

THE  
**ANDERSON  
VALLEY  
LAND  
TRUST**  
INCORPORATED



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DEDICATED TO THE VOLUNTARY PRESERVATION  
OF THE LAND AND ITS ABUNDANT  
NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT  
OF GENERATIONS TO COME.

# GOOD DIRT

The Newsletter of the Anderson Valley Land Trust  
Fall - Winter 2005

## TIME FOR FALL PLANNING AND PLANTING

As we all await the arrival of the first good rains of the season, this is a good time to think about the planning of restoration and conservation projects on your land. Fall is a perfect time to plant California natives and these plants may help solve a number of concerns you might have about erosion and water use.

If you have a bank that is beginning to slide you might consider covering it with erosion netting and scattering native grass seed over the top with a light cover of mulch. With the first rains the grass should sprout and you will have a green bank instead of a muddy, slippery slope.

If you have a limited water supply and are looking for plants that will give your garden some shape and color you might consider California natives as your solution. There are handsome native trees, shrubs and perennials that thrive here in the Valley, once they are established. This means you have to give them water during the first couple of summers they are in the ground, so you may have to plant your garden in phases, but after a couple of years the plants should be able to survive on what water the winter rains provide.

There are several sources of help with these projects here in Anderson Valley:

- Anderson Valley Farm Supply has erosion netting and native grass seeds for your slope restoration needs.
- Anderson Valley Nursery specializes in California native plants and owner, Ken Montgomery, is generous with his knowledge and expertise on what to grow and how plant.
- Mendocino Natives Nursery will work with you on the custom propagation of site-specific native plants for restoration projects. The nursery is located at Anderson Valley High School and Ken Montgomery is the person to contact. He can be reached at 895-3853.
- For more information about restoration and what is being done here in Anderson Valley you should drop in to talk with Sandy Bartlett at the Navarro River Resource Center, located in Boonville at 14125 Hwy128. The office is open from 1 - 4 Tuesday through Thursday. There are a number of books and pamphlets about restoration and conservation available at the office. The River Center phone number is 894-3230.

### INSIDE DIRT

President's message - Page 2

Save the Date! - Page 3

Connie Best - Page 4

Thanks to Donors - Page 5

Alan Porter - Page 6

Pacific Yew - Page 7

Power Point - Page 8

25

## *Letter from the President*

Dear Friends,

This year of 2005 has seen many changes at the Anderson Valley Land Trust.

In January I became President of the Board of Directors, following the four-year presidency of Susan Addison. Lee Serrie was elected Treasurer, Ed Short remained as Vice President, and Pete Bates as Secretary.

In February, founding director, Connie Best resigned her fourteen-year position on the Board and joined our new Advisory Committee. Please see the article on page 4.

In March, Pacific Forest Trust moved their Boonville office to San Francisco and the Madrone Clinic moved into their space. Fortunately, they were able to allow the Land Trust to remain in the front office, which we have occupied for the past 5 years. Happily, we now share the office with the Navarro River Resource Center so there are two conservation groups working on resource preservation in the Valley.

In April, Susan Addison resigned from the Board to become our part-time executive director. She is responsible for keeping our records up to date and working on developing our new conservation easements. She now brings the same abilities and enthusiasm she brought to the Board and her presidency of the AVLTT to the workings of the office. She continues to give her expertise in helping landowners protect their land. The AVLTT Board is very grateful she continues to be involved with the Land Trust.

Also in April, Alan Porter joined us as our newest Board member. Alan has previously worked with the Land Trust, and since he has retired he now has more time to devote to Land Trust affairs. Please article on page 6.

During the months of May through September, various members of the Board and other volunteers monitored several of our easements. It is always a pleasure for us to see the properties as they change and talk with the landowners about the enjoyment they garner from knowing that the land is protected from development and that its natural resources are preserved and enhanced.

We also have been working with three landowners to put conservation easements on their land. We hope to complete at least one of the easements before the end of the year.

At our October board meeting we invited Thom Elkjer to join our Board. His experience as a writer and his previous association with the Marin Land Trust will bring fresh insights into the Land Trust's work. Look for an article about him in our Spring/Summer 2006 issue of *Good Dirt*.

2005 is drawing to a close and its time for us once again to appeal to our readers for their support for our preservation and conservation efforts. Won't you please consider renewing your support or becoming a new donor this year? Your donation would be much appreciated.

Thank You, Karen Altaras, President

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**Save the Date!!!**  
**Saturday, May 13, 2006**



We are pleased to announce that the annual Anderson Valley Garden Tour will be held on Saturday, May 13, 2006, from 10 AM to 4PM, and The Anderson Valley Land Trust will be the beneficiary of the event.

