

FOUNTAINGROVE II

The OSMA Newsletter is published quarterly by the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association.



SONG SPARROW

Nocturnal goings-on and Sunrise Concerts, now playing in our Fountaingrove II Open Space.



More than a barn – a symbol

Do you miss the Round Barn? It's been gone now for more than four years so it's fair to assume there are some who never saw it. But it was, in a word, *Fountaingrove*. It stood as a symbol, a reminder of the dream that took root and lives on in these hills. The dream of the Wonder Seekers that we have all come in search of. Our history, see page 6.



Ever see a Ring Tailed Cat?

If you have, count yourself among the few. Often referred to as nature's cutest mammal, these Dr. Seuss-like predators are nocturnal and masters of invisibility. Surprisingly they live right here among us but are seen so rarely they're believed by many to be the stuff of campfire legends. Resembling a cat, they're actually part of the raccoon family—as you might guess.



It's a Blooming Wilderness

Our Fountaingrove II open space is home to a wealth of native flora that is putting on its annual display of colorful blooms as we speak. But most of it you will miss. Most are small and hug the ground where few of us ever take the time to look. But for those who do, what they see is highlighted by Michele Karle, our native plant guru, on page 10.

The mystical and mysterious allure of Thomas Lake Harris.

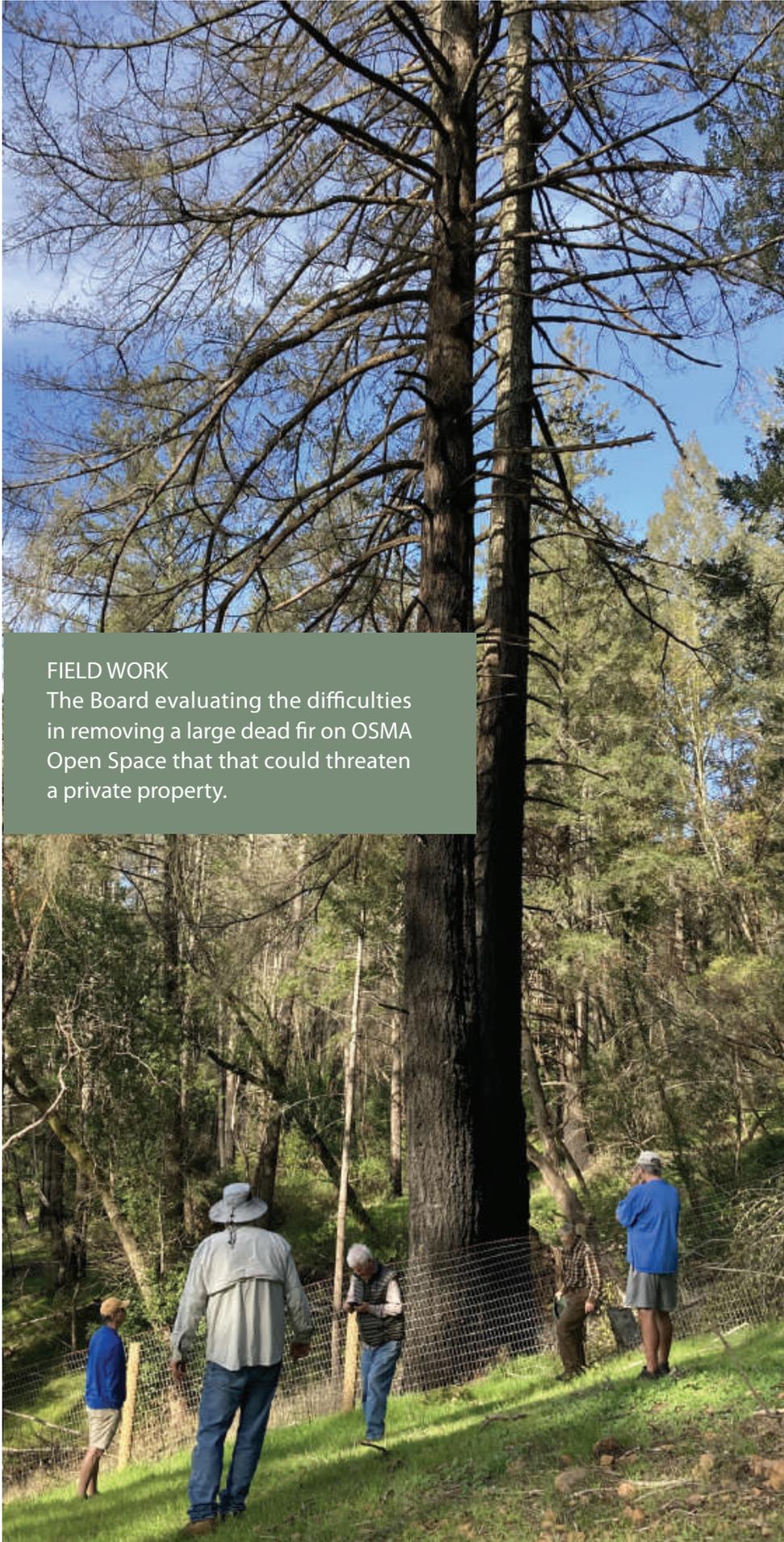
If you've wondered what brought you to these hills, Thomas Lake Harris, the prophet, would assure you it was destiny, as it was his in 1875 when he came west with his *Brotherhood of the New Life*. What followed was a history that reads like fiction, leaving the ultimate mystery of Fountaingrove yet to be unravelled. Perhaps by you? See Gaye LaBaron's *Fountaingrove the Wonder Seekers*, page 6.



