

# **The California Native Plant Society**

by Geri Hulse-Stephens

## **Who are we?**

If you are interested in the wild plants of forest and field you are in good company. The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is made up of a diverse group of native plant enthusiasts from neophytes to professionals who are knowledgeable about the local flora. The Sanhedrin Chapter includes inland Mendocino County and Lake County ([www.cnps-sanhedrin.org](http://www.cnps-sanhedrin.org).) The Dorothy King Young Chapter is our local coastal chapter ([www.dkycnps.org](http://www.dkycnps.org)). CNPS sponsors public talks and hikes in our area to promote education and the enjoyment of the native plants of Mendocino County.

## **What is a native plant?**

Our native plants grew here prior to European contact. California's native plants evolved here over a very long period, and are the plants that the first Californians knew and depended on for their livelihood. These plants have co-evolved with animals, fungi and microbes, to form a complex network of relationships. They are the foundation of our native ecosystems, or natural communities.

## **Benefits to rural landowners.**

Rural landowners can bring many benefits to their land when they have knowledge of local native plants.

- They can recognize non-native invasive species and eradicate them before they take over their property.
- They can plant native plants that support native pollinators and provide habitat for birds and animals.
- They can promote water conservation by landscaping with native plants. Once native plants are established they are able to survive with the seasonal rainfall they are accustomed to.
- They can promote and enhance native plant communities and encourage good sustainable land management practices.

## **What do native plants have to do with fire safety?**

CNPS encourages the maintenance of native plant diversity while promoting fire safety in and around the home. Native plant landscapes consume less water which means more is available for suppression if the need arises.

## **Want to learn more about native plants?**

CNPS has an excellent informative website (CNPS.org) with everything about native plants from an on-line growing natives forum to contact information for native plant nurseries as well as information on native plant flower shows, available books, conservation issues and more. Our local Sanhedrin Chapter president, Chuck Williams at 462-8984, may also be able to answer your questions or direct you to someone who can. Be sure to check too with your local nursery to find native plants that will do well on your property.

*Geri Hulse-Stephens is a 25-year CNPS member and is currently Vice President of its Sanhedrin Chapter.*

