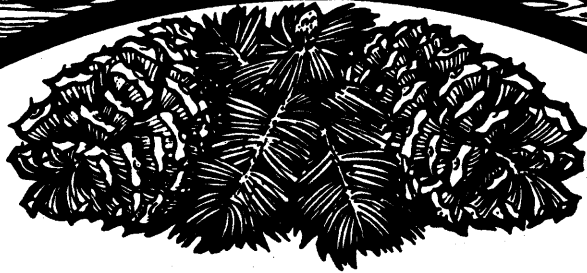


BRISTLECONE • CHAPTER

CNRS



Volume 14 No. 6 November 1995

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

Wednesday, November 29, 6:30 p.m. Big Pine Methodist Church. Potluck dinner followed by member's slide show. This is a fun way to share your adventures or reminisce about flowers seen!

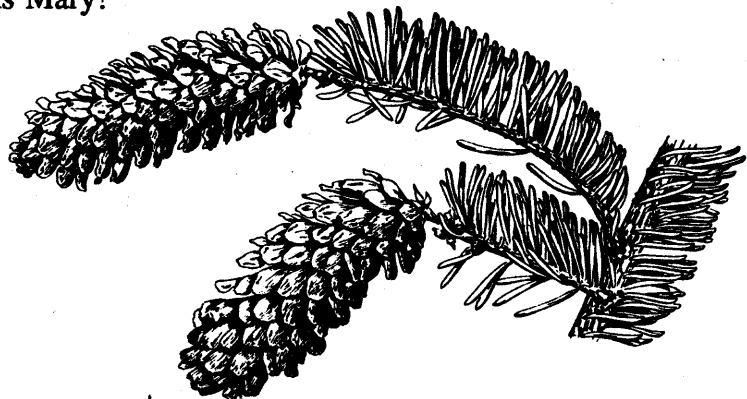
NEXT CHAPTER BOARD MEETING:

Tuesday, November 21, 7:00 p.m. at Doris Fredendall's residence in Big Pine. All chairpersons are welcome and encouraged to attend.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This month I want to throw in a sales pitch as salesperson for our chapter. We had put in an order for more T-shirts and now we have them!!! Talk about selection, this time I ordered short and long sleeve shirts, white and gray, and lots and lots of large and EXTRA large sizes. If I would have had a penny for every time I had to tell someone that I was out of large T-shirts I would have at least ten cents by now! So don't put it off any longer, get that large T-shirt from me right away, because before you know I'll be out of them again. Remember too that these shirts make great Christmas gifts.

On the more presidential side, on behalf of our chapter I would like to give a big congratulations to Mary Ann Henry. She has been voted by the state Fellows Committee to be our chapter's newest fellow. Mary Ann is the fourth Bristlecone Chapter member to become a fellow and I am delighted as well as proud that we have such dedicated members in our chapter. Congratulations Mary!



The following article by Mary DeDecker is the fifth in a series on native plants that will focus on ecology, taxonomy and other natural history information.

Rabbitbrush

Common Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*) cannot be ignored in the fall, so it is featured in this issue. It is a very competitively successful, fall-blooming shrub in the Sunflower Family.

The plant is mostly 2 to 5 feet high, its stems flexible, somewhat broomlike, and covered with a grayish feltlike coat. Their color varies from pale greenish to bluish-green. Its leaves are narrowly linear and relatively inconspicuous. Its broken stems have a sweet odor, similar to anise. The numerous flowers are bright yellow and lack petals. The flowers grow in terminal clusters.

Rabbitbrush is an inconspicuous part of the shrub cover until fall when its yellow blooms dominate the landscape. Then the entire valley becomes golden. There are several subspecies which are difficult to distinguish so will not be described here. Some are slightly more alkali tolerant than others, and some favor higher elevations.

Rabbitbrush is an opportunist which takes over abandoned farm lands and takes advantage of situations where the native plant community has been altered. Long periods of stress have allowed it to move into pastures and precious meadows. Now it is even crowding out the natives in the alkali meadows so characteristic of the Owens Valley. It is very sad to see the diverse flora of the valley turning into a monoculture of a shrub of questionable value. Its only use for wildlife is to furnish cover. Although it does stabilize the soil and prevent blowing dust, other species would do the same if given a chance. It cannot be eradicated by burning because it readily crownsprouts. It seems that its only redeeming feature is the beautiful color it provides in the fall. Its sap does contain a significant amount of rubber and if anyone can come up with a practical way to harvest that, please come forth.

