

California Native Plants – A Starter List

Low plants (up to 3' tall)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Plant Type	Water	Sun	Soil	Height x width	Flower Color & Season	Notes
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	common yarrow	P	M/L	S-P	C,L,S	2-3' x 2-3'	white,yellow,pink, red;spring-summer	Perennial with ferny, scented leaves. Can be mowed for a lawn alternative. Many cultivars with varied colors.
<i>Achillea</i> 'Moonshine'	Moonshine yarrow	P	M/L	S	C,L,S	2' x 2-3'	bright yellow; spring-summer	Perennial. Grey-green leaves. Flowers attract butterflies and beneficial insects.
<i>Arctostaphylos edmundsii</i> 'Bert Johnson'	Bert Johnson manzanita	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	1-2' x 4-6'	pink to white; winter-spring	Groundcover manzanita. Afternoon shade needed inland.
<i>Arctostaphylos edmundsii</i> 'Carmel Sur'	Carmel Sur manzanita	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	18" x 7-10'	very few flowers	More heat tolerant than other groundcover manzanitas, but afternoon shade needed inland. Dense habit.
<i>Artemisia californica</i> 'Canyon Gray'	Canyon Gray sagebrush	E	L/VL	S	WD, C,L,S	12-18" x 8-10'	white; summer-fall	Groundcover sagebrush. Good erosion control. Spreading silvery mat.
<i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	mugwort	P	M/L	S-P	C,L	2-3' x 3' spreads	white; summer	Perennial. Scented leaves are grey underneath. Spreads by rhizomes. Cut to the ground in early winter.
<i>Artemisia pycnocephala</i> 'David's Choice'	David's Choice sagebrush	E	M/L	S	WD, S,L	8-12" x 18-24"	white; spring-summer	Silvery leaves on a compact, rounded plant. Deadhead flower stalks.
<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	narrow-leaf milkweed	DP	M/L	S-P	C,L,S	3'-4' x spreads	greenish white; spring-summer	Perennial. Great plant for Life Cycle studies. Food for monarch caterpillars. Dies back in winter.
<i>Asclepias speciosa</i>	showy milkweed	DP	M/L	S-P	C,L	2-5' x 3-5'	pink; late spring-summer	Food for monarch caterpillars. Fuzzy grey leaves. Dies back in winter. Great in clay.
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i> 'Pigeon Point'	Pigeon Point coyote bush	E	M/L	S	C,L,S	18-24" x 6-9'	white; fall	Green groundcover. Can cut back periodically. Good in fire-prone areas.
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i> 'Twin Peaks 2'	Twin Peaks 2 coyote bush	E	M/L	S	C,L,S	1' x 3-5'	white; fall	Green groundcover. Can cut back periodically. Good in fire-prone areas.
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	blue grama grass	D	L/VL	S-P	C,L,S	6"-1' x 6"-1'	brown; summer	Fast, clumping/spreading grass can be used for turf. Very drought tolerant. Winter dormant. Seedheads look like flags.
<i>Carex pansa</i>	CA meadow sedge	E	M	S-Sh	WD, C,L,S	6-8" x 3'	brown; spring	Can be mowed for lawn alternative, or left un-mowed for a floppy look. Needs regular water. Needs more shade inland.
<i>Carex praegracilis</i>	clustered field sedge, dune sedge	E	M	S-Sh	WD, C,L,S	18" x 4"-3.5'	brown; spring	Can be mowed for lawn alternative, or left un-mowed for a floppy look. Needs regular water. Needs more shade inland.
<i>Leymus condensatus</i> 'Canyon Prince'	Canyon Prince wild rye	E	low	S-P	C,L,S	3' x 4' spreads	white; summer	Very drought tolerant native grass. Grey-blue leaves are wide and upright. Take heavy clay.
<i>Salvia spathacea</i>	hummingbird sage	P	L/VL	S-P	C,L,S	1-2' and spreads	red-magenta; spring-summer	Fruity-minty leaf scent. Ground cover with larger leaves and flowers than other sages.
<i>Sisyrinchium bellum</i>	blue-eyed grass	DP	M/L	S-P	C,L,S	12-18" x .5-1'	purple-blue; spring-summer	Leaves like grass blades. Reseeds. Dies back to the ground in summer. Needs regular water in winter.
<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	desert mallow, apricot mallow	E	L/VL	S	WD, C,L,S	2-3' x 2-3'	orange-apricot; spring-fall	Low water needs and intense flower color. Drops leaves under drought stress. New leaves with rains. Cut back in fall.

