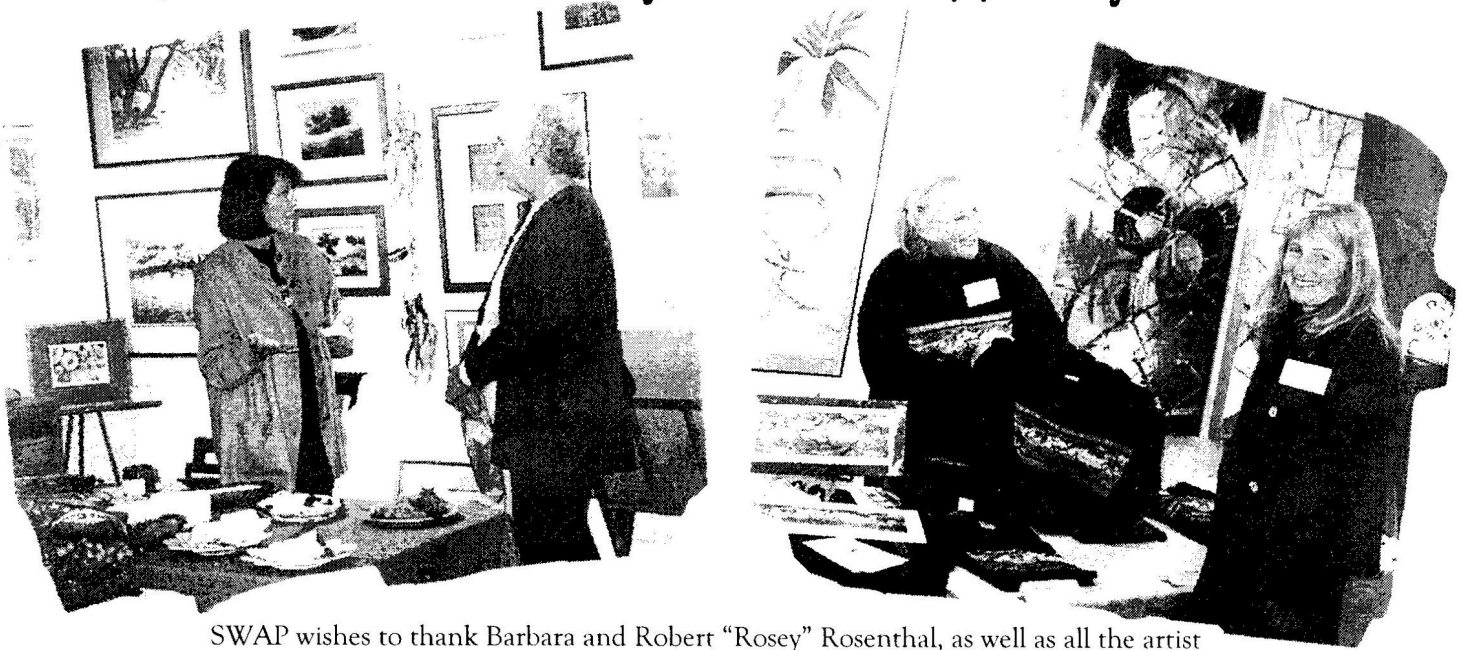




# OAK LEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE LOS OSOS / MORRO BAY CHAPTER OF SMALL WILDERNESS AREA PRESERVATION  
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-3092 ❖ FEBRUARY / MARCH 2001

## *Many Thanks to Artists for Their Support of SWAP*



SWAP wishes to thank Barbara and Robert "Rosey" Rosenthal, as well as all the artist members of the San Luis Artists Gallery cooperative, for putting on a fundraiser for the Elfin Forest. All involved spent an enjoyable evening looking at the works of more than 30 members of the cooperative, sampling food, and yes – buying some art to take home.

*Photos clockwise from upper left:*

*Barbara Rosenthal, San Luis Artists Gallery co-founder discusses art (or maybe food?) with past SWAP Board member Barbara Machado.*

*Pat Sarafian and new SWAP volunteer Brenda Ostrander sold Elfin Forest Mural T-shirts and prints;*

*Pete Sarafian and San Luis Artists Gallery co-founder Robert "Rosey" Rosenthal.*

*Rose Bowker, past SWAP President, selects a piece of art.*



# Sarafians Attend War on Weeds Symposium

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

Pat and Pete Sarafian went up to Monterey in November to attend the fourth annual Monterey Bay War on Weeds Symposium. The symposium was held at the Moss Landing Marine Laboratory and included walks and talks on efforts to restore the dunes at the laboratory to native conditions. Also featured were demonstrations of weed control tools and field trips to dune restoration sites nearby and to Elkhorn Slough Reserve. Monterey Bay has a very active group of weed warriors from government, academia and private concerns. They are probably ahead of San Luis Obispo County in their cooperative weed management efforts.

