



ARTICLE

Plant Tech Talk: The Fruits of Fieldwork

Point Reyes National Seashore (<https://www.nps.gov/pore/>)

By Danielle Parsons and Mackenzie Morris

June 2021 - Happy Solstice from your local plant community monitoring technicians! We are two budding botanists eager to share the fruits of our research with you. We are spending the summer monitoring important plant communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area Network, including coast dune scrub, coast live oak woodlands, and annual grasslands. Every few years, permanent plots within these habitats are revisited to track change in plant communities. We feel lucky to have spent our first month of fieldwork visiting plots among the dunes of Point Reyes National Seashore.

Headed out for a beach day? Try your luck finding *Fragaria chiloensis*, a delicious coastal strawberry! This summer treat is commonly found on coastal terraces and dunes and was omnipresent on our species lists. A member of the rose family (Rosaceae), the white, five-petaled flower, if successfully pollinated, results in a juicy, red fruit. Notice the leaves are in groups of three (see below), similar to poison oak, but the undersides are densely hairy and won't leave you with an itchy rash. When foraging for these wild coastal strawberries give thanks to the moth, an underappreciated pollinator. Unlike butterflies, many moths feed at night and depend heavily on scent to find food. But as night falls and the moon rises, the white petals of *Fragaria chiloensis* reflect moonlight allowing them to be easily spotted by nocturnal pollinators. This is a tasty example of coadaptation between native pollinators and plants that have evolved in each other's presence over millennia. If you choose to taste test a ripe strawberry, remember to leave some fruits behind for the seed dispersers. Let's conserve this plant and the ecosystem that supports it so we may all enjoy the fruits of our earth!



Danielle (left) and Mackenzie (right). We are two budding botanists eager to share the fruits of our research with you. We're spending the summer monitoring important plant communities in the San Francisco Bay Area Network, including coast dune scrub, coast live oak woodlands, and annual grasslands.

NPS / Lisa Schomaker



A member of the rose family, the white, five-petaled beach strawberry flower, if successfully pollinated, results in a juicy, red fruit. Notice the leaves are in groups of three, similar to poison oak, but the undersides are densely hairy and won't leave you with an itchy rash.

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For more information

- San Francisco Bay Area Network [Plant Community Monitoring webpage](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/plant-communities.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/plant-communities.htm>).

[See more from the Bay Area Nature & Science Blog \(https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/blog.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/blog.htm)



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