


Plant Identification Guide

to the Sierra Nevada Foothills Native Plant Demonstration Garden




*“When we try to pick out
anything by itself, we find
it hitched to everything
else in the universe.”*

John Muir



Gardening with plants native to an area, or natural landscaping, offers many benefits, both to the gardener and to the ecological dynamics in and around the garden setting. Wherever you live, unless the natural conditions have been substantially altered, the indigenous plants of that area are adapted to its climate, geography, soils, water availability and other native flora and fauna. This demonstration garden showcases a diversity of drought-tolerant native plants adapted to the Mediterranean climate and other natural rhythms of the central Sierra Nevada foothills.

Native plant gardens and home landscapes generally thrive with less maintenance, less watering, fewer if any soil amendments, and no pesticides or fertilizers since natives are more resistant to local pests and diseases. Natural landscaping will likely save you time, labor and money. Native ground covers can even take the place of manicured turf, beautifying and enriching your yard.



Diverse gardens and landscapes mimic a sustainable natural community, or ecosystem. They afford habitat for wildlife, meeting animals' needs for shelter and nesting. They attract native pollinators such as bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. They provide seeds, nuts, fruits and other edibles for birds, other wildlife and sometimes people. They stabilize soil, conserve water and protect water quality.

The plants in this garden exemplify those qualities. Interpretive panels along the pathway present an overview of the plants' ecological and cultural values. This brochure, keyed to numbered stakes, identifies the specific plants, describing their attributes and adaptations in more detail.

If you aren't already going native with plants in your yard or garden, this walk may inspire you to discover the joys and benefits of natural landscaping.

EXPLANATORY NOTES:

An asterisk (*) behind a plant name indicates the plant is especially drought-tolerant.

The term endemic in a description means that plant's natural distribution is restricted to the area cited.

Plants described as fire-resistant are not fire-proof. All plants burn, but those with moist, supple leaves; watery (rather than resinous) sap; and little dead material are less flammable and slower to catch fire. Proper spacing, pruning, watering when needed and prompt removal of dead plant parts reduce any plant's vulnerability to fire, but it is not necessary to remove all vegetation to create a fire-safe landscape.

A generous 2008 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to the Mariposa County Resource Conservation District, the project sponsor, funded the development of this garden under the direction of project manager Kris Randal.



