



Recommended Plants for Sonoma County for Garden Sense

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.

These climate appropriate plants are recommended by our Garden Sense program, which focuses on water conservation. (See Garden Sense page for more information.)

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

- ★ = Sonoma Superstars
- s = small
- m = medium
- g = large
- H = high water
- M = moderate water
- L = low water
- V = very low water
- S = full sun
- A = afternoon shade
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- F = full shade
- N = CA native
- W = wildlife habitat
- B = beneficial insects
- E = evergreen
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Trees									
★	Arbutus unedo (strawberry tree)	s m	L	S A P	W B E D				2 3 4
	<i>When mature, prune lower branches to expose multiple branches and peeling bark. Can be grown as large shrub or small tree.</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>								
	Chitalpa tashkentensis (chitalpa)	m	L	S					4
	<i>Choose 'Pink Dawn' or white blooming 'Morning Cloud' for summer blooms.</i>								
	Cotinus coggygria (smoke tree)	s	L	S A P		D			4
	<i>Can be grown as large shrub or small tree. Can be pruned to control size and shape. Excellent fall color.</i>								
	Diospyros kaki (Japanese persimmon)	m	L	S					4
	<i>Beautiful fall foliage.</i>								
★	Lagerstroemia indica (crape myrtle)	s m	L	S		D			4
	<i>Select plant in bloom. Many colors available. Decorative bark.</i>								
	Laurus nobilis (sweet bay)	m	L	S A P		E			2 4
	<i>Grows as shrub or small tree. Leaves can be used in cooking.</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>								
★	Pistacia chinensis (Chinese pistache)	m	L	S		D			4
	<i>Fall color bright orange/red. Plant named male cultivars only.</i>								
	Rhaphiolepis 'Majestic Beauty' (majestic beauty raphiolepis)	s	L	S A P		E			4
	<i>Large shrub that can be trained as a single- or multi-trunked tree.</i>								
★	Ulmus parvifolia (Chinese evergreen elm)	g	L	S					4
	<i>Striking bark texture. Semi-evergreen. Named cultivars vary in height, leaf size, and habit.</i>								
	Vitex agnus-castus (chaste tree)	s	L	S		B			3 4
	<i>May be grown as shrub or small tree. Dormant for 6 months of the year. Blooms in mid-summer.</i>								

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Shrubs

★ <i>Arctostaphylos</i> 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>						
<i>Artemisia</i> spp (sagebrush)	s m	L V	S		E D C	3 4
<i>Woody perennials vary from prostrate to mounding. Prune to maintain shape and rejuvenate. Avoid planting 'Valerie Finiss' and 'Silver King' which may spread too vigorously.</i>						
<i>Callistemon</i> spp (bottle brush)	s g	L	S A P	W	E D	3 4
<i>Red, pink, or yellow bristly flower clusters resemble bottle brushes. Varies from 3' dwarf to tree size. Do not prune into bare wood. Dwarf varieties available.</i>						
★ <i>Ceanothus</i> 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>						
<i>Ceratostigma griffithii</i> (burmese plumbago)	m	L	S A P	W	D	4
<i>Clear blue flowers in summer; red foliage in fall. Deciduous stems turn brown in winter.</i>						
<i>Chaenomeles</i> spp (flowering quince)	m g	L	S A P	W	D	4
<i>Cistus</i> spp (rock rose)	s m	L	S		E D	3 4
<i>Needs good drainage. Tolerates poor soil and neglect. Remove dead interior branches; replace woody plants after several years.</i>						
★ <i>Correa</i> spp (Australian fuschia)	s m	L	S A P	W B E	D	2 3 4
<i>May be hedged.</i>						
<i>Daphne</i> spp (daphne)	s m	M L	A P		E D X	3 4
<i>Extremely fragrant flowers. D. odora is low water use; may be finicky. All need excellent drainage. Compact forms available.</i>						
<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> (hop bush)	g	L	S A P		E D T	4
<i>Can be pruned to control size and shape. Good screen or hedge. 'Purpurea' is purple form.</i>						
<i>Elaeagnus pungens</i> (silverberry)	g	L	S A P		E D	2 4
<i>Tough plant; withstands harsh conditions. Good screen or hedge.</i>						
<i>Euonymus japonicus</i> (evergreen euonymus)	m g	L	S A P		E X	2 3 4
<i>Many cultivars available.</i>						
<i>Grevillea</i> spp (grevillea)	s m g	L	S A P	W	E D C	3 4
<i>Huge variation in size and form. Needle-leaved species are deer-proof. Avoid phosphorus fertilizers. Remove rangy growth.</i>						
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> (sunrose)	s	L	S		B E D C	3 4
★ <i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i> (toyon, California holly)	m g	L	S A P	N W B E	D C X	2 4
<i>Excellent fall/winter interest. Usually grown as a shrub but can reach tree size.</i>						
<i>Lantana</i> spp	m	L	S		B E D C T X	4
<i>Long blooming. Repetitive shearing promotes woody interiors. Thin out in late winter or early spring.</i>						

