GOING NATIVE GARDEN TOUR 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

August 15th, 2013

California Native Plant Society
Santa Clara Valley Chapter
**Highlights**

This report describes the GNGT committee’s achievements during the past year (July 2012 through June 2013). The document also provides details about tour weekend, when hundreds of volunteers share their time, expertise and gardens to ensure that the thousands of tour visitors enjoy both days and receive inspiration for their own gardens. Table 1 lists some tour highlights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>April 20 &amp; 21, 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>10am-4pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of gardens</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of registrants</td>
<td>3209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of garden visits</td>
<td>6553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer-hours on tour weekend</td>
<td>1163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering committee hours</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sponsors</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Supporters</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ongoing efforts to ensure a quality tour**

- Volunteer orientation meeting
- Web-based volunteer signup
- Enhanced web-based registration to cooperate with ISP anti-Spam filters.
- Custom designed t-shirts and pins for volunteers.
- Plant labeling info on website
- Invasive plants list on website
- Native plant sales featured at 13 tour gardens.
- Automation of garden webpage generation and cross-references
- Tour continued with two day format after positive response last year

Table 1: Tour Highlights

The 11th annual Going Native Garden Tour took place on Saturday and Sunday, April 20 & 21, 2013 from 10am to 4pm. The 3209 registrants who signed up for the tour made 6553 visits to the open gardens. There were 262 volunteers participating on tour day, serving as docents and greeters at the 62 open gardens.

Once again this year, various initiatives enhanced the tour experience for registrants and volunteers. Volunteers received either a custom-designed organic cotton t-shirt or a pin featuring this year’s original art-work. Our 9 nursery sponsors conducted 13 native plant sales at selected tour gardens. Participants supplied many positive comments about the tour and the plant sales.
Presenting Organizations

The Going Native Garden Tour Steering Committee is a recognized part of the California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter. The tour is presented in association with the UCCE Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County.

Insurance and fiscal management is provided by the California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to the tour are tax deductible.

Sponsors and Supporters

This year’s tour was sponsored by the following 14 organizations:
Almaden Valley Nursery
BAWSCA
Bay Maples Nursery
Bay Natives Nursery
California Nativescapes
Central Coast Wilds Nursery (Ecological Concerns)
East Bay Wilds Nursery
SCVURPPP
Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County
Gold Rush Nursery
Mediterranean Garden Society
Middlebrook Gardens Nursery
Native Revival Nursery
Santa Clara Valley Water District

Sponsors paid for the following: Tour fliers, mailing, copying, orientation meeting and website expenses, and volunteer t-shirts.

The tour was supported by the following 13 organizations:
-Acterra
-Azureheart
-Bay Nature Magazine
-Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge
-Green Thumb' Garden Club
-Larner Seeds
-National Wildlife Federation
-Neighborhood Development Center (City of San Jose)
-Our City Forest
-Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
-Sierra Club (Loma Prieta Chapter)
-Sunnyvale Garden Club
-Western Horticultural Society

Supporters provided assistance in the following areas:
- Soliciting gardens and volunteers
- Publicizing the tour to their members
- Linking their website to the tour website
- Distributing tour fliers at events
Sponsor and supporter information was publicized on the GNGT website, through tour literature, fliers, and press releases. Host garden sign-in tables displayed rectangular signs that featured logos and graphics of sponsors and supporters, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Garden sign graphic 2013](image-url)

**Steering Committee**

Table 2 lists the steering committee members and their roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Core Member</th>
<th>Additional Contributor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garden Selection/Descriptions/-Directions/Plant Lists</td>
<td>Renate Kempf, Madeline Morrow, Debbie Loeb</td>
<td>Peigi Duvall, Agi Kehoe, Deva Luna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Krzysztof Kozminski</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Coordination</td>
<td>Nella Henninger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Previews</td>
<td>Ingrid Graeve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor Liaison/Development</td>
<td>Penny Pollock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter Liaison/Development</td>
<td>Nella Henninger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNPS Treasurer</td>
<td>Dee Wong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor Materials (maps, descriptions, etc.)</td>
<td>Krzysztof Kozminski</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>Penny Pollock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2: Steering Committee members*

