

Fall 2018

Marsh Mailing

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center

Marsh Mailing is also available in full color at www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com*



The Four Seasons: Fall

Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU, Dominguez Hills

Photos by Dr. Vadheim

Fall begins in late September and lasts until the end of December. Usually, it's our driest time on the Marsh. Days are sometimes warm (even hot) but night temperatures are typically cool. The temperatures, scents and the colors remind us of Halloween. It's a great time to get out and see what's happening at Madrona Marsh.

What to see: The Preserve is very colorful this time of year, with late-blooming yellow sunflowers and orange-brown buckwheats. Later in the season, the Black Willows and other plants provide vivid red and yellow leaves. The sun is low in the sky—great for dramatic afternoon photographs. This is also when we get our showiest sunsets. Be sure to notice the crunch of dry leaves beneath your feet and the smell of the Preserve on a foggy morning.

Birds: Winter visitors begin arriving in September. Among the prettiest are the brightly colored Common Yellowthroats and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Seed-eating birds, including the American and Lesser Goldfinches and over 10 species of sparrows, can be seen eating sunflower seeds. Common birds to watch for feeding on the ground are White-crowned Sparrows (see page 9) and Mourning Doves.

Swallows can be seen flying swiftly overhead, catching insects, starting in September. Watch and listen for Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Cooper's Hawks in the larger trees or soaring above. You'll also hear Crows, Ravens, Scrub Jays, and Mockingbirds.

Later in the season, look for the water birds: the ducks (Wigeons, Mallards, Teals and others), geese and coots. You may see the Great and Snowy Egrets—large, white, long-legged birds that hunt in shallow water.

Anna's and Allen's hummingbirds are active, as are flycatchers like the Black and Say's Phoebes. Flocks of tiny Bushtits are very common this time of year. If you're lucky, you may also glimpse a Downy Woodpecker, a Killdeer at dusk or a flock of Cedar Waxwings feeding on berries.

Insects and animals: In September/October you will still see many bees and other pollinators visiting flowers. Also common during the warm days are Skipper butterflies. You may even see an occasional orange Monarch or Gulf Fritillary butterfly. Large Orb-weaver Spiders make extraordinary webs this time of year. Late

"Fall" continued on page 2

It's All About Connections

Suzan Hubert, President

Welcome, fall. It's almost docent season again—my favorite time of year. Docent tours are, for us, school study tours that we used to call field trips. This year I am focusing on connecting children to nature on my docent tours. I get such a thrill when I see in children's faces that they realize nature isn't just something "out there"; that we are all a part of nature. I work hard for that expression. Being a docent for the Marsh isn't about lecturing and cool facts. For me, and I believe the other docents, it's about bridging the gap that exists between many children and nature.

All of the docents have lots of facts to share; we attend about fourteen hours of training annually. I like to leave my student group with a few facts they will remember and share with their family when asked, "What did you learn in school today?"

My personal favorite set of memorable facts includes learning that you may tell what a bird eats by the shape of its bill. Short stubby beaks eat seeds; birds with long beaks eat insects, worms and fish; hooked beaks eat other animals. Birds that eat animals have hooked beaks and talons because they can't use a knife and fork. Children connect with that information. They need knives and forks to eat and so do birds. When we talk about the Harvester Ants we hunker down and just watch for a while. I explain that each ant has a job—

tunnel builders, queen, egg caregivers, shoppers that collect the seeds all the ants eat, and warriors that defend the nest—sometimes with their lives. Then I ask the students what job they would have if they lived in the ant nest. They pause for a moment—then everyone has a choice. The boys choose jobs, too, even after I tell them all the ants in the colony are girls. Once they mate with the queen, all the male ants leave, one way or another. The connection here is that ants have jobs, people have jobs.

Gophers offer another connection between people and animals. In the Exhibit Hall there is a rather old, slightly balding taxidermied pocket gopher the children can handle. I tell them that pocket gophers live in underground burrows. Then I ask the children what rooms their homes have: kitchen, bedroom and bathroom are all volunteered. We then turn around and consider the illustration of a pocket gopher burrow on a kiosk. Sure enough, the gopher burrow has a sleeping chamber, food cache and a lavatory. Different words, different home but the same rooms. We use study skins to learn why we never touch raccoons, opossums or skunks in the wild. They have sharp teeth and claws which they use to tell people to go away and leave them alone. They growl, hiss, show their teeth, stamp their feet or try to get away. They don't want to be bothered by us, so they use their communication skills to warn us away. Then the children share what they do when someone bothers them; they say "stop", "go away", tell an adult, yell or run away. Not so different from other living things. "Go away", "vete" (Spanish), "dokoka ni ite" (Japanese) and *bared teeth* (Dog) all mean the same thing; just different languages.

