

Noso-n,

That's an Ohlone greeting that means 'In breath, as it is in Spirit' or 'Life for all living things'. Wouldn't those be wonderful thoughts to share with other people than just the customary hello? The word actually comes from [Mutsun](#), one of eight Ohlone dialects spoken along the central coast of California. While many of us may be familiar with the local tribes of the Bay Area including the [Coast Miwok](#) (now known as the [Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria](#)), the [Ohlone](#) (named the Coastanoan people by the Spanish), the [Yokuts](#), and the [Pomo](#) (which were actually made up of 21 different groups), most standard historical accounts barely scratch the surface of cultural diversity present in California before the arrival of Spanish explorers in 1542. When the Padres of the Franciscan Order established their first mission, San Diego de Alcalá, in 1769 there were about 100 unique tribes or nations inhabiting California's rich and diverse landscape. Between these tribes and nations, more than [120 dialects](#) were spoken and many of them as unintelligible to one another as Chinese is to English and vice versa. Linguistics researchers state that some of these languages are endemic to California (meaning they are unassociated with any other languages spoken around the world).

While some anthropologists estimate the population of native people living west of the Sierra crest in 1769 run as high as 2 million, the most commonly accepted figure by academics is around 300,000. By the time the Mission system of domination, exploitation, conversion to Christianity, acculturation, and outright genocide ended in the early 1800s, over [75% of the native people](#) between San Diego and San Francisco had been wiped out and their cultural traditions nearly destroyed. Most early explorers, scientists, and anthropologists, crudely defined California's indigenous population as a primitive people, even compared to other native tribes and nations across the United States, because they did very little 'agriculture' (specifically the use of irrigation to grow rows of crops for sustenance), wore little to no clothing, and did not have an elaborate written language. [John Muir, and other 'conservationists.'](#) were awestruck by the beauty and abundance of California's oak woodlands, valley grasslands and prairies, and coastal ecosystems describing them as a new 'Eden,' and 'park like' in their openness, and apparent usefulness in their appearance, yet they claimed the native people had very little [involvement in the landscape](#), and more often than not, resorted to an assumption that most native people of California took extra care to 'barely break a branch or twig'. After decades of more thorough [research](#), archeology, and oral tradition, we have come to understand that the native people of California were highly involved in the care and tending of the landscape to create the park like settings of majestic oaks that rained down acorns, and the incredibly abundant prairies and grasslands that were purposefully burned to promote new growth, recharge the soil's fertility, reduce pest populations, and encourage genetic biodiversity. Cultivation of many useful plants was a common practice, and the methods used to promote enhanced growth and diversity included weeding around specific beds of wild crops, careful pruning and coppicing of shrubs and trees, spreading wildflower and wild grain seeds, loosening the soil with digging sticks, and fire to reduce fuel loads and the above mentioned benefits. The sustainable harvest of plants and animals that was able to sustain robust populations of people for over 10,000 years were based on six key variables: season, frequency, appropriate tool, pattern, scale,

and intensity. These practices, known today as [Tradition Ecological Knowledge or TEK](#), was passed down from generation to generation of families by word of mouth and practical experience.

The belief many of these tribes share is that the role humans play in the landscape is not something they choose to do for their benefit, but it is something they must do to properly care for the land, the plants and animals they rely on for food, medicine, shelter, and cultural expression. When humans do not touch the earth with these intentions, they say the plants and animals will go away. In the last 200 years, we have lost over [90% of coastal wetlands](#), and over 95% of inland wetlands, and not surprisingly, about 25% of plants and 55% of animals designated as threatened or endangered species live in wetland habitats. [Coastal forests of Redwood](#) and Douglas fir record some of the fastest growth rates of any forests in the world, any while they once extended from Monterey, CA to Alaska, what remains are fragmented state and national parks - only 5% of the once 2 million acres of old-growth forests that take thousands of years to evolve, and can support thousands more species per individual tree than those found in second and third growth stands. Much of the grassland and prairies that made up 1/4 of the state before 1542 have been converted to overgrazed ranch and pasture, salinated and toxic farmland and feedlots, and increasing human development and infrastructure filled with invasive annual plants that prevent more ecological perennial natives from remaining established. Anyone living in California for over a year know we have tremendously damaging fires that rage through much of the remaining grass lands and pasture throughout the state every year. The intentional burning practiced by the native tribes of California reduced fuel loads and the risk of out of control blazes that burn landscapes beyond their ability to heal themselves. Sadly, while some of the native groups that barely cling to existence in our state have some of their own land, many tribes are still [not federally recognized](#), do not have their own reservations or rights to their native lands, and nearly all treaties made with them in the past [were never ratified](#). We haven't even mentioned the desecration and overt disrespect of [native burial grounds](#) and remains ([Ikea of Emeryville's 'Shellmound St.'](#) address comes to mind).

