Chances are, you have never thought of your garden — indeed, of all of the space on your property — as a wildlife preserve that represents the last chance we have for sustaining plants and animals that were once common throughout the U.S. But that is exactly the role our suburban landscapes are now playing and will play even more in the near future.

Doug Tallamy  
[http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/gardening-for-life.html](http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/gardening-for-life.html)

Judith will describe what she has learned in over 35 years of work in the field of backyard restoration gardening. Topics will include using models from the wild, becoming a refuge for California's threatened annual and perennial wildflowers and their associated insects, as well as lawn conversion. She is a beloved award-winning author and proprietor of Larner Seeds, specializing in California's native plants and backyard habitat restoration. As well as being a wildland seed-collector and propagator, she has designed, installed, and consulted for habitat restoration gardens throughout northern California. The Larner Seeds website and seed listings contain a large amount of information on California’s native plants.

http://www.larnerseeds.com

Her one and a half acre garden of coastal native plants surrounding the Larner Seeds Garden Shop in Bolinas is the scene of many workshops and open houses, and most importantly, a seed grow-out location and textbook for deeper understanding of California’s native plants. Lowry has talked on these topics at numerous events throughout the State.

Lowry is the award-winning author of three books, **Gardening with a Wild Heart**, and **The Landscaping Ideas of Jays**, both published by UC Press, and most recently, **California Foraging**, published by Timber Press.

**NOTE:** This is a free event open to the public, though, of course, donations are greatly appreciated.

**Other Events**

**April 23 & 24:** Anderson Valley Wildflower Show, 10am–4pm, Boonville Fairgrounds  
**April 28:** Sanhedrin Chapter Board Meeting, 6:30pm, Ukiah Garden Clubhouse  
**April 29 & 30:** Mendocino College Plant Sale, 9am–5pm
**Fieldtrips**

**March 26, Saturday - An Early Spring Walk at Low Gap Park, Ukiah**
Officially spring is here! We’ll walk the same lower trails as the month before to see how spring is progressing this year. Again we'll take time to identify the wildflowers and check out field guides but mostly the walk is about getting out and celebrating the gifts of spring. Dress appropriately for the weather with good walking shoes. Led by Cathy Monroe 485-8249, hike goes from 10am – noon. Call if heavy rain is forecasted.

**April 2, Saturday - Low Gap Park Annual Botany Inventory**
Mark Albert leads the early spring plant inventory along the trails at Low Gap Park, aimed at accurately identifying our local spring wildflowers and polishing up our botany skills. Everyone will receive a 9-page detailed list of plants that have bloomed during the first week of April in Low Gap Park over the last 33 years! We take the time to find the scientific plant names and try to keep up with the current taxonomy. Meet at the parking lot, opposite Ukiah High School on Low Gap Road at 9 AM. Bring a light lunch and hand lens. We’ll also pull out some escaped exotic French Broom, monitor the changes in the park, and check out the status of the vernal pool and the disturbed semaphore grass. For more information, call Mark at (707) 463-8672. If you come late, the group is easy to find as we botanize from the parking lot to the entrance sign for awhile and then up the path to the left at the entrance sign. Call to confirm if heavy rain is in the forecast.

**April 16, Saturday – Twining Ranch Walk**
This will be a leisurely walk. We will walk up Red Barn creek, climb up a steep slope to a big vernal pool and on to Split Rock about 400 feet of elevation gain. At some point we will stop for lunch, either at the vernal pool or at Split Rock. Twining Ranch has a lot of serpentine soil, so we will see a number of serpentine adapted plants. Bring a lunch, sunscreen, water, hand lens (if desired) to look at plant structures, and camera, as well as sturdy walking shoes and weather appropriate clothing. The hike will take about 4 hours but there are a variety of points where people can turn back and return to the parking area.

**Where and When:** We start at Oracle Oak Arena’s Howell Creek entrance. Look for the sign about 2 miles south of Talmage on Old River Road. Meet at 10am.