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Lavandula spp (lavender) <i>Many varieties of varying sizes. Shear annually to green buds near woody base.</i>	s	L	S		B E D			3 4
Lavatera maritima (bush mallow)	g	L	S A P		W B E D T			4
Leonotis leonurus (lion's tail) <i>Cut back rangy stems to new growth in spring. Tends to be short-lived.</i>	m	L	S		W B E D			4
Lonicera nitida (box honeysuckle) <i>Drought tolerant once established. Can be sheared into hedge. Can be invasive.</i>	m	L	S A P		E C			2 4
★ Loropetalum chinense (fringe flower) <i>Burgundy-leaved cultivars make wonderful specimen plants. New dwarf varieties available. Remove dead interior branches.</i>	s g	L	S A P		E			2 3 4
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
Myrsine africana (African boxwood) <i>Useful hedge in hot dry climates</i>	m g	L	S A P		E D			2 3 4
Myrtus communis (common myrtle) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s g	L	S A P		E D			3 4
★ Nandina domestica & cvs (heavenly bamboo) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	M L	S A P F		E D X			2 3 4
Olea europaea 'Little Ollie' (dwarf fruitless olive)	g	V	S A P		E D			4
Phormium hybrids (New Zealand flax) <i>Needs good drainage. Very attractive to gophers and voles. Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	L	S A P		W E D			2 4
Physocarpus capitatus (Pacific ninebark) <i>Needs part shade in inland areas.</i>	g	L	S A P	N W	D			2 4
Pittosporum tobira (mock orange) <i>Dwarf and variegated varieties available.</i>	s m g	L	S A P		B E X			3 4
Prunus caroliniana (Carolina laurel cherry) <i>Tolerates shearing.</i>	g	L	S A P		E C X			4
Prunus ilicifolia (holly leaf cherry)	g	L	S A P	N W	B E D C X			4
Punica granatum (pomegranate) <i>Dwarf version available for smaller gardens.</i>	s m g	L	S A P		B			3 4
★ Rhamnus [Frangula] californica (coffeeberry)	m g	L	S A P	N W	B E D C			2 4
Rhamnus alaternus (Italian buckthorn) <i>Plant named cultivars only. For large gardens only.</i>	g	L	S		E D C			4
Rhaphiolepis indica (Indian hawthorn) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m	L	S A P		E			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
Rosmarinus officinalis (rosemary) <i>Varies from groundcover to upright or trailing shrubs.</i>	s m	L	S A P		W B E D C		1	3 4
Salvia greggii & hybrids (autumn sage)	s m	L	S A P		W B D T			3 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

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★ Sarcococca ruscifolia (sweet box)	m	L	P F	E D	2	4
Sollya heterophylla (Australian bluebell creeper) <i>Can also grow as a vine.</i>	m	L	S A P	E D C T		4
Syringa vulgaris (lilac) <i>Remove old stems at ground level.</i>	m g	L	S	W B D		4
Teucrium fruticans (bush germander) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	L	S	B E D C		4
Vitex agnus-castus (chaste tree) <i>May be grown as shrub or small tree. Dormant for 6 months of the year. Blooms in mid-summer.</i>	g	L	S	B		4
Westringia spp (coast rosemary) <i>Can be frost tender before established.</i>	m	L	S	E D		4