The steering committee itself logged over 600 volunteer-hours during the past year. The *Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge* at the Environmental Education Center in Alviso (San Jose) provided meeting space. Some meetings occurred at committee members’ homes. The committee met on the first Sunday of each month (varied as necessary).
Volunteers

This year the tour drew a total of 262 volunteers who logged 1163 volunteer-hours working at gardens on tour weekend. Some volunteers who were knowledgeable about native plants worked as docents. Docents answered plant-related questions and conducted guided tours of gardens. Others worked as greeters. Greeters welcomed visitors, encouraged them to sign the guest book, and answered general questions. In addition to contributing their time on tour weekend, garden owners worked hard readying their gardens for the tour.

The tour has been designated a project by UCCE Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County so that volunteer hours for the tour would count toward the Master Gardener volunteer service requirement. As a result, 84 of the tour weekend docents were Master Gardeners.

Funding

Our sponsors supplied both monetary donations and donations of signage and flier production. In addition to signage and fliers, production of volunteer t-shirts is a primary tour expense. Other expenses included insurance, supplies for the Orientation meeting and mailing expenses. Donations from registered tour visitors are also an important source of funding, totaling $737 this year.

Garden Selection

The garden selection committee moved up the submission deadline for this year’s gardens, so that all the related preparations were under less deadline pressure for the tour. This worked quite well, although there were some last-minute requests from previous garden owners who had overlooked the submission deadline.

Because of the many positive comments, the committee decided to continue the two-day tour format. The tour was divided geographically with 37 southern gardens open on Saturday and 25 northern gardens on Sunday. Plant sales were featured at six gardens on Saturday and seven on Sunday. A book signing was available at one garden on each day, featuring Helen Popper, author of the new book: *California Native Gardening, A Month-by-Month Guide*. Talks were offered at selected gardens on both days. Among the topics were:

- Use of salvaged/re-purposed wood in garden design
- Storm water runoff pollution prevention
- Honey bee and other pollinators in the Native Plant Garden
- Edible California native plants
- 10 top steps for successful native gardens

The tour featured 62 gardens. Of these, 18 gardens (29%) were on the tour for the first time. This year, 7 public native gardens and 1 school garden were included in the tour. Most of the gardens were located in Santa Clara County, and a few gardens were in southern San Mateo County. The southernmost gardens were in Los Gatos and south San Jose. The Garden Selection Committee evaluated a total of 21 gardens and prepared garden descriptions for the selected gardens.
Figure 2 depicts an area map showing the approximate locations of gardens selected for the 2013 tour. Blue markers indicate gardens open on Saturday. Red markers indicate gardens open on Sunday. The CNPS held a plant sale on Sunday at one of the northern gardens.

**Garden Previews**

As a way to attract and retain volunteers, the tour committee offers a Garden Preview program for volunteers (inspired by the Garden Soirees organized by the East Bay Bringing Back the Natives Tour). Under this program, volunteers receive invitations to visit private native gardens throughout the year. This is a reward for their volunteer efforts, and a chance to see gardens they would otherwise miss due to their volunteer duties on tour day. Many appreciate the opportunity to see native gardens at different times of the year. Under this program, a total of 10 garden previews were arranged between July 2012 and June 2013, attracting from 5 to 20 visitors to any one garden visit.

**Other Volunteer Benefits**

This year all volunteers received custom designed t-shirts. Myra Saylor designed the T-shirt art. She is an artist on paper, canvas and gourds and lives part time in Yuma, AZ and part time in California. She is a Master Gardener in Arizona and a great proponent of native landscaping.
Her design for this year’s shirt featuring California fuchsia is on the front page of this report. This image was printed on large pins also, to give to those volunteers who eschew t-shirts.

**Tour Orientation**

Tour organizers once again offered a well-received volunteer orientation program three weeks before tour day. All volunteers and garden hosts were invited to attend an evening meeting. A short presentation covered greeter, docent, and garden owner tasks and benefits followed by a question and answer session. Over 150 volunteers and garden owners attended the orientation.

A presentation about minimizing runoff was featured this year: Laura Prickett, Senior Planner of EOA Inc. (Land Use Subgroup of the Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Institute), spoke for about 15 minutes describing watershed-friendly designs, why we need them, and what we can do to make our gardens more watershed-friendly.

