

https://napavalleyregister.com/lifestyles/home-and-garden/weed-wackers-goats-and-sheep-help-land-trust-of-napa-county-with-a-growing-problem/article_c76b9da9-62b5-5eae-8c12-c23549531284.html

Weed wackers: Goats and sheep help Land Trust of Napa County with a growing problem

JORGEN GULLIKSEN Land Trust of Napa County

Nov 13, 2020



Sheep graze dry plant material on the Land Trust of Napa County's Wantrup Preserve 18 days before the LNU Lightning Complex fires started.

Jorgen Gulliksen - Land Trust of Napa County

JORGEN GULLIKSEN Land Trust of Napa County

Large swaths of oak woodland on Land Trust of Napa County's Wantrup Preserve are now missing the typical undergrowth of thick weed thatch that inhibits native species and creates fuel for wildfires. Instead, the property's ground cover looks like a beard that was shaved with a dull razor, leaving only stubble.

Two herds of sheep did the trimming this year, and overall results point to greater native plant diversity and reduced risk of wildfire. "We're very happy with how the goats during the first few years, and now the sheep this year have performed," said Mike Palladini, stewardship program manager for the Land Trust.

Like many places in Napa County, this 730 acres of oak woodlands and forest had a growing problem – a heavy buildup of invasive weed thatch overwhelming the native plants and creating fine fuel loads that can quickly carry a fire. The Land Trust has pursued multiple approaches to deal with these issues across its properties — mowing and hand pulling invasive plants, targeted herbicide applications and working with CALFIRE to carry out several prescribed burns.

"On this property, the size of the invasives problem, the location and types of invasives and the remote terrain led us to choose grazing as the best approach," said Palladini. "And in particular, we turned to some very efficient weed wackers: goats and sheep."

"The project began in 2017, before the fires that year," said Palladini. "This year, we had two herds of about 600 sheep from Kaos Sheep Outfit in Lake County."

"Sheep grazed correctly can improve the land," said Jamie Irwin, co-owner of Kaos Sheep Outfit. "They grow a renewable resource every year, wool, and the lamb provides a healthy protein source."

"This is a rotational grazing project, keeping the goats or sheep within one 15 to 20-acre area at a time in order to make sure they get to everything, but not leaving them there for too long, which can have negative consequences," said Palladini. "This is also a dry season project – grazing after native plant species have already set seed. We are

testing the potential restoration benefits of grazing in the dry season, combined with the reduction of a heavy buildup of dried weed material, which can act as a barrier to native plant growth and reproduction.”

The project is also aimed at lowering the risk of wildfires as the fuel loads are removed by the hungry animals. This objective was tested in a very real way in August, during the LNU Lightning Complex fires, when a spot fire started on an abutting property and, carried by a heavy buildup of weed thatch there, burned toward the Land Trust property.

The fire advanced until it hit the grazed area, which acted as a fire break. Once the fire reached this stubble, its advance was stymied and St. Helena firefighters, who were already in the area, were able to easily put the fire out. In total, only $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre burned.

“Without tall grass, you don’t have fuel for the fire,” said Wantrup Preserve caretaker Leaf Hayes, who has wildland firefighting experience and assisted in the firefighting efforts that day. “I’m a firm believer in grazing as a wildfire prevention method. It helped a lot with containing that fire.”

The impact on native species can also be dramatic. Paired plots of grazed and ungrazed land are regularly surveyed by local, professional botanist Jake Ruygt. Preliminary data show that along with fuel load reduction, the number of native plants species, and the cover of native species are increasing in grazed areas relative to ungrazed areas.

This careful assessment of impacts attracted support from the USDA’s “Conservation Innovation Grants” program (CIG). The program helps fund conservation projects on agricultural lands. The grants are aimed at cultivating innovative and creative approaches to improve water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat. The award will pay for one-half of the costs of this project over three years.

"The fact that we are carefully evaluating the impacts of this specific type of grazing on native species while reducing fuel loads at the same time, made the project interesting to the CIG program," said Palladini. "While the project has been ongoing for four years now, it requires several years of good data in order to demonstrate definitive results because the goal here is to look at longer-term trends. Once the project is complete, we look forward to sharing the results with other landowners and land managers."

