



California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter

THE BLAZING STAR

November-December 2025

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Reminder: Join us for our Annual Potluck Dinner

Saturday, November 1 at 5:45 PM

Speaker: **Michael Uhler**,
Regional Parks Botanic Garden

Chapter members are invited to join us at a social evening to celebrate our yearly achievements. As always, this popular dinner potluck will be held at the **Garden House at Shoup Park in Los Altos**. To help with setup or cleanup, please sign up here: www.cnps-scv.org/potluck-signup. For more potluck details, see the [September-October Blazing Star newsletter](#).

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Seed/Cutting Exchange + Online Plant Sale

Online Sale: November 3-4, california-native-plant-society-santa-clara-valley-.square.site

Seed and Cutting Exchange: Nov. 8 1:00 to 3:00pm

Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto



Vivian Neou

Seed and Cutting Exchange in May at the PCC

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 be distributing free seed packets and information.

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, November 3**. You can shop from the comfort of your home, and your plants will be **ready for you on Saturday, November 8 at the Seed and Cutting Exchange**. The store will close when either the pickup capacity is reached or at the **end of the day on November 4**, whichever occurs first.



Vivian Neou

Preparing CNPS-SCV Nursery for Fall Native Plant Sale, October 2025

Save the CNPS-SCV Nursery

The CNPS-Santa Clara Valley Nursery (SCV) was one of the first CNPS nurseries in the state, opening in December 1996. Unfortunately, after 30 years, we are faced with the possibility of having to **close the nursery** by the end of 2026 **unless we can find new volunteers to manage the nursery**.

The idea for a nursery was conceived by Jean Struthers, Liz Dana (the oldest Duveneck sibling) and Brenda Butner. All three had built a foundation in native plants by working at Yerba Buena Nursery for Gerda Isenberg. Liz Dana suggested setting up the nursery on her family property at Hidden Villa. Using a grant from David Packard, they were able to gather a crew of Chapter volunteers, including Jean's husband David, to construct the nursery at its current location.

Jean Struthers managed the nursery for the first fifteen years with Ray Deutsch's assistance for many of them.

Jean continued as chief propagator for several years after that. Jean and Ray were assisted by a dedicated crew of volunteers, which included Melanie Cross for many years. Melanie and Ray officially took over management of the nursery in 2013 with Melanie as the primary nursery manager. Our current nursery manager, Vivian Neou, started volunteering at the nursery in 2014 and assisted by Tara Lee, took over management of the nursery from Melanie in 2016.

The deadly *Phytophthora tentaculata* water mold was discovered in California during Melanie's tenure as nursery manager. To control the spread of this pathogen, the nursery needed a major remodel, as well as more rigorous plant production procedures. Vivian took over and completed the project to address these issues.

In 2020, the nursery needed to adapt to the changes necessitated by the COVID pandemic. The nursery already had an online inventory system, which became the basis for starting online plant sales as pandemic restrictions started to loosen up later that year.

These changes have made the nursery operation more complex, as well as increasing the revenue generated by the nursery. **The nursery continues to be the main source of funds for Chapter activities**, including scholarships, conservation, outreach and education.



Vivian Neou

Plants growing on tables within the CNPS-SCV Nursery, just before the Fall Native Plant Sale, October 2025

We have a crew of dedicated nursery volunteers to help with the propagation, potting and tending of plants and ongoing maintenance of the nursery facilities and native plant garden. However, Vivian and Tara are planning to step away from nursery management after our fall sale in 2026, and we cannot continue to run the nursery without a

manager or management team. We do not have any volunteers to take on that role, so **we are searching for people to take on management of the nursery**. This is a great opportunity for people interested in learning the nursery business, but will require **at least a two-year commitment**. The volunteers who take this on will spend the next year in the nursery learning its operations and then take over the management of the nursery **after our 2026 Fall Plant Sale**.

The management of the nursery is a huge responsibility, and we are hoping to develop a **management team** rather than put the burden on one person. You can help in this effort by getting the word out to anyone whom you may know who might be interested in **volunteering to help manage the nursery**. For more information, please contact Janet Hoffmann, Nursery Leadership Development Coordinator, at janet@cnps-scv.org.



