



Recommended Plants for Sonoma County

Native Plants

The selection of plants on this list is not intended to be exhaustive. There are many more plants that can be—and are—grown successfully in Sonoma County. The selected plants are likely to be the most successful. Our 30 very favorites, which we call the Sonoma Superstars, are marked with a star in the left margin.

Plants native to California provide food and habitat for wildlife and beneficial insects.

See our glossary of plant list descriptors at [http address] for explanations of these descriptors.

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- N = CA native
- W = wildlife habitat
- B = beneficial insects
- E = evergreen
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Trees

Aesculus californica (California buckeye)	g	V	S		N	W	B	D	X				
<i>Loses leaves in early summer, but occasional summer water will keep in leaf until fall. Poisonous to honeybees.</i>													
★ Cercis occidentalis (western redbud)	s		V	S	A	P		N	W		D	C	2 3 4
<i>Can be grown as a large shrub or small tree. Remove dead or twiggy branches. Clean up seed pods as they drop.</i>													
Cornus nuttallii (Pacific dogwood)	g	M		A	P	F		N		B		C	
<i>Dislikes excessive watering, fertilizing and pruning. Susceptible to anthracnose.</i>													
Lyonothamnus floribundus ssp aspleniifolius (Catalina ironwood)	g	L		S	A	P		N	W		E	D	T 2 4
<i>Flowers persist; must be removed manually.</i>													
Myrica [Morella] californica (Pacific wax myrtle)	g	M		S	A	P		N	W		E	D	
<i>Good hedge or screen. Birds are attracted to berries.</i>													
Platanus racemosa (California or western sycamore)	g	M		S				N	W			D	
<i>Suitable only for large gardens. Clean up litter as leaves drop in fall.</i>													
Quercus agrifolia (coast live oak)	g		V	S				N	W	B	E	D	
<i>Suitable only for large gardens.</i>													
Quercus douglasii (blue oak)	g		V	S				N	W	B		D	
<i>Suitable only for large gardens.</i>													
Quercus kelloggii (black oak)	g	L		S	A	P		N	W	B		D	2
<i>Suitable only for large gardens.</i>													
Quercus lobata (valley oak)	g	L		S				N	W	B		D	
<i>Suitable only for large gardens.</i>													

Shrubs

★ Arctostaphylos spp (manzanita)	s	m	g	L		S	A	P		N	W	B	E	D	C	1 2 3 4	
<i>Plants vary from creeping groundcovers to treelike shrubs. A. densiflora 'Howard McMinn' is one of the most garden tolerant manzanitas and is native to Sonoma County. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>																	
Artemisia californica (California sagebrush)	m			L		S				N	W		E	D	C		
<i>'Canyon Gray' and 'Montara' are superior selections.</i>																	
★ Ceanothus spp and cvs (California lilac)	m	g		M	L		S	A	P		N	W	B	E	D	C	3 4
<i>The most drought tolerant and deer resistant have small, dark green, crinkly leaves. Those with larger glossy foliage benefit from summer irrigation and shade inland. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>																	

