contribute to the Chapter's success. This role requires 2 to 5 hours per month.

Treasurer: The Treasurer is tasked with creating and maintaining the Chapter's financial records. This includes preparing the Chapter's annual budget and quarterly financial statements. 10 - 15 hours per month.



Vivian Neou

Board meeting in Raptor Suite at PCC, January 2026

Recording Secretary: The Recording Secretary is responsible for keeping minutes and publishing all business meetings of the Board and the membership. This role requires 5 hours per month.

Chapter Council Delegate: This position serves as the representative for the Chapter during the quarterly Chapter Council meetings that take place across the state (virtual attendance is an option). These meetings are generally scheduled from 9:00am to 5:00pm on Saturdays. This entails a commitment of 8 hours each quarter (not including travel time) for the Chapter Council meetings, along with an additional two hours per month for board meetings. The

Chapter Council Delegate is permitted to hold one more position simultaneously.

Moreover, individuals in these roles are expected to participate in all Chapter board meetings and support the Chapter as needed.

The Leadership Development Committee is particularly interested in **finding candidates for the Vice-President role**. If you wish to explore this opportunity or any other positions, please reach out to Priya Pharate and Vivian Neou at president@cnps-scv.org.

Information about voting will be provided in the next issue of the *Blazing Star*. To make sure you receive your ballot, check your email address at the CNPS membership portal at secure2.convio.net/cnps/site/UserLogin. **Please log in and do this by Friday, May 1.**

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Seed/Cutting Exchange + Online Plant Sale

Online Sale: March 9-10 california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site

Seed and Cutting Exchange

Saturday, March 14 1:00 to 3:00pm
Peninsula Conservation Center,
3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto

This free event provides an opportunity to share and receive cuttings and seeds of native plants. Discover the diverse offerings, ranging from easy-to-grow varieties to rare finds, and leave with new native plant cuttings and seeds! We will supply coin envelopes for seeds, but please bring your own containers for transporting cuttings home.

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. **It is not necessary to bring anything if you do not have native material to share**, as there is typically an abundance for everyone.

Several well-known native plant books will be available for purchase at the event, including *Wildflowers of California*

from CNPS, *Seed Propagation of Native California Plants* (2021 edition) by Dara E. Emery and *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross and Bart O'Brien. Our Wildflower Ambassadors will also distribute free seed packets and information.



Vivian Neou

Seed and Cutting Exchange at the PCC, September 2024

Online Plant Sale

The CNPS SCV Nursery will conduct an online plant sale (california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-chapter.square.site) starting **Monday, March 9**. We have a great stock of iris available – including the difficult-to-find *Iris douglasiana* ‘Canyon Snow.’ You can shop from the comfort of your home, and your plants will be ready for you at the Exchange. The store will close when either the pickup capacity is reached or at the **end of the day on March 10**, whichever occurs first.

The mud planting technique (www.cnps-scv.org/mud-planting) outlined by Krzysztof Kozminski is a method that is effective throughout the year, but it is particularly beneficial for ensuring successful planting during the summer season.

Scheduled pickup from the plant sale will be available at the nursery on Friday, March 13 and during the Seed and Cutting Exchange at the Peninsula Conservation Center on Saturday, March 14.

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 18.

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. The next quarterly program meeting will be **Monday, April 13, 7:00 – 8:30pm** on Zoom.

**Aging with Grace: The Life of
the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine
A talk by Tim Aston**

**Thursday, April 30 7:00 - 8:30 PM, Los Altos
Library Orchard Room, 13 S. San Antonio Rd.,
Los Altos**



Stunning Mermaid by Tim Aston

This long-exposed root on the downslope gave Tim the impression of the tail of a mermaid, while its living branch appears to be an arm holding something. It's hypothesized that exposed roots are a common cause of death in ancient trees.

The Great Basin bristlecone pine is considered the longest-living organism on earth, with a confirmed living tree that is older than 5,000 years. How is this known? The science of dendrochronology analyzes the growth rings of trees, identifying their age and even informing our understanding of climate patterns. Above 10,000 ft. elevation and east of the Sierra Nevada range, nutrient-poor alkaline soil is the only place where bristlecone pines can establish themselves with no other serious competitors. “Aging with Grace” will cover some of the scientific discoveries the bristlecone pine has been part of, how its environment shapes it, and share images that demonstrate the facets of their life and growth that make them one of California’s most iconic native species.

Tim Aston, a photographer and former Gunn High School biology teacher, grew up in Los Altos and currently lives in the Eastern Sierra. He has been photographing bristlecone pines for fifteen years, culminating in his new book, *Branches in Time: A Photographic Study of the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine*. When Tim was a kid, he borrowed *Little Shop of Horrors* from the Los Altos Library approximately 74 times.



