A Wandering Gardener Puts Down Roots,
Lawn Conversion to Multi-Zoned Habitat

How does a wanderer garden? Since you cannot pack up a
garden and put it in a moving van, you must garden intensively,
creatively, and always be willing to try something new.

Imagine moving 9 times in 45 years. Such a scenario presents
challenges for a gardener, knowing there will be goodbyes in the
future. However, it also presents opportunities for a lover of
California’s amazing native flora to explore new locales and to
discover and learn about new plants. That was Kathy LaShure’s
life before moving to Chico in retirement in 2017.

Kathy’s May 1 presentation will show how she and husband
Rich LaShure, working with inspiring designer and installer
John Whittlesey, have converted over 5000 sq feet of west-side
Chico lawn into a vibrant multi-zoned habitat garden in just over
one year. The new landscape includes nearly 500 plants,
comprising over 125 species of California natives plus drought
and heat-tolerant native plants from Arizona, Texas, Mexico, and
beyond. Add to that a productive kitchen garden and rear pool-
side Hot-Zone garden, you have a landscape others should see. Which you can do on the May 5th
Water-Wise and Habitat-Friendly Garden Tour in Chico.

This Chico property is the fifth home where Kathy has incorporated California native plants into
the landscape. As a member of CNPS since
1991, she has been on the boards of both
the San Gabriel Mountains and Bristlecone
Chapters. Serving as the Chair of the
Maturango Museum’s (Ridgecrest, CA)
Garden Committee, she oversaw several
major expansions of their landscaping.
While living in the Northern Mojave town
of Inyokern from 2011 to 2016, she
participated in CNPS’ Rare Plant Treasure
Hunt program, documenting 138
occurrences of 24 species plus an
additional 17 occurrences of Rank 1B.2
Phacelia novenmillensis (Spring 2016).
Kathy is a woman with a green heart!
March 24, 2019 — Marjorie McNairn

The first trip of the season occurred on a beautiful sunny day sandwiched between two wet ones. There were 22 in attendance, including three children ages 1, 3, and 10. The ground was quite muddy, but we tried to avoid it by staying on the upland areas. We visited the three largest vernal pools in the Barn Unit in a clockwise direction and made a detour to Sheep Camp Ditch to look at the water buttercup (*Ranunculus aquatilis*). A bit about the history of the preserve was presented, when and why Vina Plains was purchased and how it is being managed and by whom. We talked about the positive and negative impacts of cows on the preserve. Cows helps control the annual grasses which produces a grander wildflower show, but over the years adobe lily has become quite uncommon. Also discussed was the necessity of controled burning on a 5-year cycle to control non-native annual grasses, especially Medusa Head.

Some interesting sightings on this trip include the resident burrowing owl, early-blooming flowers still showing such as the lowland shooting star (*Dodecatheon clevelandii* ssp. *patulum*), and a wonderful stand of Fremont’s Zigadene (*Toxicoscordion fremontii*). Also Hookers plantain (*Plantago erecta*), one patch of blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*) a few plants of blooming meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii* var. *rosea*) and cowbag clover (*Trifolium depauperatum* var. *depauperatum*) both red and white varieties. Masses of color were provided by goldfields (*Lasthenia fremontii*), Johnnytuck (*Triphysaria eriantha* var. *eriantha*) and a few tidy tips (*Layia fremontii*) blossoms with many immature plants promising a big show in another few weeks. The vernal pools were full, and we observed some invertebrates swimming at the edge. The only vernal pool plant visible was coyote thistle. The cows remained at a distance.

Participants were enthusiastic, with many questions, most of which I could answer. One interesting one was, “If you were stranded out here for three weeks, what would you live on?”
I had the foresight to fence off the area with caution tape to deter PG&E tree trimming crews from traipsing or driving through this small, beautiful meadow. It has been a sight. A big surprise was seeing large swaths of milkmaids, Cardamine californica, appear across the creek. In the past there would be the occasional plant growing in pockets of soil on the slope above the creek, announcing itself as the first flower of spring. But now, with the blackberries burned to the ground, the milkmaids showed up in mass, growing in the sandy loam deposited by the creek at high water. The startling white flowers brightened the riparian area, which to my surprise had burned intensely killing many large ash and bay trees.

I wondered about the iris. With fairly shallow rhizomes and the duff under the oaks having burned slow and hot, how could they survive? They took their time to show signs of growth, but now the colonies are full and lush and flowering like they have never done before. Drifts of white scattered up and down the drainages are a cheerful sight on these grey damp days.

Geophytes are usually buried deep in the soil, so there was no surprise they would not be impacted by fire. In fact, they have thrived. The single, strappy leaves of the Fairy Lantern, Calochortus albus, are much more noticeable against the bare, blackened soil, as are the mottled leaves of Erythronium multisepaloides. Their elegant white flowers can be spotted easily in the scorched drainages where toyon, poison oak and manzanita once grew. The blue dicks, Dicholostemma, are making a tremendous show with their small heads of red-purple flowers waving on slender stems in the grass. The Dicholostemma and the Tritelia laxa are growing so thickly under the blue oaks it’s difficult to take a step without crushing them. We tread carefully.

