

## Standout Species--Here and Nowhere Else

For 20 years, the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society has compiled information on the rare and unusual plants of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Now in its 8<sup>th</sup> edition, it is published as the *Rare, Unusual and Significant Plants of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties*. I asked Dianne Lake, who spearheads this effort, to pick a few standout species from the Sausal Creek list. Here are Dianne's choices for species of the Sausal Creek Watershed that occur no place else in the entire East Bay (except for *Carex globosa*, which is also at Mt. Diablo). One plant (*Hosackia stipularis*) grows in the rare maritime chaparral plant community in Joaquin Miller Park; the rest are redwood understory plants.

### Maritime Chaparral Plant Community

*Hosackia stipularis* (balsam birds-foot trefoil): This small pea-like plant grows in only one spot in the watershed, with other plants that are also rare, in a rare plant-community type. At any time we've visited, we've found only 10 to 25 plants. They are growing under brittleleaf manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos crustacea*) that form an even-aged stand that is becoming senescent, dying from old age. These manzanitas grow from large burls. If a fire sweeps through an area, burl-forming manzanitas are capable of resprouting. It might be possible to encourage some resprouting by cutting the shrubs back. The area is also slowly being encroached upon by the surrounding forest of bay, oak, and madrone.



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Other interesting plants at this site are the only chinquapin we have found in the watershed. It is also one of the few areas with chamise; there's a good stand of it growing behind the chinquapin. Only recently we've identified a grass that occurs under the manzanitas—difficult because it hasn't bloomed. But David Amme, one of the founders of the California Native Grass Association, has identified it as pinegrass, *Calamagrostis rubescens*. There is only one other occurrence of it recorded in Oakland. There's also black snakeroot, *Sanicula laciniata*, here. It occurs nowhere else in our watershed and is uncommon nearby. Given the sad state of the aging brittleleaf manzanitas at the site, we're worried about the diverse and interesting assemblage of understory plants.

### Redwood Plant Community

*Gaultheria shallon* (salal): This is a plant of the coast and the redwoods and in our Oakland hills is at the inland edge of its range. It occurs in three locations in the watershed, one in Redwood Park near Chabot Space and Science Center and in two locations in Joaquin Miller Park. There are only a few plants at each site, and the plants are small, with few blooms. We've never caught them fruiting, but we don't visit them often, since they're far off-trail. We've speculated that they really want more fog drip and cooler summer temperatures.



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*Oxalis oregana* (redwood sorrel) seems to be a companion to redwoods wherever they grow, except in the East Bay hills. The major exception to that exception is the redwood sorrel at our Monterey restoration site. The sorrel there was a major factor in FOSC's decision to choose that location as our first redwood restoration site. FOSC has been working to clear the invasives from the site since Earth Day 2003. The small struggling sorrel patch that survived near the top of the switchbacks now continues all the way down to the creek. We've propagated and planted some of them, others patches have appeared on their own.

Another small patch of sorrel mysteriously appeared recently in Joaquin Miller Park, a few plants neatly tucked in a fairy circle of redwoods. FOSC didn't plant them there. We have often visited the area on seed collection hikes, and it's quite near a path—our sharp-eyed seed hikers would surely have noticed them. Did someone else decide to plant them? Have they been there all along? In fact, spreading the Dimond Canyon sorrel upward into the Joaquin Miller Park redwoods is something that FOSC plant folks have talked about occasionally but we have not reached any decision.

The last two plants on Dianne's list of stand-out species are sedges:

- *Carex leptopoda* (slender-footed sedge) has been found in two places in Joaquin Miller Park; the only other known occurrence is nearby in Redwood Park. It needs a moist site. Unfortunately, it seems to be quite prone to rust infestations. Vibrant two-year-old plants in Beaconsfield Canyon suddenly turned bright orange one winter and died. Plants in the nursery were also badly affected last winter, with some recovering and some dying.
- *Carex globosa* (round-fruited sedge) occurs in small clumps in the redwoods of Joaquin Miller Park. The best stand, however, is growing under a mix of oaks and madrones. There are some plants reported in Redwood Park; the only other location in the two-county chapter area is Mount Diablo.

--Karen Paulsell



*Carex globosa* (flowering)  
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