



*Mardi is on the right.*

This year's Hoover award recipient has enriched our chapter in many ways. Her enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, and love of native plants, especially those of San Luis Obispo, are shared and appreciated by everyone that has met with her, be it a first-time field trip attendee or one of our botanical experts.

This year's recipient, Mardi Niles, became our Field Trip chair in 2003. We have had excellent field trips planned and very rewarding turnouts in the years that she has been organizing this very important part of our chapter. Mardi takes great care to plan her walks and line up the leaders well in advance. That she really cares about the people who attend the walks is obvious. Hike leaders have told us how much they appreciate her organization and the assistance she provides when needed.

The field trips have included reliable favorites, as well as excursions to places that are unusual and unique. We've been to the Chimineas Ranch, The Indians in Monterey County, Wind Wolves Preserve southeast of the Carrizo, as well as to private landowner holdings. It is not unusual to have 20-40 people come for field trips to

Coreopsis Hill, the hike up Cerro Alto, and the Cambria forest Fungal Foray. Last year, Mardi planned a first-ever garden tour, featuring 4 South County native plant home gardens of various types and sizes - complete with horticultural advice. It's overwhelming success means another garden tour to a different area for this year.

Mardi's 'touch' is also seen in many other ways. A couple of years ago, she started enhancing our monthly meetings by setting up a Refreshment Table, complete with flowers or a plant decoration that helps get the conversation started with people who are new to the meetings. The ideas and information shared during this pre-program time often leads to Mardi tracking down a plant needed or looking for a resource for someone.

Last May, gallery space at Linnea's café in San Luis was home to a month long exhibit of 20 San Luis Obispo native plant portraits that were drawn by Mardi. Postcards of some portraits can be found on our sales table.

Mardi developed a children's plant identification game used at our education booth, which she often volunteers to help staff. In 2004 and 2005, she made trips to the Nipomo mesa to rescue plants about to be bulldozed for development, and then found homes for them.

Whether it was working on Santa Lucia fir propagation efforts, or watching a population of Pismo clarkia, or arranging spur-of-the moment trips for botanists to see unique populations of plants, Mardi's commitment to native plants and her many, many activities have made all our lives richer, and the mission of our chapter more accessible to the public in general.

And so, tonight we honor Mardi Niles as our Hoover Award recipient.