MARIPOSA COUNTY



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Common Plant Name Scientific Name	Plant Values Garden; Wildlife; Native American Uses
1 Alumroot <i>Heuchera micrantha</i>	Dry shade under oaks; flowers attract hummingbirds; winter greens for Native Americans.
2 Purple Haze Aster <i>Aster chilensis</i>	Good erosion control on slopes. Vigorous spreader via rhizomes, to 2 feet tall or more; fall flowers attract butterflies and bees.
3 Western Mountain Aster <i>Aster occidentalis</i>	Same as above.
4 Blue-eyed Grass <i>Sisyrinchium bellum</i>	Blooms early to late spring. Spreads by seeds; good in meadows or between larger plants. Tolerates clay soils. Good in dry conditions, but can take some water. Fire-resistant.
5 Buckbrush* <i>Ceanothus cuneatus</i>	Dry conditions; white, fragrant, early-spring blossoms attract pollinators. Roots stabilize and add nitrogen to poor soils. Elevation up to 6,000 feet. Provides habitat and food to birds and deer. Native American baskets, cradleboards and seedbeaters.
6 Nude Buckwheat* <i>Eriogonum nudum</i>	Good in rock gardens; like all buckwheats, its flowers provide rich source of nectar to bees. Blooms in summer.
7 Sulfur-flower Buckwheat <i>E. umbellatum</i> 'Shasta'	Ground cover, up to 18" tall, eventually spreads to 5 feet. Good in full sun, but tolerates some shade. Winter leaves may turn reddish; yellow, compact flowers (mid- to late spring) attract pollinators.
8 Tripod Buckwheat* <i>E. tripodum</i>	California endemic that can be used as ground cover on serpentine soils. Yellow summer blooms offer copious nectar to native bees.
9 Wright's Buckwheat* <i>E. wrightii</i>	Dry, rocky areas or rock gardens. Silver-leafed; small white blooms offer pollinators nectar summer to fall.
10 Bush Anemone <i>Carpenteria californica</i>	Evergreen flowering shrub endemic to Fresno County. Favors afternoon shade. Large, white, fragrant flowers with yellow centers attract pollinators.
11 California Barberry <i>Berberis dictyota</i>	Endemic shrub that grows in dry, rocky places. Plant in background as an edger because of its thick, spiny leaves. Yellow flowers in March and April. Bluish berries attract wildlife, esp. birds.
12 California Bay Laurel <i>Umbellularia californica</i>	Avocado family; pale yellow, fragrant flowers in winter; one-seeded fruit attracts wildlife. California Indians roasted the edible seeds; aromatic leaves repelled insects from acorn granaries; used wood as tool.
13 California Buckeye* <i>Aesculus californica</i>	Elevation up to 4,000 feet. Small tree; apple-green leaves in late winter, fragrant flowers in late spring. In fall ornament-like seedpods hang from branches. Pale, bare branches beautify winter days. Nectar consumed by native pollinators, but toxic to European honeybees. Calcium-rich, dead, brown leaves eaten by pregnant mule deer. Indians mashed toxic seedpods to aid in capturing fish, but leached out toxin to eat pods when acorn crops were lean; used wood as fire drill.
14 California Coffeeberry <i>Rhamnus californica</i>	Elevation 1,000 to 7,000 feet; sun to partial shade. Adapted to many soil types, but favors good drainage. Summer berries change color, from green to purple to black, as they ripen in fall; relished by birds, esp. band-tailed pigeons. Tiny, nectar-rich flowers popular with pollinators. Fire-resistant.
15 California Fuchsia* <i>Epilobium canum</i>	Formerly known as <i>Zauschneria</i> . Grows best in gravelly, rocky soils with good drainage. May need occasional water during extended hot weather. Attractive in rock gardens or near boulders; can be slightly invasive. Listed as fire-resistant. Cut back in winter. Red, tubular flowers (August - November) provide nectar to migrating hummingbirds.
16 California Fuchsia 'Select Mattole' <i>Epilobium septentrionale</i>	Similar growing needs as above, but does best with some summer water. Lower-growing, spreads out to 3 feet with silver foliage and orange flowers. Attractive along rock walls and raised beds.
17 California Poppy <i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	California's state flower. Orange, glossy-petaled wildflower spreads by seeds; good in meadows; fire-resistant. Long taproot helps control erosion. Offers no nectar, but abundant pollen attracts bees and beetles. Native Americans used plant parts in cooking, medicinally and for grooming.