Watch now: [How To Teach Your Kids To Be Eco-Friendly](#)

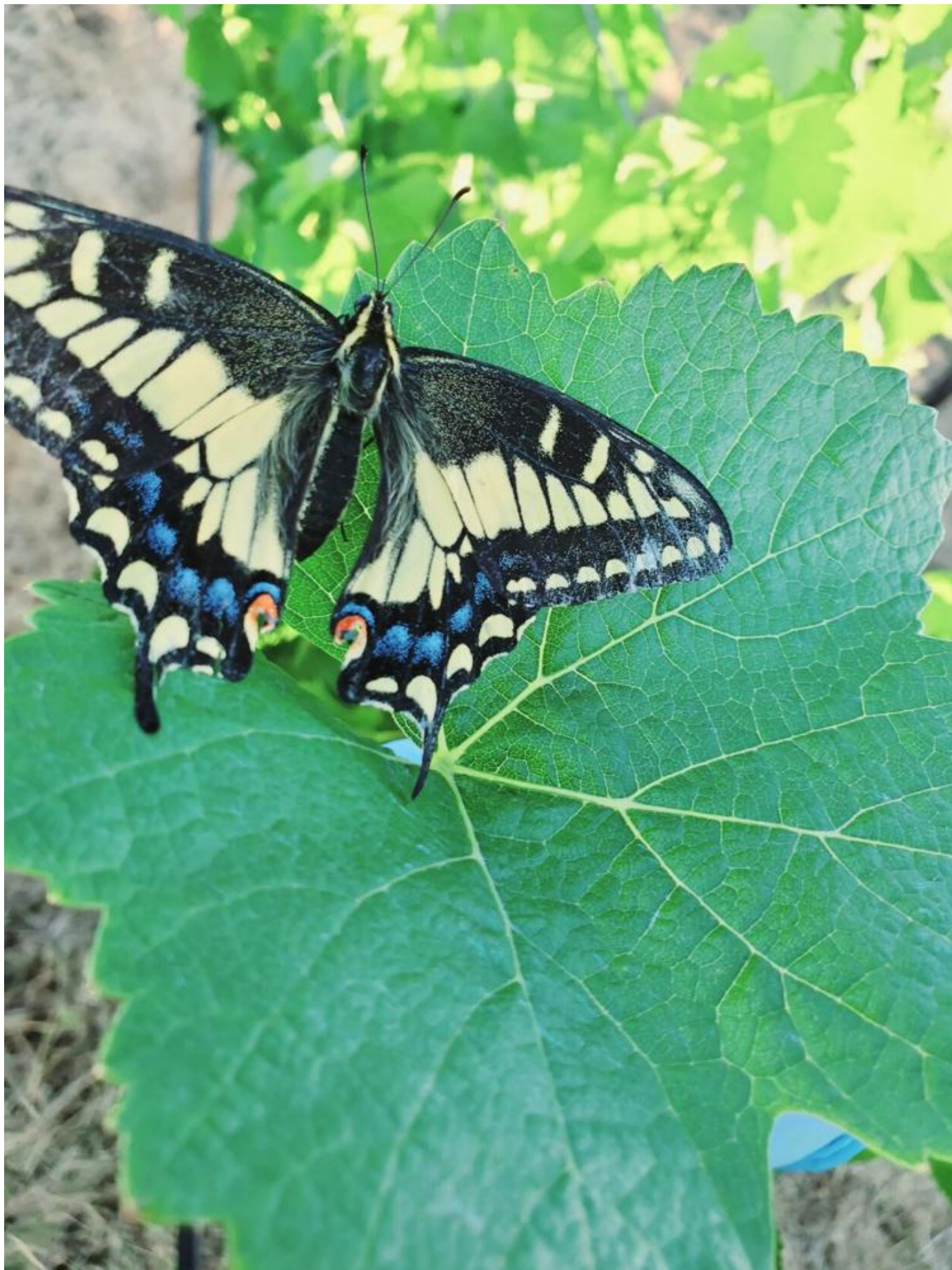
Scenic Napa Valley



Peek-a-boo hot air balloons on Linda Vista Avenue.

-- Submitted by Tammy Duda

Scenic Napa Valley



A butterfly spotted at ZD Wines Napa Valley.

-- Submitted by Verónica Aviña

Scenic Napa Valley

Birds enjoying the sunshine at ZD Wines Napa Valley.

