



LOS TRANCOS WOODS & VISTA VERDE Newsletter – April / May 2012

Banish the Broom or Stifle the Stars

I am not talking about the “sweep the kitchen” broom or the “flying” broom. And I am not talking about the stars “in the sky” or stars “in your eyes.” I am talking about those ever spreading, fire loving, native plant suppressant, invasive plants called French broom (*Genista monspessulana*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and Star Thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*). With these fresh winter rains the soil has softened and it is the perfect time to purge the yard of these plants. Huge progress has been made on ridding the neighborhood of these invasive plants; however, the brilliant yellow flowers of Broom are still popping out in unexpected places.

You can recognize the French Broom by the three petaled leaf that is ubiquitous on the stems. They are a pale green color and remain on the stems all year. In contrast the Scotch Broom also has a three petaled leaf but the leaves are darker green and typically are not prominent until after the plant flowers. The brilliant yellow pea-like flower sets them apart from other wild plants that you see. The Scotch Broom flower is larger than the French Broom flower. The bushes can grow from 3 ft. to 5 ft. tall for Scotch Broom and 3-7 ft. tall for French Broom.

The Star Thistle season is not yet upon us as they will have their flowering period in early to midsummer. This annual develops a long taproot which is how it sucks in the water and outcompetes the other annuals. Star Thistle has fuzzy light green leaves that form a basal rosette.

All these plants are not native and have the ability to spread prolifically with the Broom seeds able to stay viable in the soil for over 15 years and the Thistle seeds for over 3 years. In other words you will need to keep vigilant. They are able to cover an area so densely that they crowd out any natives. Disturbed soil is their preferred choice, and we have plenty of that up here. Since all these plants have toxic chemicals in them, they cannot serve as a grazing plant for animals.

Have I charged you up, and you have your gardening gloves at the ready! Here is how to successfully remove the plants. Once established the only way to rid the area of their presence is to pull them out when the soil is soft, making sure that you get the root also. For the larger well established Broom there are two methods, a Weed Wrench™, found at hardware stores, will pull out the plant and the roots, or if they defy your best efforts, then wait until the dry season and cut off the plant a bit above the soil level. This will decrease the odds of resprouting significantly.



French Boom



Scotch Broom



Star Thistle

Submitted by Linda Drey-Nightingale (A more detailed article will come later in e-mail.)

Emergency Preparedness

We are currently working on updating the Community Resource Guide. Take a look at your listing in the Guide and be sure each piece of information is correct. To make changes call either Yvonne, for VV, or in LTW call Linda. Your Guide is a wealth of knowledge about Emergency Preparedness. While you are checking your listing, also check out pages 1-21 and the back cover, so that in an emergency you can go directly to the information that you will need.

Submitted by Steve Friedman, LTW Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

Los Trancos County Water District

In January the newly constituted Board formed new program and administrative committees. Please refer to this list if you have questions or input for the District. Members may be contacted via email firstname.lastname@lrcwd.org.

President 2012 - David Smernoff

Vice President - Susan Coons

Committees:

Finance - David Smernoff, Tracy Sherman, Keri Tate (staff)

Water Movement Control – David Smernoff & Tom Uridel

Lands Committee – Susan Coons & Claudia Mazzetti

Emergency Preparedness & Fire Safety – Tracy Sherman & Susan Coons, public representatives - Charlie Krenz & Nancy Neuer

Water Use Efficiency Program – Claudia Mazzetti, public representatives - Mike Ward & Stan Gage

The budget for the upcoming fiscal year will be on the agenda for the regular meetings of May 3rd and June 7th. Please see lrcwd.org for agendas and packet materials.

Submitted by David Smernoff, President of LTCWB

Richard Tryce Leaves Us a Better Community

When we are talking original, Rich was original. He was one of the original owners and residents in Vista Verde in 1962. He was the original patriarch, helping all those around him. He was the original historian. He was the original contact in power outages. Many felt he was the heart and soul of the community. Rich built up a great base of knowledge about local happenings and provided a contact point for both newcomers and oldcomers. His yearly calls to every resident in VV to update the database for the Resource Guide signified just one of the ways that Rich stayed connected with each resident on a personal level. On top of that he was involved with a weekly check-in with emergency County officials, started the first VV web site and e-mail bulletin board. As one resident so aptly described Rich, "He was a radio operating, motorcycle riding, first on the scene to new arrivals, ever-present at community functions, police and firefighter schmoozing and supporting, wryly humorous, bull doggedly tenacious, dedicated to this community Patriarch." We can all learn from Rich what it means to not just be a cluster of houses, but to be a community working together for a greater good. Rich, you will be remembered by many.

Neighborhood Notes

- Here is the spring reminder, "**Leave only footprints; take only pictures.**" Our hope to have continuing wildflower displays year after year is dependent on leaving the flowers and bulbs in the wild. Not only do wildflowers typically wilt quickly once picked, the seed bank is then gone for next year's display. For your yard purchase seeds or plants at Yerba Buena Nursery, 851-1668.
- At a recent meeting of the Los Trancos Community Association Board, the dangerous **blind curve at 1087 Los Trancos Road** was discussed. The Board subsequently investigated having a mirror placed at the corner to see on-coming traffic; however, the County declined to install and maintain a mirror. In light of this the Board is relying on residents to take extra precaution when navigating this dangerous curve. Take the curve slowly and keep well to right side of the road.
- **Rainfall data** is finally adding up and starting to look better. Gene Hunner reports: February - 2.4", March - 9.0", and total for the season 20.8".

Community Associations' Web Sites

The web site addresses are:

<http://lostrancoswoods.org/>

<http://www.vistaverdepv.org> NEW

The group e-mail list is:

VistaVerdeLTW@yahoogroups.com

VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Thank you, Jerry Jensen & Rob Kalman for maintaining web sites