



A Summer Nap*

"Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine."

Alexander Smith *Dreamthorpe, First Essay*

As the weather warms and the soil dries, late spring blossoms fade and our native gardens grow drowsy. The once green Needlegrass becomes blonde, the fine foliage of our California sagebrush is now coarser, more silver. Adaptable Buckeyes drop their lush winter/spring foliage revealing their summer silhouette. Native bulbs sleep happily beneath their cloak of warm soil and the remaining amber stalks of wildflowers remind us of that recent spring explosion of vibrant color. Even the stately Live Oak now seems to hesitate between its deep, slow breaths, while the normal circus of birds and insects, which call it home, are quieter and less hectic. A slow place exists in the garden, a deliberately slow pace designed to allow our southern California native plants a chance to make it through summer's heat and drought, eventually landing on the other side of autumn with enough cellular energy and structural integrity to respond to winter's first rains. In short, to live.

Oh the garden is still a pleasant place to be sure. Not all is drowsy and dry despite spring's departure. Chaparral Mallow still holds its shell-pink blossoms in long arched inflorescences. Blue Flax provides a cool pure blue despite the heat while the Woolly Blue Curles and Matilija Poppies, nearing the end of their blooms, continue to provide color and fragrance. The Sages, with their now dry but always interesting flower stalks, still have their foliage and the warm summer temperatures intensify their aromatic fragrance, just as that heat ripens the delicious maple syrup scent of Pearly Everlasting's straw-like blooms. And there are, of course, a few lingering Leopard Lilies, several small but durable sprigs of Blue-eyed Grass which blossom through the heat, the white flowers of California Mock Orange hanging on, and many flowers remaining on the Island Bush Poppy. But the Fremontia, despite a double bloom this year, is finally at rest.

As in any garden there is always the promise of tomorrow. The fierce flowering of *Epilobium* and *Isocoma*, *Abutilon* and *Chilopsis*, mixed with the long blooming period of Island Snapdragon and Buckwheats are probably weeks away. Yes, the butterflies are certainly about in the sun, the heat seeming to buoy them in the light air as they leap and dance and skip, looking for mates, nectar, or the right place to lay their eggs. And if there is even a trickling water feature in the garden, don't the birds seem to enjoy it all the more this time of year? Still, the garden—this *native* garden—for the most part is asleep, conserving its precious energy. Unlike those gardens where something *must* be blooming all the time, this native garden is given a respite, a space between now and then, a small piece of time to slow down, relax, and perhaps take a nap.

Might we all be as lucky! Enjoy your summer, everyone.

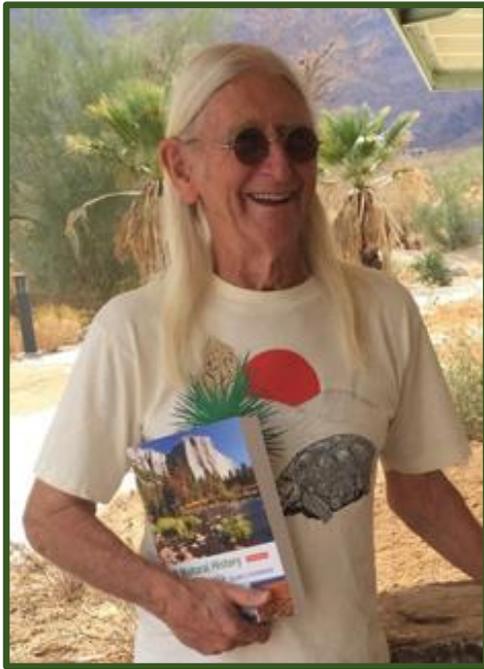
*Reprinted from July/August, 2002

—Dan Songster

ALLAN SCHOENHERR—February 6, 1937-May 31, 2021

Allan passed away at his cabin in the Sierra on May 31st, age 84. We will miss his fellowship, leadership and unique perspective over all the years of our chapter's existence.

Allan's accomplishments as a teacher and as a scholar are numerous and varied and sincerely impressive. In addition, he authored and edited several books, including *A Natural History of California* (1992), which he originally wrote to support his popular class at Fullerton College. He was the ultimate naturalist with a huge breadth and depth of knowledge in biology, geography, geology, ecology and many more subjects.



