

Native Plants in Arcata's Gardens and Forest  
by Carol Ralph  
April 16, 2020

**April 18, Saturday. 12:30-3:30. Native Plants in Arcata's Gardens and Forest.** Join Carol Ralph for a walk from the Arcata Community Center to Arcata Community Forest and back to see native plants in public and private landscapes and in a redwood forest. They will identify a range of native plants and invasive plants, see wildlife in a native plant garden, and think about how to mimic wild habitats in the confines of gardens. Hopefully, trillium will be blooming in the forest. The walk is about 3 miles on sidewalks and good paths, with about 250 ft. elevation gain. Call 826-7050 to register for this free trip sponsored by California Native Plant Society at Godwit Days, or register for Godwit Days at [www.godwitdays.org](http://www.godwitdays.org).

Anna Bernard, Pete Haggard, and I always enjoy leading this walk for Godwit Days, and the attendees always enjoy it. I will tell you some of what we see, so you can do this walk yourself.

We start at the Arcata Community Center. We review why we are interested in using native plants in our gardens--to help the native wildlife! And because we love these plants. We look around and find our first native plants in a garden right there, where Evergreen Huckleberries fill the bed right next to the building. We see that this native plant is not as uniformly shaped and thick as horticultural shrubs we might choose for that location, but hopefully it makes berries! Native plant gardening requires some shifting your expectations, looking for different effects than we have grown up with in traditional gardens.

Across the parking lot and halfway up the hill to the left of Health Sport is the Arcata Community Center Native Plant and Wildlife Garden, where Pete Haggard tells us about CNPS starting this garden years ago and shows us some of the fun things there. Right now this year Pete says the Beach Strawberries are awash with blossoms. The annuals Globe Gilia and Birdseye Gilia are blooming in the hard-packed dirt along the upper edge, which is also where the tiny native bees make their holes. Pete has seen the season's first of these bees, *Halictus tripartus*, this month. He has also seen Painted Lady and Anise Swallowtail butterflies. The California Poppies, Bolander's Phacelia (pale violet flowers), and Blue Blossom (shrub with blue flowers) are blooming. The Yarrow is full of buds, as is the Maple-leaf Checkermallow (*Sidalcea malachroides*). This garden is truly diverse, and Pete continues to enrich it. It is a good example of a habitat garden, providing homes and food for diverse native animals, mostly the tiny kind. Species lists and some photos are on the website:  
<http://northcoastcnps.org/index.php/gardening/arcata-comm-ctr-native-garden/home>.

From this native garden we walk up to Seventh Street, cross it, and start our list of invasive species. Two species of cotoneaster, English Holly, Three-cornered Garlic (aka wild onion, *Allium triquetrum*), Bermuda Buttercup (*Oxalis pes-caprae*). At the corner with Union St. we see a few native Blue Blossom poking out of a bed of English Ivy, Periwinkle, Himalaya Blackberry, and other frightening invasive species. We turn up Fickle Hill Rd a short ways and then turn left onto the first street. The second house down this street (129 Hill St.) has all native plants in the front yard--all native, but only four species--a ground cover manzanita, a Wax Myrtle hedge, something else I forget now, and a few Sword Ferns. Wax Myrtle can provide good food for birds, but not when it is hedged so strictly. Ferns in general do not provide sustenance for insects or anything else. So this garden is native, but minimal habitat for wildlife.

The neighbor has a Red-flowering Currant, trying to incorporate some natives into the existing, non-native landscape.

We turn about, leave Hill St. and walk across Bayview St., then turn right up 11th St., which takes us in to the Arcata Community Forest. A few more invasive species cluster at the entrance to the forest, including pittosporum. Stepping into the forest, under the big (well, bigger than anything in the neighborhood) trees is like stepping into another world. Suddenly most of the plants are native. We scan the tree trunks and identify Grand Fir, Douglas-fir, Sitka Spruce, and Coast Redwood. The ground covers include Inside-out Flower, Sword Fern, Redwood Sorrel, and we spot our first Western Trillium. Up the hill, along the edge of the park behind the Scout Hut, we add French Broom, Scotch Broom, and Crocosmia to the invasive plant list. We cross the parking lot, head to the uphill corner of the lawn, pass the water tank, and follow the path uphill just below the street. We encounter some escaped garden plants, surely the result of garden waste being dumped off the edge of the road. Bad practice!

The trail veers away from the street, and we find ourselves in tranquil, purely native, Redwood forest. Fairy Bells, False Lily-of-the-Valley, Candyflower, Redwood Violet, and Douglas Iris join the Western Trilliums and Redwood Sorrel. These would be a great combination for a small, shady garden. At a trail junction we angle left down a path that cuts down across a slope. We admire the lush gully of Lady Fern, Salmonberry, Thimbleberry, and Elderberry down below on the left. These are good species for a wet place in a garden with room for things to spread. We stop at a bridge and admire the garden on a stump. We see Deer Fern and Spreading Wood Fern, as well as Sword and Lady Ferns. We continue on this trail (Trail #1), past a lovely Deer Fern grotto with amazing Fairy Bells, past a few Skunk Cabbage at a little bridge, and emerge eventually at the parking lot at the top of 14th St.

We cross the large lawn to the Scout Hut, descend to 11th St., continue down it to Union St., where we turn left. Halfway up the block we stop awhile to admire Tamar Danufsky's garden on the left side of the street. It is easily identified by the rampant California Poppies in it. Tamar sometimes appears and tells us how she has learned that to have anything else in her garden, she has had to learn to pull poppies like weeds. Everything in her front yard is local, native plants. I find it an interesting and pleasing garden. In contrast to the Hill St. garden, which has been exactly the same for about 20 years, Tamar's garden has been changing, as she learns to control poppies, as the shrubs get too crowded and something has to be removed, and as new perennials are added.

We complete our tour walking back down to the community center. It takes us three hours in a group, stopping to talk, but this walk takes about one hour just walking.