-- Submitted by Verónica Aviña

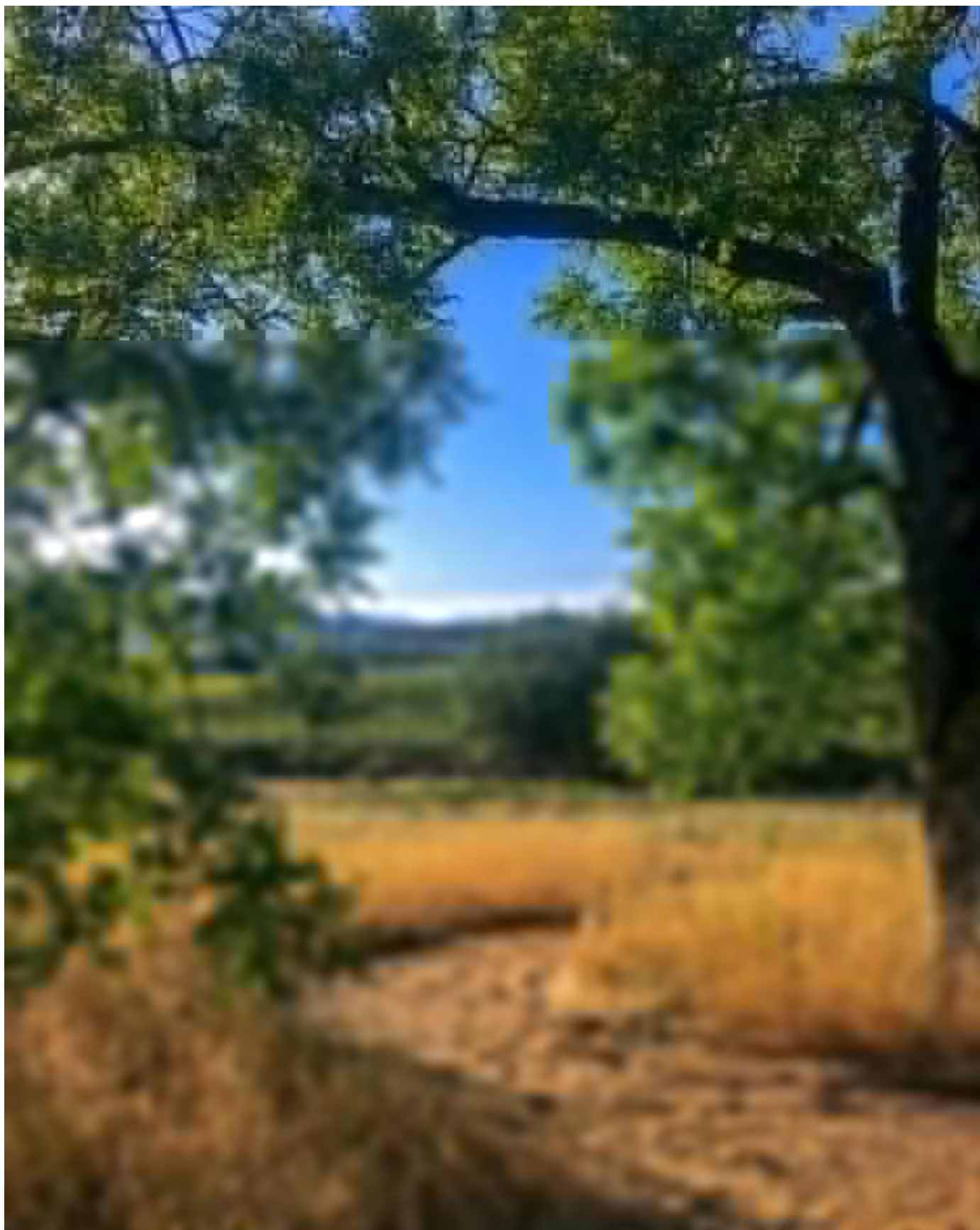
Scenic Napa Valley



Seed head in fields of Angwin.

