



OAKLEAVES

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF EL MORO ELFIN FOREST
P.O. BOX 6442, LOS OSOS, CALIFORNIA 93412-6442 ❖ (805) 528-0392 ❖ SUMMER 2022

Oakleaves to Go Quarterly

Editor Yolanda Waddell, in consultation with co-editors Jean Wheeler and Robert Dees, and with the concurrence of the FEMEF Board of Directors, has announced that *Oakleaves* will become a quarterly publication, beginning with this issue. This first quarterly issue covers the months of June, July, and August, and will be the Summer issue. It will be followed in September with the Fall issue, in December with the Winter issue, and in March of 2023 with the Spring issue.

Our newsletter will continue to be mailed to members choosing to receive printed copies by mail and will also continue to be published in color on our website, elfin-forest.org. Each current issue is available on the website home page. All previous issues, starting in 1986, can be accessed on the Forest Library page both by date and by the subject of an article.

Oakleaves is intended to distribute news and information to FEMEF members and the public in support of the Elfin Forest. Board member Robert Dees and Webmaster Jeff Reifel have created a Forest News entry, also on the home page of our website, so members and the public can keep up with current news affecting the Elfin Forest and FEMEF in a timely way.

Since frequent publication in paper form is no longer necessary for current news affecting our Elfin Forest, the editors are now turning to a quarterly publication. Articles will focus on the four climatic seasons affecting the Elfin Forest and its plant and animal inhabitants. We feel this will enable us to better serve our readers with stories and images of those forest residents and our efforts to assist them in adapting to their topographic, climate, and human interaction challenges.

❖ Inside This Issue ❖	
2	<i>State of the Forest</i>
3	<i>Elsie Deitz - A Remembrance</i>
4	<i>Walks in the Forest Are Back</i>
6	<i>Hollyleaf Cherry by D. & B. Walters</i>
7	<i>Photos from the Forest</i>
8	<i>Committee Reports</i>
9	<i>Coming Up in the Elfin Forest</i>
10	<i>New & Renewing Members</i>

Roger Carmody Joins FEMEF Board

By Yolanda Waddell

At the March 8, 2020, FEMEF Board meeting, Treasurer Dave Bowlus introduced Roger Carmody as a potential member of the Board. Following an orientation walk at the Elfin Forest with Board representatives later that month, Roger was unanimously elected at the April 11 meeting to serve on the Board.



A retired CPA who moved from Pasadena, California, to Los Osos in 2005, Roger has interests in music and the out-of-doors and has served on the board of the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art. He will serve a two-year term on the FEMEF Board and has already become active as Chair of the Publicity Committee. FEMEF and the Elfin Forest will undoubtedly benefit from Roger's work to inform the community about the Forest and FEMEF events. He has sent *Oakleaves* the following information about himself:

"I grew up in Southern California, first amid the orange groves of Redlands, and then later in the suburban foothills of the San Gabriel Valley. I greatly enjoyed hiking, camping, and exploring with my older brother during those formative years.

"After graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Southern California in 1970, I joined the U.S. Army. I spent the next three years playing music in Army bands in San Francisco and Germany. Upon returning to the States, I took a job as an accountant for a trucking company and later worked for a CPA firm in Encino, California. I became a CPA myself in 1980.

"My wife and I moved to Los Osos in 2005 and fell immediately in love with the community and its people, the ocean breezes, the birds and plants, and the many places to enjoy being outside. We especially liked coming to the Elfin Forest, where we could feel the timelessness of nature and the subtle changes of the seasons.

"I look forward to working with the FEMEF Board of Directors to maintain, improve, and preserve this special, small bit of wilderness."



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

of the

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest (FEMEF):

Steve Hendricks, Chair

Robert Dees, Vice Chair

Dave Bowlus, Treasurer

Yolanda Waddell, Secretary

Beverly Boyd, Acting Recording Secretary

Allison Fash, Student Board Member

Roger Carmody

John Perrine

Jeff Reifel

Skip Rotstein

The FEMEF Board of Directors meets monthly,
2nd Monday of the month from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The next meetings are

June 13, July 11, August 8.

FEMEF Board meetings are virtual and are
open to the public.

To attend a FEMEF Board meeting, leave a
message at 805-528-0392.

CONTACT FEMEF

If you have questions about FEMEF activities
or want to volunteer, please call
(805) 528-0392 and leave a message.

A recorded message will give information
about our coming activities and other events.

If you have questions, concerns or comments
about any problems in the Elfin Forest,
call or write: Lasca Gaylord
SLO County Parks Supervising Ranger
1144 Monterey Street, SLO, CA 93408
(805) 781-1196.

Owners of dogs off-leash can be cited. If you
witness dogs off-leash, vandalism or obvious
crimes, call the County Sheriff at 781-4550
or Lasca Gaylord at 781-1196.



[https://www.facebook.com/
pages/Elfin-Forest-Pre-
serve/139602329410370](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Elfin-Forest-Pre-serve/139602329410370)



[https://www.instagram.com/
el_moro_elfin_forest/](https://www.instagram.com/el_moro_elfin_forest/)

State of the Forest

By Steve Hendricks, FEMEF Board Chair

FEMEF board members have been meeting monthly on Zoom to discuss issues related to the Elfin Forest, plan for future projects, and keep up with maintenance throughout the reserve. Below is an overview of some of the most significant happenings in the last four months.