Medium plants (3-6')

Scientific Name	Common Name	Plant Type	Water	Sun	Soil	Height x width	Flower Color & Season	Notes
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> 'Howard McMinn'	Howard McMinn manzanita	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	6-8' x 6-8'	light pink-white; winter-spring	Medium green upright leaves. Late bloomer. Afternoon shade needed inland.
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> 'John Dourley'	John Dourley manzanita	E	M/L	S	C,L,S	4' x 6'	pink; winter	Easily grown. Coppery colored new growth. Grey-green leaves and red stems.
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> 'La Panza'	La Panza manzanita	E	M/L	S	C,L,S	3-4' x 3-4'	light pink; winter	Grows in sand or clay. Clean grey leaves. Beautiful red peeling bark.
<i>Ceanothus</i> 'Joyce Coulter'	Joyce Coulter ceanothus	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C, I	3-5' x 10-12'	blue; late winter-early spring	Sprawling ground cover. Very showy, long clusters of flowers. Partial shade needed inland.
<i>Encelia farinosa</i>	Brittlebush, desert encelia, incienso	E	L/VL	S	C,L,S	3-5' x 3-5'	yellow; spring	Grey-white leaves and bright yellow daisies. Native to CA deserts.
<i>Eriogonum cinereum</i>	ashyleaf buckwheat	E	L/VL	S-P	C,L,S	4-5' x 6'	light pink; late spring-summer	Leaves white below, green on top. Good inland and at the coast. Excellent butterfly plant, erosion control for slopes.
<i>Juncus textilis</i>	basket rush	E	H	P	C,L,S	5-6' x 4, spreads	brown; spring	Leaves for basketry. Good erosion control. Needs a consistently moist soil. Handles standing water.
<i>Leymus condensatus</i> 'Canyon Prince'	Canyon Prince wild rye	E	low	S-P	C,L,S	3-4' x 4' spreads	white; summer	Very drought tolerant native grass. Grey-blue leaves are wide and upright. A shorter version of the species.
<i>Penstemon spectabilis</i>	royal penstemon	P	M/L	S	WD, L,S	3-6' x 2-3'	purple-blue-pink; spring-fall	Trumpet-shaped flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Striking plant.
<i>Perityle incana</i>	Guadalupe Island rock daisy	E	M/L	S-P	L,S	3-4' x 3-4'	yellow; spring-summer	Silver-blue-grey lacy foliage. Cut it back by a third each year to maintain compact/dense plant. Part sun needed inland.
<i>Rhamnus californica</i> 'Eve Case'	Eve Case coffeeberry	E	M/L	Sh	L,S	3-6' x 3-4'	yellow; spring	Tidy shrub, much smaller than the species. Good for a screen or hedge.
<i>Rhamnus californica</i> 'Little Sur'	Little Sur coffeeberry	E	M/L	S-P	WD, L,S	3-4' x 3-4'	yellow-green; spring	Good solid, clean evergreen shrub. Flowers attract pollinators and round dark purple berries attract birds.
<i>Rhamnus californica</i> 'Mound San Bruno'	Mound San Bruno coffeeberry	E	M/L	Sh	WD, C,L,S	5' x 5'	yellow; spring	Very tidy shrub that bares small fruits that birds love, but not edible for humans. Easy to maintain as a hedge.
<i>Ribes indecorum</i>	white flowering currant	D	M/L	S-P	L,S	4-6' x 6-8'	white; winter-spring	Second most drought tolerant native Ribes. Summer deciduous if dry. Black-purple edible berries. Shade from
<i>Ribes malvaceum</i> 'Dancing Tassels'	Dancing Tassels currant	D	M/L	P-Sh	WD, L,S	6' x 5'	light pink; winter	4-5" flower tassels attract hummingbirds. Near the coast, closer to evergreen.
<i>Salvia apiana</i>	white sage	E	L/VL	S-P	C,L,S	3-4' x 4-5'	white with pink; spring-summer	White, silvery foliage – very different looking than other sages. Used by many native peoples for ceremonies.
<i>Salvia clevelandii</i>	Cleveland Sage	E	L/VL	S	WD, L,S	3-5' x 4-5'	blue; spring-summer	One of the best smelling sages. A dense shrub. Winifred Gilman is excellent selection with electric blue flowers.
<i>Salvia leucophylla</i>	purple sage	E	L/VL	S	L,S	3-6' x 5-15'	pink-lavender; spring-summer	Many hybrids created with Cleveland sage. Strong sage scent. Best near the coast.
<i>Salvia mellifera</i>	black sage	E	L/VL	S	L,S	3-5' x 6'	white-lavender; spring-summer	Not as showy as other sages, but a good plant to attract native pollinators. Leaves are green.