Tour materials and signs were distributed and refreshments were served. The meeting provided the opportunity for attendees to talk with members of the steering committee and meet other like-minded volunteers.

**Publicity**

The publicity this year targeted print media, gardening and environmental groups, colleges/academics, broadcast media, city business bureaus, water companies, nurseries, special interest groups and neighborhood associations

**PRESS RELEASE:** Hard copy press releases were mailed to selected media outlets. The release was emailed to more than 250 local media contacts. The tour received coverage in the following publications:
- Avocet (Santa Clara County Audubon newsletter)
- CNPS Santa Clara Valley Chapter newsletter
- CNPS Yerba Buena Chapter newsletter
- Los Altos Town Crier
- Palo Alto Weekly
- San Jose Mercury News
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Santa Clara County Master Gardener newsletter
- Sierra Club Loma Prietan Newsletter
- Western Horticulture Society newsletter
- Yerba Buena Nursery newsletter

**FLIER DISTRIBUTION:** Thousands of fliers were mailed to nurseries, local colleges, local botanic gardens, libraries, and garden owners; 1200 were mailed to chapter members as part of the bimonthly newsletter *Blazing Star*; the rest were distributed at public meetings organized by CNPS as well as Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County.
Registrants identified many varied sources for learning about the GNGT. Now entering its twelveth year, the tour has established a loyal base of adherents, and a reputation and following among the gardening public.

**Website**

The tour website is located at www.goingnativegardentour.org and can be also accessed at www.gngt.org.

Steering Committee volunteers have spent about 100 hours implementing significant website enhancements for the 2013 Tour:

- The website pages now have a consistent appearance.
- The garden pages are now all generated dynamically, using a database with garden information provided by the garden owners and designers. The list of gardens can be grouped by city or by designer, and sorted by garden age or garden size. This database will be used in the future to create a cross-referenced system for selecting gardens based on topics of interest. For example, a website visitor will be able to find and browse all gardens that have rain capture/containment features, or all gardens with meadows.
- Garden owners and designers can use a special page to upload garden photographs and submit corrections to the garden descriptions.
- Garden owners can also generate an accurate plant list using the new native plant database, current with the latest version of the Jepsen manual.
- The online registration for the tour has been simplified and made easier by reusing the information provided by the registrants in the past years to reduce the amount of typing needed to re-register.
- Registered visitors can select garden they want to visit and mark them as “favorites”, then print descriptions and directions to the favorite gardens only, minimizing the use of paper.
- Registered visitors can access Google™ maps with garden locations and use all features provided on these maps, such as download to a PDA.

The garden submission form is online. All gardens featured this year applied through this automated form, which is live 365 days of the year. Additional improvements to the garden submission form are planned for the 2014 Tour.

The number of web pages increased with the addition of information about this year’s gardens. The showcase feature of each garden is described along with other garden attractions, wildlife value, years gardening at this location, and lot size. Website visitors can view up to ten pictures from each garden. Where available, plant lists are provided online. Addresses of public gardens are available year-round to all website visitors. To protect privacy, addresses of private gardens are shown only to registered visitors, and only during the two weeks immediately preceding the tour. These web pages, along with pages from previous years’ tours, are available year-round, serving as a valuable resource for people searching for great native garden ideas.
Descriptions for making various styles of labels are on the website. Clear labeling helps answer many of the garden visitors’ questions, so that docents have more time to discuss other aspects of the gardens.

With the permission of Cal-IPC, a summary list of plants considered invasive in California natural areas was extracted from their documents (California Invasive Plant Inventory, Feb. ’06, and Cal-IPC News Spring 2007). This list is available on the GNGT website. A link to their full database allows interested visitors to access more details about these invasive plants. Note that this list focuses on plants that imperil natural areas – there are other cultivated plants that can be quite invasive in the home garden.

Volunteer sign-ups are now automated on the website, with information going directly to a database that allows for easier coordination on tour weekend.

**iPhone app**

The free iPhone app from last year was not available this year due to problems with personnel changes in the Steering Committee and new personnel working on the app. We plan to re-institute it next year.