Two of the more interesting talks involved soil chemistry and biota. Apparently, healthy plant communities have micorrhizal fungi networks in their root systems. In fact, any such habitats around North America have the same few species of fungi involved in root networks. It appears that the various plants in a given ecosystem can share nutrients and other resources with their neighbors. In order to obtain good growth and healthy restoration of native plants, the soil must be conditioned to return to the micorrhizal state. Inoculation with topsoil or fungal species was suggested as a way to jump-start the slow process of plant succession that might otherwise take decades or centuries to occur. Planting seedling close to other natives was another good revegetation technique. In the desert climate of the American west, the presence of cryptobiotic crusts was mentioned as a healthy and necessary component of the soil. In the Elfin Forest chaparral one can see the dark crust under healthy groups of native plants. The crust consists of cyanobacteria, algae, fungi and mosses. As long as the crust is intact, weeds have a hard time invading. Once the crust is broken and dispersed, such as when trails are created and footpaths are worn, the weeds can come in and take over.



*Pete Sarafian demonstrates how he attacks weeds, with help from another alien invader.*

*Photo by Pat Sarafian*

## Let's All Pull Together!

SWAP First Saturday work parties are held at 9 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month.

Volunteers should meet at the north end of 15th Street. Dress for sun and wind and bring work gloves if you can. Some work gloves, tools and drinking water are provided. Call 528-3092.



## OAK LEAVES

is published six times per year beginning in February.  
Editor is Yolanda Waddell; layout is by Katy Budge.

Contributors to this issue:

Sandra Beebe, Wendy Brown, Pat Sarafian, Pete Sarafian,  
Yolanda Waddell, Dirk & Bonnie Walters, and Jim Weldon;  
editing assistance by Pat Grimes

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# Chuck Lowe

## Supervisor of Rangers County Parks Pecho District

*An Interview by Sandra Beebe*

*The purpose of interviewing Chuck Lowe, Supervisor of Rangers for the County Park system (Pecho District) was to talk with him about the vandalism that has occurred in the Elfin Forest since the boardwalk has been completed. We met recently at his office off Highway One. He is a very affable man and that made for a pleasant interview.*

Chuck moved to San Luis Obispo County when just an infant and lived just off of South Bay Boulevard. His father came here after being discharged from the service to attend school at Cal Poly. They moved around the county and he attended school in Templeton where his father bought a home. After graduating from high school he attended Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, where he majored in biology. He knew he wanted to work outdoors but wasn't certain of the field. After graduation he worked for Oregon State Parks for awhile, first as an aide and then as a ranger. A friend and he decided they needed to do some serious exploration while they were young. They went on a canoe trip for two seasons, retracing Lewis and Clark's route. Neither was an expert canoeist, but both felt it was the time when they should do it. After the canoe trip was over, he came to San Luis Obispo County and found a position at Lopez Lake in 1980 as a park ranger, working there until about six years ago. That is when he came took the position of Supervisor of the Pecho district, which runs from San Luis Obispo to Cambria along the coast.