Memories from Dan Songster: "Allan was the first speaker I heard at OC CNPS when we were meeting at the tiny Irvine historical society museum. It seated 15 in a pinch. It was full that night with a couple even standing in the back, and I was sitting behind a post in the center of the room. By the end of the night my neck was sore from bending it around the post to see his lovely images, but it was worth it.

When attending Southern California Botanists yearly symposiums, Allan, with bright smile and sparkling eyes, was always one of the first to greet you and steer you towards the famous donut table. A sweet and humble guy with a million great stories but who would always listen, he was always interested in what others were doing."

The last of his many talks for OC CNPS was on May 17, 2018, entitled "California Public Lands: Our Incomparable Treasures." He always had great photos and was engaging, informative and fascinating. Allan made us all feel that we were a part of a bigger world that we were excited to learn about.

Allan taught ambitious field courses involving overnight camping, and even more extended month-long trips backpacking through different habitats. In addition to his mastery of all things California, Allan was the naturalist on

many and extensive shipboard excursions all over the world, teaching marine biology and ecology. What a teacher! He influenced many lives.

—Laura Camp

More about Allan:

<http://fullertoncollegecentennial.com/staff-stories/allan-schoenner.html>

<https://lagunacanyon.org/stories/allan-a-schoenherr/>

Dick Newell, noted Orange County naturalist

Sad to report, Dick Newell passed away on June 13 from a long illness. Over the years, Dick greatly expanded the minds of many of us as he shared his broad knowledge of the natural features of Orange County. Animal tracking was a specialty and he even dared to tackle the difficult science of lichen identification! He will be greatly missed.

There will be a celebration of life for Dick on **Monday, July 26, 4-6pm** at the Back Bay Muth Interpretive Center, 2301 University Dr., Newport Beach,

FIELD TRIPS

Our first field trip for 2021 at O'Neill Regional Park was fun and informative. On Sunday morning, June 27, Jonathan Frank led a group along Vista Trail. The group saw three different kinds of native milkweed: *Asclepias eriocarpa*, wooly pod milkweed (pictured here), *Asclepias fascicularis*, narrowleaf milkweed, and *Funastrum cynanchoides*, climbing milkweed.

Future field trips are in the works. Stay tuned for more information.

—Elizabeth Wallace



Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the gardens you didn't plant than by the ones you did. So throw off the stifling lawn and ivy. Grow away from last century's conventional landscape and reach into your region's diverse natural legacy. Catch the native winds in your plans. Explore. Dream. Discover. Grow Naturally.

—Mark Twain

Ramblings about Summer Watering and Clay Soils

—Dan Songster

Advice is always a two-edged sword, something that should be dispensed and received with caution. No supposed expert is ever the last word on matters, especially when these issues relate to our wondrous native plants. One question I am often asked is about watering natives—especially in the summer months. Even with the many books, articles and websites that have erupted onto the scene since the arrival of the groundbreaking *California Native Plants for the Garden* (Bornstein, Fross, O'Brien, 2005) it seems that the issue of watering your native plants in summer is a subject that is tiptoed around, perhaps with good reason.

It is a tricky concept to address with each gardener. We all have slightly (or greatly) different soils, exposures, techniques, plant palettes, topography, and levels of success that seem to transcend logic. This advice will be all right as long as you remember there are no hard and fast rules that apply in *all* situations, no magic formula for how to treat all native plants. Now that you have been warned and read the disclaimer, let's consider some factors that may directly influence watering practices during the hot months, especially in clay soils. By the way, Tree of life nursery has one of the most complete overviews of watering of native plants, including summer irrigation. Worth a read through even if you consider yourself an expert!

<https://www.californianativeplants.com/PDFs/Watering-Native-Plants.pdf>

Root Rot and Soils. Almost everyone's soil has various species of root rot pathogens swarming around in it, even yours. They aid in the decomposition of sick plants and such, but also are enemies of a several of our favorite natives such as Manzanita, Woolly Blue Curls, and Fremontodendron. The pathogen itself can't do much unless given the right conditions—warm, moist preferably heavy soils like clay—at which point it can infect the vascular system of your favorite plant, seemingly overnight, and with devastating results.