**April 17, Sunday: Big Canyon Creek, after the Valley fire**
This trip offers a splendid opportunity to observe plant response following the 2015 Valley fire in Lake County. Big Canyon Creek lies in a remote area between Hwy 175 and Hwy 29. Its headwaters and upper tributaries flow from the northern and eastern flanks of Bogg’s Mountain, then join the main stem in a winding southeasterly direction meeting Putah Creek a few miles north of Middletown. Putah Creek eventually empties into Lake Berryessa. From Middletown, we’ll drive up Big Canyon Road (good condition dirt road with potholes) about 8 miles to explore areas of chaparral, grassland, riparian, maybe serpentine, oak woodlands, mixed coniferous forest, and adjacent ecotones (which all burned). Tom Moran is our host for the day and is a third generation owner of the property.

Expect 1.5 hours from Ukiah to Middletown; take Hwy 20 to Hwy 29, then Hwy 175 to Middletown. We’ll rendezvous at Hardesters Market at 21088 Calistoga Rd. (1 block north of Hwy 175 and 29 intersection) around 10am. Carpoolers from Ukiah meet in the Orchard Plaza parking area in front of CVS at 8am. Trip leaders: Kerry Heise (707-462-4533) and John Nickerson.

**May 1, Sunday, 9:15am-12:30pm: Cherry Creek Ranch, north of Willits**
This walk will take place at the northern edge of Cherry Creek Ranches just east of highway 101 about 12 miles north of Willits. This lovely property is located at about 2,000 ft. elevation and includes a large north facing California oatgrass prairie, moist swales supporting a number of wildflowers including short-spurred plectritus, death camas, blue-eyed Mary and most likely Pacific drop-wort, and a south facing hillside with a large stand of Bird's eye gilia. We'll also explore the boundary line with the neighboring cattle ranch to compare differences between grazed and ungrazed grasslands. On good wildflower years, the grazed side has large patches of gold fields and butter and eggs, is dappled with owls clover and hosts large flowered star tulip. Easy walking, but
shoes could get wet in the meadow. Bring water and a lunch. Field trip leader: Geri Hulse-Stephens 707-459-3689 gerihs79@gmail.com.

Directions: It's 1/2 hour drive from Willits. Take 101 North 12 miles past Willits. Continue on 101 for 2 miles past the turnoff to 162/Covelo and turn off at the rest stop sign on the right. The rest stop is the last place for "civilized" bathrooms. As you turn off the freeway immediately on the left is a locked gate. Meet at the gate by 9:15. A gate-keeper will be there from 9 - 9:15. You will need the 4 digit gate combo to open it if you are late. Call Lyn Talkovsky at 707-321-3214 if you are locked out. Drive thru the gate and up Cherry Creek road 2 miles. You'll come to Turkey Run on the left, just opposite a pond. Please park at the intersection of Cherry Creek and Turkey Run and walk up Turkey Run. Carpools from Ukiah meet at CVS parking lot, on far west side of lot, at 8:00 AM. Carpools from Willits: Meeting place to be determined.

May 8, Sunday, 10am-2pm: Mothers' Day Walk at McLaughlin Reserve, Lake County
Join us for a field trip to the McLaughlin Reserve which is located near the town of Lower Lake in Lake County. The Reserve protects and manages serpentine ecosystems, including serpentine "grasslands" and "barrens" dominated by native forbs. While excellent wildflower displays are the norm at the McLaughlin Reserve, this year we anticipate stunning displays due to the combination of fires that burned the region in August of last year, and good rains. Reserve directors will lead us to locations with good flower displays and interesting species. Depending on phenology, we may find some of the serpentine endemic "barrens" species flowering.

To register, call Gail at 707-462-2018 or email: sanhedrincnps@gmail.com. Make sure you give us your phone number and email, so we can send you directions. Directions will be provided a few days before the event to those who have registered. Ukiah Carpool: meet at CVS parking lot along Orchard St. by 8:00 a.m. Bring: Water, sunhat, bag lunch, good walking shoes. There are bathroom facilities at the Reserve. If you have any additional questions, email Cathy Koehler at the Reserve: koehler@ucdavis.edu. Or try calling: 707-995-9005.

May 14, Saturday, 10am-12pm: Wildflower Wander at the UC Hopland Research and Extension Center
Enjoy a stroll around the Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) to identify spring wildflowers. The first two hours of the hike (10am-12pm) will suit those new to the world of plant identification. For those who wish to delve a little deeper, we will continue to an afternoon session after lunch, finishing at 2 pm. Heavy rain will cancel this trip. Led by Peter Warner, Botanist & Naturalist. Bring a packed lunch, water, sun protection, sturdy shoes. Sorry, no dogs due to the management of sheep with guard animals on this site.

