



# CNPS Membership Ideas Handbook

CONTRIBUTORS:

Betsey Landis, Halli Mason (L.A./SANTA MONICA MTNS.)

Carolyn Martus (SAN DIEGO)

Charli Danielsen (EAST BAY)

Cliff McLean (SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS)

Dave Flietner (SAN DIEGO)

Delia Taylor (EAST BAY)

Ingrid Graeve (SANTA CLARA VALLEY)

Janet Fanning (ALTA PEAK)

Lynn Houser (MILO BAKER)

COMPILED BY:

Arvind Kumar (SANTA CLARA VALLEY)

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# Introduction

This document is a compilation of membership ideas that have been implemented in various chapters to attract new or renewing members. These are proven methods that have yielded good results at one or more chapters.

Chapters looking for ideas to boost membership may browse this document to find one or more ideas they can apply with a minimum of effort. Where possible, sample coupons and posters are included that can be easily customized and reused.

If your chapter has put in place a successful membership incentive not described in these pages, please consider submitting it to Arvind Kumar [chhaprahiya@yahoo.com](mailto:chhaprahiya@yahoo.com) for inclusion in a future version of this document.

## Revision History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Author</i>
1.0	9/26/2007	First version emailed to Membership Committee	Arvind Kumar
2.0	10/29/2007	Added East Bay's Instant Raffle	Arvind Kumar
2.1	11/12/2007	Added San Gabriel Mtns Member Discount	Arvind Kumar
2.2	11/21/2007	Added Alta Peak data to #11	Arvind Kumar
2.3	3/13/2008	Updated Contents page. Added Suggested Idea Table.	Arvind Kumar

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## **Idea #1**

# **Same-day Plant Sale Coupon**

This incentive has been implemented at the Milo Baker Chapter and produced good results, attracting up to 25 new members/renewals at a single plant sale. It is simple to implement at the chapter level and does not require coordination with state CNPS.

**Description:** At the chapter plant sale, those who sign up/renew on the spot (by paying) receive a \$5 coupon redeemable at checkout towards any plant purchase.

**Logistics:** At the plant sale, set up a Membership Table. Put signs up all over, advertising the promotion and directing people to the Membership table. Each person who pays membership dues here receives a \$5 coupon. On the back of the coupon, the membership table volunteer writes the member's name, amount paid, and her/his initials. The member then takes the coupon and plant purchases to the cashier where they receive \$5 off their total purchase.

**Benefit:** Plant buyers are motivated by discounts, especially one that can be applied immediately. Promotion yields immediate results. Administration overhead is low, and limited to the day of the sale. No long-term commitment. Chapter gains members. State collects membership funds.

**Cost:** Chapter "pays" for the promotion out of its plant sale revenue. In chapters where the members grow some of the plants, this does not spend funds.

**Feedback:**

*"We just had our plant sale and decided to do the Same-Day Plant Sale Coupon at the last minute and got five new members. It's a winner."—Sherryl Taylor, Bristlecone*

*The following pages contain sample coupons and posters to publicize this promotion.*

**Membership Incentive:**  
**A coupon worth \$5.00 off**  
**native plants at checkout**  
**with new or renewing**  
**(paid) CNPS membership**

**\$5 off**

Native plants  
*With paid CNPS*  
*Membership today!*

GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES



REDEEM AT CASHIER

**Membership table volunteers:**

On the back of the coupon, **when you have received a check or cash for membership**, write the following:

Name of member

Amount paid

Your initials

Give a coupon with thanks for membership; it is to be redeemed at the cashier for \$5.00 off plants, seeds, or bulbs. **For new, lapsed, or renewing memberships, paid today.**

**Coupon instructions for cashiers:**

1. Check that the member's name and amount paid for joining/renewing is on the back of the coupon with membership volunteer's initials.
2. Subtotal, then subtract \$5.00.
3. Add tax and total bill for payment.

**\$5 off**

native plant  
purchase  
*with paid CNPS  
Membership today!*  
GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES  
REDEEM AT CASHIER



**Coupon instructions for cashiers:**

1. Check that the member's name and amount paid for joining/renewing is on the back of the coupon with membership volunteer's initials.
2. Subtotal, then subtract \$5.00.
3. Add tax and total bill for payment.

