



### **BASIC CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT FACTS:**

- California is home to one-quarter of all plants native to North America, north of Mexico.
- California has about 6,000 species, subspecies and varieties of native plants – more than any other state or region of comparable size in the United States.
- Urban and suburban native plant gardens will be the “make or break difference” for the support of biodiversity (“Bringing Nature Home,” Douglas Tallamy. Timber Press, 2007).
- For our own well being, we need native plants and the ecosystem services they make possible.

### **CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS SAVE WATER, ENERGY AND WILDLIFE:**

- California native plants use, on average, one-seventh the water of most non-natives; this contributes to the health of the river systems and aquifers from which we draw our water.
- 20% of California’s energy is used to pump and treat water, and up to 70% of household water is used for landscaping; gardening with native plants saves a considerable amount of energy and water.
- CA native plants know how to deal with drought because the plants evolved with drought. 37 of the last 40 centuries in California have been dry; the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of 3 wet centuries in the last 4,000 years. California’s growth was predicated on the expectation of an uncharacteristic amount of water. Drought is normal. (“Introduction to Water in California,” by David Carle, U.C. Natural History Guides, 2009)
- California native plants need no fertilizers, soil amendments or pesticides, which harm soil, fresh water and ocean health.
- 90% of all insect species that eat leaves (such as caterpillars of butterflies) can eat *only* native plants. For working ecosystems, we need native plants because they are the foundation of the food web. (“Bringing Nature Home”)
- Insects convert leaf matter to protein; most non-domesticated land animals – birds, lizards, mammals – depend on insects in some way for survival.
- Insects are essential to our well being as pollinators, food for other insects and animals, decomposers, and population regulators of other organisms.
- Everything is connected: Most caterpillars can only eat a few types of native plants. Without native plants on which to lay their eggs, most butterflies and moths go extinct. Butterflies and moths are important because they’re pollinators and because their caterpillars are the main food of baby birds. Without caterpillars, our bird populations crash.
- U.S. populations of many bird species have fallen between 60-90% in the last forty years. We need birds for the sixteen-trillion-dollars’ worth of ecosystem services they provide each year, world-wide, from agricultural pest control to reforestation to watershed health services. Birds give us so much in addition to beauty! We can help birds by creating native habitat in public and private spaces.
- Native plants produce 35 times more caterpillars than non-native plants. (“Bringing Nature Home”)
- Not all plants are equally “green” -- a native oak feeds up to 5,000 species of beneficial insects, whereas, for example, a non-native maple feeds relatively few. A native oak also uses much less water than a non-native maple, thereby saving water and wildlife.
- The current species extinction rate vastly exceeds the normal background rate. We need to do all we can to help save species through the creation of habitat in our communities – parkways, medians, public spaces and private gardens. (see “Has the Earth’s Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?” by Prof. Anthony Barnosky et al., published in the March 3, 2011, edition of *Nature*).

### **GARDENING WITH CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS:**

- Native plants like their soil “lean and mean.” Do not add fertilizers or soil amendments. California native plants are adapted to nitrogen-poor soils.
- Fertilizers make native plants generate top growth without the compensating root growth, which is needed to support what’s above ground.
- Mulch all around the plant, but keep the mulch at least three inches away from the trunk to prevent stem rot from water being held next to the trunk.
- Native plants can be planted at any time of year, but the very best time to plant is autumn and winter, when the weather cools and the rains come. Desert and riparian plants do particularly well being planted year round.
- In general, baby native plants should be deeply watered (about 3 gallons per plant) once a week, or more precisely, when their soil is dry. The best way to check if the plant needs water is to stick your finger into the soil (near the root ball) up to your second knuckle. If the soil’s dry or warm at your fingertip, it’s time to water. Watering will vary with soil type, as heavy soils hold water much longer than fast-draining soils.
- As the native plant becomes established over several years, the dry periods between deep waterings should be extended. Eventually, many species of native plants will be able to go without water for months during the summer. However, baby plants must be given help to reach this independent state.
- Having native plants near fruit/vegetable gardens will increase the yield by about 20% because native plants support native pollinators of different shapes and sizes for more thorough pollination.

### **THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION FACTS:**

- Theodore Payne was the father of the native plant movement in California. A British horticulturist who came to Los Angeles in 1893, Mr. Payne fell in love with California’s native flora.
- Through his own nursery and seed business, started in 1903, Theodore Payne brought over 400 species of California native plants into cultivation.
- Determined to counteract the destruction of California’s natural landscape, Theodore Payne worked tirelessly to propagate native plants and educate the public about the intrinsic beauty and worth of California native flora. Theodore Payne’s vision is now more relevant than ever!
- Theodore Payne planted dozens of public & private gardens in Southern California, including Descanso, Rancho Santa Ana in O.C. and Exposition Park in Los Angeles.
- In 1960, the Theodore Payne Foundation was incorporated to continue his legacy and, in 1961, Mr. Payne bequeathed all of his plants, seed and equipment to the Foundation.
- The Theodore Payne Foundation operates a non-profit nursery, seed and book store, education center and art gallery open to the public year-round. TPF provides extensive plant information and advice in the nursery sales yard, on the website and through its classes, plus K-12 field trip and outreach programs. Every year, TPF holds fall and spring plant sales. TPF’s annual Native Plant Garden Tour features about 40 home gardens throughout the Los Angeles region to demonstrate the various aesthetic styles that may be achieved with natives while saving water, energy and wildlife. TPF operates a booth at the Hollywood Farmers’ Market the first Sunday of every month, provides the free Wild Flower Hotline, exhibits botanical art in the Theodore Payne Gallery in the bookstore, and maintains an archive and library about California’s native flora. TPF’s 22 acres include Wild Flower Hill (a loop trail winding through chaparral and wild flowers), demonstration gardens, a picnic area, & natural habitat.
- In April, 2011, TPF was awarded \$930,000 by the State of California to construct new nature education facilities, and construction has begun!
- The TPF website [www.theodorepayne.org](http://www.theodorepayne.org) has PDF’s of all our educational handouts. Use the website’s Native Plant Library for specific plant information, then check the website’s weekly inventory to find out which plants are available.