The Native Americans, who found a use for almost every species did make use of Rabbitbrush. They made a medicinal tea of its leaves and stems to treat colds and other ailments. Chewing gum was made from its roots. Entire plants were used in making dwellings. Its blooming period was a

valuable indicator of the time to harvest Pinyon nuts.

Surely we should be able to put the plant to some good use as well.

.....Mary DeDecker

Field Trip Reports

McGee Canyon

July 8 - Leader: Charlotte Harbeson

On this lovely partly cloudy mountain morning, twelve adults and three children gathered at the McGee parking lot. A refreshing breeze was blowing and thoughts of thunder showers were on everyone's mind. The group started up the horse trail which winds steeply up McGee Canyon's moraine. The tilted and folded colorful rock layers of brown, red, white and gray are one of the many spectacular geological sights to be seen in the Eastern Sierra. Looking to the west, an alluvial fan was covered with gray Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), brilliant yellow Sulphur Flowered Buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*), and dotted with Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.).

As the group continued walking, everyone's eyes were now to the ground viewing the blue Woolly Star (*Eriastrum* sp.), Dusty Maidens (*Chaenactis douglasii*), Linanthus (*Linanthus nuttallii*), Hawksbeard (*Crepis* sp.), Sticky Aster (*Machaeranthera* sp.) and Whitney's Locoweed (*Astragalus whitneyi*). Snow banks were still clinging to the sides of the canyon, a remainder of last winter's heavy snowfall. The wheezy vocalizations of a Red-Breasted Sapsucker and the "wee-chee-a-wee" of a White-Crowned Sparrow could barely be heard over the raging white water coursing down McGee Creek as we approached a small aspen grove on the left side of the trail. Coming to a moister section of the trail lined with willow stands, Forget-Me-Nots (*Myosotis sylvatica*) and streamside Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*) were striking.

Further up the canyon, we crossed an immense alluvial fan abundant with Mountain Mules Ears (*Wyethia mollis*) and White-Spurred Lupine (*Lupinus* sp.). Swallowtail butterflies were floating in the breeze and numerous little blue butterflies were feeding on the Sulphur Flowered Buckwheat. Small clusters of Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) and Wild Onion (*Allium* sp.) were seen along the way.

After crossing the long alluvial fan, we stopped for lunch at a spring that was flowing from the west side of the mountains toward McGee Creek. A lone Sierra Rein Orchid (*Platanthera* sp.) attracted our attention and common Monkey Flowers (*Mimulus* sp.) were growing near the water's edge. As we were eating lunch and chatting, a few raindrops began falling. An unidentified light greenish-flowered Umbelliferae piqued everyone's curiosity. The smell of the root and leaves was of an anise or licorice scent. The plant was identified as Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza* sp.). Several people continued up to McGee Creek and the rest of the group walked back noticing a small forest of Bitter Cherry (*Prunus emarginata*). The "zee-chuppity-chups" of the immature Rufous Hummingbirds vying for their territories amongst the Indian Paintbrush could be heard. A special thank you to Doris Fredendall, who shared her enormous wealth of information and anecdotes which helped to make our hike complete.

.....Charlotte Harbeson

Whippoorwill Flat

July 15 - Leader: Mary DeDecker

On Saturday, July 15, Mary DeDecker led a field trip to Whippoorwill Flat in the Inyo Mountains. The objective: Mistletoe. That's right, Mistletoe - the elusive green stuff celebrated by poets and worshipped by our Germanic and Celtic ancestors.

I know, you're thinking "Are you crazy, Mistletoe doesn't grow around here!" Perhaps the desert heat had warped our judgement. Who knows what really motivated people to go on this seemingly hopeless quest. All I know is that 13 people showed up at the Triangle Campground in Big Pine and Mary was there to lead us.

