Nishi Rajakaruna fell in love with plants at a young age during a visit to Sinharaja Rainforest, a lowland tropical rainforest in Sri Lanka. He received a BA in human ecology from College of the Atlantic and conducted his post-undergraduate practical training in plant ecophysiology at Harvard University. His research on the evolutionary ecology of the *Lasthenia californica* complex earned him a MS and a PhD in botany from the University of British Columbia, Canada. Nishi conducted post-doctoral research in plant ecology at Stanford University. His research examines how plant diversity, ecology, and evolution are influenced by serpentine and other 'unusual' soils, including those with heavy metals. He has taught botany at College of the Atlantic and San José State University for 12 years and spent a year as a Fulbright Senior Scholar in Sri Lanka and India. He is currently an associate professor in plant biology at California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo) where he has been teaching general botany, ethnobotany, and biogeography since 2017. Over his 15-year teaching career he has taught many botany courses, including edible botany, ethnobotany, plant taxonomy, plant evolution, geobotany, and field botany.

Nishi has published over 85 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters on plant-soil relations of serpentine and other harsh rock outcrops in California, Maine, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Iran, and Russia and is the co-editor of two key treatments on plant life on serpentine soils [*Serpentine: Evolution and Ecology in a Model System* (2011) and *Soil and Biota of Serpentine: A World View* (2009) and a book titled *Plant Ecology and*

Evolution in Harsh Environments (2014). He has served on the scientific advisory committees of the International Conference on Serpentine Ecology since 2006 and was the Recording Secretary of the California Botanical Society 2009-2010. He was the Editor-in-Chief of *Rhodora*, the Journal of the New England Botanical Club, from 2014-2019 and is currently on the Board of Directors of the California Native Plant Society, San Luis Obispo Chapter. He holds an honorary research professor position at the School of Biological Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.