County Purchases Maintenance Supplies

As the boardwalk ages, FEMEF volunteers led by board member Jeff Reifel are identifying boards that need to be replaced. As opposed to tearing up large sections of the boardwalk and disrupting its use in the Elfin Forest, we have decided on board-by-board replacement to allow the public's ongoing use of the Forest. After the planning committee came up with a board replacement and materials list, Lasca Gaylord of County Parks was asked if the County could contribute to the project. She replied that County Parks would purchase all materials and store the new and old boards. This is a more than \$3,000 contribution by County Parks. Jeff Reifel will be leading work parties to replace decaying boards throughout the year. If you would like to help out, please check the "Forest News" link on our website (elfin-forest.org) for upcoming work parties. Thank you, County Parks, for your support, and kudos to Jeff Reifel for leading this effort! [See a photo of Jeff replacing rusted boardwalk screws on page 7.]

Trail Guide Update

After many years, the Elfin Forest Boardwalk Guide is getting an update. This is being done to condense the guide and reduce our printing costs. We will soon be ordering 15,000 new Boardwalk Guides, which should last us about three years. Jeff Reifel has been leading this effort and has spent many hours updating the field guide. Look for the new guides in a few months when you are out on a walk in the Elfin Forest. We ask that you return the guides after your walk to help us save on printing costs.

Recognition Bricks

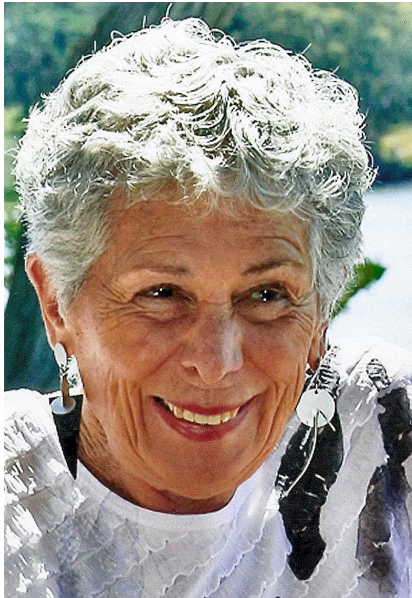
As time marches on and many of the founding members of Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP, now FEMEF) age and, sadly, pass away [see article on the passing of Elsie Deitz in this edition] our community is looking for ways to honor these amazing people and the contributions they have made to the Elfin Forest. Some people have asked why we don't continue to put up more memorial plaques or benches in the Forest. Well, County and State Parks informed us several years ago that they did not want the Forest to resemble a cemetery. Pat Murray, Chair of our Property and Records Committee, has suggested that we could have a "recognition brick" pathway at the entrance to 16th street (or other street), something similar to what was recently created at the Morro Bay Maritime Museum. FEMEF has organized a committee and will be investigating the steps necessary to accomplish this task at the Elfin Forest. If you would like to join our committee or help in any way, please contact committee chair Steve Hendricks (shendric@cuesta.edu).

Elfin Forest Is on Instagram

Our student board member, Allison Fash, has been hard at work developing the FEMEF Instagram page. This page has been active for only two months and it already has 111 followers and 153 following. If you haven't yet, please check us out on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/el_moro_elfin_forest/ and be sure to follow us. We are hoping this will encourage the younger generation (or those tech-savvy older folks) to connect with the Elfin Forest. Allison is also leading an effort to update our donations and merchandise purchasing to accept Venmo and Paypal. Apparently younger folks aren't quite sure what "checks" are! Thank you for your hard work, Allison.

Elsie Deitz — A Remembrance

By Yolanda Waddell. Photo by Robert Boxberger



Elsie Deitz, whose work helped to save the southern 38.7 acres of the Elfin Forest, passed away on April 6, 2022, at age 95. A Los Osos resident, Elsie, along with her husband Jerry, joined the SWAP Board in 1988. Elsie became the Special Events and Membership Coordinator, and Jerry was the SWAP Treasurer. She organized many parties, fundraising meetings, and gala events in the Elfin Forest. Elsie was a

voice and the image of SWAP during interviews on television and radio and wrote articles about the Forest for local newspapers.

Elsie had many friends, and each has a special memory of her. I remember that she designed the SWAP—and now FEMEF—T-shirt that we still use and sell. She had to persuade some of her fellow board members that a black T-shirt was a good idea, but her artist's eye told her that black is the perfect background for Barbara Rosenthal's Elfin Forest mural, front and back. I also remember being in her kitchen, watching her prepare an elegant snack tray for a fundraising meeting. Elsie did everything with finesse. Three of her friends who have known her since the years when SWAP was raising money to buy the 38.7 acres of the Elfin Forest have shared their memories of her.

From Pat Grimes,
early SWAP Board member and *Oakleaves* editor:

Elsie always made things happen. When she gave you “the look” along with her request, there was only one answer—“Sure!” Whether she was convincing you that you could carry a harpsichord down a sandy trail into Rose's Grove (and back up again) or that you could set up a fine art show under a tent in a parking lot, you knew you were going to help her make it happen and it would be a wonderful event that would enhance the possibilities for raising more money and awareness to preserve the Elfin Forest.

Elsie had an elegant style that always gave panache to any event she organized. It was never over-the-top, but there were small details that made the public relations tour or the volunteer appreciation event or even a potluck board meeting unique and memorable in the minds of the people we were encouraging to support our efforts. And when she spoke to those people, she got results from them as well.