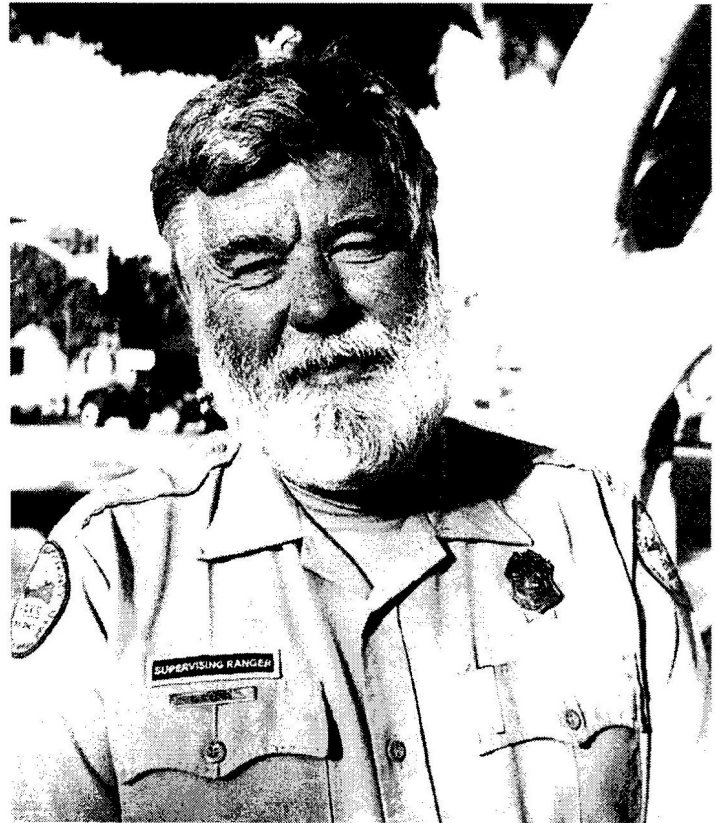
Chuck mentioned that vandalism varies from park to park in this county. Much of it is simply "tagging" where spray paint or other means are used to mark equipment. Skateboarders cause damage by riding on rails or walls. He classifies that as "kids' fun" but they are, nevertheless, destructive. In San Luis Obispo County parks, his staff has tried to put physical barriers such as rings on flower boxes to discourage skateboard acrobatics. However, it sometimes incurs the skateboarders' wrath and they try to knock the rings out.

In the Elfin Forest there has been tagging of the beautiful wood benches, but Chuck's staff was able to undo that damage. He does worry that if the benches are more deeply marked, it may be impossible to repair them. Recently a ranger has noticed that there are marks from skateboarders on some of the benches. To discourage this kind of behavior, he tries to have his rangers keep as high a profile as possible year round. However, for this area he only has three rangers who are assigned to the various parks.

Chuck wants to identify the offenders in the Elfin Forest, and then go speak to their parents, for he feels the majority of parents don't know what their kids are doing. He believes that education is the best preventive of future vandalism. One of the ways his department cuts down on destruction in other parks is to buy equipment that would be more difficult to destroy. The goals are for the equipment to look good but also to be easily repaired after vandalism. He feels there will never be a time when vandalism will be completely eradicated. Compared to the other more used parks in the system, Elfin Forest has had less vandalism. Most of the damage is done by young people who live near the Elfin Forest. Generally, people who will drive to Elfin Forest are not the type to cause damage.

As others have pointed out, Chuck says the presence of the boardwalk contributes to the problem of vandalism. At present time park rangers inform visitors why they should stay on the boardwalk, but permanent signs with this message are in the works. These signs will explain the damage that is caused when people and dogs go off the boardwalk and create trails in the dune scrub.

We talked some about the future plans to have volunteer "Park



Hosts" in the Elfin Forest to increase the visibility of authority figures. Chuck brought up an interesting point. He says there is a thin line that the parks staff who interact with the public must tread. They will have to be effective in talking to people without alienating them. The goal is for all who visit the Elfin Forest to enjoy the park, while respecting it. This gave me a pause, for it would be my natural instinct to be cantankerous with those I see "not following the rules". He continued that a Park Host program will be effective as long as the details are worked out so the overall results are positive. The more eyes and ears the better. Guidelines are needed so that the public perceives that even though they are being told they cannot be as free as they want, they will leave with a positive feeling toward the forest.

Chuck noted that some neighbors of the Elfin Forest have lived near the forest for a long time, and in the past were able to use it as they wanted. Now that there are restrictions on their behavior, they often feel that this is an infringement on their rights. They need to understand that in the long run they benefit from County Parks owning the forest, for they could now be looking at homes instead of a "small wilderness." Education will help them understand this. Many seem not to understand how even their dogs can contribute to the damage if they are left to run loose.

All of Chuck's rangers have taken a basic law enforcement course, but are not police officers so cannot give out tickets. They can give out written warnings and when offenders are identified, be they dog owners or vandals, they can refer the matter to the Sheriff's Department. Chuck likes to talk first to dog owners or violators to attempt to get cooperation without alienating them. Animal Control cannot give out a ticket unless they see the offense (a dog running loose in the Elfin Forest) and can only pick up the animal if it is still there when they arrive.

