

GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust, Incorporated
Spring/Summer 2010

California Nutmeg – *Torreya californica*

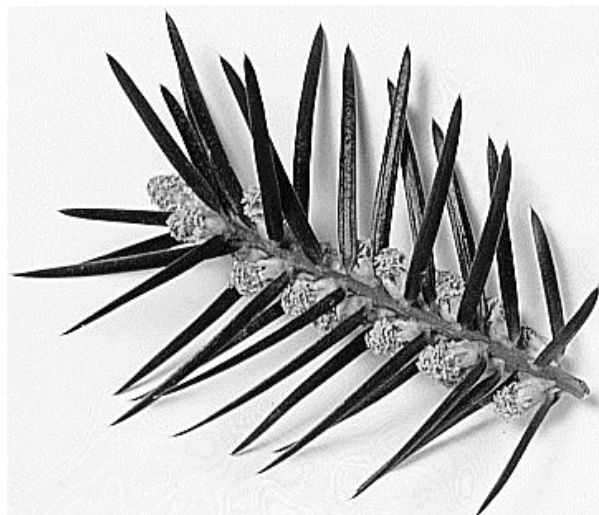
By Amy Soderman and Miles Gibson

In the forests of Anderson Valley, you may happen upon a rare and elusive tree - the California Nutmeg. Locally, the trees are never abundant and occur scattered in dense shady forests above the valley floor. Typically, the California Nutmeg grows from 30-70 feet tall. In the coastal mountains, the species descends almost to the coastline; the eastern limit of its range is the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Torreya californica is commonly called the California Nutmeg because its plum-like fruit resembles that of the nutmeg, the tropical spice tree. That is the only similarity between the two trees, however. California Nutmegs are evergreen conifers of the yew family that grow only in California. The California *Torreya* was named by an American botanist, John Torrey, who found these trees in the 1830s.

Given the California Nutmeg fruit's likeness to that of the true nutmeg, *Myristica fragrans*, you might be curious about its suitability for culinary use. Aside from the challenge of first finding the fruits and the patience required to dry them properly, the pungent aroma of the crushed seed cone lessens its appeal as a cooking ingredient. Other parts have a odor as well, lending *Torreya californica* another common name: stinking cedar. However, Native people in centuries past used the fruit in food preparation, the wood for bows, and the very sharp needles to apply tattoos.

Locating these trees requires a bit of knowledge. First, where to look?



On the coast they are found at elevations up to 3,600 feet. Situated along mountain streams, protected slopes, creek bottoms, and cool, moist canyons, these trees grow on steep south or southeast-facing slopes. Never forming a continuous forest, but found rather as isolated trees or in small groups, the nutmeg is usually seen tucked into shaded ravines or rocky gorges, shaded by a canopy of taller pines or other conifers.

Second, how do you identify this tree? At first glance its foliage resembles a redwood or a fir. Its paired needles are waxy, deep green, flattened, 1-2 inches long, and aromatic. But when reaching for a branch-end to inspect it further, beware: the needles are so sharp that they can immediately draw blood! The fruit is a modified cone,

(continued on page 5)

AVLT Board News

Last year was a watershed year! In 2009 we successfully worked with landowners to complete the protection of 236 more acres, bringing AVLT's total to 2,240 acres! The spring and fall 2009 *Good Dirt* newsletters featured the Hallomas and Hochberg easements. In this issue you will find a portrait of the Jablonski easement (see pg. 3), and in our upcoming fall *Good Dirt*, the Pogran/McGregor easement will be highlighted as part of an update on our Confluence of the Navarro project. We gratefully thank our donors (see pg. 6) for making possible the permanent protection of these Anderson Valley forests, meadows, watersheds, flora, and fauna.

The AVLT and the River Center office spaces are now located in the historic Missouri House! We encourage you to come see our new home. Shelly is there from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays. We will soon have an exciting, large topographic map of Anderson Valley and local photographs on the walls.

Our board has a new influx of positive energy and skills with three new members. A big welcome to Patti Jeffrey (see below), Andy Balastracci, and Dean Titus! This trio brings a spectrum of backgrounds and perspectives to the Board, expanding our ability to help property owners achieve their goals through conservation easements. We will introduce Andy and Dean in future issues. We sincerely thank Lee Serrie and Thom Elkjer for their many years on the board and their substantive contributions, wishing them well in their new pursuits. Our intent is to expand our volunteer board to 11 members to meet the challenges of new projects and to annually monitor each of our 25 currently protected properties.

