

WHY CALIFORNIA NATIVES?

You've probably heard you should plant natives. Here's why you'll want to:



They're Tough When It Counts

Once established, California natives thrive with little to no summer water and handle our droughts. Many resist fire better than traditional landscape plants.



They Support Wildlife

A single oak supports over 300 species. Native plants feed native butterflies, bees, birds, and beneficial insects. Your garden becomes part of a living ecosystem.



They're Actually Easy

The secret? Right plant, right place. Match sun, shade, space, and water needs, and then natives are lower maintenance than most conventional landscapes.



They're Beautiful

Stunning flowers, elegant forms, year-round interest, and textures you can't find anywhere else. California natives offer beauty that rivals any exotic plant.



They're Available

California natives are increasingly common at local nurseries. Look for many of the species featured here alongside new and exciting selections as well as trusted, time-tested favorites.

The Bottom Line:

You don't have to rip everything out or start from scratch. Start small. Add a native plant where it makes sense. Watch what happens.

  @sonomabotanicalgarden

Your Yard Can Be a Haven

For wildlife. For water conservation. For resilience. For lasting beauty, California natives make it possible. This garden shows you how.

THREE EASY STEPS TO GET STARTED WITH NATIVE PLANTS



1) Assess Your Site

Sun or shade? Available space? Water access? Soil or drainage challenges? Match your conditions to the right plants.



2) Start Small, Start Smart

Convert one bed. Try natives in containers. Replace one high-maintenance plant. Small successes build confidence.



3) Shop Local and Get Growing

Ask local nurseries for native plants. Customer demand shapes availability.

WHAT TO EXPECT: YEARS 1-3



Year 1: Sleep

Regular watering while roots establish. Growth may appear slow.



Year 2: Creep

Less frequent watering. Noticeable growth and first blooms.



Year 3+: Leap

Most natives need little to no supplemental water. Blooming increases, maintenance decreases.

This demonstration garden was made possible by:

Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation • Sonoma Ecology Center
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NATIVE PLANTS & NATURAL WONDERS

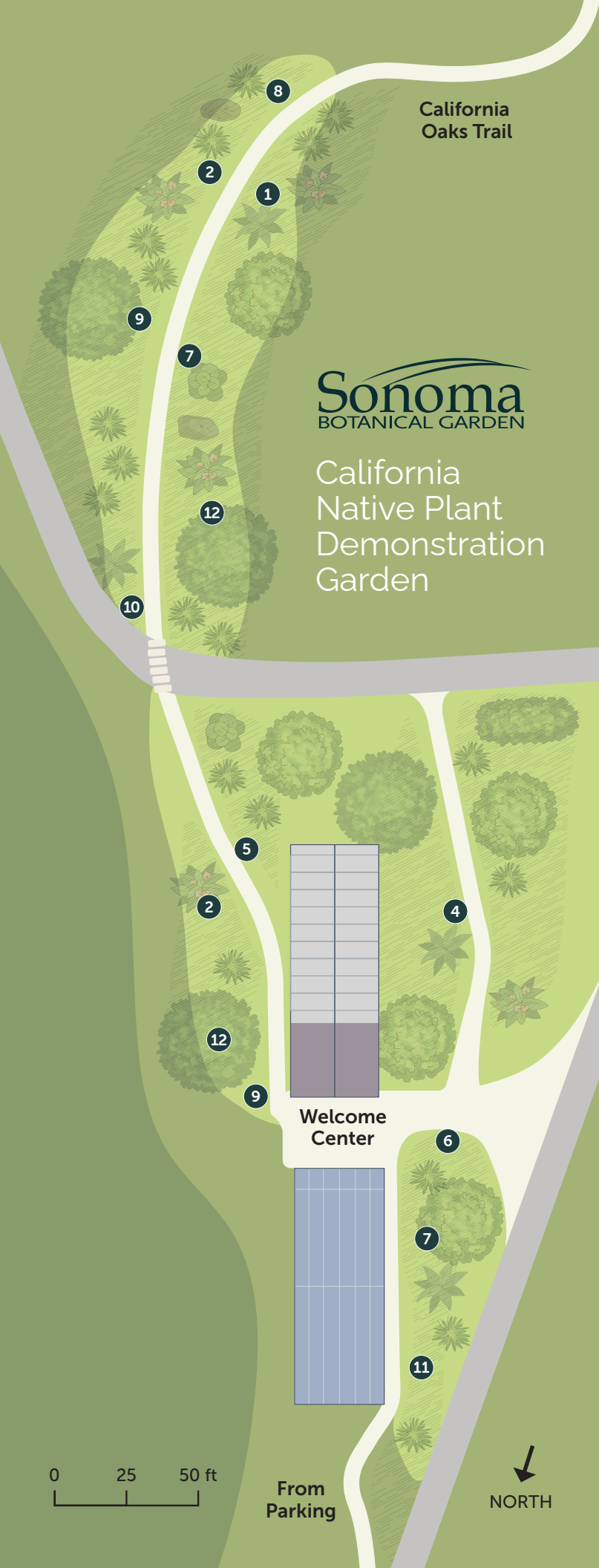
Sonoma Botanical Garden has long celebrated the botanical connections between California and East Asia—two regions separated by an ocean but united by ancient evolutionary ties.

