



The Southern CALIFORNIA

Native Flower Garden

A Guide to Size, Bloom, Foliage, Color, and Texture

Susan Van Atta, ASLA

Illustrated by Peter Gaede

\$19.99 U.S.

The Southern California Native Flower Garden is a comprehensive guide to 164 flowering plants native to California. Plants native to this region are uniquely beautiful and can thrive on their own with minimal water, pruning or trimming, fertilizers, or soil amendments.

The Southern California Native Flower Garden includes

- Detailed descriptions and growing information for 164 native plants.
- Easy-to-use tri-cut flip pages with illustrations to mix and match plants.
- Information on height and spread, soil needs, and Sunset Climate Zones.
- Symbols showing growing season and water and sunlight requirements for at-a-glance comparison.
- Icons depicting the type of wildlife each plant attracts.
- A comprehensive resource section.

Susan Van Atta, ASLA, is founder and president of award-winning landscape architecture firm Van Atta Associates, Inc. She holds degrees in environmental studies and landscape architecture, and dedicates herself to environmentally appropriate landscape design, habitat restoration, and the use of native plants.

GARDENING



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The SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Native Flower Garden Van Atta / Gaede

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Introduction

“Flowers are Nature’s most eloquent voice, speaking to us of optimism and fertility. Flowers remind us that we share the Earth with other living things. Nature can almost be disregarded—treated as a faceless background—until flowers bloom. Then we are awestruck at the delicate beauty of life in its myriad forms, its exuberant colors, and its subtle fragrances.”

—Susan Lamb, *Wildflowers of California*

This native flower garden book is intended to help you create flower gardens with inspired and memorable colors, textures, and scents, while enhancing the health and comfort of your home with less effort, water, energy, and expense.

The book illustrates 164 California native plants, presented in the same light as popular exotic flowering plants readily available at retail nurseries. The trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, ground covers, and vines described here last a long time and provide brilliant flowers. The garden-shop nonnative annuals and perennials, so commonly used in flower gardens, require fertilizer, water, and frequent replacement. In sunny Southern California, a colorful flower-filled garden can be so much easier.

Environmentally sensitive design does not require sacrifice or discomfort and is a more authentic, vibrant, and thoughtful way to live. By designing gardens with plants that are adapted to our surroundings, we can have all of the beauty without the fuss of lots of water, chemical fertilizers, amendments, pesticides, herbicides, pruning, and trimming. This approach to gardening maximizes the health of our gardens and households as well as the communities in which we live.

The plants that have evolved here also have advantages for the local wildlife such as songbirds, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Hosting living creatures enriches the garden with beauty, life, and charm as well.

The modern gardener designs with nature.

Native Flora Enriches Life

Native plants reveal so much and have lots to offer if only we pay attention. Growing California plants stimulates this curiosity.

Understanding of the native flora provides insight regarding our overall environment, including soils, climate, and human habitation. For example, one can look out on the landscape and see that the presence of coastal sage scrub reveals a rocky area, grassland suggests clay, and wetland plants indicate seeps and other water sources. Trees and shrubs indicate which way the winds usually blow and how intensely. Long-term habitation can be inferred from the ceremonial plant datura growing at a Chumash sacred site, or the medicinal yerba mansa at a former settlement.

Simple pleasures can come from knowing and experiencing the delightful scents and tastes of our native plants. Many sweetly scent the air and attract hummingbirds and butterflies with flowers, but these qualities go beyond the obvious with native plants. For example, Cleveland sage foliage possesses a sweeter herbal scent than lavender, and the leaves of white sage are burned for incense. California bay trees cool the air, and the leaves can be used in cooking. Miner’s lettuce and the berries of some mahonia are edible, while delicious and restorative teas can be made from the hips of California rose or the leaves of wild ginger and yerba buena.

Be curious. Get out in nature to see where these plants choose to grow, and chances are that you will want to bring native plants into your landscape. Learn our native flora and seek out plants you have not yet seen in nature. It’s easier than birding—plants don’t move!

Do leave the plants where you find them, as most plants are not likely to survive being transplanted. Digging up plants also adversely affects species’ long-term survival and ability to reproduce in a location. Keep in mind that pollinators and other animals depend on that species for food, and other visitors will not be able to enjoy our natural heritage if plants are taken away.

Every Year Can be a Good Year in the Garden

Whether or not you are native to California, the time has come to love the subtle beauty of our indigenous plant communities such as the coastal sage scrub or chaparral.

One year after good rains, I hiked up Sage Hill through coastal sage scrub and higher up through the chaparral. It was nature's perennial garden in full bloom. Even the chamise was blooming exuberantly, revealing glowing soft yellow flower stalks. The Indian paintbrush, 18 inches wide that year (much bigger than the paintbrushes of a normal year), appeared like bright flames all along the path. All of the species of sage were flowering in full white, lavender, and purple glory. Towards the top of the trail, in rocky soil on a steep slope, the landscape was filled with masses of foothill penstemon. This was the first time I'd seen it in nature, and I wondered, "How did this garden plant make it six miles into the backcountry?"

A native garden can be at its best all the time, even if the rain is not well timed, and can grace your life very conveniently right outside your door.

Until you have created your own native paradise, every year is a good year at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (founded in 1927 and now located in Claremont) and Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (founded in 1926). It is a significant endorsement of our native flora that two wonderful botanic gardens were founded so long ago in Southern California. Visit these places to experience native plants through the seasons and become inspired as a native gardener.

Many other opportunities to experience nature occur near you. These books can help you to begin your explorations:

Phyllis Faber, *California's Wild Gardens: A Guide to Favorite Botanical Sites*, University of California Press, 2005.

Philip W. Rundel and Robert Gustafson, *Introduction to the Plant Life of Southern California: Coast to Foothills*, University of California Press, 2005. (See page 286 of their book for "Where to Experience Southern California Plant Communities.")

Many Plants in Nature Are Beautiful without Care

Explaining the virtues of a native landscape to a client, I have pointed out, "See that green and lush-looking toyon growing on a hot dry south-facing slope with no irrigation? Just imagine how nice it would look with a little care in your garden."

With the correct maintenance, our native plants are easy to grow. Unfortunately, native plants in a garden setting often receive the wrong care, which has resulted in the misperception that they are difficult to grow. Most commonly, they receive too much water and are not allowed to attain their natural form due to misguided pruning methods. See the bibliography for some excellent resources about Southern California native plant care and maintenance.