The goal of San Luis Obispo County Parks is to restore the Elfin Forest to the way it was early in this century, and to keep it that way. That certainly is a goal of every one of us who loves the Elfin Forest. Part of this process, Ranger Lowe feels, is to decrease vandalism with trained volunteers patrolling and being more visible; and by education of the public, in particular our youth, in such a way that they will want to be part of the solution.

# From the Chair

By Jim Weldon, SWAP Board of Directors

The SWAP Los Osos/Morro Bay Chapter has a new phone number: 805-528-3092. Our previous phone number was a voice-mail number only; the new number will enable SWAP to be listed in the phone directory. We have an answering machine which will give you information on walks, work parties, our Board meetings and other SWAP events. You can leave us a message and we will return your call within 24 hours. Since our old phone number, 546-1199 can still be seen in many places such as our past newsletters and brochures, we'd appreciate your making a note of our new number.

A pen and ink drawing by nationally known artist Nancy Kolliner was generously re-donated to SWAP by Norma Wightman.

We were disappointed that only a few members attended our Annual Meeting on December 9th. Our speakers: Jan DiLeo, County Parks Planner and Bill Henry and Gaylene Tupen of The Morro Group gave an excellent presentation. Since we feel that low turnout is partly due to the time of year (we inadvertently scheduled our meeting for the same day and time as the Los Osos Christmas parade), we have decided to move our Annual Meeting date to the second Saturday in October – October 13, 2001. We hope that more of our members will be able to attend at that time.

A pen and ink drawing by nationally known artist Nancy Kolliner was generously re-donated to SWAP by Norma Wightman, who won it in a SWAP raffle six years ago. The drawing has a value of \$2,000-\$3,000. We will raffle the drawing again for \$5 per ticket or six tickets for \$25. Drawing for the winning ticket will be held at our Annual Meeting, October 13th. The drawing will be on display at the Morro Bay National Estuary Program office in Morro Bay, so you can get a chance to view it.

## Alien Invasion, Part 10:



By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

This is the tenth in a series of articles on alien plant species that are invading the Elfin Forest. Unchecked, the aliens will take over and destroy the plants that have been part of the Elfin Forest for centuries. It is hoped that these aliens will become more recognizable to members of SWAP and the Los Osos community. Community members are encouraged to assist SWAP and San Luis County Parks on the first Saturday of each month to control these pests. Community involvement could make a big difference in restoring and maintaining the health of the park for the long term.

Tall, waving white plumes above bunches of slender green blades make for a handsome coastal resident, right? Maybe for the uninformed, but to the many native plant lovers on the California coast, this sight is horrifying. Pampasgrass and jubatagrass are familiar sights along the coast, unfortunately. These rapidly spreading invaders are non-natives at their worst.

First introduced into Santa Barbara in the mid-1800's for horticultural purposes, the taller of the two grasses, pampasgrass (*Cortaderia selloana*), originally came from South America. It was introduced into Europe in the early 1800's and then to North America later. It was raised commercially around the Santa Barbara area, and the Soil Conservation Service even planted it in southern California for dryland forage and erosion control in the mid-1900's.

Jubatagrass (*Cortaderia jubata*), with shorter bunches of slender green blades, also is native to South America. It was brought into France and Ireland first, and then somehow was introduced into North America. It probably was a horticultural import as well.

Both grasses are invasive in California's wildlands. Both species can be found both in yards and escaped into the open spaces in Los Osos and Morro Bay. Jubatagrass is the more aggressive species. It cannot tolerate frost, and so can grow only along the coast. Drive from San Luis Obispo to the Monterey Bay area along US Highway 1, and you will see the hillsides covered with *jubata*. Landslides often disturb the hillside soils and create an ideal site

*Alien Invasion, continued on page 7*

### Where To Call, Where To Write

If you have questions about SWAP activities or want to volunteer, please call 528-3092 and leave a message.

A recorded message will have information about our 3rd Saturday Walks, Work Saturdays, and other events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments about anything that's happening in the Elfin Forest, call or write:

Pete Jenny, SLO County Parks Facilities Manager,  
1087 Santa Rosa Street, SLO, CA 93408, (805) 781-5930.

february 12

### SWAP BOARD MEETINGS

The SWAP Board of Directors meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Board meetings will be held at the Coast National Bank, 1193 Los Osos Valley Road on

Monday, February 12, and Monday, March 12.

All Board meetings are open to the public.