While this all may sound like a dismal and sobering account of our state's legacy, optimism can be found [in the facts](#) that we know what activities brought about these disasters and outcomes, and that we still have much of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge granted us by the strong survivors of native California culture. We know how to do things differently - better at that, we just need to cooperate and coordinate our efforts to make it happen. Many native-led groups and other scholarly efforts are underway to make the necessary changes towards harnessing TEK for ecological and social gains, as well as work towards reparation and recognition for descendants of native tribes and nations. Some of the native-run non-profit doing this meaningful work include: [The Cultural Conservancy](#), "dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of indigenous cultures and their ancestral lands," the [Indigenous Environmental Network](#), "A network of Indigenous Peoples empowering Indigenous Nations and communities towards sustainable livelihoods, demanding environmental justice and maintaining the Sacred Fire of our traditions", and the [Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival](#) created "to foster the restoration and revival of indigenous California language so that

they may be retained as a permanent part of the living cultures of native California." They each have different volunteer opportunities for those interested. Some restoration work is going on in San Francisco, for example [Ohlone Pocket Park](#). For more general informaion, Karen Strom has compiled a lot of links and resources [here](#).

## **RECENT ECOSF EVENTS**

We recently attended the [Focus the Nation](#) event at San Francisco State University. Much of the discussion there was around large national campaigns for clean, renewable energy, green jobs, and green business. We brought a local, personal perspective and shared the benefits and simplicity of [building a solar oven](#) for heating and cooking out of cardboard, aluminum foil, and a piece of scrap glass that we learned from Joseph Radabaugh's book [Heavens Flame](#), and informative selection from our [Lending Library](#). We brought a brand new [Sun Oven](#), which you can buy on average for about \$250, and quite easily gets up to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (yes, even in San Francisco), and a [homemade solar oven](#), Radabaugh style, which can't get quite as hot, or as quickly, but its practically free, and it heats water, and preheats food with not problem. Joe says if they're made well, they can cook anything you want. You can even start a [small bakery](#) if you really know what you're doing.

We also stopped by a [Jefferson Elementary School garden work day](#) organized by Gerry, one of the parents at Jefferson, and helped them plant dozens of veggio starts donated by a wholesale nursery. While we were there, we added a third coat of [boiled linseed oil](#) to the cob fish to help make the finish more water resistant. We have a few other linseed oil applications to do around the city, so if you'd like to learn more and perhaps volunteer an hour or so to help, please let us know.

The last garden work day at Monroe Elementary School in January brought us to about the completion of the [cob phase](#), now ready to be plastered with an earthen mix of clay and straw mostly for a rough coat. We'll be working on that this Friday, [click here](#) for more details. We also harvested some of the Broccoli and Cauliflower from the garden and served it to the students for lunch (with a little Ranch dressing in case they were to shy to eat it plain and raw).

Perhaps the most exciting thing we did last month was hosting the Pottery Workshop at Baker's Alley on Sat. January 17th. We were blessed to have the expertise, patience, and skill of [Beatrice Bloom](#) to instruct participants on what kind of clay to get for making beautiful and practical [dishware](#), how to wedge clay to prepare it for working, and the simplicity and craft of the pinch, coil, and slab hand build methods. [The Peaceniks](#) were on hand to play some rebellious, thought provoking, folk songs, and Annie, who will be showing how to knit hats and scarves and other things, brought some of [her wares](#). For complete details and photos, check out our [Baker's Alley page](#), and be sure to come to our next event, a Guerrilla Fruit Tree Grafting, Pruning, and Knitting Workshop with Nik Dyer and Annie Katz.

