



Wild Cucumber



This Coast Live Oak appears dead



Wildflowers & grass compete for space



But as you can see, it is not.....

There's a race going on

Plants that grow quickly after a fire have a competitive advantage. This Wild Cucumber quickly grew back from a surviving underground potato-like tuber. A tuber can be the size of a beetle - a VW Beetle, that is.

Below you see a mix of wildflowers (Farewell-to-spring, Mariposa lily, Fiddleneck and Lupine) and grasses, all competing for space and nutrients after the shady canopy of shrubs and trees was burned away.

Appearances are Deceiving

For thousands of years, small lightning-sparked fires occurred in the Chaparral during the summer - we estimate every 10- 50 years. Coast Live Oak and Scrub Oak developed thick bark as an evolutionary response to these frequent fires. Their thick bark acts as an insulator and protects the underlying living tissue. After four months, you see new growth pushing out through the bark of this Coast Live Oak.

How you can help.

You're curious and want to explore. Good! You will have an unique opportunity to see nature respond to fire. But please be responsible - your actions now will make a difference. If you respect the work we do, please don't make our jobs more difficult.

- ⚡ Stay out until we re-open the park.. We need time make sure the trails are safe to use. Roots can smolder underground for up to two months. Burned branches and tree trunks near the trail will fall without warning.
- ⚡ Stay on the trail. Besides being unsafe, you can track in non-native seeds that will compete with the recovering native plants. Also, the ash layer will repel water and minimize erosion, but not if you break the crust by walking on it.
- ⚡ Keep your dog on a leash. The surviving animals need time to recover. Don't make their lives more difficult by forcing them to hide from your dog. Also, dogs track in non-native seeds.
- ⚡ Don't scatter seeds or hay to feed the animals. Animals need find a new sustainable habitat as soon as possible.

After the Fire: Regrowth & Renewal



Santa Monica Mountains
Conservancy

Mountains Recreation and
Conservation Authority

Ed Davis Park in Towsley Canyon
24255 The Old Road
Newhall, CA 91321
Phone: 661-255-3606
Fax: 661-255-0746
Email: Towsley@mrca.ca.gov
www.LAMountains.com



Ash and smoke - October 2003



This was the site of a Wood Rat nest



Succulent Lupine



California Black Walnut growing from roots



Field of Blue-eyed Grass - April 2004



This Gopher survived



Hairy-leaf Ceanothus



Sprouting Mule Fat

Ash works like...

...fertilizer - it contains plant nutrients recycled by fire from old and dead plants.

...a greenhouse - its black color absorbs sunlight and warms the soil.

...Teflon. Fire vaporizes the oils in Chaparral plants and creates hydrophobic soil (water resistant), which minimizes erosion.

Many animals survived by running away or hiding underground

Notice the white ash on the ground. White ash is deposited where a fire burns hot - here a wood rat built it's surface nest out of dry brush. He died.

But the gopher survived. He hid underground and is now rebuilding his burrow (while churning up fresh soil , ash and seeds.)

Some plants thrive after a fire

Some seeds need lots of sunlight to germinate. This lupine blossomed because the shady canopy of Yerba Santa was removed.

Some seeds need heat from the fire or chemicals found in smoke and ash to germinate. Ceanothus is one of those plants.

The roots are alive

Dry soil acts as an insulator, so the temperature one inch below the surface is like that of a sauna . The roots of this California Black Walnut did not die. Months later you see shoots sprouting from the roots.

The Mule Fat roots also survived. Green shoots were noticeable four months after the fire.