OIL ON CANVAS, ALICE PARTING, 1893, SONOMA COUNTY MUSEUM

"There's pride that comes with volunteering and being an active member of our community."
— Joe Kaiser

The OSMA is an all Volunteer organization and the five member Board of Directors (also volunteers) needs your help. We need members willing to lend their time and expertise and help with the many tasks required to maintain and improve our 230 acres of landscaped and wild areas. Clearly these assets are of significant value to all of us, but they must be preserved as scenic and healthy habitat. See page 4 for the various options and consider being an OSMA Volunteer.



FIELD WORK

The Board evaluating the difficulties in removing a large dead fir on OSMA Open Space that that could threaten a private property.

From the OSMA Board

This column is intended to display questions and comments from our members. We will provide as informative a response as we can. If the answers are beyond our areas of responsibility, we will do our best to direct you appropriately.

Does the OSMA have duties beyond the open space areas?

The OSMA has a wide range of duties but ultimately they all exist to improve and protect our landscaped and wildland areas from the impact of fire and developmental stress. We are fortunate to live in a desirable community that takes seriously the preservation of those assets that makes it so desirable. For more on OSMA duties, see Volunteer Options (that need volunteers) on page 4.

If I see damage to landscaped areas, irrigation systems or open space, who do I contact?

If while driving or walking by our open space areas you see damaged plants or broken water lines, please note the location and report it as soon as possible. Best if you can take a picture of the damage and email it to leslie@focus-re.com.

Am I permitted to water, prune, fertilize or add plants in the open space near my fence?

Open space is a protected natural area not to be redesigned or otherwise modified without an approved reason for doing so. Contact the Board through leslie@focus-re.com.

The OSMA Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Fountaingrove II Open Space Maintenance Association as a service to our members. Questions or suggestions are always welcome. Email leslie@focus-re.com. Be sure to visit Fountaingroveii.com

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Documenting our recovery.

The first order of business is completing the documentation of the Tubbs fire recovery effort. This second segment of the documentation will focus on clearing the burned OSMA Open Space Wildland areas. Approximately 170 acres of Wildland was destroyed by the Tubbs Fire. This included Oak and Douglas Fir Tree Forest areas and Chaparral and Grass Land areas.

The majority of clearing effort consisted of cutting and chipping dead or severely damaged trees. Prior to beginning the tree removal activity, the OSMA was/is required to obtain a report prepared by a Qualified Authority (Registered Consulting Arborists, SAF Certified Foresters, ISA Certified Tree Risk Assessor, etc.) certifying that trees to be removed are either dead or severely damaged.

During 2018-2020, the OSMA Board adopted a practice; "give damaged trees a chance to recover". Our experience with that practice over the past three years is 99% of these trees die. We now follow the advice of experts when told to remove trees that are too damaged to survive.

We have been clearing OSMA burned Wildland areas since 2018, and are optimistic by November 2022 all fire impacted areas will have received an initial clearing of burned trees and vegetation. Unfortunately, many additional trees have died after an area was cleared.

