

Edgewood Explorer



July 1994

Volume 1 Number 3

FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD INSTALL MORE FENCE

By Carolyn Curtis

Under the direction of Rangers Mike Fritz and Lynn Fritz, along with Park Aide Bert Brandi, six Friends

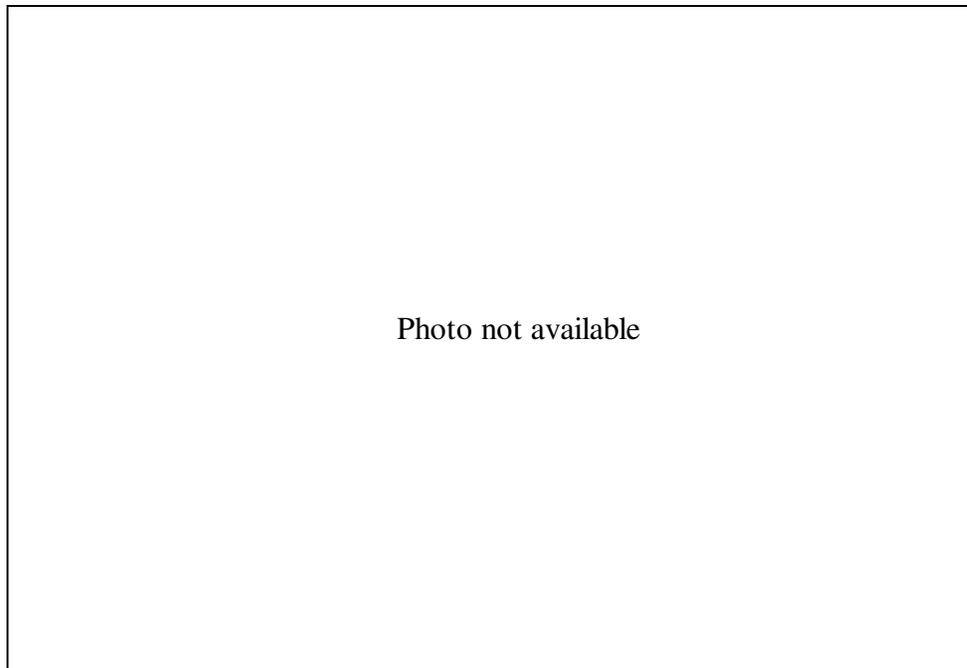


Photo not available

of Edgewood installed cross pieces to make a stretch of wooden fence along the service road, down and around the bend from the Sunset (Hillcrest) entrance. This fence protects a big part of the meadow west of the service road, where Bay checkerspot butterflies cavort in April. Helping were Stew and Jan Simpson, Billy James, Leon Glahn, Don Hohl, and Carolyn Curtis. With terrific teamwork, plus camaraderie, sweet rolls, and juice, we finished the job well before noon.

This fence probably would not have been built without our volunteer labor, or would have been considerably postponed; this kind of effort is valuable for the park. If you checked the box for trail maintenance on the membership application and

missed this chance to help, don't worry; there'll be other opportunities!

ELHA DONATES \$350 TO FRIENDS OF EDGEWOOD

Emerald Lake Homeowners Association has donated the proceeds from the second annual Explore the Edge run/walk to the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve. The event, sponsored by ELHA, featured an 8K (5 mile) run and 4K (2.5 mile) walk through upper Edgewood, along the Serpentine and Ridgeview trails.

Approximately 100 participants were there on May 21 to enjoy perfect weather and a good time. After the run/walk, over two dozen gift certificates, donated by local merchants, were raffled off. The donation of \$350 will be used to improve the signs and/or the visitor displays inside the park.