(L to R) Jerry Deitz, Elsie Deitz, Mary Coffeen, and Kathleen Goddard Jones were among those celebrating the Elfin Forest purchase in June, 1994. Photo in Oakleaves archives.

It's sad that none of the women who got the most important results for our project from Shirley Otto (the property owner) are still with us to tell the story of that consequential event. Elsie Deitz, Rose Bowker, and Barbara Machado loved to recall their memorable trip to Montecito, where they found common ground and even friendship with Mrs. Otto. It changed all the possibilities when Shirley Otto agreed to give SWAP time to meet our goals. And it made all the work facing them and all the SWAP volunteers even more important.

From Barbara Rosenthal,
artist and Elfin Forest mural creator:

When Elsie moved to Los Osos and decided to retire from her jewelry making, many local organizations and causes reaped the benefit of her skills and dedication. Elsie and Jerry made going to meetings to secure the Elfin Forest entertaining. They were always so welcoming in their beautiful home. Elsie was also very organized and efficient. She had great ideas for fundraising and worked hard to pull them off. I remember a really fun dance in the community center, all decorated with trees and elves. In working with Elsie, it was possible to enjoy social time, build relationships, and still reach goals. She was such a well-spoken and clear-thinking person. Later, she was a very respected member of a book club I attended. How many people do you know with an unabridged dictionary always set in a place of honor in the kitchen dining area, opened to some interesting entries?

From Dennis Sheridan, entomologist,
photographer, and Fungus Foray walk leader:

(Editor note: Dennis often took Elsie for a walk around her neighborhood during her last years.)

Elsie was a good friend. We did many different things, including meditating together at retreats or just at the sauna. She was a classy woman with a wonderful sense of humor. I miss her.

Like Dennis, I and many others miss Elsie. We are grateful for her hard work that resulted in a very special legacy.

NATURE WALKS in the ELFIN FOREST

3rd Saturday Walks

At last, after more than two years, and with the approval of County Parks, our Elfin Forest 3rd Saturday walks can be given again. Masks are not required, but if you have a cold or cough, please do use a mask. Thanks go to our walk leaders, whose walks were cancelled in 2020 and who will give them this year.

Important: *We are limiting walk attendance to 15 persons and require reservations. If you plan to attend a walk, please email walks@elfin-forest.org with “Yes” in the subject line. You will be notified by email if the walk is filled.*

June 18, 9:30 a.m. –

Drought Survival in the Elfin Forest

Learn how the plants and animals within the Elfin Forest deal with drought conditions. Elfin Forest Roving Docent Vicky Johnsen will take you on a tour around the boardwalk to see examples of the ways that the native plants of the Forest manage to survive without rain during at least six months of the year.

July 16, 9:30 a.m. – Insect Walk

Although we generally see just a few kinds of insects and spiders while walking through the Elfin Forest, there are dozens, perhaps hundreds of different species of arthropods living in the Forest. Entomologist Dr. Norman Smith will search every nook and cranny along the boardwalk for the Good, Bad, and Ugly of these creatures. The importance and ecology of our local insects will be discussed during the walk. If you'd like to see the insects close-up, bring a hand lens or close-focusing binoculars.

August 20, 8:30 a.m. –

(Note Earlier Time)

Elfin Forest Birds in the Summer

Late summer is an interesting time for birds. Nesting season is ending, but migration has not yet started. Juvenile birds are on their own for the first time, and some bird species form “family flocks.” Many birds are switching from breeding to preparing for migration. Though not as many birds are singing, there is still plenty to see and hear! Join Jessica Griffiths on a walk to explore what birds are up to during this under-appreciated time of year.

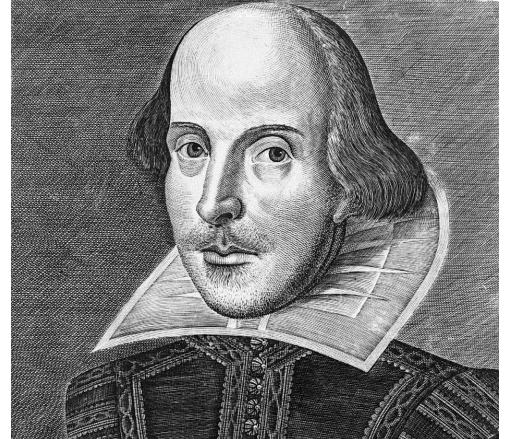
Walks in the Elfin Forest begin at times stated above at the north end (1100 block) of 15th Street off Santa Ysabel in Los Osos. Wear closed-toe shoes, long sleeves, and pants to avoid poison oak and mosquitoes. Park carefully, avoiding driveways and mailboxes, and leave pets at home. The easy-paced walks last 1-1/2 to 2 hours. For more information or if you use a wheelchair, call (805) 528-0392

Shakespeare in El Moro Elfin Forest

By Bob Dees

Missing some Shakespeare in your life? California may be a long way from the Bard's stomping grounds, but you can still get a taste of his love of plants and flowers with a walk around El Moro Elfin Forest. The works of England's greatest poet and dramatist, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), are remarkable for their inclusion of plots,

images, and metaphors demonstrating his vast familiarity with the plants and flowers of the English countryside. Professional horticulturists, master and amateur gardeners, nature lovers, and even children have all been enchanted by Shakespeare's artistic command of



William Shakespeare, the famous British playwright who named within his plays 38 species of plants with relatives living in El Moro Elfin Forest.

botany. Cities around the globe have established Shakespeare gardens in which the 175 plants mentioned in his works are displayed along with quotations illustrating their use.

