

Larner Seeds
September 2008
Newsletter

Native Clovers, Going Deeper, Snapy is here Again,
The Newly Available

Native Clovers – the Missing Link

"In former times we gathered clover." Carolina Welmas (Cupeno Indian), 1973

Once so common as to be an important food source for the indigenous Californians, the native clovers of California are now rarely seen. Once they inhabited the bare spots between bunchgrasses, fixing nitrogen for the grasses, or shared the wildflower fields with other annual wildflowers. Most are extremely attractive, both in flower and foliage. Low-growing, they make good front of the border bloomers, and are delightful in containers.



Trifolium albopurpureum

Most are annual, though there are some perennials. Most like dry clay, though some like wetter areas. Watching their progress from flower to seed is intriguing. Normally, they are sown in the fall and bloom in early spring, but we have had successful grow-outs out of season as well. Sowing the seed in flats in early spring, we transplanted into containers in April and still have them blooming in September, both in containers and in the ground.

It seems obvious that they are most delicious in the spring; perhaps at that time they haven't developed the toxic elements that older plants have, which are also more bitter. This is still a MYSTERY.

We like mysteries, but for now, please grow for their beauty and interest. Various tidbits from ethnographies mention intriguing possibilities for how they were eaten, (with salt, with bay nut balls, boiled, roasted in earth ovens, fresh) warning

Please also note that in 1909 V.K. Chesnut in his classic ethnobotany, **Plants Used by the Indians of Mendocino County** mentions that in Round Valley, an Indian woman died, reputedly from eating too much native clover. Clovers are both nutritious, delicious, and TOXIC.

WARNING: All clovers have toxic principles, so please don't eat them till we know more. The indigenous technology of "clover eating" precious knowledge, is not available to us. Consider yourself warned. For now, till we know more, please grow for their beauty, interest, and wildlife value.



Trifolium fucatum

The Queen of Clovers



NEW! NEW! NEW!

Showy Indian clover, [*Trifolium amoenum*](#), pictured below. In 1993, a single plant of *T. amoenum*, presumed to be extinct, was about to be bulldozed next to a road near Occidental in Sonoma County. Rescued in the nick of time, those precious seeds have been carefully passed around for grow-outs. This year, we grew twenty plants, and are listing this seed for

the first time in VERY limited quantities. Makes a special gift. [*Trifolium amoneum*](#), **\$6.00 packet.**

Addition to Larner Seeds Website

A NEW, ongoing addition to our website, a feature we think of as “Going Deeper.” We are documenting at greater length the natural history of the species whose seeds we offer, including our personal experiences growing them, and whatever else interests us. Garden traits, the personality of, uses of, garden traits, faunal interactions with, indigenous uses of, in general, each plant’s “medicine.”

Sometimes, as in the case of *Nemophilas*, we have collected all the descriptions of people who love Baby blue eyes through the centuries, and put this affection into words. Like the California poppy, Baby blue eyes inspires lyricism.



To find this feature, look for a link in the species description called “More info” or “link to Blog.” Here we also invite you to share your own thoughts, history, interactions with these plants, personal reactions to.

Usually, collecting the seed sends stimulates the kind of thought leading to the “going deeper” entries. So far, we have “more info” entries for Baby-blue-eyes, Five-spot, (genus *Nemophila*), Poppies, (genus *Eschscholzia californica*), and tarweeds, genera *Madia* and *Hemizonia*, Ca figwort or, *Scrophularia californica*. We would love to hear back from you on our blog, regarding anything you might like to add about these plants.

New Species Available!

We've been collecting, cleaning, and packing the following, which have been sold out since last year and are now available:

[*Aristolochia californica*](#), California Pipevine

[*Claytonia perfoliata*](#), Miner's Lettuce

[*Claytonia sibirica*](#), Peppermint Candy Flower

[*Iris douglasiana*](#), Douglas Iris

[*Lotus formosissimus*](#), Coast Lotus

[*Lupinus propinquus*](#), Violet Flowered Lupine (shrub)

[*Sidalcea calycosa rhizomata*](#), Point Reyes Checkerbloom (endangered)

[*Vaccinium ovatum*](#), Evergreen Huckleberry

[*Cercis occidentalis*](#), Western Redbud

[*Ribes sanguineum var. glutinosum*](#), Pink Flowering Currant

[*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*](#), Soap Lily

Check website for individual pricing.

Snapy Available Once Again!

[Larner Seeds](#) is glad to have found a permanent source for our beloved insect catcher, the [Snapy](#) (pronounced "snappy"). First introduced last year, we immediately sold out. The Snapy is a handy tool that safely scoops up insects from your home for depositing outside or for closer inspection.

Recommended for budding naturalists, Buddhists, and insect-o-phobes - all for different reasons! In the latter category, you will find my sister. Once she received her [Snapy](#), her fear of spiders transformed to fascination. The [Snapy](#) has a wonderful



little viewing window that appears and disappears with a smooth functioning button that slides open and closed, making it easy to return insects to their homes without harming them. Let us choose one of 4 primary colors for you. Makes a great gift. And remember, "Snapy makes you happy." **\$15.00**

*Now's the time!
Happy Fall Planting from all of us at Larner Seeds!*