

# THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN SOCIETY

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH

An international forum devoted to furthering knowledge and appreciation of plants and gardens suited to the mediterranean climate regions of the world

issue 21  
Winter 2005-06

*Heteromeles arbutifolia* (Lindl.) M. Roemer 1847

**toyon, Christmas berry, California holly**

French: **hétéromèle de Californie, photinie de**

**Californie** Italian: **fotinia** Spanish: **tollon, toyon**

*Heteromeles arbutifolia* is widely distributed in the California and Nevada foothills up to 4,000 feet. Typical habitats are open woodlands, rocky slopes, canyons, and chaparral. Thaddeus Haenke discovered this species 1791. Archibald Menzies discovered it again in 1796 near Monterey. Seed from this latter discovery was sent to England where it became a popular garden subject. Because of its resemblance to the hawthorn, it was classified as *Crataegus arbutifolia* (maybush and mayblossom are still common names in the UK). Later it was determined to be related to *Photinia* and placed in that genus. In 1847, it was reclassified into a separate genus of its own - *Heteromeles*.

It is often assumed that the city of Hollywood got its name from the abundance of "holly berry" plants in that area. But the name was actually chosen by Daeida Wilcox, wife of Kansas businessman Harvey Wilcox. On a train trip to the east, she met a woman who spoke of her country home in Ohio named after a Dutch settlement called "Hollywood." Daeida liked the sound of it and upon returning to Southern California, bestowed the name on the family ranch. It is hard to believe that she was not also familiar with the abundant *Heteromeles* in the hills surrounding their property.

There are records of regional battles to prevent the destructive picking of *Heteromeles* berries for holiday decorations, and during the 1920s a law was passed making it illegal to pick or dig wild plants without permission. Preservationists concerned about the welfare of wild populations encouraged homeowners to plant this very adaptable shrub in their gardens.

*Heteromeles* is propagated from seed that germinates readily when fresh. Older seed requires a three-month stratification period. It can also be propagated by tip cuttings taken in late summer from partially hardened wood. Plants can be grown on in containers for the first year. Planted out in their second autumn, they will begin to flower and fruit after the third year. Dense panicles of small, cream-white flowers bloom during summer, followed by clusters of red or rarely, yellow berries that last Fall through winter. The glossy, serrate, evergreen leaves are a perfect foil for this display.

In the wild, *Heteromeles* is usually a dense shrub five to 15 feet tall in full sun. It tends to be rangy in wooded areas. It is quite tolerant of winter pruning, making the berries a perfect candidate for seasonal decoration.

continued on next page



*Heteromeles arbutifolia*, by Albert Valentien, © San Diego Natural History Museum. For more info, see The Valentien Project - The Flora of California - [www.sdnhm.org/valentien/plantportraits/](http://www.sdnhm.org/valentien/plantportraits/)

2006 ANNUAL BRANCH MEETING

The Big Year: Spring in  
the California Garden

with Russ Beatty

Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1:30pm

for more information,  
see Calendar of Events on page 3

*Heteromeles arbutifolia*, continued from first page

It may be trained into a small tree by gradually removing lower limbs, or pruned into a large shrub with several trunks and a full, rounded crown. It is handsome as an accent plant or rough hedge, but is also useful in a mixed border of drought tolerant native shrubs and perennials. Occasionally attacked by insects that produce honeydew followed by sooty mold, and also by pear blight.

The red berries were used to make a tasty cider, enjoyed by the native Californians and by early settlers. Indians cooked the berries by tossing them in baskets with hot pebbles or wood coals. Berries were also eaten raw on occasion but are not particularly palatable. Spanish settlers are reported to have made a pudding of the berries by baking them with sugar in a slow oven. Edibility is often in question. The berries contain cyanide compounds, but these are the same ones that give cherries their flavor when cooked. Perhaps it is best to leave the berries to the birds, which relish them when fully ripe in late winter. Deer tend to shun the leaves and the berries, except in bad foraging years.

Seán A. O'Hara

*Heteromeles arbutifolia* has also been known under these names:

