

Plant Explorations in the Watershed (Making a List and Checking It Often...)

When I started collecting seeds for the FOSC nursery in 2002, the only native species list I knew about was the one from Martha Lowe's thesis, which listed 173 species of natives. Our group of intrepid seed hikers soon started finding species that weren't on her list. To help learn the names of the natives, I started working with an electronic copy of Martha's data, adding new species as they were ID'd, making notes about locations, rarity, or other information.

Within a year, we added more than a dozen species. As the list climbed to over 200 native species, the rate of discovery slowed, but our seed hikes still added a few species every year. We also added some plants to the list by finding records of their occurrence in Calflora or in the Jepson Herbarium's records and visiting the locations. Visiting various sites in the watershed added a few, like one species we've only found in Castle Canyon and four others found only at the Oakland Estuary.

The fortuitous meet-up with Jeff Greenhouse (see following article) was a big boon. After careful computer-assisted comparisons of Jeff's list and the FOSC list, we both added species to our counts. One source of some confusion is that while I've been keeping a Sausal Creek Watershed list, he's keeping a Joaquin Miller Park list. And part of Joaquin Miller Park (including the nursery) isn't in the Sausal Creek Watershed. What to do? I took the easy way out and made a list showing both the watershed and the park species. Some of Jeff's finds are so close to the watershed boundary that I'm not quite sure which way the water drains, and if the plants seeded a few feet away, they might cross the boundary.

Jeff not only brings his considerable expertise to the process of finding and identifying new species in the park, but he has great backup: he can consult his former colleagues from the Jepson Herbarium when difficult species like some grasses and sedges need to be identified.

Great Finds!

Two years ago, when we got the city to eliminate the goat grazing from the interior of the Sanborn Drive one-way loop, we subsequently found two "new" species there that we'd walked past dozens of times: foothill sedge (*Carex tumulicola*) and hairy golden aster (*Heterotheca sessiliflora* subsp. *bolanderi*). We plan to plant both of them in additional locations in the watershed. Once we increase the populations of the aster, it should be a popular plant sale species. It's a low groundcover, with fuzzy white leaves and bright, late-blooming yellow flowers.

One of the exciting recent finds is in Marj Saunders Park. While Elaine Geffen of Piedmont Pines Neighborhood Association and I were chatting at the end of the Earth Day 2012 work morning, she told me she'd just found some western bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*) in the park. It's not in one of the areas where they've been working, it's not adjacent to anyone's garden from which it might have crept over, and it also occurs in Huckleberry and Redwood Parks. It's in the right habitat and it looks like the small population has been there for a long time. So we're assuming that it really is native to the site and hope to collect seeds or divisions and propagate it for use in restoration and for purchase at our plant sales.



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A very recent find by Rob Leidy at Fern Ravine reminds us of the vital role that restoration plays in preserving our native plant diversity. Rob spotted an unusual grass in the upper wetland area where many invasive elms and other non-natives had been cleared. Jeff Greenhouse and another botanical expert both identified the grass as tufted hairgrass, *Deschampsia caespitosa* subsp. *caespitosa*. It has a dense clump of bright green leaves and stems, with delicate, open seed heads, and should make a great addition to our riparian planting palette. Tufted hairgrass is not new for our watershed only, but for all of the East Bay Hills. Another great find at the site was zoological—Rob found larvae of Pacific chorus frogs in a pool in the wetland. It would be great if the late wet spring and the removal of many water-guzzling elms keep the pool filled until they can mature.

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Jeff ID'd one plant I'd been confused about—giant scouring rush (*Equisetum hyemale* subsp. *affine*). I'd found the plant upstream from Beaconsfield Canyon and had planned to plant divisions at Beaconsfield. Jeff ID'd the nursery specimen we've been saving and also found the plant near Cinderella Creek in Joaquin Miller Park. Now that we know what we have, we can divide our nursery specimen for the plant sale. Strange that such an odd plant would be trendy, but it is showing up in avant-garde landscaping efforts. I just spotted some in a planter box outside a Rockridge restaurant, and there's a nice stand at the corner of Hanly and Waterhouse streets in the Glenview District.



New Names for Old Friends; Old Friends in New Places

Recently, we've been updating our lists to use the names in the new edition of *The Jepson Manual* published this year. Some changes are minor—a variety name dropped or added, or a variety changed to a subspecies. Other plants changed genus—we used to have two asters, now we have none! Instead we have a *Eurybia* and a *Symphotrichum*. And the lily family has gone through such changes! We had 17 lily family members but now only have four. The rest have been assigned to the Agavaceae, Alliaceae, Amaryllidaceae, Melanthiaceae, Ruscaceae, or Themidaceae families.

Another aspect of FOSC's native plant restoration work is keeping track of plants we've found in an area before we have intervened as opposed to natives we've introduced. We've done this mainly by tracking the plant shipments for our planting days at each site and then comparing that to the list of naturally occurring species. We'll probably update the "planted" information soon after we wrap up the plant shipment season for 2012 at the end of June.

And the Grand Total Is...

We have now identified 244 species native to the Sausal Creek Watershed, plus an additional 16 species adjacent to the watershed in Joaquin Miller Park. In the past two years, we've added about 30 new species to these lists, with Jeff Greenhouse identifying about 25 of them. We invite you to review the new species lists at http://www.sausalcreek.org/pdf/sausal_species_lists_120606.pdf (Excel versions can be found at www.sausalcreek.org/sausal/nature.html). Email kpaulsell@pacbell.net with your comments and additions.

Some resources for learning about native plants:

- ❑ Jepson Herbarium provides the plant descriptions and dichotomous keys from the new edition of *The Jepson Manual* at <http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/interchange>
- ❑ Calflora (www.calflora.org) is a wonderful resource for viewing photographs and descriptions of native plants. You can search by scientific name, common name, or family, and limit your search by county. New features include a "bloom clock" showing months that plants are in bloom, a "What Grows Here" feature that lets you get lists for specific parks, and illustrated species lists.
- ❑ FOSC seed hikes: If you're free on weekday mornings, you can join the FOSC seed and cutting collection crew. It's a great opportunity to identify the watershed's native species and to learn about the many plant communities. Contact field@sausalcreek.org for more information.

--Karen Paulsell