El Moro Elfin Forest was never meant to be a Shakespeare garden, but it does contain a great number of plants related to those mentioned in the Bard's plays. Primroses, ferns, clovers, plantain, nettles, gooseberry, poppies, oats, rushes, oaks, and more populate the plays of Shakespeare as well as the Elfin Forest. Because Shakespeare was writing at a time when botanical nomenclature was still in its infancy, it's not always known which particular species he might have had in mind when referring to a plant or flower by its common or broad, categorical name. Nonetheless, if the Bard were to visit El Moro Elfin Forest today, he would likely recognize many relatives of the plants and flowers mentioned in his plays. After all, as Hamlet says, “What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet.”

The following list, based primarily on *Botanical Shakespeare* (2017) by Gerit Quealy and “Vascular Plants of the Elfin Forest” on the FEMEF website, includes 38 of Shakespeare's plants (as well as the acorn) and cites the plays (numbered) in which they are named. These are followed by related species that can be found in the Elfin Forest. You can use the list to acquaint yourself with some of the variety of plants Shakespeare referred to in his plays or perhaps even become curious enough to investigate the plays themselves. You'll be immensely rewarded by either choice—or both!

Plants and Flowers in Shakespeare's Plays and Their Elfin Forest Relatives

- Acorn** 3, 6, 22, 29, 30
Fruit of the coast live oak.
- Almond** 33
Dune almond (*Prunus fasciculata* var. *punctata*)
- Barley** 10, 29, 36
Foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*)
- Blackberry** 8, 33
California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*)
- Bulrush** 3, 28, 36
Dwarf bulrush (*Isolepis cernua*)
Saltmarsh bulrush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus* ssp. *paludosus*)
Small-headed bulrush (*Scirpus microcarpus*)
Sturdy bulrush (*Bolboschoenus robustus*)
- Carrot** ("caret") 21
Wild carrot (*Daucus pusillus*)
- Clover** 10
Burdock (*Medicago polymorpha**)
White sweet-clover (*Melilotus albus**)
Yellow sweet-clover (*Melilotus indicus**)
- Docks** 10, 29
Curly dock (*Rumex crispus**)
Sour-dock (*Rumex acetosella**)
Western dock (*Rumex occidentalis*)
- Fennel** 7, 9
Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare**)
- Fern** 8
Bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum* var. *pubescens*)
California polypody (*Polypodium californicum*)
Wood fern (*Dryopteris arguta*)
- Fescue** 36, 37
California fescue (*Festuca rubra*)
Meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*)
Rattail fescue (*Festuca myuros**)
Six-weeks fescue (*Festuca octoflora*)
Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea**)
- Flax** 12, 16, 21, 34, 36, 38
Blue toadflax (*Nuttallanthus texanus*)
- Gooseberry** 9
Canyon gooseberry (*Ribes menziesii*)
Fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*)
Straggly gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum* var. *publiferum*)
- Grasses** 1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17, 20, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 37
California brome (*Bromus carinatus*)
Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum**)
False brome (*Brachypodium distachyon**)
Foxtail brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens**)
Green bristlegrass (*Setaria viridis**)
Panic veldtgrass (*Ehrharta erecta**)
Perennial veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina**)
Rattlesnake grass (*Briza maxima*)
Ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus**)
Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*)
Smallflower melicgrass (*Melica imperfecta*)
Soft chess brome (*Bromus hordeaceus**)
- Heath** 29
Alkali heath (*Frankenia salina*)
- Holly** 3
Hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)
- Honeysuckle** 9, 23
California honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula* var. *vacillans*)
- Ivy** 4, 22, 29, 36, 38
Cape ivy (*Delairea odorata**)
English ivy (*Hedera helix**)
- Knot-grass** 22
Common knotweed (*Polygonum aviculare**)
- Lettuce** 24
Miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*)
- Mustard** (condiment or medication) 3, 9, 32
Black mustard (*Brassica nigra**)
Perennial mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana**)
Rape mustard (*Brassica rapa**)
Tower mustard (*Turritis glabra*)
Yellow tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*)
- Myrtle** 2, 19, 37
California wax-myrtle (*Morella californica*)
- Nettles** 5, 7, 8, 10, 16, 24, 26, 29, 30, 33, 36, 38
California hedge nettle (*Stachys bullata*)
Dwarf nettle (*Urtica urens**)
Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*)
Western nettle (*Hesperocnide tenella*)
- Oak** 3, 5, 6, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30, 33, 38
Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Oats** 8, 16, 22, 29, 32, 36
Common wild oat (*Avena fatua**)
Slender wild oat (*Avena barbata**)
- Parsley** 32
Water parsley (*Oenanthe sarmentosa*)
- Plantain** 17, 36
Cutleaf plantain (*Plantago coronopus**)
English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata**)
- Poppy** 22
California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)
- Primrose** 6, 7, 9, 18, 22, 38
Beach evening primrose (*Camissoniopsis cheiranthifolia*)
Spencer primrose (*Camissoniopsis micrantha*)
- Radish** 8, 9
Wild radish (*Raphanus sativus**)
- Reed** 2, 6, 8, 20, 21, 28, 36
Bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum* var. *eurycarpum*)
Common reed (*Phragmites australis**)
- Rose** 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
California wildrose (*Rosa californica*)
Coast ground rose (*Rosa spithamea*)
- Rushes** 2, 5, 6, 9, 32, 36
Common scouring rush (*Equisetum hyemale*)
Beaked spikerush (*Eleocharis rostellata*)
Southwestern spiny rush (*Juncus acutus* ssp. *leopoldii*)
Toad rush (*Juncus bufonius*)
- Rye** 3, 29
Giant wild rye (*Elymus condensatus*)
Perennial ryegrass (*Festuca perennis**)
- Sedge** 8, 29, 32, 35, 36
American threesquare (*Schoenoplectus americanus*)
Coast or bog rush (*Juncus hesperius*)
California tule (*Schoenoplectus californicus*)
Round fruit sedge (*Carex globosa*)
- Santa Barbara sedge (*Carex barbara*)
Slough sedge (*Carex obnupta*)
Tule (*Schoenoplectus acutus* var. *occidentalis*)
- Thistle** 10, 22, 23
Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)
Cobwebby thistle (*Cirsium occidentale* var. *occidentale*)
Common sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus**)
Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus**)
Prickly sow thistle (*Sonchus asper**)
- Vetches** 29
Giant vetch (*Vicia gigantea*)
Pomona milk vetch (*Astragalus pomonensis*)
- Willow** 7, 13, 20 23 24 34 36
Arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*)

