



## Bristlecone Chapter

*Dedicated to the Preservation of California Native Flora*

# The California Native Plant Society

Bristlecone Chapter Newsletter

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**Volume 43, No. 1**  
**January–February 2022**

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## President's Message

Happy New Year fellow native plant devotees! Hopefully, you've all been enjoying the recent rain and snowfall. I sense the plant life rejoicing—the leaves of desert bushes slowly unfolding, the sagebrush regaining that silver green hue, and the high-elevation trees and bushes finally resting under snow. What a reprieve for all of us—flora and fauna.

For me, this is the time of year for hiking in the arid, rocky places where the Great Basin intersects the Mojave Desert, where the views encompass both the Sierra Nevada and Death Valley. In the 1940's my great grandmother wrote a poem in which she concluded that "...the peace of all the ages lies in the desert West." My heart has always felt this to be true. I love the tough and resilient life of the land—the creosote, yucca and shadscale scrub so starkly visible against the stone backdrop and open skies; the animals hidden during the day in burrows and under rocks, but their traces and trails all around. I feel so thankful for the people in my life who inspired my wonder and appreciation for this landscape that many would call a 'wasteland'.

The desert is a landscape defined by the absence of water. And yet "...there is water enough in the desert if you live properly," writes ecologist Christopher Norment. Recently I revisited Norment's book *Relicts of a Beautiful Sea-Survival, Extinction, and Conservation in a Desert World* in which he studies the lives of rare and imperiled desert wildlife and habitats in the Owens Valley, Inyo Mountains, Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge and Death Valley. Water is an underlying theme in the book, and of course, humans—the ways in which we continue to drive species to extinction with our "... bulldozers and pipelines, pumps and wells, ditches and dams, lawns and lakes, fields of alfalfa, fields of houses..." Of

course, this is not happening only in the desert, but to all other ecosystems and species worldwide. The book also focuses on the actions of a handful of people intent on stopping the flood of destruction. People who cherish native plants and animals, who strive to protect water and land and who also believe like Norment, that "...all species have a right to exist, independent of human utilitarian concerns and needs."

And so, my message today is a tribute to both plants and people, land and life. I am deeply grateful to the members and volunteers of the Bristlecone Chapter CNPS, and to all other conservation organizations, grassroots groups, activists, writers, and artists. I truly appreciate those people who understand the value of the Inyo rock daisy and Tiehm's buckwheat (and so many other endangered species), and who work so hard to protect and fight for "...biodiversity's inherent right to exist."

—Kelly Bahr

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## Mary DeDecker Botanical Grant

The Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society is pleased to request applications for the Mary DeDecker Botanical Grant. This small-grants program is named in memory of a local botanist renowned for her many contributions to the botany and history of the Eastern Sierra Nevada and northern Mojave Desert.

Our goal is to promote research and projects that increase understanding and appreciation of native plants and ecosystems in the Bristlecone Chapter area. Anyone may apply, but we are especially interested in helping graduate and undergraduate college students as well as elementary, middle, and

high school pupils and their teachers. The only requirement is that the project include studies within the Bristlecone Chapter area—generally defined as Inyo and Mono Counties, but including adjacent biogeographic areas of the northern Mojave Desert, Sierra Nevada, or western Great Basin. Subjects appropriate for funding cover a wide range, from basic taxonomic or ecological research to native plant gardens. The committee evaluates applications based on the extent to which the proposed project is specific to our regional flora, fills information gaps, and contributes to public awareness of native flora. We seek well-organized proposals that demonstrate a clear objective and a pathway to achieve success.

The program will award grants of up to \$1,000 each. Proposals exceeding \$1,000 may still be considered, contingent on chapter funding and project justification; in such cases, applicants are advised to develop their project acknowledging that only \$1,000 or less may be available, and line-item the budget accordingly.