I don't mind if my tour group doesn't remember all the science facts I shared with them. What I hope is that they leave with is a glimmer of thought, a connection; that what goes on in nature is a lot like what goes on in their life. Sometimes I see that awareness and sometimes I don't. When I don't, I realize I have a ways to go as a docent. It's always a wondrous challenge with every tour.

It is so lovely as we hike back to the Nature Center all grubby and a child asks, "Is it ok if I change jobs in the ant nest? I would really rather be a builder not a warrior!"

I am so glad I'm a volunteer docent for the Marsh, because if they paid me I would have to give it back. Joy has no price.

See you on the Preserve; don't step on the ants!

"Fall" continued from page 1

or early in the day you may even glimpse a skunk.

Things to do at the Preserve:

- Get out and walk; outdoor exercise is important during this busy season.
- Notice the scents on a rainy or foggy day. The Preserve is magical in damp weather.
- Bring your camera or sketchpad. This is a great time to capture fall color.
- Bring binoculars to watch birds, insects. Visit the Nature Center to learn more. Pick up a guidebook in the Gift Shop.
- Close your eyes. Listen to the sounds.
- Visit the Preserve (even the parking lot) at dusk to see spectacular sunsets.
- Take kids on an explorer hunt. Watch for tracks and trails made by animals.
- Take a fall class, walk or workshop. See the Madrona Marsh calendar for ideas.--C.V.

Portraits of Two Wonderful Women

Bill Arrowsmith, Past President



Many of you who have visited the Nature Center have asked who the subjects are in the two beautiful paintings on the north wall, just to the right of the front desk. We apologize for the lack of identification and will remedy that soon with plaques beneath the pictures.

The woman on the left is Betty Shaw, the fourth president of the Friends of Madrona Marsh. Betty, whom we lost to cancer a few years ago, was a retired teacher, an artist, and a person of boundless enthusiasm and energy. She began her term as president in 1983, just as we realized the 35 acres recently dedicated by developers of Park del Amo were in danger of being reclaimed if used certain ways. Betty even endured threats from the developers of a law suit against her personally, and never wavered in her commitment to save Madrona Marsh.

The woman on the right is Shirley Turner, who is synonymous with the effort to save and restore the Marsh. Although Shirley has never

held office, she was a vocal presence at MANY city council meetings, single-handedly published many stories for the newsletter for many years (including printing the copies herself), contacted scout troops, Y groups, schools and more to introduce them to the Marsh, and, finally, she has been one of the earliest and strongest proponents of restoration on the Preserve, inspiring the above groups and many more of us into restoration projects.

(P.S. if you're wondering about that chain-link fence behind Shirley in the painting—I think it's to remind us that her support of the effort to save the Marsh goes back many years . . . to when it was still privately owned and we could only walk around the perimeter.)

And a third wonderful woman is Marianne Strehler, the artist who contacted Shirley and Betty and offered to create these beautiful paintings. Marianne and her husband now live in Oregon, but they are still strong supporters of our Preserve.

Pints with a Purpose --A Howling Success

On behalf of the Friends of Madrona Marsh I want to say a huge THANK YOU to Laurie and Jonathan Porter, owners and operators of Smog City Brewing Company, for inviting the Friends to be one of their local non-profit environmental partners and for allowing us to participate in their Thursday night "Pints with a Purpose" program for the month of July.

All who participated were rewarded not only with some tasty and interesting brews, and friendly, helpful service from the staff; but also enjoyable nights of camaraderie with old friends and some brand new ones. Those who were fortunate (or wise) enough to attend on the final Thursday were treated to an almost full moon as well, and showed their appreciation in true Marshan fashion, howling in cacophonous harmony at the luminous orb.

But perhaps the greatest reward for patrons was in knowing that with each Pint they raised on those four Thursdays in July, they were also helping to support the Friends and our programs—a noble Purpose, indeed. Smog City shared a very generous percentage of July's Thursday night revenue and presented the Friends with a check for over \$1100! Now that's something to howl about.