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18	California Grape 'Roger Red' <i>Vitis californica</i>	Grapevines thrive on fence or large trellis. Red fall foliage. Fire-resistant. Fruit attractive to birds and other wildlife. Used as food and twine by Native Americans.
19	California Wild Rose <i>Rosa californica</i>	Rambling, spiny plant; best in wild and natural areas. Adapted to clay soils; useful for erosion control and barriers. Displays attractive, fragrant pink blossoms from spring to summer and orange rose hips in fall. Thickets offer food and nest protection for towhees and other birds. Used by California Indians as food and fire drill.
20	Chia <i>Salvia columbariae</i>	Annual; blue flowers embedded within rounded head of stiff, purple bracts. Visited by bees; high-energy seeds eaten by California Indians.
21	Sticky Cinquefoil <i>Potentilla glandulosa</i>	Adaptable to many soil types in sun or shade. Yellow-flowering perennial (rose family) attracts various pollinators.
22	Chaparral Clematis <i>Clematis lasiantha</i>	18-foot vine for trellis or fence. Attractive white flowers and fuzzy seed heads from summer to fall. Pollinators visit late-spring flowers.
23	Coyote Brush 'Pigeon Point' <i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	Deer-resistant, 2-foot-tall, 5-foot-wide ground cover that grows quickly. Habitat value for wildlife. Small October-blooming flowers offer many pollinators nectar in late fall.
24	Coyote Mint <i>Monardella villosa</i>	Grows best in dry, rocky areas. Fragrant, minty leaves. Butterflies and other pollinators visit purplish to white flowers (June - August).
25	Deergrass <i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Striking, large bunchgrass. Grows best in full sun with some water, but can tolerate dry conditions. Controls erosion on slopes and in areas that flood. Deer-resistant. Habitat for bumblebees, butterflies, hibernating ladybugs and lizards. Where grass is abundant, deer find shelter for bedding and birthing. Indians used flowering stalks to make water-tight baskets.
26	Elderberry <i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	Usually multi-trunked tree or shrub; grows best with some water. Most plant parts poisonous, but fully ripe, bluish berries can be made into jams. Pollinators flock to cream-colored flowers; many birds relish summertime fruit. Indian people savor berries; use pithy stems and branches for flutes and musical clappers and as fire drills.
27	Idaho Fescue <i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	Attractive, small bunchgrass; does best in well-drained soils in sun to partial shade.
28	Flannel Bush* <i>Fremontodendron californicum</i>	Keep water away from trunk during first year and don't overwater. After first year, ignore plant and don't water. Plant in background or wild areas. May need to cage from deer until plant is large. Showy, waxy, yellow flowers (May) attract pollinators and complement blue flowers of some Ceanothus species. Indian uses include cordage and tools.
29	Bitter Gooseberry <i>Ribes amarum</i>	Grows well under oaks. Late winter-blooming, fuchsia-like flowers decorate spiny, arching branches. Flowers provide nectar for Anna's hummingbirds. Indians charred spines from gooseberry fruit to eat.
30	Chaparral Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera interrupta</i>	Elevation 1,000 to 6,000 feet. Vine could cover an arbor. Yellow tubular flowers attract hummingbirds and other pollinators; orange berries eaten by birds and other wildlife. Stems used in Native American baskets.
31	Parry's Horkelia <i>Horkelia parryi</i>	Small ground cover endemic to California. Grows naturally in Sierra Nevada foothills chaparral. Grow it between stepping stones in afternoon shade. Rose family; small white flowers attract native bees and other pollinators.
32	Incense Cedar <i>Calocedrus decurrens</i>	Attractive, tall evergreen tree grows at least 1 foot/year once established. Adaptable to many soil types, but prefers well-drained. Bark and foliage emit spicy fragrance. Offers dense cover, nesting sites and insect foraging for birds. Indians used large slabs of bark for their shelters (<i>um-a-chas</i>) and branches to shield acorn granaries from rain and snow.
33	Indian Hemp <i>Apocynum cannabinum</i>	One of few wetland natives featured in this garden; can take over in moist areas. Small flowers in summer provide pollinators with nectar; Indians value this plant for basketry, cordage and tools.