**\$5 off**

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*with paid CNPS  
Membership today!*  
GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES  
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**\$5 off**

native plant  
purchase  
*with paid CNPS  
Membership today!*  
GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES  
REDEEM AT CASHIER



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**\$5 off**

native plant  
purchase  
*with paid CNPS  
Membership today!*  
GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES  
REDEEM AT CASHIER



**Coupon instructions for cashiers:**

1. Check that the member's name and amount paid for joining/renewing is on the back of the coupon with membership volunteer's initials.
2. Subtotal, then subtract \$5.00.
3. Add tax and total bill for payment.

**\$5 off**

native plant  
purchase  
*with paid CNPS  
Membership today!*  
GOOD TOWARDS  
PLANT PURCHASES  
REDEEM AT CASHIER



# **JOIN CNPS OR RENEW TODAY**

**and get**

**\$5.00**

**off**

**your plant  
purchases  
at the  
cashier!**



Visit the **MEMBERSHIP TABLE**  
to become a member and  
pick up your coupon.

## Idea #2

# Email/Phone Call to Lapsed Members

This incentive has been implemented at the East Bay Chapter and is very effective in generating renewals.

**Description:** Each lapsed member receives a reminder email or phone call from the chapter.

**Logistics:** Soon after receiving each lapsed member report from state CNPS, a chapter volunteer (may or may not be Membership Chair) contacts the member by email or phone. The member is made aware of the lapse, and the convenient ways to renew: website, phone, etc.

**Benefit:** Easy way to retain lapsed members. Easy to implement/administer at the chapter level. Chapter improves retention rate. State collects membership funds.

**Cost:** Chapter volunteer pays for the phone call.

*Sample email below. Charli says, "In our chapter, cold phone calls have proven an obstacle for many seemingly outgoing volunteers, so having the sample e-mail can help give a caller a sense of what to say, as well."*

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

Your name appears on the list of lapsed members of the \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter, California Native Plant Society.

Your membership is important to CNPS. It strengthens the statewide organization which in turn provides a subsidy to the chapter. The local membership really counts when we do advocacy work to protect and promote native plants in this area.

I hope you will re-join and consider becoming active in the chapter. The last three monthly programs have been terrific! We continue to offer many field trips. Our nursery accepts and trains volunteers in the propagation and care of native plants, especially around sale time. A new group is starting for people who like to grow native plants in their home gardens. Plant Science committees include Rare Plants, Vegetation, Unusual Plants and Bryophytes. We can welcome your involvement in everything from botany and gardening to data entry and phoning.

If you can't find your renewal form, consider joining on-line at <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/join/> or by calling (916) 447-2677 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

(chapter volunteer or officer), \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter, CNPS

### **Idea #3**

## **Free Gift for New Members**

This incentive has been implemented at the San Diego Chapter and attracts 1-3 new members at each monthly general meeting.

**Description:** Every new member who joins by paying at a chapter general meeting receives a free gift.

**Logistics:** At the general meeting, set up a Membership Table. Each person who joins by paying dues receives the following free gifts:

1. a \$10 value catalog donated to the chapter by the Tree of Life Nursery
2. packet of wildflower seeds prepared by chapter volunteers at low/no cost

**Benefit:** A good way to attract first timers and get them “hooked” on native plants. Easy to implement/administer at the chapter level. Chapter attracts new members. State collects membership funds.

**Cost:** Chapter pays for the free gift. In the case of the San Diego Chapter, the cost is low/none.

*From the home page of the San Diego Chapter (<http://cnpssd.org>):*

**Join CNPS and receive a free gift!** This offer is open to new members only and you must join and pay at a monthly general meeting. You can download a membership form [here](#).



## ***Idea #4***

# **Discounts on Books**

This incentive has been implemented at the Santa Clara Valley Chapter where 90% of book sales revenue comes from members, 10% from non-members.

**Description:** Members receive a discount of 10-25% on book purchases from the chapter book table (at general meetings, plant sales, wildflower show).

**Logistics:** At each general meeting, plant sale, or wildflower show, the Book Committee Chair sets up a Book Table. A wide variety of books on native plants, natural history, and the environment are available for purchase/donation, many of them hard to find in regular bookstores. Members get 10-25% discount, which varies by book. Non-members can sign up as members on the spot, and some do so. Non-member sales tend to be higher at plant sales and wildflower show as compared to general meetings.

**Benefit:** Adds tangible value to membership. Attracts and retains members. Many members choose to buy their books from the chapter rather than other sources. Chapter attracts new members. State collects membership funds.

**Cost:** Chapter “pays” for the discounts out of its book sale revenue. Requires an active and dedicated book committee chair.