Woolly Bluecurls

Most of us in suburban Orange County don't have native soils even if we think we do. Those were all scraped away back when the homes were being built and replaced with a "cap" of clay soils, easy to compact for contractors who need a firm base for pouring cement slabs to build the homes upon, but not good for our native plants! So if you are growing natives here in OC, it is likely they are planted in clay soils and when it is summertime and you water,

what do you have?—the perfect environment for the various plant-killing fungus pathogens. That is why you see so many experts warn that if you must water in the hot months of summer and fall, do it early in the morning on cooler days while your soils are still fairly cool. That can help a little.

Those of you who have sandy or rocky soils or even just a nice, loamy soils can be less concerned with the fungal issues than your friends gardening in heavier soils. Yes, light soils mean more irrigating due to water percolating through the soil and away from a new plant's root zone. This can be expensive-but you have less in the way of root rots and other associated diseases. Once established your natives will be the envy of many of us with clay soils.

Making the Best of a "Heavy" Situation.

So for most of us in or near the OC, we have to deal with clay soils. The hope is that you have selected a range of native plants for your landscape that are either local or have proved to be "garden tolerant," which is often a euphemism for being able to accept additional water through the year without harm. Take a look at the article that follows—**Native Plants Suitable for Clay Soils**. Choosing plants from that list is helpful as is planting in the fall or early winter when soils are normally cool and the water needed to get your natives started will not trigger a response from the fungal pathogens present in our soils. As inferred above, planting natives late, say in spring or (gasp!) early summer is really asking for trouble. You will be watering fairly heavily into the summer months to begin establishing a root system and for many native plants that can be a death sentence. Theodore Payne foundation has a good guide for your native plant's first year, including the excellent but overlooked advice to

check the soil before automatically watering: Use a trowel or your finger to check soil moisture. Just because the top looks dry does NOT mean the plant needs water.

https://theodorepayne.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/YOUR-NATIVE-GARDEN27S-FIRST-YEAR_final.pdf

Even if you do plant in the cooler part of the year, if you have clay soils and poor drainage you may be walking the tightrope that first summer with some plants, trying to water as little as possible and still keeping the plant alive. Too little water and the cells breakdown, too much and root rot pathogens have a chance to attack susceptible natives in the warm and heavy soils. Some folks have had success creating a mound of decomposed granite, sands, and even light gravels, and find they can water more frequently without the trouble. Establishing plants in such situations may become easier. While the roots eventually do have to enter the clay beneath, having a zone of “lighter”, better draining material up around the root collar can really help some of our natives get started.

Other Considerations

Where do you live? Climate in Mediterranean areas like ours is mainly affected by proximity to the coast. Very close to coast means cooler summer and fall seasons and less evaporation of water through the leaves. Sometimes that bit of moisture saved is enough to help a plant through the summer. Inland a few miles? The need for cautious irrigation increases. Yorba Linda? Wow! Lots of evaporation and the need for added water. The more extreme the climate (hot days and cold nights) the greater the need for picking plants that can take those conditions and still do well, without lots of additional summer water or at least making sure you plant early so that they can be at least partially established when summer’s drying heat arrives. Thankfully in some of those hot areas the soils are sandy or rocky enough to help prevent root rots, but not always.

When did you plant? Hopefully you planted in the late fall or early winter, giving your new native the best possible start towards life in your garden, allowing roots to penetrate surrounding soil just a bit before summer hits. Those small silvery-white root hairs moving outward from the original root ball mean a great deal when considering a new plant’s abilities to gather water. While planting in spring and watering into summer is actually OK for a large number of riparian species, several of the oak understory plants, and many of the cultivars whose origins are on the central and north coastline, generally most of these plants do better with a fall or early winter planting, sometimes dramatically better.



A lot of the Coastal Sage Scrub plants do fine with summer watering, especially to help them become established. Watering a young Sage, Buckwheat, Lemonade Berry, or Bladderpod once or twice a month that first summer is expected (and appreciated) regardless of when you planted. Some Chaparral plants like Mountain Mahogany, Toyon, and even Ceanothus are not bothered by moderate water during summer while others such as Manzanita, Woolly Blue Curls, or Fremontodendron, are extremely sensitive to fungus pathogens and can seem to perish from a single summer watering no matter how long they have been in the ground. With such plants you should strive to limit watering in summer if possible, especially in the heavy clay soils, and after the first year avoid summer water entirely.