Continued on page 7

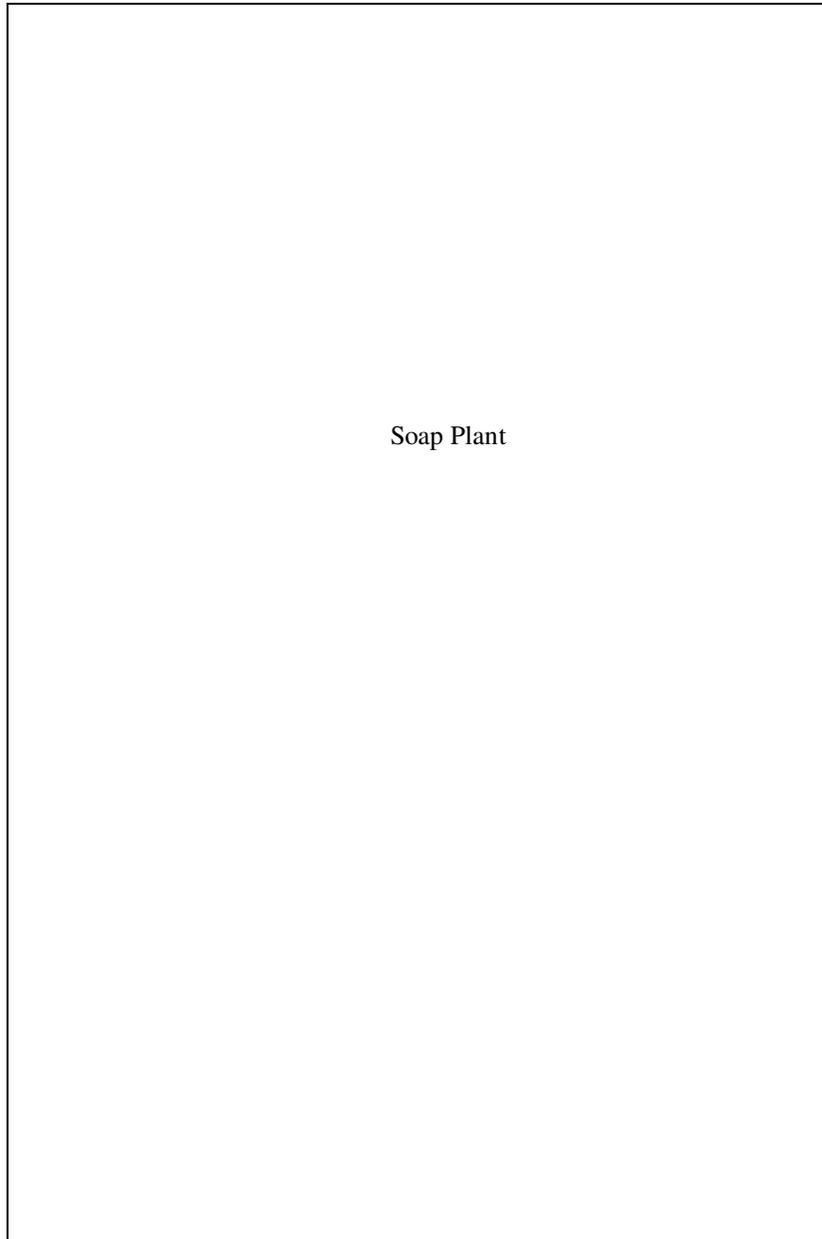
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BEAUTIFUL -- AND USEFUL TOO: THAT'S AMOLE

By Laverne Rabinowitz

People unfamiliar with the Soap Plant by name might not realize that the plant that produces clusters of lovely orchid-like blossoms in the early summer months has such practical applications just below the surface.



Soap Plant

Courtesy of the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco

Soap Plant or Amole (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*) grows in the grasslands, the chaparral, and the

forested areas of Edgewood. A good spot for viewing it is near the Sunset entrance.

The plant is a bulb (1 to 4 inches in diameter), which starts its growth early in the year by sending out several long, basal grasslike leaves (usually with wavy margins) which lie almost flat on the ground. In June, the plant begins to send up a stalk that can reach from two to five feet in height. Moth-pollinated, the white flowers open only late in the day, and look like delicate lilies or orchids with purple veins, nodding on their stalks.