We hope you were able to join us this spring on one of our explorations of AV—the Parkinson Gulch waterfall hike and/or the Wildflower Walk on the Bickell Ranch (see pg. 4). And don't miss our fundraising project this summer, visiting sustainable, edible landscapes (see pg. 5).

We began 2010, our 19th year, with a strategic planning session to prioritize our goals and strengthen the effectiveness of our mission. We look forward to celebrating our 20th year with vigor!

--Barbara Goodell, AVLT Board President

Meet Patricia Jeffery • New Board Member

We are so pleased to have Patti Jeffery join the Board. Patti brings a tremendous expertise in understanding land use and a desire to apply that knowledge to conserving our Valley landscape. Holding both undergraduate and Master's degrees in the planning arena, Patti is an urban planner with 30 years of professional experience in land use planning and environmental impact assessment. Her experience covers a broad range of projects, from small-scale, site-specific land use studies to large-scale, programmatic environmental documents. She lives in Holmes Ranch with her husband, Greg Chiodo, a civil engineer in private practice. However, she continues to maintain a loft in Emeryville, where her office is located.



Before moving to Anderson Valley, Patti spent seven years as an Emeryville Planning Commissioner. Her civic activities did not end there. She served on the Emeryville General Plan and Zoning Update Steering Committee for five years, two of those as Chair, and helped guide the update process. She also has done considerable work with school districts, advising on topics from youth services to real estate. Patti's extensive project experience working with both public and private sector clients has afforded her opportunities to participate in all phases of the planning process and to work with public agencies at the local, state and federal level. We are happy to have expertise gleaned from all these endeavors brought to AVLT. As individual conservation easements are not unlike small land use plans, Patti's professional experience will prove most valuable to AVLT's efforts. Her presence on the Board of Directors is a good fit with AVLT and our mission. And she bakes a mean batch of cookies for land trust events... Welcome Patti!

Kay Jablonski Protects Her Elkhorn Property

By Steve Snyder

Kay Jablonski purchased her 41 acres, accessed from Yorkville's Elkhorn Road, in 1980. She immediately set about building her home and has enjoyed living on the property ever since its completion 27 years ago. She and her partner, Guy Rowe, started a 600-square-foot addition housing an office, library and shop in 2003, and it is now nearing completion. The flowers surrounding her home reveal her talent for gardening, and her land, clearly visible from Highway 128, is a beautiful mix of open grassland, undisturbed Douglas fir and oak woodland forest and riparian ecosystems.

Impelled by her desire to protect her land, with its many conservation values, from being further divided, logged or used commercially, in April of 2008 Kay contacted her neighbor, Alan Porter, AVLT Board president, to ask what would be involved in getting a conservation easement.

Conservation is nothing new to Kay. Her water source is a spring from which she stores 30,000 gallons of water that she often makes last from June to the following February. Considering her gardening lifestyle, rationing water is a monumental challenge and one that she undertakes with diligence and success year after year. We should all take lessons!

In addition to the general protections provided by Kay's easement, she has also imposed perpetual limits on the right to withdraw water from the seasonal creeks in order to enhance the quality of habitat for salmonids and other native aquatic species living further downstream.

Kay says she realizes that land is getting broken up into smaller and smaller parcels, and she does not want her land to ever be subdivided at all. She would like to have places for the wildlife to go. So Kay's easement will compliment the three other protected properties on Elkhorn Road – now a total over 800 acres.



Kay's easement was completed in early December of 2009 and will allow her to continue to enjoy her property while retaining the satisfaction of knowing it will perpetually remain in its pristine state as a singular 41-acre parcel.

Parkinson Gulch Waterfall Hike

A break in the spring rain provided a very ambient April afternoon to circumnavigate Tom Brewer and Pam Armstrong's ridge off of Peachland Road. Tom, with Chris Bing, a life-long birder and nature enthusiast, led us down a forested path to the top of the waterfall, which plunges 80 feet over rocks, mosses, and ferns, eventually flowing into Indian Creek. The far views were of Clow Ridge, Philo, and the confluence of the Navarro River, then circled back to Boonville. The near views were of creek creatures, calypso orchids, California nutmeg trees (see pg. 1), and spring wildflowers. If you are not on our hike/events email list and would like to be, please send Shelly an email at avlt@mcn.org or call the office at 895-3150.