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley



Avenues in Napa; May 6, 2020

-- Submitted by Tammy Duda

Scenic Napa Valley



Early vineyard fruit growing in Yountville; June 13, 2020

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley



A bee enjoys coneflower pollen in Yountville; June 13, 2020

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley



Highway 29 St. Helena, Spring 2020

-- Submitted by Melinda Nunes

Scenic Napa Valley



Oakville, south of Far Niente Looking at Mt St Helena; 2019

-- Submitted by Phylis Anderson

Scenic Napa Valley



Kortum Canyon, Calistoga; May 28, 2020

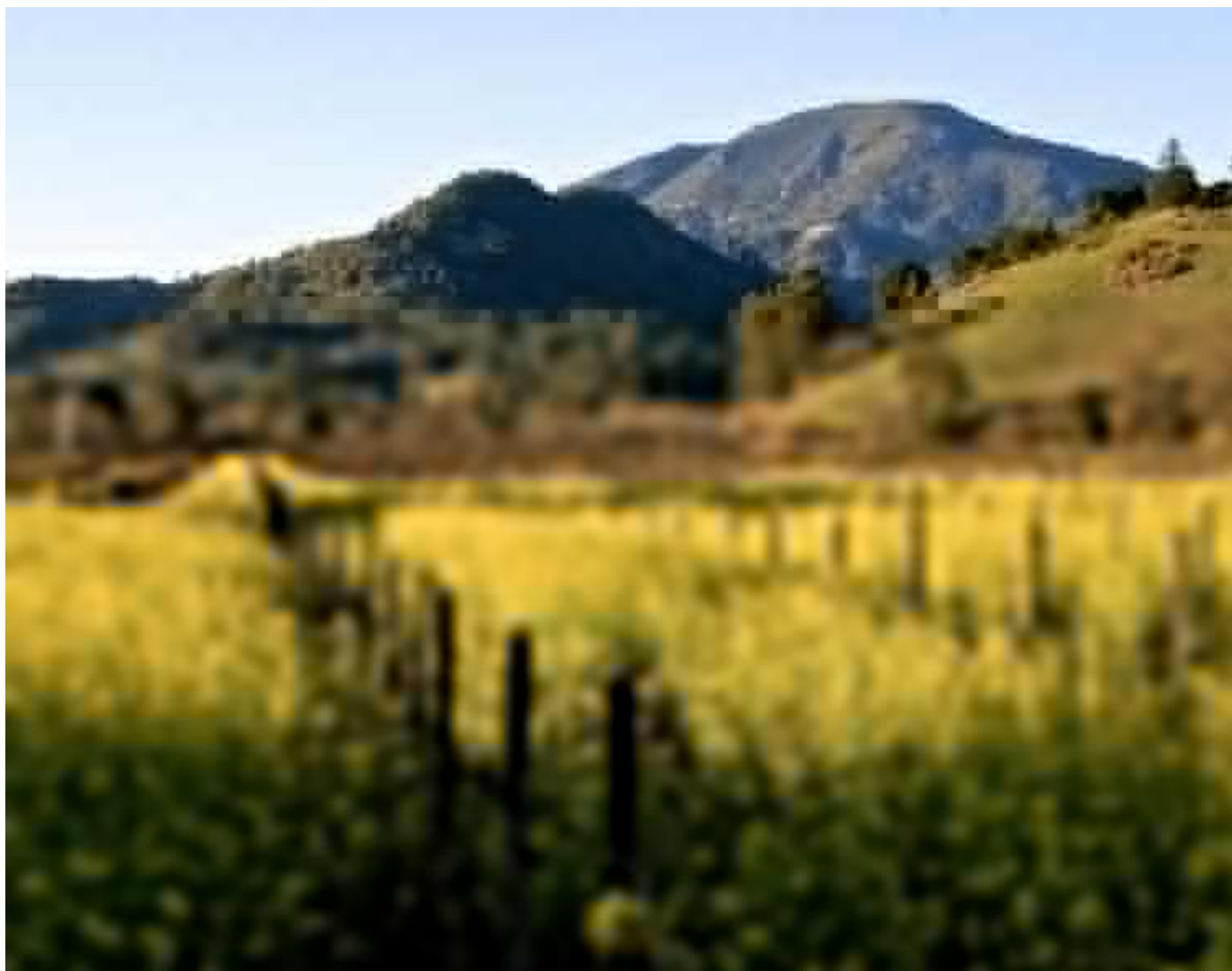
-- Submitted by Ivan Miller

Scenic Napa Valley



Taken by Beverly Sodhani at Sodhani Vineyards in Napa County in May, 2020.

