

## Why Grow Natives?

What are the benefits of planting California native plants?

Think about this! Since native plants are already adapted to native soils, they require little or no soil amendments, rototilling, cultivating, irrigating, fertilizers, or pest controls. Best of all, they require no pampering. Native plants are adapted to the region's climate patterns, so they generally need less water than imported plants.

Unless you propagate the seeds yourself, the plants might cost more, but the maintenance is much less. Although many of the native plants are labeled drought tolerant, the term is ambiguous. A label using the term drought tolerant might mean no water, it might mean a plant that requires little water, and it might mean a plant that will take summer watering. Please note that recently planted drought tolerant plants need weekly watering, at least until the roots are established.

Even with minimal care requirements, there is still much to know about native i.e. indigenous plants. For example, it is best to determine where the plants grow in the wild to determine their preferred growing conditions such as climate or soil. For example, some native plants grow only on north hillsides particularly when you live in places like the foothills of Madera county.

“But there is one more factor to consider when choosing native plants,” says Maryanne Lucas in her article, *California Natives* and subtitled, *Companion Planting Is A Necessity*.

“California natives grow best with members of their own community. As with people,” says Lucas, “community refers to more than just the physical environment. Plant communities should be viewed as living systems. The more you understand a plants native neighborhood or community, the better the choices you will be able to make.”

Consider this a warning. California natives do not grow naturally with garden flowers. Our native species are not used to the large amounts of water and fertilizer required by traditional garden flowers and must be treated accordingly.

Although September is the month the California Native Plant Society proclaims as the time to plant natives, there is still time. If new transplants have a chance to establish their roots 6 weeks before the first frost, the prospect of the plant surviving through winter is good. Since the first frost doesn't happen on the same date every year, be assured that optimal planting time doesn't happen exactly the same time every year either. It is prudent, however, to use recommended

guidelines provided by the CA. Native Plant Society specific to native plants. A list of information on substituting non-native with native plants is available. Included on the list is native plants and their water requirements available at your local Agriculture Extension office. Additional information can be procured through the CNPS (Ca. Native Plant Society) by calling Jeanne Larson at 559-243-0815. An abundance of information is also available on the web.

The annual CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SALE takes place today only, September 27th, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Vineyard Farmers Market, NW corner of Blackstone and Shaw, Fresno. This is the only fundraising event sponsored by the Sequoia Chapter of the CA. Native Plant Society. Plants, posters, books and seeds will be available.

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