Key to plays, listed by number:

1. *All's Well That Ends Well*
2. *Antony and Cleopatra*
3. *As You Like It*
4. *The Comedy of Errors*
5. *Coriolanus*
6. *Cymbeline*
7. *Hamlet*
8. *Henry IV Pt. 1*
9. *Henry IV, Pt. 2*
10. *Henry V*
11. *Henry VI, Pt. 1*
12. *Henry VI, Pt. 2*
13. *Henry VI, Pt. 3*
14. *Julius Caesar*
15. *King John*
16. *King Lear*
17. *Love's Labour's Lost*
18. *Macbeth*
19. *Measure for Measure*
20. *The Merchant of Venice*
21. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
22. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
23. *Much Ado about Nothing*
24. *Othello*
25. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*
26. *Richard II*
27. *Richard III*
28. *Romeo and Juliet*
29. *The Tempest*
30. *Timon of Athens*
31. *Titus Andronicus*
32. *The Taming of the Shrew*
33. *Troilus and Cressida*
34. *Twelfth Night*
35. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
36. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
37. *Venus and Adonis*
38. *The Winter's Tale*

* = non-native species

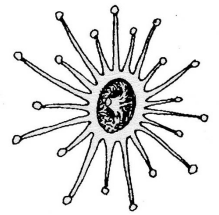
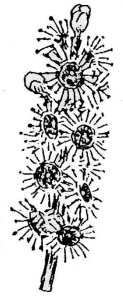
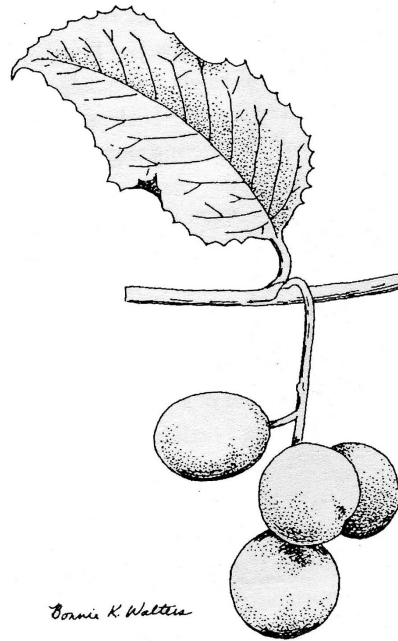
Hollyleaf Cherry

Text by Dirk Walters, Ph.D. Revised from his April 2005 article
Drawing by Bonnie Walters, Photo by Jean Wheeler

The plant profiled for this issue of *Oakleaves* is a common, but rarely abundant, shrub or small tree. It has many common names, including California cherry, California laurel cherry, Spanish wild cherry, mountain evergreen cherry, hollyleaf cherry, and "Islay." One reference indicated that the name *Islay* probably derived from one of the native California languages. It would have come to us via the Spanish. However, in our portion of California, the plant is mostly known simply as hollyleaf cherry, and this is a direct translation of its scientific name, *Prunus ilicifolia*. The genus name, *Prunus*, is the ancient Latin name for the plum with which the cherry shares its genus name. *Prunus* contains several other cultivated stone fruit crops, including the peach, apricot, and almond. The first part of the specific epithet (*ilici-*) is derived from the genus name of true holly, or *Ilex*. The rest of that second name (*folia*) simply means "leaf."

In California, hollyleaf cherry is found from Napa County south through the Coast Range into Baja California. It is partial to brush communities including coastal scrub, dune scrub, and especially chaparral. In the Elfin Forest it can be seen from the boardwalk around Bush Lupine Point and on the way to Siena's View. It appears to be restricted to the crest of the slope above the salt marsh. It produces bright evergreen leaves; however, like many California shrubs, it loses many of them during the dry summer months. The smallish flowers are produced in March and April. By fall, the plant is producing cherries an inch or so in diameter. These are reported to have a sweet-tasting but very thin flesh. It is reported that the red-to-yellow fruits stay on the plant for a very long time, and this increases its appeal as a landscape plant. The fruits are too large to be efficiently collected or eaten by our native birds, so I assume omnivorous mammals such as raccoon, coyote, or bear eat most of its fruits. Since these animals would not be welcome in large numbers near human habitations, it seems reasonable that their persistence on the shrub is a measure of animal population size. I further guess that if we could set up a transect beginning at the edge of a housing addition and ending far out in native shrub lands, we would find that the cherries disappear rapidly in the wild and persist near our houses. In other words, our transect data would be giving us an index to the health of larger native fruit-eating mammal populations. The faster the fruit disappeared, the greater the number of mammals would be assumed to be present.