### Criteria and Procedures

Submit written proposals to the Mary DeDecker Grant Committee. Each should contain 1) title, 2) objectives, 3) methods, 4) expected final product, 5) relevance to chapter area (at least part of the project should be conducted in Inyo or Mono Counties), 6) proposed budget, 7) permitting plans for collection and research from relevant land managers, and 8) applicant's resume. Student proposals must include a letter of support from their adviser or teacher. Electronic files may be in Word or pdf format, and should be named using the format: LastNameFirstName\_2020application (or \_2020letter). Proposals should not exceed three pages in length, excluding resume. **The deadline for complete proposal packages is January 21, 2022. All applicants will be notified of the committee's decision by early March, 2022.**

A progress report explaining how Bristlecone Chapter funds were used is due at the end of the calendar year. Applicants are encouraged to give a talk about their project at a chapter evening meeting and/or to write a brief explanation of their work for the Bristlecone Chapter newsletter.

**Send proposals or requests for information to:**  
[grants@bristleconecnps.org](mailto:grants@bristleconecnps.org) (electronic submissions are preferred but not required)  
OR:

Michèle Slaton, Ph.D.  
Mary DeDecker Grant Committee Chair  
P. O. Box 364  
Bishop, CA 93514

You can find more information about the Bristlecone Chapter Grants Program, including this Request for Proposals, at <http://bristleconecnps.org/dedecker/grant/>

— Michèle Slaton

## Impacts of OHV Trespass on Native Plants

You may have heard about a citizen-led effort to document off-highway vehicle (OHV) impacts in Inyo County. While many OHV-users comply with best practices and “tread lightly,” it only takes one illegally created trail to impart long-lasting damage to native plant communities and rare plant populations. Unfortunately, between 2020 and 2021, there were nearly 50 citizen reports of new unauthorized, user-created routes in Inyo County. While some illegal routes avoided direct impacts to vegetation, others crushed native shrubs, and cushion plants like Purpus' buckwheat (*Eriogonum kennedyi* var. *purpusii*). All illegal routes can leave a scar by compacting the soil, which inhibits the growth of adjacent plants and interferes with regeneration. Furthermore, invasive plant propagules can linger on vehicle parts and be spread into new areas.



Evidence of OHV trespass onto a population of Purpus' buckwheat (*Eriogonum kennedyi* var. *purpusii*), an important nectar plant for an endemic subspecies of *Euphilotes* butterfly. Photo by C. Klingler.

These citizen reports, along with management recommendations, were compiled and presented to decision-makers in the hopes that future decisions

relating to OHV management will account for these impacts.

—Maria Jesus

## Why We Plant Local Natives

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 the CNPS Horticultural Committee met to explore the issues of genetic purity and supporting biodiversity with plants grown for our plant sales. They surveyed CNPS members who say they are more interested in supporting biodiversity and going to local native plant sales to buy hard-to-find plants as well as locally-sourced natives.

The issue with “locally-sourced” is there’s no standard definition. A basic definition is plants grown from locally-sourced seeds have adapted to the local climate and attract and feed the local wildlife populations. The federal government supports “restoration grade” plants, which means the plants are grown from locally-sourced seed. By “locally” the government means that if the project calls for plants to be planted in the Bodie Hills, then that is where seeds are collected from, not the Mono basin. Although CNPS does not recommend this exact level of “localization” they do encourage it.

California native  
*Penstemon speciosus*  
(top photo by Barry  
Breckling via Calphotos)  
and non-native *P.*  
*strictus* (bottom photo  
by Jerry Friedman via  
Wikimedia Commons).



One of the problems of buying seed mixes and plants from online retailers is that you sometimes are not

getting local natives. For example, I have been accidentally selling Rocky Mountain showey penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*) as opposed to the California native *P. speciosus*. *Penstemon strictus* is hardy, self-seeds and spreads easily. Penstemons cross pollinate all the time so there is the threat of the two species crossing and creating a sterile hybrid or one that local insects are not attracted to. Due to its self-seeding properties, it can also become invasive.