Availability

The most difficult part of planning a California native flower garden is that currently many of these plants are hard to find in nurseries. While this situation is improving, gardeners can stimulate the necessary demand by asking for them.

The reason that native plants have a hard time getting noticed, or offered by retail sources, is that they are less impressive in nursery containers. A fully rooted, perfect native specimen is likely to have relatively little foliage in proportion to the container. They may appear to be a poor bargain next to a greenhouse-adapted plant with leaves overflowing the nursery pot. The native plant will not be happy in its container for long either, so its "shelf life" is limited. It will take education and horticultural sophistication to overcome these barriers to native plant gardening.

At the back of this book you will find a list of nurseries and other sources, such as botanic gardens, for California native plants. If none of these are conveniently located for you, ask your local nursery to stock native California plants.

Plant Selection Criteria

“All gardeners know better than other gardeners.”

—Chinese Proverb

The plants selected for this book are intended to be the more reliable, widely adapted, relatively available, beautifully flowering, or otherwise attractive native plants for Southern California gardens. I reviewed nursery catalogues to make the list, and selected the plants that met this criteria based upon my personal experience in growing, specifying, or observing the plants in the wild or in gardens. As it happens, these plants have many other characteristics, such as providing songbird, hummingbird, and butterfly habitat. Perhaps this is not surprising in a list of native plants.

The region defined for Southern California gardens starts at Point Conception on the north and extends to the Mexican border on the south, which includes the coastal cities of Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego. The book emphasizes plants that come from areas with some coastal influence throughout the state because these plants are most available at this time. Many widely adapted plants from inland and desert areas are included too.

Desert dwellers will find more help by looking to sources for the desert states such as Arizona. Another book in this series, *The Arizona Low Desert Flower Garden*, 2007, by Kirti Mathura, provides guidance, and the Mountain States Nursery (Web site, catalogue, and books) is another good starting point.

Everyone has different experiences with individual plants. Commonly, there is a lack of agreement in the literature, on Web sites, and in catalogues regarding the size, time of bloom, performance, and sometimes even flower color. This reflects the effect of many variables (soils, microclimates, expectations, cultural practices, and many more) on gardens and gardeners. Plants will perform differently in different places.

This book highlights 164 species of California native flowering plants. Included are 14 small trees or large shrubs chosen for their flowers. A few ferns and grasses are included for textural contrast with the flowering plants.

How to Use This Book

The format of this book allows you to consider selected plant combinations for use in the garden. Flip through the tri-cut pages to mix and match plants according to plant height, time of year of bloom, color of flowers, and foliage (diagram on page 12). Further useful information is summarized with each plant entry to help with other design decisions as well. The Planting Design section includes ideas to help you get started on your own combinations.

Botanic and Family Names

The pages are organized alphabetically by botanic names (known by some as Latin names) to make the plants easy to find. It is necessary to know the botanic name when looking for or requesting a certain plant, because many plants have more than one common name or share a name (or a similar one) with other plants.

The plant family is noted with each entry. Botanists group plants according to similar characteristics found in their structure. These groupings are referred to as families. The first name in a botanic name is the genus, and these groups are based upon similarities found in the flowers. It is useful to know which plants are related, because this can suggest similar environmental responses and can reveal relationships when seemingly very different plants share the same family.

Origin

The plant communities in which the listed plant is found in nature are given. A plant community is an assemblage of plants with complementary adaptations that grow together in nature. Keeping in mind plant communities and the environmental conditions in which they thrive will help you to select plants that are visually compatible and suitable to the natural conditions in your garden.

I was first introduced to the California flora in a University of California field botany class where we traveled throughout the state to

Flip pages for color and season matches

Top row plants: TALL
(usually 3-8 feet)

Middle
row
plants:
MEDIUM
(usually
2-3 feet)

Bottom row plants: LOW
(usually 1-2 feet)

Water consumption



Exposure



Provides food for



Peak
interest
season:

Summer/ Fall
Spring/ Summer
Winter/ Spring
Year- round

experience our plant communities directly. I continued these explorations as a passion, and whenever appropriate, I always enjoyed re-creating the finer examples of the natural landscape in my work as a landscape architect. This has the practical benefit of combining plants with similar horticultural requirements.

Height and Spread

One hundred fifty of the plants are split between three general size groups and are organized from top to bottom as follows: the top section lists tall plants that grow 3 to 8 feet high or a little more; the middle section lists medium plants that are usually 2 to 3 feet high; and the bottom section lists low plants that are usually less than 2 feet high.

These heights serve as a general guideline, with some plants straddling categories. The expected height and the spread or width are noted for each plant. Actual heights will vary depending upon microclimate, soils, and horticultural practices.

The illustrations provide a close-up of the flowers (and sometimes the fruit or leaves) of each featured plant as well as the entire plant in bloom to give an impression of its overall form, texture, and foliage color.

Each plant description includes the type of plant, flower color and form, ornamental fruiting characteristics, and shape. Additional interest from seasonal variations (including deciduousness) or the texture or color of the foliage and bark is also noted. The value and potential uses of the plant are described, and special notes regarding planting and maintenance are included when important. Sometimes other species or varieties of the plant entry are listed for more plant selection options.

Fourteen small flowering trees (or large shrubs) are listed following the section of tri-cut pages. These plants all easily exceed 8 feet in height.

Page Edge Symbols and Colors

The color of each page edge indicates the time of year when the featured plant provides its peak seasonal interest in the form of flowers, fruit, or foliage. This information allows you to select plants that bloom together in

a desired season, or alternatively, makes it possible to design a garden with something special in each season or throughout the year. Orange indicates summer/fall plants; yellow indicates spring/summer plants; blue indicates winter/spring plants; and green indicates plants that have year-round interest.

Exposure

It is important to group plants according to their sun or shade requirements and plant them in the appropriate exposure. On each page you'll find symbols for recommended sun exposure, from full sun to partial shade to full shade.

Water

This book's water requirement designations are suggested amounts for established plants. Water needs vary considerably regionally in response to microclimates and soils. The real way to know the water schedule in your own garden is by noting the plant's health in response to the amount of water provided. Watering schedules must be adjusted seasonally and over time in response to the maturity of the plants. Below are the symbols that indicate recommended water amounts.

Rainfall only—These plants survive on rainfall after establishment.

Low water needs—Most established native plants need one deep watering every four to five weeks during the dry season or in drought years.

Moderate water needs—For all-year best appearance, plants naturally found in moister areas or microclimates benefit from irrigation (or rain) every two to three weeks.

