



# THE CYPRESS CONE

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY CHAPTER



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[cruzcnp.org](http://cruzcnp.org)

Fall 2020

## Letter From the Chapter President

Linda Brodman

Yes! We are still here. These are challenging times, and our Chapter remains very present and engaged.

Over the past forty years, we have sent out a bi-monthly newsletter in the months with a general meeting. The newsletter highlights the meeting speaker, as well as brings members up to speed on Chapter events and activities. However, during these Covid-19 times when social distancing is required, there are no general meetings and limited group activities. For the time being we will be publishing the newsletter quarterly in accordance with nature's seasons, this being our inaugural fall issue. Included is a tribute to Mike Luther, our dear Propagation Leader who passed away in July, an article on planting after a fire by Jackie Pascoe, and a few tidbits of general interest.

### Of note is the decision to not hold our Annual Fall Plant Sale.

Social distancing guidelines make it cumbersome to hold the sale, and creates new propagation challenges difficult to navigate without our visionary propagation leader. Kari Olsen worked closely with Mike in propagation and met with him to discuss transitions, and is stepping in for Mike for now. Check our website ([cruzcnp.org](http://cruzcnp.org)) for updates and spot sales between now and spring.

Our Chapter is supporting this year's California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) Symposium online October 27 – 30. The timely topic is *Recovery and Resilience: Confronting Fire, Weeds, and Forest Pests*. You are invited to safely connect with community members from across the state to get latest updates on effective tools, relevant research, and strategic management approaches to invasive plant biology and management. Learn more and sign up at [cal-ipc.org/resources/symposium](http://cal-ipc.org/resources/symposium).

During the last few weeks of the CZU Lightning Complex Fire, my heart has filled with a profound sadness knowing what we have lost — beloved wildlands, idyllic open spaces, flora, and wildlife. Our community has reached out to help many people who have suffered losses and can not return to what was their home. The sincere goodwill and gratitude is seen, and felt every day.

Stay hopeful and involved. Like the interlace of plant and tree roots, we are all connected; our resilience and stewardship will help with our personal renewal, and restore our natural world.



Fire damage above Scott Creek.

## Look. Act. Inspire.

The challenging events of 2020 have further inspired UCSC's Ken Norris Center for Natural History to strengthen connections within the Santa Cruz County naturalist community and to continue its commitment to training the next generation of environmental leaders. This fall they honor the work of many past and present notable local naturalists, including Fred McPherson and Randall Morgan, in a public and virtual exhibition at San Lorenzo Valley Museum in Felton.

The exhibit, *Look. Act. Inspire. Sustaining and Expanding the Community of Naturalists in Santa Cruz County* highlights vital work that senior naturalists and others who have inspired a generation of young naturalists to follow in their footsteps.

The exhibit launches a campaign to support a cohort of diverse undergraduates to participate in a six-month county-wide pollinator survey project starting in Spring 2021. This program builds upon the legacy of CNPS Fellow and super-naturalist Randall Morgan.

Due to uncertainty from recent forest fires, there is no confirmed date for opening. Hopes remain it will open (with appropriate Covid-19 protocols) in early November. For updates please visit [norriscenter.ucsc.edu](http://norriscenter.ucsc.edu).

Many thanks to exhibit sponsors Santa Cruz County CNPS, Valley Women's Club, Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, BayPhoto Lab, Linda Brodman, and Jane Orbuch.

# Skies are Clearing

Jackie Pascoe

Skies are clearing as I write, August 25, and we are among the lucky ones—touch wood. What did I pack? Clothes, photos, and hundreds of envelopes of local native plant seed I've gathered from our property and nearby (with permission).

I've taken pleasure in bolstering our local native plant populations through seed propagation. But as I loaded my car, I thought about these seeds differently. If the ridges and valleys around us had burned—and they still might, sometime—they could be crucial for the ecosystem to regenerate from its seed bank.

Stephen McCabe, friend and Emeritus Director of Research for the UCSC Arboretum, reinforced this point. He's "firmly on the side of letting nature recover on its own," reminding us not all seeds in the seed bank sprout in the same year, so be patient.



