



# GOLD FIELD NOTES

EL DORADO CHAPTER ☼ CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ☼ March-April 2012

## MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup> PROGRAM: RARE PLANT TREASURE HUNT

### CALENDAR

#### March 20 (Tuesday)

Program  
Rare Plant Treasure Hunt. See article on this page.

#### March 29 (Thursday)

Workshop  
Yellow Starthistle Control and Preventing the Spread of Invasive Weeds in El Dorado County, 1-3 pm. See website for details: <http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/?calitem=155459&g=15296&close=yes>

#### March 31 (Saturday) Garden Tour

Sacramento Valley Chapter Gardens Gone Native Tour. Free, self-guided tour 10 am-3 pm, requires pre-registration: [www.sacvalleycnps.org](http://www.sacvalleycnps.org).

#### April 21 (Saturday)

Plant sale  
Twice-yearly Chapter plant sale, 9 am to 1 pm. See details inside.

#### April 28 (Saturday)

Workshop  
Fire Ecology. Chico State Herbarium. See website for details: <http://www.csuchico.edu/biol/Herb/Friends.html>

#### April 28 (Saturday)

Plant sale  
El Dorado County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale. 9 am to 3 pm, Veteran's Memorial Building, Placerville.

Evening programs are held on the third Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November, and begin at 6:30 PM at the El Dorado County Main Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville.

Danny Slakey, the CNPS Statewide Rare Plant Treasure Hunt Coordinator, will talk about how to set priorities for rare plant surveys by using online resources and how to use GPS to navigate and accurately map rare plants. Filling in these information gaps can keep plant population information current, as well as help land managers to protect rare plants. He will discuss what other Chapters have been able to contribute toward these goals.

A few highlights from last year's Rare Plant Treasure Hunt include:

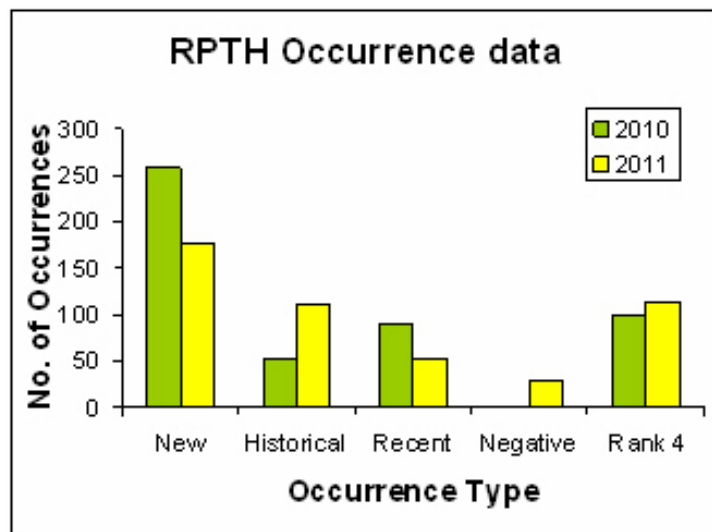
Discovery of what will likely be the second known occurrence of *Botrychium paradoxum*, paradox moonwort, in California. This plant is not yet ranked by CNPS, but it is sure to make its way into the Rare Plant Inventory in the coming months. We are still awaiting genetic testing by a moonwort expert to confirm the identity of this very unusual fern.

The Rare Plant Treasure Hunt took a

survey out on the water for the first time. At the Cosumnes River Preserve in Sacramento County, volunteers paddled through the Delta in nine different canoes and kayaks, mapping twenty-five colonies of *Sagittaria sanfordii*, Sanford's arrowhead, and two populations of *Hibiscus lasiocarpus* var. *occidentalis*, woolly rose-mallow, both Rank 1B.2.

Volunteers from the North Coast Chapter of CNPS found populations of *Cuscuta pacifica* var. *papillata*, Mendocino dodder, a parasitic plant that was just added to rank 1B.2. Previously, this California endemic had only been known from six populations, none of which had been documented more recently than the 1980s. In 2011, the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt

The meeting begins at 6:30 pm for plant identification, business and socializing. The program starts at 7:15 pm.