This post fire tree death is attributable to one or a combination of: postfire stress, disease, drought, etc. In most cases it's the combination of these adverse environmental factors that cause an established tree to die. It is noteworthy, we are experiencing a higher post fire tree mortality rate in the burned areas vs. non burned areas.

Later this year, tree cutting and debris chipping crews will be working in the Eastern Wildland Areas behind the houses along Shelter Glen Way and Sage Hill Place. Once these areas are cleared, the OSMA will transition to a normal annual prioritizing of areas needing additional clean-up.

*Bruce McConnell,
OSMA Board President*



Burned areas east of Rocky Knoll Cul-de-sac.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER: *continued****Fire Debris Removal***

The table below recaps the last five years of expenditures funding the Tubbs Fire Cleanup. Approximately 38% of the funding was provided by Emergency Special Assessment (ESA) Fund, the remaining 62% of funding was provided by the Operating and Replacement Funds. There are approximately ten acres remaining to be cleared this year, all of which

will be funded by the ESA and OSMA Operating Funds. Reading the chart one should keep in mind, some Wildland Acres were easily accessible – some not so much, some acres were mostly vegetation and some were covered with dead trees. The terrain had a significant impact on the cleanup productivity and consequently the cost per acre for cleanup.

**Use of OSMA Funds
Fire Related Cleanup Expenses**

| YEAR | ESA FUND | OPERATING FUND | REPLACEMENT FUND | TOTAL ALL FUNDS | ACREAGE CLEARED |
|-------|------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2017 | \$ | \$ 64,809 | \$ 0 | \$ 64,809 | |
| 2018 | \$ | \$ 232,797 | \$ 066,616 | \$ 299,413 | 40.0 |
| 2019 | \$ | \$ 222,773 | \$ 14,750 | \$ 237,523 | 45.0 |
| 2020 | \$ 495,703 | \$ 87,735 | \$ 73,067 | \$ 656,505 | 52.7 |
| 2021 | \$ 55,285 | \$ 157,906 | \$ 11,598 | \$ 224,789 | 43.7 |
| | \$ 550,988 | \$ 766,020 | \$ 166,031 | \$ 1,483,039 | 181.4 |
| 2022* | \$ 16,913 | \$ 125,000 | \$ 0 | \$ 141,913 | 10.0 |

* 2022 Amounts are Estimates

2022 Weed Abatement

The high pitch sound of several weed whackers will soon be passing through our Open Space Areas cutting weeds to a fire safe level. The scheduled start of weed whacking is in May and will take approximately one month to complete. Proactive measures such as this are required as prevention against uncontrollable wildfires. Fountaingrove II is rated highly among Fire Safe Communities and your OSMA has worked hard to achieve that distinction. It's advisable also that you maintain fire safe conditions near your home and throughout your property. Working together we can hopefully avoid another tragic fire experience.

OSMA Volunteers

OSMA is a volunteer organization. We depend on members volunteering time and energy for the mutual benefit of all – a concept disrupted by the fire when 85% of our members lost their homes. Some sold their lots and moved on, some decided to rebuild and have been too busy or overcome with the rebuilding process — and some are still in a state of limbo. And of course there has been COVID. But we're now working our way back to normal and the Board (also volunteers) will be needing assistance with **Landscape** (maintenance and improvement), **Budget** (annual development), **Infrastructure** (sidewalks, curbs, gutters – with city of Santa Rosa), and **Communications** (welcome packages to new members, quarterly newsletter, web site).

If you are willing to volunteer your services to OSMA, please contact Leslie Cohen at Focus Real Estate and Investments, 707-544-9443 x105 or email leslie@focus-re.com.

Please Volunteer

Thank You. OSMA Board of Directors.

Get Out in the Open Space

So much there is to discover — the things a walk in the woods can reveal.

It's a fungus. It's beautiful. It's even medicinal. The turkey tail mushroom.

*Under the heading, "Who Woulda Guessed?" you'll find the unexpected attributes of the *Trametes versicolor* (or *Coriolus versicolor*). You probably know this colorful mushroom variety by its nick name, turkey tail — or you may not know it at all.*

The turkey tail is one of the world's most common varieties of mushrooms, found around the world growing on dead wood, typically that of hardwood trees such as oak or beech. It's known primarily for its beauty, colorful concentric bands that fan out from the center like...*a turkey's tail*.