To establish native plants, it is important that the root ball be watered just before it becomes dry during the first several months after planting. The only way to know this is to check the soil around the plant every few days or in response to weather conditions. After this, water deeply according to the needs of the plants and avoid overhead irrigation during the hot part of the day.

Soils

It is more realistic to match your plant selections to the soils of your site than to attempt to alter your soils to match plants. Nearly all native plants do better in well-drained soil. See the plant descriptions for some plants tolerant of clay soil. Below are the symbols that indicate soil recommendations.

Adaptable—Plants that tolerate many soils.

Adaptable (well drained)—Wide soil tolerance, prefers good drainage or slopes.

Well drained—Plants adapted to rocky or sandy soils; must have good drainage to survive.

Sunset Climate Zones

Sunset climate zones are provided for each plant that is listed in the January 2007 *Sunset Western Garden Book*, 8th Edition, or the Jepson Horticultural Database, which is online at http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/interchange/hort_form.html.

The twenty-four Sunset climate zones, established and mapped by Sunset Publishing Company, take all of the factors affecting a plant's performance into account, including the great variety of microclimates created by topography, wind patterns, and elevations, as well as temperatures, length of growing season, timing and amount of rainfall, and humidity. The Sunset zones are more useful than the familiar hardiness zone maps produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which divide the United States into 11 zones based strictly on "average annual minimum temperatures."

The Sunset Western Garden Book, first published in 1939, is meaningfully updated on a regular basis and is a reflection of trends in gardening. It is notable that the recent edition of this basic gardening reference now includes many native plants. I take this as a sign that native plants have finally gone "mainstream" and that availability is likely to improve.

Habitat Value

The most enlivening aspect of native gardening is that it supports our native wildlife as well. The plants that have qualities that are especially attractive to songbirds (food and cover), hummingbirds (nectar), butterflies (nectar or larvae food sources), bees (nectar), or wildlife (food, nesting materials, and cover) are designated with symbols. Many books (see lists) and some Web sites listed in this book provide more detailed information regarding the specific birds, butterflies, and bees that are attracted to individual plants.

Plant Selection

“Plant-forms and plant colors are as expressive as the canvas work of the painter. In some respects they are more expressive, since they are things themselves, with individuality and life, not the suggestions of things.”

—Liberty Hyde Bailey, *Cyclopedia of Horticulture*

This book can be useful to gardeners redesigning a portion of the garden as a flower garden, adding color to an existing garden, or starting an entirely new landscape.

Planting design is a creative and technical challenge because there is so much to know, and much of the needed knowledge is best gained through experience. Successful gardening is an informed art, and as in art, it is appropriate to find your own way.

Prepare yourself by visiting native plant sales, taking classes at your local botanic garden, reading the many books about native plants and their requirements listed in the bibliography of this book, and getting out in nature to increase your understanding. This preparation will help you just as much if you decide to consult with a landscape architect (especially helpful if the overall structure of the garden is to be developed), a landscape designer, or a contractor with expertise and interest in the use of native plants. A good residential landscape architect or designer will be concerned first with your goals and aesthetic preferences, and this book

can be a tool to help you communicate your plant selection interests to the architect or designer.

Following are five simplified steps to help you get started.

Understand Your Region and Site

The environmental conditions in your region, as well as your garden, must inspire your plant selection.

Determine regional considerations, including your Sunset climate zone, prevailing winds, watershed conditions (how drainage enters your site and where it goes), and the plant communities occurring in your region in environmental conditions similar to those found in your garden.

Understand the natural features in your garden such as the following:

- **Existing vegetation:** Consider what the health of the existing vegetation reveals about your site, and think about how you will incorporate desirable vegetation into your planting scheme.
- **Soils:** Consider having your soil characteristics (texture, chemical composition, and pH) tested at a horticultural soils lab, but keep in mind that the standard recommendations for fertilizers and amendments will not apply to native plantings. The information gained from testing should guide the choice of plant materials that prefer your soil type without alteration.
- **Water sources and quality:** Even regionally adapted plants require irrigation for establishment and to look their best every year. Consider the quality of your water sources and how the water will be applied. Look for opportunities to take advantage of rainwater with the use of cisterns, rainwater gardens, and bioswales. These conservation methods have the added advantages of happier plants (plants thrive with rainwater!) and a healthier watershed. Watersheds benefit when regional storm-water systems are less burdened with runoff, and plants remove pollutants while being nourished by water.
- **Topography:** The angle and direction of the slopes that occur on your site affect drainage and the amount of sun and wind received by plants.
- **Microclimates:** In addition to the affect of the topography on sun,

wind, and drainage, man-made features such as buildings, fences, and arbors affect plants by altering the amount and affect of sun, drainage, and wind. Plants can be placed to improve microclimates as well. For example, deciduous plants can provide summer shade and allow winter sun, while evergreen plants can block unpleasant winds.

- **Fire:** Vegetation has a profound affect on the fire safety of your home. If you live in or near a naturally high fire hazard area such as the chaparral, consult with your local fire district, Web sites, or books regarding fire-safe landscapes, often referred to as “firescaping.”

Determine Uses

Consider the many ways you use or wish to use your garden. Keep in mind the views, from inside and outside your home, that you wish to improve or enhance. Locate these uses on a plan or on the ground, along with practical requirements such as trash storage, composting, and screening.

Choose a Theme

There are so many choices that it is best to simplify them by choosing a theme and sticking with it. Different parts of your garden will inspire themes in response to the qualities of the area you wish to landscape. Shady areas under trees or at the north side of a house or fence may suggest the creation of a woodland garden. A sunny slope may be turned into a brightly flowering chaparral garden to minimize water use and to control erosion. An outdoor sitting area may be enhanced with a fragrance garden, and a garden to be viewed from inside may be designed to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

There are endless creative possibilities for thematic exploration. Your themes may be quite personal—inspired by things such as your favorite natural place, poetry, history, or literature. Themes that are easy to implement with California native plants include the following:

- **Plant community themes:** oak woodland understory; riparian woodland understory; chaparral garden; coastal sage scrub garden; dune garden; desert wash garden; coastal bluff garden; wildflower meadow; island garden.

- **Environmental themes:** rainwater gardens; habitat restoration garden; songbird garden; hummingbird garden; butterfly garden; insect garden.
- **Exposures:** shade garden; rock garden; ferny seep.
- **Plant family themes:** sage garden; sunflower garden; rose family garden.
- **Uses:** children’s garden; fragrance garden; edible or herb garden; ethnobotanical garden.

