Tours Begin at Jepson Prairie

The Solano Land Trust reports that docent-led tours are scheduled to begin March 9th for Saturdays and Sundays at their Jepson Prairie Preserve, until Mother’s Day. The Preserve (like our Chapter), is named after the famous Vacaville botanist and native plant conservationist, Willis Linn Jepson. The 1,566-acre property is a local example of vernal pool habitats and bunchgrass prairies that once filled the Central Valley in winter and spring.

The docent-led hikes are free, and begin at 10:00 AM in the Preserve’s parking lot at 4845 Cook Lane, Dixon. Docents for these hikes are volunteers trained by scientist from UC Davis who work for the University of California Natural Reserve System.

If your schedule does not permit participation in the docent-led hikes, consider taking the self-guided hike offered at the Preserve. CNPS offers the Jepson Prairie Preserve Handbook that can be used as a reference and field guide.

Last year, winter rains produced a spectacular display of wildflowers at the Preserve in April, which was documented on our website by some Jepson Chapter members who took the Preserve’s self-guided hike. This winter’s rains are likely to produce a similar experience.

Finally, the Trust has also announced it will be breaking ground on its Visitor Center Project at the Preserve on Friday, March 15. At this event, volunteers are requested to help install new benches that are part of the Visitor Center Project. The Jepson Chapter donated $2,000 to the Trust last year to help with this project. To help, please contact Michelle at michelle@solanolandtrust.org.
SAVE THE DATE
April 26, 2019
Volunteer Work Day
Native Plant Nursery
in Vallejo
10 AM to Noon

The nursery is located at Vallejo Flood and Wastewater District, a gated facility. RSVP to Barbara at breiley45@yahoo.com.

Nature Lovers Convene at Flyway Festival
Last month, the annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival was held at Mare Island for the 24th time. Each year, wildlife enthusiasts from throughout the Bay Area gather in mid-February, to celebrate the region’s natural beauty. In between guided hikes and presentation on local nature, visitors can view exhibits by artists, environmental organizations and recreational businesses.

The Jepson Chapter sponsors an exhibit every year. At our table we offer native plants from our nursery and information on our local activities. It is also a good opportunity to catch-up on the activities of the other conservation organizations in our area. This event is a bright spot in the dead of winter and we’ll be back again next year, for the 25th time.

Figure 2: Jepson Chapter exhibit table at the 24th Annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
Now is the Time to Plant a Native Meadow

February and March are the best times to plant a native meadow on your property, according to the Solano Resource Conservation District (RCD), which has prepared a flyer on how to do it yourself. The flyer provides details on the native plant species appropriate for low-water meadows in Solano County and the steps for installation.

You can see how a native meadow looks by going to the demonstration meadow behind the Three Oaks Community Center at 1100 Alamo Drive in Vacaville. This meadow was built in 2016 using five species of native grasses and sedges, providing the look of a lawn but with much less water. Solano RCD also holds workshops on how to replace water-hungry turf laws with a native plants landscape. Call 707-678-1655x101 for more information.

Plant of the Month
Potentilla gracilis (Northwest cinquefoil)

This herbaceous perennial grows to about 1’ high with yellow 1” flowers on multiple upright stalks above clumps of palmate medium green basal leaves divided into toothed, lanceolate, finger-like leaflets. Potentilla likes full sun and regular water; it will not grow in full shade. Established plants have respectable drought tolerance. It flowers in July and dies back some in winter. The deer-resistant Potentilla is easy to grow and will reseed under optimum growing conditions. It is a good meadow plant, being found in wetlands and non-wetlands. Native to mixed-evergreen forest, Northern Oak woodland and Coastal Prairie from British Columbia to San Diego. This plant will be available at the Spring Plant Sale on May 4th.

Figure 3: Full view (left) and close-up (right) of Potentilla gracilis (Northwest cinquefoil)