How old is the plant? A plant which has been in the ground for a few years is much more likely to do OK without needing too much in the way of summer water. The root system has grown and is more likely to obtain enough moisture to make it through the summer. That does not mean you would deliberately withhold water from natives that appreciate summer watering. Deergrass, Douglas Iris, and Yarrow could probably make it through a summer without irrigation but do much better with that added water. Of course, on becoming familiar with the natives you have, you will find out if a little summer water keeps your plant fresh or if such watering creates problems. Ask other people who grow natives!

Sun or Shade? Often just the amount of sun or shade a plant gets means you will need to water it a bit more (if it can tolerate it). The same plant with high shade from a nearby tall tree or the afternoon shadow of a structure will lose less water than one in full sun. A small trick for Woolly Blue Curly, which despises summer water, is to add a piece of shade-screen staked on its south-west side; it may not look great but could help it through that first critical summer by slowing evaporation of water from sun-heated leaf surfaces, thereby lessening the need of water. Additionally, especially in sunny and hot locations, if you must water then generally do it at the coolest time of the day, early morning or even late evening is best. If there is a day you “know” (or the weatherman claims) will soar into the 90s then wait, if possible, for a day of lower than normal projected temperatures to water that morning. In the following link Barbara Eisenstein gives us an in-depth look at heat wave gardening.



Summer Holly

Many of the tips she mentions are applicable to how to treat your plants in the summer months. Her lists of natives that made it and those that did not are great!

<http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com/native-plant-heat-wave-gardening-tips/>

Mulching? As long as it is kept a few inches away from the plants main stem or trunk, mulch can be useful in keeping water evaporation (from the soil itself) to a minimum, meaning less need to get out the hose or turn on the drip system. Also is the added benefit of keeping the soil temperatures somewhat balanced, the mulch acting as an insulating blanket, preventing extremely hot or cold soils.

These more moderate soil temperatures mean longer periods of root growth allowing the plant to gather more of its own water. But not all mulch is good for natives and not all uses of mulch are as beneficial as you might think! Listen to Mike Evans of Tree of Life Nursery in this video to really explain things.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNU7ozqGq0Y>

Planted or in containers? Normally, plants in the ground have less need of frequent watering than do plants in containers. The very fast draining soils normally used in potted plants and the drain holes in the bottom mean that (even with a shallow tray underneath) water runs past the roots and out the bottom rather fast. While this helps prevent Root Rot issues, it does mean a plant can dry out much more quickly and watering intervals are very short, sometimes every other day. Container gardening is its subject which I love but will not go into at this time-for inspiration read this Pete Veilleux article: <https://www.cnps.org/gardening/patio-and-container-gardens-5423>

Conclusion

Talk to people -If you read this and are more confused than ever, my apologies. In any case, ask someone who also grows natives and you will often find a generous person willing to share experiences and knowledge. This is perhaps the best way to improve your native garden in many ways. Don't know anyone who grows natives? Attend a chapter meeting—many of us are native plant gardeners and love to give advice. Don't be shy, chances are someone has had and possibly overcome the same problem. And don't feel thwarted by the possibility of a plant not doing so well if you water too much or too little. You will learn as you go with far fewer losses than I may have caused you to envision.

Here at the end of this article I must say that the Tree of Life Nursery Catalog is almost indispensable for getting a rough overview of summer watering needs for most of the native plants you may have in your garden. They have been in business for 40 years and have gathered a lot useful information!

<https://californianativeplants.com/plants/plantcatalogdownload/>

My Best Advice- Get to know your garden. Unlike conventional landscapes demanding copious amounts of water at most times of the year, a native landscape asks that you get to know its citizens and its seasonality. Realize that the summer downtime most natives enjoy is also a respite for you. As seeds mature through the summer, the leaves of the Buckeye drop in summer dormancy, and the bulbs sleep beneath a cover of native grasses, take a break yourself and enjoy a garden in seasonal transition.

Final Note: If you would like to continue your education on native gardens and watering issues I suggest you grab a cool drink, and sit back and read Barbara Eisenstein's article on summer watering. She has loam soil (good) but lives up in Pasadena area (hot!) She is an excellent writer—enjoy!

<http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com/summer-water-2/>

“Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration.”