At the first stop, along the Death Valley road near Devil's Gate, we saw a nice example of a Mojave mixed shrub community. Several *Eriogonum* spp. were in bloom, along with *Penstemon scapoides* and *Astragalus minthorniae* among the shrubs.

Next stop: Whippoorwill Flat. And there it was. Mistletoe all around us, *Arceuthobium divaricatum* growing on *Pinus monophylla* and *Phoradendron juniperum* and *P. densum* growing on *Juniperus osteosperma*. According to Mary, a rare hybrid of the two *Phoradendron* spp. occurs there as well.

There was a nice display of flowers in the understory: *Phacelia vallis-mortae*, *Allium*

atrorubens, *Eriogonum umbellatum* var. *versicolor*, *Cordylanthus kingii* ssp. *helleri*, *Calochortus bruneaunis*, *Orobanche* sp., *Astragalus casei*, *Erigeron argentatus*, *Ranunculus andersonii*, *Oxytheca dendroides*, *Chaenactis douglasii*, *Caulanthus cordatus*, and *Crepis acuminata* among many others. But something was missing. After having driven over 30 miles on hot dusty roads to find the only Mistletoe population for who knows how many miles around, what did we do? Perform ancient Druidic rituals? Engage in personal vision quests and seek spiritual enlightenment? of course not! We sat quietly in the shade and ate our lunches (with homemade cookies provided by Betty Gilchrist and Mary).

On the drive home (which included another stop in the Mojave mixed shrub community where we admired *Penstemon floridus*, *Dalea searlsiae*, *Cymopterus aboriginum*, *Cryptantha confertiflora* and *Mimulus bigelovii*), I pondered the meaning of it all. How could a plant which had such a powerful effect on our ancestors have had such a negligible effect on us? Did we need to sit under pyramids to restore our psychic sensitivity?

Seeking enlightenment, I made a pilgrimage to the Bishop public library. According to the Encyclopedia Americana, the Mistletoe revered by our northern European ancestors was the shrub *Viscum album*, which is not even native to California! No wonder we hadn't felt the Mistletoe's power: we ate lunch sitting under "Juniper Mistletoe" and "Dense Mistletoe" which aren't even in the same genus as the Real Thing (look it up in your Jepson)!

Moral of the story: Never trust common names.

.....Daniel Pritchard

Francis Lake

August 9 - Leader: Charlotte Harbeson

On a beautiful Wednesday morning, six of us met at the Rock Creek Lake trailhead for a leisurely hike to Francis Lake. Our leader, Charlotte Harbeson, provided us with plant lists and first-hand knowledge of where to look for particular flowers. We saw somewhat over forty species of plants in bloom. Especially noteworthy were Scarlet Penstemon (*Penstemon rostriflorus*), *Potentilla* spp., and Primrose Monkey Flower (*Mimulus primuloides*) in the wet meadows, Sulphur Flowered Buckwheat (*Eriogonum umbellatum*) and Meadow

Penstemon (*Penstemon rydbergii*) on the drier slopes, Alpine Buttercup (*Ranunculus eschscholtzii*) and Colville's Columbine (*Aquilegia pubescens*) by the lake, and here and there at all elevations the lovely blue Showy Penstemon (*Penstemon speciosus*).

.....Mary Allen

Lundy Canyon

August 26 - Leader: Ann Howald

This trip was originally scheduled to go to Saddlebag Lake, but even toward the end of August this high-altitude locale was mostly covered with snow. The consensus was that we would go instead to beautiful Lundy Canyon a few miles further north and at a much lower elevation than Saddlebag Lake.

After some trouble finding parking places in this popular fishing area, we were on our way up the canyon, with Ann pointing out and identifying plants right and left. We saw Dogbane (*Apocynum* sp.), Cream Bush (*Holodiscus discolor*), Tobacco Bush (*Ceanothus velutinus*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos vaccinoides*), the Sierra Soda Straw (*Angelica lineariloba*) and Scarlet Gilia (*Ipomopsis aggregata*), all in the aspen at the start of the trip.

Coming out of the aspen groves and starting up the steeper part of the canyon we passed some Mules Ears (*Wyethia mollis*), tall Basin Wild Rye (*Leymus cinereus*), Sierra Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus rubra*), and Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifoliosus*) and the majestic Sierra Juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis* var. *australis*).