*At the book table of the Santa Clara Valley Chapter, members get discounts of 10-25%.*



## Idea #5

# Preferential Admission to Plant Sale

This incentive has been implemented at the San Diego Chapter where about 25 new/renewing members sign up at each plant sale.

**Description:** Members are admitted to the plant sale an hour in advance of the general public, giving them first dibs on available inventory.

**Logistics:** At the plant sale, set up a membership table at the entrance. Members are admitted at 10am. Non-members may sign up on the spot and gain entry at 10am. The general public is admitted at 11am.

**Benefit:** Rewards members explicitly and publicly. Adds tangible value to membership. Relatively easy to implement at existing plant sale. Easy way to attract/retain native plant gardening audience. Chapter attracts/retains members. State collects membership funds.

**Cost:** No cost to the chapter or state CNPS.

From the home page of the San Diego Chapter (<http://cnpssd.org>):

### Oct. 13th - Fall Plant Sale



California Native Plant Sale  
Open to CNPS members 10AM - 3PM.  
Open to Public 11AM - 3PM.  
Balboa Park, Casa del Prado Courtyard,  
San Diego  
[2007 Plant List](#)  
[Pre-order information](#)

## Idea #6

# Tabling

This outreach idea is also great for attracting new members. It has been implemented at many chapters, including the East Bay Chapter.

**Description:** The chapter sets up a table/booth at a local high-traffic event. Volunteers distribute literature, answer questions, and sign up members.

**Logistics:** At major public events such as county fairs, spring festivals, Earth Day celebrations, flower shows, garden shows, wildlife festivals, food and wine festivals, etc., the local CNPS chapter sets up a table. Volunteers staff the table, distribute literature, answer questions, and sign up memberships.

**Benefit:** A good way to educate the public and attract new members.

**Cost:** Chapter pays for table/booth costs (non-profit groups often get reduced rates).

*Delia Taylor's article from the CNPS Bulletin, Oct-Dec 2006:*

### EAST BAY CHAPTER:

## Getting Creative With Chapter Outreach

The outreach/membership job is no easy task, as many of you know. In order to run with the big guys, we here at the East Bay Chapter have tried to be as creative as possible to grab that unsuspecting wanderer.



igor skaredoff

Delia Taylor at the Borges Ranch Heritage Day in Walnut Creek, which celebrates the city's 2,704 acres of open space.

At tabling events we often have a lot of competition—with the bee keepers giving away honey and the birders doing bird whistles. A bouquet of native flowers, leaves, and catkins always draws attention. At a food and wine festival visitors were attracted by our display of edible native plants. We also offered tastes of wild grapes, gave away

wild strawberry plants, and sold Margit Roos-Collins' book on wild edible plants, *Flavors of Home*.

Whenever possible we try to make our tabling display site specific. As an example, for a bird migration celebration we gave out lists of plants that attract birds.

Janet Gawthrop, one of our dedicated volunteers, speaks Spanish. At Earth Day in Richmond, Janet was able to field questions from a rainbow of attendees, including many Spanish speakers.

Everyone can relate to weeds, which is why we often have a bouquet of weeds. One of our handouts contains a list of the 20 most invasive weeds in our area. In the near future we also hope to have a sheet on how to get rid of them.

Partnering with watershed or historical groups helps us get our message into new communities. Besides our regular venue, this year we will have tables at a watershed forum, an open space area in Walnut Creek, the John Muir historical site, and the Bay Area Open Space Council. 🌿

Delia Taylor, Outreach/Membership Chair and  
Elaine Jackson, President, East Bay Chapter

## Idea #7

# Field Trips for the Public

This idea has been implemented at the San Diego Chapter. It serves dual purposes: education and recruitment.