*Crataegus arbutifolia* Lam. 1783

*Crataegus arbutifolia* W.T.Aiton non Lam. 1811

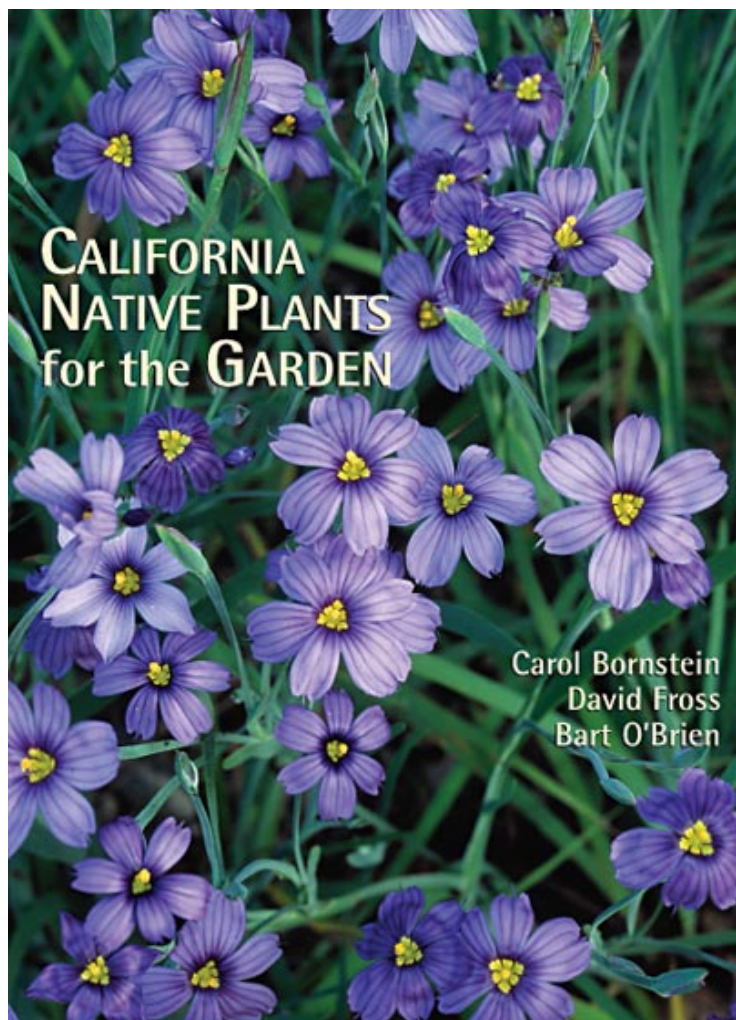
*Heteromeles salicifolia* (C.Presl) Abrams 1910

*Photinia arbutifolia* Lindl. 1821

*Photinia salicifolia* C.Presl 1851



*Heteromeles arbutifolia* 'Davis Gold' with its bright gold berries is a favorite food for the Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) in our area. This healthy shrub [above] was planted in the fall of 2001 in full sun and is now six feet tall. The plant was hand watered the first year, but is now surviving on rainfall alone. The gold berries provide wonderful winter color. Bracey Tiede



## California Native Plants for the Garden Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien

280 pages; 7.5" x 10.25"; 450 color photos; appendices; bibliography; glossary, indexes; ISBN: 0-9628505-8-6 ( Paperback ), 0-9628505-9-4 (Hardcover)

"California Native Plants for the Garden... is a stunner and comes at just the right time to stoke the growing interest in these beautiful water-wise garden gems... [It is] a marvelous new resource."

- San Jose Mercury News

"California Native Plants for the Garden delivers... It provides advice to folks who have struggled with growing natives in their gardens. And it offers terrific landscape photos to convince skeptics that native plants are truly attractive."

- Santa Maria Times

"Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien have combined their deep knowledge of and experience with California plants into a thorough and charismatic guide that speaks to both novice and expert gardeners throughout the state... This engaging and comprehensive guide will be a valuable addition to any gardener's library."

- Bay Nature

"Guaranteed to feed the passion of plant lovers everywhere... California Native Plants for the Garden offers a wealth of information laid out on lush stock and peppered with clear, colorful photographs. The text is concise, accessible, and authoritative, while providing solid guidelines and how-to tips."

- Santa Barbara News-Press

For more information, or to order on-line, go to  
Cachuma Press' web site: [cachumapress.com](http://cachumapress.com)

(See also events listed on the bottom of the next page)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

of interest to our membership

January 11<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday), 7:30pm, Los Altos

GARDEN AND CLIMATE: HISTORY AND FUTURE OF ENERGY CONSERVING MICROCLIMATES - lecture with CHIP SULLIVAN, professor of landscape architecture and artist living in Berkeley; Western Horticultural Society; Covington Elementary School, 205 Covington Road, Los Altos, 408 867-9428, [www.westernhort.org](http://www.westernhort.org).



2ND ANNUAL NO. CALIFORNIA MGS BRANCH MEETING

January 21<sup>st</sup> (Saturday), 1:30pm, Los Altos \*

**THE BIG YEAR: SPRING IN THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN**  
a presentation by RUSS BEATTY, MGS Advisory Board member, senior lecturer emeritus, UC Berkeley Dept of Landscape Architecture, and a consulting landscape architect in Santa Cruz; 2005 was the wettest winter that anyone can remember and also gave us unseasonably warm weather in January. Russ will show us some of the amazing bounty of wildflower bloom that occurred in that spectacular Spring; light refreshments will follow this presentation, so plan to stick around and meet your fellow MGS Branch members; The Garden House at Shoup Park, 400 University Avenue, Los Altos, MGS members \$5, guests \$10; to register, call Sue Ann Manners: 925 254-0226.