The hiking group with their backs to the magnificent waterfall

Spring Wildflower Walk

On a picture-perfect day the third Saturday in April, about 30 enthusiastic people gathered for the third annual spring wildflower walk. This was our second year visiting the Bickell Ranch. The weather was warm, the sky blue, and anticipation high about the sights to see on a small portion of this stunning 695-acre property.

Clare Wheeler, native plant expert and co-author of *A Flora of the Vascular Plants of Mendocino County*, and Jane Miller, instructor of plant identification at U.C. Berkeley Extension and Merritt College, guided the group on a casual walk along Rancheria Creek and some side drainages to view, smell, touch, examine, and, of course, photograph many different species of wildflowers in glorious bloom. Lupines, popcorn flower, California poppies, hound's tongue, cream cups, buttercups, blue-eyed grass, milkmaids, and baby blue eyes were just some of the plant life encountered.



Clare Wheeler finds even the smallest of wildflowers

Tom Bickell was a most gracious host, gamely shuttling his trusty Toyota 4WD across the creek over and over until all were deposited on the opposite side without so much as a wet toe. After strolling up to take in views of the lower of two lovely ponds, and marveling at the sight of a mass of blossoming pale blue wild lilac on the far hillside, we trooped back down the path where Tom repeated the shuttling process all over again!

A million thanks to Tom Bickell for allowing us to visit his ranch and for donating a conservation easement so that the land will remain this beautiful in perpetuity.

Announcing the 1st Anderson Valley Sustainable Landscape Discoveries Saturday August 14, 2010: 9:30 AM TO 4 PM

Anderson Valley can be thought of as a secluded landscape island of creativity and microclimate set in California's coastal range. Locally produced, slow food, farm-to-table, sustainable, organic, no GMO . . . temperate, natural, cultural, and, oh yes, mix in vineyards, tasting rooms, rivers, virgin redwoods, oaks and madrone, apples and sheep and you now have picturesque.

What are the Discoveries? A one day seminar / excursion . . . an adventure spent visiting three distinctive private landscapes where agriculture, landscape management, and conservation are important ingredients of the health, beauty and annual rhythms of the land. This premier year of the Sustainable Landscape Discoveries will extend from the Valley's ridge tops to the Valley's floor. The Discoveries will not be simply a day of visits, but also an education and an experience. It will encompass a sustainable garden that feeds a family, a chestnut orchard, a commercial vegetable farm, and the Valley's only certified organic winery. The owners of each site will provide an annotated guide to why and how they conceived their environments, the factors they use in the management of their properties, and particulars about water use, organic practices, and energy efficiency . . . in short, sustainability.

Lunch will be provided by *Table 128*, the restaurant at the Boonville Hotel (www.boonvillehotel.com) that serves family style meals that delight and satisfy. For this event, lunch will be in the gardens of the Hotel from food grown locally in Anderson Valley and prepared under the impeccable guidance of Johnny Schmitt, regionally known for his paring of flavors and one of the Valley's finest chefs.

Event Particulars: Participation will be limited to 40 with a contribution of \$100/person to benefit AVLT. Discoveries will start at 9:30 AM and conclude at 4 PM. To register, please contact Anderson Valley Land Trust at 707.895.3150 or e-mail at avlt@mcn.org.

California Nutmeg - *continued from page 1*

green with purple markings, plum-like, and about 1 inch long. The branches are slender and spread out, giving a slightly ungainly appearance. A tree can be either male or female. The fruits hang from the branch tips of female trees in late summer and autumn.

California Nutmegs are slow-growing trees and as a result seemingly small compared to their lofty forest companions. They can live for several centuries. Trees only 1 to 1.5 feet thick are likely to be 200 years old. Until 1983, there was a registered California *Torreya* growing near Fort Bragg. It stood 141 feet high and had a girth of 14 feet 10 inches before it was cut down by timber thieves. On the ridges of Anderson Valley, the trees range from 30 feet to well over 100 feet, with a diameter of up to 3 feet.

Commercial harvesting of California Nutmeg is almost nonexistent due to scant availability. Its fine-grained yellow-brown wood is highly durable, attractive, and of good quality. It is strong and elastic, smooth in texture, polishes well, and emits a fragrance similar to that of sandalwood. Trees cut over 100 years ago have been found lying on the ground with little rot. The wood was historically used for making cabinets, fence posts, wooden turnware and novelty items, as well as for fuel.