Color themes are a good choice for any flower garden. One clear color scheme sets a mood and brings harmony to the landscapes you create. Remember to consider the foliage, flowers, and fruit of plants across all seasons. Ideas for color schemes with the atmospheres they create include the following:

- Red, yellow, and blue—bright and balanced
- Yellow and blue—fresh
- Red and yellow—exciting
- Red, orange, and yellow—cheerful
- Night or white garden—calm
- White and green—restful
- Blue and white—cheerful
- White, yellow, and blue—uplifting
- Purple, pale yellow, and gray—restful
- Pink and gray—calm
- Pink, purple, and gray—old-fashioned
- Bright yellow and purple—stately and grand
- Soft yellow and purple—Subdued
- Deep purple and blue (with yellow or white accents)—opulent
- Deep purple and red (with pale blue accents)—elegant and dignified
- Lime green and orange—modern
- Pink and blue—romantic
- Orange and purple—energetic

Select Compatible Plants

Group plants with compatible horticultural requirements and plant them where these requirements can be readily met. The information provided for each plant in this book includes what you need to know to select plants adapted to the environmental conditions in your garden. These conditions include where they are found in nature, preferred sun exposure, water requirements, soil tolerances, and climate preferences.

Space Plants Correctly

Space plants to allow for their mature size. For those who cannot resist the temptation to plant too close together for an instant effect, plant the areas under larger plants with annuals or short-lived perennials.

Wildlife Gardening

If one of your goals is to attract wildlife to your garden, pay attention to the wild creatures that already visit, and then research the plants that attract and support the birds, insects, and animals you wish to see in your garden. Try to include in your garden a variety of plants that produce nectar, berries, fruit, and seed in different seasons for a steady source of food all year. Try planting layers of vegetation that attract birds, insects, and other animals adapted to a variety of niches. In addition, provide nesting and perching habitat by planting trees or leaving dead snags.

The measures you can take beyond plant selection to increase the number of wild creatures that visit your garden include using only compost or organic fertilizers and natural pesticides appropriately, and avoiding the use of toxic chemicals; supplying water for bathing and drinking; letting seeds ripen for food; and restricting domestic pets that may frighten away wildlife from the portions of your garden dedicated to a wild habitat.

Genetics

Botanists, ecologists, and others are concerned with the alteration of the natural range of plant species by the horticultural use of native plants, and genetic interference with native species through hybridization with non-native species, horticultural varieties, hybrids, and selections. Gardeners

in areas within or near a natural area can avoid contributing to this problem by planting regionally native plants propagated from sources within the watershed.

Check with the local chapter of the California Native Plant Society for nurseries that propagate from sources in your area. Very ambitious gardeners can grow their own plants from cuttings and seeds. Much information is available regarding the most successful methods for propagating native plants in several of the books listed in the bibliography, and from Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden or the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. See the bibliography for more insight regarding this topic.

An Important Note about Reclaimed Water

Use reclaimed water only on plantings that must have significant supplemental irrigation to survive and can better tolerate the salinity of this water source. Turf areas that are to be used for recreation and productive areas such as orchards are examples of landscapes that require long-term irrigation and are necessary even in times of drought.

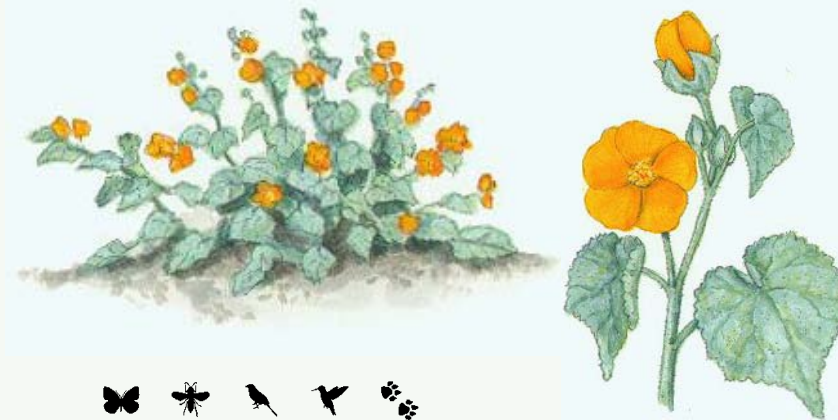
Until water districts provide reclaimed water that is treated to the point that it is no longer toxic to most plants, do not use it on drought-tolerant plants, especially natives. They are not likely to survive the effect of the salts and other substances that remain in this water. Invest in the proper establishment of drought-tolerant plants by using quality water for establishment, and plant them in the fall. The reward will be long-term water savings and healthier landscapes.

22a

Abutilon palmeri—Indian mallow

Family: Mallow (Malvaceae); Origin: East-facing slopes, canyons, washes, desert scrub

Indian mallow is a sprawling evergreen shrub related to a popular group of plants referred to as “flowering maples” with maple-like leaves and showy flowers. The bright gold-orange 1-inch-wide flowers occur in clusters on wiry stems, contrasting attractively with the velvety olive-gray foliage. Indian mallow leaves are 4 to 7 inches wide, providing a bold texture for a flower garden. Select Indian mallow to contrast with fine textured or dark green plants, or as a feature in a gray-and-silver garden with incienso (*Encelia farinosa*), chalk dudleya (*Dudleya pulverulenta*), and our lord’s candle (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*). Its long flowering period and need for good drainage make it a good choice for containers. Prune Indian mallow for shape, remove old flowers for a longer bloom period, or let it go to seed for more plants. The foliage becomes greener with more water.



3' to 5'

3' to 5'

SOILS:
Adaptable
(well drained)

SUNSET ZONES:
8–9, 11–13

22b

Acalypha californica—California copperleaf

Family: Spurge (Euphorbiaceae); Origin: Chaparral and southern oak woodland

California copperleaf is a lovely red-twigged evergreen shrub with fuzzy dark green leaves that are copper red when young. The soft red male flowers are numerous in short catkins, and one to three red female flowers are set inside a cuplike bract, both on the same plant. This fast-growing plant is an appropriate choice for oak understory or to fill in around taller and bolder desert plants. Plant it with other natives with bright warm flower colors such as chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) and Indian mallow (*Abutilon palmeri*) to emphasize the attractive red accents of this plant. California copperleaf is found in very dry rocky habitats from San Diego County and south, thus it requires very little water.