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, February 27, March 27 and April 24 at 7:00pm**. You can learn more and join the email group at: 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

Leader Bill Lundgren sent us the following photo of a lichen-encrusted branch he found at Stile Ranch County Park. Note we'll have a field trip to this park on Sunday, March 15. See page 13 for the trip description.



Bill Lundgren

Colorful, lichen-encrusted branch
along Stile Ranch Trail, January 2026

Native Plant ID

Native Plant ID (formerly Keying with Natives), meets once a month to work together to learn plant identification using botanical keys and other resources.

For the upcoming meetings in March and April we expect an abundance of spring wildflowers to look at. Bring in samples of flowers that you would like to identify if you have permission to collect them. If you see some flowers on hikes on public lands, take photos. For identification purposes we need a close-up photo or photos showing all the flower parts as well as photos of the leaves and a whole plant photo to show the growth form. Send your photos to the email below no later than the Sunday before the meeting.

Even if you don't have anything to contribute, join us as we look at plant samples and photos and practice methods of identifying the native flowers of our region. 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 and dissecting microscopes that we can use to look at small plant parts or bring your own lens.

Our next meetings will be **Tuesdays, March 24 and April 28 at 7:00pm** at the Peninsula Conservation Center. The PCC is located at [3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto](#). The meeting rooms are on the first floor. For details, contact Janet Hoffmann at janet@cnps-scw.org.

Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Museum: New Ethnobotanical Garden

The Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Museum in **San Jose** features a new ethnobotanical garden. Chapter member **Julisa Soto** organized community members to create the garden, an ethnobotanically informed landscape featuring over 100 locally native plant species. Each plant tells a story of cultural use, ecological function and the deep relationships Indigenous communities have maintained for thousands of years. Plant labels include common and scientific names, native ranges, botanical sketches, ethnobotanical summary and QR codes, helping visitors understand how traditional ecological knowledge continues to influence biodiversity and land stewardship.

For example, the garden includes a signed specimen of a big berry manzanita (see photo on next page). Manzanitas have long supported Indigenous communities: berries are still eaten raw or dried, boiled into a tea, or ground into a fine powder, and leaves are carefully processed to produce yellowish dyes.

This ethnobotanical garden is part of the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Museum (RASH), a historical site in San Jose stewarded by the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County (CPSCC). Julisa Soto is CPSCC's Grants and Garden Manager.

The RASH garden organizes plants by California's eras: native plants, Spanish plants, Mexican plants, and United States international



Julisa Soto

Pink flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum*) at the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House ethnobotanical garden. Note the Roberto Adobe in the background.

plants. A marked path guides visitors through all parts of the garden.

The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County hosts monthly volunteer days at the RASH garden, offering hands-on restoration, ecological education and free native seeds or cuttings. Protecting biodiversity is a community responsibility. By volunteering, you help safeguard the living history of this land and ensure that future generations inherit an environment rich in culture, beauty and ecological resilience.



Julisa Soto

Julisa Soto at the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House ethnobotanical garden, mulching a big berry manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*), February 2026

Ethnobotanical Garden Volunteer Workdays

Julisa invites CNPS members to attend their choice of three **garden volunteer days in March: 10:00am to 1:00pm Sunday the 1st, Friday the 20th and Friday the 27th.** Participants will learn principles of ethnobotany, practical ways to support pollinators and biodiversity, techniques for weeding, planting and mulching at the garden and more. Lunch will be served.

To learn more about the workdays and to attend, please sign up at Eventbrite, here: www.bit.ly/RASH-garden-volunteer

The museum and garden are **open every Saturday from 12:00 to 2:00pm.** Or contact Julisa to schedule a private tour at some other time. Or join our Chapter's **field trip to the garden on Sunday, March 29.** To learn more about that event, turn to page 14 of this newsletter.

The museum is located at 770 Lincoln Ave. in San Jose. From Parkmoor Ave. or Paula St., turn on Lincoln Ave., heading towards I-280 in the Willow Glen neighborhood. Look for the historic adobe and brick structures set slightly back from the street. Parking is available behind the museum, including accessibility parking, with additional street parking on Lincoln Ave. and nearby residential streets.

[To learn more about the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Museum, visit californiapioneers.com/visit/roberto-adobe-sunol-house-museum.](http://californiapioneers.com/visit/roberto-adobe-sunol-house-museum) [To learn more about the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House garden, contact Julisa Soto at julisasotogutierrez@gmail.com.](mailto:julisasotogutierrez@gmail.com)

SCHOLARSHIPS

2025 - 2026 Research Scholarship Projects and Talks

Since 1999, our Chapter has awarded scholarships to support California native plant research by graduate and undergraduate students. Graduate Research scholarships of \$2,500 include the Sally Casey Shooting Stars and Donald Mayall Conservation Scholarships, in recognition of the contributions of two of our Chapter's CNPS Fellows who were very supportive of education, research and conservation activities. Additionally, we grant a \$1,500 Undergraduate Research Scholarship. We selected our winners from a wide pool of exciting research projects. **The three winners will be presenting their research projects on Wednesday, March 4th from 7:00 to 9:00pm.** Join us to learn about their work, streamed live on Zoom and YouTube.