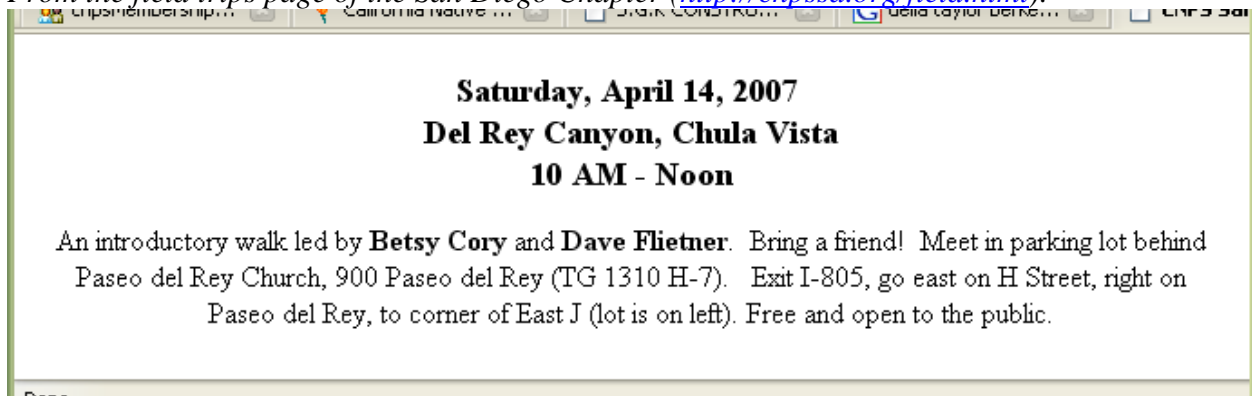
**Description:** The chapter organizes field trips open to the public. In San Diego, these trips are to local canyons and open spaces. These are publicized through local media. At the end of the trip, memberships are pitched and accepted on the spot.

**Logistics:** Special field trips for the general public are organized and publicized through the chapter newsletter, website, local media, and fliers. The idea is to introduce people to nature in their “backyard”, learn up to 20 common names of plants, some natural history, and ethnobotany. Wherever possible, native plant connections to wildlife, and human impact on native habitats are illustrated. At the conclusion of the trip, an explicit pitch to join CNPS is made, application forms handed out, and memberships accepted. (Caveat: people may not bring their checkbooks on a field trip.) At the San Diego Chapter, turnout ranges from 2 to 35. Best turnouts happen when the trip is promoted jointly with “Friends of ...” type of organizations. Half of the field trips yield new memberships.

**Benefit:** A good way to educate the public and attract new members. This is also good for members who want to learn the basics.

**Cost:** Active field trip committee. No other costs.

From the field trips page of the San Diego Chapter (<http://cnpsd.org/field.html>):



**Saturday, April 14, 2007**  
**Del Rey Canyon, Chula Vista**  
**10 AM - Noon**

An introductory walk led by **Betsy Cory** and **Dave Flietner**. Bring a friend! Meet in parking lot behind Paseo del Rey Church, 900 Paseo del Rey (TG 1310 H-7). Exit I-805, go east on H Street, right on Paseo del Rey, to corner of East J (lot is on left). Free and open to the public.

## Idea #8

# Members-only Events

Members-only events serve to attract and retain members. This idea has been implemented at the San Diego Chapter where traditional field trips are for members only.

**Description:** Some events/activities (such field trips, propagation workshop, etc.) are open only to members. Membership signups are accepted at the beginning of the event.

**Logistics:** Special events are organized for members only. This may be a field trip, propagation workshop, potluck, etc. They are explicitly promoted as such through the chapter newsletter, email, and website. At the start of the event, memberships are accepted. Prospective members do bring their checkbooks when they know it is a members-only event. At the San Diego Chapter, there have been new memberships at several members-only events, especially trips to unusual places or trips with leaders of renown.

**Benefit:** A tangible benefit of membership. A good way to attract and retain members.

**Cost:** None.

*From the field trips page of the San Diego Chapter (<http://cnpssd.org/field.html>):*

**November 10, 2007  
Saturday  
Propagation Workshop  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm (noon)**

Learn the basics of native plant propagation including seed germination techniques and vegetative propagation.

Behind the scenes tour of Recon's Native Plant Nursery – one of the largest growers of California's native plants.

Who is invited? CNPS members only (join online at [www.cnpssd.org/membership.html](http://www.cnpssd.org/membership.html)).

School teachers/parents/volunteers working on a school garden are also invited.

**RSVP** to [sandiegonativeplants@yahoo.com](mailto:sandiegonativeplants@yahoo.com)

Please indicate whether you are a CNPS member (individual or family) or if you're working with a school include the name and location of the school and one brief paragraph describing your garden plans.

## ***Idea #9***

# **Plant Sale Discount Coupon**

This idea has been implemented at the East Bay Chapter.

**Description:** At tabling events, anyone who signs up as a member receives a 5% discount coupon on future plant purchases at the chapter nursery.

**Logistics:** At tabling events, volunteers display membership forms and a poster promoting this incentive: “Join/renew today and receive a 5% off coupon on native plant sales at the CNPS Nursery.” Each person who joins/renews that day receives a bookmark-size 5% discount coupon. The coupon can be redeemed at the chapter nursery anytime in the coming months. The coupon serves as an incentive to close the membership transaction on the spot.