3'

3'

SOILS:
Well drained

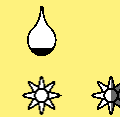
SUNSET ZONES:
15–16, 18–24

22c

Achillea millefolium—Yarrow

Family: Sunflower (Asteraceae); Origin: Many plant communities, grasslands

This variable semievergreen herbaceous perennial has dark green to silver-gray feathery or fernlike leaves. The white to pink flowers form tight 3- to 5-inch flattened heads on 6-inch- to 3-foot-tall flower stalks. Yarrow spreads by rhizomes that form colonies. The low forms can serve as lawn substitutes that can take light foot traffic and require only occasional mowing and watering. Yarrow controls erosion on slopes, it attracts beneficial insects, is beautiful in meadow or border plantings, and can be used, fresh or dry, in arrangements. Yarrow is drought deciduous, so maintain foliage with a little summer water. Remove dead flowers for a longer bloom and divide it when crowded. Rabbits, caterpillars, and birds will feed on the foliage. Most of the yarrows sold in nurseries have been hybridized from European origins. Our native ‘Calistoga’ has silver-gray foliage and white 1-foot-tall flowers.



6" to 3'

forms spreading
colonies

SOILS:
Adaptable

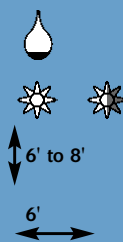
SUNSET ZONES:
1–24

24a

Arctostaphylos densiflora 'Sentinel'—Sentinel manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Horticultural selection of *A. densiflora*

Sentinel manzanita features many large clusters of white flowers, blushed pink, beginning in winter. The soft gray-green leaves open up to reveal interesting and beautiful chocolate-colored branches on a tall upright form. The neutral foliage makes it a good backdrop for more colorful plants, and it also harmonizes with the subtle tones of grayer plants such as creeping sage (*Salvia sonomensis*). Plant it as a specimen for its sculptural quality or in masses with coast silk tassel (*Garrya elliptica*) and flowering ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*). This manzanita is happy with average garden maintenance, including regular summer water, clay soils, and pruning. It responds well to warmer inland climates and is a bit faster growing than other manzanitas.



SOILS:
Well drained

SUNSET ZONES:
7–9, 14–21

24b

Achillea 'Island Pink'—Island Pink yarrow

Family: Sunflower (Asteraceae); Origin: Santa Cruz Island

Island Pink yarrow is a low-growing perennial with feathery, bright green foliage. The rose-pink flowers age to light pink and occur in tight 3-inch flattened heads on flower stalks that reach 2 feet high. Island Pink yarrow spreads by rhizomes that form colonies. As a result, this form of yarrow is used as a lawn substitute that can take light foot traffic and requires only occasional mowing and watering. This very useful and attractive native plant can control erosion on slopes, and it attracts beneficial insects. The long-lasting flowers are beautiful in meadow or border plantings and are good cut flowers. Yarrow is one of the easiest natives to grow. It is drought deciduous, so maintain foliage with a little summer water. Anticipate that rabbits and caterpillars will feed on the foliage, and leave some mature flower heads to attract birds with the seeds.



SOILS:
Adaptable

SUNSET ZONES:
1–24

24c

Adiantum aleuticum—Five-fingered fern, western maidenhair

Family: Brake fern (Pteridaceae); Origin: Seeps and springs, chaparral, woodlands, and forests

Five-fingered fern is composed of delicate arching fronds on wiry black stems that fork to make a unique fingerlike pattern. This airy fern forms delicate and beautiful small colonies. Use five-fingered fern for its unique foliage alone in containers or mixed with flowering plants. This lush-looking plant appears natural along ponds or streams or as a part of a shaded rock garden or grotto. It is a good choice for shady spots, such as the north side of a building, in combination with other shade plants such as coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.), western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*), and flowering ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*). Native Americans use the black stems in basketry. Plant this fern in moist, shady environments and remove old fronds for best appearance. It is drought deciduous, meaning once established, it can survive drought by losing its leaves.



SOILS:
Adaptable

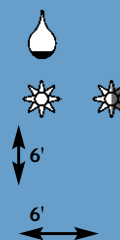
SUNSET ZONES:
14–21

26a

Arctostaphylos bakeri 'Louis Edmunds'—Serpentine manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Horticultural selection, slopes, bluffs, canyons

Serpentine manzanita is a striking shrub with elegantly sculpted, dark mahogany purple branches, sage gray leaves, and numerous clusters of showy clear pink flowers. Reddish berries follow the flowers in the spring. This manzanita has an upright growth habit that opens over time to reveal the sculptural form. Try it with western spicebush (*Calycanthus occidentalis*) and one of the many ceanothus. This manzanita can be a focal point in the garden or serve as an informal screen when planted in masses. The unique purple bark and pink flowers can set the stage for a rich color scheme of burgundy, pinks, and blues in a spring garden. Serpentine manzanita is easy to grow. It shows exceptional heat and drought tolerance, yet accepts garden water.



SOILS:
Adaptable (even
serpentine)

SUNSET ZONES:
4–9, 14–24

26b

Agave desertii—Desert century plant

Family: Agave (Agavaceae); Origin: Colorado and Mojave deserts

Desert century plant is composed of chalky blue-gray leaves that form a rosette resembling a sculptural light blue flower with black edges. After ten years or more, a giant asparagus-like stem emerges from the rosette and then forms a flower. The flower stems are up to 15 feet tall and end in clusters of bold yellow flowers. The original plant dies upon flowering but is replaced by new rosettes that form dense colonies over time. Use the bold form of this agave in a rock garden or dry border to contrast with finer-leaved shrubs or desert trees such as desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) or blue palo verde (*Cercidium floridum*). It will thrive for a very long time in pots and other containers. The rosette leaves end in long, sharp, needle-like tips. Therefore, place desert century plant away from areas of potential contact. It is also hard to weed around; 2 to 3 inches of gravel mulch will prevent weed growth.