Vivian Neou

Looking over plants for sale at Chapter's Native Plant Sale at Hidden Villa in October

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 12.

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.



Jill Sowards

Jill Sowards gathers native plants to dry and make into a Holiday wreath

Wreath-Making with Native Plants, a Talk and Demonstration by Jill Sowards

Monday, November 17 7:00 - 8:30 PM, Raptor Suite, Peninsula Conservation Center, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303

In this talk, Jill will demonstrate how to make a seasonal dried flower wreath using sustainable materials, with a focus on native California plants. She'll share techniques for drying flowers and creating the wreath, demonstrate how to start and finish your creation and identify some useful garden flowers you can start in the ground now to enjoy next year. These dried arrangements are made to be enjoyed for years or can be composted in their entirety when the season is over.

Please note that Jill will only demonstrate how to make a California native plant wreath; there will be no audience participation.

Jill Sowards is a gardener and owner of Violetear Studio. She teaches classes and workshops on a range of gardening and design topics throughout the Bay Area and online. No matter the subject, her foundation is always on ecological gardening, waterwise practices and how to incorporate native plants. Originally trained as a public interest lawyer,

Jill believes that all people can benefit from building a nurturing connection with the joy of the garden.



Jill Sowards

Close-up of wreath made with dried plant elements:
native and non-native flowers, grasses,
foliage and seedheads

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, November 21 and December 19 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 monarch butterfly emerging from its pupa, on a narrow-leaf milkweed plant in his San Jose home garden.



Bill Lundgren

Monarch just emerged from its pupa, lower left, on narrow-leaf milkweed, October 2025

Native Plant ID

Join other native plant enthusiasts in a fun and educational atmosphere as we hone our skills at plant identification (aka "keying"). Native Plant ID usually meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month to work with botanical keys to identify plant samples brought in by various participants.

For November and December, we will not be having our usual Native Plant ID sessions. **We have moved the November meeting up a week, to November 18**, to avoid Thanksgiving conflicts. Instead of meeting as usual at the Peninsula Conservation Center, we've arranged for a **visit to the herbarium at San Jose State University**. To limit our attendance at this special meeting, we'll offer it first to past Plant ID attendees and then post the meeting on Meetup closer to the date if space is still available. There will **not be a meeting in December** due to conflicts with the Christmas holiday.

Hopefully we will be starting up again in the new year. If you are willing to help with future sessions, please contact Janet Hoffmann at janet@cnps-scv.org.

Nella Henninger Receives Spotlight Award

In September, **Nella Henninger** was awarded a **Volunteer Spotlight award** by our Chapter, in recognition of her

contributions over the years to the GNGT (Growing Natives Garden Tour) and education about California native plants in general. Members of the GNGT committee presented the award to Nella at the annual UC-MG-SCC volunteer recognition event.

Since 2006, Master Gardener Nella Henninger has been creating connections between CNPS-SCV and UC MG-SCC (University of California Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County).



Hank Morales
Nella Henninger receiving her Chapter Volunteer Spotlight award, September 2025

Nella joined the GNGT steering committee in its fourth year (2006), as the volunteer coordinator. She worked to make the tour an officially supported activity for UC MG-SCC, leading to many Master Gardeners volunteering at gardens on tour day. Nella organized volunteers for the tour for many years, making sure each year's 50 or so gardens had enough greeters and docents. She also started the volunteer orientation, continuing to lead it for many years.

She recruited her sister, artist Myra Saylor, to design T-shirts with botanical art of California native plants. These shirts have become a recruiting perk for volunteers and a way to spread the beauty of native plants. She offered her home so the GNGT committee could pack bags of materials for each garden. Generously, the packing party was followed by a potluck dinner. Nella's hospitality was one of the benefits of joining the GNGT committee.

Nella did so much for our Chapter's garden tour. GNGT is organized in collaboration with the Master Gardeners, which we believe is a unique partnership in California. She

also promoted native plants within the Santa Clara County Master gardeners' activities. The beautiful California native garden at Martial Cottle Park owes much to her leadership.