The above-average rainfall that began a week after the fire, plus the nutrients released from the fire, has resulted in a spectacular recovery. The blackened canyon has been transformed. Fire clearly showed itself as being a healthy partner in the ecology of this blue oak grassland and chaparral. In addition, the seed bank will certainly be replenished after this floriferous spring.
Professional and Legal Missteps in Management of Bidwell Park

Woody Elliott, Conservation Chair

In early March, Chico’s Park Division inadvertently cut down at least 27 native valley oaks and disturbed several blue elderberry plants (habitat of the federally protected valley elderberry longhorn beetle) just west of Chico Creek Nature Center. The intent was to lessen wildfire fuels by removing alien catalpa and hazardous trees.

Inadequate field supervision of a Cal Fire fire-fighting crew (doing the tree falling) by City staff was the immediate cause of the mistake. However, the lack of a written site-specific plan that included “Best Management Practices” (BMP) was the fundamental professional error.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) helps to avoid such errors. A project following legally required CEQA Guidelines should include a written site-specific plan that is: 1) reviewed by City staff, 2) presented before the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC), and 3) given to field staff for implementation. The written plan should have included procedures for clearly marking trees to remove and protecting blue elderberry. The process allows public scrutiny through BPPC, which represents the citizens of Chico with the Power and Duty to manage Chico’s parks.

The Park Division claims that the policies and BMP’s in the eleven-year-old Bidwell Park Master Management Plan are sufficient review of potential adverse environmental effects per CEQA Guidelines. Therefore, City staff do not currently write site-specific plans for management of vegetation, fire roads and trails in Bidwell Park. However to avoid more adverse outcomes, the Park Division must follow professional planning and implementation practices, including CEQA review, for its future projects, e.g. mitigation for the environmental damage of the patch cut adjacent to the Nature Center.

Blooms Still Wow Despite Delayed Spring — 2019 Wildflower Show and Plant Sale

Mt. Lassen Chapter hosts a Wildflower Show and Plant Sale every other year. This year’s productions was in coordination with Friends of the Chico State Herbarium. Many herbarium friends wear two hats as Friends and CNPS members, but cooperation in the planning for plant collection and identification has been invaluable.

Robert Fischer did a yeoman’s job updating the plant lists for collectors and printing additional plant labels for each of the different habitats that we collect and display. Germain Boivin brought plants from Floral Native Nursery to sell to attendees. Floral Native Nursery donated a portion of proceeds to the Chapter. A small number of home-grown plants were offered also.

Plant collectors commented on the delayed spring and the difficulty finding blossoms from certain species. More than two hundred visitors enjoyed the blooms and plant material from our area. They learned about a variety of topics: Native Plant Horticulture, Calscape offerings, and the Altacal Neighborhood Habitat Program. Many purchased books about native plants and Mount Lassen Chapter t-shirts. Brave souls tasted teas from native plants, and all enjoyed lemonade and cookies so generously donated by chapter members.
Denise Devine Recognized for Dedication to Chapter

Mount Lassen Chapter recognized Denise Devine at the April 14 Wildflower Show as outstanding volunteer. Denise has been the Newsletter and Design Guru for the Chapter for decades. Active since the inception of our chapter, Denise designed our logo, and maintained wildflower show plant lists, labels and signs. She was the go to person for many of our publications including the very popular Native Plant Gardens of Butte, Glen, Plumas, and Tehama Counties.

Officers & Chairs

ELECTED OFFICERS

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Hospitality        Roxane Canfield
Invasive Plants    OPEN
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Newsletter Editor  Ann Elliott (Acting) / OPEN
Programs Co-Chair  OPEN
Publicity          Cindy Weiner
Rare Plants        OPEN
Sales              OPEN
Volunteer Recognition OPEN
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Membership Form

I wish to affiliate with the Mount Lassen Chapter
new ____
renew ____

Name _________________________________________________
Address _______________________________________________
City __________________________________________________
State _____ Zip ___________ Phone ______________________
Email  _________________________________________________

Send Membership Application to:
California Native Plant Society
Attn: Membership
2707 K Street, Suite 1
Sacramento, CA 95816-5130

Membership Application:
Student / Fixed Income ............ $25
Individual .................................. $50
Plant Lover ............................. $120
Supporter ................................. $500
For memberships for organizations or
to become a Perennial monthly-
sustainer go to CNPS.org.

Calendar 2019

April
27 - Magalia Serpentine

May
1 - General Meeting
5 - Water-Wise and Habitat-
Friendly Garden Tour
12 - Vina Plain Field Trip
22 - Ex. Board Meeting
25 - Feather R. Canyon
  Mosey
June
5 - Evening Picnic