Watch the talks at www.youtube.com/@CNPSSantaClaraValley or register for the Zoom at www.cnps-scvc.org/talk-20260304.

You can also watch recordings of past talks on our Chapter's YouTube channel. Here are the three winning projects.

Yuerong Xiao, Stanford University, Sally Casey Shooting Stars Research Scholarship **“Hydrological and Ecological Effects of Cultural Burning on Native Plant Regrowth in Sierra Nevada Meadows”**

Yuerong Xiao is a PhD student in Earth System Science at Stanford University studying with Dr. Tad Fukami.

Interested in fire ecology and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Yuerong has participated in many cultural burns with the North Fork Mono Tribe. The North Fork Mono Tribe draws upon generations of TEK that have taught them that burning helps increase the diversity of native plants traditionally used for cultural practices. They use this understanding to guide meadow restoration efforts.



Research Scholarship winner Yuerong Xiao participating in a small cultural burning demonstration in Alder Creek Grove of giant sequoias in the Sierra Nevada, October 2025

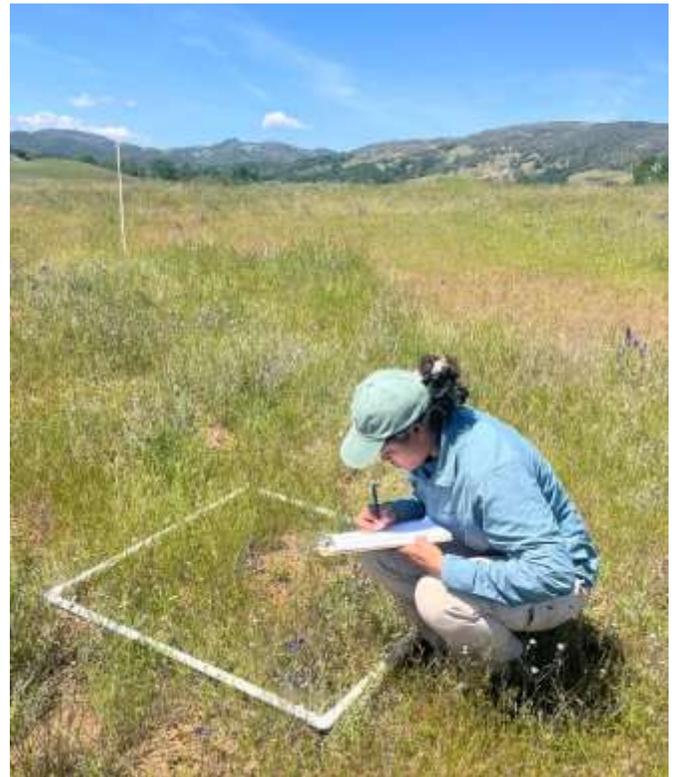
Building on this foundation, and with support from the CNPS-SCV scholarship, Yuerong will collaborate with the tribe to explore how small-scale cultural burning, as practiced by Tribal fire practitioners, influences native meadow plant diversity and soil properties. Yuerong will use Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry (IRMS) to trace changes in key bioelements (specifically carbon and nitrogen) in leaf and soil. The goal is to understand how cultural burning affects plant nutrient and soil chemistry, potentially by shifting nutrient cycling, organic matter transformation, and microbial activity.

The project will also utilize field surveys and interviews with Tribal fire practitioners. The research work is guided by a commitment to community-engaged science and Indigenous environmental justice. By documenting the ecological benefits of Indigenous fire stewardship, Yuerong aims to provide data to strengthen tribal practices and support broader recognition of Indigenous fire stewardship in native plant ecosystems. Project adviser Dr. Tadashi

Fukami believes that “Indigenous Science is the key to environmental sustainability” and that Yuerong’s research plan “is scientifically rigorous and thoughtfully contextualized to be beneficial from both Western and Indigenous scientific perspectives.”

Kekoa Nelson, University of California, Davis, Don Mayall Conservation Research Scholarship
“Prescribed Fire in Serpentine Grasslands of Varying Restoration Management Histories”

Kekoa Nelson is a second-year PhD student in the Graduate Group in Ecology at the University of California, Davis. She works in Justin Valliere’s Invasive Weed and Restoration Ecology lab, studying prescribed fire in serpentine meadows in California and the effects of wildfires across serpentine and non-serpentine soils. Kekoa will also survey California land managers and stakeholders to identify opportunities for prescribed fire and to assess concerns about its use in weed management. Her general research interests are restoration ecology, California native plants and prescribed fire!