Photo taken five years after 2008 Martin Fire, Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve. Credit: Jackie Pascoe

ecosystems can be left out of well-intentioned recovery plans. For reliable, science-based guidelines on fire recovery, I return again and again to CNPS resources:

- *The CNPS Fire Recovery Guide*, downloadable from: [cnps.org/conservation/fire](https://cnps.org/conservation/fire).
- The March 2020 issue of *Fremontia* is devoted to California Fires: [cnps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Fremontia-V47-N2-LR.pdf](https://cnps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Fremontia-V47-N2-LR.pdf)

**Did you know** that your local Resource Conservation District offers free services to help land owners and stewards? Visit [rcdsantacruz.org](https://rcdsantacruz.org) for more information on planting—or not—after a fire.



View of burned trees looking northwest from Eagle Repeater into Big Basin. Credit: CA State Parks.

Can we do anything in the meantime, to help our beleaguered wildlife? Yes—we can garden with native plants. Be extra careful if you garden within the wildland urban interface (WUI) to avoid plants that could escape into the wild or hybridize with local natives. For example, I love the Channel Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*), which hosts at least seven species of butterfly and doesn't hybridize with my local *Eriogonum nudum*, which may support thirty-nine!

If your garden is greater-than-pollinator distance from wildland, you don't have this restriction. Using Calscape ([calscape.org](https://calscape.org)) Advanced Search filters "Butterfly Host Plants" and "Commonly Available" returns 167 local natives you can buy for your garden!

Fall is the very best time to plant in California. But due to Covid-19, our chapter decided not to hold a fall plant sale. And then our propagation group leader Mike Luther passed away, leaving our community with a gaping hole in its collective heart. And then the lightning storm and the fires... So we are focusing on spring. But we may hold some online spot sales—stay tuned ([cruzcnps.org](https://cruzcnps.org)).

Here are a few other resources for native plants:

## Local organizations offering online sales:

Watsonville Wetlands Watch, CNPS Santa Clara Valley Chapter. UCSC Arboretum offers ongoing online sales at [shopucscarboretum.com](https://shopucscarboretum.com).

## Local or regional nurseries with outdoor shopping:

Central Coast Wilds ([centralcoastwilds.com](https://centralcoastwilds.com)), Yerba Buena Nursery, Half Moon Bay. Norrie's Gift Shop offers many natives ([arboretum.ucsc.edu](https://arboretum.ucsc.edu)). Most general plant nurseries have decent native plant selections too.

**Online native plant nurseries:** such as Las Pilitas ([laspilitas.com](https://laspilitas.com)) and Native Revival Nursery ([nativerevival.com](https://nativerevival.com)). Annie's Annuals ([anniesannuals.com](https://anniesannuals.com)) also offers many California native plants.



Iconic California poppy blooming after a fire.

## Mike Luther, Plant Propagator Extraordinaire, Honored

Mike Luther, visionary leader of our chapter's outstanding propagation group, died in late July this year. Mike was an active member of the Santa Cruz County Chapter for many years before he began taking on more responsibilities for the propagation group in the early 1990s.

At the September CNPS Chapter Council session, held virtually this year, the Volunteer Recognition Committee on behalf of the Chapter Council honored Mike Luther with the prestigious Volunteer Recognition Award. The award, made posthumously, recognizes Mike's many years of exceptional leadership of the Santa Cruz County Chapter's propagation team, contributing in great part to its success in growing beautiful native plants, creating interest in gardening with natives, and raising substantial funds for the chapter.

Our propagation team began around 1980, at Nevin Smith's Wintergreen Nursery in Watsonville. In the early 1990s the operation moved to Suncrest Nurseries which has given the group amazing support ever since. That's when Mike became right-hand man to Denise Polk, another wonderful leader. When Denise retired in 2013, Mike naturally emerged as leader, in large part because of his deliberate and steady way of working, his focus, and the strong sense of direction that he brought to the group. In other words because he cared.

Mike was often at the nursery between monthly group sessions to check on plants, gather data, confer with Nevin Smith or Leonel Morales (chief propagator there), and plan for the upcoming months. He called out the volunteers each month and led sessions. With Mike's extra care and attention and the group's support, the quality of the plants offered and the funds generated by sales steadily increased.

Mike had both a plantsman's and an engineer's eye. Careful data collection was his key to success, as was his attention to detail and willingness to innovate. He even came up with simple and effective teaching aids. For example when volunteers were routinely (and incorrectly) potting up Iris so their leaves were upright and their roots were buried, Mike used a simple slotted piece of cardboard to demo how the root crowns should lie along the surface, even though it meant the leaves would be slanted.