What we don't see beneath the surface of the soil is the bulb, the most interesting part of the plant. Both the Native Americans and the early Spanish-Californians found many uses for the bulb or root -- both fresh and cooked: As the name hints, when the coating is removed and the bulb is crushed and rubbed on hands or clothes in water, it creates a fine lather for washing body and garments (including delicate fabrics!). The bulb's properties are also gentle enough that it can be used for a good shampoo. The crushed bulb can be rubbed on the body to relieve rheumatic pains and cramps, and perhaps as a salve for poison oak rashes. And the Native Americans used the crushed bulbs as a fishing method: the bulbs were thrown into pools or dammed streams and their juices in the water stunned the fish, causing them to float to the surface where they could be picked out by net (without poisoning the fish).

To grow your own soap plant, ask at native plant nurseries and sales.

The bulbs were also cooked by slow roasting in ground-pits: For the Native Americans, they were a good food source of starch. The cooked bulbs contained fiber which could be made into small brushes. The bulbs were made into poultices used on sores. And the thick juice obtained from the cooking was used as a glue to attach feathers to arrowshafts.

The outer fibers of the bulb are coarse and were also used to make brushes as well as to fill mattresses.

There's more to tell, but these important uses of a native wildflower help us to understand the resourcefulness of our ancestors in this area. They knew how to dig below the surface!

Primary reference for this article: Early Uses of California Plants, by Edward K. Balls (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1962).