Lee Lens, in his book *Native Plants for California Gardens*, indicated that hollyleaf cherry was already being used in landscaping long before the first records appeared. All the books on landscaping indicate how forgiving it is. Although the plant prefers well-drained soils, it can tolerate heavy soils. Hollyleaf cherry can survive without water in the summer, but it keeps its good looks best with limited summer water. It even tolerates pruning. In other



words, the plant seen in our gardens is essentially identical to the ones that grow in the wild.

Most botanical books recommend its use as a background specimen or even as a hedge. So, although it has had a long horticultural history, I was able to find no evidence of any sustained selection. It seems to be such a beautiful plant as is and is so tolerant of garden conditions that gardeners have seen little need to select garden specific varieties. That said, one source suggested that one way to 'improve' it would be to select for thicker fleshed fruit. Of course, then the fruit would disappear as quickly from our garden plants as I assume it does from plants growing in wilderness areas.

Photos from the Forest

Photos by Vicky Johnsen

Common names for the plant shown in these photos, taken by Vicky Johnsen in March, are wild cucumber or manroot (*Marah fabaceus*). It is a vine seen climbing on other plants in the Elfin Forest in early spring. Its fruit, seen in the first photo, is a prickly-covered sphere with many seeds inside. Despite the prickles, an animal or bird knew how to open another fruit on the same plant and eat all the seeds. Wild cucumber is a native plant and source of food for Elfin Forest wildlife and should not be pulled, even though it might look like an invasive weed.



Forest Happenings

On March 29, Conservation Committee member Dean Thompson wrote, “Last week we found that someone had cut a trail down towards the bay at the end of the Klopfler Grove trail and built a bench that they screwed into a wax myrtle. I tried to brush the trail back in, but I haven’t done anything with the structure.” The bench was later removed by County Parks staff.



*Bench illegally installed
on a trail illegally cut in the Don Klopfler Grove.
Photo by Dean Thompson.*



Please Report Sightings

Have you observed any unusual birds in the Elfin Forest? Mammals? Reptiles? Amphibians? Insects? Interesting activities or footprints of wildlife in our Elfin Forest? Unusual plants? Taken a good photo?

Please report any interesting sightings to your *Oakleaves* editors at: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org or leave a message on FEMEF’s answering machine, (805) 528-0392.