Volunteers enjoyed working with Mike—his love of plants was infectious. Mike was generous, thoughtful, and had a good sense of humor. He was also respected and liked by Suncrest staff. Former VP of operations Jim Marshall said, "Mike looks the part, and he is so bright and perceptive. He reminds me of the wonderful mentors who inspired me when I was getting started in the business."



Even after Mike entered hospice he still talked with many by phone to check on plants and discuss ideas for improvements. He was indefatigable and cheerful throughout. The propagation group and chapter board decided to award him a volunteer recognition award (pictured above) as we feared he would not live to enjoy the state-level volunteer recognition award that was already in progress. He thoroughly enjoyed our socially-distanced celebration, appreciating the warmth of the group and discussing transitioning the group to new leadership.

In addition to involvement with the CNPS, Mike was also a long-term volunteer with State Parks Archeology beginning around 1984, becoming an accomplished excavator specializing in adobe buildings. Mike had a wide range of other interests including hiking, attending classical

music concerts with friends, and his native plant garden.

Julia Davenport, plant sale co-chair, says this about Mike. "Mike was simply one of the kindest people I have ever met. His ideas always showed deep thought and consideration, not just for the plants, but for the propagation volunteers who worked diligently to make the plant sales possible.

Some folks are plant people, some are people people. Mike treated plants and people alike. For both, he held respect for individual strengths, perceived temperaments and acted accordingly to nurture as best he could, looked to improvise for better results, and was concerned for the welfare of all.

Spending time with Mike could be frustrating. Sometimes he would put off making a decision, or beat around the bush, rather than risk hurting someone's feelings. Procrastination sometimes isn't such a bad thing, especially when the reasons for it are based on kindness. Mike reminded us of the importance of treating people gently. We miss him."



Loading the truck at Suncrest Nurseries before a sale (Mike Luther, Ann Garside, Don Peattie, Linda Brodman).

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## Welcome to our many new members!

Our mission is to ensure survival of native plant populations and the web of life that depends upon them. What an important time to be a member! Below are the CNPS Santa Cruz County Chapter's newest members as of the March/April issue of *The Cypress Cone*.

Nancy Alstrum  
Travis Beck  
Helen Behar  
Kathleen Bosserman-King  
Susie Bright  
Stella Casillas  
Vickie Clark  
Mikey Cohen  
Charles Cseuz  
Camilla Day  
Courtney Eggleston  
John Gamman

Laura Goodhue  
Karen Haralson  
Greg Larson  
Joyce LoFranco  
Hanna Meade  
Lisa Ortiz  
Kai Parker  
Donna Robbins  
John Root  
Vaughan Williams  
Elena Wolff

## Join the California Native Plant Society!

Your membership includes *Fremontia* journal (twice yearly) filled with articles on all aspects of native plants; *Flora* (quarterly) CNPS magazine presenting statewide activities and schedules; and Chapter newsletter *The Cypress Cone*.

Fill out the form below or go to [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org) to join or renew your membership online. Be sure to state your chapter affiliation as the Santa Cruz County Chapter.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Choose One:

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Steward \$5,000 (two members, plus Special Updates)  
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Make your check payable to CNPS and send to:  
California Native Plant Society, Attn: Membership,  
2707 K Street, Suite 1, Sacramento, CA 95816-5130

## Like us on Facebook

Contribute to our group! Search for "Santa Cruz County Chapter - California Native Plant Society." Ask a question about native plants or post your own photos of native plants in your yard or on your hikes.

## Opt for Email

If you would like to receive your newsletter via email only, please contact Ann at [anng@calcentral.com](mailto:anng@calcentral.com).

## CNPS is a 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization dedicated to the preservation of California native flora

CNPS has thirty-four chapters throughout the state and membership is open to all persons, professional and amateur, with an interest in California's native plants and other activities such as natural history, botany, ecology, conservation, photography, drawing, hiking, and gardening.

Donations are tax-deductible and support special projects such as publication of the County Checklist and conservation activities that preserve important habitats and species in our area. You may earmark gifts for specific areas. Your membership is also tax deductible, minus \$8 for the journal *Fremontia*, published two times per year. Make checks payable to CNPS and send to: Santa Cruz County Chapter CNPS, P.O. Box 1622, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. <http://www.cruzcnps.org>