

# Charlotte Torgovitsky

415-892-9148. [torgovitsky@comcast.net](mailto:torgovitsky@comcast.net)

## HOME GROUND HABITATS

I founded Home Ground Habitats in 2011; it is now a 501(c)(3) not-profit operating as a native plant nursery and educational facility, a model of social enterprise with a local focus, where volunteers propagate both plants and ideas for a new paradigm in home landscaping. Since our founding, Home Ground Habitats has donated California natives and habitat plants, seeds, and educational materials to more than fifteen schools in Marin County, and provided on-going support to several community and public gardens and open space restoration projects throughout the county. In addition, it provides plants in support of fund-raising activities of other non-profit organizations such as the Marin chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

Over the years, I have taught my volunteers what I know so they flourish along with our plants. I have also given or hosted innumerable public lectures and hands-on demonstrations on subjects ranging from pruning natives, installing irrigation systems, home composting, seed collecting, and insects and butterflies in the garden, to traditional uses of California native plants.

## MARIN ART & GARDEN CENTER – 2001 to 2009

### **Garden Education Manager and Volunteer Coordinator**

I created this position at the Marin Art and Garden Center; I joined the Garden Society of Marin, one of the founding organizations, but soon came to realize that while there was plenty of art being promoted at the Center, there was nothing going on in the gardens—eleven acres of wonderfully unique and beautiful public space. I made a proposal to the Board of Directors to build and maintain the gardens while engaging and educating members and visitors on an eco-friendly approach to land stewardship. While there:

- I recruited, trained and managed youth interns, service-learning groups, and adult volunteers who helped design and build California native plant and butterfly demonstration gardens, a nursery, a composting demo site, and rainwater harvesting systems.
- In collaboration with volunteer groups, I created and delivered numerous educational and hands-on programs on nature and gardening for children and adults.
- I successfully sought out sponsors and grant funding for many of these programs.

## NATURALIST and EDUCATOR

***Watershed Approach to Landscaping* book, 2018.** Hired by Marin Municipal Water District as the local consultant for this influential book that encourages a new and much more ecofriendly approach to home landscaping practices

**Watershed Approach to Landscaping educational classes. Fall 2019 – resuming in Spring of 2021.** Originated a six-part series of classes through College of Marin Community Education, together with my colleague, Teliha Draheim, teaching the principles of eco-friendly gardening using MMWD's WAL book as the textbook.

**Native Plant Propagation Classes.** 2016–2019. Taught a series of plant propagation classes each summer. Sponsored by Marin Resource Conservation District, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, and PRNSA

**Teacher Workshops** in collaboration with SPAWN, 2017–2019. Representing the Marin

chapter of CNPS, and working together with Audrey Fusco, SPAWN's nursery manager, we developed free workshops for elementary level teachers interested in bringing nature to school. Subjects included plants for habitats, butterfly and pollinator gardens, composting with worms, site and soil preparation, and propagating native plants. We supported these teachers and schools with on-site consultations and donations of supplies and plants.

**Creating Wildlife-Friendly Gardens**, 2005 to present. Classes taught at Tilden Regional Parks, SF Botanical Garden, Pt. Reyes Field Institute, Pepperwood Preserve, Sonoma State Sustainable Landscape Professional Certificate Program, and North Marin Water District  
**Marin Master Gardeners Continuing Education Classes**, 2017 to present. California Naturalist Training

**Programs and Presentations**, 2005 to present. Numerous presentations given on gardening for butterflies and creating habitat to groups such as California Native Plant Society, Audubon Society, The Gardens at Heather Farms, Inverness Garden Club, Santa Rosa Garden Club, Healdsburg Garden Club, Novato Garden Club, and many more

**Home Composting Education**, 2005–2015. Taught hands-on classes for ZeroWaste Marin. I initiated their compost bin subsidy program for Marin residents.

**Marin County Fair**, 2010 to present. I serve as a Compost Judge

**Bay-Friendly Gardening classes at MAGC, 2007 to 2009.** I took the training courses, including a special Master Composter's Course, and then taught the same courses at MAGC. Sponsored by Marin Municipal Water District.