Tall Plants (6'+)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Plant Type	Water	Sun	Soil	Height x width	Flower Color & Season	Notes
<i>Arctostaphylos densiflora</i> 'Austin Griffiths'	Austin Griffiths manzanita	E	M/L	S-P	WD, L,S	10' x 6'	pink; winter-spring	An early blooming manzanita. Red peeling bark. A hummingbird favorite.
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> 'Howard McMinn'	Howard McMinn manzanita	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	6-8' x 6-8'	light pink-white; winter-spring	Medium green upright leaves. Late bloomer. Afternoon shade needed inland.
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> <i>manzanita</i> 'Byrd Hill'	Byrd Hill manzanita	E	M/L	S	WD, L,S	8-10' x 10'	white; winter-spring	Great cultivar of a local southern California native. No summer water once established.
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> <i>manzanita</i> 'Dr Hurd'	Dr Hurd manzanita	E	M/L	S	WD, C,L,S	12-15' x 10'	white; winter-spring	Great cultivar of a local southern California native. Pale green leaves. No Summer water once established.
<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i> ssp <i>lentiformis</i>	salt bush	E	L/VL	S	WD, C,L,S	10-15' x 12-15	spring	Excellent habitat plant. Very tough against salt and wind. <i>A.lentiformis</i> ssp <i>breweri</i> has larger leaves and best at coast.
<i>Baccharis salicifolia</i>	mule fat	E	M/L	S-P	L,S	4-12' x 8'	white; spring-summer	Tall semi-deciduous shrub. Long, linear leaves that are similar to willows. Rapid growth. Attracts native birds.
<i>Berberis</i> 'Golden <i>Abundance</i> '	Golden Abundance barberry	E	M/L	P- Sh	C,L	8' x 6-12'	yellow; spring	Bright yellow flowers help to brighten up shady spots. Prickly leaves, so plant it away from paths.
<i>Ceanothus</i> 'Concha'	Concha ceanothus	E	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	6-9' x 6-10'	cobalt blue; late winter-early spring	Glossy, narrow leaves. Very showy. Flowers in tight clusters. Part shade needed inland.
<i>Ceanothus</i> 'Ray Hartman'	Ray Hartman ceanothus	E	M/L	S-P	C,L,S	12-20' x 15'	medium blue; spring	Readily available. Does well at the coast or inland. Tolerates garden water and clay! Butterflies love it.
<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	western redbud	D	M/L	S-P	WD, L,S	6-20' x 6-20'	magenta; late winter-spring	Multi-trunk small tree. Round leaves turn yellow in fall. Magenta seed pods turn brown and hang through winter.
<i>Cercocarpus betuloides</i>	mountain mahogany	E	L/VL	S-P	C,L,S	8-10' x 8-10'	yellow; spring	The cork scaw silvery-white seeds cover the shrub making it shimmer. Easy to prune for narrow spaces.
<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	desert willow	D	M/L	S	WD, L,S	12-20' x 12-20'	white, pink, lavender; spring	Large shrub or small tree. Lightly fragrant flowers attract hummingbirds. Must have well-drained soil.
<i>Eriogonum giganteum</i>	Saint Catherine's lace	D	L/VL	S-P	WD, L,S	5-10' x 5-10'	white; spring-fall	Largest buckwheat. Big flower heads can be used in flower arrangements. Semi-deciduous. Cut back after blooming.
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	toyon	E	M/L	S-P	C,L,S	12-25' x 10-20'	white; summer	Red berries in winter provide food for birds. Very common in local chaparral. Good at coast or inland.
<i>Rhus integrifolia</i>	lemondade berry	E	L/VL	S-P	WD, L,S	10-25' x 10-25'	white-pink; spring	Can handle some water if given good drainage. Sturdy screen shrub. Lemon-flavored fruits. Not good in valley.
<i>Rhus lentii</i>	pink-flowering sumac	E	L/VL	S-P	WD, L,S	4-8' x 5-8'	pink; late winter- early spring	Blue-green oval leaves. Flowers and berries attract birds. Native to Baja. A smaller version of <i>R. integrifolia</i> .
<i>Rhus ovata</i>	sugar bush	E	L/VL	S-P	WD, L,S	12-35' x 20-25'	white-pink; spring	Similar to <i>R. integrifolia</i> , but this species is native away from the coast.
<i>Ribes aureum</i>	golden currant	D	M/L	S-P	WD, C,L,S	6-10' x 5-7'	yellow; spring	The most drought tolerant <i>Ribes</i> . Semi-deciduous shrub. Edible yellow-orange berries. Leaves susceptible to rust.