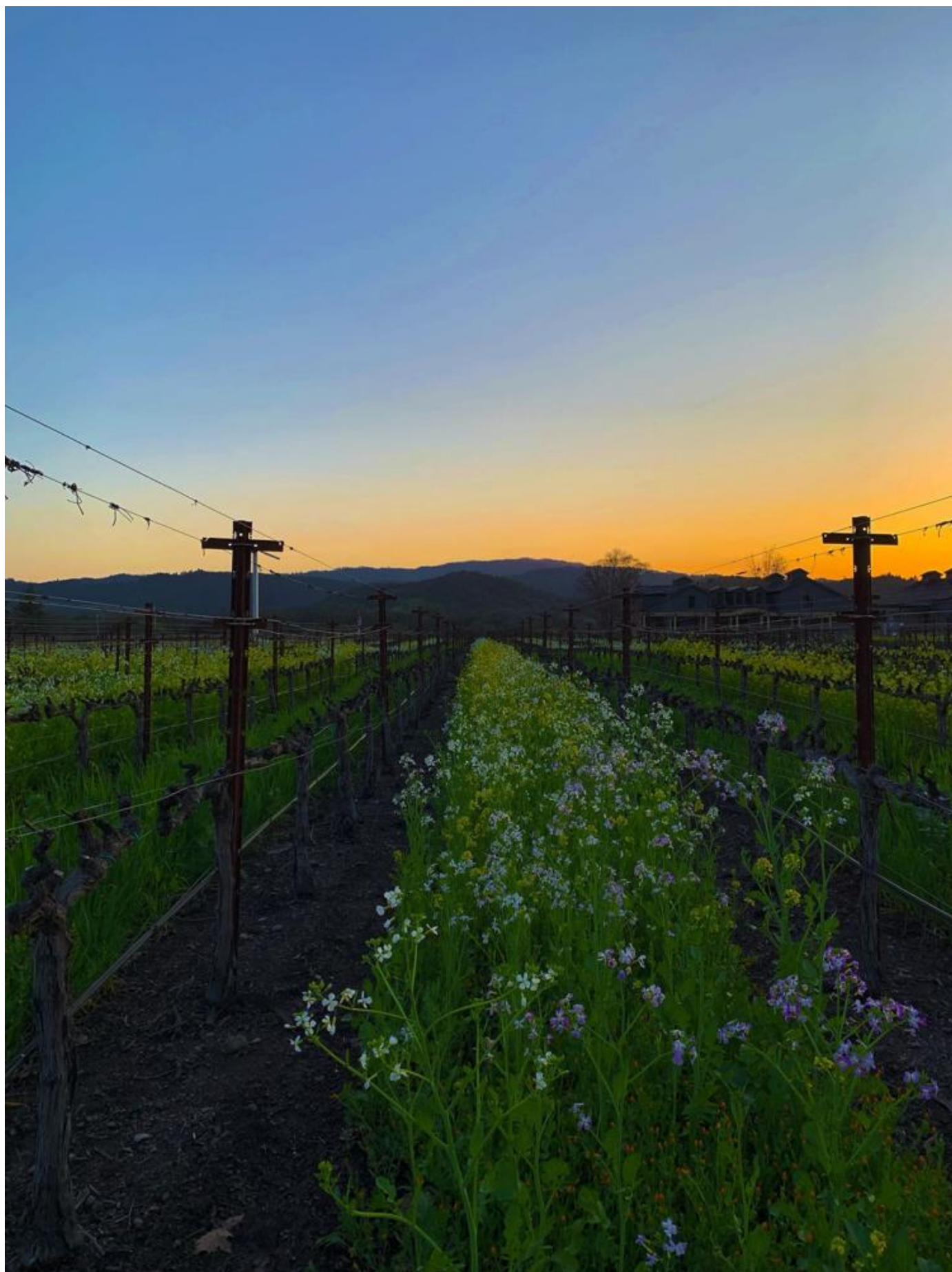
Scenic Napa Valley



Mt. St. Helena

-- Submitted by Ivan Miller

Scenic Napa Valley



Beautiful night out in the vineyards in Yountville, 2019

-- Submitted by Rianna Reyes

Scenic Napa Valley



Yountville, Napa County, April 2020

-- Submitted by Justin Duncan

Scenic Napa Valley



Golden Hour at Paraduxx Winery on Silverado Trail.

-- Submitted by Justin Duncan

Scenic Napa Valley



Pope Valley in spring time, May 2020.

-- Submitted by Justin Duncan Photography

Scenic Napa Valley

Looking up at the beautiful Eucalyptus trees in Napa.

-- Submitted by Cindy Miller

Scenic Napa Valley



Downtown Napa, as seen April 2020.

-- Submitted by Yanet Gonzalez

Scenic Napa Valley



V. Sattui Vineyard at sunset.

-- Submitted by Karen Jamison

Scenic Napa Valley



Spring awakening of the vineyards in Napa Valley at Hendry Winery.

-- Submitted by Jess Foglesong

Scenic Napa Valley



Field of lupines in Chiles Valley.

