**Alice Eastwood (1859-1953): Heroine of Botany**

*by Nancy Nies*

While Californians are certainly familiar with the disastrous San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fire of 1906, they may not have heard of a heroic act performed at that time on behalf of native plants by a daring woman named Alice Eastwood. Then curator of botany at the California Academy of Sciences, she rushed to the heavily damaged Academy building as fires raged nearby. The herbarium was on the sixth floor, and since most of the stone steps had not survived the earthquake, Alice and a friend somehow managed to climb up the metal railing. They were able to quickly retrieve the most valuable botanical treasures — 1,497 type specimens — thanks to Alice’s unconventional decision as curator to house them separately from the rest of the collection. After escaping with the specimens, Alice found a cart she could use to transport and protect them over the next few days, even as her own home and possessions went up in flames.

Alice Eastwood was born in Toronto, Canada, but at age 14 moved to Denver, Colorado with her family. There she attended high school, graduating as class valedictorian. She taught at the school for the next ten years, without benefit of a college education. During vacations, she taught herself botany and made collecting trips. In 1891 Katharine Brandegee, then botany curator at the California Academy of Sciences, saw Alice’s collection in Denver and asked her to help at the Academy’s herbarium. The next year Alice Eastwood and Katharine Brandegee became joint curators of the Academy’s botany department, and in 1894, upon Bran-
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degree’s retirement, Alice became the sole curator.

During the five years it took to rebuild the Academy’s facilities in San Francisco, Alice studied at herbaria in Europe and the United States. In order to replace the Academy’s lost collections, she made expeditions to Alaska, Arizona, Baja California, British Columbia, and Utah, being particularly interested in Western U.S. Liliaceae and the genera Lupinus, Arctostaphylos, and Castilleja. She also did extensive field work within California, and named 125 species of California plants. By the time she retired in 1949 at age 90, the Academy’s herbarium contained over 350,000 specimens—almost three times the number lost in 1906—and Alice had published many books and more than 300 articles, edited the journals Zoe and Erythea, and co-founded the journal Leaflets of Western Botany.

Like her mentor Katharine Brandegee, Alice Eastwood was a woman ahead of her time. Broad-minded, she promoted the interests of women, plants, the outdoors, and natural resources. In 1903 only a few women were recognized in American Men of Science, and Alice was one of the two listed with a star to indicate their being among the top 25% of scientists in their field. She was an energetic, robust woman who could cover twenty miles a day on foot, and who was allowed to join a men’s hiking group when she showed that her hiking ability rivaled that of the men. She explored difficult Western terrain in long skirts, but also designed a skirt that buttoned to make pants. Though Alice was conventional enough to apparently have noticed the bushes in the islands, but they are toyons. The toyon is clipped to look like a boxwood, but nevertheless it’s cool to see it planted.

Alice Eastwood’s name lives on in the plants named for her, which include seventeen species and the genera Aliciella and Eastwoodia. In 1950, she presided over the International Botanical Congress in Sweden from a chair once used by Linnaeus. A tribute written in 1942 by F. M. MacFarland, commemorating Alice Eastwood’s fifty years of service to the Academy, mentions the “frank, direct approach to every problem and [the] modest, kindly spirit” of the woman who risked her life to save valuable specimens in 1906 and would dedicate her long life to the study of native plants of California and the Western U.S. — a true heroine of botany.

Author’s note: For historical and personal details, I am indebted in large part to Larry Blakely’s well-researched website on California botanists, “Who’s in a Name?”.

Natives go “Commercial”

by Monica Tudor

At the Bakersfield College Garden Fest this year, a person came by and commented that their homeowner’s association was not in favor of native/drought-tolerant plantings. I had recently read of legislation that allowed the homeowner to use native plantings in spite of the HOA’s rules. This and a suggestion from a CNPS member got me thinking about the use of native plants in Bakersfield’s commercial locations.

