



Big Berry manzanita berries

BILL SHEPARD NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

ALPS, ATASCADERO LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF ATASCADERO, ATASCADERO NATIVE TREE ASSOCIATION,
AND THE CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS



California lilac flowers

This garden trail was initiated and designed by Dr. Bill Shepard to promote local California native plants for landscape use. The trail allows one to visualize the size, shape, foliage, and flowers of young to mature plants throughout the year. All plants are drought tolerant needing little to no water after being established, are hardy to the Atascadero climate, and many provide pleasing flowers, foliage and shapes for landscape gardening. Copies of the current plant list and information on ALPS are in the dispensers to your right or available on the ALPS website: www.supportalps.org. The planting information shown below is has been provided by the Native Plant Society of San Luis Obispo and modified by ALPS. It is available on the ALPS website at <http://supportalps.org/ALPS/Home.html>.

TIPS FOR GROWING NATIVE PLANTS SUCCESSFULLY

CHOICE OF PLANTS

Your selection of plants should consider the locale where they are to grow. Atascadero's hot, dry summers and freezing winters limit coastal-adapted plants which may not be successful here. The descriptions immediately to the right lists locally available native plants which are time-tested in Atascadero, and in the Shepard garden are grown without irrigation water after the first two years. Additionally, a brochure in a box to the left lists other drought tolerant native and non-natives to consider.

DRAINAGE

Most natives require good drainage. Heavy soils should be amended with sand or fine mulch to provide good drainage, and shallow underlying hardpan broken up if possible.

WHILE PLANTS ARE IN CONTAINERS

The soil in the container should be kept damp BUT NOT WET: the moisture in the container is ALL that is available to the plant. If allowed to dry out, the plants become stressed and may not survive even if copiously watered. One-gallon plants are the most available and successful.

WHEN TO PLANT

The best time to plant natives is in the fall; October to December in Atascadero. The winter rains allow deep root growth to occur, necessitating only weekly or bi-weekly deep, slow irrigation during the summer. This is different from non-native plants that normally require frequent irrigation. If spring or summer planting cannot be avoided, then weekly deep, slow watering is essential during the summer and early fall months. During winter no watering should be done.

PLANTING and INITIAL WATERING

Young plants require supplemental water until they are established, PARTICULARLY DURING THE FIRST TWO YEARS.

- Choose 1-gallon sized plants if possible. Larger plants are often root bound and languish in the ground.
- Dig a hole twice the size of root ball. Mix any supplements (sand, mulch) with the soil from the hole if the soil is very dense.
- Fill the hole with water and allow it to soak in two or three times. This ensures a moist environment for the roots.
- Remove plant from container, gently place it in the hole, and backfill with the original soil. Firm the soil around the root ball at the same depth as it was in the container. Water the plant thoroughly.
- From then on, INFREQUENT , SLOW, DEEP watering to a depth of at least a foot is most effective. This may be accomplished via a drip system or by means of a trickling hose. This encourages the plants to develop deep root systems that will not be inclined to dry out during dry months. After two –three years either no watering or monthly deep watering is useful.

FERTILIZING

Most natives do best with minimal or no fertilizer: natives are used to lean soils and often have a shorter, but glorious, life with fertilizers. Slow release fertilizers such as OSMOCOTE should be used rather than ammonium-based types or fresh manures.

PRUNING

Heavy pruning is not recommended. Pinch prune tips of branches to encourage lateral growth. Otherwise, prune only the season's growth. Prune deciduous plants while dormant.

NATIVE CALIFORNIA SHRUBS ESPECIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN ATASCADERO

*Examples of these plants may be seen in the Shepard garden growing with NO water**

** After plants have been established for 1-2 years with intermittent summer watering*



8-year old Big Berry

For instance, Dr. Hurd can grow to 10-15 feet high, while Howard McMinn is a lower (3-6 feet) but wide (10-12 feet) plant.

MANZANITA (*Arctostaphylos* spp)

A must-have plant with high garden value and a clean tidy look. Full sun, evergreen, very drought tolerant, beautiful red bark, pink to white flowers in January-February forming berries in spring, widely available. Manzanitas last 10-30 years, require little/no pruning, and come in a variety of sizes. Big Berry (*A. glauca*) is perhaps the most hardy in Atascadero, but Dr. Hurd, Louis Edmunds, and Howard McMinn also thrive with no/little water. It is important to confirm the size and shape of the mature shrub so it fits your landscaping requirements.



15-year old hedge

CALIFORNIA CHERRY (*Prunus ilicifolia*)

Works well as hedge or single plant. Full sun or shade, evergreen, very drought tolerant but accepts garden watering, cream-colored flowers in April-May forming dard cherries in summer. *Prunus* can be trained into a single trunk or allowed to form a dense hedge. Pruning is required to maintain the size of the plant which can grow to 20 feet tall in optimal conditions. This is a very durable and dependable plant.



6-year old prunus hedge on shady side of house

CALIFORNIA WILD LILAC (*Ceanothus ssp*)

Ceanothus are known for their beautiful blue flowers in early spring. The plants are generally drought hardy, evergreen, and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. One *Ceanothus* local to Atascadero is called Buckbrush (*C. cuneatus*) and is one of the hardiest lilacs with white to light blue flowers and small greyish leaves. While many cultivars are available locally, the coastal varieties will not thrive in the Atascadero heat and winter cold. Blue Jeans, Concha, Ray Hartman, and L.T. Blue do well in Atascadero. Deer like *Ceanothus*, but Blue Jeans and Buckbrush are fairly resistant.



<http://waywardspark.com/ceanothus/>



<http://desertmountainrcandd.org/54-2shoptoyon-heteromeles-arbutifolia-3>

TOYON (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

Toyon is sometimes call Christmas Berry for its displays of orange-red berries in winter: birds love to forage the berries. It is drought hardy, evergreen, usually 6-8 feet tall but up to 15 feet in optimal conditions, and tolerates shade or sun. It may be pruned to a tree-like single trunk. Good for hedges or as single background (larger) shrub in landscape.

OTHER PLANTS TO CONSIDER.

ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus mexicana*) A shrub that can grow to a small tree size (20 feet), but usually 8-12 feet high. It has a canopy of cream-colored flowers in spring turning into dark blue berry clusters in early summer. Very drought tolerant and long lived, deciduous (loses leaves in winter).

COYOTE BUSH (*Baccharis pilularis*) Very drought hardy, evergreen: a bush up to 8+ feet tall and wide. Deer resistant.

OTHERS Sages (*Salvia ssp*), currents and gooseberries (*Ribes ssp*), buckwheats (*Eriogonum*), and California fuchsias (*Zauschneria ssp*) are wonderfullyl hardy, drought toloerant shrubs and ground covers offering color and a more rambling wild look in your garden.