

JULY MEETING RECAP

California is home to more endemic and endangered plants than any region in the continental U.S. except Florida, and we are continuing to learn more about the rich plant biodiversity of our neck of the woods thanks to explorers like Jim Riley, who was the featured speaker for the July meeting. (Originally scheduled co-presenter and conservation scientist Sula Vanderplank was unable to attend.)

Conservationists often emphasize the importance of “acting locally and thinking globally” and that certainly was the origin of Jim’s passion for native flora. He left the world of finance and real estate to pursue botany starting in his own backyard. After founding the San Mateo Creek Conservancy at San Onofre State Beach, he moved on to preservation and expanded his horizons southward to the maritime succulent scrub of Baja California, Mexico, where he serves as manager of Reserva Natural Valle Tranquilo.

The California Floristic Province stretches from the southwest corner of Oregon along the coast, inland to the Sierra Nevada and southward to the northwestern portion of Baja California. This last area is the focus of “Plant Guide: Maritime Succulent Scrub Region, Northwest Baja California, Mexico”, co-authored by Jim, plant taxonomist Jon P. Rebman of the San Diego Natural History Museum, and Vanderplank, who serves as a biodiversity explorer for the Botanical Research Institute of Texas and as science advisor for Terra Peninsular, AC. Jim’s talk was rooted in the contents of the guide, which presents more than 200 plants found in the region.

Maritime succulent scrub is composed of many plants familiar to those of us in the L.A. Basin, and Jim identified the coastal sage scrub “big four” as coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*). With average rainfall of just three to five inches (as compared with 12 to 25 in coastal scrub regions), the distinguishing feature of maritime succulent scrub is the “succulent” element, in this case agaves, dudleyas, and cacti (*Mammillaria*, *Stenocereus*, *Opuntia*). Jim’s presentation was a stroll through the abundant photos of the guide, and with an array of anecdotes he imparted the sense of adventure and enthusiasm that went into it. A follow-up guide to the flora of Baja California Sur is in the works - which will undoubtedly be every bit as engaging.

🌀 Sandy Masuo

SCHS SOMIS DAY TRIP “REVISITED”

The June 27 “Secrets of Somis Revisited” SCHS field trip was a unique opportunity for the 30 attendees to get behind-the-scenes looks at three diverse destinations in the Ventura County agriculture preserve known as Somis. The tour included visits to two different types of nursery growers plus a rare look at a 40-acre private garden that is a work in progress.

The first stop on the tour was at Boething Treeland Farms in Moorpark where Andrew Trafton, Purchasing Agent, presented a brief history of the company while the bus drove through the 11-acre growing yard. He provided information on how trees are propagated, irrigated, fed, and kept disease-free, as well as data on the daily operations.



Attendees watched employees shift trees from 24” to 36” boxes and then Andrew answered visitors’ questions as the bus headed to the next destination.

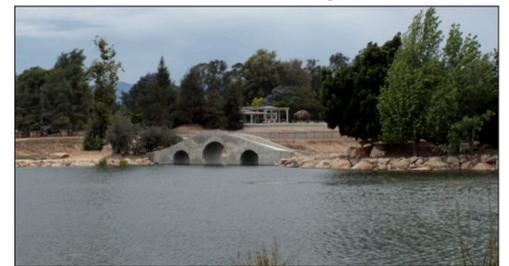
At Greenwood Daylily Gardens, owner and tour guide/host, John Schoustra, showed another side of the nursery business with a more specific growing focus. He explained how micro-climates and irrigation



challenges on his property impact multiple business decisions including plant propagation choices. Visitors were given time to shop before the bus took them to John’s hilltop home and demonstration garden, where they lunched on a catered meal prepared by chef Damiano Carrara. Afterward John discussed some of his new plant introductions until it was time to be bused to the final stop of the day.

2

Richard Baron’s 40-acre “Garden of Dreams” is an ever-evolving project conceptualized by one man and largely based on his love of trees. While Richard originally started the layout himself, including the island in the middle of a man-made lake, in recent years he has enlisted the assistance of landscape designer Nick Williams. Together they have mapped out the site and installed numerous mature “rescue” trees in groupings that will eventually delineate various areas, including the Chinese garden, the topiary circle, and the European castle. While most areas are still in the “dream” stage, others, like



the island with its many specimen trees, are fully realized. For visitors who saw this garden on the first SCHS Somis tour in 2009, the progress was evident and piqued their interest for yet another return visit in the future.

🌀 Sabine Steinmetz

On behalf of the trip attendees, the SCHS would like to thank the board members who were able to pull together this trip on short notice, the various locations for opening their gates to us, and our tour bus driver for maneuvering everyone safely around with his excellent driving skills.

CALL FOR SILENT AUCTION

The SCHS holds its annual Silent Auction in September, during our Horticulturist of the Year event. The auction is a major source of funds for our Society and a great chance to bid on a diverse assortment of intriguing things. If you have a donation you would like to contribute, please bring it to the August meeting, or contact Steven Gerischer to coordinate a time for pickup at: sglarkspur@aol.com or by phone (323)257-3629. We are accepting interesting plants, garden-related items and anything other gardeners or the human race in general would find fun and/or useful... You may also bring items to the event, but please contact me ahead of time so I can prepare a bid card in advance. Thank you!

🌀 Steve Gerischer