

# Outstanding Plants for Alameda County

## Attractive Plants that Thrive on Little Care Alameda County Master Gardeners

As Master Gardeners, we are often asked to recommend plants that grow well in Alameda County. Many gardeners are seeking to conserve water, reduce pesticide usage and attract wildlife to their gardens. At the same time, they are looking for plants that don't require a lot of special care. Fortunately, there are a great many wonderful plants that can help gardeners meet these goals while providing color and interest in the garden.

This pamphlet highlights some of those plants. Some are single species, while others are genera of plants with species ranging from groundcovers to large shrubs. We have recommended some species and varieties, however, there are many others that will perform well and look beautiful. The plants listed are some specific choices with which Master Gardeners have had positive experiences. Always check the label of the plant you are buying for its final size as well as 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 bayside Berkeley may require afternoon shade in Livermore. And plants that need no summer water in San Leandro, might benefit from an occasional deep soaking in Pleasanton. We have noted this throughout the brochure, but you will achieve the 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
-  Some summer water - Deep soaking every 3-4 weeks
-  Summer water required - Deep soaking every 1-2 weeks
-  Full sun - All day minimum 8 hours of sun
-  Part shade - filtered light or 4-5 hours of sun
-  Shade - less than 3 hours of sun
-  Endemic (native) to California

Note some varieties may have specific needs that differ from the genus/species.

## PERENNIALS

### Alstroemeria (Peruvian Lily)

*Alstroemeria* spp.



    Low maintenance perennial producing long, leafy stems of brightly colored yellow, orange, peach, pink, red, or magenta flowers resembling small lilies. Multiplies on tuberous underground roots as well as by seed; can become invasive. Deciduous form produces leaves in winter replaced by flowers in late spring. No summer water. Evergreen varieties form clumping mounds

that bloom for long periods with some summer water.

**Suggested varieties:** Litgu and Dr. Salter's hybrids (deciduous); *A. aurea* hybrids (evergreen)

**Other:** Good drainage. Afternoon shade inland.

### California Fuchsia

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



    Low growing perennial spreading by rhizomes to form attractive clumps of silver-gray or gray-green leaves. Produces clusters of brilliant red-orange flowers in late summer and fall. Requires little maintenance; just cut back stems after blooming for new growth the following spring.

**Other:** Good drainage.

Tolerates heat. Attracts hummingbirds and native bees.

### Coyote Mint

*Monardella villosa*



Fragrant semi-evergreen perennial with pungent gray-green foliage and purplish, pink, or white flowers. Needs annual pruning but otherwise low maintenance.

**Other:** Good drainage. Some summer water inland. Deer resistant. Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and beneficial insects.

### 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 flowers); 'Powerline Pink'

**Other:** Prefers richer soil. Afternoon shade inland may be preferred, but not required.. Performs better with occasional summer watering. Good under oaks. Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.

### Lavender

*Lavandula* spp.



Shrubby perennial with aromatic gray-green leaves and spikes of aromatic purple flowers excellent in potpourri. Requires little water once established and will tolerate light frosts. Cut back after flower harvest in summer. Avoid cutting into woody part of plant when pruning. Excellent addition to low water, low maintenance gardens.

**Suggested varieties:** *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.

### New Zealand Flax

*Phormium tenax* and hybrids



Grown for foliage and structural value with large, sword-shaped leaves in varying



lengths of bronze, red, variegated green, and yellow. Color intensifies with full sun and cooler weather. Occasionally produce large reddish or yellow spiky blooms in late spring or summer.

**Suggested varieties:** 'Jack Spratt' (smaller; reddish dark green); 'Maori Chief' (large; green with crimson and cream edges); 'Variegatum' (large; gray green with yellow and cream stripes)

**Other:** Hybrids require more water inland. Check tag for final size. Deer resistant.

### Pineapple Sage

*Salvia elegans*



Attractive clumping perennial growing to 4' and producing spikes of long, tubular red flowers late summer through winter and even into spring in mild winters. Foliage smells like pineapple and can be 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.

### Scarlet Monkey Flower

*Mimulus cardinalis*



Evergreen perennial with large, showy orange-red tubular flowers blooming early summer through fall. Prefers moist areas.

**Other:** Afternoon shade inland may be preferred but not required. Attracts hummingbirds.

## SHRUBS & VARIABLES

### California Lilac

*Ceanothus* spp.