As we went up, we encountered a wet spring area populated by Meadow-Rue (*Thalictrum* sp.), *Potentilla glandulosa* ssp. *hansenii*, *P. gracilis*, *P. fruticosa* and Braken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum* var. *pubescens*). There we were also greeted by a *Platanthera* orchid with its exquisite small white flowers. A little further along, in a shady glen, we saw *Smilacina stellata* and Monkshood (*Aconitum columbianum*). Nearby were St. John's Wort (*Hypericum formosum* var. *scouleri*), beautiful Blue-Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium* sp.), *Arnica* sp., Ranger's Buttons (*Sphenosciadium capitellatum*) and Labrador Tea (*Ledum glandulosum*) as well as *Osmorhiza* sp. and the lovely *Deschampsia* grass. Further on we spotted *Pyrola asarifolia* with its stalks of pink blossoms, Giant Green Gentian

(*Swertia radiata*), and Chinquapin (*Chrysolepis sempervirens*).

Going up a sunny, rocky slope I had my first official introduction to *Amelanchier*, the Serviceberry, a plant I've heard of ever since my botany classes in graduate school in the early 70's, but had never knowingly met in real life. Going up through alternating dry slopes and wet streamside habitats, we saw *Ageratina occidentalis* [*Eupatorium*], Catchfly (*Silene* sp.), *Juniperus communis*, *Aster breweri* [*Chrysopsis breweri*] and *Allium validum* with its big purple flower globes.

Finally we came out into a meadow of avalanche-compressed aspen and passed through to a treeless wet meadow where we saw, besides some other friends already mentioned, Groundsel (*Senecio integerrimus*), *Montia chammisoi*, and *Rumex* sp.

After lunch, we proceeded back to the trailhead admiring again all that we had seen on the trip in. Thanks for a nice trip, Ann and may the Saddlebag Lake trip be on for next summer.

.....Ted Gies

Noxious Weed News

In early October, the 1995 meeting of the California Exotic Pest Plant Council commenced in Asilomar, just south of Monterey, California. Human weeds of all types representing various state and federal agencies and "attack" groups blew in from far corners of California and elsewhere. Sally Manning, two LADWP employees and myself represented the "Eastside's" weed woes. When confronted with so many horror and success stories from the other side of the mountains, we were both enlightened and encouraged as well as frightened. "Wow, you guys really have a terrible problem on your hands(heh-)..." was an often repeated statement. Yellow Star Thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), Pampus Grass (*Cortaderia jubata*), Perennial Pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), Tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), German Ivy, English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Scotch Broom, French Broom, Spanish Broom, Portuguese Broom, Basque shepherder's Broom (*Cystis* sp.), all play a part in disrupting California's native plant communities. Who so many weeds? What happened? Where did they all come from? Who is supposed to deal with all of this? CALEPPC meets once a year and attempts to figure some of these questions out.

Upon my return from a foggy six a.m. bike tour of the non-native iceplant and golf course-covered dunes along world famous "17-Mile Drive", there was just enough time to plow through my entirely non-indigenous breakfast before we launched into our day-long verbal bombardment of weeds. We learned about the use of fire in removing yellow star thistle and cheat grass and why herbicides are good and why they are bad. We heard about the futility of dealing with Perennial Pepperweed in Nevada and why some riparian birds in the Southeast might be better off if we just left the Saltcedar alone (?!). This hot topic was continued in an evening Tamarisk workshop where the speaker explained that in some drainages, e.g. the Lower Colorado, human induced changes such as increased salinity in soils may prevent native plants from ever returning once Tamarisk is removed. Therefore, crummy, non-native, salty, shrubby trees may be better than no trees at all - for birds.

Hopefully, we are not yet at that point in the Owens Valley. Saltcedar may be systematically removed from select areas and the native plants may make a comeback, possibly with human help. But we also have Perennial Pepperweed, Tumbleweed (*Salsola* spp.), *Bassia hyssopifolia*, Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolius*) and more. We must; 1) do what we can to keep native plant communities healthy and less susceptible to exotic plant invasions, 2) be aware of new infestations and act upon them immediately, and 3) plan the best and safest strategy for dealing with established non-native plant species that are threats to local biodiversity. Well, its good to be home and sneezing in our own weed patch. Go pull a weed!