COYOTE -- *Canis latrans*

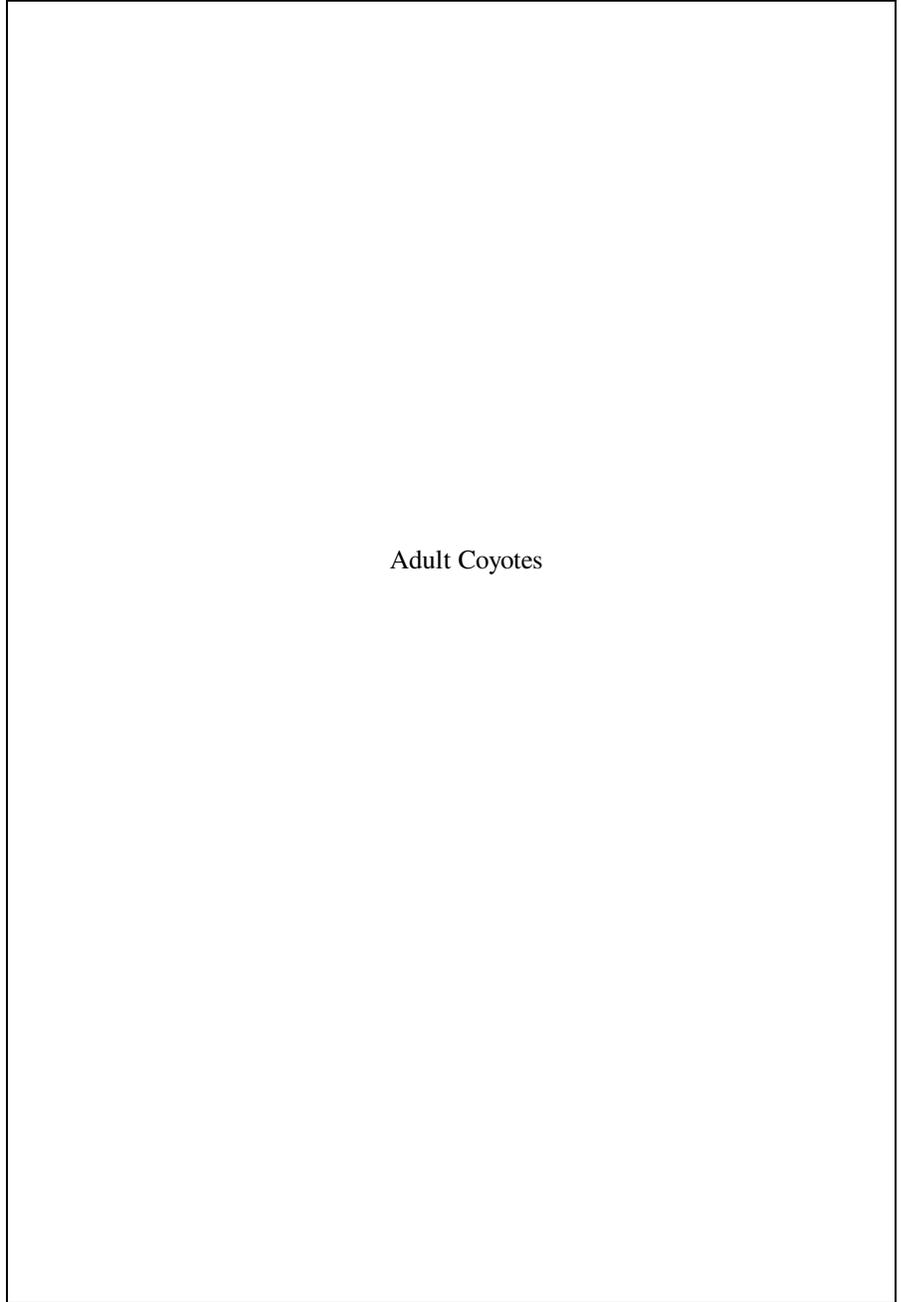
By Kathy Korbholz

There is evidence that coyotes live in Edgewood. Here is some information on these fascinating animals.

The coyote is a medium-sized member of the dog family. Coyotes have pointed, yellowish ears, a slender pointed muzzle and a bushy, rather short tail with a black tip. Their overall color can vary from very pale to very dark, but most are yellowish gray with whitish or buff throats and underparts. There are no color variations between the sexes, but the males are usually larger. Coyotes weigh from 18 to 30 pounds. A rare male can reach 48 pounds. (23" to 26" at the shoulder, 41" to 52" in length without the tail.) A small German shepherd is comparable in height to the coyote but the coyote weighs not much more than a whippet. Coyotes can be active at any time during the day, but are most active at sunset and in the early morning. They may even have periods of activity during the night.

One of the interesting things about coyotes is their variable and flexible social organizations. The basic social unit is the mated pair, but coyotes can live alone

or in certain instances in packs. Rangers in this area report that they don't see packs too often. Once in a while rangers hear a couple vocalizing at dusk. Coyotes live alone when they are sick, disabled or juveniles dispersing to new areas. Occasionally these



Adult Coyotes

From a GUIDE TO ANIMAL TRACKING AND BEHAVIOR by Donald & Lillian Stokes.
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lone animals are in fact healthy adults who may be recruited as new mates or pack members. Coyotes mark their territories by urinating, dropping feces, or rubbing their scent glands at the boundaries of their territories.

Through facial expressions, vocal signals (they have 10 or more gradations of sounds: growls, woofs, barks, howls, yelps) and scent-marking, coyotes communicate with each other. Their behavior ranges along the continuum from aggressive to submissive. Aggressive individuals will hold their heads high, neck arched, with shoulder and neck hairs erect, eyes narrowed, mouth open, and canine teeth exposed. A submissive animal will have head and body low, ears back and tail tucked between its legs.

Coyote Quick Reference

Habitat:	Open grassy areas, brushy areas, woods
Home range:	5-25 square miles
Food:	Mice, rabbits, and other small animals, fruits, berries, deer, carrion, garbage
Mating:	January to April
Gestation:	58 to 63 days
Young born:	March to May
# of young:	5 to 7
# of litters:	1 per year
Independence:	Disperse at 6 to 9 months, but sometimes remain with parents and form a pack

When paired, coyotes may live together for a long time, even for life. They hunt together, raise their family together, and even use the same den site year after year. Coyotes mate in our area in February and March. Females come into estrus for only a short time, 4 to 15 days, once a year. The female is pregnant around 60 days and gives birth to a litter of 5 to 7 pups. Larger litters are born in years where food is more plentiful, like the '93 miracle March.