What may surprise you is it's alleged medicinal qualities. And would it surprise you to learn that Asian cultures have known of these benefits for thousands of years? Studies have indicated that turkey tail mushrooms support the immune system, aid in inflammation response, protect DNA, support the gut microbiome, support liver health, and may help with blood sugar balance.

Turkey tail mushrooms are reportedly high in antioxidants like phenols which reduce or inhibit cellular damage from oxidative stress. And while not yet confirmed, there are indications turkey tail mushrooms may possess anti-cancer potentials.

So you ask, how does one avail oneself of this natural healer? It's common knowledge that consuming mushrooms from the wild can be risky, even harmful, or worse. There are many commercially available turkey tail supplements. Check with a reputable mycological society for guidance. Learn to be safe.



An FYI: As unique as turkey tails are in appearance, there are in fact some look-alikes. However, there is a way to tell if it's the real thing — the underside of a true turkey tail is covered with tiny pores, actually the ends of tubes that contain reproductive spores. You won't find them on the look-alikes.

CAUTION: As stated above, foraging mushrooms, or anything else in the wild should only be done with the guidance of an expert. Be aware, toxic mushrooms do exist in Sonoma County.



Turkey tail mushroom growing on a fallen oak in our open space. Image contributed by Mike Bertoli.



Our Fountaingrove History

Truth that reads like fiction, a prophet, a pilgrim and a pioneering Japanese winemaker.

The effort that went into this book is remarkable but equally so is the fact it was produced at all. Were it not for the paths of two talented historians crossing in March of 2013, this nearly forgotten saga would surely have been lost.

Gaye LeBaron had for decades been chronicling what facts were known of Thomas Lake Harris and his *Brotherhood of the New Life*, sharing them in her popular Press Democrat columns.

Of local interest also was Kanaye Nagasawa, Japanese immigrant, winemaker and eventual heir to the entirety of Fountaingrove, the winery and all of the Harris holdings.

Meanwhile on the east coast, biographer Bart Casey was compiling facts on the extraordinary life of Laurence Oliphant (*The Double Life of Laurence Oliphant*) noted 19th century British author, diplomat and devoted Thomas Lake Harris disciple.

Relevant to the work of both authors was young Nagasawa. Casey's fortuitous visit to Santa Rosa to interview Nagasawa's descendants led, as well, to a visit with Gaye LeBaron – a visit that could be described as destiny.

The complementary findings each brought to the table made possible a complete, historically accurate telling of this story.

Gaye LeBaron
& Bart Casey

The Wonder Seekers of Fountaingrove

Introduction
(Condensed)

There was a time, less than fifty years into the history of the United States, when its pioneers were wonder seekers, yearning for order and enlightenment as they stretched new territories westward. Given the young country's Constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, the leader they longed for would combine practical strength and spiritual electricity to guide them on their way.

The most successful of these was Mormon leader, Joseph Smith. Most others failed in the face of daunting religious and financial challenges to such ideal ventures.

An exception – one of the most remarkable and successful of these experiments – is the subject of this story: The Brotherhood of the New Life, founded in 1865 by prophet Thomas Lake Harris. It flourished at its beginning and then lingered over seventy years into the 1930s, all but the initial ten of those years were here in Fountaingrove.

Harris adopted the premise of an alternate society – a life apart from the world where the spiritual elite could find peace and show the rest of mankind the error of its ways.



Thomas Lake Harris, 1823-1906



Harris was a spiritualist, a practicing mystic a prolific poet, an orator of renown, a social reformer, a pioneer viticulturist and a keen businessman.

He was a father, a protector and a deity. And in his many mirrors, warped and distorted as they may have been by his own personal flaws, are reflections of the serious social and religious thought that have transcended his time.

Thomas Lake Harris believed fervently in a new age. He told his flock he was leading them not really to a new world but to a world that had once been, where man had lived in close communion with God and where they could experience re-birth as the kind of people originally intended to inhabit the earth.

His disciples called him Father, but his earthly form was only half the story. Harris's God was a dual God, both Father and Mother. The true nature of man, Harris believed, was also dual: "the Two-in-one" – equal parts feminine and masculine – joined into a single being created in the image of God.

Harris did not believe in marriage or in any earthly sort of sexual union, a difficult precept to comprehend since Harris had been twice widowed and thrice wed. He taught that each person had a counterpart – their missing original half – who existed in a higher sphere.