Maisey Rew
 Scholarship winner Kekoa Nelson conducting a vegetation survey of one of her plots in the serpentine meadows at McLaughlin Reserve. She is identifying species in the plot, as well as recording species cover. April 2025

More specifically, Kekoa's research examines the effects of prescribed fire in serpentine meadows with distinct restoration histories. In areas with high management, active restoration measures – such as hand removal and chemical treatment of invasive species and prescribed fires – have produced high native species composition. In contrast, areas with no intervention or low management tend to have high levels of invasive species. These areas have often experienced cattle grazing and only limited restoration, with some hand removal and/or chemical spot treatments. Given these differing species compositions, the project focuses on removing invasive species and restoring natives in both low- and high-managed plots after a fall prescribed burn. Dr. Valliere tells us that “Kekoa has a strong drive to conduct impactful research. She is passionate about doing work that matters. While she has a solid background in ecological concepts and theories, she is especially interested in research that will inform solutions for conservation and land management.”

B'Elanna Pho-Marrujo, University of California, Davis, Undergraduate Research Scholarship “Reopening a Cold Case: Microbes and Rare Vernal Pool Grass Germination”

B'Elanna Pho-Marrujo, an undergraduate student at UC Davis from San Jose, is interested in native plant conservation and landscape ecology. With the Center for Plant Diversity and Lab Leveau, she has been investigating a rare tribe of grasses, the Orcuttieae. The project began as part of the California Plant Rescue, a program that funds institutions to collect rare plant seeds for long-term storage. Found in seasonal wetlands in California's Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, these grasses persist in such scarce populations that all species are listed as state and federally endangered.

Researchers looking to propagate Orcuttieae utilized two methods. One researcher tried to plant the grasses in an artificial pool. Most researchers make a “chaff extract,” which is plant material like leaves, seeds, and stems submerged in water overnight. That water is then used to water the seeds, typically in a petri plate with no soil. Researchers discovered that adding the plant material increased the number of Orcuttiese seeds breaking dormancy by about 25%, but they do not know why. In lab settings, B'Elanna



is evaluating potential explanations for the improved seed performance in the hope of uncovering ways to increase germination success. Solving this mystery would not only satisfy decades of curiosity but also potentially help rescue some of Northern and Central California's rarest species and their habitat.



Jadzia Pho-Marrujo

Scholarship winner B'Elanna Pho-Marrujo speaking next to her poster, at the 2025 UC Davis undergraduate research conference.

Don't miss the **presentations from all three scholarship winners on Wednesday, March 4**. Join us live on Zoom or YouTube (see details above) to learn more about their projects and the impact they are making on progressing native plant research in our area. We look forward to your participation!

Support our Scholarship Program

This year, our scholarship recipients were chosen from an exceptionally talented pool of students. We are proud to support their research on native plants in Northern California.

With federal funding under pressure, it is more important than ever to sustain student research locally. We invite you to donate to our Chapter's scholarship programs to ensure this important work continues.

For more information about our scholarship program, please visit

www.cnps-scv.org/education/scholarships

or donate directly at

www.cnps-scv.org/support-scholarships.

GROWING NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

24th Annual GNGT

**Saturday April 18 (Southern Gardens) and
Sunday April 19 (Northern Gardens)
10:00AM to 4:00PM Each Day**

The Growing Natives Garden Tour (GNGT) is a free, self-guided tour of gardens within our Chapter area that feature a minimum of 70% California native plants. All are welcome, but advance registration is required to receive addresses. These tour gardens are attractive, water-wise and low maintenance. They also use a minimum of chemicals and provide habitat havens for birds, butterflies and pollinators. California's native plant gardens increase wildlife corridors in fragmented habitats, preserve our natural ecosystem and promote biodiversity in our built environments. They help restore nature, one garden at a time! Native plant tours provide inspiration and information for everyone interested in learning about native plants.



Over 50 of our home and public gardens landscaped with California native plants will be open to the public for in-person tours on Saturday, April 18 and Sunday, April 19, from 10:00am to 4:00pm. On Saturday, registered visitors may tour the gardens in these southern Chapter locations: Alviso, Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Gatos,

Morgan Hill, San Jose, Santa Clara and Saratoga. On Sunday, registered visitors may tour the gardens in these northern Chapter locations: Belmont, Hillsborough, Los Altos, Mountain View, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Carlos, San Mateo and Sunnyvale. Some gardens will feature educational activities, talks or plant giveaways. The garden descriptions will include this information.

If you can't attend in person on tour days, you can visit online anytime at gngt.org, which has a page for each garden including descriptions, photos, videos and plant lists.