—Lou Erickson

Native Plants Suitable for Clay Soils

—Dan Songster

We hear all the time about native plants needing well drained soils and for many natives that is absolutely true. We may try incorporating organic composts into the landscape often causing more problems than solving. Or we try adding the coarse sand, gravel, and decomposed granite recommended by some experts, with some success with the odd manzanita or woolly blue curls. Perhaps you are at the point where you are curious about what native plants actually thrive in clay soils. Hmmm....Why not try them? What a novel idea! Here are a few of my favorites.

Ground covers

Achillea millefolium, *Yarrow*
 Adenostoma fasciculatum 'Nicholas', *prostrate form*
Chamise
 Baccharis pilularis Twin Peaks' or 'Pigeon Point', *Prostrate*
Coyote Brush
 Carex pansa or praegracilis -*Sedge*
 Ceanothus griseus horiz. 'Yankee Point'-*Yankee Point*
Lilac (Also C. 'Anchor Bay')
 Erigeron sp-*Seaside Daisy*
 Eriogonum fasciculatum *California Buckwheat*
 Fragaria sp-Both “woodland” and “Beach” *strawberries*
 Salvia spathacea-*Hummingbird Sage*

Small to midsize plants

Artemisia californica including 'Montara'-*California Sagebrush*
 Encelia californica -*Coast Sunflower*
 Eriogonum fasciculatum, *California Buckwheat*
 Galvesia speciosa-*Island Snapdragon*
 Juncus species-*Rush*
 Muhlenbergia rigens-*Deergrass*
 Sages-Many! Salvia apiana-*White Sage*, S. clevelandii, S. leucophylla, S. mellifera, etc

Perennials (Sometimes referred to as sub-shrubs)

Epilobium canum-*California Fuchsia*
 Romneya coulteri -*Matilija Poppy*
 Solidago velutina ssp. Californica-*California GoldenRod*
 Sisyrinchium bellum-*Western Blue-eyed Grass*
 Thalictrum fendleri var. polycarpum-*Meadow rue*

Verbena lilacina-*Lilac Verbena*

Shrubs

Ceanothus species ('Concha', 'Wheeler Canyon', etc.)-*California Lilac*
 Eriogonum giganteum-St. Catherine's Lace (Also-Many of the other Buckwheat)
 Frangula californica (Rhamnus c.)-*Coffeeberry*
 Heteromeles arbutifolia-*Toyon*
 Isocoma menziesii-*Coast Goldenbush (and most of its friends Hazardia, Grindelia, etc)*
 Prunus ilicifolia-*Hollyleaf Cherry*
 Rhus integrifolia-*Lemonadeberry (also R. ovata-Sugarbush)*

Trees

Calocedrus decurrens-*Incense Cedar*
 Cercis occidentalis-*Western Redbud*
 Cercocarpus betuloides-*Western Mountain Mahogany*
 Cupressus forbesii-*Tecate Cypress*
 Chilopsis linearis-*Desert Willow*
 Juglans Californica-*California Walnut*
 Prunus ilicifolia ssp byonia-*Catalina Cherry*
 Quercus agrifolia-*Coast Live Oak (and others) **Limit summer water!*
 Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea -*Blue Elderberry*

Focal Points

Hespeoyucca whipplei-*Foothill Yucca*, Our Lord's Candle
 Nolina cismontana- *Peninsular beargrass*

***Many native bulbs can also thrive in heavy soils if not watered in summer

***Many native grasses also enjoy clay soils!

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Gardens are Essential—Especially During a Pandemic

Gardens are an essential (perhaps *the* essential) component of the built environment at all scales. As we take tentative steps forward towards a future where the next global pandemic likely lurks just around the corner, we must not underestimate the value of our gardens and green spaces. We need not only to protect and cherish them, but also to enlarge and reconfigure them to serve as safe outlets for public recreation, social interaction, and mental health and well-being. The need to connect—to oneself, to others, to the greater outdoors—is fundamental. Self-isolation is not. Whether a balcony of potted plants, a postage-stamp front yard filled with perennials, wildflowers spilling over a trail, or a well-worn dirt track along the bank of an urban river, gardens are fundamental. They nourish our soul, connect us to our communities, and provide safe and healthy places for us to escape confinement and recreate. Gardens let us showcase the best parts of ourselves.”

**Haven Kiers
 Pacific Horticulture- June, 2020**