A cultivar is a plant variety produced in cultivation by selective breeding. Many of the plants you buy at commercial nurseries are grown this way. Their traits have often been chosen for long bloom times, insect resistance, and good leaf color. The plants are cloned from plant tissue of a mother plant and grown out so the traits stay genetically pure. There are also plants that are termed “nativar”. These are native plants that have also been cultivated for specific traits. The CNPS policy on using nativars is vague but basically says, “if there is modification to the leaf color or flower color that can alter the chemical makeup of the leaf or can affect the nectar resources”, that may negatively affect biodiversity.

Things to consider if you are planting nativars and cultivars are:

1. How far away are you planting to wild populations?
2. How are the plants pollinated?
  - a. Wind pollination can help pollen travel relatively far (up to 12 miles for oaks and conifers, for example).
  - b. Bees can travel up to a quarter of a mile and tend to visit the same type of flower during the day. So if they get some pollen from a cultivar and then transfer that to a native plant the genetic diversity will be compromised.
  - c. A self-pollinating plant holds no risk.

For example, Sonoma yarrow is a cultivar that is used in gardens. It is sterile so it possess no risk to the native populations. Yarrow ‘paprika’ (the red-pink variety) is from Europe and can easily cross-pollinate with our natives. The local yarrow is the only yarrow we sell at our plant sale.

The Bristlecone Chapter does grow all plants from locally-sourced seed for plant sales. We cannot be as specific as the Federal government since our customers come from a wide ranging area from Walker to Darwin. So seeds are collected in both Inyo and Mono counties, and we do not buy plants from



A cultivar of *Achillea millefolium*, yarrow 'paprika' (top, photo by Timmeh 85) and our local native *A. millefolium* (bottom photo by Dcrjsr via Wikimedia Commons).



wholesale nurseries. There have been a few times when we sold nursery plants that were donated from graduate students whose experiments had finished with their studies.

—Katie Quinlan

## Conservation Volunteer Opportunities for Members Near and Far

Our chapter area is home to a rich variety of plant life—from rare and endemic species, like the Owens Valley checkerbloom (*Sidalcea covillei*), to ubiquitous plants like big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), which play a critical role in local ecosystems. In this era of great change, many native plant species are under increased threat by habitat loss, invasive species, wildfire, and the climate crisis, just to name a few. According to CNPS, more than 2,400 species, subspecies, and varieties are ranked as rare or uncommon in California. However, only a fraction of these species are afforded strong legal protections.

The work carried out by our chapter's conservation committee aims to give these plants a voice and advocate for their protection. For instance, longtime CNPS Bristlecone volunteer, Edie Trimmer, has kept our chapter engaged in the public comment process when it comes to groundwater pumping activities and associated impacts to plants, especially groundwater dependent vegetation. Other examples of potential plant threats we've tracked over the last

year include mining activities at Conglomerate Mesa and Long Valley, off-highway vehicle trespass, and even road maintenance practices. We also work to get the latest scientific data to decision-makers and recently contributed to CNPS' Important Plant Area initiative for the Eastern Sierra region.

**In this New Year, we are looking for more volunteers to join our conservation committee!** If you would like to learn more about how you can contribute or have conservation ideas you'd like to discuss, please email us at [conservation@bristleconecnps.org](mailto:conservation@bristleconecnps.org).

—Maria Jesus

## Outdoor Education Opportunities

Are you interested in volunteering in outdoor education? Want to teach hands-on and interactive lessons about native plants and the environment to small groups of students? If so, Inyo County Office of Education (ICOE) and Eastern Sierra Watershed Project (ESWP) can use your help!



Docents instruct students on water quality testing (top), stream morphology (middle), and local wildlife (bottom). Photos courtesy of Maggie Riley.

Docent instructors are needed for a variety of outdoor education programs for 2nd to 7th graders from February through May of 2022. These are volunteer positions, but docents are offered an \$85/day teaching stipend, free training, and free transportation to field sites from Bishop. For exact dates, more details/resources, and to sign up directly for programs visit the following website:  
<https://sites.google.com/icsos.us/eswp/docents>.