**Benefit:** Attracts new members by offering a tangible benefit. An incentive to join now rather than later. Low cost to the chapter. If the coupon is not redeemed, it contains the chapter contact information and serves as a bookmark or “business card”.

**Cost:** Chapter “pays” for the discount.

## ***Idea #10***

# **New/Renewing Member Instant Raffle**

The East Bay Chapter attracted 35 new members, 13 renewing and 3 lapsed renewals using this idea in October 2007.

**Description:** At the annual plant sale/fair, anyone who signs up as a new/renewing member becomes eligible for an instant raffle prize.

**Logistics:** Signs/posters are used to publicize this incentive at the plant sale/fair. After new/renewing members pay their membership dues, they are asked to pick one item from a basket of folded notes. “There were 60 papers folded up in quarters with a pretty pink *Rosa californica* showing on the outside of one quarter (our theme flower used for the Plant Fair poster and name tags).” They open their note to reveal their prize and claim it on the spot. It could be one of:

- \$5 off plant purchase
- Landscape Maintenance Book in English/Spanish
- Consultation from a native plant designer
- Gift certificate from a local nursery
- Membership in a local museum

**Benefit:** Attracts new/renewing members by offering a mystery incentive.

**Cost:** Requires some legwork to create the raffle rewards.

## **Idea #11**

# **Member Discount at Plant Sale**

This idea has been implemented at various chapters with good results. From the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter: “We had a great membership day [Fall 2007], with 33 paid memberships, including 22 new members, 9 renewals and 2 reinstatements.” From the Alta Peak Chapter: “We had 17 renewals and 1 reinstatement [and] two new memberships.”

**Description:** At the plant sale, members receive a flat discount. The San Gabriel Mountains Chapter offers members 10% on all plants, books, CDs and T-shirts. “We want existing members to feel that there is a tangible benefit to membership (in addition to the Fremontia and Bulletin).” The Alta Peak Chapter offers members a 15% discount on pre-orders of plants.

**Logistics:** At the San Gabriel Mountains Chapter sale, there is a Membership Table next to the cashier table. Tables are laid out so that every visitor must go past the Membership Table to get to the cashier. Members are required to stop at the Membership Table to verify their discount. “The people staffing the Membership Table get a chance to actively engage every non-member and encourage them to join. Qualifying for the member discount was an effective incentive to join on the spot. I think that the friendly conversations about CNPS were the most important factor. These were made possible by the physical arrangement of the tables at the exit gate.”

The Alta Peak Chapter mails a plant list to members in August. Later in fall, the chapter sees “a rush to renew memberships to earn the discount.”

**Benefit:** High rate of joining/renewals proven over several years: “We did what was so successful for us last year.” Incentive induces people to join on the spot. Tangible benefit at local level improves renewal rate. “What we lost in discounts to all members, we regained in member goodwill and new members.”

**Cost:** Chapter “pays” for the discount.

## ***Idea #12***

# **Free Plant at Plant Sale**

This idea has been implemented at the Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains chapter. At the fall plant sale in 2007, this generated 12 new memberships.

**Description:** At the chapter plant sale, those who sign up as members receive a free 1-gallon plant (\$8-10 value).

**Logistics:** At the sale, posters are displayed announcing the promotion. At the Membership Table, those who sign up or renew as members receive a coupon for a free plant which can be redeemed at the cashier table.

**Benefit:** Low effort to implement. Effective at converting plant sale customers into members. Low cost.

**Cost:** Chapter “pays” for the promotion.

## *Suggested Ideas*

# Suggested Ideas for Events

Each idea in this document is suitable for a certain type of chapter event. The following table will help you quickly identify which ideas are suitable for the type of event you may be planning.

<i>Idea #</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Plant Sale</i>	<i>Wildflower Show</i>	<i>Field Trips</i>	<i>General Meetings</i>	<i>Outreach Events</i>	<i>Year-round</i>
1	Same-day Coupon	x					
2	Email/call to lapsed						x
3	Free gift				x		x
4	Book discount	x	x		x		x
5	Early admission to sale	x					
6	Tabling	x	x			x	x
7	Field trips			x			
8	Members-only events			x			x
9	Sale coupon	x	x		x	x	x
10	Instant raffle	x	x		x	x	x
11	Plant sale discount	x					
12	Free plant at sale	x					

**Table 1: Suggested Idea Matrix**