To confirm the date, time and location (which are subject to change), phone 528-3092.

march 12

# WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

## Third Saturday Walks

### February 17 - 9:30 a.m.

Here's hoping that we'll have plenty of rain in February so Dennis Sheridan can lead us on SWAP's annual **Fungus Foray** in the Elfin Forest instead of a lichen walk, as happened last January. Remember? No rain at all last January, so we decided to try February this time. Dennis knows where all of the fascinating fungi are, and will help us to discover Black elfin saddles, Earthstars, Golden caps and dozens of others. Dress for the possibility of getting dirty – that's what mushrooms grow in. Bring a magnifying lens.

### March 17 - 9:30 a.m.

Join Dick Hitchman, Cuesta College history instructor and author of several books on the history of San Luis Obispo County and the Central Coast. As he leads us along the Elfin Forest Boardwalk, he'll relate stories of the days of the ranchos, San Luis Obispo's "Wild West" years and the more peaceful settlers who followed. Come prepared to hear some fascinating tales.

### April 21 - 9:30 a.m.

Dr. Dirk Walters, Cal Poly botanist and author of a botany text, will take us on a wildflower walk during the best month for Spring wildflowers in the Elfin Forest. Dirk writes the column on native plants for *Oakleaves*, and has a piece of information or good story to go with every plant that is in bloom. Don't miss this one!

Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at 9:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted) at the north end of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear comfortable shoes, long sleeves and pants to avoid poison oak. Please park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes. We ask that you not bring dogs or other pets. The easy paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information call (805) 528-3092 evenings.



The Weed Warriors stopped for a moment's rest on December 2nd, a beautiful Saturday morning.

L to R: Terry Gates, Pat Sarafian, Sharon Meyer, Heather Johnson, Bob Meyer, James Johnson, Pete Sarafian.



Above, November walk leader Al Normandin talked about survival styles of plants in the Elfin Forest.

Below, "Forest and Bay" was the subject of December walk leader Mike Multari, Director of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program.



## Work Party Scores Big

By Pete Sarafian, Conservation Chair

The December Weekend Weed Warrior work party cleaned up in high fashion. The last of this year's narrow-leaved iceplant was hauled out of the east end of the Elfin Forest. Although mature and full of seed pods, the plants were bagged with their seeds and hauled to the new compost site at the north end of 15th Street. A visiting wildland restoration and tree specialist from Santa Barbara, Duke McPherson, joined SWAP members Bob McDougale and Ron Rasmussen in rooting out these invasives.

Also being pounced on (a first for us) were the new shoots of veldt grass in the open, disturbed area near Bush Lupine Point. This gives us a head start on the year 2001 crop of nasty, invasive grasses. Pat Sarafian organized an effort that included Kathy Dugan, Terry Gates, James and Heather Johnson, Bob and Sharon Meyer, and Yolanda Waddell. (Of course, yours truly was there too.) Drinks and holiday goodies capped off the gala occasion.

Thanks to all who have volunteered this year. In retrospect, the year 2000 was a huge success with hundreds of volunteer hours being provided to support the Elfin Forest. The park is beginning to show the effects of our dedicated effort. No longer are the trails lined with invasive plants and blossoms. The spring flowering season should be more dominated by natives than it has been in a long time.

## Twentieth in a Series

# Fiddleneck

By Dirk Walters, Ph.D.; Drawing by Bonnie Walters

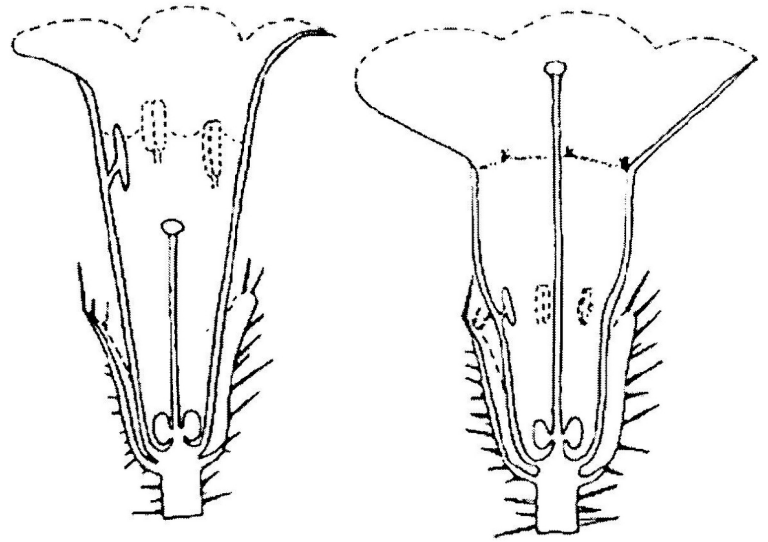
The plant chosen for installment is the only fiddle-neck listed in the Elfin Forest species list. It is *Amsinckia spectabilis*, and it is a member of the Boraginaceae or forget-me-not family. This genus is very easy to recognize because of its yellow to orange flowers coupled with its very characteristic inflorescence that can be seen in the scan of one Dirk's slides. The inflorescence seems to be uncoiling from the tip which makes it resemble the end of a violin or fiddle and thus accounts for the common name, fiddle-neck.

