

# Spring Edition Newsletter - April 2025

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## *Let's Celebrate with Babies and Blossoms!*

**Dwelling on Carbon Plot**



**Elegant Clarkia (seedling)**



**Elegant Clarkia (blossom)**



**Caterpillar Chow seedlings: Caterpillar Phacelia, Arroyo Lupine, and Bladderpod.**

Thank you to Rosalind of Dwelling on Carbon, Ken and Lorien of Caterpillar Chow, and Felicia of Julian for nurturing these baby plants and helping us all to keep San Diego sustainably Wild! Come visit us at one of our free events and go home with your very own seedling :)

## *Extra! Vote for our San Diego Official Flower Today!*

Our friends at the San Diego Bird Alliance have taken on the fabulous task of convincing the City of San Diego to update our official city flower. The "Your City, Your Flower" initiative aims to

replace the non-native carnation with a native flower to represent our vibrant city. Amending San Diego's official city flower to a native flowering species supports local ecosystems to safeguard our precious biodiversity, and will give us an icon that doesn't remind us of a middle school Valentine's Day dance :) San Diego is the most biodiverse county in the nation, and it's time for our city flower to reflect that!

Voting is officially open, so don't miss your chance to make your voice heard and vote on the new official flower of San Diego. We started with 8 contenders and the first round of voting narrowed the options down to these Final Four:

- Bush Sunflower v. California Wild Rose
- Blue-eyed Grass v. California Buckwheat

Learn more and cast your vote by **April 7** here: [Vote Now!](#)

A graphic titled "FLORAL FACEOFF YOUR CITY, YOUR FLOWER" set against a dark teal background. At the top center is the San Diego Bird Alliance logo, which features a stylized bird in flight within a circular frame. Below the logo, four flower images are arranged in a 2x2 grid, connected by white lines. The top-left image is a yellow Bush Sunflower, the top-right is a pink California Wild Rose, the bottom-left is a purple Blue-eyed Grass, and the bottom-right is a white California Buckwheat. Each image has a white label at the bottom with the flower's name in all caps. In the center of the bottom row, between the Blue-eyed Grass and California Buckwheat images, is a white button with the text "Vote Now!" in a bold, sans-serif font. The central text "FLORAL FACEOFF" is in a large, bold, dark teal font, and "YOUR CITY, YOUR FLOWER" is in a smaller, all-caps, dark teal font below it.

**SAN DIEGO BIRD ALLIANCE**

**BUSH SUNFLOWER**

**CALIFORNIA WILD ROSE**

**FLORAL FACEOFF**  
**YOUR CITY, YOUR FLOWER**

**BLUE-EYED GRASS**

**Vote Now!**

**CALIFORNIA BUCKWHEAT**

***Spotlight on Milkweed with Ken: *Asclepias erosa* (Desert Milkweed)***

See these species in the wild with Ken on our April 13th Milkweed Hike!

"San Diego is the most biologically diverse county in the nation, which should come as no surprise to those familiar with its multiple climate profiles and varied geographical features





coupled with its location in the Pacific . In our county, you can find vast desert valleys and steppes, mountainous forests, and rolling foothills along with coastal arroyos, open spaces, and deep estuary lagoons. Because of this ecological diversity we can find 9 species of milkweed that are native to San Diego County!

Today we're going to talk about the high desert star, *Asclepias erosa*, commonly known as desert milkweed. This milkweed grows along the edges of high desert

washes and streams, typically where the soil has been disturbed. It grows up to 7 feet tall in a triangular shape with larger leaves at the bottom and smaller ones at the tip. The flowers are about 1.5 cm in diameter and are a pleasant yellow. The foliage is leathery looking without hairs and is a yellow-green color, lighter on the edges and deepening in green as you reach the veins. The leaves can reach over 12" in length in older plants. The seed pods are equally massive, resembling leathery fairy slippers roughly 10cm long and full of seeds that are about 8mm. When they pop open the air dries out their fluffy parachutes and they drift across the landscape in the wild desert winds that are a hallmark of their habitat.



Plants senesce in late summer and return when rains and warm temperatures take the chill out of the winter air. By late spring they are typically alive with blooms and life from every corner of the desert, feeding a wide variety of ants, wasps, flies, and butterflies. Many birds also take advantage of the flowers and insects that are drawn to these plants and when in bloom they're often the hub of activity in these seemingly desolate arid landscapes.

You can also find milkweed bugs, cobalt beetles, and yellow aphids on these plants as well as many lizards and rodents eating the bugs. Small mammals and birds consume many of the seeds and even mule deer and longhorn sheep have been spotted munching on the fruits. One can observe the two most common species of *Danaus* on these milkweeds, the Queen and the Monarch butterflies, but these milkweeds absolutely rely on the wasps of the desert for pollination. You can find the ubiquitous Tarantula Hawk frequenting the bloom clusters, as well



as our native carpenter bees, often adorned with golden pollinea like glorious anklets of golden doubloons.

~ Ken Abernathy, Caterpillar Chow Milkweed Nursery

## Recent Successes!

● **Spring Crafting with Hayley!** - We ate well, made new friends, and came home with amazing

souvenirs. “Just a reminder that it’s time to welcome spring with an earthy craft! We’ll be making Witch’s Bells for our doors to keep negative energy out of our sacred spaces.” - Hayley



- **San Altos Ribbon Cutting to celebrate our grant pollinator garden project**





- **Mt. Helix Nature Day Tabling.** Look close to see Caterpillar Chow right across the way :)



## ***Upcoming Events - FREE! - (click for details and more events)***

- Apr 12th - South Bay Earth Day
- Apr 13th - Milkweed Hike w/Ken
- April 19th - Plant and Pollinator workshop - if you haven't been to this talk by Elena, you should know that last time she gave it, the host said it as their favorite workshop of the year.
- April 26th - San Altos Elementary Festival
- May 5th - Quarterly Chapter Meeting
- May 3rd - Claremont Garden Tour
- May 10th - Old Town Planting Party
- May 17th - Polyculture Lawn talk w/Roz





## You Can Help save monarchs and other pollinators

Our very own Chelsea is also a key supporter of monarch butterflies with the Monarch Fellowship. They are an excellent resource for free milkweed and pollinator plant seeds, if you are interested in sprouting important habitat plants. It doesn't take much to germinate your own native seedlings, which Wild Ones San Diego would be happy to help you distribute. You too can feel the joy of witnessing a new plant sprout and grow, it's truly a magical experience.

"The Monarch Fellowship is a volunteer network of passionate native gardeners and pollinator enthusiasts who grow milkweed and nectar plants that are native to California's diverse regions to give away for free in their communities. We send volunteers or "hubs" free native milkweed and native nectar plant seeds. Volunteers grow and distribute native plants for free. The goal is to help save monarchs, increase the number of native pollinator gardens and encourage neighbors to begin their native gardening journey."

<https://www.monarchfellowship.com/>