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley

Wildflower seedhead in Snell Valley.

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley



California poppy field in Pope Valley.

-- Submitted by Suzi Albertson

Scenic Napa Valley



Vibrant red barn off Oak Knoll Ave

--Submitted by Hannah Harrison

Scenic Napa Valley

Looking up-valley toward Mt St Helena around sunset

-- Submitted by Joel Pagels

Scenic Napa Valley

St. Helena fawn lily (*Erythronium helenae*).

Photo by Land Trust of Napa County.

Scenic Napa Valley

California Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*).

Photo by Land Trust of Napa County.

Scenic Napa Valley



Wild Hyacinth (*Dichelostemma capitatum*).

Photo by Land Trust of Napa County.

Scenic Napa Valley

Yellow monkey flower (*Mimulus guttatus*).

Photo by Land Trust of Napa County.

Scenic Napa Valley

Gilia cream cups and goldfields wildflowers.

Photo by Land Trust of Napa County.

Scenic Napa Valley

California native flannel bush seen in Deer Park. Taken by Connie Wilson on March 22, 2020

Scenic Napa Valley

A Red camellia blooms on Foster Road in Napa. Taken by Eric Zimny on March 26, 2020.

Scenic

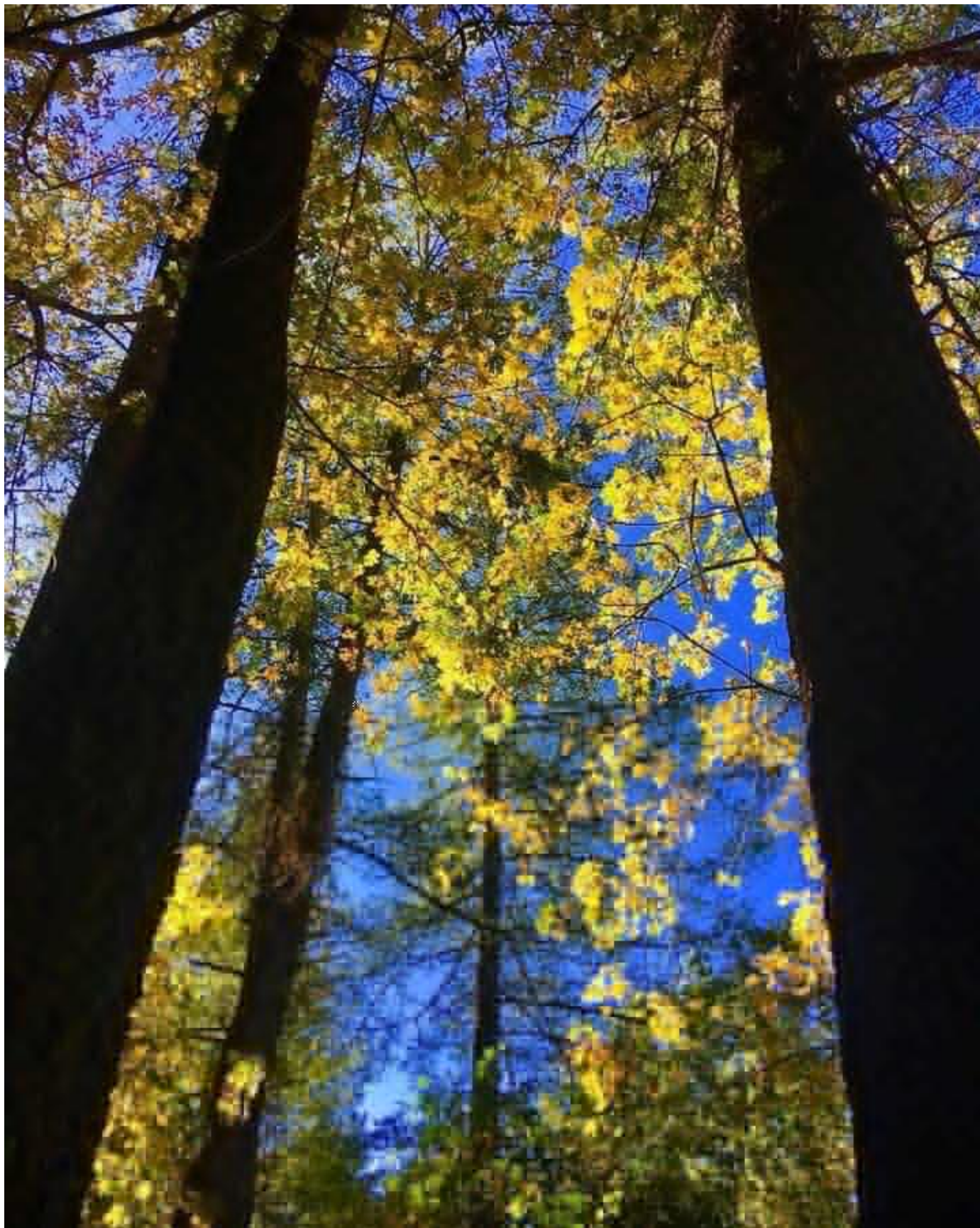
California Poppy Season. Taken by Suzi Albertson at Deer Park and Silverado Trail on March 4, 2020.