Botanists use the name scorpioid cyme for such an inflorescence, as it also resembles the end of a scorpion's tail. Scorpioid cymes are a major field recognition characteristic for members of the Boraginaceae. The only other family that commonly possesses a scorpioid cyme is the Hydrophyllaceae or waterleaf family. The waterleaf family usually has compound leaves, more open, funnel-shaped flowers and a capsule fruit. They also usually have two distinct styles. On the other hand, the borages tend to have simple leaves, smaller, tubular flowers and four-nutlets as a fruit.

The species *Amsinckia spectabilis* is found along our coast from Morro Bay south into Santa Barbara County. It is relatively common in open areas dominated by various herbs. This includes open areas in the dunes portions of the Elfin Forest as well as in roadsides, pastures, and vacant lots. It is one of the larger flowered fiddle-necks whose flowers can be over one-half an inch long. Most of the other seven species of fiddle-necks bear flowers one-quarter of an inch long or less.

The two longitudinally sectioned flowers that were drawn by Bonnie for Dr. David Keil's and my plant taxonomy textbook show a characteristic found in a few of the fiddle-necks, including *A. spectabilis*. One of the drawings shows a flower with a long style that places the receptive pad (stigma) in the opening of the corolla tube. In this drawing the stamens are placed well inside the corolla tube. The other drawing shows a flower section with a style totally hidden inside the corolla tube and the stamens borne at the upper end (mouth) of the corolla tube. (i.e. the positions of the receptive sexual parts of the flower are reversed.) These two types of flowers are found in the same species, but usually on different individuals. It serves as a method to ensure at least some cross-pollination.

Only long-proboscis insects can pollinate fiddle-necks because only they can reach the nectar at the bottom of the thin corolla tube. If an insect visits a flower with a long style, pollen is placed halfway up the proboscis. If the insect then visits a second long-styled flower, the pollen is too low on the proboscis to reach the high stigma. On the other hand, if the insect now visits a short styled flower, the pollen is correctly



placed for the deep stigma.

Other common names that have been used for this genus are fireweed and buckthorn. I do not know the origin of the name buckthorn, but the origin of the name fireweed was told to me by one of my students just after I arrived in California. In class, I called one of the *Amsinckias* a fiddle-neck and the student said that he and his neighbors called it 'fireweed'. He said they called it that because, when it was present as a weed in hay fields, and then got bailed with the hay, it caused a 'fiery' rash on any exposed skin of anyone who had to handle the bails.

Almost all the fiddle-necks have stout hairs that can cause mechanical irritation to the skin. Fiddle-neck in hay is also dangerous to livestock, especially young animals. The two most widespread species, *A. intermedia* and *A. douglasii*, and presumably our species as well, contain an alkaloid of the Pyrrolizidine group called amsinckinae. If eaten in large amounts, it destroys the animal's liver and, if eaten in smaller amounts may ultimately cause liver cancer. Fiddle-necks are also partial to soils high in nitrates. The species are nitrate accumulators. Too much nitrate in the diet is not good for people or livestock.



*Do your part for the planet.  
Do all the things you know you "should" do.  
Our grandchildren's children will either have  
words of praise for our efforts and our foresight,  
or words that condemn us  
for forgetting that they must live here long after we are gone.  
Don't overlook the obvious:  
This is not a dress rehearsal. This is the real thing.  
Our presence has an impact, but our precautions do, too.  
And the environment means the world to us.*

— By Douglas Pagels

## THANK YOU TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Compiled by Wendy Brown, Membership Committee

### NEW MEMBERS:

Mrs. T. J. Carsey\*  
Stephani & Stuart Denker\*  
Shari & Robert Goldman  
Nancy Graves\*  
Alta Hall  
Judy Malcolm  
Leslie Hanna & Dan Miller  
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\*Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$12 membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest.