More than 200 volunteers have spent over 6,000 hours in 2010 and 2011 on the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt. Data on nearly 1,000 rare plant occurrences has been collected.

For updates between newsletters  
[www.eldoradocnps.org](http://www.eldoradocnps.org)

## BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

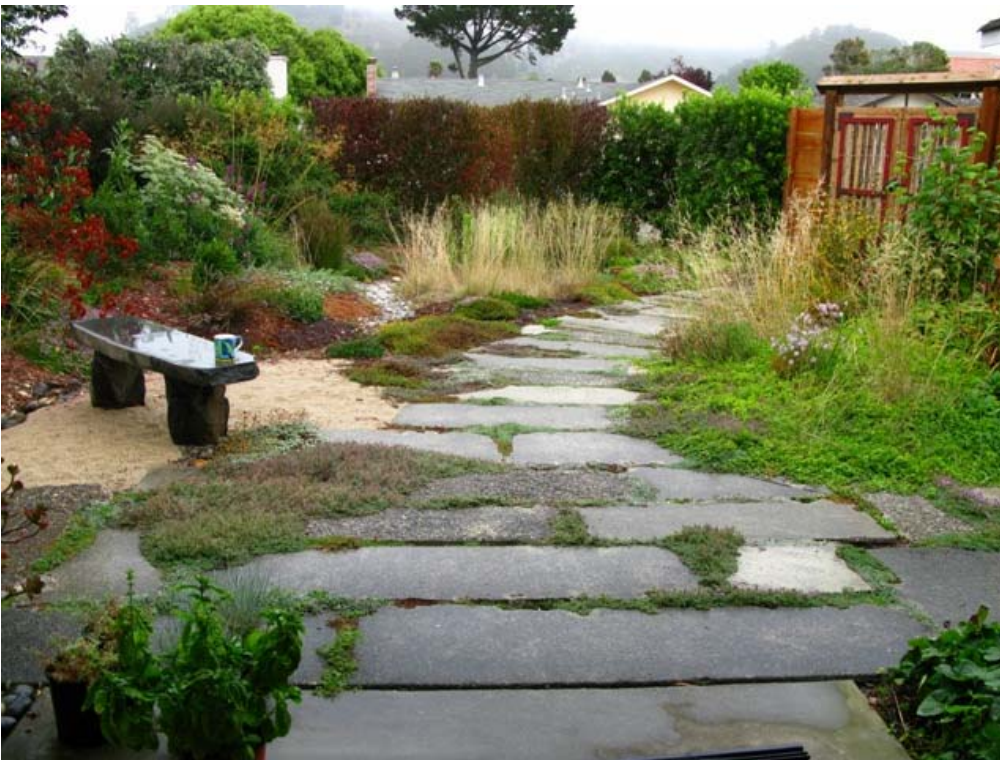
Five years ago, Jim and Meredith Howard bought a 1971 slab house with a flat concrete-paved backyard in the San Francisco Bay area and began transforming it into a habitat garden. They wanted to create an interesting and functional space that attracted native birds and insects, learn the local native plants, improve drainage, and do it all on a budget and without wasting materials or hauling truckloads to the landfill. At a recent Gardening with Natives talk, Jim Howard showed how they did it. As the District Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in San Mateo County, Howard is attuned to nature but was new to the bay area.

Starting with the front yard, they consulted with Acterra, a restoration nursery, to choose appropriate native plants. Since the goal was to attract wildlife, they focused on species rather than cultivars. "You don't know what you're breeding out and what ecological functions you're impairing" if you use a hybrid or cultivar, Howard said.

For instance, he said, monkey flowers bred or selected for larger, more colorful flowers are less attractive to hummingbirds than the ones found in nature. But, he noted, ceanothus and salvia cultivars seem to be as full of insect life as the species.