**College of Marin Community Education Classes.** 2006 to 2009. I developed and taught classes, many offered off-site at MAGC, on gardening for bees, butterflies and birds, seed collecting and plant propagation, and home composting.

## COMMUNITY PROJECTS

**California Native Pollinator Garden** at the Bay Model Visitor Center, US Army Corps of Engineers. A project of the Marin chapter of CNPS, initiated by myself and Laura Lovett, Gardening with Natives Co-Chairs, in 2018, to create a showpiece garden of California natives in a very public place, with the goal of showing people how beautiful they can be and to encourage the use of natives in private home gardens. Garden bed is over 100 feet long and includes plant groupings to support butterflies, hummingbirds, songbirds, native bees, and monarch butterflies. The project included extensive interface with the US Army Corps staff to develop the site and collaborate on its care and upkeep.

- Garden was featured in *Flora* magazine, published by CNPS, Summer 2019 issue
- Won a Sausalito Beautiful Award, 2019

**California Native Plant Society, Marin chapter.** Immediate Past President, current board member, Plant Sale Co-Chair, School Programs Chair, and Gardening with Natives Co-Chair  
**Eco-Friendly Garden Tours**, 2014 to present. My large Novato habitat garden is a highlight of the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership tours. Hands-on demos are offered during the tour.

**Marin School of Environmental Leadership**, mentor, 2014–2018. I worked with 9<sup>th</sup> graders to help them create native gardens at Terra Linda High School

**State Park Volunteer**, 2010 to present. Assist with pulling invasive plants and restoring habitat at Samuel P. Taylor State Park

**Novato Live Well Network Board Member**, 2005–2013.

**Co-founded the Marin Eco-Friendly Garden Tours**, 2007–2009. Produced in collaboration with the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program

**Hungry Owl Project**, 2002 to 2009. I funded and helped set up barn owl nesting boxes, one with a nest-cam installed, at MAGC. During those years, we took in orphaned owlets and I

fostered broods of these babies, providing dead baby mice every evening until the owlets fledged.

**Garden Society of Marin**, President 1999–2001. A founding organization at MAGC

## WRITER

“Gardening in Harmony with Nature,” a regular monthly column for the Marin CNPS newsletter

*Flora* magazine, Summer 2019. Featured garden: “Native Plants for Native Pollinators,” the pollinator garden at the Bay Model, Sausalito, a project of the Marin chapter of CNPS

*Flora* magazine, Summer 2018. Feature on my home garden

*Marin* magazine, March 2017. “Go Native,” about Marin’s plant communities, co-authored with Laura Lovett

*Wildcare* magazine, Spring 2016. “Building a Habitat Garden,” co-authored with Laura Lovett

*Fremontia* magazine, September 2012. “My Home Ground: Inspiration for a Habitat Garden”

*The California Wildlife Habitat Garden*, Nancy Bauer, UC Press, 2012. My garden is featured, and I authored an appendix for the book on “Plant Propagation Tips”

*Pacific Horticulture*, 2008. Articles: “Thistle Lovers All” (Vol. 69, #2), “The Untamable Beauty of California’s Wildflowers” (Vol. 69, #4)

Marin Independent Journal. 2002–2008. Numerous garden/ecology articles published

*Gardening Among Friends*, edited by Barbara J. Euser, includes essays and articles I wrote for the Marin Master Gardeners regular column in the Marin IJ

*Passion Projects for Smart People*, Michael Wing, Ph.D., 2017, includes a profile of me and the collaborative associations I promoted as President of Marin CNPS.

## CONSULTANT

Consultant to Marin Municipal Water District, 2018, on the book *Watershed Approach to Landscaping*

Consultant at large estates for native and nonnative plant ID

Consultant for home gardeners on California native plant landscapes and habitat gardens

Garden Ambassador for California Native Plant Society (state organization)

## EDUCATION

Studied natural history of California at College of Marin, 1996–2007

Took numerous independent courses on plant propagation and nursery management

Marin Master Gardeners, graduated 2002

Bay-Friendly Training, completed 2007

For most of the last thirty years I have lived with my family in Novato, where I am currently developing my own two-acre property, working in a sustainable and resourceful way with native soils and plants to create gardens that provide sanctuary for my family and for the wildlife with whom we share our land.