## Alien Invasion continued from page 4

for propagation of invasive species. Jubatagrass threatens coastal ecosystems by crowding out the native species, particularly in sensitive coastal dunes. *Jubata* has invaded large areas of the central coast in Vandenberg Airforce Base. It also is a major headache in logged areas on the northern California coast.

Pampasgrass often is seen along with jubatagrass in the San Francisco Bay area and along the southern California coast. Pampasgrass, being tolerant of frost, also has escaped and invaded an inland riparian zone along the American River near Sacramento.

There are two ways to identify which plant species is which. Pampasgrass develops tall bunches of greenery that can reach over ten feet in height. The female of the species *selloana* also has a very white seed plume with no traces of purple color. Unfortunately, the male *selloana* has purple coloration, making its plumes difficult to distinguish from *jubata*, which also has a purple tinge. However, jubatagrass seldom reaches greenery heights of more than about five feet tall. This is probably the easiest distinction to make between the two species.

Pampasgrass has both male and female plants. In nature, *selloana* reproduces only by sexual means, with fertilization occurring in the presence of both male and female plants. The female plant flowers when it is about two to three years old. Originally, only the female plants were cultivated for their showier plumes. However, male plants have escaped into the environment now and allow the plants to spread in the wild.

Jubatagrass has only female flowers. However, the flowers can form viable seeds without pollination. This is called apomixis, and allows *jubata* to spread uncontrollably. An individual plume can produce 100,000 seeds, and large clumps of *jubata* can produce one million or more seeds. Viable seeds can be produced in the first year of growth. The seeds can be carried by the wind for up to 20 miles. This makes *jubata* extremely aggressive in wildlands. In both species, the grasses usually flower in late summer or fall.

Burning or grazing cannot control these South American grasses. They simply re-sprout too quickly. Mechanical digging and cutting can be used with tools such as the Pulaski (axe on one end and hoe on the other) or mattock (pick on one end and hoe on the other) being effective. However, the task can be very tedious and time consuming until skill is developed. Also, the steep, rocky hillsides on which the plants can be found are dangerous to traverse and can require skilled mountaineering techniques to be employed. The plant and the upper roots have to be detached and inverted to prevent re-sprouting. Once plants have flowered, it is important to burn or compost the plumes to prevent seed dispersal.

Post-emergent chemical control can be used on both pampasgrass and jubatagrass. Be aware that only someone licensed or certified to apply chemicals and having permission from State and County Parks may do so in the Elfin Forest. For homeowners, Roundup at 2-4% may be effective if applied in the fall and sprayed until the leaves are wet. Rope-wick applicators can be used with undiluted Roundup to eliminate spray drift. In all cases, a surfactant should be added to enhance absorption. Other registered herbicides include Poast, Fusilade, Prism and Stalker or Arsenal. Once plants have been killed, clumps can be mechanically uprooted and left to decompose naturally. Leaving dead clumps in wildlands may prevent new seedlings from being established.

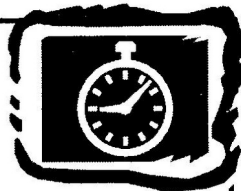
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## How Do I Know When It's Time to Renew?



To find out, check the RENEWAL DUE DATE located next to your name on the address label. You can use the adjacent membership form for your renewal. Select your membership category and mail off the form along with your check as your anniversary approaches. Joining S.W.A.P. for the first time is just as easy.

Our basic membership is \$12 which covers our operating costs and brings you our bimonthly newsletter, *Oak Leaves*. Membership donations above the basic level provide our all-volunteer organization with funds for habitat restoration and weed control projects.

Thank you for your membership and support of S.W.A.P. We look forward to hearing from you!

**PLEASE RENEW YOUR COMMITMENT  
TO THE ELFIN FOREST TODAY!**

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Member \$12       Defender \$100

Steward \$25       Champion \$250

Protector \$50       Guardian \$500

Life Member \$1000

I want to help, please call me!

Have you renewed your membership on time?

Check the label on this newsletter  
for your renewal due date.

**EVERY membership counts!!**

Make checks payable to SWAP,  
Mail to Small Wilderness Area Preservation,  
P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412 - 6442