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
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
Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (dwarf plumbago) <i>Spreads by underground runners. Generally dies back in winter.</i>	s m g	L	S A P	W D	1 2	4
Chamaemelum nobile (chamomile) <i>Sheer as a lawn substitute; 'Treneague' requires no mowing.</i>	s	L	S A P	W E D	1	3 4
Cotoneaster dammeri cvs <i>Superior groundcover forms include 'Lowfast' and 'Coral Beauty'.</i>	m g	L	S	W E D C	X 1	4
★ Dymondia margaretae (dymondia) <i>Excellent walk-on lawn substitute.</i>	s	L	S A P F	E D	1 2 3	4
Grevillea lanigera 'Coastal Gem' (grevillea 'Coastal Gem') <i>Avoid phosphorus fertilizers.</i>	m	L	S A P	W E D	1 2	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
Myoporum parvifolium (prostrate myoporum)	m g	L	S	E D C T	1	4
Ribes viburnifolium (evergreen currant, Catalina perfume)	m	L	P F N W	D C	2 3	4
Rosmarinus officinalis -Prostratusø (prostrate rosemary)	g	L	S	W B E D C	1	4
Salvia -Bee's Blissø (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
Teucrium cossonii majoricum (Majorcan germander)	s	V	S	B E D	1	3 4
★ Thymus praecox (creeping thyme) <i>Excellent as a walkable groundcover.</i>	s	L	S A P	B E D	1	4

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★ Verbena spp (verbena) s M L S B E D 1 3 4

Vines

Aristolochia californica (California pipe vine) g L P F N W D 2 4
Slow to establish. Pipe vine swallowtail butterfly larva feeds solely on Aristolochia.

Clematis lasiantha (pipestem clematis) m g L S A P N B D X 2 3 4

Lonicera hispidula (western or California honeysuckle) m L S A P F N W B C 1 2 3 4
Can be grown as a ground cover,

Perennials

Achillea filipendulina 'Coronation Gold' (fernleaf yarrow) m L S B D 3 4

Achillea millefolium, native CA cvs (yarrow) s L S A P N B D C X 3 4
A very important plant for native bees and beneficial insects.

Agastache rupestris (licorice mint) m L S A P W B D 3 4
Narrow fragrant grey green leaves with spikes of orange flowers. Outstanding garden performance.

Anigozanthos spp (kangaroo paw) s m g L S W E T 3 4
Dwarf varieties available. Bush Gems series bred to require less water and resist leaf and root diseases.

Aquilegia spp (columbines) s m L S A P W B D X 2 3 4
Suited to woodland gardens. Most are not long lived and need to be replaced every 3 or 4 years.

Asclepias spp, CA native (milkweed) m L S N B D X 3 4
Important source of food for Monarch butterfly larvae. A. speciosa and A. fascicularis are native to western USA.

Coreopsis spp (coreopsis) s M L S B 3 4

Erigeron glaucus (beach aster, seaside daisy) s L S A P N B E D T 2 3 4
Needs some shade in hot areas.

Erigeron karvinskianus 'Spindrift' (Santa Barbara or Mexican dai) m L S A P B E D 3 4
Other cultivars can be invasive.

Eriogonum spp (wild buckwheats) s m L V S N W B E D C 3 4
Many native species, all great habitat plants. E. grande rubescens is especially showy

Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve' (wallflower) m L S A P B E D 3 4

Euphorbia x martinii (Martin's euphorbia) m L S A P E D X 2 3 4
Less invasive than other euphorbias.

Gaillardia grandiflora (blanket flower) s m L S E 3 4

★ Helleborus spp (hellebore, Christmas rose) m M L A P F E D X 2 3 4
Water requirements vary greatly by species. H. orientalis needs moderate water. H. argutifolia and H. foetidus are most drought-tolerant.