Look for the "weed edition" of the Inyo County Department's Water Reporter this fall.

.....Brian Cashore - new Exotic Pest Plant Chair

Tree Lore

Tree Lore will be a series by Andrew Kirk that will be devoted to the identification, distribution and natural history of our native trees.

Screwbean Mesquite

Though generally considered a tree of the Colorado and Mojave deserts, Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*) has established itself near Independence,

CA. To see this interesting member of the Pea Family, drive, walk or bicycle 2.1 miles east of Independence on Mazourka Canyon Road. There, near the Stephens Canal and the earthquake fault, you can see about 90 Screwbeans, mainly in minor water courses.

Also growing there are non-native Russian Olive trees which have smooth red bark, unlike the gray-brown, shaggy bark of the Screwbean Mesquite. Their respective forms further differentiate these two: Russian Olive branches erratically whereas the Screwbean branches little, its several trunks gracefully bending outward in a vase-like habit.

In spring, the Screwbean looks dead until late May. Only after the Black Locusts have fully flowered and the first clutches of Common Ravens are fledging, do the small, bipinnately compound leaves begin to appear. The leaves are followed by yellow flower spikes and clumps of green seed pods, growing several to a stalk, in July and August. The pods are spring-shaped, formed of a single long, twisted strand which encloses the seeds. From the seeds comes its vernacular name of Tornillo.

Originating from the same nodes as the leaf and seed stalks are pairs of whitish thorns; then, at the next node the thorns are rotated 120° from the previous pair. This pattern repeats at each node, making each twig a marvel of graceful geometry, and giving these small trees their airy form.

The largest specimen in our Screwbean Mesquite colony was needlessly bulldozed this spring, likely in preparation for the snowmelt runoff. I sawed the thickest trunk to count the rings, It had been alive for about 35 years. I can only speculate on its origin and welcome any further information about local Tornillos.

.....Andrew Kirk

Mr. Kirk can be reached at 878-2222.

Why Grow Native Plants

We all love observing and studying native plants and we are very fortunate to be surrounded by the botanically rich and diverse public lands in which they occur. So why try to grow native plants in our own gardens?



For those of us who are horticulturally inclined, that question is rarely even posed. In a well planned native garden we can enjoy the company of multitudes of beautiful native plants year round. Without traveling, we can see them in all seasons and times of day, enjoying the first greenhoots in the spring and marveling at the rich colors in autumn. Insects, birds and other wildlife are also easily observed. The added bonus is that we get to be involved in the process! The act of planting and nurturing can bring us closer to the plant life we love and bring unexpected rewards.

Collecting seeds to grow at home is a wonderful and educational way to get in tune with the life cycles of the plants around us. After eagerly watching the growth and blooming of our favorite native plants, seeds can be seen as a small gift to those who mourn the passing of the flowers. The seed collecting process is time-consuming but rewarding; waiting and watching for ripe seed, harvesting seed, recording habitat and other helpful information, cleaning the seed, sharing, giving the seed its required pretreatment and finally sowing it. Although nature does it all the time, successful germination is a huge thrill!

There are other good reasons for growing native plants. The native plant gardener is given a closer look into the fascinating life cycle occurring around us. Birds, butterflies and other creatures benefit from a native garden, finding food and shelter within. Once established in the proper location, native plants are easily maintained. The plants fit into our environment, not needing an overabundance of water, fertilizer, pesticides, and care.

Some rather obvious cautions are worth repeating. Be careful about introducing a plant that could either escape into sensitive areas in which it does not naturally occur or that could hybridize with closely related plants in surrounding areas. Also try to grow plants together that have the same ecological requirements. Not only will they be more aesthetically pleasing in the garden, they will have a better chance of thriving.

Unfortunately, there is not much information available about growing native plants of the eastern Sierra. A small group of Bristlecone Chapter members are enthusiastic about propagating our native plants and have and are recording information about growing techniques. This year some of us including Scott Hetzler, Anne Halford, Richard Potashin, Steve Ingram and others have

collected seed from many local plants. Seed packets and a propagation record sheet are available to anyone interested, although quantities are limited. It doesn't require a lot of knowledge or experience, just the desire to learn about and enjoy our great native plant communities. Please send a self addressed envelope, along with seed requests from the following list to: Karen Ferrell, Rt. 2, Box 352, Bishop, CA 93514.