"We couldn't believe how quickly" and how many birds found the garden, he said. Birds came "instantly" when native plants were installed, and they noted a "huge increase" after adding a water feature. Following Audubon Society recommendations, the water feature was placed within 10 feet of a shrub where birds could seek cover to elude predators. There's "always something going on in the yard," he said. Bushtits, for instance, will take 40 percent of the bugs in a mature shrub. California towhees especially like purple needlegrass seeds. He's observed a Townsend's warbler eating caterpillars from hummingbird sage plants and robins resting under yellow lupines. At least 37 species of birds visit the garden. Though crows, jays, and ravens populate the neighborhood, they don't come to this garden.

The biggest single task was to improve drainage in the backyard. The Howards rented an electric pavement breaker to cut



Habitat plants in their garden: *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, *Myrica californica*, *Ceanothus* 'Dark Star', *Ribes sanguinum*, *Salvia spathacea*, *Nassella pulchra*, *Eriogonum giganteum*, *Asarum caudatum*, and *Satureja douglasii*.

## CALL FOR PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS

Since this season's sale will be at least two weeks later than spring sales of the past, the chances for lovely, balmy spring weather are better, so we are seeking more volunteers to meet the anticipated demand. Volunteers typically arrive for 2 hour shifts and help with unloading and set up, direct sales to customers, book and poster sales, and repacking after the sale. This is a great way to meet and learn from the many marvelous Chapter members who have been volunteering at the sales for years, and from our vendors. Please contact Shellie Perry, our Plant Sale Chair, to volunteer at [SEPerry55@comcast.net](mailto:SEPerry55@comcast.net) or at 530.644.6335.

the tons of concrete into slabs, many of which they dry-stacked into raised beds and used for stepping stones. For the rain garden, they dug a hole and filled it with cobble-size concrete chunks and then gravel, topped by geotextile. The rain garden has successfully let rainwater soak into the soil onsite rather than pooling or flowing into the street.

Jim Howard offered some advice for others contemplating an ecosystem restoration garden.

- Stick to natives. Native plants are the best food source for native insects and other wildlife.
- Go for complexity of structure, flower color, and flower type. Use shrubs, trees, groundcovers, and perennials that offer a range of habitat niches. A variety of flowers will attract different pollinators.
- Do whatever you can. Start small, but start somewhere. It took only three summers for the Howards' garden to look "done."
- Learn as you go. "You could spend a lifetime investigating what to do and know less than when you started," he said. Don't be afraid to experiment.

This article by Tanya Kucak was reprinted from the CNPS blog on native plant gardening: <http://grownatives.cnps.org/> Check out the blog for more tips on native plants. Think about adding some of your own.



## SPRING PLANT SALE

**SATURDAY, APRIL 21**

**9 AM TO 1 PM**

This year we will be holding our Spring plant sale at the same time as the El Dorado County Annual Earth Day Festival at the Placerville Library

([www.eldoradoguide.com/evps.evitem.cf?m?evid=1922](http://www.eldoradoguide.com/evps.evitem.cf?m?evid=1922)). The sale will be located across the street from the library between County Government Buildings A and B at 330 and 360 Fair Lane, Placerville, CA.

Once again, we are partnering with Cornflower Farms and High Ranch Nursery from the valley, as well as our excellent local native plants nurseries: Lotus Valley

Natives, Steve Dowty Nursery, and Brian Austin Nursery. These are all friendly and knowledgeable people who are happy to help you find the right plant to meet your landscaping needs. There will be a wide selection of perennials, shrubs, ornamental bunch grasses, and some native tree species. Even if you're early in the planning stages for your garden, you can soak up a lot of information from experienced Chapter members and the nursery professionals at this fun community event.

This newsletter includes a list of plants that are likely to be at the sale so that you can plan ahead for your shopping trip. For the best selection, arrive when we open at 9 am. We only accept cash or checks.

