UPCOMING PROGRAMS
of the Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter

January 10, 2005 - 7:30-9:30PM
Sepulveda Garden Center
Encino

Native Irises for your Garden
Speaker: Bob Sussman, owner of the Matilija Nursery in Moorpark.
California has 11 different Iris species referred to as “Pacifica’s”. They generally grow along the coast from Santa Barbara up into Oregon, with a few in the Sierra's and San Bernardino Mts. The presentation will feature both discussion and pictures of these irises and their garden hybrids. The presentation will also include how to both select them and grow them in your garden. For those who are sufficiently inspired and can’t wait, we will even have some beautiful and easy to grow varieties for you to purchase and take home and plant for this is the planting season.

Programs are free to the public. Refreshments will be served.
For directions, please see Calendar of Events on pages 4 & 5

Chapter Picnic February 19, 2006
For more info, please see page 4

Fire Visits Las Virgenes Once Again by Dave Brown

Brush fires create a succession of disconnected images, sounds and sensations. In the Palmer Fire, 38 years ago, it was the hot, dry, gale-force winds blowing hose water back in my face; the flames leaping over my neighbor’s second story roof and hanging there for several seconds; the hiss of boiling sap as 20’ flames lashed my walnut tree; and the sudden rush of killing heat while I ran for my life.

The heat from that fire killed my landscaping, plastered the back of my house with hot sparks, and set redwood bark on fire 75 to 125’ back from the edge of the slope. I learned a few things about brush fires that day:

- The dominant force in brush fires is the power of the hot, dry wind, which may blow at gale force, drive flames and superheated air uphill many times faster than fire moves on level ground - “it ain’t the fire, it’s the fuel, stupid!” Brush fires are inevitable in our Mediterranean climate; they are nature’s way of getting rid of the continuous buildup of fuel from year to year due to our combination of rainy winters and bone-dry summers.

- Some landscaping plants (eucalyptus, juniper, cypress and even ice plant) will burn as readily as chaparral. We’ll probably never be able to prevent all fire ignitions, but we do have a lot of control over the amount of fuel - dry brush, and combustible landscaping - that we allow to build up around our homes. Aggressive brush clearance was credited with preventing loss of any local homes in last week’s fire.

Continued on page 7
Plant Sale Recap October 15 & 16, 2005 - Halli Mason

This year’s Plant Sale was very much a success. We did well financially, and we also did well in attracting people from within a much larger geographic radius than in previous years. Receiving coverage in various newspapers and mailing out postcards reminding our patrons of the upcoming event has proven to be very helpful. The calendar section of our newsletter “Toyon” and special flyers publicize the Plant Sale as well.

But what really, REALLY! makes it a success is the dedication of so many volunteers who give of their precious time so freely and willingly.

Well before the Plant Sale, a well-oiled machinery is set into motion to gear up for this event. Closer to the Plant Sale all the loose ends get tied up and on the afternoon before the Sale the physical site is set up with sun/rain structures, which all have to be hauled from elsewhere; plants need to be sorted, grouped and supplemented with pretty pictures; tables, chairs, signage, fencing, have to be dealt with.

The two actual Sale days were busy but also a lot of fun. To all of you tireless helpers and shoppers: a huge thank-you. The first thank-you goes to my co-chair, Steve Hartman, who also convinced his wife Leslie and daughter Melanie and her two friends to help. A big thank-you to Jo Kitz and Olga Hammer selling books (with an occasional assist from Sid Mendel and David Hollombe) who also helped with other tasks. Betsey Landis once again sold seeds donating the proceeds of the sales to CNPS. Henrietta and Bill Yuan and their granddaughter Michelle brewed the much-needed coffee and tea, cooked the soup, chili, chicken, cookies and more.

Thank you Ileen Anderson, Chuck Enz, Chris and Trish Meyer, Donna Timlin, Carol Heikkinen and her daughter Talia, Marianne Peck, Maribeth Kambitsch, Barbara Turner, Henry Carlton, John Kuiper, David Ecklund, David Mason, David Hollombe, Bob Sussman, Leslie Reuter, Marianne Campbell and Vicki Edwards. Another round of thanks goes to Margaret Huffman giving talks on how to attract birds to your garden, Sheila Braden from the National Park Service, Nancy Helsley from the Cold Creek Docents, Peter and Sylvia Asco, and Paola Aliaga and Keylandra of the Los Angeles Environmental Affairs Department. And what would we do without the help and cooperation of Patty Jones, Director of the Sepulveda Garden Center. She is invaluable.