The 2006 Garden Tour will feature these 5 local gardens, all of them new to the tour circuit:

- \* A formal English garden that includes a generous nod to the famous garden at Sissinghurst with its laburnum arbor, many garden 'rooms', and a copper canopy to support the same white rose found in Sissinghurst's white and green room.
- \* A Mediterranean garden enhancing a home worthy of mention in Architectural Digest.
- \* An extensive organic vegetable and flower garden that provides produce and flowers for a rural retreat center.
- \* A beautiful native plant garden displaying many choices for those of us whose water availability dictate gardening under xeriscape conditions.
- \* A young Mediterranean garden surrounding a home and cottage featured in a 1999 edition of House Beautiful.

One of the special aspects of Anderson Valley's Garden Tour is the limitation of attendance. This means that everyone can enjoy a leisurely stroll through the varied and interesting gardens, as well as stop to discuss a particular plant with your garden-viewing companions. This organic approach to garden viewing has made the AV Garden Tour a big attraction for knowledgeable garden tour aficionados. Last year, potential attendees had to be turned away, as interest was high. Brochures will be available by February of 2006, but you can get on the mailing list right away. We'd hate to disappoint anyone, so please make your RSVP early by calling Ginger Valen at 895-9424.

For the truly avid gardener, who is looking for a thoughtful Mother's Day gift, a sponsorship ticket for the garden tour would be great choice. This ticket includes the preview tour on the day before the regular tour, led by the former director of Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, who will also be available for questions on plants, cultural requirements, and garden design. It is followed by a kick-off party in the garden of one of last year's tour hosts.

Ginger Valen is the Anderson Valley Garden Tour *impresaria*, and we are honored that she chose The Anderson Valley Land Trust to host the 2006 tour. The Anderson Valley Garden Tour is sponsored by the Anderson Valley Horticultural Forum and Valley non-profit organizations benefit from the tour proceeds.

## CONNIE BEST BECOMES ADVISOR TO AVLT

On May 7, 1991 the Anderson Valley Land Trust had its first meeting, at which time Connie Best was elected Chairperson. For the following fourteen years Connie provided leadership and guidance to the organization she helped to found.

She placed conservation easements on three parcels of land during this time thus protecting a total of 168 acres of Valley property ranging from agricultural land to forested and riparian. Two of these properties have been sold to new owners who continue to protect the conservation values of the land per the conservation easements that stay with the property in perpetuity. Connie and her family continue to live on the other property and to enjoy the benefits of rural life while knowing that the land will remain much as it is today thanks to the their foresight in placing an easement on the land.

Connie played an important role in initiating the Navarro Watershed Restoration Plan process. From the fall of 1994, when AVLT was granted \$98,000 by the State Coastal Conservancy to organize a strategic assessment of the Navarro River Basin, through the summer of 1998, she worked tirelessly with a team of local people to produce the Plan. Thanks to the efforts of these dedicated team members we now have a watershed plan in place and the Mendocino Resource Conservation District has hired coordinator, Patty Madigan to implement various aspects of the plan. The Land Trust is pleased to be currently sharing an office with the Navarro River Resource Center here in Boonville.



Connie, 4<sup>th</sup> from left, meeting with AVLT Board to discuss possible new conservation easement

Once the Land Trust was successfully launched Connie and her partner, Laurie Wayburn, founded The Pacific Forest Trust, which is working to preserve, enhance and restore America's vast and vital private forests – and safeguard their incalculable public benefits – through education, innovation and collaboration. This organization has thrived and grown and is now based in the Presidio of San Francisco. While they were both very busy with their professional lives, Connie and Laurie remained actively involved in the activities of the Land Trust, writing new conservation easements and meeting with potential donors. Due to their efforts and the hard work of the rest of the Board of Directors, the Land Trust now has over 950 acres of Valley land protected by conservation easements.

*Continued on page 5*

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## TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS WE SAY THANK YOU!

These loyal donors have made it possible for us to move forward with our efforts to conserve the natural resources of Anderson Valley.

Mary Stuart Alvord	Walter & Susan Hopkins
Rene & Judith Auberjonois	Charles & Muriel Kittel
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We also wish to extend a special thank you to Bud Ledbetter for matching the proceeds from the sale of the Paula Gray paintings that he donated to our Art Auction last fall.

Won't you please join this special group of supporters of the Land Trust by sending us your contribution in the enclosed envelope? It would mean so much to all of us who love the Valley's rural landscape.

*Continued from page 4*

In January of this year the Land Trust directors formed an advisory committee and asked Connie and Laurie, who retired had from the Board in December of 2003, to become members of that committee so the organization could continue to benefit from their expertise but not require them to devote their limited time to regular board activities. Happily they both agreed and in February Connie joined Laurie in her retirement from the Board of Directors.

Thanks in large part to the vision of Connie and the other founding board members, Bill Chambers, Joel Clark, Norman Clow, Micki Colfax, Barbara Goodell and John Scharffenberger, The Anderson Valley Land Trust continues to work to protect the treasured resources of our beautiful Valley. Connie's comment in the 1999 Summer issue of *Good Dirt* remains relevant today. "If each of us takes responsibility for our own property's fate and prevents excessive development, then we will stem the tide and keep Anderson Valley the rare place it is today."

