

## Outstanding Plants for Alameda County

### Attractive Plants that Thrive on Little Care

As Master Gardeners, we are often asked to recommend plants that grow well in Alameda County. In addition, many gardeners want to conserve water, reduce pesticide usage and attract wildlife to their gardens. They also desire plants that don't require a lot of special care. Fortunately, there are many wonderful plants that can help gardeners meet these goals while providing color and interest in the garden.

This pamphlet highlights a selection of those plants. Some are single species, while others listed are genera of plants with species ranging from ground covers to large shrubs. For the latter, we have recommended some species and varieties within the genus as a starting point, though there are many others that will perform well and look beautiful. Reassuringly, the plants included here are those with which Master Gardeners in Alameda County have had positive experiences. Always check the label of the plant you are buying for its final size as well as its growing conditions (i.e. water, sun, and care requirements).

When planting, bear in mind that Alameda County contains many climatic zones or "micro-climates," so a plant that tolerates full sun in coastal Berkeley may require afternoon shade in Livermore. Similarly, plants that need no summer water in San Leandro, might benefit from an occasional deep soaking in Pleasanton. Although this brochure notes general growing conditions with each plant description, you will achieve best results if you learn about your own micro-climate and consult with your local nursery.

#### Key

-  No summer water required beyond what is naturally available.
-  Full Sun - All day minimum of 8 hours of sun.
-  Some summer water - deep soaking every 3-4 weeks.
-  Part Shade - filtered light, or, 4-5 hours of sun.
-  Summer water required - deep soaking every 1-2 weeks.
-  Shade - less than 3 hours of sun.
-  Endemic to California
-  Deer resistant.\*\*

Note: some varieties may have specific needs that differ from the genus/species. \*\*Deer may resort to resistant plants during times of severe drought or other extreme pressure to avoid starvation.

## Shrubs and Variables



**California Lilac**  
*Ceanothus* spp.

Mounding evergreen groundcover, large shrub or tree with profuse clusters of tiny blue flowers in mid-spring. Thrives on neglect. Afternoon shade inland. Suggested varieties: *C. griseus horizontalis* (groundcover); 'Joyce Coulter' (low shrub); 'Julia Phelps' (medium to large shrub), 'Ray Hartman' (large shrub/small tree). Other: Good drainage. Little to no summer water. Small-leaved varieties deer resistant. Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.



**Grevillea**  
*Grevillea* spp.

Australian native. Ranges from small, prostrate species to trees - select with care. Ferny lobed or needlelike leaves. Red, orange, pink, white or yellow flowers in winter and spring. Tolerates heat, poor soil, and little or no water. Suggested: *G. lanigera* (medium to large shrub, hairy leaves, pink flowers); *G. lavandulacea* (medium shrub, needlelike leaves, rose-red flowers); *G. rosemarinifolia* (large shrub, prickly leaves, red flowers). Other: Good drainage. Hummingbirds love.



**Oregon Grape**  
*Mahonia aquifolium*, *M. pinnata*, *M. repens*

Erect medium to large evergreen shrub with dark green spiny leaves - bronzy when new - red to purple in fall. Small yellow blooms in early spring followed by edible blue-black fruit. Excellent understory plant. Suggested varieties: 'Compacta' (lower, wider growth); 'Golden Abundance.' Other: All soil types. Prefers shade in hottest climates. Attracts birds. Good for large containers.



**Currant or Gooseberry**  
*Ribes sanguineum*, *R. aureum* (inland)

Deciduous shrub with graceful habit and attractive foliage. Produces stunning displays of hummingbird-loving red, pink, white, or yellow flowers in spring followed by fruit for birds in fall. *R. sanguineum* best in afternoon shade. Suggested varieties: *R. sanguineum* var. *glutinosum* (pink flowers); 'White Icicle'/'Inverness White' (white flowers); 'Barrie Coate' (red flowers). Other: Good under oaks. Water until established.



**Manzanita**  
*Arctostaphylos* spp.

Groundcover to large shrub with small white to pink flowers in winter/early spring; many have attractive red to purplish bark. Groundcover types provide good erosion control. Suggested: 'Carmel Sur' (groundcover); 'Howard McMinn' and 'Louis Edmunds' (medium to large shrub); 'Sentinel' (medium shrub, open form). Other: Prefers well drained, acid to neutral soil. Needs some water while new growth is tender or when inland grown. Attracts bees and hummingbirds.



**Shrubby Monkey Flower**  
*Mimulus aurantiacus*

Evergreen and semi-deciduous subshrub with showy red, orange and yellow tubular flowers in April through June. Prune to maintain bushiness. Summer dormant if not watered. Suggested: 'Burgundy'; 'Eleanor' (yellow flowers); 'Elliot's Verity Red'; 'Pumpkin'. Other: Good drainage. Attracts hummingbirds and bees. Good container plant.