Thank you, again, Laurie and Jonathan. We look forward to many more FUNdraising events at Smog City. **Bill Arrowsmith, Brewery Liaison**

Marsh Mailing is a quarterly newsletter designed to provide information about activities and upcoming events at or relating to the Madrona Marsh Preserve. Contributions are welcome and may be e-mailed to Editorial Advisor, Bill Arrowsmith, frandbill@att.net or Editor, Diane Gonsalves at gonwild2@yahoo.com or may be dropped off or mailed to the Nature Center, P.O. Box 5078, Torrance, CA 90510.

Donations of \$100 or more

Summer 2018

DATE	DONOR	AMOUNT	COMMENT
June	The Strommes	\$100	
June	Torrance Teachers Association	\$300	
June	Hermosa Garden Club	\$300	
July	Ted Kotzin	\$100	
July	Virginia Massey	\$150	
July	The Hilkers	\$100	
July	El Dorado Audubon Society Inc.	\$100	
July	Karen & David Henseler	\$100	
July	Ray & Anna Randall	\$250	
July	Anthony & Dorothy Vinter	\$100	
July	Georgian Griswold	\$3,000	
July	Elaine Endres	\$250	
August	Juno & Ethel Uyematsu	\$100	
August	Alfred & Barbara Sattler	\$100	
August	Dale Lincoln	\$200	
Sept.	James Justiss	\$250	Boeing Employee Match Program
Sept.	Torrance Historical Society	\$100	

Editor's Note: The list of donors during the Summer quarter, above, reads like an honor roll. Almost every one of these individuals or groups has a long and very generous history of helping the Friends financially. Thank you to all our donors, and a special note of gratitude to our outstanding long-time supporters. You make our programs and projects possible.



The Nature Center and Preserve are open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 310-782-3989 for more information. or consult the website: www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.

"There and Back" -- Changing the World

Tracy Drake, Park Services

Some days we are reminded that, though we spend much time in the City of Torrance, we are connected to things going on beyond our city boundaries—beyond our state boundaries—connected to the rest of the planet. We were reminded of this on August 22 through a program co-hosted by the Friends of Madrona Marsh, the City of Torrance and Wild Birds Unlimited.

Richard Crossley is a birder, photographer and author of the "next generation", cutting edge bird field guides in which birds are featured in their habitat—in their flyways—as we would actually see them in the field.



Crossley book signing in the atrium.

Mr. Crossley is single focused—intent on literally changing the world through connecting people to birds through birding and by providing opportunities for diverse people to come together in a common interest.



Richard Crossley

He works with hunters, woodcarvers, birders, teachers, and hobbyists, world-wide. He wants us to realize that we all have much in common and that by coming together and working together, we can become healthier and better connected to nature; by learning how to look—not only by looking "out there" but also by just looking out our own windows. He is working on a new guide featuring western birds, and along the way, he came to Madrona Marsh Preserve.

During his brief stop while continuing his search for more birds to photograph, nearly 115 people gathered to hear his stories and be inspired by his vision.



Five visiting foster children get their first close-up view of tortoises and snakes in the Nature Center classroom.

Madrona Marsh Preserve and Nature Center*

Schedule of Events for October 2018 through January 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<u>1</u> CLOSED	<u>2</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u> 10 am-Tyke Hike -donation 10:30 Prop.Soc.	<u>5</u> 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	<u>6</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 7-9pm-Night Hike
<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> CLOSED	<u>9</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>10</u> 8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman 6:30-8:30 pm-FOMM Board Meeting	<u>11</u> 10:30 Prop.Soc. 1pm- Naturalist 6:30Dr.Vadheim	<u>12</u> 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	<u>13</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 7-9 pm-Star Party
<u>14</u>	<u>15</u> CLOSED	<u>16</u> 8:30am-Tour d'Torrance 7 pm-Audubon Mtg.	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u> 10:30-12:30- Prop. Society	<u>19</u> 10 am--12n- Friday Fun- donation**	<u>20</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor 9am-H.B.Nature Walk 10-1-Turtle/Tortoise Day
<u>21</u>	<u>22</u> CLOSED	<u>23</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>24</u>	<u>25</u> 10:30-12:30- Prop. Society	<u>26</u> 9 am- 10 am-Friday Fun- donation**	<u>27</u> 8:30 am-Bird Walk 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. 8:30--12-Make a Difference 10 am - Nature Walk 1-pm-Shibata Reception
<u>28</u> 10-NatureWalk	<u>29</u> CLOSED	<u>30</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>31</u>			

OCTOBER

*All activities and classes meet at the Madrona Marsh Nature Center, located at 3201 Plaza del Amo (between Maple and Madrona) on the north side of the street. **Reservations are required for Friday Fun.. For latest event information, see our website, www.friendsofmadronamarsh.com.