Harris's own counterpart was very real to him. The Celestial Sphere, where he was married to her, was as familiar to Harris as this earth. He went there in trances and lived there, he wrote, a good part of the time. His counterpart was called Queen Lily of the Conjugal Angels. She eventually bore him two children in the Celestial Sphere and dominated his life to the extent that all important decisions affecting the Brotherhood were attributed to her.

Harris also spoke to the angels in the Celestial Sphere and to God and to former inhabitants of the earth both long dead and recently deceased. Most of his poetry was “received” in this sphere, he never claimed to have composed it but only “put it into externals.”

Outside the spiritualist-occult circles where his writings were widely distributed, his greatest claim to fame in the world was one convert – Laurence Oliphant. Early in his messianic career in London, Harris crossed paths with a young member of Parliament with a promising future in British politics – a writer with several novels to his credit and a frequent contributor to the prestigious magazines of the world.



A 1942 study of Harris's association with Oliphant by Columbia University scholars, George Lawton and Herbert Schneider, is the most complete study of Harris as a religious philosopher ever written. They called their extensive work,

“A Prophet and a Pilgrim.” Ironically, for all of Harris's egocentricity, it was his pilgrim who made him the talk of London café society when he gave up his Parliamentary and literary careers to follow his prophet.

Likewise, the longevity of The Brotherhood of the New Life, begun in 1865, cannot be credited to Harris but is owed to the most unlikely member of his community, Kanaye Nagasawa. Nagasawa came into Harris's experiment as a teenage samurai from old Japan, via a chance meeting while schooling in London, and stayed to become its master for nearly thirty years after Harris departed this life in 1906.

The young Japanese man kept its headquarters thriving as a leader in the California wine industry, surviving even prohibition, until his own death in 1934. Harris's final instruction to Nagasawa – who really was a surrogate son to Father Harris –



– was to keep everything to Harris's own high standard and remain ready to welcome the long-awaited visitors from heaven when the end of the old world finally came and the new life was to begin.

Kanaye had the filial loyalty and discipline to keep to this task though he himself remained focused on the wine and agriculture that supported the Brotherhood and not on “Father's” complex ideas of spirits and religion. Kanaye Nagasawa is the well documented hero in the final chapters of this remarkable tale.



Fountaingrove Winery as it appeared in the early 1900s. Under Kanaye Nagasawa, production reportedly was as much as 200,000 gallons per year distributed to the US, Europe and Japan.

As for the Harris years, most of our information is philosophical rather than pragmatic. Harris the Christian mystic, Harris the poet with a lust for the apocalypse, Harris the savior and regenerator of mankind – all those we know from his own hand and pen. But there is little that could be called autobiographical.

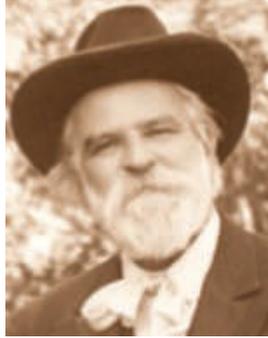
For what really happened in the mysterious brotherhood he founded, we must rely on rumor and innuendo. The truth, unembellished by adoring followers or untarnished by the malice of scornful, departed disciples, went with him into his “Celestial Sphere.”

One man who might have been able to explain Harris to the rest of the world was Edwin Markham. The poet and author of the famous social protest poem entitled, “The Man with the Hoe.” Markham was also a lecturer and social philosopher of considerable fame.

Edwin Markham was Harris's good personal friend and intellectual soul mate, Markham not only had the capacity to understand Harris but the communicative ability to interpret him for the non-believers. And he acknowledged this was to be his task.

When the long friendship ended with Harris's death, it was Edwin Markham who spoke at the funeral service and who immediately announced his intention to write a two volume biography and evaluation of his mentor.

Markham, at the urging of the faithful at the Brotherhood, also took on the impossible



job of editing and publishing all of Harris's work. But despite his dedication, Markham faltered at his task. Thirty-four years after he delivered Harris's funeral oration, Markham died, still collecting hand-written manuscripts and fragments of letters.

The work that would have told the world about Thomas Lake Harris was left as cardboard boxes full of nearly illegible notations and faded, handwritten poetry on yellowed paper, part of Markham's vast library.