Our California Native Plant Demonstration Garden brings this story home, showcasing plants that belong here and how beautifully they can work in your own landscape.

Native plants aren't just for the wilderness. They're garden-ready plants that thrive with less water, support birds, bees, and butterflies, and offer beauty throughout the year.


Sonoma
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Twelve of Our Favorite Native Plants for Every California Landscape

We've identified twelve versatile, garden-ready, reliable "power plants" that conserve water, resist fire, support wildlife, build healthy soil, and provide year-round beauty. Seasonal highlights can include fruits, flowers, textural foliage, and garden structure. These are specifically noted in each plant description. Think of them as your native plant starter kit. Sizes cited depend on species.

WINTER / EARLY SPRING

- 1 Toyon — *Heteromeles arbutifolia***
The Original Hollywood Star
 Brilliant red berries provide winter beauty and vital bird food.
 6–15' shrubs or small trees
Key Tip: Prune after berries finish in late winter.



- 2 Currants & Gooseberries — *Ribes***
The Early Bloomers
 Provide early hummingbird nectar when little else blooms (Feb–Apr). Shade-tolerant, producing edible berries for wildlife.
 3–8' shrubs
Key Tip: Prune only after flowering—summer pruning removes next year's blooms.



- 3 Manzanita — *Arctostaphylos***
The Living Sculpture
 Architectural plants with mahogany bark, evergreen presence, and winter flowers. Exceptional drought tolerance.
 Groundcovers–15' shrubs
Key Tip: Provide good drainage. No summer water once established.



- 4 California Lilac — *Ceanothus***
The Spring Spectacle
 Clouds of blue flowers each spring. Fast-growing and pollinator-friendly with soil-improving roots.
 1–20' shrubs
Key Tip: Needs excellent drainage. No summer water.



SPRING / SUMMER

- 5 Blue-Eyed Grass — *Sisyrinchium***
The Small-Scale Charmer
 Delicate iris-like flowers in spring. Ideal for small spaces and containers.
 6–12" perennials
Key Tip: Summer dormancy is normal—don't overwater.



- 6 Sage — *Salvia***
The Pollinator Powerhouse
 Aromatic summer bloomers loved by hummingbirds and bees, but not by deer.
 1–6' perennials and shrubs
Key Tip: Best in nutrient poor soil. Needs no fertilizer and only minimal summer water.



- 7 Monkey Flower — *Diplacus***
The Solar-Powered Hummingbird Feeder
 Showy tubular blooms in vibrant colors. Adaptable and long-flowering through early summer.
 Groundcovers–4' shrubs
Key Tip: Tolerates moderate water.



- 8 Rush — *Juncus***
The Evergreen Essential
 Grasslike texture for borders, meadows, and containers. Adaptable from wet to dry.
 2–4' evergreen perennials
Key Tip: Cut back once yearly in late winter for fresh new foliage in spring.



SUMMER / FALL

- 9 Buckwheat — *Eriogonum***
The Butterfly Lifeline
 Drought champions with months of summer flowers that support 400+ pollinator species.
 4"–4' shrubs
Key Tip: No summer water once established. Excellent drainage required.



YEAR-ROUND STRUCTURE

- 10 Coyote Brush — *Baccharis***
The Utility Player
 Evergreen that thrives in wind, clay, on slopes, and in tough conditions. Excellent for screening and erosion control.
 6"–6' shrubs
Key Tip: Choose compact forms for smaller gardens.



- 11 Coffeeberry — *Frangula***
The Shady Lady
 Reliable evergreen native for partly shady areas. Attractive berries for birds.
 2–15' shrubs
Key Tip: Choose compact forms to reduce pruning.



- 12 Oak — *Quercus***
The Keystone Giant
 California's ecological backbone, supporting hundreds of wildlife species.
 Shrubs–large trees
Key Tip: No summer water once mature.