Education Report

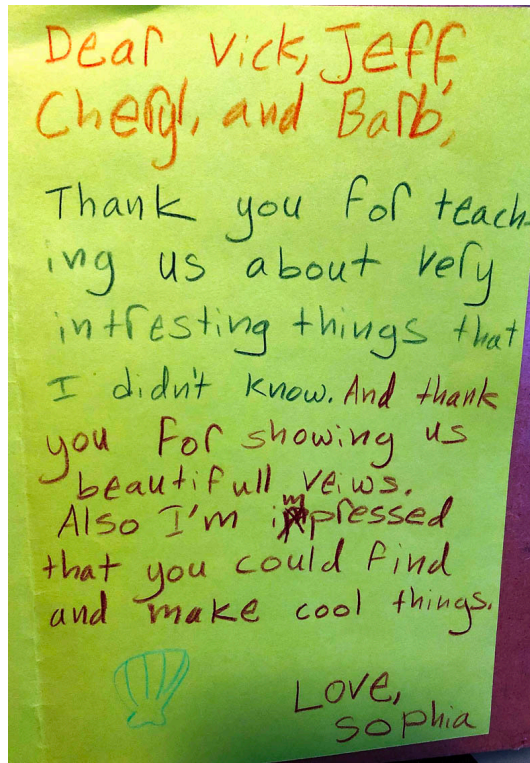
By Yolanda Waddell

with information from Cheryl Dove and Jeff Reifel

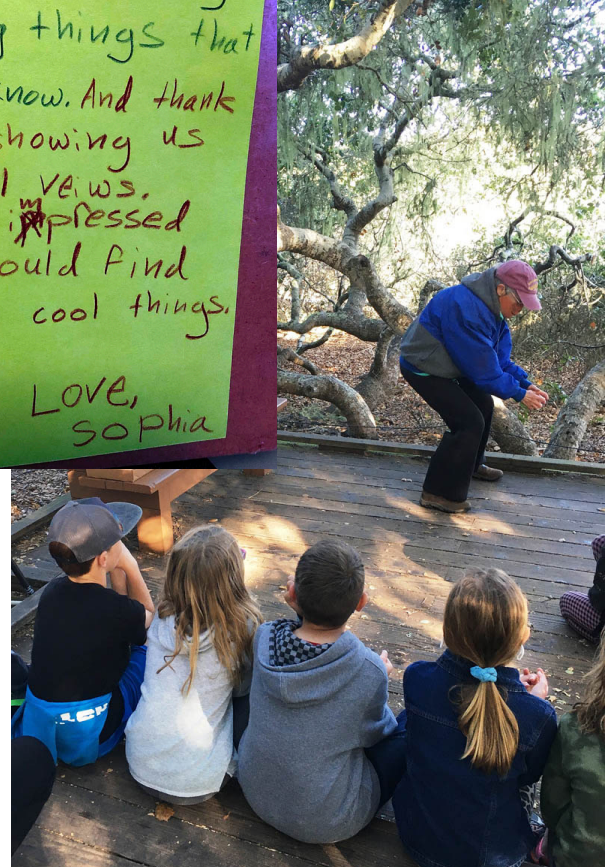
The request for an Elfin Forest field trip that Cheryl Dove heard on the phone was a bit breathtaking. Monarch Elementary School 3rd grade teacher Sandra Knapp told Cheryl that a group of parents from the school's three third grades asked for a field trip to the Elfin Forest. They wanted to bring all three classes on the same day and offered to pay for a school bus to transport more than 60 students and parent guides. The topic of the walk would be Chumash uses of the Forest's plants and animals.

An Education Committee condition for school field trips has always been that groups of students should be 10 or fewer per docent so the students can see and hear what the docent is saying and showing to them. Committee docents Cheryl Dove, Pat Brown, Vicky Johnsen, Jeff Reifel, and Barb Renshaw met and concluded that they could make it work by posting each of them at a different station in the Elfin Forest. The school bus would let off groups of 10 to 15 students at Santa Ysabel and 11th, 15th, 16th and 17th Streets. Guided by parents who had been given an orientation, the students walked to and then into the Elfin Forest, to each station where a docent was posted. Jeff Reifel prepared a route map for each group.

The field trip went smoothly. After the walk, all the students met at the end of 11th Street to board the school bus. That is the only street end where a school bus can turn around. Each docent was sent enthusiastic thank you notes. One of them is shown with this article. Would the Education Committee docents want to give a field trip for so many students again? That remains to be seen.



At left: One of the many thank you notes sent to the FEMEF docents after the field trip. Photo by Vicky Johnsen.



At Right: Vicky Johnsen at her station in Rose's Grove with students from Monarch Elementary School in Los Osos.

Elfin Forest Work Report

By Jeff Reifel and Vicky Johnsen, Conservation Co-Chairs

Weed Warrior activities have not been held for well over a year because of Covid, but Vicky Johnsen has continued to do some trimming and weeding when possible, assisted by her loyal volunteer, James Slocum. Jeff Reifel has also continued the ever-necessary replacement of rusted screws on the boardwalk. His photo at the right is a still from a video taken by student Board Member Allison Fash.



Coming up in the Elfin Forest

Story and Photos by Jean Wheeler

We have incredibly beautiful floral displays in our winters and springs here in the Elfin Forest. But our summer flowers are also amazingly varied and beautiful. I think they favorably rival summer wildflower displays in easterly and northern parts of our nation. Making a walk in our small wilderness area even more exciting in summer are the antics of our birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, and arthropods, almost all of whom are extremely busy breeding and raising their young.

Blue flower spikes of tall silver dune lupines, for which Bush Lupine Point is named, start blooming in late spring but can continue into June and July. Woolly stars are shown in my photo taken near the boardwalk intersection at the Fairbanks Monument. They have herbaceous stems and bright blue flowers above a woody root crown in summer. The same photo also shows tall red stems of the succulent dudleya topped with bright yellow flowers.

Dune buckwheat has white flowers, darkening to pink by late summer. White to pale lavender blossoms are in pompoms on sturdy stems of black sage. Spikes of white flowers characterize chamise. California wild rose, cobwebby thistles, and California hedge nettles have pink flowers. Golden yarrow (pictured) is golden yellow. Sticky monkey-flowers (the leaves, not the flowers are sticky) are orange and abundantly distributed most of the summer. Cardinal catchflies (red flowers in the undergrowth appearing to have been cut by pinking shears) should bloom all summer.

Butterflies, often called “flying flowers,” continue to abound in early summer. Bush lupines attract more blue butterflies to lay eggs on their leaves while acmon blues are attracted to deerweed for their caterpillars. Dune buckwheat attracts gray hairstreaks. Variable checkerspots lay eggs beneath sticky monkey-flower leaves. Gabb’s checkerspot is attracted to California poppies for nectar. The California oak moth lays its eggs on our pygmy live oaks.

While admiring butterflies and flowers from the boardwalk and sand trails, your eyes will no doubt also be attracted by the flight of avian residents tending or seeking food for their young. Especially likely to be seen and heard are the bright blue California scrub jays, loudly proclaiming their last name. Orange and black spotted towhees make a loud buzz. The large California quail sports a silly bobbing head plume and sounds to me like it is calling “quer-CAH-go.” Then there are busily chattering flocks of tiny fuzzy gray birds, dominated by bushtits and blue-gray gnatcatchers. Talkative little brown birds include several species of sparrows and wrens.

Among other residents busy in summer are bees, damselflies, spittlebugs, western fence lizards (doing their amusing pushups), garter snakes, gopher snakes, brush rabbits, ground squirrels, coyotes, and sometimes even deer.

So enjoy a walk on our wild side this summer!