Key:

Plant Type

E-evergreen (leaves present all year)

D-deciduous (loses all leaves in a season)

P-perennial (a non-woody plant that lives many years)

DP- deciduous perennial (a non-woody deciduous plant- typically dying all the way to the ground every year)

Water

Ratings listed with two letters divided by a "/" designate plants that need less water in the summer. The second letter is the summer water needed.

L/VL - Low water, very low water in summer months

M/L – moderate water, low water in summer months

H/M – high water (soil kept very moist), moderate water (soil is allowed to dry out between waterings)

M – Moderate water all year

Sun S-full sun, P-partial sun, Sh-shade

Soil WD-well-drained, C-clay, L-loam, S-sand

References and Resources:

O'Brien, Bart C. 2007. **Plant Lists for the San Gabriel River Watershed**. Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Azusa, CA

Bornstein, Carol; Fross, David; O'Brien, Bart. 2005. **California Native Plants for the Garden**. Cachuma Press. Los Olivos, CA

Perry, Bob. 2010. **Landscape Plants for California Gardens**. Land Design Publishing. Claremont, CA.

Grow Native Nursery Westwood; branch of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. 100 Davis Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90049. <http://www.rsabg.org/gnn-westwood>

Las Pilitas Nursery; <http://laspilitas.com>. Great online information.

Theodore Payne Foundation; <http://www.theodorepayne.org>. Great online information. Nursery on site. 10459 Tuxford St, Sun Valley 91352. (818) 768-1802.

Tree of Life Nursery; <http://www.californianativeplants.com>. Largest native plant nursery. 33201 Ortega Hwy, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. (949) 728-0685.