The pups are born in underground dens. The animals can dig their own dens, but most often enlarge the abandoned dens of other mammals. Dens are found on slopes, in brushy areas, thickets or woods. Coyote parents may move their pups if there is a disturbance.

The pups are blind and helpless at birth. Their eyes open at 8-14 days and they venture out of the den for short periods beginning at 3 weeks. They are weaned

at 3-5 weeks and begin eating solid food regurgitated by the mother or father. Occasionally there are helpers, siblings from the previous year, that assist in raising the young.

The young begin wrestling with each other at an early age. At about 4 to 5 weeks they begin more serious fighting in order to establish a dominance order. Fighting is gradually replaced by the displays which communicate dominance or submission. Once these roles are established, there is a decrease in fighting and an increase in playing. They play much like domestic puppies, pawing at each other's faces, "bowing" and wagging their tails.

When the pups are 2 to 3 months old, they begin to make forays on their own. At 5 months they can hunt on their own, and somewhere between 6 to 9 months they begin to disperse.

Usually we are not lucky enough to see the animals, just the clues they leave behind. In wet weather evidence of coyotes in the area may be the tracks they leave. The tracks are generally oval with 4 toes with claws. The larger front track is 2.25" to 2.75" inches long. It looks similar to tracks made by small dogs like the cocker. Coyotes do have more of a tendency to perfect-step than dogs do and they demonstrate more cunning and awareness of their environment. Another difference between coyote and domestic dog tracks is the distance between strides. The dog will be about 10 to 12, while the coyote will be 14 to 16 inches.

The track pattern of the fox and the coyote is a nearly straight line of neat prints in which the hind feet step exactly into the track of the forefeet. The tracks and strides of these two animals are so similar that distinguishing them may be difficult. In general, the fox is a more delicate animal with a narrow straddle, 3 to 4 inches; being light, it makes a shallower impression. The heavier coyote has a larger straddle, 4 to 6 inches, and makes a deeper impression. The trails of the fox and coyote also generally portray a keen awareness of environment, a directness of intent and no wasted energy.

Coyotes are opportunistic omnivores. They eat mice, rabbits, other small animals, insects, lizards, frogs,

fruits, berries and along urban fringes, domestic livestock and/or garbage. Often the only sign a hiker sees of the local coyote population is the scat they leave along the trail. Coyote scat are difficult to recognize from fox scat. Coyote can be distinguished primarily by their size - those 3/4" or more and greater than 4" are probably coyote. Scat change seasonally -- during the summer and fall they have more berries. During winter and spring you will often find more small animal bones. Scat usually crumble apart in a few days. Finding scat on the trail indicates a coyote has been in the area recently.

Hikers often ask why scat are found on the trail. The rangers propose two theories. First, coyotes use the trails because they are easier to navigate; the same reason hikers remain on the trails instead of trying to go cross-country. Second, trails make excellent natural territorial boundaries. As such, coyotes use scat to mark them. Hopefully, this information will enrich your hiking experience at Edgewood.

Tracks

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Primary reference for this article: Animal Tracking and Behavior, by Donald & Lillian Stokes (Little, Brown and Company, 1987).



FOCUS ON...CAROLYN CURTIS

By Laverne Rabinowitz

Carolyn Curtis has been serving as the Coordinator of the Friends of Edgewood since its founding, and coordinated the major and varied efforts to preserve the Park for many years. She's savoring the victory these days (and the relief) yet hasn't let the fact that her guard can now be let down relieve her from planning, wishing and working for further improvement to the Preserve and its use.

Her immediate wishes for Edgewood are for a full-time ranger to patrol the open space and for better signs. With County funding being cut, she says, fulfillment of these goals may depend on a large increase in membership of the Friends of Edgewood!

Carolyn came to champion Edgewood both through her membership in the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) and out of a firsthand familiarity with the uniqueness of the park gained from many visits per week when she lived in Emerald Hills adjacent to Edgewood in the mid-1980's.