**California Native Plant Society
Bristlecone Chapter
Seed List
October 1995**

APIACEAE

Pteryxia petraea

ASCLEPIADACEAE

Asclepias fascicularis Narrow-leaf milkweed
A. speciosa Showy milkweed

ASTERACEAE

Arnica spp. Budsage
Artemisia spinescens Great Basin Sagebrush
A. tridentata Great Basin Sagebrush
Brickellia oblongifolia var. *linifolia*
Encelia farinosa Brittlebush
Erigeron aphanactis Gold Buttons
Machaeranthera canescens Sticky Aster
Stephanomeria spinosa Wool Cache Plant
Tetradymia axillaris Cottonthorn

Townsendia scapigera Ground Daisy

CARYOPHYLLACEAE

Arenaria macradenia
ssp. ferrisaiae desert Sand Wort

CHENOPODIACEAE

Grayia spinosa Spiny Hopsage
Krascheninnikovia lanata Winter Fat

FABACEAE

Astragalus inyoensis Inyo Milkvetch
A. newberryi

A. purshii
Lupinus spp.

LAMIACEAE

Monardella odoratissima Mountain Pennyroyal

LOASACEAE

Mentzelia laevicaulis Giant Blazing Star

ONAGRACEAE

Oenothera caespitosa
ssp. *marginata* Evening Primrose

PAPAVERACEAE

Argemone munita ssp. *rotundata* Prickly Poppy

POLYGONACEAE

Eriogonum fasciculatum
E. microthecum
E. nudum
E. ovalifolium
E. umbellatum
E. wrightii

PRIMULACEAE

Dodecatheon sp. Shooting Star

RANUNCULACEAE

Aquilegia formosa Columbine
Delphinium parishii Desert Larkspur

RHAMNACEAE

Ceanothus greggii Desert Ceanothus

ROSACEAE

Cercocarpus ledifolius Mountain Mahogany
Ivesia kingii
var. *kingii* Alkali Ivesia
Purshia tridentata
var. *tridentata* Bitterbrush

SAXIFRAGACEAE

Heuchera rubescens Alumroot

SCROPHULARIACEAE

Castilleja sp. Indian Paintbrush

Cordylanthus kingii
ssp. *helleri* Purple Bird's Beak
Penstemon floridus
P. patens
P. rostiflorus
P. scapoides
Penstemon spp.

POACEAE

Achnatherum hymenoides Indian Rice Grass
Leymus cinereus Basin Wild Rye
Spartina gracilis Alkali Cord Grass

New Members

The Bristlecone Chapter warmly welcomes the following new members.

Renee J. Beymer
Death Valley, CA

Brian Cashore
Bishop, CA

Carol Dittmer
Woodland Hills, CA

Peter J. Garcia
El Cerrito, CA

Amalie Jo Orme
Woodland Hills, CA

Sherryl Taylor
Mammoth Lakes, CA

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: December 31.

WEB PAGE: CNPS now has a home page on the Internet's World Wide Web. The uniform resource locator address is:

http://www.calpoly.edu/~dchippin/cnps_main.html



THE CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY - Membership Application

The California Native Plant Society is an organization of lay persons 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. Varied interests are represented.

Name _____ P.O. Box or Street _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____
 I wish to be affiliated with the Bristlecone Chapter _____ Other _____.

Membership Category

<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Retired/Limited Income	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual or Library	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> International	\$35.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family or Group	\$45.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$75.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Lover	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$1,000.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$1,000.00

Please make check payable to: The California Native Plant Society. Mail to: Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS. HCR 67 Box 35, Independence, CA 93526.

Gift Contribution: Where most needed _____ Conservation _____.

THE BRISTLECONE CHAPTER NEWSLETTER comes out bimonthly. It is mailed free to members of the Bristlecone Chapter, CNPS. The subscription is \$5.00 per year for others. Editor: Anne Halford.

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