Nella is retiring from her position on the GNGT committee. We have all been blessed by her wisdom and generosity of spirit.

GROWING NATIVES GARDEN TOUR

GNGT: Call for Gardens and Volunteers!

Garden Submission Deadline: Tuesday, Nov. 11

GNGT is now accepting submissions for the 2026 Tour! We're looking for new gardens, returning favorites and enthusiastic volunteers to help plan and organize this inspiring event.

Tour Dates

- Saturday, April 18 – Southern gardens
- Sunday, April 19 – Northern gardens

Garden Participation Details

We welcome home, school and community gardens that showcase California native plants. To qualify:

- At least 70% of the garden must feature native plants
- Gardens must not contain invasive species
- Gardens should highlight sustainable practices, water conservation and wildlife habitat value
- We appreciate both DIY and professionally designed gardens with aesthetic appeal

Location Focus

Garden owners or managers in southern San Mateo County and Santa Clara County are especially encouraged to apply.

How to Submit Your Garden

Visit [GNGT.org](https://www.gngt.org) and click on "Submit your Garden for the 2026 Tour."

Join the Planning Committee

Want to help behind the scenes? We need volunteers to:

- Coordinate Garden Previews, once a month
- Coordinate printing of tour T-shirts, in February/March
- Coordinate Garden Talks: encourage Garden owners/designers to give talks

- Take pictures during the tour weekend: we need a few photographers to roam during the tour!

If you're interested, please reach out via GNGT.org.



Kris Kozminski

GNGT garden hosts and volunteers on a private tour of a [large native garden in Monte Sereno](#), May 2025

SCHOLARSHIPS

CNPS 2026 Conference Scholarships

Our Chapter is providing several scholarships to cover the registration fees and provide a travel and lodging stipend of \$750 for the 2026 CNPS Conference, which will take place from **February 5-7, 2026 in Riverside**. Students enrolled in colleges, universities and community colleges and who reside in Santa Clara and southern San Mateo Counties are eligible to apply.

The **deadline for applications is November 28, 2025** and the application form can be found at bit.ly/conference-scholarship-application. More information about the conference is available at: conference.cnps.org.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Conservation Committee

Our Chapter's next Conservation Committee meetings will be held over Zoom on **Mondays, November 3 and December 1, 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

Fountain Thistle Work Party November 29

Join Don Thomas and members of the Santa Clara Valley and Yerba Buena CNPS Chapters for our fall fountain thistle habitat restoration work party **near the intersection of I-280 and Hwy. 92**. We'll meet on **Saturday, November 29** and work from **10:00am to noon**.

Fountain thistle (*Cirsium fontinale* var. *fontinale*) is a federally endangered plant species that grows in an unusual and specialized habitat – serpentine seeps – and is only found at our work location and in a few other nearby locations on the Peninsula.



Dee Himes, left, Joerg Lohse CC-BY-NC 4.0, right
Left: Fountain thistle flowering head, June 2021. Right: Crystal Springs lessingia September 2019. Both pictured in the fountain thistle work area on Caltrans property.

Fountain thistle's recovery here is a restoration success story. Once almost completely displaced by jubatagrass (Andean pampas grass), it has largely recovered here, as a result of the work done by CNPS volunteers. The CNPS project is a cooperative of our Santa Clara Valley and

Yerba Buena Chapters. However, fountain thistle is still under threat from invasion by non-native plants and by woody plants threatening to convert the area to shrubland or woodland. In addition, the bordering dry serpentine zone is habitat to another rare plant, Crystal Springs lessingia (*Lessingia arachnoidea*), which is threatened by invasion of yellow star-thistle, fennel, tufted wallaby grass (*Rytidosperma caespitosum*) and other non-native plants.

Sturdy gloves are recommended; you might also want to wear long sleeves/pants and bring sunscreen, water, a hat and layered clothing. If you have them, bring tools, such as trowels, spades and shovels. Some tools will also be provided.

Sign up on the Chapter's **Meetup page**, here: www.meetup.com/California-Native-Plant-Society-Santa-Clara-Valley-Chapter/.