February 20<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 7:15pm, San Francisco

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS FOR THE GARDEN – a presentation by CAROL BORNSTEIN, director of Living Collections and nursery Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, DAVID FROSS, founder/president of Native Sons Wholesale Nursery, specializing in plants from the mediterranean climate regions, and BART O'BRIEN, director of Horticulture and Curator of Living Collections at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden; highlighting their new book (see prior page), the authors discuss their favorite plants with beautiful photos from the book; California Horticultural Society, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Way; members free, guests \$5; for more information, call 800 884-0009 (CA only) or 415 566-5222.



March 13<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 7:30pm, Orinda \*

**MAGIC, MURDER & THE WEATHER: THE ART OF *NOT***

GARDENING with BILLY MARTIN from Australia; *“covering the wonderful magic of gardens /gardening, the murder of wasteful and unnecessary garden practices, the influence and importance of working with our given climate for horticultural and general cultural sustainability!!”*; quirky, creative, opinionated are all adjectives that have been used to describe this garden designer from down under, who will show us some of his daring use of color, form, and innovative materials; Orinda Library, 24 Orinda Way, Orinda; MGS members \$10, guests \$15; to register, call Sue Ann Manners: 925 254-0226.

March 20<sup>th</sup> (Monday), 7:15pm, San Francisco

FLOWERS OF GREECE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN – Presented by Dr. BOB GIBBONS, highly respected natural history photographer and author of numerous plant and wildlife books; California Horticultural Society, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Way; members free, guests \$5; for more information, call 800 884-0009 (CA only) or 415 566-5222.

\* MGS sponsored/supported event

from Bracey Tiede:

The **Going Native Garden Tour** is coming up on April 30, 2006. Registration opens on January 1, 2006.

**We are looking for gardens and volunteers too.**

Information about how to join us or submit a garden is on our website ([www.goingnativegardentour.org](http://www.goingnativegardentour.org)). This tour is now four years old and getting better every year here in the Santa Clara Valley and on the Peninsula.

Other, single-author, book-signings for Cachuma Press' newly published *California Native Plants for the Garden* (prior page):

December 17	Santa Clara Valley CNPS, Palo Alto
January 21	Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Berkeley
January 21	Mrs. Dalloways, Berkeley
February 18	Marin Art & Garden Center, Ross
March 8	Western Hort Society, Palo Alto
March 15 & 19	SF Flower and Garden Show
March 17	UC Davis Arboretum
March 22	East Bay CNPS, Orinda

# Don't Forget to Renew for 2006!



MGS memberships are for the calendar year, so now is the time to send in your renewal if you haven't done so already. Send in your check or credit card information (be sure to include the 3-digit cvv number, or card verification value, at the end of your account number in the signature panel on the back of your card) to the MGS in Greece - international postage is 84¢



Have questions? Contact The MGS Secretary (info at right) or your Branch (below).

The MGS Secretary  
Sparoza, P.O.Box 14  
GR-190 02 Peania, GREECE

We invite you to join The Mediterranean Garden Society to learn more about gardening in our unique and desirable climate.

Memberships are for the calendar year (Jan-Dec), and all members receive the Society's quarterly journal, *The Mediterranean Garden*, which contains articles written by members worldwide.

If you join mid-year, you will receive all four journal issues for that year.

Annual membership is \$35  
Life membership is \$350

Send your personal check or credit card information to:

**The MGS Secretary  
Sparoza, P.O.Box 14  
GR-190 02 Peania,  
GREECE**

(International letter postage is 84¢)

tel/fax: 011 30 1 664 3089  
(+ 10 hours)

email: mgssec@hol.gr

Payment of dues for the Mediterranean Garden Society includes you in this Branch if your address is within our range or if you specify branch inclusion directly on the membership form. You can join at any of our events or send your application separately.

For a membership form, contact Sue Ann Manners, (925) 254-0226, or visit the MGS web site:

[www.MediterraneanGardenSociety.org](http://www.MediterraneanGardenSociety.org)

This newsletter is published in the FALL, WINTER, & SPRING (dormant in SUMMER!) to announce the events and news of the Northern California Branch of the MGS.

EDITOR: Seán O'Hara, sean@gimcw.org



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN SOCIETY  
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH  
P.O.Box 542  
Lafayette, CA 94549

#### Co-chairs

Seán O'Hara

Nancy Swarengen

#### Executive Committee

Stitch Boyle

Katherine Greenberg

Sue Ann Manners

Nancy Mead

Seán O'Hara

Nancy Swarengen

Judy Thomas

Bracey Tiede

#### Advisory Board

Russ Beatty

Betsy Clebsch

Bill Grant

Chris Jacobsen

Warren Roberts

Bernard Trainor

Richard Turner

Phil Van Soelen

*Don't forget to renew your membership for 2006!*