

## California Native Plants: Natural Landscape Interpretation

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### Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about trips...

#### **Why doesn't the registration system work? I can't register for the class!**

The four most common problems that affect registration

1. If you have taken Alpines class four times at Merritt (Peralta Colleges), you will not be able to register for Alpines again at Merritt.
2. If you are not a continuing student (if you haven't taken a class within the most recent two semesters), you will need to reapply before you can register.
3. Remember that the login and password you used for the application are NOT the same and the login and password you need to use for class registration. See the email you got when you were accepted to the college.
4. If you have any unpaid fees from previous semesters at any Peralta College, you will need to take care of these with the financial office before you can register for a class. If you thought you paid for that previous class, check your records and credit card statements; you can contact the financial office to send them your proof of payment.

**Can I go on all the trips? No.** Students sign up for one trip, and if space is available after all students have been accommodated on one trip, students may request to go on a second trip. Each trip is limited to 12 students (except for Trip 4 which is limited to 11 students who have confirmed backpacking experience at high elevation).

#### **What about carpooling on trips?**

Everyone carpools. In June, we'll send out an email to everyone signed up for each trip, with email addresses and cell phone numbers listed so that students can contact each other to arrange carpooling.

#### **What is a typical day like?**

Get up when it's light enough to see without a flashlight.

Prepare lunch and snacks while the water is heating for breakfast, and get your daypack ready with what you'll need for the day so when Stew is ready to go, no one has to wait for you.

Hike and immerse yourself in the scene – take notes, make sketches, photograph plants.

The day doesn't end at 4 pm. Why waste all those hours of daylight lounging around in camp, when you could be scrambling around on rocks looking at plants?

Plan to get back to camp around dark each day.

#### **What should I bring?**

Please print out this page, and use it as a checklist.

[http://hortecology.com/nativesclass\\_materials\\_list.pdf](http://hortecology.com/nativesclass_materials_list.pdf)

**Bring a DAYPACK that can contain the following NECESSARY items, which you will need to have available to you during the day.**

- Water bottles or Camelback that can hold **AT LEAST 2 LITERS** of drinking water. If you bring a Camelback (bladder), make sure it doesn't leak BEFORE you leave, and bring at least one backup water container.
- Snacks and lunch **READY TO EAT**
- Hat/gloves/warm/water repellent layers, as needed
- Map, compass, hand lens, small journal or notepad, pencil, camera with at least two extra batteries, watch, headlamp, spare batteries, flashlight, pocket knife, whistle
- Enough toilet paper and personal necessities for the day. Allergy medicine? Tampax?  
**WHATEVER YOU WILL NEED FOR THE DAY, TO HAVE WITH YOU.**

**PLEASE DON'T BE** the student who doesn't bring items that are listed as necessary to bring. We made the list because you will need those items.

**PLEASE! BRING AT LEAST TWO EXTRA CAMERA BATTERIES!!!** Do not come on a trip and have your camera battery die the second morning and then say, "I only brought one camera battery because it's rechargeable!" It's not rechargeable in the woods, unless you brought your own solar charger and know it will work for the equipment you brought. And when it's cold, batteries run down sooner. **BRING AT LEAST TWO EXTRA BATTERIES! PLEASE!**

**BRING CLOTHING AND GEAR TO BE PREPARED FOR ALL WEATHER!** If you do not, you will probably be too cold, or wet, or both. Check out your tent BEFORE the trip – does it leak? Do you have all the poles? Do you have enough stakes so the tent won't blow away while you are out hiking? Can you keep the rainfly taut so you can stay dry in a downpour? Do you have a tent footprint for the tent?

### Questions about Backpacking...

**If I haven't backpacked before (or recently), how hard could it be to backpack at botanist pace?**

Harder than you think, probably. PLEASE don't use our class as your personal experiment to see if you can do it. **PLEASE GO ON ONE OR TWO BACKPACKING TRIPS ON YOUR OWN TIME, FIRST**, to figure out your capabilities, and to discover what works best for you (equipment and food), before going on any of the backpacking trips

**Yeah but if I don't really have time to do a trial backpacking trip before the class trip, and I think maybe my medical issues might be okay, I should just come and not say anything, right?**

PLEASE don't use our class as your personal experiment to see if you can do it. **PLEASE GO ON ONE OR TWO BACKPACKING TRIPS ON YOUR OWN TIME, FIRST**, to figure out your capabilities. PLEASE DON'T BE THE PERSON WHO MAKES THE ENTIRE GROUP TURN BACK BECAUSE YOU WERE NOT IN FIT CONDITION TO DO THE TRIP.

**How long does it usually take to backpack to base camp?**

It's not the miles per day, so much, as the time spent packing. Even when it's only 4 – 8 miles to camp, we look at the plants along the way, taking photos and notes, with the packs on, and take a few breaks. 5-6 miles could take 9-10 hours, most of it with the backpack on. You need

to be able to stand up from bending down taking photos with your pack on. So it's harder than other people's backpacking trips, which often consist of packing for a total of four or five hours followed by lounging around a lake. If you usually do several backpacking trips on your own each summer, and do a few trips on your own before the class trip, you will be more likely to enjoy one of the backpacking trips.

### **Which trip is the hardest?**

Of the backpacking trips, higher elevation trips in the Sierra, between 8,000' and 11,000' will be more difficult than lower elevation trips in the North Coast ranges at elevations mostly below 7,000'. Higher elevation is more strenuous, especially when carrying a backpack.

### **What can I do to prepare for backpacking with Stew?**

Come to the Orientation Meeting in June to see examples of gear that works.

**GO ON SOME BACKPACKING TRIPS ON YOUR OWN!**

Two good reasons to backpack on your own first

1. You already know what you really need to bring, and therefore won't show up with a pack that is way too heavy, or without necessary gear.
2. You will already be in shape. It's easier to pay attention to taking notes and photos if you can stand up from your photo-taking crouch with your full pack on, without assistance.

### **What do I really need to bring on a backpacking trip?**

- Please print this out and use it as a checklist:  
[http://hortecology.com/nativesclass\\_materials\\_list.pdf](http://hortecology.com/nativesclass_materials_list.pdf)
- Please don't be the student who brings too much and has such a heavy pack that the entire group is slowed down or has to help carry the excess stuff.
- **COMMON MISTAKE – BRINGING WAY TOO MUCH FOOD.** You won't eat five pounds of nut mix in five days, and you can't give it away, either, because everyone else is trying to eat up their own food. Take some trips on your own. How much food did you bring back?
- **PLEASE!!! NO cast iron frying pans!**
- **NO ginormous bags of fresh or canned food!**
- **NO food that needs to cook in a pot (including those bags that get immersed in a pot of hot water)!** Bring food that can cook by adding hot water to **YOUR** container, or that doesn't need cooking.
- **NO huge bedrolls!**
- This is not a fashion shoot. You don't need an entire set of fresh clothes for each day. Do not bring five pairs of shorts and five t-shirts!
- Bring rain gear that will keep you dry. It's easier to **STAY** dry than to **GET** dry.
- Bring a backpack, not luggage!
- **BRING SHOES OR BOOTS THAT YOU **KNOW** FIT YOU COMFORTABLY!**

We did not make these up! Please don't make these same old mistakes!