

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION

ABOUT CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

What native plants are (and what they aren't)

- According to California Native Plant Society, “Native plants grew here prior to European contact. California's native plants evolved here over a very long period, and are the plants which the first Californians knew and depended on for their livelihood. These plants have co-evolved with animals, fungi, and microbes to form a complex network of relationships. They are the foundation of our native ecosystems, or natural communities.”
- California is home to a variety of ecosystems and plant communities. While many native plants are extremely drought-tolerant, others grow naturally in wet habitats. You can find a native plant for almost any garden condition.
- California is unique in that it has over 6,000 plant species, subspecies and varieties, and contains one-quarter of all plants native to North America, north of Mexico. Nearly one-third of our native species are **endemic** to our state, meaning they do not occur anywhere else on Earth.
- Many plants marketed as “drought-tolerant” are from other Mediterranean regions. While they may conserve water, they are not necessarily adapted to our region in other ways—such as our soils, climates, and pollinators. For best results, choose plants that are adapted to **all** of your garden's conditions.
- “Naturalized” is not the same as “native.” Naturalized plants are non-native species that have escaped cultivation and spread into wild lands. Without their natural predators and competitors, some of these plants, such as mustard and fountain grass, have become invasive. Although drought-tolerant, these plants reduce habitat and biodiversity by outcompeting native plants for resources.
- Being adapted to our native soils, climates and annual summer dry season (= drought-tolerant), native plants are a beautiful, sustainable, environmentally-friendly choice for California gardens.

What native plants can do

- Reduce water consumption. California native plants use, on average, one-seventh the water of most non-natives.
- Reduce pesticide use. Because they have co-evolved with native wildlife, native plants typically require fewer pesticides.

- Reduce your carbon footprint. Most native plants like lean, nutrient-poor soils. These do not require fertilizers or soil amendments. Most are grown in-state and travel short distances to retail nurseries.
- Reduce maintenance. A well-designed native garden—planted for the mature size of the plants—can be very low maintenance.
- Provide beauty. Native plants are beautiful for their many colors, forms, textures and aromas. With good design, you can have something in bloom every season.
- Attract wildlife. Native plants provide birds, beneficial insects (e.g. bees, butterflies, beetles), lizards, etc. with food and shelter.
- Support essential ecosystem services. Think about this: only 10% of herbivorous insect species can eat non-native plants, and insects comprise over 90% of the diet of baby birds, making native plants (and insects) an essential part of any bird habitat. Insects also provide other important services such as decomposition, pollination, and predation (on other insects).

What “CA-Friendly” plants are

- CA-Friendly as a term is designated for plants that, while not indigenous to the area (pre-European), are drought tolerant and generally adapted to our climate and soils.
- Species from other Mediterranean-climate parts of the globe, including Chile, South Africa, western Australia, and countries adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea (e.g. parts of Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Morocco, Israel, etc.).
- Species from desert regions of the globe with water requirements below that of our native flora including regions such as Mexico, the American Southwest, and the Middle East.

About Theodore Payne

Theodore Payne (1872 - 1963) was a British horticulturist who came to Southern California in 1893 and fell in love with the native flora. After working as head gardener for Madame Modjeska at her ranch in Orange County, he moved to Los Angeles where he started his own nursery and seed business in 1903. Through his nursery, he brought more than 400 native species into cultivation. He also planted dozens of public and private gardens throughout Southern California, including Descanso Gardens, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (now the California Botanic Garden), and Exposition Park in Los Angeles. Theodore Payne worked tirelessly to educate the public about the intrinsic beauty and value of native plants. He passed away in Glendale, CA at the age of 91.

About the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants, Inc.

The Theodore Payne Foundation was incorporated in 1960 to continue Mr. Payne's legacy. The following year, Payne bequeathed all of his plants, seed and equipment to the Foundation. Since that time, the Foundation has grown into a nursery, seed store, bookstore, art gallery and education center. TPF provides extensive plant information and advice in our nursery, on our website, through our adult classes and K-12 field trips, and through our outreach programs.

In addition, TPF sponsors an annual Native Plant Garden Tour featuring 30-40 gardens throughout the Los Angeles region. TPF operates a booth at the Hollywood Farmer's Market, provides a free Wild Flower Hotline each spring, exhibits botanical art in the Theodore Payne Gallery, and maintains an archive and library about California flora.

TPF is located on 22 acres in Sun Valley, CA. Our canyon site is home to a retail nursery, educational facilities, demonstration gardens, picnic areas, and hiking trail. The Theodore Payne Foundation is open to the public year round. Please visit our website, www.theodorepayne.org, for hours, directions, class schedule, and much more!