The Meyers supplied a small selection of plants; the bulk came from Bob Sussman of Matilija Nursery. All good-looking and healthy plants.

Hope to see you all next year.

New Chapter Board Officers - Betsey Landis

Enjoy our wildflowers! Ask questions!
Learn more about native plants! Become an active member!

For 2006 the officers of the Board of Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter are

President: Snowdy Dodson
Chapter Council Delegate: Betsey Landis
Co-vice Presidents: Jo Kitz and Halli Mason
Treasurer: Steve Hartman
Secretary: Henrietta Yuan

Thanks so much to everyone who ran for office and those dozens of members who sent in their ballots.

We encourage more of our Chapter members to get involved in Chapter activities, such as helping with the newsletter layout and mailings, leading wildflower walks in your favorite area, weeding in the State parks, sending out publicity about Chapter programs, bringing refreshments to the monthly programs, putting in a few hours at our spring Wildflower Show and/or our Fall Plant Sale or handing out information at various events in which CNPS is asked to participate.
DeAnza Trail Dedication

Calabasas’ own segment of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail was recently dedicated at the west end of Calabasas Road in a ceremony complete with mounted riders in Spanish attire and speeches by local politicians, followed by guided walks along the trail.

The first paleface to see the Las Virgenes area, Gaspar de Portola, passed from west to east along the general route of the Freeway Corridor on January 15, 1770, stopping at a village on the present-day site of Agoura Meadows Shopping Center to pick up a couple of Chumash guides, who led him along an Indian trail through the Las Virgenes Valley and up an east-west tributary stream to the top of a low pass from which he could see what he called the Valle de Santa Catalina de Bononia.

Six years later, on February 22, 1776, Juan Bautista de Anza led the first European settlers of California - men, women, and children, and their livestock across the Valley and over that same pass, camping that night at a place called Agua Escondida, possibly a spring on the site of Deer Springs. The Indian trail eventually became El Camino Real, then later the Ventura Highway, and, finally, the Ventura Freeway we have come to know and love, but the stream is still there, along with oaks that probably witnessed the passage of Portola and Anza.

Parking is at the end of Calabasas Road. The trail, complete with Chumash prayer poles, a piece of the old Ventura Highway, stepping stones over the stream, and signs interpreting the natural flora, the Chumash, the Camino Real, and the Ventura Highway can be found spotted along the trail, which parallels the Freeway and then passes into a small, secluded valley full of oaks. At several points along the way you will literally be walking in the footsteps of Portola and Anza.

(Excerpted from the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation newsletter)

Not Quite A Correction, But...

In a recent issue of TOYON (Vol. 25 No. 5) in part 2 of “The Flora of Our Local Mountains” by Arthur Gibson and Barry Prigge, it was noted that “planted conifers such as pines and cedars around the mountains...do not appear to reproduce there from seeds.” Chapter member Jo Kitz wrote to the authors and agreed that the statement is probably true when there has been no fire, “but we have pulled out many conifer seedlings throughout the Cold Creek watershed presumably from the 1993 fire. There is a nice grove of seedling resprouts across the road from 24735 Mulholland Highway.” Arthur replied that subsequently he has “come across good examples of pines that have been established as seedlings” and has his eye on “perhaps three species of pines, and definitely two species of Cupressaceae” that are likely to be included in the revised flora.

Horticulturist of the Year - Bart O’Brien

By Kerry Morris, Southern California Horticultural Society (SCHS) www.socahort.org

Since the early 1960s, the Horticulturist of the Year award has been given in recognition and acknowledgement of the contributions made by the recipient to the world of horticulture. There is no doubt that Bart O’Brien is worthy and deserving of the award this year. With a life-long love of plants, Bart has immersed himself in the world of horticulture and native plants. He willingly shares his vast knowledge with those around him. After more than forty years studying plants and their culture, he continues to explore, learn, and share.

