



TREEPEOPLE

sustainable solutions

growing a greener city

november 2010 • native plants • out-of-the-box • plant of the month • discounts



"I live east, near downtown, so TreePeople's home at Coldwater Canyon Park is the perfect place to take a walk and wait for traffic to die down. It's an extra bonus if I can find my buddy Cody Chappel, who is a Mountain Restoration Coordinator and is full of knowledge of all the indigenous plant life. The beauty and variety of our native plants is just amazing! It's nice to see what southern California looks like untouched and unlandscaped. And a hike out in nature is a nice workout as well."

- Todd Lowe, Actor



Go Native!

Everyone is "going native." But in order to be the coolest earth-momma or poppa out there, you need to know SoCal native plants from mere "climate appropriate" ones. Not all that long ago, "drought-tolerant" was the hippest thing you could do. Casually chat about making your own compost, and suddenly you are the tops in organic gardening land. Well, no more. Here's a quick cheat sheet.

Native plants are endemic or indigenous to a given area. **Climate appropriate** plants are adapted to the temperature and rainfall of an area. The term **drought tolerant** is being phased out, as it conjures up images of deserts and cacti. Los Angeles is not a desert. In fact, we live in a Mediterranean climate with warm to hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Think: Greece and Italy. We know...yet another reason why SoCal rocks.

1. Why natives? Why now?

California natives have been appreciated all over the world for centuries, yet they're often absent from our local landscapes. Why not return some of that beauty to your own backyard? Now is the best time to plant. The wet winters help establish new plants, and many native plant nurseries have fall plant sales.

Compared to many non-natives, they need less (or sometimes none) care such as pruning, fertilizers, pesticides or other things that take up your time and money. Switching over to natives can save you hundreds a year in maintenance costs alone.

2. Save money & water

Generally speaking, native plants require little water once they are established. Many require no additional irrigation beyond normal rainfall. By going native, you'll conserve a vital resource and save money on your water bill.

4. Aren't they weedy and look alike?

There are so many lovely native plants for SoCal. California is home to 5,862 species, subspecies, and varieties of native plants. This figure is comparable to all the species in all the other states combined! A great way to see many wonderful choices is to visit a local native plant nursery or botanical garden. And come up to TreePeople. Our urban watershed garden has many native species and you can hike the trails of our 45-acre park.

3. Low maintenance

Native plants have all they need to survive in our local wilderness areas with no help from us.

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TreePeople's Sustainable Solutions Program is dedicated to landscape transformation - turning yards into functional landscapes that are beautiful and sustainable. Our monthly guides and checklists detail an easy, step-by-step process, helping us all create a healthy urban forest where water is valued, air is clean, soil is healthy and trees are thriving.

Next Month: The Right Tree in the Right Place

Linda's List

Linda Eremita, TreePeople's Senior ISA Certified Arborist, has the following suggestions for your November gardening fun:

Climate Appropriate Plant of the Month

Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)

This California native is interesting all year. It can reach 8' to 20' tall, and can be a multi- or single-trunk tree. In late winter to early spring, the branches are covered with magenta-pink flowers, followed by rounded, heart-shaped leaves. Magenta seed pods resembling snow peas replace the flowers. October and November bring autumn leaves ranging from yellow to red. Once the leaves drop, you have a beautiful silhouette of dark, silvery branches. Low water use? You bet!

Upcoming Workshop

November 14, 2010 - Community Greening Workshop. Visit www.treepeople.org



Photo courtesy of Juan Villegas

Out-of-the-Box

Contain Yourself

Just because you live in a 3rd floor apartment doesn't mean you can't go native. Many native plants can be grown successfully as outdoor potted plants, but need special care. Here are helpful hints to get you started.

- Plants in pots can dry out quickly. For full-sun locations, avoid dark-colored or metal pots, or place them inside larger pots and fill the space in between with gravel or perlite.
- Choose a potting mix that drains quickly, such as a "cactus mix." Have at least 25-30% perlite by volume.
- Container plants need regular watering. Keep the soil barely to slightly moist at all times, allowing the top inch or two of soil to dry out between waterings. Fertilize as growth begins (fall to spring) with organic fertilizer at half strength.
- Some plants will outgrow their containers. To keep them in the same container, you need to prune the roots every two to three years before active growth resumes, generally in fall or late winter. Remove the plant from the pot and cut off the outer half to one inch of root ball along the side and bottom. Replace the plant and fill in the gap between root ball and pot with fresh potting mix on the bottom and sides.

5. The birds & the bees

Birds not only bring beauty and songs to your garden, they help balance our ecosystem. They pollinate plants and provide insect control. Many native plants are pollinated by creatures other than bees, such as birds, butterflies and moths. Native bees are much less aggressive than their European counterparts, such as the European honeybee, and some native bees are more effective at pollinating fruits than honeybees.

6. Support local ecology

While creating native landscapes can never fully replace natural habitats, natives can serve as a vital link to nearby wilderness. Go beyond your yard and recommend

natives for other landscapes like schools, parks and public lands.

7. Be here now

Native plants provide a sense of place. They help us connect to where we are on this earth. What are your earliest memories of being outside? Where do you go to unwind and relax? Connecting yourself to your little corner of the globe is grounding and helps revitalize your spirit. Planting native plants is not just good for our earth, it's good for you.

As you enjoy the festivities of the season consider a gift for your children, your neighbors and yourself. Get a jump on the holidays and go native!

Native Plant Experts

- Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden
www.rsabg.org
- Theodore Payne Foundation
www.theodorepayne.org
- California Native Plant Society
www.cnps.org

Member Discount: Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden is the largest botanic garden dedicated exclusively to California's native plants. Visit www.rsabg.org, or call (909) 625-8767. Mention **promotional code SS1110** to receive a one-time 20 percent discount on registration fees for classes and events.

To become a member go to www.treepeople.org.