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34	Canyon Live-forever* <i>Dudleya cymosa</i>	Find this plant growing between stones in rock wall of the Native American planting mound, mimicking its natural affinity for local canyons' vertical rock faces. Also thrives in rock gardens with no summer water. Fire-resistant. Red-yellow flowers favored by hummingbirds.
35	Silver Bush Lupine* <i>Lupinus albifrons</i>	Too much water will kill this plant. Silver foliage contrasts with violet flower spires in spring. Does best with good drainage and rocky soils. Attracts native bees and hummingbirds.
36	Manzanita 'Green Supreme' <i>Arctostaphylos sp.</i>	Low-growing ground cover; up to 5-foot spread. Deer-resistant and can grow in clay soils. Grows well near oaks.
37	Mariposa Manzanita* <i>A. viscida</i>	Beautiful red-barked shrub with pale green leaves and dainty pink to white flowers; Anna's hummingbirds depend on nectar-rich, late-winter to early-spring blossoms and favor them over feeders. Sticky berries feed variety of birds and other wildlife. Indians consumed berries as food and drink.
38	Narrow-leaf Milkweed <i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	This perennial dies back in winter and returns each spring. Use in more natural or wild areas of garden. One of many foothill varieties of milkweeds, sole food of monarch butterfly. Attracts variety of pollinators. Indians timed seasonal harvest of this plant to get greens, cordage and medicine.
39	Showy Milkweed <i>A. speciosa</i>	Big, fuzzy, whitish leaves. Grows commonly in Yosemite Valley. Like all milkweeds, tied to survival of monarch butterfly. More group plantings of milkweeds could ensure survival of this magnificent insect.
40	Mock Orange 'Desert Snow' <i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	6' x 6' shrub for sun or partial shade; accepts regular water or dry conditions. Fragrant white flowers (May) attract butterflies and native bees.
41	Mountain Mahogany <i>Cercocarpus betuloides</i>	Use as hedge or screen; can prune. Curled, fuzzy, silver seeds offer fall beauty when backlit. Small flowers important to native pollinators. Indian women used stem as digging stick for prying wildflower bulbs out of soil.
42	Mugwort <i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	Tolerates shade and heavy soil. Can cut back to base in winter. Indians used leaves as poison oak remedy, insect repellent and in ceremonies.
43	Purple Needlegrass <i>Nassella pulchra</i>	California's state grass. This bunchgrass is good for sowing in wild meadows or for erosion control. Indians collected seeds for food.
44	Blue Oak* <i>Quercus douglasii</i>	Keep summer irrigation, soil compaction and trenching away from this tree. Keystone species that offers habitat, shelter, nesting sites and food for large diversity of wildlife. Indians used wood as fire drill. Endemic to California.
45	Interior Live Oak <i>Q. wislizenii</i>	Same as above. Evergreen oak provides winter protection and foraging areas for birds and other wildlife. All oaks are important for acorn crops. Indians regularly burned around oaks to improve acorn production.
46	Oregon Grape 'Compacta' <i>Berberis aquifolium</i>	Thrives in all soils; grows slowly via rhizomes. 'Compacta' is a clumping ground cover 1 to 3 feet tall in sun to shade. Oregon-grape ground covers are good around oaks in dry shade and are fire-resistant. Copper foliage in spring.
47	Creeping Oregon Grape <i>B. a. var. repens</i>	1- to 2-foot ground cover with late-winter yellow flowers followed by purple edible fruit. Good for wildlife habitat. Indians used roots medicinally.
48	Azure Penstemon <i>Penstemon azureus</i>	Needs good drainage and some summer water. Fire-resistant. Brilliant blue, tubular flowers attract hummingbirds and native bees.
49	Firecracker Penstemon <i>P. eatonii</i>	Needs good drainage and some water. Bright red flowers favored by hummingbirds; blooms for several months.
50	Foothill Penstemon <i>P. heterophyllus</i>	Grows naturally in dry, rocky areas. Does well in rock gardens and mixed borders. Tolerates heavy soils and summer water. Beautiful blue to purple flowers attract hummingbirds and native bees.
51	Gay Penstemon <i>P. laetus</i>	Needs good drainage. Can take some water, but keep on dry side. Rock gardens. Blue-violet to lavender flowers attract hummingbirds.

Common Plant Name Scientific Name	Plant Values Garden; Wildlife; Native American Uses
52 Pitcher Sage* <i>Lepechinia calycina</i>	Large white to light-pink tubular flowers. Fuzzy foliage has sage fragrance. Grow on hot, dry slopes or in shade of oak. Adapts to many soil types but favors well-drained.
53 Rabbitbrush* <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i>	Silver foliage contrasts with darker greens of other native plants with low water requirements. Superb in butterfly garden. Attracts variety of butterflies in late fall.
54 Threadleaf Ragwort* <i>Senecio flaccidus</i>	Grows in dry, rocky areas. Sunny yellow flowers (July to October) extend season for butterflies to sip nectar.
55 Redberry <i>Rhamnus ilicifolia</i>	Sometimes mistaken for scrub oak, this small, evergreen shrub often grows near shade of oaks. Tiny green flowers appear on female plants only in March and April and attract host of native pollinators. Glistening red berries in July offer food to variety of birds.
56 'Bee's Bliss' Sage <i>S. clevelandii x sonomensis</i>	Fast-growing ground cover up to 1 foot high and 8 feet wide. Deer-resistant. Drought-tolerant, but gray-green leaves look best with occasional water. Prolific lavender flowers attract hummingbirds and bumblebees in spring.
57 Creeping Sage <i>Salvia sonomensis</i>	Low-growing, creeping ground cover that looks best in afternoon shade. Drought-tolerant; can be grown near oaks if not watered more than once a month. Deer-resistant. Bluish flowers attract hummingbirds and bees.
58 Snowberry <i>Symphoricarpos acutus</i>	Ground cover under shade of trees; adaptable to many soil types. Small white to pink flowers attract native pollinators; white berries feed quail and other birds.
59 Soap Root* <i>Chlorogalum pomeridianum</i>	Large, hairy bulb dormant in winter. In summer, sends up tall, airy stems with small, white lily flowers that open in afternoon. Indian uses are numerous: soap, cooked as food, brush tool.
60 Sourberry <i>Rhus trilobata</i>	Leaves similar to poison oak, but sourberry's middle leaflet lacks long stem. Instead, its 3 leaflets touch. Eventually forms large groupings of plants. Chartreuse flowers attractive with redbud flowers; good wildlife habitat. Birds feed on berries. Important basketry plant for Indians; berries for food and drink.
61 Toyon/California Holly <i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	Attractive, evergreen shrub; once covered Hollywood Hills, hence the name. Grows in most soil types; white flowers in spring rated as top pollinator attractor. Red berries in winter feed array of birds. Indians cooked berries, used other parts for medicine.
62 Western Blue Flax <i>Linum lewisii</i>	Beautiful blue flowers topping wiry stems give airy, delicate look to garden. Reseeds easily; good in meadows and wildflower areas.
63 Western Redbud <i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	All-season beauty, especially magenta spring blossoms and fall color of heart-shaped leaves. Provides nectar to migrating and local hummingbirds, butterflies and bumblebees. Important basketry plant for Native Americans.
64 Woolly Leaf Mountain Lilac* <i>Ceanothus tomentosus</i>	Brilliant blue flowers cover this evergreen shrub in late spring. Attracts many pollinators.
65 Common Yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Can be invasive, but makes great lawn substitute, taking less water and no fertilizers or chemicals. Mow after seeds set. Fire-resistant. Flowers attract diversity of beneficial insects. Plant known to have medicinal properties.