Now director of horticulture for Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont, Bart also serves as an advisor, board member, editorial member, or co-director of eight plant groups and societies (including, of course, CNPS). He has written, edited, co-authored, or contributed to over sixty publications and books. Since 1988, he has selected and introduced over sixty native plants. He is a member or involved in fourteen professional associations. His research interests include the taxonomy, origin, and history of California native plant cultivars; horticultural selection, evaluation, and propagation of California native plants such as Ceanothus and Heuchera; and collaboration on projects using molecular techniques in the study of native plants. He also continues to do field work in California and Mexico. He is a co-author, with Dave Fross and Carol Bornstein, of a new book “California Native Plants for the Garden” published by Cachuma Press. His photographs have appeared in numerous books, newsletters, and magazines.

(Excerpted from “Pacific Horticulture” magazine)
HIKES

SAT 1/7 9:30am
Cheeseboro/Palo Comado
After-the-Burn Wildflower Recovery Walks or the Amazing Fire Followers
Fire in wildlands is not a disaster; it is a renewal. Easy walks along roads and trails will enjoy the recovery in this series of walks as plants bloom and animals return to this lush new habitat. Call for meeting place. (818) 348-5910. 3hrs

THUR 1/19 10am
Cold Creek Preserve
Cold Creek Meanderings
Milk maids, the first sign of spring, bloom along the shaded glens of Cold Creek on this easy walk. We will look for other signs of our winter/spring season as the trails pass under oak canopies, through grasslands and mountain lilac tunnels. Bring water and lunch. Meet at the Lower Stunt High Trailhead. (818) 348-5910. 3hrs. Co-sponsored by CNPS and Mountains Restoration Trust.

SUN 2/19 10am
Location to be determined
LA/SMMtns CNPS Chapter Picnic
Join members of our chapter for an early wildflower hike and picnic. If the rains have been sufficient we will look for mushrooms! Contact Jo at (818) 348-5910 for location and directions. 3 hrs.

PROGRAMS

TUES 1/10 7:30-9:30pm
Sepulveda Garden Center, Encino
NATIVE IRISES FOR YOUR GARDEN
Speaker: Bob Sussman, owner of the Matilija Nursery in Moorpark.

Directions: the Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd. in Encino, is on the north side of Magnolia between Balboa & Hayvenhurst. Park in the lighted lot at the east end of the garden, walk west along the path to the garden center building. Native plant and gardening books will be for sale and refreshments are served. A no-host dinner precedes the meeting at 6:00pm at Chevys Mexican Restaurant in Encino (16705 Ventura Blvd.)

TUES 2/14 7:30-9:30pm
First United Methodist Church, Santa Monica
CNPS Horticulture Program: Going Native, Landscaping for Sustainability
Speaker: Peigi Duvall, CNPS Horticulture Program Director

Directions: The First United Methodist Church, 1008 11th Street, Santa Monica CA 90403, is one and a half blocks north of Wilshire Boulevard on 11th Street in Santa Monica. From the 10 freeway, exit at Lincoln. Go right, or north to Wilshire. Turn right. In three blocks turn left on 11th Street. The church is on the left, just past California. Church parking is on the right under an apartment complex. The Fireside Room is at the north end of the church’s large patio, next to the Sanctuary. A no-host dinner precedes the meeting at 6:00pm at El Cholo Mexican Restaurant in Santa Monica at 1025 Wilshire Blvd.

For more information, please see the Upcoming programs on front page
WEED WARS / RESTORATION

SUN 1/8  9am
Point Mugu State Park
Habitat Restoration Weed War Remove invasive plants and noxious weeds to restore parkland. Bring lunch, water, and gloves; credit for community service hours. Reservations required (818) 348-5910. 4hrs

SAT 1/28  9am
Malibu Creek State Park
Oak Restoration Plant oaks, native plants and grasses to restore oak woodlands; credit for community service hours. Reservations required phone (818) 348-5910. 3hrs Co-sponsored by CNPS and Mountains Restoration Trust.

SAT 2/4  9am
Malibu Creek State Park
Oak Habitat Restoration Restore oak woodlands; plant native plants and grasses; remove non-native invasive weeds. Community service credit. Reservations required phone (818) 348-5910. 3hrs Co-sponsored by CNPS and Mountains Restoration Trust.