There are other locations where native plants are featured, — CALM, for example — but what about commercial developments? I’ve seen deer grass in street medians, but even better are the newer developments on Stockdale highway from California Pizza Kitchen all the way to Riverlakes Park. These are planted with several varieties of native plants. They are mixed with typical landscape plants (roses) and other drought-tolerant plants (Texas ranger, for example). Thank you to the planners and designers!

Starting at the parking lot at Riverlakes Park, I noticed Salvia, penstemon, and manzanita. The manzanita looks great and I’m jealous because it is the plant I’ve had the most difficulty with, trying to get it to grow in my own California garden. In front of Target are some nice desert willows. At first I didn’t notice the bushes in the islands, but they are toyons. The toyon is clipped to look like a boxwood, but nevertheless it’s cool to see it planted.

In front of Chipotle is a mallow of some kind and just over is (what might be) an Encelia actonii. Heading east along the bike path just behind California Pizza Kitchen and the Elephant Bar is deer grass, Cleveland sage, white sage, and redbud. These two establishments also use natives in the landscaping facing the street. Their style is to use
natives like regular commercial plants, so you’ll find their plants clipped and in orderly rows. Just goes to show that natives can be used in a more formal style landscape as well as a natural-looking landscape.

I have to confess that when I discover natives in parks and commercial landscapes, it brings me joy. What’s not to love? The plants are beautiful, they provide habitat and they are drought-tolerant, an important consideration for our valley.

“The Davis-Sterling Act, Civil Code §1353.8. Low Water-Using Plants. specifically states: “...a provision of any of the governing documents of a common interest development shall be void and unenforceable if it ... prohibits, or includes conditions that have the effect of prohibiting, the use of low water-using plants as a group...”

Germinating Ideas...

If you or someone you know has a garden featuring at least some native plants, contact Dorie Giragosian (dorengiragosian@peoplepc.com). A resource listing of such gardens will be invaluable in the spring for planning possible garden tours.

Anyone with interest in and or knowledge of fabric-dying with plants — especially natives — contact Sasha Honig (andym5@bak.rr.com) for sharing knowledge and resources.

Rare Plant Treasure Hunt

Enjoy a day of botanizing in the Mount Pinos/Los Padres National Forest area on Saturday, June 28. Help us search for several historically-documented populations in the area. Hiking will be easy, but at some altitude. Be sure to bring water for the day, a lunch, and plenty of sun protection. Ticks could be encountered but no poison oak (yay!). Meet at 9:30 am at the Chuchupate Ranger Station’s large parking lot, 1 mile west of Lake of the Woods, about 8 miles from Highway 5.

For info and to RSVP contact: Melinda Elster (melster@charter.net) or Danny Slakey (dslakey@cnps.org).

When: Saturday, June 28, 2014, 9:30am – 5pm

Where: Chuchupate Ranger Station
34580 Lockwood Valley Rd, Frazier Park
The Kern Chapter of the California Native Plant Society meets the third Thursday of each month at Hall Ambulance Community Room, 1013 21st St. (21st & N St), Bakersfield, CA. Chapter Website: kern.cnps.org

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of California's native plants and their natural habitats. Members have diverse interests including natural history, botany, conservation, propagation, photography, horticulture, and more.

Contacts:
- President – Richard Pjut
- Vice President –
- Coordinator – Paul Gipe
- Treasurer – Monica Tudor
- Delegate – Dorie Giragosian
- Webmaster – Richard Pjut
- Secretary – Ashley Honig
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- Newsletter – Dinah Campbell
- Meeting Place, Dates & Topics
- Botany Heroine – Alice Eastwood

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The Mimulus Memo, the newsletter of the Kern Chapter, is a quarterly report of activities and updates on all aspects of native plants. As a Kern County resident, your membership includes garden tours, photography, horticulture, propagation, conservation, and more. The Mimulus Memo is open to all persons interested in professional and amateur California native plants.

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