



Native Plants to Grow in Your Yard



Growing native plants in your yard is a great way to reduce the amount of irrigation needed, and attract pollinators like bees and butterflies. Once native plants are established, they need minimal watering and maintenance.

Native Versus Drought Tolerant

Native plants are plants that exist or grow naturally in a region or country. In southern California, these plants tend to need less water and many would be considered drought tolerant. Native plants can be difficult to buy since they are usually only found in special nurseries. Places like Home Depot® very rarely sell native plants.

Drought tolerant plants need less water and can survive long periods of time without water once they have been established (usually about a year or so). There are many non-native drought tolerant plants available at local nurseries. These options are good for our water issues, but not as beneficial to the native pollinators.

Where to Buy Native Plants

These organizations sell native plants. Their hours vary, so we recommend contacting them before visiting their locations.

- [Tree of Life Nursery](#) - located in San Juan Capistrano
- [ShIPLEY Nature Center](#) - located in Huntington Beach
- [Back to Natives](#) - located in Santa Ana
- [Fullerton Arboretum](#) - located at Cal State Fullerton
- [Theodore Paine Foundation](#) - located in LA County, will ship seeds
- [Las Pilitas Nursery](#) - located in Central California but will ship

Watering Requirements

One of the benefits of native plants is that they need very little water. Most natives only need a small amount of water once a week. After they have been established for a year or two, they can survive without additional watering. To keep natives green year round, it is best to give them some water during the dry months. Be careful to not over water native plants.

Soil Requirements

Your native plants should do fine in whatever soil you have at your house. It is more important to make sure you are planting the right plants for your area. If you need to add soil in order to plant, landscape soil will work well for most native plants.

Which Natives Might Work Well in My Yard?

Not all California natives will work well in all types of garden settings. Some California native plants will turn very brown and dry during the hot months and don't look as nice in a landscape setting or in a planter box. Some native plants grow well in planters. Other natives can be trimmed and still grow nicely. Below is a short list of common native plants that will work well in many household yards.

Common Name	Size of Plant	Color of Plant and Flowers	Can you trim/prune the plant?
Bush Sunflower	Up to 5 feet tall and wide	Leaves stay green year round with water once a week. Yellow flowers will be on the plant for most of the year with minimal water.	Yes, this plant can be drastically trimmed. After the flowers have bloomed, you can cut them off the plant. If it starts to look dead you can trim it back as well.
California Buckwheat	Up to 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide	Leaves stay dark green year round. They produce small white flowers from May through October.	Yes, you can trim the branches and after the flowers have bloomed, you can cut them off the plant. This plant is very fast growing.
Black Sage	Up to 6 feet tall	Leaves are light to dark green and they produce white flowers in the spring.	Yes, you can trim the branches and after the flowers have bloomed, you can cut them off the plant.
Purple Sage/ Cleveland Sage	Up to 5 feet tall	Leaves are light to dark green and they produce purple flowers in the spring.	Yes, you can trim the branches and after the flowers have bloomed, you can cut them off the plant.
White Sage	Up to 5 feet tall and wide	Leaves are light green and they produce white flowers on long stalks (up to 9 feet tall) from April through July.	This is a slower growing sage, limit trimming when small. Trim the flower stalks after they have finished blooming.
Prickly Pear Cactus	Up to 5 feet tall	The pads (stem) stays green all year. They produce a purple flower that turns into a fruit. Both the pads and the fruit are edible.	The pads of the plant can be trimmed. This plant is easy to regrow by planting a pad.
Coyote Brush	4 - 6 feet tall	Leaves stay green all year and blooms in the fall.	This plant can be pruned as a hedge or a desired shape. They grow back easily even when cut back to 6 inches.
Elderberry	Tree will get 6 to 24 feet tall	Leaves are light to dark green and they produce yellow flowers.	When young, these plants can be trained to grow as single or multi-trunk trees. Remove any of the rootsuckers from the base of the plant.
Toyon	6 to 25 feet tall	Leaves are dark green, they produce red berries in the winter.	Best to trim in spring. Cut back any of the dead branches and you can cut the lower branches to open the understory.
Bush Mallow	Up to 15 feet tall.	Leaves are light green and they produce purple flowers. It will lose many of it's leaves if it's not watered occasionally year-round..	Best if trimmed in late summer. Cut back any of the dead branches.

Native Garden Ideas