Mounding evergreen varying from groundcover to large shrub or tree producing 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 birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds. (See front of brochure for picture.)

### Currant

*Ribes sanguineum*, *R. aureum* (inland)



Deciduous native shrub grown for its graceful habit and attractive foliage. Produces stunning displays of red, pink, white, or yellow flowers in spring that provide food for hummingbirds followed by fruit for birds in fall.

*R. sanguineum* does 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.

## Coffeberry

*Rhamnus californica*



Groundcover to large shrub depending on variety. Attractive dark green foliage with berries turning from green to red to black as they mature from spring to late fall. 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. Not deer resistant. Some summer water inland. Habitat plant for birds and other wildlife.

## Grevillea

*Grevillea* spp.



Low maintenance Australian native ranging from small, prostrate species to trees—check selection carefully. Ferny lobed or needlelike leaves. Red, orange, pink, white, or yellow flower clusters in winter and spring. Tolerates heat and poor soil with little or no water.  
**Suggested varieties:** *G. lanigera* (medium to large shrub; hairy leaves, pink flowers); *G. lavandulacea* (medium shrub; needlelike leaves, rose-red flowers); *G. rosmarinifolia* (large shrub; prickly leaves, red flowers)  
**Other:** Good drainage. Hummingbirds love them and deer ignore them.

## Manzanita

*Arctostaphylos* spp.



Attractive and reliable California native varying from groundcover to large shrub or small tree. Most have small white to pinkish flowers appearing in winter to early spring; many have attractive red to purplish bark. Groundcover varieties provide good erosion control.  
**Suggested varieties:** 'Carmel Sur' (groundcover); 'Howard McMinn' (medium to large shrub); 'Louis Edmunds' (medium to large shrub); 'Sentinel' (medium shrub with open form)  
**Other:** Prefers well drained, acid to neutral soil. Needs some water when new growth is tender and inland during summer. Attracts hummingbirds and bees.

## Mexican Bush Sage

*Salvia leucantha*



Attractive and reliable shrub with gray green foliage and purple flower spikes blooming summer through late fall. Presents an eye catching statement to any fall garden. Prune way back late winter to keep from getting too woody.  
**Suggested varieties:** 'Midnight'; 'Santa Barbara' (compact)  
**Other:** Can handle part shade and occasional summer water inland. Attracts hummingbirds.

## Oregon Grape

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



Erect medium to large evergreen shrub with dark green spiny leaves bronzy when new and turning red or purple in fall. Small yellow blooms in early spring followed by edible blue-black fruit. Excellent understory plant.



**Suggested species/varieties:** 'Compacta' (lower and wider growing); 'Golden Abundance'  
**Other:** Can take any soil. Deer resistant. Prefers shade in hottest climates. Attracts birds. Good for large containers.

## Shrubby Monkey Flower

*Mimulus aurantiacus*



Evergreen and semi-deciduous subshrub with showy red, orange, and yellow tubular flowers blooming April through June. Prune to maintain bushiness. Summer dormant if not watered.



**Suggested varieties:** 'Burgundy'; 'Eleanor' (yellow flowers); 'Elliot's Verity Red'; 'Pumpkin'  
**Other:** Good drainage. Deer resistant. Attracts hummingbirds and bees. Good container plant.

## Tree Mallow

*Lavatera* spp.



Large, fast-growing shrubby perennial with gray-green maple-like leaves and long blooming purplish-pink flowers with contrasting



centers. Will grow to 6' in one season. Prune to keep dense and promote flowering. Very low maintenance.  
**Suggested species:** *L. assurgentiflora* (native; darker blooms with white centers); *L. maritima* (light pink flowers with magenta centers)  
**Other:** Can take any soil. Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees. Host for butterfly larvae.

## GRASS

### California Fescue

*Festuca californica*



Green to blue-gray clumping semi-evergreen perennial grass up to 2'. Bloom stems rise 1-3' above foliage in spring and early summer. Best in woodland areas. Excellent background to bright flowers. Summer dormant if not watered. Remove spent stems to keep from getting leggy and groom with stiff rake to remove old foliage.  
**Other:** Prefers good drainage but is adaptable. Host for butterfly larvae.

For more information and pictures of each plant go to [http://groups.ucanr.org/ACMG/Outstanding\\_Plants\\_for\\_Alameda\\_County/](http://groups.ucanr.org/ACMG/Outstanding_Plants_for_Alameda_County/)  
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*Ceanothus*

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