Also feel free to contact Maggie Riley (email: [mriley@inyocoe.org](mailto:mriley@inyocoe.org); phone: 760-873-3262 x2131) for more information or with any questions.

—Martin Purdy and Maggie Riley

## Welcome to our Newest Members

We have the pleasure of welcoming Mabel of Huntington, Catherine of Oakland, Patricia of Sacramento and Linda of Santa Cruz. Thank you and all of our members for helping our chapter grow.

### Up-Coming Events (For updated information, visit [www.bristleconecnps.org/events](http://www.bristleconecnps.org/events))

#### Chapter Events

**Wednesday, January 19, 6:00 p.m.**

#### Board Meeting

All members are welcome to join. Contact our Secretary, Kathleen Nelson, at [secretary@bristleconecnps.org](mailto:secretary@bristleconecnps.org) for the Zoom link.

#### Other Events

**Monday–Tuesday, January 10–11, 2022  
Northern California Botanists Symposium  
California State University, Chico**

Northern California Botanists is having their next symposium at California State University, Chico on January 10–11, 2022 with online workshops on the 12th. Updates will be available at:  
<http://www.norcalbotanists.org/>

### Up-Coming Events

(For updated information, visit  
[www.bristleconecnps.org/events](http://www.bristleconecnps.org/events))

**Saturday February 5, 2022, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.**

#### Friends of the Inyo, Bodie Hills Winter Outing

Join FOI for a fun outing on skis or snowshoes to explore the Bodie Hills. All ages and skill levels are welcome.

Meet at the Virginia Creek Settlement in Bridgeport at 9:00 a.m. Bring water, lunch, snacks, camera, and skis or snowshoes. If you don't have any, FOI will have snowshoes to borrow. Dress in warm clothing. Contact FOI if you need more information on the event, guidance on gear and/or what to bring.  
<https://friendsoftheinyo.org/event/bodie-hills-winter-outing-2022/>

**Please send any submissions to us by  
February 15, 2022 for the next issue.**

#### Bristlecone Chapter Directory

President: Kelly Bahr [kbahr@cnps.org](mailto:kbahr@cnps.org)  
 Vice President: Michèle Slaton  
[vicepresident@bristleconecnps.org](mailto:vicepresident@bristleconecnps.org)  
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 DeDecker Grants: Michèle Slaton [grants@bristlecone.org](mailto:grants@bristlecone.org)  
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 T-shirt Sales: Katie Quinlan [plant\\_sale@bristleconecnps.org](mailto:plant_sale@bristleconecnps.org)  
 DeDecker Gardener: Kelly Bahr [kbahr@cnps.org](mailto:kbahr@cnps.org)  
 Historian: **OPEN**  
 Mammoth Plant Sales: **OPEN**  
 Hospitality: **OPEN**

## The California Native Plant Society

Bristlecone Chapter

P.O. Box 364

Bishop, CA 93515-0364

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Note: If you still receive this newsletter via US Mail, please help the Bristlecone chapter save money, energy, and trees by sending your email address to newsletter@bristleconecnps.org so you can receive the electronic version.

## Membership

*The California Native Plant Society is an organization of laypersons and professionals united by an interest in the plants of California. It is open to all. The society, working through its local chapters, seeks to increase the understanding of California's native flora and to preserve this rich resource for future generations.*

**To join or renew online:** Go to [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org) and select JOIN/RENEW (at the top of the webpage or select it after clicking the menu button) or mail the form below:

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to be affiliated with the Bristlecone Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mail To / Make Payable To:

California Native Plant Society, Attn: Membership

2707 K Street, Suite 1

Sacramento, CA 95816

**Gift Contribution:** \_\_\_\_\_ Wherever needed ☐  
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### Membership Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Student / Fixed Income	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Lover	\$120
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$500
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