Elderberry Farms
Native Plant Nursery

... A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

By Christina Lewis, Elderberry Farms Director.
Photos by Chris

Elderberry is the HOST plant for the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle!
“Just call me VELB.”
Who are We?

Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery is a project of the Sacramento Valley Chapter of CNPS.

The Nursery is run entirely by volunteers.

California Native Plant Society has been dedicated to protecting California's native plant heritage and preserving it for future generations since 1965.
Planning & Visioning
2003 - 2006

- preliminary meetings
- discussions with Sacramento Regional Parks about having the Nursery on the American River Ranch site; to work with Soil Born Farms
- The American River Parkway is a treasure in the landscape of Sacramento. The parkway is a 23 mile, 4,000 acres of land and nature.
- Sacramento Regional Parks suggested we work with Soil Born Farms’ Shawn Harrison regarding American River Ranch. He was just starting the SBF site and would welcome working with CNPS to have an onsite nursery.
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Our mission is to

• promote awareness of the benefits of native plant habitat,
• encourage community involvement, and
• provide a source of grown local native plants for restorations, schools and home gardeners.
Fall, 2007

We are given the go-ahead by Soil Born Farms to start the Nursery. Propagation work began **slowly** using Soil Born Farm’s greenhouse. A small band of Native Plant enthusiasts begin collecting seeds along the American River Parkway.

(photo: Mike Finan ‘collecting’ grape seeds)
2008 Nursery takes off

- Over the years the old decking material Joe and Mary Maret donated has been used to build many tables by many volunteers on many workdays!

- As building infrastructure dreams began, Lynda Ives helped us write several successful grants, raising enough money to build our fencing, office and shade structure.
June, 2009

- In 2008 and 2009, we were having 2 workdays each month, plus a collecting walk each week.

- In May 2009, Betsy Weiland steps up to join Chris Lewis in a leadership role including starting a Demonstration Garden and overseeing projects such as weed removal around the Nursery.

Photo: Alex Morton, Betsy Weiland & Gracie
Plant Production Accelerates

Robin Rietz was part of the planning committee in the beginning and left us to work on her degree in Propagation at Sierra College.

In August, 2009 Robin joined the Nursery becoming the Propagation Director.

And the Nursery exploded with plants!

Photo: Robin Rietz, January 2010
Greenhouse designed and built by volunteers, February, 2011

Terry, Martha, Dean Mortensen (BUILD Leader), Al, Chris, Charlie, Bruce, Mike, and Jim during the build.
Friday Walks

- Friday Walks along the American River Parkway and natural areas nearby are for seed and data collecting, plant identification, photography, and fun!

- In 2010, Friday Walks became very popular when John Schmidt took over leadership!

- The Nursery grows only plants native to the American River.

- The destination changed each week depending on the Nursery’s need and the group’s interest.

Photo: Friday Walkers, William Pond Park

Friday Walks were on hiatus during the pandemic but are back on now!
Friday Walks are popular!

This walk was at Upper Sunrise (off Sunrise Blvd) in August 2014. Jim Wadsworth took photos at the Nursery and Friday Walks from 2009 until he moved out of town in 2019.
Wednesday Workdays 1

How can we possibly need or make use of 23 volunteers in one Wednesday morning session? (This is half the group on August 5, 2015.)
JOBS: Rinsing then sterilize pots - Updating drip irrigation - Weeding Outdoor Classroom - Fertilizing plants - Cleaning out 2 pot storage areas! - Transplanting grasses from flat to 2" pots - Writing plant labels - Weeding in Demo Garden - Hand watering Butterfly Waystation - Updating inventory (Peanut butter & Jelly sandwiches for all!)
(This is the other half the group on August 5, 2015.)
Snapshots from workdays. Patricia Gilbert has led many of

Lunchtime in the sun Sun., Jan 2014.

Bee boxes in February 2015.

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Now we’ve instituted Best Practices:
1. Commercial organic soil blend only - stored in a bin (no soil touches the ground or wood)
2. New or sterilized pots only - we are buying 1 gallon pots now, then sterilizing all others that we reuse.
3. Pots do not touch ground – whether planted or not, pots are only on gravel, cement blocks or benches.
4. No standing water anywhere in Nursery.
5. Clean work surfaces, we’re adding: wipe down with disinfectant prior to working.
Built by VOLUNTEERS!

Alex, John, Carol, Ashton, Christine, Meg, Steve, Jami, Chris, Carole, and Robin
Since the Covid19 virus became a pandemic, everything has changed. As of March 13, 2020, Soil Born Farms has closed to the public.

Now we are having mini workdays with 4 or 7 (depending on county guidelines) volunteers, three days each week. Sadly no snacks are provided. We all need to wear masks at all times and keep 6’ distance from each other.
December 2020

Socially distanced mini-workdays now 2 days a week with up to 7 volunteers continue! (We still wear masks but a photo without them on!)

All photos by Chris Lewis unless noted otherwise.
Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery
2140 Chase Drive, Rancho Cordova
American River Parkway at Soil Born Farms

Photo by Jim Wadsworth

For CURRENT activities, see our webpage: SacValleyCNPS.org/Nursery