## **UPCOMING ECOSF EVENTS**

Feb. 13th - Friday - 1:30pm-4:30pm : **Monroe Elementary School Garden Work Day** -

- Cob Bench building : [You should see it now!](#) Cob building in inclement weather is a blast and all the better with friends and family and the goal of completing the student's outdoor classroom. If you haven't made it out to a cob event, perhaps this one is the one!
- Enjoy a potluck of local, homegrown, and homemade foods, including solar oven baking if the sun is out! Bring something to share!
- Salad bar gardening : We'll be adding to our salad bar bed we have been planting over the last several months. Learn about crop rotation, succession, and fertilizing for maximum yields and quality.
- Location : [260 Madrid St between Excelsior and Avalon in the Excelsior district.](#)

Feb. 22nd - Sunday- 10am-4pm : **Baker's Alley: Guerilla Grafting, Fruit Tree Pruning, and Knitting Workshop** -

- Guerilla Grafting : With guest ecological designer and farmer Nik Dyer, learn how to graft delicious fruit on city street trees as well as general grafting and pruning techniques for your urban orchard.
- Knitting Workshop in the Living Room: Knitting extraordinaire Annie Katz is offering to teach her knitting skills on how to make your own scarves, hats, and more from natural fibers.
- [Community baking](#) : As always, the oven is fired and available for all your baking needs. Bring something to bake and share, or just a potluck dish and a smile.
- Location : [1390 31<sup>st</sup> Ave between Judah and Irving in the Sunset district.](#)

## **SPECIES OF THE MONTH**

Ceanothus,

## **IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH**

The weather has been quite unusual this time around. Hot days, cold days, windy days, rainy days. We have several native plants that are quite confused, and fruit trees that are still putting out new leaves since the December. A recent [SF Gate article](#) suggests its not just around here, but all over the world. Many plants are confused and not sure if they should put all their energy into growing roots or shoots. One thing is for sure, if you are looking to enhance your garden with any perennial fruit bearing trees and shrubs, now is the time to do so. Most nurseries in and around San Francisco have bareroot fruit trees eager to be planted in your urban homestead. Recent specialized grafting techniques provide 6 on 1 apple trees already trained for [espalier](#), or multi graft plums, pears, and even fruit cocktails (peach, plum, nectarine, and apricot). These are all great options for diversity in a small urban lot. If you have even less space, you might want to consider a [genetic dwarf](#), which don't grow higher than 6 feet, and are great for containers. This is also the time for your blueberries, raspberries, blackberries (and all their hybridizations), currants, grapes, kiwis, figs, persimmons, and more - all which can do well in the right microclimate. If you have trees already in the ground, now is the time to prune them for structure or fruit set if you haven't done so already. If you don't know what you're doing,

consult a good book, call the local [Cooperative Extension](#), or come to our Guerrilla Grafting and Pruning workshop this month at Baker's Alley. If you're not feeling quite so ambitious to plant or prune trees, brassica's like kale, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and mustards do great being planted right now, as well as lettuce, Asian greens, spinach, and direct seeded root crops like carrots, beets, turnips, and radishes. Primrose is a wonderful edible flower that is full of life and color right now and Borage is beginning to burst with edible flowers for you and the bees if it re-sprouted from last year's seeds. For detailed information on grafting if you can't make it to the workshop, [click here](#).

Whatever you do this month, make it personal, make it local, and make it happen. Maybe something in this newsletter sparked your interest, or presented something you don't agree with. Let us know your thoughts! We always appreciate feedback, suggestions, and comments so email them to [info@eco-sf.org](mailto:info@eco-sf.org).

[Suururu-me](#),

(thank you - in Mutsun)

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