Scenic

Charles Krug in St Helena, Sept. 2017

-- Submitted by Audrey Luippold

Scenic



Bothe-Napa Valley State Park, Oct. 2018

Melissa Hejazj

Scenic

Carneros district at sunset

Nick Murrieta

Scenic

"Another perfect Napa Valley sunset." -- Michael Booth

Scenic

Yountville, May 2019

Antonio Perez

Scenic

Castell di Amorosa winery, 2016

Garry Waggoner

Scenic

Double rainbow in Napa

Leeanna Sherman

Scenic

Bee on plum blossoms in East Napa.

Lottie Pena

Scenic

Blooms at Napa Valley Care Center

Nicole Hermosillo

Scenic

A cold morning in Napa Valley. Trefethen Vineyard Manager turned on the sprinklers last night resulting in the beautiful jewels of ice on the vines and guide wires. (February 2018)

Lee Seeger

Scenic

Scenic

Audrey Luippold

Scenic

Rural lane in Oakville off Highway 29

Phylis Penland Anderson

Scenic



Beautiful sunset at Napa Downtown.

Jose R Garcia

Scenic

Flowers along St. Helena Highway

Submitted

Scenic

Resurgence from a bloom in Camille Park in Spring 2017.

Michael Redman photo

Scenic

A field of Oakville mustard from Feb. 2018.

Josh Stephens photo

Scenic

Reader Jan sends in a photo of morning fog over Bell Wine Cellars in Yountville in April 2017.

Submitted photo

Scenic

Mustard takes over this Oakville vineyard in Feb. 2018.

Darren Loveland photo

Scenic

A St. Helena vineyard scene in Fall 2017.

Antonio Perez photo

Scenic

Winter stream in Bothe Park in Dec. 2016.

Darren Loveland photo

Scenic



A bird takes a break at Silver Oak Winery in May 2012.

Karen VanDeursen photo

Scenic

Sunset over downtown Napa from above in June 2015.

Darren Loveland photo

Scenic

An early morning summer storm in the Oak Knoll region in June 2017.

Darren Loveland photo

Scenic

Almost sunset along the Napa River in March 2017.

Elizabeth Rogers photo

Scenic

A sunset sky scene from Mount George on Thanksgiving Day 2017.

Elizabeth Rogers photo

Scenic

Fall season in St. Helena in Oct. 2017.

Darren Loveland photo

Scenic

A view of the Napa River in Feb. 2017.

Elizabeth Rogers photo

Scenic

Glorious light as seen from St. Helena Hospital in this Sept. 2017 photo.

Elizabeth Rogers photo

Scenic

An oak tree at sunset in Kennedy Park in Jan. 2018.

Elizabeth Rogers photo

Scenic

Grapes on the vine at Trefethen Winery in 2012.

Garry Waggoner photo

Scenic

Old Upvalley vines and mustard along Highway 29 in March 2007.

Garry Waggoner photo

Scenic

The Third Street Bridge in Napa California.

Tennille Tune photo

Scenic

An early spring comes to Carneros near Buhman Road in this February 2018 photo.

Robin McKee-Cant photo

Scenic

A morning walk along the Napa River Walk following a November 2017 rainstorm.

Scott Heskes photo

Scenic

A view at the Vintners Golf Club in Yountville from 2016.

Bernard Vangrin photo

Scenic

The end of the rainbow on Henry Road in Carneros district in August 2017.

Nicholas Murrieta photo

Scenic

A Lake Hennessy sunset in January 2018.

Kathleen Wallace photo

Scenic

Reader Brett was at Skyline Park when it opened on Jan. 21, following the October fires

Submitted photo

Scenic

Fall in the vineyards in November 2017 at the Michael Franti concert at Robert Mondavi Winery.