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<u>4</u>	<u>5</u> CLOSED	<u>6</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u> 10:30 Prop.Soc. 1pm-Naturalist 6:30Dr.Vadheim	<u>9</u> 10 am--12 n- Friday Fun- donation**	<u>10</u> 8:45 am-12 n-Hab.Restor. & Student.Service 6:30-8pm- Night Hike
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NOVEMBER

Nature Center & Gift Shop

(310) 782-3989

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						8:45 am-12 --Hab.Restor. <u>1</u> 10am-Dr.Vadheim- 9am-Cards/Calligraphy-fee 9am-Intro to Birding
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> CLOSED	<u>4</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	<u>5</u>	10 TykeHike <u>6</u> 10:30 Prop.Society 6:30pm-Dr. Vadheim	10 am--12 n- <u>7</u> Friday Fun- donation**	<u>8</u> 8:45am-12-Hab.Restor. Student.Service 9am-Intro to Birding
<u>9</u>	<u>10</u> CLOSED	<u>11</u> 8:30 am-Tour d'Torrance	8 am-Bird Walk/ Bob Shanman <u>12</u> 11am-Senior Stroll 6:30--FOMM Meet	10:30-12:30- <u>13</u> Propagation Society 1pm Naturalist	10 am--12n- <u>14</u> Friday Fun- donation**	8:45 am-12 - Hab.Res.. <u>15</u> 9 am-H.B.Nature Walk 9am-Intro to Birding 10am-wreath making 6:30 pm-Star Party
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<u>30</u>	<u>31</u> CLOSED					

DECEMBER

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JANUARY

Madrona Marsh Species List

September 2018

This list was made possible by the dedication of volunteers and staff who love to pay attention to the birds of Madrona Marsh Preserve. People who contributed include: Mark Rubke, Tracy Drake, Melissa Loeb, Dinuk Magammana, David Moody, Manuel Duran, David Quadhammer, Christine Jacobs, Chris Dean, Deidre Asbjorn, Hallie Daly and Brooke Keeney.

BIRDS		
Mallard	American Kestrel	Vesper Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Savannah Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Western Wood-Pewee	Song Sparrow
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Willow Flycatcher	Lincoln's Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Pacific-slope Flycatcher	California Towhee
White-throated Swift	Black Phoebe	Yellow-breasted Chat
Anna's Hummingbird	Say's Phoebe	Hooded Oriole
Allen's Hummingbird	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Red-winged Blackbird
American Coot	Cassin's Kingbird	Black-and-white Warbler
Killdeer	Warbling Vireo	Orange-crowned Warbler
<i>Long-billed Curlew</i>	California Scrub-Jay	<i>Nashville Warbler</i>
Ring-billed Gull	American Crow	<i>MacGillivray's Warbler</i>
Western Gull	Common Raven	Common Yellowthroat
California Gull	Barn Swallow	<i>American Redstart</i>
Caspian Tern	Bushtit	Yellow Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	House Wren	Black-throated Gray Warbler
Great Egret	Marsh Wren	Wilson's Warbler
Snowy Egret	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Western Tanager
Green Heron	Northern Mockingbird	Black-headed Grosbeak
Black-crowned Night-Heron	European Starling	<i>Blue Grosbeak</i>
<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	House Finch	Lazuli Bunting
Cooper's Hawk	<i>European Goldfinch</i>	House Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk	Lesser Goldfinch	Scaly-breasted Munia
Red-tailed Hawk	American Goldfinch	Pin-tailed Whydah
Barn Owl	Chipping Sparrow	
<i>Great Horned Owl</i>	Lark Sparrow	Bold = Breeder
Downy Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Italics = uncommon visitor</i>
<i>Nuttall's Woodpecker</i>	White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Bold italics = rare visitor</i>
BUTTERFLIES		
Monarch	Northern White	Cloudless Sulphur
Gulf Fritillary	Gray Hairstreak	Umber Skipper
Giant Swallowtail	Western Pygmy Blue	Eufala Skipper
Mourning Cloak	Acmon Blue	Sandhill Skipper
Cabbage White	Marine Blue	Fiery Skipper
Checkered White Skipper		

The White-Crowned Sparrow

Vincent Lloyd



Adult Gambel's Sparrow. McCaulay Library.