Markham's biographers are at a loss to explain the poet's enthusiasm for Harris as a religious leader, and the more scholarly decry the waste of his talent on such a far-fetched idea. What heights might Edwin Markham have reached had he not been side-tracked into the labyrinth of Harris doctrines?

This brief telling of the Fountaingrove story is just that – a synopsis of events that played out over the past two centuries and across three continents. A mystical story that began in 1823 and a mystery that lives on today. A story that never could have been told from the intimate perspective provided by Gaye LeBaron and Bart Casey. Gaye has generously offered signed hard cover copies we can share with members for a \$15 donation to OSMA. To read deeper into our history and those who preceded us, email leslie@focus-re.com.



A 19th century Harvest at Fountaingrove

Starring Now in Sunrise Concerts

With its surprisingly broad repertoire, the Song Sparrow more than lives up to its name.

They may not get a lot of attention being small and brown, but what they lack in bright colors, they make up for in talent.

For those who pay attention to such things, Song Sparrows are among the most conspicuous of our small birds – and for those who listen, they are clearly the most vocal with their extensive repertoire of “songs for any occasion”.

Males at a young age begin developing their own unique variations (up to 15) of the basic Song Sparrow melody, usually under the tutelage of a mature male. These songs will evolve into an identity meant to attract females, warn off other males and defend territory. Females are attracted to males with an extensive, well developed song library, seeing them as most prepared to be a strong, protective mate.



Song Sparrow nesting preference is near or on the ground within thick tufts of grass or vegetation. Shrubs or bushes are also favored. Females are the primary nest builders while the males, with their songs, defend their chosen territory. The pair will typically produce three to four

clutches of eggs per season, however, should some be lost to predators, they will produce more – up to seven clutches in a season have been observed.



The Song Sparrow's natural diet consists of weed and grass seeds, some berries and insects. They prefer to forage on the ground, walking, or hopping on uneven surfaces. Where bird feeders are accessible, they will avail themselves, millet being the preferred food. It has been noted that in bird feeders, Song Sparrows are aggressive toward other, even larger, birds. *It's worth mentioning, bird feeders should be cleaned regularly as they can become contaminated with Salmonella bacteria.*

There's so much more to learn about the birds here in our open space as well as your own back yard. They are in fact our neighbors and deserve to be acknowledged as such.

We'll get to know that owl you may be hearing at night in our next issue. Meanwhile, do some scouting on your own.



Song Sparrow Facts

Song Sparrows are common across North America with some surprising variations in coloring.

Here in the west, a russet-and-gray bird with dark streaks, most noticeably down its white chest.

Walks and hops while foraging on the ground usually two or three birds together, near protective cover.

In flight, Song Sparrows can achieve up to 28 miles per hour.

Life span believed to be 4 years with one documented case of 11 years.

Blooms of Spring

The blooms are back in the Rincon Ridge Preserve just waiting for you to notice. Take a walk, appreciate them.

In beginning this page, I researched our Mediterranean climate – unique to only 2 percent of the earth’s land masses. The cycle of seasons here is more than a casual occurrence, as many of us have come to think of it. It truly is life-changing. The “awakening” phase is now underway with every bud, new leaf and every bloom. And most will go unnoticed – until you take a closer look.

But I’ve gotten ahead of myself! Let’s go back to the here and now, mid-March in the Rincon Ridge Preserve, with eyepopping displays of **Ceanothus** in deep blues and purple. We still have some of the **Manzanita** flowers hanging around, with the **Pyrobombas** (fiery-tailed bumble bees) in attendance. Look for a large, fuzzy yellow bee, helicoptering around the inverted urn-shaped flowers. These bees nest underground and rarely sting.

The showstoppers right now are the two species of ceanothus...

The showstoppers right now are the two species of ceanothus, (see-ah-KNOW-thuss)...at hip height and visible from your car, is the more common **wavyleaf ceanothus**. You’ll have to park your car and take a short walk to see the rare **Rincon Ridge ceanothus**, they only grow ankle to mid calf height. If you take a moment and try a little belly-botany, you may detect a faint aroma of grape Koolaid. The Rincon ceanothus in the shady area near the children’s play structure (in the park) are the easiest to access. And worth the walk.



Manzanita



Wavy Leaf ceanothus.
Inset, bloom detail.