We'll meet at the end of Lessingia Court in San Mateo. For more info., contact Don at donethomasd@gmail.com.

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 **November 8, 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.

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 in March of 2026, after Daylight Savings Time resumes. For an overview, please visit www.cnps-scv.org/restoration/edgewood-park.



Ellen Gartside

Edgewood weeders pause on special MROSD weeding day at Loma Prieta, September 2025. They are pulling yellow star-thistle from areas most likely to benefit the endangered Santa Cruz kangaroo rat.

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.



Tilak

Four volunteers clearing weeds at Cataldi Park Native Plant Garden, September 2025. Note plastic solarization sheet on right side of photo in the background.

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.

Solarization Techniques

In August and September, the volunteers started to use solarization to kill the weed seeds. Solarization is a commonly used agricultural technique, but something the Cataldi Park team has never tried before in their projects.

On the August 2 workday, volunteers cleared an area of weeds using a hand hoe and string trimmer, then rolled out a 10' x 100' roll of 6-mil clear plastic sheet and anchored the sheet in place using concrete blocks. They left the sheeting in place for the next 3-4 weeks for the sun to heat up the soil under the sheet, hopefully high enough to kill the weed seeds.

On August 23, the volunteers cleared another 1,000 square feet adjacent to the area solarized on August 2 via the same techniques, but added a lawn mower. Then they moved the plastic sheet and concrete blocks by 10 feet over the newly cleared area. Again, this sheet would be left in place for the next few weeks to kill any remaining weed seeds underneath. On September 12 volunteers moved the plastic sheet by 10 feet again.

The project is trying solarization as an alternative to sheet mulching, as it's been difficult to get another pile of mulch. We'll know if our solarization attempts worked next spring after the rains.

These solarized areas will eventually need to be mulched, but a thin layer will suffice if the weed seeds have already been killed.

New Volunteers are Welcome

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

During the week following the September 20 weeding session, the crew learnt the hard way that stinkwort (*Dittrichia graveolens*) can cause contact dermatitis. Volunteers are reminded that removing stinkwort requires wearing a full-length shirt and pants at a minimum.

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.



Tilak

Cataldi project lead Tilak and regular volunteer Roger with solarization sheet behind them, held in place by concrete blocks, August 2025

Pollinators in the Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden

All Photos Taken September 28 and 29, 2025



Pollinators on Pacific Aster
Leafcutter Bee
Drone Fly
Sweat Bee
Fiery Skipper
Gray Hairstreak
European Honey Bee

Monarch Butterfly on Narrowleaf Milkweed
Monarch Caterpillar on Narrowleaf Milkweed
Gulf Fritillary on Red Buckwheat

Pollinators on California Buckwheat
Hover Fly
Tachnid Fly
Fiery Skipper
Sweat Bee
Masked Bee
Drone Fly

Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden

Visit the Kirk Park Native Plant Pollinator Garden in San Jose in just about any season and you will likely find pollinators on the many species of native flowers. Now in fall, the buckwheats and asters are drawing a buzzing crowd of pollinators, making these plants come alive!

We are seeing monarch caterpillars in the garden again, now that it is fall and the European paper wasps have stopped patrolling our milkweed patches for monarch eggs and young larvae. These wasps are invasive non-natives and they feed caterpillars to their developing young. Now that the European paper wasp nesting season is over, our monarchs have a brief opportunity to reproduce before winter.

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 at 1601 Foxworthy Ave. Park along Briarwood Drive and the garden is located along the north edge of the park.

Seed and Cutting Exchange Recap

We would like to say "Thank you!" to all the volunteers and participants who came to our first annual Kirk Park Seed and Cutting Exchange on September 20. Many people came to learn about native plants and to pick up free seeds and cuttings. With help from our usual garden volunteers and additional volunteers from the Chapter, we had a fun and successful event. Watch for another Seed and Cutting Exchange at the park next year!

Other Pollinator Gardens in San Jose and Beyond

In addition to our work at Kirk Park, several of our volunteers have created new native plant gardens in other neighborhood parks in the past year and are adding new plantings this year. You can find these gardens in the following parks **in San Jose: Bramhall, Cahalan, Houge** and **in Los Gatos: Oak Hill Play Lot**. The volunteers at these parks would welcome your visit, and if you have time, would love to have your assistance in their projects.