## LIBRARY DISPLAY: PLEASE HELP

We need volunteers to help put together the display for the month of May at the Cameron Park library. The theme will be LOCAL WILDFLOWER WALKS or something like that....may need a catchier title. We will get together as a group and brainstorm ideas; then work on segments of the display on our own, and finally put it together for May. If you have maps, colorful magazine pictures, wildflower photos (including wildlife or birds ) or even a potted native that are specific to a trail or trails as well as items (3dimensional....walking sticks, hats, interesting T-shirts) it would be helpful. Meet-

## CHAPTER PROPAGATION GROUP

The Propagation group tries to meet monthly with dates alternating between midweek and a weekend (usually Sunday). If you are interested, please send Cindy your email address or phone. We are only notifying folks via email (or phone) that are on the propagation list. There won't be any information posted in the newsletter or the website. Contact Cindy at [cpodsiadlo@yahoo.com](mailto:cpodsiadlo@yahoo.com) or call (530) 642-0648.

ing will be set up around mid-March. Contact Cindy [cpodsiadlo@yahoo.com](mailto:cpodsiadlo@yahoo.com) or 642-0648.

March, with significant amounts of rain predicted. This remarkable weather variability has made it extremely hard to predict when and where wildflowers will be in bloom, so the Chapter will no longer advertise our walks in the newsletter. Instead, we will post them on-line, on our web page ([www.eldoradocnps.org](http://www.eldoradocnps.org)).

New field trip leaders are encouraged to lead wildflower walks in areas that they know and like. Please contact Shellie Perry, our Field Trips Chair, at [SEPer-ry55@comcast.net](mailto:SEPer-ry55@comcast.net) or at 530.644.6335. She can advise you on optimum field trip length and duration and other tips.

## MAY PROGRAM

### HOW THE HECK DO I START MY NATIVE PLANT GARDEN?

On May 15, the El Dorado Chapter of the California Native Plant Society presents landscape designer Marcia Scott, who has been practicing in El Dorado County for 12 years. She holds a degree in Landscape Architecture from UC Berkeley, and previously worked in the S.F. Bay Area for 18 years. In the past year Marcia designed gardens using more than 2000 CA Native Plants. She will explain in simple terms how to start a successful garden using California Native plants.

The meeting begins at 6:30 pm for plant identification, business, and socializing. The program starts at 7:15 pm. at the Placerville Main Library, 345 Fair Lane, Placerville.

## SPRING HIKES TO THE RARE PLANT PRESERVES

The Bureau of Land Management's Mother Lode Field Office will host naturalist-led walks on Saturdays to the Pine Hill Preserve.

April (TBD)	Bird Tour: Kanaka Valley/Salmon Falls
April 28	Cameron Park
May 5	Pine Hill
May 19	Pine Hill
June 2	Kanaka Valley/Salmon Falls

With the exception of the bird tour, all tours will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude by 1:00 p.m. The bird tour will begin at 7:00 a.m. and end by noon. Tours are limited to 25 people and pre-registration is required. For more information or to sign up for a tour, contact Julie Wynia, Pine Hill Preserve Intern, [pinehillpreserve@gmail.org](mailto:pinehillpreserve@gmail.org) or (916) 941-3135.

## CHAPTER FIELD TRIPS FOR 2012

The last two La Nina winters in California have been full of flux and surprises, either setting new records or coming close. That was the case in March-May 2011, the coolest, wettest spring in recent memory, which produced an epic snow pack in El Dorado County that prevented access to subalpine areas until August. In December 2011 researchers recorded the driest December in 22 years in California and a Sierra snow pack that was measured as the lowest on record in nearly 50 years at certain locations. Now, all weather models agree that California is back in a stormy pattern for the second half of





El Dorado Chapter  
California Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 1948  
Placerville, CA 95667

March-April 2012

**SPRING PLANT SALE**  
**SATURDAY, APRIL 21**  
**9 am to 1 pm**  
**BETWEEN COUNTY**  
**BUILDINGS A & B**  
**SEE DETAILS INSIDE**



CALIFORNIA  
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

**DEDICATED TO THE  
PRESERVATION OF  
CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE FLORA**

The California Native Plant Society is a state-wide nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in California's native plants. The mission of the Society is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation. Membership is open to all.

Membership includes the quarterly journal, *Fremontia*, the quarterly *Bulletin*, which gives statewide news and announcements of Society activities and conservation issues, and the chapter newsletter *Gold Field Notes*. To join, call our main office in Sacramento, (916) 447-2677, or visit [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org) to join online.

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