They seem to all arrive overnight. The evening before, the garden is quiet; the next morning, you awake to the musical chatter of the White-crowned Sparrow and you know fall is here. There is no mistaking them: while many sparrow species look confusingly similar, these handsome birds stand out with their striking black-and-white striped heads. And while they tend to hide in the shrubbery, they make their presence known with their musical song, which they practice all winter long.

The White-crown is a large sparrow, about seven inches long; it weighs just about an ounce. The back is streaked with black, the wings have two bars, the underparts are plain grey. The sexes (oops—I mean the genders!) are alike. First winter birds have a distinctive plumage: the head stripes are brownish and buff, rather than black and white. I've noticed that these immature birds are less wary than the adults and more willing to pose out in the open, so they may be the first White-crowns you see or photograph. Late in winter, it's exciting when you see them starting to molt into adults—a sign spring is near.

The White-crown is one of five closely related species composing the genus *Zonotrichia* ("hairband") in the family Passerellidae. (Passer WHO? you may be thinking—last year the

American Ornithological Society moved the New World sparrows from the family Emberizidae, the Old World buntings, into their own family.) The White-crown is *Z. leucophrys* ("white eyebrow"). Its close relatives are the White-throated Sparrow of eastern North America, the Golden-crowned Sparrow of the West Coast, Harris's Sparrow of the Great Plains, and the Rufous-collared Sparrow of Central and South America. All but the last are seen more or less regularly in California. Most similar is the White-throated Sparrow, which does indeed have a distinctive bright white throat; however,

some White-crowns have a pale throat that could be confused with a White-throat in poor light; a conclusive mark of the White-throat is the yellow lore in front of the eye. The White-throat is common in the Southeast in winter, whereas the White-crown is uncommon; in the West the situation is reversed. The Golden-crown is restricted to the Pacific Coast, breeding from Nome to Vancouver and wintering south to northern Baja. In northern California, Golden-crowns are nearly as common in the winter as White-crowns; here in southern California they are a bit sparse but more common in the foothills than the lowlands. The handsome Harris's Sparrow is an uncommon winter visitor.

But back to the White-crowned Sparrow. It breeds in the far north in the taiga and the tundra as far north as the Arctic Ocean; at its southern limit it breeds in the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada. In winter, it occurs from the Canadian border south to Jalisco. The birds that winter in Southern California breed in British Columbia. There are five subspecies which fall into two or three distinctive types, called by Sibley the "Pacific", "Taiga", and "Interior West" types. The "Pacific" type includes Nuttall's Sparrow, which breeds along the Oregon and California coast south to Santa Barbara. The "Interior West" type

"Sparrow" continued on page 10

“Sparrow” continued from page 9

(*Z. l. orianthe*) breeds in the Sierra Nevada and Rockies. The great majority of the sparrows we see at the Marsh are Gambel's Sparrow and Sibley's "West Taiga" type, which has a yellow-orange bill, whereas Nuttall's bill is quite yellow and the "Interior West" bill is pink.

Each subspecies has a recognizable song. A couple of years ago I was birding the Marsh and was surprised to hear the song of the Nuttall's sparrow, which to my mind conjures up pictures of the foggy northern California coast; I didn't have to look at the bird to know it had a yellow bill (but I did). Sierra Nevada birds are sometimes seen here as well; they can be distinguished from the Gambel's by looking at the white stripe through the eye; in the Sierra Nevada birds, the white stripe doesn't extend in front of the eye; in Gambel's and Nuttall's it goes all the way to the bill.

The White-crowned Sparrow breeds in brushy areas in the taiga and tundra in the far north, in the mountains, and along the Pacific coast. They eat seeds and insects (but you probably guessed that, since they aren't exactly equipped for hunting or fishing). The female builds a cup nest right on the ground (or in a shrub in the case of Nuttall's Sparrow). There are usually four or five eggs, which the female incubates alone.

Both the female and male feed the chicks, which fledge 10-14 days after hatching, and the male may feed them while the female starts a new nest. During fall migration, the sparrows can stay awake for two weeks at a time till they reach their wintering grounds. It is said that the females winter farther south than the males on average, but it is not said why. (Probably to get some peace and quiet!) In winter they often hang out in flocks and forage together on the ground, hiding in shrubs when predators or bird photographers come by.