Admission to participate in GNGT is free, but registration is required at gngt.org to obtain tour maps with garden addresses. Register for the tour early to ensure access to late breaking information. Only one person per group needs to register.

Help spread the word! Print or post the GNGT flyer from here: gngt.org/GNGT/Pressroom.php.

Call for GNGT Volunteers on April 18 & 19

The 2026 Growing Natives Garden Tour (GNGT) is seeking volunteers for our 24th annual garden tour, which will take place on **Saturday, April 18** (Southern Gardens) and **Sunday, April 19** (Northern Gardens). The tour hours are **10:00am to 4:00pm each day**.

As a volunteer you will support garden visitors learning 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 3-hour shift. Knowledge of native plants is not required, as we have shifts for both greeters and docents. Note that the tour takes place entirely outdoors.

There will be a virtual, **pre-tour orientation on Wednesday, April 1, from 6:30 to 8:00pm** with more

details to be provided to registered volunteers. There will be about 50 gardens to select from. To volunteer for the 2026 tour please complete the Volunteer sign-up form at: gngt.org/GNGT/vol_register.php

CONSERVATION CORNER

Conservation Committee

Our Chapter's next Conservation Committee meetings will be held over Zoom on third **Mondays, March 16 and April 20**, from **7:00 to 8:30pm**. (*Note we've moved our meeting dates from first Mondays to third Mondays.*)

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

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.

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. Scroll down the page to find Alum Rock Park Trail Crew as one of the options. The

next **Saturday** workday is **March 14, 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 ultratodhdh@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.

Project leader Arvind Kumar sent us this report from the Saturday, February 14 workday:

It was a cool, overcast morning. Buckeyes and elderberry are leafing out. A single pink-flowering currant in full pendant blossoms looks stunning. Much birdsong, including northern flicker, white-crowned sparrow, house finch, yellow-rumped warbler and Anna's hummingbird. Two turkey vultures perched atop lampposts -- one had carried takeout up there. Lastly, a juvenile green heron, unafraid, kept us company for a few minutes.



Elliot Liu
Juvenile green heron spotted during a Lake Cunningham workday, February 2026

Three volunteers worked 8:00 to 10:00am in the Native Garden parking lot hillside ("Kara's Hill") today, cutting down coyote bush and chaparral mallow to allow other native shrubs to grow. The cuttings were used to cover patches of invasive annuals. As a result, these shrubs are now more prominent:

- sticky monkeyflower
- Brandegees sage
- dark star ceanothus
- skylark? ceanothus

- sagebrush
- lemonade berry
- bladderpod



Arvind Kumar

Volunteer removing overgrown chaparral mallow at Lake Cunningham Native Garden, February 2026

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**. Our **5:30pm Wednesday sessions will resume on March 11**, after Daylight Savings Time resumes. For an overview, please visit www.cnps-scvc.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. 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 workdays 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.



Tilak

Volunteers at Cataldi Park Native Garden pause to show off their sheet mulching progress, January 2026

In December and January, volunteers planted, sheet mulched, weeded and trimmed. See the photo below for sheet mulching in progress.

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, visit our Chapter's Meetup page at www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter.

Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden

Community volunteers regularly care for this native plant garden. 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. If you would like to help out, please sign up for our **Saturday** workdays on the [CNPS-SCV Meetup page](#). The garden is located along the north edge of Kirk Park in San Jose. Park along Briarwood Drive near Wawona Drive.

Flowers and Pollinators at the Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden

Photographed January 28, 2025



Valley Violet Ceanothus
with European Honey Bee



Snow Flurry Ceanothus



Joyce Coulter Ceanothus
with Yellow-faced Bumble Bee



Chaparral Currant



Blue-eyed Grass
with Yellow-faced Bumble Bee



Hedgenettle
with Hover Fly

Kathy Kleinsteiber

For more information or to volunteer at **new pollinator gardens** getting started in San Jose and beyond, contact KirkParkGardens@gmail.com.

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 group**, 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 group and tap/click the "Attend" button to reserve your spot.

Sat Mar 7 10:00am - 3:00pm South Slope Walk on San Bruno Mountain (South San Francisco)

Join Chuck Heimstadt and Loretta Brooks to explore the less visited south slopes of San Bruno Mountain. This area features bright landscapes of large areas of grasslands critical to our resident endangered butterflies and some plants on the CNPS watchlist, such as coast iris, coast rock cress and San Francisco wallflower. We may also see onion, fritillaries and butterfly host plants: silver bush lupine and California golden violet. In addition, we'll

see Niebla lichen, which occurs only in the fog belt of the Californian coast, from Mendocino to Baja.



Loretta Brooks

Mission Blue butterflies on south slope of Mt. San Bruno, May 2025

Since there are only fire roads and weeding trails on this side of San Bruno Mountain, the going can be difficult on **steep and rocky slopes**. Please be sure to wear sturdy footwear, as this area is really only for the adventuresome. We should have time to stop at the top, so bring a snack or lunch. There are no restrooms per se on the mountain, except in the parking area.