SOILS:
Well drained

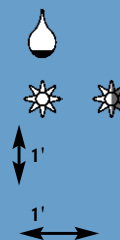
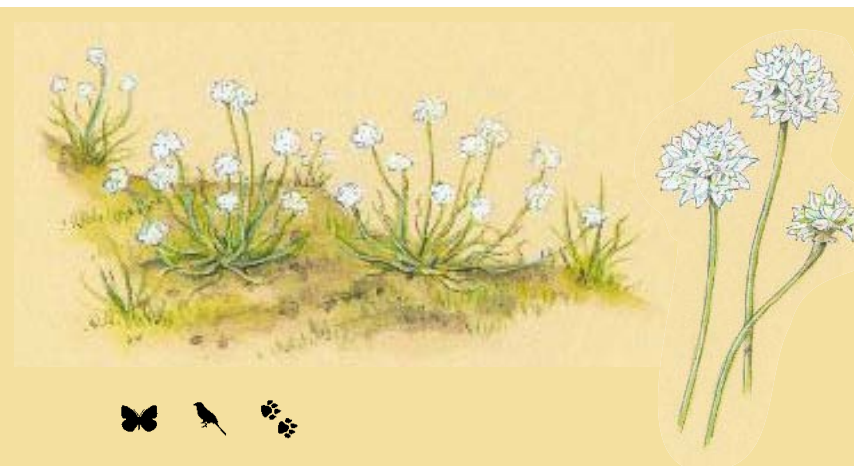
SUNSET ZONES:
3, 7–16, 18–23

26c

Allium haematochiton—Red-skinned onion

Family: Amaryllis (Amaryllidaceae); Origin: Chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland

Red-skinned onion is a perennial herb with flowers in compact umbels on stalks up to 1 foot tall, flanked by dark green leaves. The attractive bicolored blooms are white to rose with purple mid-veins. This native onion is rhizomatous and multiplies slowly, eventually making a nice clump. All wild onions have onion- or garlic-flavored bulbs and may give off these scents when crushed. Especially suited to rock gardens or containers, this onion may be added to dry borders or planted in drifts in open areas of the garden. Red-skinned onion is easy to grow from bulb or seed. Cut back on watering when foliage begins to yellow after flowering. Lift and divide the bulbs when they become crowded.



SOILS:
Well drained

SUNSET ZONES:
7, 14–24




28a


Arctostaphylos densiflora ‘Howard McMinn’—
McMinn manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Horticultural selection of *A. densiflora*


This refined-looking shrub features snowy white to pale pink blossoms that cover the plant and ground in midwinter. The leaves are glossy green and smooth, and the entire plant opens up and becomes sculptural with age. Use McMinn manzanita in informal masses to provide structure or as a soft foundation planting. It can even be trained as an espalier or topiary. Create a small-scale flowering woodland garden by planting it with Ray Hartman ceanothus (*Ceanothus* ‘Ray Hartman’), iris ‘Canyon Snow’ (*Iris douglasiana* ‘Canyon Snow’), and wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*). This manzanita can seem slow to get started, but it is dependable and long lasting. It tolerates average garden conditions, regular summer water, overhead irri-







5' to 6'



6'

SOILS:
Adaptable
(well drained)

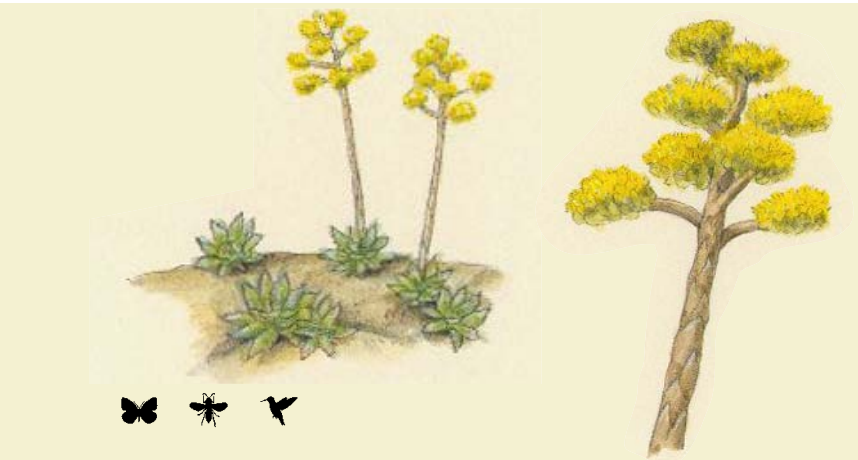
SUNSET ZONES:
7–9, 14–24




28b


Agave shawii—Shaw’s century plant, Shaw agave

Family: Agavaceae (Agave); Origin: Coastal sage scrub, chaparral


This dark green succulent forms sculptural rosettes with sharp red-brown spines along the edges of the leaves. Upon reaching maturity (usually ten to twenty years), impressive broad, flat clusters of large golden to reddish tubular blossoms mature on 7- to 12-foot-tall flower stems. The rosette dies after blooming, but only after other rosettes have “pupped out” to take its place. Use Shaw agave as a bold accent against a backdrop of finer-textured plants such as San Diego sunflower (*Viguiera laciniata*) in a coastal garden. This agave fits in well with naturalistic desert plantings, lasts a very long time in containers, and is a great addition to rock gardens or dry slopes. The spines are very sharp, so plant Shaw agave away from paths and other potential points of contact. It is also hard to weed around; 2 to 3 inches of gravel mulch will prevent weed growth.







2'



2' and colonizes

SOILS:
Well drained

SUNSET ZONES:
14–24




28c


Anemopsis californica—Yerba mansa

Family: Lizardtail (Saururaceae); Origin: Seeps and stream edges


Yerba mansa is a deciduous perennial, well worth growing for its great numbers of striking, unusual flowers. The flowers consist of a greenish white to dark conelike center surrounded by large, bright white bracts. The large, rounded, waxy green leaves form rosettes that send out long, bright red runners. Plant yerba mansa along a pond or stream or to add an easy-to-grow flowering plant to a bioswale with other wetland plants. It can be used as a ground cover or as part of a meadow mix, where the grasses can maintain a green cover when yerba mansa is dormant. Yerba mansa is fast growing and deer resistant. It will grow in very wet or poorly drained soils, and yet it takes ordinary watering in the garden. California Native American tribes have long spread and cultivated yerba mansa because it is an important medicinal plant in this culture.







1'



Colonizes

SOILS:
Adaptable (takes
poor drainage)

SUNSET ZONES:
3, 6, 7–12, 14–24




30a


Arctostaphylos ‘Sunset’—Sunset manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Hybrid between *A. hookeri* and *A. pajaroensis*


‘Sunset’ is an apt name for this evergreen shrub with coppery red new growth, white flowers blushed pink, and red-tinged berries. The dense foliage, covering red peeling bark, matures to bright green, and the flower clusters are 3/4 inch long. This manzanita starts out mounding and becomes upright over time. Sunset manzanita is long-lived and very attractive. Its compact form and lovely coloration make it a good choice as a specimen, or try planting in masses to organize a lush yet low-water flower garden with green foliage, including California barberry <AQ: holly grape?> (*Mahonia pinnata*), *Ceanothus* spp., and coyote mint (*Monardella villosa*). This manzanita tolerates light pruning and heavy soil, and stays dense with age. In favorable locations it can grow quickly.