The songs of the White-crowned Sparrow have been extensively studied. The songs vary from locality to locality as well as subspecies to subspecies. Young males learn the songs

they hear near their nest; not just their father's song. If they grow up where two "dialects" meet, they may learn to sing both songs. During their first winter, they practice singing every day so that come spring they can win the heart of a comely female.

For those with long memories, the first edition of Roger Tory Peterson's Field Guide to Western Birds, although it was a slim volume by modern standards, still devoted more than two pages to describing the varied songs of White-crowned Sparrows. Each song was illustrated pictorially — a practice that has sadly fallen out of use—and vividly showed the differences between, for example, the songs sung at Pt. Reyes, Berkeley, and Carmel.

White-crowned Sparrows are widely found in brushy areas on southern California from late September to early May. This year the first White-crowns arrived at the Marsh on Sept. 21; by the time you read this they will be tseeting and singing in abundance. They like to hang out right around the entrance gate. While enjoying their singing, keep an eye out for a stray Nuttall's Sparrow or Sierra Nevada White-crown or perhaps a Golden-crowned Sparrow. If come summer you miss their song, just go to Morro Bay or the Sierra Nevada!



Immature Gambel's Sparrow

South Bay Native Plant Corner

Dr. Connie Vadheim, CSU, Dominguez Hills

Photos by Dr. Vadheim



Shaw's agave
Agave shawii

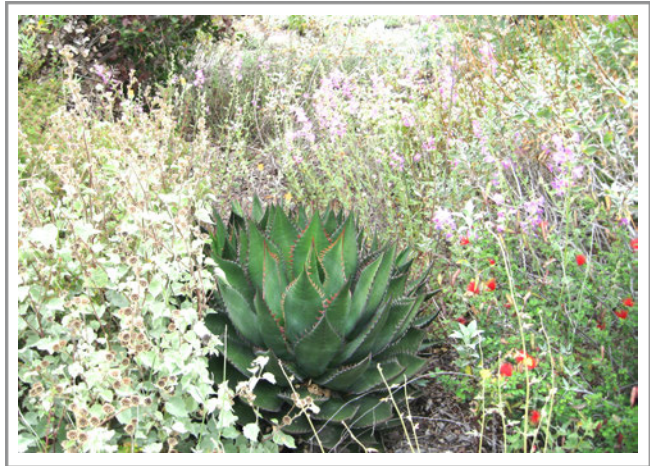
The yellows of the late sunflowers and the orange and rusts of the buckwheats create a mosaic of fall colors in a native plant garden. The trick is to contrast these with evergreen plants. Shaw's agave is a good example – one you can see in the Madrona native plant garden.

Shaw's agave is native to the Southern California coast from San Diego County into Baja. Growing on dry bluffs and hillsides in coastal sage scrub, it's well-suited to water-wise gardens. If you like the look of agaves and yuccas, this is a good one to try in a home garden.

Shaw's agave is a true agave—and has the stout, succulent leaves to prove it. The leaves are medium- to blue-green, with darker, red-brown edges. Like most agaves, the leaves are armed with stout spines. You need to consider these when choosing a place for it in a garden.

Agave shawii reproduces both sexually and vegetatively. A mother plant produces new plants ('pups') around her base. A single plant can grow to a dense clump of 6-10 feet.

Shaw's agave flowers at 10-15 years of age, sending up a stout flowering stalk that can literally grow inches a day. One in the Madrona garden bloomed last year. It was quite a sight! The flowering stalk (which can be 15 feet or more tall) is topped by a cluster of yellow-red flowers. After flowering, the plant dies, to be replaced by its developing 'pups'.



Shaw's agave is easy to grow, given the right conditions. It grows in full sun along the coast, but likes afternoon shade in hot gardens. It needs good drainage, and requires only occasional summer water once established.

Agave shawii is a great evergreen accent plant. It complements local native plants or those from the California deserts. Combine it with white- or gray-foliage plants for an exotic look. And if you care to, parts of the plant (flowers; stalk; leaves) can be eaten or the leaves used for their fiber.

For more on this plant see:

<http://www.slideshare.net/cvadheim/agave-shawii>

Learn more about local native plants at our "Out of the Wilds and into Your Garden" series on the first Saturday of each month.

Plant Information Sheets and *Plant Lists* are also available at the Nature Center.

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