RSVP via email is required to join the hike. No drop-ins please and space is limited. **To RSVP, please email Chuck and Loretta at ChuckHeimstadt@yahoo.com.**

Details will be sent to you about the meeting location as the date gets close, including the possibility of cancellation due to rain. Waivers will be provided to be signed on site.

Sun Mar 15 10:00am - 2:00pm Stile Ranch Trail (South San Jose)

Join Tom Lee on the Stile Ranch Trail, located at the Southwest corner of Santa Teresa County Park. This trail is known for its native plants. With the late winter rains this hike will feature wildflowers such as poppies, fiddlenecks, salvias and many others. The trail starts with a climb on some rocky switchbacks, crosses some grassland and a creek before returning in a loop. The distance is 2.6 miles, and the elevation gain is 450 feet.

There are no restroom services at the parking area or on the trail, however there is a restroom on McKean Road just across from Fortini Road at the Rancho San Vicente entrance of Calero County Park.

Please bring sturdy shoes, appropriate layering, hat and lunch. Heavy rain cancels.

RSVP is required to join the hike. No drop-ins please and space is limited to 15 people due to narrow trails. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section to **RSVP on Meetup**.

We'll meet at the Santa Teresa Park Stile Ranch parking area on San Vicente Ave. Driving directions are provided on Meetup.



Ron Horii

Stile ranch field trip, March 2025

Sun Mar 22 9:00am - Noon Bird and Plant ID Walk at Lake Cunningham Park (San Jose)

With the onset of Spring, 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 birds of this area, while Arvind Kumar will identify the native plants that they depend on for food and shelter.

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.

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**.

The walk will be 2-3 miles in length and includes a short walk up the hill, about 300 ft. elevation gain and some off-trail hiking.



Ashok Jethanandani

Bird and Plant ID walk at Lake Cunningham, March 2019

Meet at the Marina parking lot at **9:00am**. **Driving directions** and parking tips are provided on Meetup. This event is cosponsored by CNPS, Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority.

Sat Mar 28 9:40am - 1:00pm Tulare Hill Wildflower Walk (San Jose)

Join Craige Edgerton and Alyssa LoGalbo on a wildflower walk at Tulare Hill. The hill and surrounding 330 acres of serpentine grasslands are home to the endangered Bay checkerspot butterfly and Santa Clara Valley dudleya (*Dudleya setchellii*). A portion of the hill makes up the Tulare Hill Ecological Preserve.



Ron Horii

Hikers on the March 2025 field trip to Tulare Hill heading up the hill. Looking towards Coyote Ridge. In the background is the Calpine Metcalf Energy Center. It's a 500 MW gas-fired power plant. The south half of Tulare Hill was donated by Calpine to the Land Trust as mitigation for building the power plant.

Bring snacks and plenty of water. Heavy rain cancels. Liability waivers for Tulare Hill are required. They will be available at the hike.

RSVP is required to join the hike. **Open to CNPS members only.** Please ensure your CNPS membership is current. **To become a member**, visit www.cnps.org/membership. No drop-ins please and space is limited. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section to **RSVP on Meetup**.

Directions: Meet at the Flames Restaurant parking lot at **9:40am**. The address is 7170 Santa Teresa Blvd, San Jose. We will do a no-host carpool to the trailhead.

Sun Mar 29 10:00am - 1:00pm Tour Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Ethnobotanic Garden (San Jose)

Join co-leaders Julisa Soto and Vicki Silvas-Young for a walking tour of the newly installed ethnobotanic garden at this historic site. Over 100 locally native plant species are growing in the garden. Each plant represents its use during one of four major eras of regional transformation: Indigenous ancestral homelands, the Spanish colonial period, the Mexican rancho era and early American statehood.

Julisa Soto organized community members to create the garden. Each plant tells a story of cultural use, ecological function and the deep relationships Indigenous communities have maintained for thousands of years. As we tour the garden, we'll learn how traditional ecological knowledge continues to influence biodiversity and land stewardship.

The garden's plant list includes maintenance tips for each plant. Visit it here: bit.ly/RASH-garden. The garden is wheelchair accessible on level, decomposed granite or brick paths. Light refreshments will be served.

RSVP is required to join 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**.

We'll meet at 10:00am at the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House site. The street address is 770 Lincoln Ave. in San Jose. **Driving directions and parking tips** are provided on the Meetup page.



Julisa Soto

Julisa Soto holding a plant at the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House in San Jose, February 2026

You can learn more about the garden and the Roberto Adobe & Sunol House Museum in the article in this newsletter, on page 5.