Golden yarrow



Dudleya (left) - Woolly star (right)

Thank You to Our Generous Members

Compiled by Betsy Kinter, FEMEF Database Coordinator

NEW MEMBERS:

Monique Kuo*
Vanessa Shaw*

RENEWING MEMBERS:

Libbie Agran & Guy Fitzwater*
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Dianne Bougher*
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Tim & Melissa Rochte*
Diane & Frank Snow*
Nancy Stephens*

DONATIONS:

Catherine Yi

**Thanks to those listed above who donated more than the \$25 (regular) or \$15 (senior or student) membership dues. The additional donations will be used for special projects in the Elfin Forest. If you recently sent a donation to FEMEF and don't see your name in this issue's New and Renewing list, be assured that your gift will be acknowledged in the next quarterly issue. Gifts are processed by two different volunteers before reaching our editors, and newsletter copy deadline is one month before the date of the issue.*



OAKLEAVES

is a quarterly FEMEF publication.

Editors are Yolanda Waddell, Jean Wheeler, and Bob Dees.
Layout is by Katy Budge.

Contributors to this issue: Dave Bowlus, Beverly Boyd, Roger Carmody, Bob Dees, Cheryl Dove, Allison Fash, Steve Hendricks, Vicky Johnsen, Betsy Kinter, Jeff Reifel, Dean Thompson, Yolanda Waddell, Dirk Walters, Jean Wheeler.

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If possible, all copy should be submitted by e-mail to: oakleaf@elfin-forest.org.



Skip Rotstein and Dave Bowlus staffed the FEMEF booth and talked to visitors at the LOCAC Town Hall Event.

FEMEF Participation in LOCAC Outreach Event

On May 1, FEMEF board members Beverly Boyd, Skip Rotstein, and Dave Bowlus staffed a table promoting the Elfin Forest and its goals at the Town Hall & Community Fair hosted by the Los Osos Community Outreach Council (LOCAC). More than fifteen local organizations were represented at the event, which was held at the Los Osos Community Park's Red Barn. Our board member Dave Bowlus reports that attendance was excellent, with many guests asking questions about and expressing support for the Elfin Forest. You can view a video of the event on LOCAC's web site at <https://locac.info>.

Friends of El Moro Elfin Forest Mission:

Preserve and maintain El Moro Elfin Forest Natural Area;
inform and educate about the natural history
of the Elfin Forest and the Morro Bay Estuary;
promote and support scientific research in the Forest.

Thinking of Switching to Online *Oakleaves*?

If you receive a print copy of *Oakleaves*, we encourage you to visit our online version at www.elfin-forest.org. You will see photos in full color, and the text is easier to read on your computer. If you decide to be an online reader, you will receive an email when each new issue is posted on our website. Your decision would save paper, ink, and FEMEF dollars for other uses. Just email us at oakleaf@elfin-forest.org with the subject Switch me to online.



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2. POCKET GUIDE

Useful 56-page guide to plants and animals of the Elfin Forest. Lists for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, moths and butterflies, gastropods, vascular plants, lichens, and mushrooms. Some with charts for seasonality, color and more.

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Signed prints by artist Barbara Rosenthal, image size 4 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. Mounted on foamcore

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Walks Are Back! Walks Are Back! ~ See page 4

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Things for Kids to do in the Elfin Forest During Summer

Explore with a camera. Come early when bunnies are **hopping** around and quail are foraging. Send "best" photos to *Oakleaves* (oakleaf@elfin-forest.org) at the end of the summer and we'll publish them.

Pack a lunch and have a **picnic**.
 Look at the flowers and butterflies.

Become a birder. Take binoculars and a bird guide and see how many birds you can identify.



Become a *writer*. Make a journal about your visits to the Forest, and turn that into a story.

Get exercise. **SHAPE UP** by walking or running around the boardwalk.

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 P.O. Box 6442, Los Osos, CA 93412-6442.

Spittlebugs

Text by Jean Wheeler, Ph.D.

The blobs of white foam seen festooning especially ceanothus and coyote bush plants in our Elfin Forest from late spring through mid-summer look like spittle and are created by very tiny bugs, so spittlebugs are what they are called.

The spittle is excreted by the nymph or immature stage of the insect, and each nymph is only about 3 mm (1/8 of an inch) in size. One blob of spittle may be created by just one nymph or by several of them. The nymphs usually hang upside down on a branch, extract fluids from the plants, add secretions from glands on their abdomens, and mix in air bubbles to produce the froth. The bubbly mixture is long lasting, prevents dehydration of the nymphs, and conceals them from potential predators.

By mid-summer, spittle will be disappearing as the nymphs grow into adults. Adults are about a half inch long and hop about on leaves. They land with head up and looking like tiny dull brown frogs, so they are usually called froghoppers. But they have two features called bullae that look like big eyes, located at the tail end just behind the wings, one showing distinctly in Jeff's photo. These may deter predators. There is only one brood per year, and eggs are laid on plant leaves to provide the following year's spittle-making nymphs.

Spittlebugs occur throughout the United States and on many plant species, with about six species of spittlebugs known in California. In the Elfin Forest they occur mainly on ceanothus and coyote bush plants. They do little or no harm to the plants.



Extreme closeup of "froghoppers" or adult spittlebugs, one showing one of the large "bullae" looking like a large eye near the tail end.

Photo by Jeff Reifel.



Closeup of a single mass of spittle produced by one or several bugs inside.

Photo by Jean Wheeler.



Many spittlebugs on a ceanothus shrub. Photo by Jean Wheeler.