(Rare) Rincon Ridge ceanothus



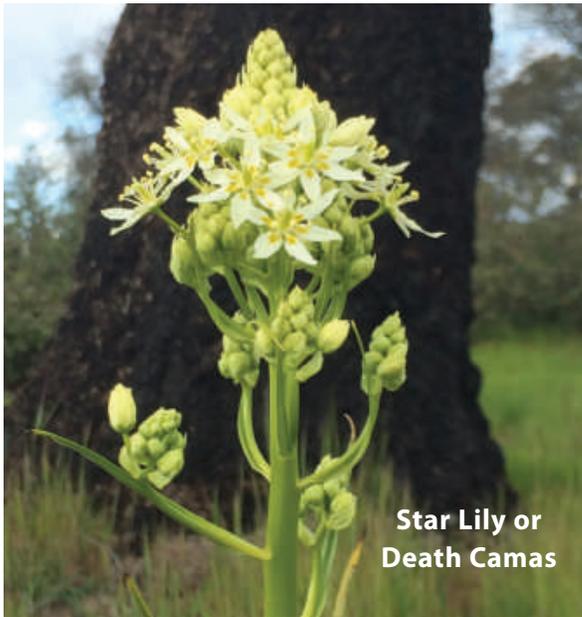
If you then walk toward Fountaingrove Parkway from the play structure, on the woodchip path, the bloom of **chaparral pea** might catch your eye. The bush itself may catch your sleeve! Adapted to some of the hottest, rockiest chaparral, the stem is green (photosynthesis), the leaves are tiny and few, there are spines and a brilliant hot pink bloom. This plant is also found locally in the chaparral at Annadel-Trione, Hood Mountain, Sugarloaf Ridge and Mount Saint Helena..

Also in bloom is the **star lily, or death camas Toxicoscordion fremontii**. Before blooming, the linear leaves are upright and a glossy green. The common name and scientific name should be clue enough that this is not an edible plant. A similar plant that you might not see blooming is the **soaproot, Chlorogalum pomeridianum**; its leaves are low, wavy, dull green and resemble

Blooms of Spring



Chaparral Pea



Star Lily or
Death Camas



Soaproot

corn seedlings. It blooms at night, later in the spring. Both of these plants have a solid foundation to thrive despite our current, less-than-promising rainfall forecast, an underground bulb.

In many of my happy (plant) hunting grounds, the **geophytes** are having a good year. Geophytes are plants with underground storage organs, such as bulbs, corms or rhizomes. I think the October 24th atmospheric river really got them going, and despite the current state of our water-year, they are putting on a good show. I'm hoping to see some of our other geophytes this year: **golden fairy lantern** (*Calochortus amabilis*), **ground iris** (*Iris macrosiphon*) and **narrow-flowered California brodiaea** (*Brodiaea leptandra*).

If you look carefully in the area around the preserve, you may spot some other blooms, **oregon grape** (yellow), **viola** (yellow), **oaks** (yellow), **poison oak** (yellow). Most of the larger plants are evergreen native shrubs and trees. Two of the larger trees, madrone and bay laurel are just finishing their blooms. Of our deciduous shrubs and trees, now is the time to make leaves... black oak, blue oak, buckeyes and maples (elsewhere), all have their leaves now, taking advantage of weather that is typically cooler and wetter than later in spring. In landscaped spaces and medians, the cultivated deciduous trees from elsewhere...barely have buds.

The other plant you may soon notice is a fern (yes, a fern in chaparral!). **Bracken fern** will be unfurling in the larger preserve plot, nestled among the Rincon manzanita and Rincon Ridge ceanothus. It is winter deciduous, doesn't tolerate frost, but doesn't require shade.

*Finally, I have a favor to ask of the curious and observant. The California Academy of Sciences has developed a (free) app, called iNaturalist (see at [inaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org)). I would love a better inventory of the critters frequenting the Rincon Ridge Preserve. If you are interested, please download the app and make observations of the wildlife you see in the Preserve. Hopefully, next newsletter, I can report on more of the fauna of the space! If this is of interest to you, you can search for me on iNaturalist with my user name, **lilredhen**.*

Next newsletter we'll take a look at popular landscape plants to avoid to protect our natives...and much more. Also watch for guided tours of our plant preserve.

Michelle
Preserve Manager

OSMA Newsletter

FOUNTAINGROVE II

*If you would like to sign up for email consent
and receive this newsletter and other OSMA
communications, contact Leslie Cohen at
Focus Real Estate & investments, Inc.
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