



Big Berry manzanita berries

BILL SHEPARD NATIVE PLANT GARDEN

ATASCADERO LAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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



Pink-flowered current flower

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 or no water after being established and thrive in Atascadero's climate. Many plants display pleasing flowers, foliage, and shapes for landscape gardening. Copies of both the current plant list and information on ALPS are in kiosk dispensers to your right and are available on ALPS' website: www.supportalps.org. The "Tips for Growing Native Plants" below was provided by the California Native Plant Society of San Luis Obispo and edited by ALPS; it is also available on ALPS' website.

TIPS FOR GROWING NATIVE PLANTS

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 many coastal plants which may not be successful here. The column to the right describes plants which are time-tested in Atascadero and which are locally available. For a broader list of drought tolerant plants consult the brochure provided by the Atascadero Mutual Water Company in the kiosk box to your left.

DRAINAGE

Most natives require good drainage. Heavy soils should be amended with compost 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 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: rough up the edges of the hole for roots to grow into. Amendments are generally not needed for plants adapted to the local area.
- Fill the hole with water and allow it to soak in two or three times. This ensures a moist environment for the roots: thoroughly allow to drain before planting.
- 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 micro-spray system or by means of a trickling hose to ensure watering away from the plant base to more closely simulate rainfall and reduce trunk diseases. Riparian plants may require supplemental summer watering while other plants may not tolerate summer moisture. In the Shepard garden plants are grown without supplemental water after the first two years.

FERTILIZING

Fertilizers are generally not necessary for California native plants. Plants in containers may benefit from an organic fertilizer.

PRUNING

Heavy pruning is not recommended. Pinch prune tips of branches to encourage lateral growth. Prune plants when dormant, which may be during the summer for some natives.

NATIVE CALIFORNIA SHRUBS ESPECIALLY SUCCESSFUL IN ATASCADERO

MANZANITA (*Arctostaphylos* spp*) *spp: species



8-year old Big Berry manzanita

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. 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.

CALIFORNIA CHERRY (*Prunus ilicifolia*)



15-year old Prunus hedge

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 dark cherries in summer. *Prunus* can be trained into a single trunk or allowed to form a dense hedge. Pruning may be required to maintain the desired size 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* spp)



Ceanothus blooms

By permission from Wayward Spark (<http://waywardspark.com/>)

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. Many 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. Blue Jeans and Buckbrush are fairly deer resistant.

TOYON (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)



Toyon berries

Toyon is sometimes called 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

- LOW SHRUBS AND GROUND COVERS** Sages (*Salvia* spp), buckwheats (*Eriogonum*), and California fuchsias (*Zauschneria* spp) are drought hardy low shrubs and ground covers with engaging flower colors and a rambling look in your garden. Look in the Shepard garden to see a number of specimens.
- CURRENTS AND GOOSEBERRIES** The *Ribes* genus includes *R. aureum* and *R. sanguineum* (currents) and *R. speciosum* (gooseberry) which display beautiful, colorful flowers and interesting (and edible) berries. Good plants for attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. Deciduous (loses leaves in winter) and may need summer water in Atascadero.
- COYOTE BUSH (*Baccharis pilularis*)** A bush up to 8+ feet tall and wide. Very drought hardy, evergreen, deer resistant. Female plants differ from male plants in producing larger cream colored flowers.
- ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus mexicana*)** A deciduous shrub that can grow to a small tree size (20 feet) but usually stays 8-12 feet high. It has cream-colored flower clusters in spring turning into dark blue berries in early summer. Very drought tolerant and long lived.