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Dendromecon harfordii (island bush poppy) <i>Needs excellent drainage</i>	g	L	S	N	B	E	D	C	
Dendromecon rigida (bush poppy)	m		V	S	N	B	E	D	C
Encelia californica (coast sunflower) <i>Will drop leaves if no summer irrigation.</i>	s		L	S	N	B	E	C	T 3
Eriogonum giganteum (St. Catherine's lace) <i>Excellent native habitat plant. Best with some summer water.</i>	m g		V	S	N	W	B	E	D C T
Fremontodendron spp (flannel bush) <i>Foliage can be very irritating to the skin. Young plants require staking.</i>	g		V	S	N		E	D	
Garrya elliptica (coast silk-tassel) <i>Has dramatic winter catkins. Can be pruned to control size and shape. For large gardens only.</i>	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	E	D 2
★ Heteromeles arbutifolia (toyon, California holly) <i>Excellent fall/winter interest. Usually grown as a shrub but can reach tree size.</i>	m g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D C X 2 4
Holodiscus discolor (cream bush, ocean spray)	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	D 2
Lavatera [Malva] assurgentiflora (tree or island or mission ma Shear to keep dense.	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D T
Lepechinia spp (pitcher sage)	m	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D
Lupinus albifrons (silver bush lupine)	m		V	S	N	B	E	D	4
Mimulus [Diplacus] aurantiacus and hybrids (sticky monkey flower) <i>Woody-based perennial. Thin out twiggy growth; cut back annually to emerging buds on woody base.</i>	s		L	V	S	A	P	N	B E D C 3 4
Philadelphus lewisii (wild mock orange, western mock orange) <i>Remove dead interior branches.</i>	g	M	S	A	P	N	B	C	
Physocarpus capitatus (Pacific ninebark) <i>Needs part shade in inland areas.</i>	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	D	2 4
Prunus ilicifolia (holly leaf cherry)	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D C X 4
Prunus ilicifolia lyonii (Catalina cherry)	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D X
★ Rhamnus [Frangula] californica (coffeeberry)	m g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D C 2 4
Rhus integrifolia (lemonade berry) <i>Can be frost-tender inland.</i>	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	E	D C 4
Rhus ovata (sugar bush)	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	E	D C 4
★ Ribes spp (currant or gooseberry) <i>Thornless species are called currants; thorned species are called gooseberries.</i>	m g	M	L	V	S	A	P	F	N W D C 2 4
Sambucus spp (elderberry) <i>Plant more than one variety or species for best fruiting. Raw fruit is poisonous to humans.</i>	g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	D C X 4
Styrax redivivus (snowbell bush, California styrax)	m	L	S	A	P	N	W		2
Symphoricarpos albus (snowberry) <i>Named cultivars are less likely to spread.</i>	s m	L	P	N	W	B	D	C	X 2

Ground Covers

★ Arctostaphylos uva-ursi and cvs (kinnikinnick) <i>Prostrate, spreading and rooting as it grows. Slow to establish. Recommended varieties are 'Radiant' and 'Point Reyes'. 'Point Reyes' is more tolerant of heat and drought. Remove dead or twiggy interior branches.</i>	s m g	L	S	A	P	N	W	B	E D C 1 2 4
Artemisia pycnocephala 'David's Choice' (sandhill sage) <i>A particularly fine cultivar of this Sonoma County native. Short-lived; replace every 2 or 3 years.</i>	s		V	S	N	W	B	E	D C 3

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Baccharis pilularis cvs (dwarf coyote brush) <i>'Pigeon Point' and 'Twin Peaks' are recommended varieties. Shear in early spring before new growth appears. Cut out old arching branches.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N W B E	D C	1 2 4
★ Ceanothus spp and cvs (California lilac) <i>The most drought tolerant and deer resistant have small, dark green, crinkly leaves. C. griseus 'Yankee Point' is a superior form; 'Diamond Heights' is lime green and variegated. Neither of these is deer resistant. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>	m g	M L	S A P	N W B E	D C	1 4
Grindelia stricta [G. arenicola] (Pacific grindelia, gumplant)	s	L	S A P	N	B E D T	1 3 4
Lupinus albifrons collinus (prostrate lupine)	s	V	S	N	B E D C	1 3 4
Mahonia repens [Berberis aquifolium var repens] (Oregon grape) <i>Needs part shade in hottest locations.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N W	E D C	1 2 3 4
Ribes viburnifolium (evergreen currant, Catalina perfume)	m	L	P F	N W	D C	2 3 4
Salvia 'Bee's Bliss' (bee's bliss sage)	m	L	S	N W B E	D C	1 4
Salvia spathacea (hummingbird sage)	m	L	A P	N W B	D C	1 2 4
Satureja [Clinopodium] douglasii (yerba buena)	s	L	P F	N W B E	D C	1 2 3 4

Vines

Aristolochia californica (California pipe vine) <i>Slow to establish. Pipe vine swallowtail butterfly larva feeds solely on Aristolochia.</i>	g	L	P F	N W	D	2 4
Clematis lasiantha (pipestem clematis)	m g	L	S A P	N B	D X	2 3 4
Lonicera hispidula (western or California honeysuckle) <i>Can be grown as a ground cover,</i>	m	L	S A P F	N W B	C	1 2 3 4