**Coffeeberry**  
*Rhamnus californica*

Groundcover to large shrub depending on variety. Attractive dark green foliage with berries, spring to late fall, turning from green to red to black as they mature. Inconspicuous flowers. Suggested varieties: 'Eve Case' (smaller shrub form with large berries); 'Seaview Improved' (groundcover); 'Mound San Bruno' (very adaptable larger shrub). Other: Prefers good drainage. Some summer water inland. Habitat plant for birds.



**Mexican Bush Sage**  
*Salvia leucantha*

Attractive and reliable shrub (grown as a perennial in colder regions where severe frost causes seasonal die-back). Mounding gray green foliage grows 2-4'. Purple flower spikes bloom fall through spring. Trim to ground level in late winter to prevent excessive woodiness. Suggested varieties: 'Midnight'; 'Santa Barbara' (compact). Other: Likes part shade and occasional summer water inland. Attracts hummingbirds.



**Tree Mallow**  
*Lavatera* spp.

Large, fast growing shrubby perennial with gray green maple-like leaves. Long blooming purple-pink flowers with contrasting centers. Grows to 6' in one season. Suggested: *L. assurgentiflora* (native; darker blooms with white centers); *L. maritima* (light pink flowers with magenta centers). Other: Any soil. Attracts butterflies and larva, hummingbirds, and bees. Prune to promote flowers and dense growth.

# OUTSTANDING PLANTS

FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY



PLANTS THAT THRIVE ON LITTLE CARE

University of California  
Agriculture and Natural Resources



Master Gardener Program  
of Alameda County

Making a Difference  
for California

# ALAMEDA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

## Perennials

### Alstroemeria (Peruvian Lily)

*Alstroemeria* spp.



Long, leafy stems hold lily-like flowers of yellow, orange, peach, pink, or red. Multiplies on tuberous roots and by seed; can become invasive. Deciduous form produces leaves in winter and flowers in spring. No summer water. Evergreen varieties form clumping mounds that, with some summer water, bloom for long periods. Suggested: 'Ligtu' and 'Dr. Salter's hybrids' (deciduous). *A. aurea* hybrids (evergreen). Other: Good drainage. Afternoon shade inland.

### Hummingbird Sage

*Salvia spathacea*



Fragrant herbaceous perennial with numerous long stemmed flower clusters and ground covering foliage. Blooms late winter through summer. Suggested varieties: 'Kawatre' (magenta to red-orange); 'Powerline Pink.' Other: Prefers richer soil. Afternoon shade inland. Better with occasional summer watering. Good under oaks. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.

### Pineapple Sage

*Salvia elegans*



Clumping perennial growing to 4' with spikes of long, tubular red flowers in winter and spring. Foliage smells like pineapple and is used to make tea. Spreads slowly by underground runners. To maintain shape and productivity, cut back older stems as new growth appears. Excellent winter food source for hummingbirds. Other: Good drainage. Frost can cause die-back but mature plants will recover.

### California Fuchsia

*Epilobium canum*, *E. septentrionale*  
(also known as *Zauschneria*)




Low growing perennial, spreading by rhizomes. Forms attractive clumps of silver gray or gray-green leaves. Clusters of brilliant red-orange flowers in late summer and fall. Little maintenance; just cut back stems after blooming for new growth the following spring. Other: Good drainage. Tolerates heat. Attracts hummingbirds and native bees.

### Lavender

*Lavandula* spp.




Shrubby and aromatic with gray-green leaves and spikes of purple flowers. Little water once established. Tolerates light frosts. Cut back after harvest in summer. Avoid cutting into woody part of plant when pruning. Suggested: *L. angustifolia* English lavender (tall stems); *L. dentata* French lavender (long bloom); *L. stoechas* Spanish lavender (good near coast). Other: Good drainage. Attracts butterflies and bees. Used in potpourri.



*Scarlet Monkey Flower*  
*Mimulus cardinalis*

Evergreen with showy, tubular blooms summer to fall. Prefers moist areas. Hummingbirds love it.



*California Fescue*  
*Festuca californica*

Green to blue green clumping grass up to 2'. Excellent background for bright flowers. Prefers good drainage. Host for butterfly larva.

### Coyote Mint

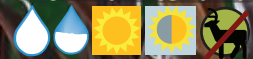
*Monardella villosa*



Fragrant semi-evergreen perennial with pungent gray/green foliage and purple, pink or white flowers. Needs annual pruning, but otherwise low maintenance. Other: Good drainage. Some summer water inland. Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and beneficial insects.

### New Zealand Flax

*Phormium tenax* and hybrids



Valued for foliage and structure. Large, sword-shaped leaves in varying lengths of bronze, red, variegated green, and yellow. Color intensifies with full sun and cool weather. Occasional large red or yellow spiky blooms in late spring/summer. Suggested: 'Jack Spratt' (small reddish dark green); 'Maori Chief' (large green, edged with crimson and cream); 'Variegatum' (large gray/green with yellow and cream stripes). Other: Hybrids require more water inland.

### Alameda County Master Gardener

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