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## ALAN PORTER JOINS LAND TRUST BOARD

Many of you long time Good Dirt readers will remember the estate planning article and workshop by Alan Porter. In the 90's AVLTL and other land trusts frequently received pro bono legal advice from Alan and in this role he became interested and very knowledgeable about conservation easements. He saw a real need for the public to have good, factual information on conservation easements, and turned the focus of his law practice to helping landowners with conserving the land they loved. While the AVLTL lost an advisor, the public gained a knowledgeable partner in preserving their land in perpetuity.

In November of 2003, when Alan announced his retirement from his law practice, we were, somewhat selfishly, delighted and immediately asked him to join the AVLTL board. We were not the only ones wanting him to volunteer his expertise. He first consulted on a large conservation easement for the Sequoia River Land Trust, which is adjacent to Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park, and upon completion of that project he agreed to join the AVLTL board,

Alan is one of those people who always volunteers to do 'his share' and after retiring, volunteered in the plant propagation and curatorial departments at the UC Botanical Garden in Berkeley. The Garden quickly recognized Alan's organizational experience and propagation knowledge and when there was an opening asked Alan to become the Volunteer Plant Propagation Coordinator. He decided to accept this part-time position and is now in charge of growing the plants the Garden sells for fund raising.

Alan is a native Californian, attending UC Berkeley and Hastings Law School and after starting his law practice, bought his Yorkville property in 1989. Since 'retiring' he and his partner Paul Hoge, have been able to happily spend over half of their time in Yorkville, where Alan can pursue his interest in ceramics and gardening. Although busier than ever, he now can find time to travel. He and Paul recently hiked the Inca Trail in Peru and last year trekked in Bhutan. He does bring youth to the AVLTL Board!

We are pleased Alan decided to bring his knowledge to the AVLTL Board. He brings not only his legal background but his expertise in land conservation issues. We have enjoyed working with Alan these past few months with his quiet, thorough analysis of issues. One of the currents that run through all our board members is a love of Anderson Valley and the desire to preserve its beauty.



## Pacific Yew *Taxus brevifolia*

By: Jane E. Miller, 2M  
Associates

The name *Taxus* is derived from the Greek 'toxin' – beware the seed! An unassuming, relatively small tree, *Taxus brevifolia* scatters its presence here and there throughout parts of northern California, including Mendocino County within the broader margins of Anderson Valley. Found most often in old-growth forests, it favors moist soils or streamsides under the watchful eye and protective cover of other larger conifers. Typically staying in the 30-foot-tall range, some specimens have achieved 50 feet, and in rare cases more than 70 feet, exhibiting a conical yet

somewhat irregular look with drooping branches covered in short, soft, delicate-looking dark yellowish-green needles. Indeed, the species name *brevifolia* refers to the abbreviated leaf length. The bark that covers the often fluted-looking trunk is beautiful too – peeling reddish to purple scales that exfoliate in curling shreds to expose equally colorful wood behind.

As with other members of this genus, Pacific Yew is gender-specific. Should you spot small fruits that resemble smooth bright red beads it is a sure sign that the tree is female. Relished by birds, each contains a black seed that is readily consumed and later deposited, yet surprisingly, viable seedlings are not as common an occurrence as might be expected. These *Taxus* also sprout from cut stumps, and fallen limbs in contact with moist earth may form their own roots, eventually growing as independent trees. Although remarkably tolerant of different light exposures from considerable sun to deep shade, the Pacific Yew is one of the slowest growing trees in the world. This characteristic, coupled with the widely dispersed nature of its wild occurrence, presented quite a challenge some years ago when *Taxus brevifolia* was discovered to yield a compound used to produce a potent cancer-fighting drug, taxol. When added to the tree's tendency toward very thin bark (that must be harvested as an ingredient for the drug) and the fact that many Pacific Yews were cut down during logging operations of the larger, and at the time more profitable, timber trees with which they co-habitate, taxol was a very costly medicine in short supply when first introduced in the 1990's. Recently, less expensive methods of producing the drug have been developed...but the story of this unpretentious tree, once considered expendable, that has since proved to have great value in treating serious disease, may provide food for thought about taking care of the natural environment that surrounds us.

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***A BRIEF  
PRESENTATION:  
WHO IS THE AVLTT?  
WHY A  
CONSERVATION  
EASEMENT?***

A short (20 minute) and beautifully illustrated power-point presentation has been put together by the AVLTT summarizing who we are, what we do, and why conservation easements are desired by property owners. This presentation is an ideal (and hopefully thought-provoking) way for you or your organization to learn about the AVLTT and its activities. If you are interested in scheduling a presentation, please contact the AVLTT office at 895-3150.