



Monarch butterfly on lilac verbena (*Verbena lilacina*) with sandhill sagebrush (*Artemisia pycnocephala*) in background. Photo: Peigi Duvall

Explore the Variety

California's unique geography has produced one of the world's loveliest and most diverse floras. Large, white Matilija poppies, aromatic sages, a vine maple's russet fall leaves, the cinnamon colored bark hanging on a Catalina ironwood—these are but a few examples of our native flora's beauty and richness. Introduce a few native plants into your existing garden, or go totally native. Fall in love with the glorious diversity of California's native plants.

California Native Plant Society

is a statewide, nonprofit organization of amateurs and professionals with a common interest in learning about and preserving California native plants. Membership is open to all.

The mission of CNPS is to increase understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to conserve them and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, horticulture, and land stewardship.



CNPS

2707 K Street, Suite 1
Sacramento, CA 95816

916-447-2677 • FAX 916-447-2727

www.cnps.org

Photos: Cover: Hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*). Photo: Toni Corelli • **Background images:** Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malvaeflora*) and Varied-colored lupine (*Lupinus variicolor*). Photo: Toni Corelli • **Below:** Bush anemone (*Carpenteria californica*). Photo: Drew Ready.



Gardening with California Native Plants

California Native Plant Society

Dedicated to the Preservation of California Native Flora

Why Garden With Native Plants?

While California's native plants have graced gardens worldwide for over a century, few of the landscapes designed for our state's gardens reflect the natural splendor for which California is famous. By gardening with native plants, you can bring the beauty of California into your own landscape while also receiving numerous benefits.



California wild lilac (*Ceanothus impressus*). Photo: Peigi Duvall

Save Water

Take advantage of water-conserving plants in your landscape. Once established, many California native plants need minimal irrigation beyond normal rainfall. Saving water conserves a vital, limited resource and saves money, too.

A beautiful mixed border of native sages, Encelia, and Clarkia at Golden West College Native Garden. Photo: Dan Songster



Lower Maintenance

In a garden environment, native plants do best with some attention and care, but require less water, fertilizer, pruning, less or no pesticide, and less of your time to maintain than do many common garden plants.

Pink-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum* 'Claremont') and giant chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*) at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Photo: Peigi Duvall



Reduce Pesticide

Native plants have developed their own defenses against many pests and diseases. Since most pesticides kill indiscriminately, beneficial insects become secondary targets in the fight against pests. Reducing or eliminating pesticide use lets natural pest control take over and keeps garden toxins out of our creeks and watersheds.



A restful spring garden with golden poppies and native grasses at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Photo: Peigi Duvall

Invite Wildlife

Native plants, hummingbirds, butterflies, and other beneficial insects are "made for each other." Research shows that native wildlife clearly prefers native plants. California's wealth of insect pollinators can improve fruit set in your garden, while a variety of native insects and birds will help keep your landscape free of mosquitoes and plant-eating bugs.

Support Local Ecology

While creating native landscapes can never replace natural habitats lost to development, planting gardens, parks, and roadsides with California native plants can help provide an important bridge to nearby remaining wild areas. Recommend native plants to homeowner associations, neighbors, and civic departments. You can also get involved with local land-use planning processes.

Going Native

Where To Find Native Plants

Places to see native plants include national forests, state parks, specialty nurseries, arboretums and botanic gardens, and nature preserves, as well as in books and on websites. Several premier gardens open to the public are East Bay Regional Park District's Botanic Garden, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, UC Berkeley Botanic Garden, and UC Santa Cruz Arboretum. Due to growing demand, conventional nurseries and garden centers are beginning to carry California native plants. If you don't find the plant you are looking for, ask for it by name.



Bluff lettuce (*Dudleya farinosa*).
Photo: Carol Mattsson

placing and caring for your new plants. Find more information at native plant nurseries and their websites.