SUN 2/12  9am
Bluffs Park
Habitat Restoration Weed War Non-native invasive plants will be removed to help purple needle grass, California’s state grass. Bring lunch, water, and gloves. Community Service credit. Reservations required (818) 348-5910. 4hrs

LA/SMM BOARD MEETINGS

TUES 1/3    7pm
LA/SMM CNPS Chapter Board Meeting at Snowdy Dodson’s home, 15811 Leadwell St., Van Nuys. Chapter members are invited! (818) 782-9346

TUES 2/7     7pm
LA/SMM CNPS Chapter Board Meeting at Steve Hartman’s home, 4444 Longridge Ave., Sherman Oaks. Chapter members are invited! (818) 881-3521

SAVE THESE DATES
APRIL 15-16, 2006
(Saturday and Easter Sunday)
WILDFLOWER SHOW
AT MALIBU BLUFFS

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter
Chapter Message Phone: (818) 881-3706
Chapter Website: www.lacnps.org
Chapter email: lacnps@lacnps.org

President: Snowdy Dodson (818) 782-9346
snowyd.dodson@csun.edu

Secretary: Henrietta Yuan (323) 463-1385

Treasurer: Steve Hartman (818) 881-3706

Co-vice Presidents:
Jo Kitz (818) 348-5910
and Halli Mason (818) 345-6749

Membership:
David Hollombe (323) 934-0332
davhlmbe@pacbell.net

Earth Share:
Halli Mason (818) 345-6749
hmason@sbcglobal.net

Restoration Team:
Jo Kitz (818) 348-5910
jkitz@mountainstrust.org

Toyon Editor:
Steve Hartman (818) 881-3706
naturebase@aol.com

Layout Design:
Nancy Cohen (310) 476-1725
lychou@aol.com
Two large creeks once flowed through the east and west sides of the UCLA campus. But in order to construct more buildings in the early 1930s, most of the two creeks was buried. Recently members of the UCLA community began the first stage of restoring the only remaining above-ground part of the creek, located behind the Anderson School of Management, as part of a larger plan to restore other parts of the creek and other waterways in the Los Angeles area.

Many of the plants currently growing in that area are invasive, meaning they overtake ecosystems and edge out native species, and must be removed several times before they stop growing by the creek.

Jessica Hall, the Ballona Creek Watershed Coordinator with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Committee, first proposed the restoration of the creek. “I have been mapping streams that are buried (in Los Angeles) for four years and I find out where there are leftover pieces all over the city,” Hall said. “I was looking for opportunities to draw attention to these buried streams.” Hall contacted Rafe Sagarin, a post-doctoral researcher in the UCLA Institute of the Environment and project leader for the Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project, and proposed a restoration of the creek as well as potential funding sources for the project, Sagarin said. They applied for a grant from the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project’s Small Grants Program and were awarded with $30,000 last month.

Restoration of the creek will entail pulling up non-native vegetation along the creek and replanting the area with small native plants in an effort to restore as much of the original habitat as possible. Sagarin said the restoration will be completed in about a year. Many of the plants currently growing in that area are invasive, meaning they overtake ecosystems and edge out native species, and must be removed several times before they stop growing by the creek. “The creek has been hidden away and we want people to see what it used to look like,” Sagarin said. By restoring the original habitat, Sagarin and Hall anticipate native birds and amphibians will return to the area.

There was at one point about 180 miles of flowing water throughout the Los Angeles area, but to further develop the city, all but 20 miles of the waterways have been buried, Hall said. She also said that restorations of the waterways will change people’s perceptions of Los Angeles. “You would think of (Los Angeles) as green and not just asphalt,” Hall said. Sagarin said he hopes this restoration will be the first stage of incorporating the creek into the campus. He said the long-term goal is to have many parts of the creek running throughout the campus like it did originally.

Stone Canyon Creek originates in the hills of Bel-Air and runs in the same direction as Westwood Boulevard. “This campus was originally built under the control of nature,” Sagarin said. “It’s so clear from those first years that there used to be a beautiful meandering creek running through here.” Walsh compared Sagarin’s plan to the UC Santa Cruz campus, where the creeks located on the campus have become an “integral” part of the school. Sagarin said getting approval for the larger project of “daylighting” the creek – actually bringing it back to the surface – would take a lot of time and funding.

“Until we can make a real case that we can do this (in a safe manner) and benefit the campus, there will be opposition along the way because people don’t like to change things. What we’re saying is that we should all come to the table and talk about the possibilities,” Sagarin said. “We want to make this a campus-wide discussion.”

He added that he is trying to get the UCLA elementary school involved with the restoration as well, because it would provide the students with a “great learning opportunity.” Sagarin said it is important to get students involved with the restoration of the creek.