Iris douglasiana (Douglas iris hybrids, Pacific Coast iris) s L S A P N E D 2 3 4
Takes full sun along coast, some shade inland. Tends to self-sow in shade.

Kniphofia spp (red hot poker, torch lily) m L S A P W E D 3 4
Needs very little water once established. Groom in spring to maintain appearance.

Lessingia [Corethrogyne] filaginifolia (California aster, silver car) s L S A P N B D 3 4
Does best on dry, rocky slopes. 'Silver Carpet' is best variety.

Limonium perezii (sea lavender, statice) m L S D T 3 4
Does well in seaside gardens.

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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		
★ Nepeta spp (catmint or catnip)	s m	L	S	A	P	B	D	3	4				
Penstemon heterophyllus (blue foothill penstemon, California penstemon)	s	L	S	A	P	N	B	3	4				
Phlomis russeliana (phlomis)	m	L	S	A	P	W	E	D	2	4			
★ 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
★ Salvia spp, non-native (sages) <i>Many varieties available. Recommended species are S. leucantha, S. chamaedryoides, S. officinalis</i>	s m g	M	L	S	A	P	W	B	D	T	3	4	
★ Santolina spp (lavender cotton)	m	L	S	A	P	E	D	2	3	4			
Stachys byzantina (lamb's ears)	s	L	S	A	P	E	D	2	3	4			
★ Teucrium chamaedrys (germander)	s	L	S	B	E	D	3	4					
Tulbaghia violacea (society garlic) <i>Attracts bees.</i>	s	L	S	B	E	D	X	3	4				
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

Agave spp (agave) <i>Many smaller species available, suitable for small gardens. Some are frost tender. Avoid A. americana which grows large and is difficult to remove.</i>	s m g	L	V	S	E	D	C	T	3	4	
Aloe spp (aloes) <i>Most make outstanding container plants.</i>	s m g	L	S	A	P	E	T	2	3	4	
Cotyledon spp (cotyledon)	s m	L	S	A	P	E	D	T	2	3	4
Dasyliirion spp (desert spoon)	s m	V	S	A	P	E	D	4			
Dudleya spp (cliff lettuce, live forever)	s	L	A	P	N	E	T	2	3	4	
Sedum spp (stonecrop) <i>Large genus with much variation. Some are frost tender.</i>	s m	L	S	A	P	B	T	2	3	4	
Sempervivum spp (houseleek) <i>Tolerates both wet and cold conditions.</i>	s	L	S	A	P	B	D	2	3	4	
Senecio mandraliscae (blue chalk fingers)	s	L	S	A	P	T	X	3	4		
Yucca filamentosa and cvs (yucca) <i>'Bright Edge' and 'Color Guard' are recommended dwarf cultivars.</i>	s m	L	S	E	D	3	4				
Yucca gloriosa <i>'Bright Star' and 'Variegata' are recommended cultivars.</i>	g	L	S	E	D	4					

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		
Carex texensis (catlin sedge)	s	L	A	P	F	B	E	D	C	2	3	4	
Carex tumulicola (foothill sedge)	m	L	A	P	F	N	B	E	D	C	2	3	4
Chondropetalum tectorum (cape reed) <i>Tolerates standing water. May be grown in rain gardens.</i>	m	L	S	A	P	W	E	D	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			

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Festuca californica (California fescue)	s	L	S A P F N	E D	2 3 4
Festuca glauca (Elijah blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	L	A P	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
Helictotrichon sempervirens (blue oat grass) <i>Needs good drainage.</i>	m	L	S A P	E D	3 4
Juncus patens (California grev 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
★ Lomandra longifolia (mat rush) <i>Extremely drought tolerant once established.</i>	m	L	S A P	E D	2 3 4
Muhlenbergia spp (muhly grass) <i>M. dubia, M. dumosa, M. capillaris are recommended. Cut to ground every two years.</i>	m g	L	S	W E D C	3 4