With a little curiosity and research, you can broaden your plant palette. Choose plants that flower through the seasons. Fill your garden with plants that display a riot of colors, have deliciously aromatic leaves, or attract specific wildlife. Plant a themed landscape such as a rock garden or wildflower meadow. Discover natives that are deer- or fire-resistant.

In every garden, the right environment (sun, soil, water, etc.) must be found or created for plants to thrive. It is easier and advisable to select plants that suit the site rather than to modify the site to suit the plants. Like all gardens,

even established native landscapes require some routine maintenance to look their best.

Growing Conditions

Like all living things, native plants grow best under natural and familiar conditions, also known as biotic communities. Common California plant communities include northern and southern oak woodland, valley grassland, chaparral, desert, coastal sage scrub and bluff, mixed

evergreen, and redwood forest. Choosing plants that are native to your landscape's community will help ensure their optimum health and performance.

Planting

Although most California natives can be planted at any time of year, it is best to put them in the ground during the fall and early winter. This gives them time to establish a healthy root system and build the energy for new growth and stunning floral displays in spring and summer.

Watering

Many native plants can survive with minimal supplemental water once they have become established (after two to five years). Proper watering can present a challenge when first becoming acquainted with native plants. Underwatering of young native plants is a frequent cause of death, while over-watering can cause root rot and kill more established species. Some native species can maintain a healthy appearance for much of the year while being watered only



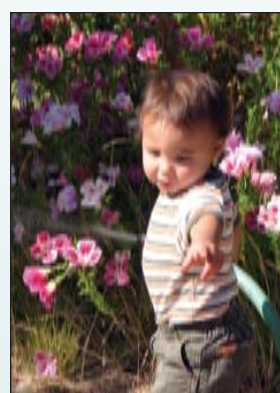
New growth on a bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). Photo: Toni Corelli

1–4 times per month. For a garden full of thriving native plants, check plant-specific watering needs from authoritative sources.

Soil

Most native plants perform better without any fertilizer. Extra nutrients push plants to grow quickly, sometimes beyond naturally supportable levels, and can shorten their life span. Mulching can be a valuable practice in low-maintenance gardening. A layer of mulch slows water evaporation, discourages weed germination, and creates a favorable

environment at the soil interface for beneficial biological bacteria. Adding organic matter to soil may be necessary where development has left an infertile top layer.



Growing together—young Californian with Farewell-to-Spring (*Clarkia amoena*). Photo: Mark Bourne



Douglas iris (*Iris douglasiana*), common horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), and western virgin's bower (*Clematis ligusticifolia*). Photo: Drew Ready

Where To Buy Native Plants

- CNPS chapter plant sales—links to local chapters are at www.cnps.org.
- Arboretums and botanic gardens
- Native plant nurseries—listed in books and on the Internet (e.g. www.cnps.org/horticulture).

No Wild Collecting, Please!

Collecting plants without a permit is illegal on California public lands, and wild transplants often have a poor survival rate. Your local CNPS chapter or native plant nursery can also provide information on hybridization of rare and endangered species and preserving gene pool integrity.

Getting Started

Visit a native plant supplier. Your local CNPS chapter is a great source for plant suggestions. Many have their own plant sales where members are eager to share their experience and knowledge. Make your selections, and then follow the supplier's instructions for

Flowering bright green dudleya (*Dudleya virens* ssp. *hassei*) and bear grass (*Nolina parryi* ssp. *wolfii*) add texture and form to a vibrant native garden. Photo: David Fross



A colorful Southern California garden featuring flowering shrubs such as flannelbush (*Fremontodendron* sp.) and island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*). Photo: Barbara Eisenstein

Pruning

While many non-native garden plants are often pruned throughout the year to keep up with their water- and fertilizer-induced growth, for most native plants pruning once per year is sufficient. Check plant-specific pruning tips from authoritative sources as plant preferences vary. Give them room to grow by properly spacing them in your garden design. Crowded plants need more frequent pruning and care. ■

Silver bush lupine (*Lupinus albifrons*), Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), and wild lilac (*Ceanothus* sp.). Photo: Chris Lewis