Sat Apr 4 10:00am – 2:00pm Mommy and Me Wildflower Walk Belgatos Park (Los Gatos)

Join botanist Katie Gallagher and her child for a wildflower walk. As we stop to look at the wildflowers, we will talk about what the flowers are called and which plants are safe for small hands to touch!

We'll park and gather at Belgatos Park in Los Gatos and walk the Santa Rosa Trail through Santa Rosa Open Space. There is a play structure for letting little ones free play before and after, and there are restrooms.

The distance we walk is flexible depending on what we feel like as a group, but it probably won't be more than a mile or two. Sections of the trail will be a little steep at the beginning.

Please bring lunch, water, lots of snacks and sun protection. Hiking poles are recommended, especially if conditions are muddy. Heavy rain cancels.

RSVP is required to join the walk. No drop-ins please and space is limited. We'll meet at Belgatos Park, 308 Belgatos Lane in Los Gatos. **Driving directions and parking tips** are on the Meetup page. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section to **RSVP on Meetup**.



Katie Gallagher and child along Adobe Creek at Hidden Villa, February 2025

Wed Apr 8 9:30am - 3:00pm Wildflower Hike at Pinnacles National Park (Paicines)

Join Nabeel Al-Shamma on a wildflower hike at Pinnacles National Park. Pinnacles protects beautiful rock formations, cliffs and canyons, and it hosts a profusion of wildflowers. We hope to see shooting stars, phacelia, goldfields, paintbrush, golden yarrow, cobwebby thistle, dudleya, buckbrush and maybe even blazing star.

We'll head out from the Bear Gulch Day Use Area and go up the High Peaks Trail. We'll take our time going up the steep part. At the top we'll have lunch and enjoy the views. Afterwards we'll return back to the start.



Nabeel Al-Shamma
Pretty face (*Triteleia ixioides*) at Pinnacles National Park.

This is a long and strenuous day. The hike will be 4 miles in length but with 1500 ft of elevation change. Plus, it can take a good two hours or more to drive there.



Nabeel Al-Shamma

The peaks at Pinnacles National Park, May 2023

Wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots. Hiking poles are recommended. Bring snacks, a sack lunch and liquids for the day. Dress in layers. Consider binoculars for condor sightings. Heavy rain cancels.

There may be an optional non-CNPS hike afterwards that will be focused on adding a few miles vs. observing.

Directions: Meet at the Bear Gulch Parking Area on the east side of the Park. If the lot is full, we'll park at the Peaks View Parking Area. Note that phones will not work at the trailhead. Please carpool, as parking is tight.

National Park Entrance Fee: \$30/car (or bring your pass if you have one).

RSVP is required to join the hike. No drop-ins please and space is limited. The hike is **open to CNPS members only**. Please ensure your CNPS membership is current. **To become a member**, visit www.cnps.org/membership. See the instructions at the beginning of this Field Trips section

to **RSVP on Meetup**. For more information contact Nabeel Al-Shamma at nabeel4cnps@gmail.com.

Sun Apr 12 10:00am - 3:00pm Calero County Park - Peña and Figueroa Trail Hike (San Jose)

Enjoy the trails and the spectacular views of Calero County Park. Join our leader Tom Lee as we hike through mixed serpentine soil and enjoy different plant communities. The trail starts with some climbing in grasslands and loops around chaparral before returning along a creek.



Tom Lee

California poppies at Calero County Park, April 2024

This hike will be about 3.6 miles long with an elevation gain of 580 feet. At this season in past years, we have seen buttercups, lupines, fiddlenecks, iris and red-winged blackbirds.

We'll meet at 10:00am at the main gate of Calero Park at 23205 McKean Road. Please bring sturdy shoes, appropriate layering, hat and lunch. 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**.

Past Field Trip Report:

Hike in Sierra Azul Thursday, January 29

Tom Lee, the field trip leader, provided this report.

The CNPS hiking season kicked off in January, with our hike to Sierra Azul along the Mount Umunhum trail. The weather was perfect and we could see for miles. This group had 10 people, with a mix of experienced native plant people and others who were getting started with natives. Many thanks to Nabeel Al-Shamma for sweeping.



Tom Lee

Sierra Azul field trip participants observing *Ceanothus cuneatus* and *Ceanothus oliganthus*, January 2026

All hiking trip elements came together as planned: parking was fine, trip pace was mostly as scheduled and most importantly, there were many early flowers and cool plants. We identified a total of 52 plants and discussed side topics including plant history, identification processes and geology. It was a great trip.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

News and Activities from Other Organizations

Friends of Edgewood's Spring Wildflower Hikes Begin March 6

Friends of Edgewood (FoE) will kick off their free spring wildflower hikes starting March 6th. FoE's expert wildflower docents will share insights about Edgewood's extraordinary biodiversity and help visitors spot some of the dozens of different species that bloom throughout the season.