But there's much in her background that made her uniquely suited for the role she assumed as coordinator. A native of the Chicago area, Carolyn first came to California on a cross-country bike trip in 1969, fell in love with the Napa Valley, and returned in 1970 to live there. She and her husband worked in the wine industry and Carolyn also taught German at Napa Junior College and a parochial school. She had always had a love for wildflowers, but had never known much about them. Living next to an open space in the Napa Valley, she taught herself, together with a friend who had a degree in botany, how to identify the plants she saw. Her interest led her to join the CNPS chapter there in the mid-1970's and her interest and knowledge have only increased.

Photo not available

Carolyn was a staffer for 18 months on a congressional campaign in 1979-80, then moved to the Redwood City area and worked in marketing for a large modem company until laid off in 1985, whereupon she began to pursue full-time her skills as a technical writer. She continues to work as a free-lance technical writer in the electronics industry. She joined CNPS' Santa Clara Valley Chapter on moving to our area but didn't become active there until 1984. The early 1980's had seen the first big fight for a golf course, culminating in the CNPS lawsuit against the County over its deficient Environmental Impact Report. When the subject heated up again in 1987, she served on the CNPS Edgewood Park Committee. This phase of the struggle ended in spring 1988, when the San Mateo County Supervisors began to pursue putting the golf course on San Francisco watershed.

When in 1991 the San Francisco Supervisors voted against allowing San Mateo County to use SF watershed land for its new golf course, Edgewood was again proposed as the preferred site. At this point the Edgewood Park Committee decided immediately to broaden its group of Edgewood supporters and to start a grassroots petition drive. At the end of the battle, the Save Edgewood Park Coalition consisted of 43 organizations and 12 businesses. With 100 park users as volunteers 11,000 signatures were obtained between September

1991 and May 1992* and countless letters and telephone calls directed to supervisors and other local officials. Carolyn estimates that the drive often took 20 hours a week of her time! But, she says it was "the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life, and I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world. All the people [who worked on it] were so grand."

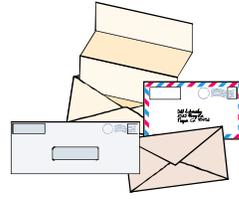
She is writing a journal article and planning a book on the Edgewood vs. Golf Course saga. The account should be inspiring for its example of how grassroots efforts can and do win out over seemingly more powerful interests.

It's clear that Edgewood is an open space Carolyn loves. She has several "favorite parts" of the park depending on the season, but she especially loves the Sylvan Trail in early spring when Solomon's seal blooms along the wooded paths and hound's tongue and Indian warrior combine with their beautiful sky blues and maroon reds. She likes the areas where one passes from one zone to another--e.g., from woods to grasslands; and the Clarkia Trail's spring-blooming yerba santa and sticky monkey flowers and the silvery foliage are delightful to her. Farther down the Clarkia Trail she loves the orange lichens and the *Melica californica* grass like "bursts of fireworks" in the rocks. And of course, she loves the carpets of flowers in April and in June on the serpentine grasslands.

It may seem superfluous to say that Carolyn has other interests (where does she find the time!). Nevertheless, in addition to a very big role in CNPS this year (as VP for programs) and next year (as President-elect), she sings alto with the California Bach Society, enjoys growing native plants and vegetables, and continues with her love of bicycling. It's clear that the fight for Edgewood would have had many supporters on its own merits, but it's also

*Though the Supervisors voted in May 1992 to declare the park a natural preserve and the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission concurred, the issue was resurrected in August when Supervisor Nolan proposed a new feasibility study for 1/3 of the park and was not laid to rest until August 1993 with the amendment of the Joint Powers Agreement and declaration of the Edgewood Natural Preserve.

clear (to this writer, at least) that it might not have been fought so brilliantly nor won so satisfactorily without the dedication of Carolyn Curtis. Hats off to you, Carolyn!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DONATION (continued from page 1)

ELHA organizes the Explore the Edge event to promote community spirit and participation, and to raise funds to protect and preserve Edgewood Natural Preserve. We extend our heartfelt thanks to ELHA for their time and effort in organizing this event, and for their donation to our organization. We also wish to thank the following merchants who contributed gifts and discounts for the raffle:

- ◆ See's Candies, Inc. (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Max's (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Redwood Cyclery (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Pack and Mail Express (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Taqueria Una Mas (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Dress Barn (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ The Runner's High (Menlo Park)
- ◆ Fresh Choice (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Long's Drugs (Sequoia Station)
- ◆ Woodside Bakery and Cafe (Woodside)
- ◆ Robert's Market (Woodside)
- ◆ Canyon Inn Restaurant (Redwood City)
- ◆ Redwood Cafe & Spice Co. (Redwood City)
- ◆ Syufy Enterprises (Redwood City)
- ◆ Peninsula Covenant Church Community Center (Redwood City).

REVEGETATION PROJECT UPDATE

Success! 95% of the *Stipa pulchra* (purple needlegrass, or, to use the up-to-date scientific name, *Nassella pulchra*) plants that the revegetation group put in this spring survived and set seed. Chris Romano is currently growing more from seed gathered at Edgewood for planting in a more ambitious project next season.

In the meantime, the group is planning to visit at least one other local revegetation project. To get involved in this fascinating and rewarding project, call Susan Sommers.

June 6, 1994

On behalf of the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department, let me express our appreciation for your recent project work at Edgewood Park and Preserve.

National Trails Day could not have presented a better opportunity for volunteer organizations like yours to provide assistance to our ranger staff. Efforts such as these reflect the cooperative nature which will be a key to future endeavors.

Staff has reported to me that with your assistance, an approximate 325 feet of habitat barrier was installed along the Serpentine Loop Trail in an effort to both protect sensitive habitat and provide an opportunity for restoration of damage caused in the past. The time spent by you and your volunteers will hopefully speak well to those who follow.

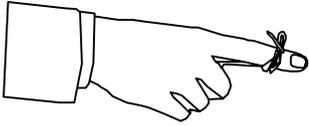
Again, let me express our deepest thanks for your genuine interest in managing Edgewood for our heritage.

Respectfully,

Patrick H. Sanchez, Director
Parks and Recreation Division
Environmental Services Agency
County of San Mateo

ARTICLES NEEDED

Would you be interested in writing an article on your favorite plants, animals, or sites in the Preserve? Please send articles, or suggestions for articles, to the newsletter committee at the return address on the back of this newsletter. For details, please contact Bill Korbholz. Deadline for submitting articles for the October issue: October 1.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- ☐ **Saturday, September 10.** *Nature Walk through Edgewood.* Roger Myers will lead a nature walk through Edgewood Natural Preserve, focusing on the plants, animals, and geology of the region. Roger is a docent with the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, and specializes in geology and herpetology. His walks are always entertaining, informative, and popular. The walk will start at 10 a.m. at the Edgewood Road Park and Ride and will last about 3½ hours. Bring water and a picnic lunch.
- ☐ **Thursday, September 15.** *Docent Training Kickoff.* Once again this year, the Friends of Edgewood and the California Native Plant Society will cosponsor training for those interested in being

docents or roving naturalists in Edgewood Natural Preserve. The 5 training sessions will run from September through next February. For more information, call John Allen.

- ☐ **Sunday, October 16.** *Friends of Edgewood Annual Meeting and Potluck Picnic.* Join your fellow Edgewood Explorers and make new friends at this afternoon of food and fun. The merriment will run from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Old Stage Day Camp. Bring a dish (preferably with food on it) to share. For more information, contact Carolyn Curtis.

- ☐ **Date To Be Determined.** *Trail Patrol Training Kickoff.* The purpose of the newly formed Edgewood Trail Patrol is to protect the Preserve for the maximum enjoyment of visitors. For more information about joining this volunteer group, please call Lee Franks.

The Edgewood Explorer is published four times yearly by the Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to keeping Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve a place where all can enjoy the natural beauty and habitat. The newsletter is produced by the interim Publishing Committee: Carolyn Curtis, Bill Korbholz, Laverne Rabinowitz, and Angela Sutton. To submit articles or suggestions, contact Bill Korbholz.

Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
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