Registration online required: Register at the Hopland Research Extension Center website, http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=17632
Meet at the Rod Shippey Building at HREC at 10am or meet at CVS in Ukiah to carpool by 9:15. Contact Hannah Bird at HREC with any questions: (707) 744-1424 ext 105 hbird@ucanr.edu

Directions: From downtown Hopland (intersection of Highways 101 and 175), take Highway 175 east toward Lakeport. Cross the Russian River and at the traffic circle take the second exit onto Old River Road (also marked "Road 201"). Next, turn right onto University Road (there is a UC sign at the intersection). Drive up University Road for approximately 3.5 miles, you will see signs for Rod Shippey Hall parking.
The names for wildflowers can often add to their delight and give you some insight for a closer look. I remember the pleasure of finally seeing shooting stars when we moved to Mendocino County. Their name fits them so well, flowers clustered on thin stalks with their brilliant magenta petals swept back from their pointed descending beaks. Along with mission bells, hound’s tongue, and warrior’s plume, they are wonderful, early harbingers of spring that have been particularly lush this year. They will soon to be passing as other flowers arrive, many also with lively names – pussy ears, gold fields, fawn lily, Chinese houses, owl’s clover ( look for the owls), Diogenes’ lantern, mule ears, and Ithuriel’s spear. Such a rich procession to rediscover that we don’t overly dwell on the ones lost in spring’s progression, still looking forward to mariposa lilies, red ribbons, firecracker flowers, and the magenta swatches of farewell-to-spring.

The firecracker flower’s common name is especially appropriate. The umbels of scarlet tubular flowers on its tall stalks look much like the clusters of red Chinese firecrackers that my father kept hidden away in his desk for special occasions. Green recurved ends of the flowers add to the effect by looking like they have exploded open. Blooming from May – July it is found in the redwood forest and mixed evergreen communities of Mendocino County up barely into Southern Oregon. It is one of the unique flowers of the North Coast and Klamath Ranges. Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds visit the flowers.

Several synonyms are listed for its Latin name. According to an account in Popular Studies of California Wildflowers, 1920, this wildflower was discovered to the botanical world in Trinity County by Dr. Alfonso Wood in 1867 when asking a stagecoach driver about the local flora. The driver pointed out Ida May’s Fire Crackers, a name referring to his small daughter because she was particularly fond of them. Wood, thinking he had found a new genus, applied the name Brevoortia ida-maia. The specific epitaph both honors the child’s name and links the flowers blooming time during the ides of May (May 15). The distinction of Dichelostemma into a separate genus and its renaming has brought back the firecracker flower to Ida-May. The Latin name has seen at least 8 iterations by various botanists over a century and a half. In chronological order these are:

Brevoortia ida-maia, B. coccinea, B. venusta, Brodiaea coccinea, B. ida-maia, B. venusta, Dichelostemma venustum, and D. ida-maia.

Firecracker flowers will sometimes naturally cross with ookow (D. congestum), or with wild hyacinth (D. multiflorum), producing a striking hybrid with raspberry pink tubular petals a bit shorter and wider than D. ida-maia with creamy recurved white tips. These sporadic hybrids have been named the rose firecracker.
(Dichelostemma venustum). One place to look for them is back on the far northeastern edge of the new addition of Montgomery Woods up the trail following Pruitt Creek.

Soon after its discovery the firecracker flower became a popular garden plant though it was sometimes referred to as the Vegetable Firecracker. (I’m sure glad the vegetable part got dropped – makes me think of zucchini.) Its corms are widely available through various bulb catalogs such as John Scheepers and Van Engelen, who also carry the hybrid form called Pink Diamond. Annie’s Annuals claims to have had great success with her firecracker flowers which have multiplied through off-setting corms. Like many California wildflowers they do not tolerate summer watering and need good draining soil. I have started some from seed but have not found the right conditions to establish them in my garden. So, instead, I look forward to finding them again this year where nature plants them best in some sunny spot in our surrounding woods.