California Nutmegs can sprout permanent new trunks from their base when they are cut or burned; thus they are adaptable to fires. In Anderson Valley, we want to protect this rare tree, as the California *Torreya* has an extremely disjointed spatial distribution now. One reason for this may be this tree's inability to compete with newer life forms, making it an evolutionary relict. Male trees must normally be within 75 to 90 feet of female trees in order to effect pollination by wind. Because the seeds are large and heavy, they usually fall near the parent tree. And seed predation by Stellar's and scrub jays is high. Let us know if you find an old tree on your property. We'd love to hear from you.

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

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<p>We are sad to report that previous Board Member and easement donor Pete Bates recently passed away. The property he loved here in Anderson Valley is conserved, and we are sure he is now building a unique windmill to assure heaven is energy efficient.</p>

AVLT VOLUNTEERS:**Thank you for your help in keeping us going!**

You know who you are, but for everyone else our thanks goes to:

Nikiki Ausschnitt, Jeff Ballantine, Chris Bing, Alice Bonner, Maureen Bowman, Tom Brewer, Bon Goodell, Steve Krieg, Brent Levin, Dan Mandelbaum, Susan Newstead, Karen Ottoboni, Charlene Rowland, Chris Sowers, and Clare Wheeler

Thanks to our volunteers for help during our 2 years at the Beer Fest:
Kam Goodell, Andrew Lemann, Jane Miller, Jay Newcomer, and Jim Taul
Special Thanks to our proof reader: Jerry Karp

WANT TO BE AN AVLT VOLUNTEER?

Interested in helping AVLT out? Organize a walk? Help the Outreach Committee? Help annual monitoring of the 25 easements we review each year? Please give us a call or e-mail.

895-3150 or avlt@mcn.org

AVLT 2009 Financial Statements

Assets – December 2009	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds
Operating Accounts	\$ 25,636.	
Pioneer Stewardship Fund		\$ 17,734.
Stewardship Endowment*		165,840.
Furniture/Equipment	2,740.	
Total Assets	\$ 28,376.	183,574.*
Total Liabilities	0.	
Net Assets		
At Beginning of Year	\$ 155,296.	
Change in Net Assets	<u>+56,654.</u>	
At End of Year	<u>211,950.</u>	
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 211,950.	

Statement of Activities as of December 31, 2009

Support & Revenue	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds
Donations & Grants	\$ 28,595.	
Rent	1,500.	
Stewardship Endowment *		12,750.*
Interest & Dividends	3,751.	
Total Support & Revenue	33,846.	12,750.*
Expenses		
Insurance	2,947.	
Easement Expense	2,560.	
Office	2,078.	
Payroll	9,111.	
Postage	979.	
Printing	4,332.	
Rent & Utilities	9,076.	
Professional Fees	2,019.	
Total Expenses	\$ 33,102.	

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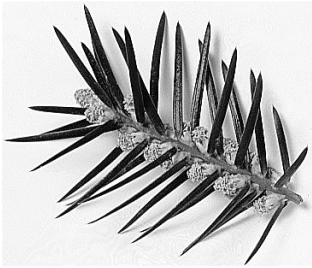
We're looking for a big conference or dining table for our new office.

If you have one or know someone who does please give us a call at 895-3150.

* restricted funds for the protection of our easements

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE DIRT



California Nutmeg by Amy Soderman and Miles Gibson Portrait of the rare California Nutmeg tree. **Page 1**

AVLT Board News More land protected, new office, new board members, and exciting events. **Page 2**

Meet New Board Member Patricia Jeffery **Page 2**



Kay Jablonski

Kay Jablonski Protects Her Elkhorn Road Property Read why Kay chose to work with AVLT to create a conservation easement. **Page 3**

Parkinson Gulch Waterfall Hike with Tom Brewer and Chris Bing. **Page 4**

Spring Wildflower Walk with Clair Wheeler and Jane Miller on the Bickell Ranch on the headwaters of Rancheria Creek. **Page 4**



Photo by Steve Snyder

Anderson Valley Sustainable Landscape Discoveries: an AVLT fundraising event featuring edible landscapes of AV. **Page 5**

Donor Thank You

Page 6

Financial Statement

Page 7
