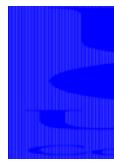




Master Gardener Newspaper Articles

Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties



Shrubs

Sue Rideout, Master Gardener Program

Are you looking for something new in shrubs besides the boxwoods, photinia, and euryops so prevalent in our neighborhoods? Certainly these shrubs have a place in the landscape, but for variety there are other lesser-known shrubs which provide a different look and are also drought-tolerant, a real plus here in the Central Valley.



Bush anemone
Close up of flower

Bush anemone (*Carpenteria californica*) is a lovely California native from the Sierra foothills in Fresno County. In bloom, its spectacular white flowers with yellow centers and its glossy green leaves give the impression of being tropical rather than native in origin. Bush anemone grows from 3 to 8 feet high and 6 to 8 feet wide. It bears many scented blossoms from May to July and remains evergreen all year. “Elizabeth”, a compact and rounded shrub, is the most widely available

cultivar for home gardeners.

In the Valley, bush anemone grows best in part sun to shade in well-drained soil with little or no fertilization. Once established, it is drought-tolerant and needs only moderate water which is best provided by drip irrigation to avoid fungal problems. Aphids are sometimes a problem that can be solved by an occasional hosing off until natural enemies such as lady bugs and lacewings take over. This shrub, native to our part of the Valley, can be a carefree addition to our gardens.



Bush anemone
A native to the Sierra foothills in Fresno County.



Matilija Poppy -
Flowers resemble
fried eggs.

The Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) is a truly spectacular shrub; when in bloom it will stop people in their tracks. A 6 to 8 foot plant, it bears many white blossoms with bright yellow centers up to 8 inches across from spring to early summer. It sports the largest flowers of any California native plant. With 5 or 6 flat, crepe-like petals and large centers, the blooms have given the shrub the nickname “fried egg plant!”

This shrub, native to Southern California, prefers full sun to a little shade, requires little to moderate water, and tolerates many soils, except heavy clay. A robust plant, Matilija poppy needs a lot of growing room and can be invasive if side shoots are not removed. Withholding summer water will help to keep growth in check and the shrub can be cut back in late fall.

Two varieties are available. “White Cloud” is very vigorous and sports profuse, very large blossoms. “Butterfly” is a many-branched shrub with smaller flowers which are slightly rounded. Propagation is difficult from seed but shoots from an established bush provide any easy way to get more plants. With room, Matilja poppies can make a beautiful informal border.

Texas Ranger (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) is native to Texas but grows well in the Central Valley. An evergreen shrub with soft gray-green foliage and pink to purple bell-shaped one inch flowers, Texas Ranger grows 5 to 8 feet tall. While the blossoms are not as showy as some other shrubs, they appear in waves, often after a light irrigation, throughout the summer and fall. I really enjoy seeing the blooms light up the garden in the heat of August!

A member of the figwort family, Texas Ranger likes well-drained soil in full or part sun. This shrub is not picky about soil pH, but it does not like fertilizer or a lot of compost, and needs only low to moderate irrigation. It is hardy to the low teens. Its cultural requirements fit our Valley conditions well. Texas Ranger can be shaped into an airy hedge.

Fall is the best season to plant drought-tolerant shrubs and perennials so if you are looking for more variety in your landscape, try one of these robust shrubs.



Texas Ranger – Lavender flowers on silver foliage.