The Shasta Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS-SC) will ring in spring with its 5th annual garden tour. On Saturday, May 2, from 10 AM to 4 PM, you will have the opportunity to meander down paths lined with aromatic blue sage, catch a glimpse of pipevine swallowtail butterflies in flight, and mingle with other nature lovers under majestic native oaks. The garden tour will feature three private residential gardens and two public gardens.

These gardens represent a broad spectrum of native plant habitats located within the greater Redding area and within the somewhat diverse geographical areas of Shasta County. Garden enthusiasts will find a variety of native plant landscapes at the three private gardens that reflect the varied interests of their owners.

There’s concern that California’s water usage is extreme and not effectively controlled. This situation has been exacerbated by the recent drought years. The CNPS-SC encourages the use of California natives as a smart alternative to high water-demanding plants and lawns. All of the gardens on the tour, which are planted with grasses, shrubs, and perennials, show that native plants offer aesthetically pleasing, water-wise options for any urban residential or business property landscape.

One subdivision-sized residential private garden is an urban wildlife habitat. Owner Amber Galusha removed her lawn five years ago and created a drought-tolerant, chaparral woodland filled a variety of oaks, shrubs, and flowering plants of varying size, shape, color, and scent.

“My front porch has become my office,” said Amber. “The garden wasn’t very interesting or inspiring when it was just lawn, but now it’s home to bees, butterflies, and birds that fill the air with bumble and buzz.”
Amber Galusha’s west Redding garden offers a perfect example of a well-established, frontyard native landscape that is drought tolerant.

A second residential private garden is situated on three and one-half acres just on the west side of town. This garden is spread throughout the oak woodland property and includes a seasonal stream. Amidst the numerous types of native plants and native plant landscapes, an ever-present flock of wild turkeys roams.

One of the public gardens is situated along the Sacramento River. This garden provides a good representation of the native plants that take full sun, are drought tolerant, and thrive year after year.

The mission of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is to increase the public’s awareness, understanding, and appreciation of California’s native flora. In light of the recent years of local drought conditions and subsequent water usage restrictions, California native plant landscapes offer a strong alternative to traditional landscaping. The CNPS garden tour provides both beginning and lifelong gardeners with the information and inspiration needed to create new native gardens, as well as ideas for incorporating complementary native plants into existing landscapes.

The CNPS-Shasta Chapter 2015 garden tour will be held Saturday, May 2, from 10 AM to 4 PM. CNPS-SC members and gardeners will be on hand to answer questions, and native plants and native plant books will be available for purchase at one of the gardens. Tickets will be available in mid-April and can be bought at Wyntour Gardens, Gold Leaf Nursery, and Creekside Gardens, all in Redding. Ticket price per person is $5, which includes admittance to all five gardens.

For more information, or to schedule and interview with Donal Jonio, please call 530/221-4280, or e-mail Donal at dfjorca@charter.net

Michele Driggs’ urban Redding native plant garden landscape is set against a blue oak woodland backdrop. Photo by Donal Jonio.