

Harvesting nature's bounty: Collecting seeds from native plants

By Laura Kirschmann

Native plants are the unsung heroes of our ecosystems, perfectly adapted to local climates and conditions. They provide essential habitat for wildlife, support biodiversity, and offer a glimpse into the natural heritage of a region. Collecting seeds from native plants and propagating them is a sustainable and rewarding way to have genetically adapted plants for restoration needs on our working lands or to create a little native habitat to attract birds and pollinators to your home.

On September 3rd, the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust (SBALT) led eight volunteers on a hike on the Nyland Property to collect seeds from native plants, such as blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and California wild rose (*Rosa californica*). Local native plant restoration specialist, Joey Dorrell-Canepa helped the group identify the native plants that had mature fruit that were ready for propagation. After collecting the seeds, Joey and the volunteers planted the seeds in trays where they will germinate and sprout under Joey's watchful eye.

During the hike, the group was treated to a couple of surprises. First, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band member Trina Higuera-Coates, one of the volunteers, shared with the group how the native plants are an integral part of the Amah Mutsun's cultural identity, providing materials for basketry, food, and medicine. The Amah Mutsun Land Trust holds a



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cultural easement on the Nyland Property allowing the tribe to share their Indigenous knowledge and practices with their members and others. Second, SBALT's Lynn Overtree, Executive Director, taught us a rhyme to identify if a plant is a sedge, a rush, or a grass. It goes a little something like this, "Sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses are jointed, are three families found."

I have to say it was an enjoyable experience for this writer's first Ranch Day. It was fun and educational, and I had a chance to connect with wonderful people. Joey shares, "The volunteers are friendly and helpful and have a deep and abiding love for nature that buoys my spirit! Everyone has interesting stories and experiences to share. I learn so much new information every Ranch Day! Everyone works together cohesively, and the work is so much easier with willing hands!" Thank you to all the volunteers and to Raley's Community Giving for their support of Ranch Days. If you are interested in attending our next Ranch Day, you can register at <https://www.sanbenitolandtrust.org/ranch-days>. ■



Pictured: Native plants on Nyland; Executive Director Lynn Overtree teaching the differences between sedges, rushes, and grasses.