**2013 Registrations**

**Table 3** shows that San Jose supplied 878 (27.4 % of the total) of the 3209 registrants, followed by Palo Alto, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Gatos.

**Table 4** shows that Santa Clara County supplied 2386 registrations (74.4% of the total), and San Mateo County supplied 541 registrations (16.9% of the total).
Tour Materials

Links to web-based tour materials were emailed to all registrants two weeks before the tour. These materials were designed to allow tour visitors to plan which gardens to visit and work out their route. The tour materials consisted of garden addresses and detailed descriptions, photos, plant lists and directions as well locations of plant sales and gardening talks.

Each garden on the tour received the following materials:
- Guest book for visitor sign-in
- Tour Garden Sign (durable, weather-proof, and should last for a long time) and 2 stakes
- Rectangular poster depicting logos of sponsors and supporters (see Figure 1)
- Garden Etiquette (description of procedures on tour day)
2013    Going Native Garden Tour Report

- Small sign requesting donations
- Gardens also received brochures and literature from Tour Sponsors to distribute, and some gardens provided plant lists and garden write-ups.

Tour Weekend

Tour weekend weather was pleasant on both Saturday and Sunday. The tour traffic was higher in the northwest/central part of the tour. Once again the southeastern locations received fewer visitors than the gardens that are further up the peninsula. A total of 6553 visits were logged, which is an underestimate as not every visitor signs the guest book. Also, some gardens did not return a visitor count, so total number of visits during the tour actually exceeded the number quoted above. The Old Adobe Garden recorded 394 visitors on Sunday. Lower garden numbers tend to be located to the northwest (Belmont, Redwood City), and higher garden numbers southeast (Santa Clara, San Jose). Garden #1 is in Hillsborough and Garden #62 is in Evergreen area of San Jose. Gardens #1 through #27 were open on Sunday, gardens #28 through #62 were open on Saturday.

Visitor Feedback – Guest Books

Here are a few of the comments entered in the guest books by visitors. It’s not surprising that many of the comments written in the guest books are brief, as the visitors are rushing to see gardens in the time allowed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garden #</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>Wonderful!  Inspiring! Great combination of wild &amp; edible!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#33</td>
<td>Thanks for id signs “you could see &amp; read”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#34</td>
<td>Great to have pictures showing how the garden looks in different seasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#35</td>
<td>The wildlife was wonderfully abundant. Great selection/examples of grasses and other natives. Lovely!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#47</td>
<td>I want natives in my yard – soon!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#56</td>
<td>Really lovely garden! The labels on the plants were extremely helpful, as well as the informative literature binder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future Plans

The garden selection committee plans once again establish an early submittal date for next year’s gardens, so that all the related preparations are under less deadline pressure for the tour.

We plan to reinstitute the online survey and iPhone App for next year.
Summary

Table 6 compares some key statistics for the last eight tours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Tour</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of gardens</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of registrants</td>
<td>3,656</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>3523</td>
<td>5090</td>
<td>4,673</td>
<td>5,250</td>
<td>4305</td>
<td>3209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of garden visits</td>
<td>7,606</td>
<td>6,688</td>
<td>7,137</td>
<td>12,824</td>
<td>12,447</td>
<td>9,916</td>
<td>7754</td>
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<td>147</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer hours on tour day</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,163</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Tour statistics, 2006 through 2013

This year’s Going Native Garden Tour featured 62 gardens over two days. Registration was down 25% from last year, and there were 15% fewer garden visits. The Steering Committee feels that there may be several reasons for the decline in numbers. Several tour registrants mentioned they did not receive email notice of the tour this year. The Committee is looking into problems with our ISP with the possibility of changing ISP. Another factor was competition from numerous Earth Day activities held that weekend.

There was a slightly different mix of sponsors and supporters this year but our core sponsors continued their support.

The continued success of the Going Native Garden Tour demonstrates that our community has a sustained interest in growing California native plants in home gardens and in environmentally conscious gardening practices.
Appendix A
Here are a few of the many photos posted of GNGT participating gardens on the garden websites at www.gngt.org

Alum Rock Garden

Heatherdale Ave Garden
Round's Hill Garden