Perennials

Achillea millefolium, native CA cvs (yarrow) <i>A very important plant for native bees and beneficial insects.</i>	s	L	S A P	N B	D C X	3 4
Aquilegia formosa (western columbine)	m	L	S A P	N W B	D X	2 3
Arabis blepharophylla (California rockcress) <i>Native to Sonoma coast. Good in rock gardens or containers.</i>	s	L	S A P	N B E D		3
Armeria maritima ssp californica (sea thrift) <i>Excellent for rock gardens. May need light shade in hottest locations.</i>	s	M	S A P	N B E D		3
Asclepias spp. CA native (milkweed) <i>Important source of food for Monarch butterfly larvae. A. speciosa and A. fascicularis are native to western USA.</i>	m	L	S	N B	D X	3 4
Aster chilensis [Symphyotrichum chilense] (California aster) <i>Spreads vigorously if over-watered.</i>	m	M	S A P	N W B	C	3
Dicentra formosa (western bleeding heart) <i>Dormant in summer with no water.</i>	m	M	P F	N	D	3
Erigeron glaucus (beach aster, seaside daisy) <i>Needs some shade in hot areas.</i>	s	L	S A P	N B E D	T	2 3 4
Eriogonum spp (wild buckwheats) <i>Many native species, all great habitat plants. E. grande rubescens is especially showy</i>	s m	L V	S	N W B E	D C	3 4
Eschscholzia californica (California poppy) <i>Native has orange or yellow flowers. Cultivars available with red, pink, white, cream, salmon flowers.</i>	s	V	S	N B	D	3
Fragaria vesca (woodland strawberry) <i>Can be used as a groundcover.</i>	s	M	S A P	N	E D	1 3
Heuchera maxima (island alum root)	s m	M	S A P	N	E T	2 3

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Heuchera micrantha (alum root) <i>Native to Sonoma County.</i>	s	M	S A P	N	E		2 3
Iris douglasiana (Douglas iris hybrids, Pacific Coast iris) <i>Takes full sun along coast, some shade inland. Tends to self-sow in shade.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	E D		2 3 4
Lessingia [Corethrogyne] filaginifolia (California aster, silver car) <i>Does best on dry, rocky slopes. 'Silver Carpet' is best variety.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	B D		3 4
Lupinus bicolor (blue and white lupine, miniature lupine) <i>Short-lived native perennial.</i>	s	V	S	N	B E D		3 4
Monardella villosa (coyote mint)	s	V	S A P	N	B D		2 3 4
Penstemon heterophyllus (blue foothill penstemon, California penstemon)	s	L	S A P	N	B		3 4
Ranunculus californicus (California buttercup)	s	V	S	N	B		3
★ Salvia spp, CA native (sages) <i>Recommended species are S. apiana, S. leucophylla, and cv 'Poza Blue'</i>	s m	L V	S A P	N W B E D C			4
Verbena lilacina 'De La Mina' (Cedros Island verbena)	m	L	S A P	N	B E T		3
Zauschneria [Epilobium] spp (California fuchsia) <i>Attractive to pollinators. Cut back after bloom to renew. May spread to form colonies.</i>	s m	L	S	N W B D C			3 4

Succulents

Dudleya spp (cliff lettuce, live forever)	s	L	A P	N	E T		2 3 4
Sedum spathulifolium (common stonecrop) <i>Purpureum has deep purple foliage.</i>	s	L	S A P	N W B			2 3

Grasses and Grass-like Plants

Bouteloua gracilis (blue grama grass) <i>Retains its attractive shape even when dormant. Attractive reddish flower heads in summer.</i>	m	L	S A P	N W B D			3 4
★ Calamagrostis foliosa (Cape Mendocino reed grass)	s m	M	S A P	N	B E D		3
Carex tumulicola (foothill sedge)	m	L	A P F	N	B E D C		2 3 4
Deschampsia cespitosa (tufted hair grass) <i>Subspecies D. holciformis is good for rain gardens.</i>	m	L	S A P	N	E D		3 4
Festuca californica (California fescue)	s	L	S A P F	N	E D		2 3 4
★ Festuca idahoensis (Idaho blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	V	S A P	N	B E D		2 3 4
Festuca rubra (red fescue) <i>Great lawn replacement in shade. Does not require mowing.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	B E D C		2 3 4
Juncus patens (California grey rush) <i>Thrives in moist soil or shallow water. Good for rain gardens. Shear back old clumps to renew.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N	E D C		2 3 4
Muhlenbergia rigens (deer grass) <i>Cut to ground every two years.</i>	g	L	S A P	N W E C			2

Ferns

Polystichum munitum (western sword fern)	m g	M		F N	E D C		3
Woodwardia fimbriata (giant chain fern)	s	M		P F N	E D		