4' to 6'



4' to 6'

SOILS:
Well drained

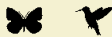
SUNSET ZONES:
6–9, 14–24





30b


Aquilegia formosa—Western columbine

Family: Buttercup (Ranunculaceae); Origin: Woodlands


Western columbine is a delicate herbaceous perennial with richly colored 1 1/2- to 2-inch nodding flowers. The red sepals and spurs are filled with nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies, and the petals and stamen are yellow. The blue-green, delicately divided leaves resemble those of maidenhair ferns. This columbine is the perfect choice to bring bright color to a woodland garden, where it makes a good companion for other shade-loving plants, including island alum root (*Heuchera maxima*) and Douglas iris (*Iris douglasiana*). Use it as temporary filler around slower-growing plants such as creeping mahonia <AQ: barberry?> (*Mahonia repens*) or to nod over a stream or a pond. Allow western columbine to set seed to feed small birds and to grow new plants. This perennial grows easily in most gardens but only lives two to three years. It survives deep shade but will seldom bloom there.







2' to 4'



1' to 2'

SOILS:
Adaptable
(rich preferred)

SUNSET ZONES:
1–11, 14–24




30c


Arctostaphylos edmundsii ‘Bert Johnson’— Bronze mat manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Coastal hybrid


Bronze mat is one of earliest manzanitas to flower, starting as early as November. The small flowers are white and are often flushed with deep pink. This elegant ground cover hugs the ground with flat stems that are covered with 1-inch, round, deep green leaves that flush bronze in early spring. This manzanita is a good ground cover because it is dense enough to suppress weeds. Plant it in combination with other ocean bluff plants or in a rock garden. It will creep over a wall or drape nicely in a hanging basket. Bronze mat manzanita has a reputation for reliability in a range of garden water, exposure, and soil situations, as well as for best performance near the coast. It is slow growing and rarely needs pruning.







1' to 3'



4' to 6'

SOILS:
Adaptable

SUNSET ZONES:
6–9, 14–24

32a ***Calycanthus occidentalis*—Spicebush**

Family: Sweetshrub (Calycanthaceae); Origin: Woodlands and forests

This lovely, large deciduous shrub has lush 3- to 6-inch-long leaves on numerous branches that rise from the ground. The 1- to 2-inch-wide chrysanthemum-shaped flowers are the color of red wine and have the fruity, woody scent of old wine barrels. The bright green spring foliage matures to a shiny deep green color and changes to a pale golden color in the fall. Interesting urn-shaped seed capsules are held on the branches through the winter months. Spicebush often forms broad thickets, making it suitable as a screen plant, to cover or soften the appearance of walls, or as a background shrub. It is also attractive as a specimen. Use it in a woodland garden, or along water for a riparian effect. Fast-growing and spreading by rhizomes, it is best left alone to attain its natural rounded form, although it can also be shaped or hedged. A northern plant, it performs surprisingly well in Southern California gardens and is tolerant of clay soils.



32b ***Arctostaphylos* 'John Dourley'—John Dourley manzanita**

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Horticultural selection

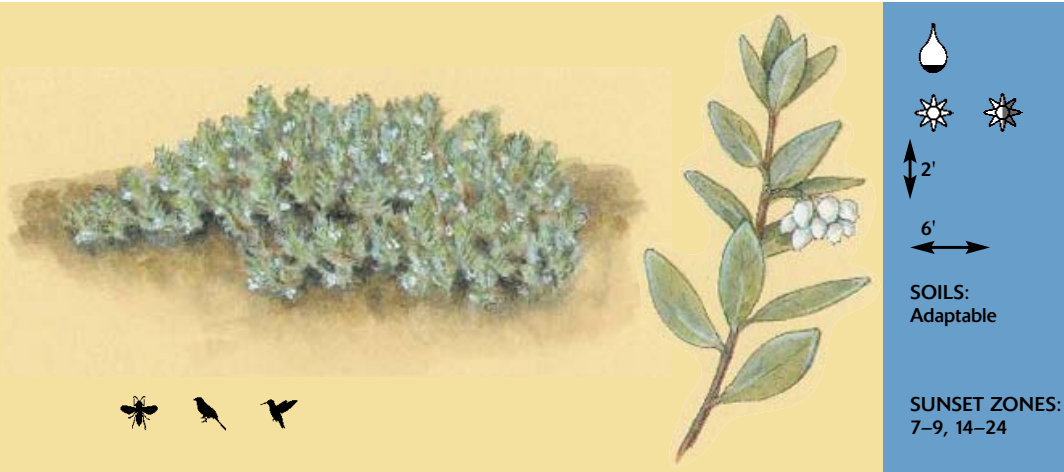
The abundant deep pink blossoms of John Dourley manzanita contrast beautifully with the slate gray foliage of this lovely mounding plant. The coppery new growth in spring and purplish red blushed fruits that follow the flowers make this a wonderful garden selection. This manzanita is horticulturally and visually compatible with other gray-leaved natives. It will light up the understory of mature trees or serve as a ground cover for large planters, parkways, banks, or hillsides. Plant it in back of canyon pink coral bells (*Heuchera* 'Canyon Pink') in coastal gardens or shaded woodlands for a pretty combination. John Dourley manzanita is vigorous and easily grown. It takes garden watering and tolerates heavy soils.



32c ***Arctostaphylos* 'Pacific Mist'—Pacific Mist manzanita**

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Hybrid with *A. silvicola*

Pacific Mist manzanita is a mounding shrub with small clusters of pure white flowers and red branches that turn upward at the leading end. The 2- to 3-inch-long, narrow pointed leaves are gray-green in the shade and grayer in sunnier locations. Use Pacific Mist manzanita as a ground cover for large spaces and gentle slopes. The light-colored foliage and bright white flowers will brighten the dry shade under native oaks. Use it in the foreground of a white garden with other white flower or foliage plants to reflect moonlight. Pacific Mist manzanita grows rapidly and has an open sprawling form. Pinch the growing tips regularly for a denser appearance.



