

SBALT NEWS

Wildflowers in bloom

By Laura Kirschmann

Nestled within the scenic landscapes of the Santa Clara Valley lies Tulare Hill, a site steeped in history and natural beauty. On March 29, I embarked on a captivating wildflower tour courtesy of The Land Trust of Santa Clara Valley. As Former Executive Director Craig Edgerton and Conservation Project Manager Alyssa Lo Galbo led us on our hike, the tale of Tulare Hill was told through what was referred to as the ABCS.

A is for Automobile: Once upon a time, Tulare Hill witnessed the arrival of the automobile. Vehicle exhaust, being very high in nitrogen, actually acts as a fertilizer for non-native plants. The more exhaust from nearby Highway 101, the more non-native grasses grow and crowd out the native plants that have adapted to the low nitrogen soil.

B is for the Bay Checkerspot Butterfly: Among the most iconic inhabitants of Tulare Hill is the Bay Checkerspot Butterfly. This endangered species, with its striking orange and black wings, has long called this area home. However, habitat loss and environmental changes have posed significant challenges to its survival. Through proper management, LTSCV aims to help the butterfly make a comeback.

C is for Cows: The cows that graze Tulare Hill eat the non-native grasses that otherwise crowd out the wildflowers. The variety of colorful flowers provided a stunning view to our fortunate group with access to this place that is not open to the public.

S is for Serpentine: Craig explained that serpentine

is a very nutrient-poor soil. As a result, certain plants have adapted to these specific conditions and are considered "serpentine endemic." This means that they only grow in serpentine. Serpentine is California's state rock. Only 1% of the state is made of this mineral—and more is disappearing year after year due to development. LTSCV's Tulare Hill preserves over 100 acres of valuable serpentine soil and provides habitat to a variety of endangered plants and



San Benito Agricultural Land Trust

animals. We were able to experience some of these wonders, including the Santa Clara Valley Dudleya (pictured) and the Sun Cup.

As we walked among the goldfields and gilia, with the swallows flying overhead and meadowlarks chirping in the background, it became evident that Tulare Hill's history is as diverse and captivating as its natural beauty. Every aspect of this landscape tells a story worth preserving. For more pictures of the tour, follow us on Facebook

and Instagram @sanbenitolandtrust. To stay informed on future hikes, follow LTSCV on Facebook. ■



Santa Clara Valley Dudleya at the Land Trust of Santa Clara Valley's Tulare Hill.



Did You Know:

San Benito County has the **third fastest-growing** older adult population in California.