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ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (grantor)	California Native Plant Society, Sierra Foothills Chapter	The Chrysalis Institute
Mariposa County Fairgrounds	California Native Garden Foundation	Granite Construction Company
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service	Yosemite Gateway District of California Garden Clubs (monetary donation)	Intermountain Nursery
Upper Merced River Watershed Council	American Indian Council of Mariposa County	Evans Tree Service
Mariposa County Juvenile Probation Community Service Program	Woodland Elementary School	Foster True Value Hardware
Mariposa Agri-nature Trail ("Weekend in the Country")	National Park Service, Yosemite Museum	Bootjack Equipment Rental and Feed
UCCE, Mariposa County Master Gardeners	National Park Service, Yosemite Research Library	The Homestead, Ahwahnee
Mariposa County 4H		Coldwell Banker Mountain Leisure Properties

INDIVIDUALS

Al and Carliene Anderson (mulch)	Brian Bullis, fairgrounds manager	author, naturalist and artist (artwork)
Kat Anderson ethnobotanist and author (photographs)	Alison Colwell, botanist	Scott McGrath metal sculptor (arbor and bench)
Rick Bergman	Pat Conlisk (stonemasonry)	Alrie Middlebrook gardening expert and author
Bonnie Bladen native plant nursery owner	Bob Evans (crane service and mulch)	Bill Nance, Probation program
Dr. Barton and Martha Brown (monetary donation)	Jessa Guisse, Xerces Society	Mace Vaughn, Xerces Society, NRCS
Bob Brown (photographs)	Dan Horner (photographs)	Kathy Wallis, Probation program supervisor
	Ashok Khosla (photograph)	
	John Muir Laws	

VOLUNTEERS

The MCRCD also thanks these dedicated volunteers whose work has brought this garden to life:

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Lonnie Allen	Gary Friesen	Liana Lopez
Kevin Bowman	Joel Friesen	Len McKenzie
Jeff Bradhurst	Jeff Gabe	Ann Mendershausen
Mary Britt	Janette Gamble	Ralph Mendershausen
Cindy Brooks	Pat Garcia	Gail Miller
Kris Casto	Granite Construction Company	Peggy Moore
Susan Clark	Jennifer Harsha	Christy Peterson
Alison Colwell	Mark Holcombe	Donovan Peterson
Dee-Dee Combes	Dan Horner	Pierce Peterson
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Julie Dowsing	Ruth Kevirtis	Marsha Theurer
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Bob Evans	Rita Kidd	Holly Warner
Don Fox	Tony Kidd	Vivian White
Glenn Franklin	Marion Lafler	Trudy Williams
John Henry Franklin	Amanda Loftis	Lowell Young

Notes

A large rectangular area with rounded corners, outlined in brown, containing horizontal blue lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and cover the majority of the page's central area.