“While you’re here, this is your home, and this is an opportunity to do something really good with your home,” Sagarin said.

(Reprinted with permission from The Daily Bruin)

Obituary

Edward Peterson, “seedsman and volunteer extraordinaire” for the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants, died on Nov. 14 in his 100th year. Mr. Peterson began the Foundation’s seed collecting program in 1962 (a year before the British horticulturalist Mr. Payne died at age 91). Until his eyesight failed him in the past five years, Ed collected, sorted, cleaned and packaged the seeds for sale at the Foundation. Collecting nature’s most basic creation - seeds - helped give purpose to his life, and it kept him going through his long life.

Native California plants and seeds are available all year long at the Theodore Payne Foundation, at 10459 Tuxford Street in Sun Valley. The nursery is open Wed through Saturday. (818) 768-1802. www.theodorepayne.org
The grossly misnamed “Topanga Fire” - which didn’t burn anywhere near Topanga - started in Santa Susana Pass during a powerful Santa Ana wind on Sept. 28, 2005 and spread quickly southwest into upper Ahmanson Ranch, posing a threat to Bell Canyon, Old Agoura, Malibu Canyon, and Oak Park. However, during the second day the wind had shifted to the southwest, and the fire began to burn down Las Virgenes Canyon in Ahmanson Ranch and Cheesboro and Palo Comado canyons above Old Agoura. With almost no wind behind it, the fire moved very slowly down Las Virgenes Canyon that afternoon with bursts of 50’ to 70’ flames and occasional fire tornadoes when it hit heavy brush. By 5:00 it was burning the hills west of upper Las Virgenes Road and Mont Calabasas. By then advisory evacuations had been called for Liberty Canyon and Medea Valley in case the fire jumped the Freeway, as the Dayton Canyon Fire had done in 1982. There were plenty of firemen and equipment ready to block the fire, aided by the lack of wind, as high flames burned around and briefly into the upper fringes of Malibu Canyon. (This time there was a crew of firemen with hose and a pumper standing next to me in my back yard in those critical closing moments as the fire started down my side of the canyon.) Disconnected impressions in this frantic time included the loud throbbing of helicopters flying over my back yard every few seconds at treetop level, the loud hissing as the firemen sprayed my house and numerous large trees first with water and then with foam so they ended up looking like flocked Christmas trees.

Meanwhile, a dramatic battle involving water and chemical drops along Las Virgenes Road near Las Virgenes Village saved the old farmhouse and the combustible eucalyptus trees around it. The fire then died out on the hillside just above Fire Station 125 and Calabasas City Hall two blocks north of the Freeway. Meanwhile, firemen in Old Agoura started a backfire near the County line in Palo Comado Canyon. Firemen from all over the state did their work with uncommon skill and dedication.

Basically, the fire burned much of the land many of us have fought to save all these years - all of Ahmanson Ranch and Jordan Ranch, and most of Cheesboro Canyon. Once the fires were out and before the Conservancy and the Park Service had time to post their “park closed” signs, I walked into Ahmanson Ranch from the end of Las Virgenes Road to see how bad the damage was. The willow forest just inside the entrance to Ahmanson Ranch looks like ground zero at Hiroshima, but the large oak trees are still alive, and, after the first 200 yards, even the willow riparian forest is pretty well intact. There is some spotty damage, but, overall, Ahmanson should be well on the way to recovery by the time things green up in the spring. After all, oak trees and fire have been living together here for thousands of years; it’s us folks and our houses that are the newcomers who have not yet fully adapted to this fire-dependent ecosystem.

(Excerpted from the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation October 2005 Newsletter)
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CHAPTER RENEWALS & NEW MEMBERSHIPS:
Send check to David Hollombe, 6223 San Vicente Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048 or to CNPS, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816. Current CNPS memberships are: Student $25, Limited Income $25, Individual $45, Library $75, Family $75, Group $75, Plant Lover $100-$300, Patron $300-$600, Benefactor $600-$1,500, Mariposa Lily $1,500 and over. Make checks payable to CNPS.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO TOYON ONLY: For members of other CNPS chapters, send $5 to David Hollombe.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Write or phone David Hollombe (323-934-0332). Include your e-mail address. Be sure to notify State CNPS Office, 2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816.