34a

Carpenteria californica—Bush anemone

Family: Mock orange (Philadelphaceae); Origin: Sierra Nevada foothills

Bush anemone has long been in cultivation. It was introduced in the 1880s in England and is known there with other California plants such as ceanothus and Matilija poppy. The long 2- to 5-inch leaves are dark green above and whitish beneath. Clusters of large 2- to 3-inch scented anemone-like white flowers, filled with yellow stamens, bloom on rose-colored stems. This tall shrub with an open, uneven form is suitable for a woodland garden. Place it among a ground cover of strawberry (*Fragaria*) and island alum root (*Heuchera maxima*), along with iris 'Canyon Snow', for a white garden in the open shade of trees. Overhead irrigation and poor air circulation can result in fungal diseases, and ants, aphids, and scale can cause sooty mold on bush anemone. Give a few of these plants a try before planting a large number of them to see how they perform in your garden.



34b

Arctostaphylos pumila—Sandmat manzanita

Family: Heath (Ericaceae); Origin: Dunes (Monterey Bay)

Sandmat manzanita is valued for its attractive foliage composed of pinkish new leaves on low-growing rooted spreading branches that turn silvery green as they age. Short white hairs give the plant a velvety texture. Brown berries follow small tight clusters of white to pink flowers. This is an excellent ground cover to bind sandy soils by the coast and to create a dune garden with dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*). This manzanita will fit nicely in a rock garden, and its fuzzy texture and small size make it fun for a children's garden. Sandmat manzanita has been found to be adaptable to a variety of garden conditions. Although it is a sand dune plant, it has been successfully grown in heavy soils, with or without water. Give it light shade inland.



34c

Armeria maritima—Sea pink

Family: Leadwort (Plumbaginaceae); Origin: Coastal bluff scrub, coastal strand, dunes

The California form of sea pink grows in natural areas on coastal bluffs, where it maintains an attractive appearance in very difficult conditions. Its small, clumping, evergreen tufts of grassy foliage support white to rose-pink ball-shaped flower clusters on single stalks. Sea pink's small size makes it useful as an edging to walks, a foreground to borders, or a ground cover to fill in around larger shrubs. It is a pretty plant to feature in rock gardens or containers. Sea pink has been a popular nursery plant for some time, and its more common forms likely do not originate from California. This popularity has resulted in many cultivars with consistent coloration: 'Bloodstone', with rosy red flowers; 'Cottontail', with white blooms; 'Splendens', with rosy pink blossoms; and 'Rubrifolia', with purplish red foliage and rosy pink blossoms.






36a


Ceanothus ‘Concha’—Concha ceanothus

Family: Buckthorn (Rhamnaceae); Origin: Probable hybrid of Santa Barbara ceanothus and wartleaf ceanothus


Mountain lilac fans rave about concha ceanothus. “Oldest,” “best,” and “outstanding” describe this heavily flowering evergreen shrub with cobalt blue flowers and rich green foliage. The 1½-inch-long clusters of flowers emerge from rose-colored buds, resulting in an overall lavender color when flowering. The graceful arching branches form a dense mound and are covered with narrow 1-inch-long leaves with a warty surface. Concha ceanothus is fast growing. Its dense arching form makes it a good slope cover, medium screen, barrier, or specimen. The cobalt blue flowers add rich flower color to a large-scale mixed shrub planting with western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) and lilac verbena (*Verbenella lilacina*). This is one of the best native shrubs for garden conditions, as it can tolerate summer water.







5' to 6'



6'

SOILS:
Adaptable
(well drained)

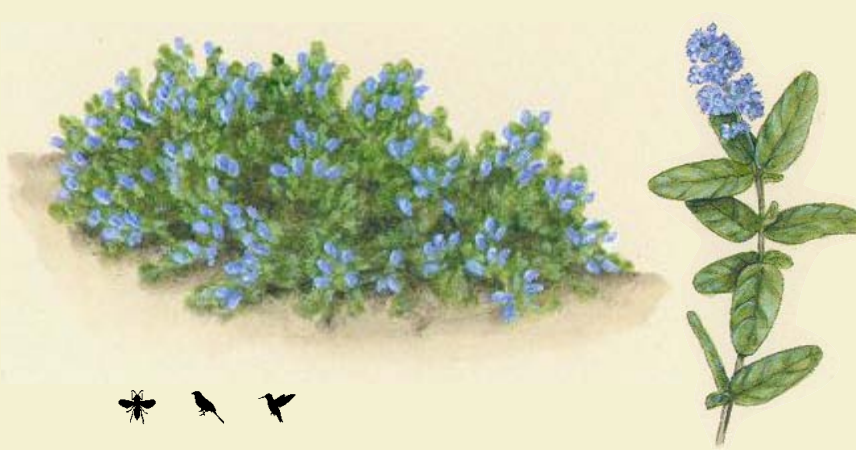
SUNSET ZONES:
5–9, 14–24




36b


Ceanothus gloriosus ‘Anchor Bay’—Anchor Bay ceanothus

Family: Buckthorn (Rhamnaceae); Origin: Coastal horticultural selection


Ancor Bay ceanothus has dark blue flowers with tiny yellow accents. The foliage is the color of coast live oak, which brings out the best in the colors of other native plants. This dense and mounding shrub has 1-inch-long serrated leaves. It is excellent to use as a bank cover for steep slopes or to drape over walls. Use it in the middle or foreground of a dry border to weave less subtle foliage and flower colors together. It combines well with the gray-toned foliage of Point Sal sage (*Salvia* ‘Point Sal’), El Dorado fremontia (*Fremontodendron* ‘El Dorado’), and Pacific Mist manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* ‘Pacific Mist’) in gardens with well-drained soils. Anchor Bay is a strong ceanothus for coastal gardens, and needs shade inland. Deer will avoid browsing on this ceanothus as compared to most.







2'



6'

SOILS:
Well drained

SUNSET ZONES:
5–9, 14–24




36c


Asarum caudatum—Wild ginger

Family: Pipevine (Aristolochiaceae); Origin: Coast redwood, mixed evergreen forests


Wild ginger is a low and spreading evergreen herbaceous perennial with large heart-shaped leaves. The glossy leaves are 2 to 4 inches long and up to 7 inches wide. Unusual deep maroon flowers, with three conspicuous long-tapered sepals, peek out from the foliage. Wild ginger is very different from the ginger root plant, but it does have a spicy, pungent scent when crushed. Use wild ginger as a lush ground cover for formal gardens or naturalistic woodland settings. Plant it on the north side of a building to fill in and around other shade-tolerant plants or in pots on a shady deck. Native Americans use this plant medicinally and make a tea from its roots. Wild ginger performs better in coastal gardens, where it will require less summer water. Water quality is important, as this plant will be damaged by alkaline and salty water.







6"+



spreading

SOILS:
Adaptable (acidic
and humus rich)

SUNSET ZONES:
4–6, 14–24