Janet Brown photo

Scenic

An aerial view of Yountville from a hot air balloon from December 2017.

Lori Eckert photo

Scenic

Flowering mustard from 2017 by reader Brett.

Submitted photo

Scenic

Lake Hennessey in November 2016.

Eric Metens photo

Scenic

Alston Park in December 2014.

Marilu Martinez photo

Scenic

Mustard blooms in a vineyard in Oakville in January 2017.

Heather Jean photo

Scenic

The Red Barn on Dealy Lane from February 2017.

Lisa Fonville

Scenic

Fall in the Napa Valley at Duckhorn Vineyards.

Joshua Stephens photo

Scenic

Rutherford vines in winter 2017.

Mari Havens photo

Scenic

Taken from the top of the castle looking south-east into the valley in April 2016.

Salvador Cuevas photo

Scenic

A vineyard view from Silverado Trail near St. Helena from July 2017.

Cris Christensen photo

Scenic

The Greeter Sculpture at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars in November 2017.

Angelica Zetina photo

Scenic

Pope Valley after the wildfires.

Fabiola Lopez photo

Scenic

Clear skies over a vineyard at Oak Knoll and Orchard avenues in January 2018.

Jonathan Ceballos photo

Scenic

Fall colors of Ginkgo trees lining the lane to Far Niente winery in 2017.

Terry Cotter photo

Scenic

A farm between Calistoga and Santa Rosa in October 2017.

Ruslan Gurzhiy photo

Scenic

The Grape Crusher statue at sunrise on Thanksgiving Day, 2017.

Hector Barragan photo

Scenic

Early ground bloom among the vineyards in South Napa in January 2018.

Brian Roddy photo

Scenic

Looking west from Trancas Street at Silverado Trail in February 2017.

Jerae Knutson photo

Scenic

A Saturday morning walk at the Alston Park dog park.

Racquel Beltran photo

Scenic

Saturday morning walk in the dog park at Alston Park in October 2017.

Racquel Beltran

Scenic

Autumn in Coombsville, just west of First Avenue, in November 2017.

Jerae Knutson photo

Scenic

A water run off along Lake Hennessey last winter.

Nicholas Murrieta photo

Scenic

A Spring 2017 sunset from the top of Coombsville Road.

Brian Roddy photo

Scenic

Reynolds Family Winery along Silverado Trail in December 2017.

Mindi LaRose photo

Scenic

Golden rays of sunlight peak through the sky at Lake Hennessy during a winter evening.

Nicholas Murrieta photo

Scenic

Tubbs Lane in Calistoga in November 2017, following area wildfires.

Nicholas Murrieta photo

Scenic

St. Helena residents are blessed with the golden color of mustard, even in their neighborhoods.

Nicholas Murrieta photo

Scenic

Sunrise in the Oakville Hills in late December 2017.

Kyle Witsil photo

Scenic

The view from the Wurtele Vineyard looking across the Valley floor in January 2018.

Tracy Smith photo

Scenic

A view from Lommel Road in Calistoga in October 2016.

Ryan Nemeyer photo

Scenic

Fall colors in 2017 near Yountville.

Ashley Ford photo

Scenic

Alpha Omega Winery in January 2018.

Leslie Garcia photo

Scenic

Wild lupine flowers from the top of Stags Leap in 2014.

Alex Simenstad photo

Scenic

Fall colors in the Napa Valley in Noveber 2016.

Menx Cuizon photo

Scenic

A Super Moon over Oakville in November 2016.

Menx Cuizon photo

Scenic

A hot air balloon ride at Alston Park in 2016.

Candy Dusky photo

Scenic

Blankeit Estate seen in November 2015.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

Sunrise at Newton Vineyards in December 2017.

Bob McClenahan photo

Scenic

The Birds at Kelham Vineyards from November 2013.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

Views of the Napa Valley from Castello di Amorosa in Calistoga in July 2016.

Ciara Ariaz photo

Scenic

Fall in the Napa Valley near Burgess Vineyards in November 2017.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

Fog above the David Arthur Vineyards in January 2018.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

Dormant vines at Dalla Valle Vineyards in January 2018.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

Staglin Winery from June 2016.

Doug Summers photo

Scenic

A rainy day sunset in Yountville from February 2016.

Sakhon Nhek photo

Scenic

Thanksgiving clouds are seen near Selanus Winery on Nov. 24, 2017.

Melissa Patrino photo