Two other projects warrant special note:

Solari Park, Seven Trees: Volunteers for the Seven Trees Neighborhood Association have been working with the City of San Jose to rehabilitate a problem piece of land in Solari Park along busy Capitol Expressway. They sought our help to create a pollinator garden in this newly reclaimed space. With advice from The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, the neighbors started a pollinator hedgerow along the expressway early this year and have spent much of the year preparing the rest of the area for a **brand new pollinator garden to be planted in November.**

Clarice Drive, near Eastridge Mall: Several community groups have been trying to rehabilitate another problem piece of land. This one lies between a strip mall parking lot and an elementary school. We were contacted in April by the City of San Jose's Project Hope with the idea of creating a pollinator garden on this site. Members of the community visited the Kirk Park gardens and were excited about the idea of having a pollinator garden in their own neighborhood.

The project is an initiative of the city council district office, the neighborhood association, the local business association, the elementary school, Project Hope and others. It is finally coming to fruition with funding from a Happy Hollow Progress for Pollinators grant. We would love to **recruit more CNPS volunteers** to work side-by-side with local community members to help them learn how to plant and maintain their new garden.

If you are interested in more information or to volunteer at any of these projects, please contact KirkParkGardens@gmail.com and we will put you in touch with the appropriate volunteer.

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

With the onset of winter, 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.**

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.

Thu Jan 1 10:00am – 2:00pm New Year's walk to Franklin Point, part of Año Nuevo State Park (Hwy 1 coast, southern San Mateo County)

Join leader Vicki Silvas-Young as we celebrate a Chapter tradition of welcoming the New Year with a walk to and BYO picnic at Franklin Point, which is part of the Año Nuevo State Park on the San Mateo County coast.

We will be exploring our surroundings as we casually walk towards Franklin Point, which is the most botanically interesting area of the park. We will be starting from the **North Whitehouse Creek Trailhead**, which is located south of Pescadero on Highway 1, just north of the Santa Cruz County line. We'll enjoy ocean views, California native plants and raptors, songbirds and maybe marine mammals.



Vivian Neou

Enjoying blufftop views on the 2025 Año Nuevo field trip

Bring binoculars and layers of clothing for variable coastal conditions including wind, sun, precipitation and fog. We will be walking on sand dunes. Bring a lunch or snacks and fluids. Extreme weather cancels.

Space is limited so please reserve your spot by going to our Chapter's **Meetup page** to sign up. Driving directions and parking tips are provided on the Meetup page. Before signing up, please read the Año Nuevo State Park restrictions at www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=523.

Note that there are no bathrooms at Franklin Point. Flush toilets are located at the main entrance of Año Nuevo State Park, which may require payment to enter. For more information, contact Nabeel Al-Shamma at nabeel4cnps@gmail.com.

IN MEMORIAM

By Vivian Neou, Chapter Co-President

Wanda Broadie Alexander was a frequent volunteer for our Chapter and especially enjoyed helping with book and poster sales. She passed away in 2022 and bequeathed her home in Los Gatos to our Chapter and the state CNPS organization, making it one of the largest donations in CNPS history. The Chapter's Wanda Alexander Fund was established with proceeds from the sale of her property and is dedicated to the creation and support of environmental education facilities for the Chapter.

Wanda began life in a charming town tucked away in the expansive plains of midwestern Kansas. Raised by parents who shifted from agricultural life to pursue education and careers, she treasured yearly family camping excursions to various National Parks, which were relatively new at that time, and felt the excitement of her first bear sighting.

She dedicated numerous holidays to eco-travel, exploring every continent, including Antarctica. An enthusiastic photographer, she captured stunning images of wildlife, flora, people, and landscapes. Her deep and enduring love for nature and its creatures flourished during one of her early journeys – a trip to the Galapagos, which enriched her understanding and appreciation of our interconnected life processes and the transformative nature of existence and mortality. This experience motivated her to engage actively in environmental advocacy.