In March, Edgewood's oak woodland flowers begin to bloom. In April, the serpentine grasslands come alive. By May, late spring flowers dot the hillsides. Last year we were lucky to see the endangered [white-rayed pentachaeta](#) (*Pentachaeta bellidiflora*) growing trailside, thanks to restoration efforts by FoE and our partners at Creekside Science.

Hikes will be offered weekly on **Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays** through the end of May. There will be options to start from the Ed Center (Sylvan and Edgewood Trails) or the Clarkia Trailhead. Hikes will **begin at 9:00am or 2:00pm**. These hikes typically cover about three miles and

last about three hours, so there is plenty of time to stop and examine what you find along the trail.

The spring wildflower hikes are best for adults or older children interested in learning more about the plants and animals that call Edgewood home. For families with young children, shorter, **kid-friendly hikes are offered on select Saturdays and Sundays at 10:00am**.

**FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD
SPRING
WILDFLOWER HIKES
AT EDGEWOOD
PRESERVE
MAR-APR-MAY**

FREE DOCENT HIKES START MARCH 6
AT EDGEWOOD PARK & NATURAL PRESERVE
MORE INFO AND SIGN UP AT
[FRIENDSOFEDGEWOOD.EVENTBRITE.COM](https://friendsofedgewood.eventbrite.com)

The hikes are free, but you must register in advance on Eventbrite at friendsofedgewood.eventbrite.com. New hikes are typically added two weeks in advance, so check back throughout the season or follow Friends of Edgewood on Eventbrite to be notified when new hikes are added. Each week offers something new to discover at Edgewood Natural Preserve!



Kathy Korbholz

Endangered white-rayed-pentachaeta at Edgewood

If you have questions about the hikes, email info@friendsofedgewood.org. ☘



Ron Horii

Cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*) on Tulare Hill, March 2025. Learn more about our upcoming field trip to Tulare Hill on page 14.

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
Interim Treasurer	Brett Tucker	treasurer@cnps-scv.org
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.

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 online only, at www.cnps-scv.org/blazing-star-newsletter.



Light in the Cold by Tim Aston

This viewpoint of the Sierra looming in the background of a sparse hillside of bristlecones doesn't give the measure of distance between them very well. A telephoto lens has compressed them, but roughly 35 miles separate the Sierra peaks from the bristlecones. Learn more about Tim Aston's upcoming native plant talk on page 4.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT *BLAZING STAR*

Saturday, April 11

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

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Suggested Membership Amounts

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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)

Feb 27 Fri	Photo Group photo sharing (4)	Apr 11 Sat	Newsletter submittal deadline (18)
Mar 1 Sun	Ethnobotanical garden workday (6)	Apr 12 Sun	Calero County Park field trip (16)
Mar 4 Wed	Scholarship winner talks (6)	Apr 18 Sat	GNGT southern gardens (9)
Mar 7 Sat	Mt. San Bruno field trip (12)	Apr 19 Sun	GNGT northern gardens (9)
Mar 9 Mon	Plant Sale online store opens (3)	Apr 20 Mon	Conservation Committee meeting (10)
Mar 13 Fri	Plant Sale pickup at nursery (3)	Apr 24 Fri	Wildflower Show Setup (2)
Mar 14 Sat	Cutting and Seed Exchange + pickup (3)	Apr 24 Fri	Photo Group photo sharing (4)
Mar 15 Sun	Stile Ranch field trip (13)	Apr 25 Sat	Wildflower Show (1)
Mar 16 Mon	Conservation Committee meeting (10)	Apr 28 Tue	Native Plant ID meeting (5)
Mar 22 Sun	Lake Cunningham bird & plant walk (13)	Apr 30 Thu	Bristlecone Pine talk – Aston (4)
Mar 24 Tue	Native Plant ID meeting (5)	May 1 Fri	Membership updates due for voting (2)
Mar 27 Fri	Photo Group photo sharing (4)	March	Three ethnobotanical garden workdays (6)
Mar 28 Sat	Chap. election self-nominations due (2)	Mon & Wed, 2nd Sat	Alum Rock Park workdays (10)
Mar 28 Sat	Tulare Hill wildflower walk (14)	Saturdays	Lake Cunningham Garden workdays (10)
Mar 29 Sun	San Jose Ethnobotanic garden walk (14)	Wed & Fri	Edgewood restoration workdays (11)
Apr 4 Sat	Mommy and me wildflower walk (15)	Saturdays	Cataldi Park Garden workdays (11)
Apr 8 Wed	Pinnacles wildflower hike (15)	Saturdays	Kirk Pollinator Garden workdays (12)

The next Chapter board meeting will be an **in-person budget meeting at the PCC at 3:00pm on Sunday, March 15.**

The April board meeting will be held on **Thursday, April 16 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.

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