Wanda held the position of CEO at ACT for Mental Health, a small mental health organization situated in downtown San Jose. In acknowledgment of her decades of leadership in delivering mental health services, she received a Jefferson Award in 2013. Throughout her career as a therapist and mental health clinician, she continually sought creative methods to assist clients and patients in reconnecting with nature as an essential aspect of their healing journey.

Wanda's support of land for environmental purposes extends beyond donating her Los Gatos property to the Chapter. After inheriting 80 acres of prairie in Kansas, she generously contributed it to Bethel College, allowing students to study prairie ecosystems. Furthermore, she founded the Broadie Habitat Preserve in Montana, which plays a vital role in safeguarding one of North America's smallest and most endangered grizzly bear populations.

If you have participated in events at the Peninsula Conservation Center (PCC) in the past few years, you have enjoyed the benefits of Wanda's generosity. The upgrades to the meeting rooms and the addition of the heat pump system have allowed us to expand our programming. Specifically, our Seed and Cutting Exchanges, as well as Native Plant ID meetings, have significantly gained from these improvements.

Furthermore, the Wanda Alexander Fund has been used to enhance the PCC landscaping with locally native plants and to put up informative signage. These enhancements not only strengthen our programs but also act as a valuable resource for those interested in native plant gardening. We are truly grateful for Wanda's kindness and her many years of commitment as a volunteer in our Chapter activities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

News and Activities from Other Organizations

Friends of Edgewood Docent Training

Each year, in early January, just as the green tips of hound's tongues and reddish bracts of warrior's plumes reappear, another class of wildflower docents begins training at Edgewood Preserve. Wildflower docents are Friends of Edgewood volunteers who introduce visitors to Edgewood's extraordinary biodiversity and the work being done to preserve and restore its ecosystems. We need a diverse pool of wildflower docents to do this important and fun job!

To learn more about what it takes to become a wildflower docent, visit friendsofedgewood.org/become-a-docent. To inquire about enrolling in docent-training, contact Sandy, the Docent Training Coordinator, at docent-training-coord@friendsofedgewood.org. The course begins in **early January, 2026**. To keep track of what is blooming at Edgewood each week, visit friendsofedgewood.org/edgewood-wildflower-survey.



Jason Bosinoff

2025 docent class practicing new interpretive skills

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?

As we are in planting season for native plants, **did you know that you can save money if you have time to propagate native plants in your own backyard?** Our Chapter of CNPS wants you to learn how to propagate and proliferate native plants so you can plant more in your garden and give them away to friends and neighbors.

See www.cnps-scv.org/activities/seed-and-cutting-exchange for lots of useful links to resources that will educate you on the subject.

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, December 6

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)

Nov 1 Sat Annual potluck dinner (reminder) (1)
Nov 3 Mon Conservation Committee meeting (6)
Nov 3-4 Mon-Tue Online plant sale (1)
Nov 8 Sat Seed & Cutting Exchange PCC (1)
Nov 8 Sat Pick up online plant purchases (2)
Nov 11 Tue GNGT garden submittal deadline (5)
Nov 17 Mon Wreath-Making talk - Sowards (3)
Nov 18 Tue Native Plant ID meeting (4)
Nov 28 Fri Photo Group photo sharing (4)
Nov 28 Fri CNPS Scholarship App. deadline (6)
Nov 29 Sat Fountain Thistle Work Party (6)

Dec 1 Mon Conservation Committee meeting (6)
Dec 6 Sat Newsletter submittal deadline (12)
Dec 21 Sun Lake Cunningham bird & plant walk (10)
Dec 26 Fri Photo Group photo sharing (4)
Jan 1 Thu Año Nuevo walk Franklin Point (10)
M+W+2nd Sat Alum Rock workdays (7)
Fridays Edgewood restoration workdays (7)
Saturdays Lake Cunningham Garden workdays (7)
Saturdays Cataldi Park Garden workdays (8)
Saturdays Kirk Pollinator Garden workdays (9)

The next Chapter board meeting will be **Thursday, December 11 at 7:00pm** over Zoom.

There will be no board meeting in November. 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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