UC Marin Master Gardeners - Low-growing Groundcovers

**Botanical Name:** Ajuga reptans  
**Common Name:** Carpet Bugle  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover, Perennial  
**Sun:** Half, Shade, Deep Shade  
**Water:** Medium  
This colorful groundcover will grow in shade or sun with slightly moist soil. It is an evergreen with purplish rosettes that spread quickly on purplish stems. Blue bloom spikes cover these plants in April and May, and are 6”-8” when blooming. This versatile groundcover can also be used in shady wildflower beds. Other names: Carpet Bugle

**Botanical Name:** Aptenia cordifolia  
**Common Name:** Hearts and Flowers  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover, Perennial, Succulent  
**Sun:** Full, Half, Shade  
**Water:** Low, Medium, Extra in Summer  
Aptenis is a herbaceous perennial groundcover with fleshy heart shaped leaves on succulent stems. Tiny, solitary red flowers appear among leaves. Foliage is shiny and bright green. It is salt tolerant and great in containers, planters or hanging baskets. It needs full sun or light shade. Be careful not to overwater. It can die back with heavy frost and will not tolerate foot traffic.

**Botanical Name:** Arctostaphylos 'Emerald Carpet'  
**Common Name:** Manzanita Emerald Carpet  
**Plant Type:** Shrub, Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Very Low, Low, Extra in Summer  
The 'Emerald Carpet' is an evergreen groundcover that grows to 1' tall by 6'-8' wide. It is favored by many landscapers as the manzanita of choice for inland situations. It has dark green leaves and exhibits compact growth. This variety is relatively tolerant of adverse soil conditions.
**Botanical Name:** Arctostaphylos uva-ursi  
**Common Name:** Bearberry  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Low  
A hardy, creeping evergreen shrub, it grows 6”-12” high and spreads as much as 10”-12”. It has glossy green leathery leaves attached to dark brown branches. Its flowers are white to light pink in late winter and early spring; berries are bright red.

**Botanical Name:** Armeria maritima  
**Common Name:** Sea Pink  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover, Perennial  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Medium  
This clumping, grass-like perennial is native to many areas, including coastal California. Its flowers range from deep rose pink to white.

**Botanical Name:** Baccharis pilularis ‘Pigeon Point’  
**Common Name:** Pigeon Point Coyote Bush  
**Plant Type:** Shrub, Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Low  
Fast-growing, easy evergreen groundcover to 2’ tall and 12’ wide. Native from Baja to the Oregon coast in dunes and bluffs in coastal scrub, and dry slopes and woods in chaparral, woodlands, and mixed evergreen forests. Tolerates ocean spray and is deer resistant. Preferred coyote bush for slope stabilization and landscaping, coastal or inland. Prefers full sun and well-drained soil, but tolerates alkaline, sandy, or clay soil. Once mature, tolerates dryness; looks better, grows faster, and is healthier with some summer water. White, insignificant flowers in fall. Plant 6-10 feet apart for ...
Botanical Name: Bergenia 'Bressingham Ruby'
Common Name: Bressingham Ruby Heartleaf
Plant Type: Ground cover, Perennial
Sun: Half, Shade
Water: Medium
This evergreen perennial has round, heart-shaped, glossy leaves that possess waxy-toothed edges. Its growth is clustered, and flowers that bloom in the spring are in shades of lilac or rose, held on stems above the leaves.

Plant Height: 1-3'
Flower Color: Pink, Red
Attracts Wildlife: n/a
Leaf Color: Green
Flower Season: Spring

Botanical Name: Campanula latifolia
Common Name: Great Bellower
Plant Type: Perennial
Sun: Full, Half
Water: Medium
This large perennial produces bell-shaped flowers that grow in conical spire shapes. It blooms in summer, attracting butterflies. Flower color can be blue, lilac, or white. Overall height of plant is 4'-5' tall spreading 1'-3' wide and may need to be staked. Foliage is oval and hairy. This plant tolerates full sun in cool summer areas but needs afternoon shade in warmer areas. It does best in well draining, fertile soil with regular watering. Self-sows and is considered aggressive in some areas but not invasive. Great for English cottage garden.

Plant Height: 3-6'
Flower Color: Blue
Attracts Wildlife: Butterflies
Leaf Color: Green
Flower Season: Summer

Botanical Name: Campanula poscharskyana
Common Name: Serbian Bellower
Plant Type: Ground cover, Perennial
Sun: Full, Half, Shade
Water: Medium, Extra in Summer
The large, light lavender blue flowers of this Bellflower are produced along trailing stems throughout the year. It is a fast, easy grower in areas of sun to partial shade.

Plant Height: Under 1'
Flower Color: Blue, Lavender
Attracts Wildlife: n/a
Leaf Color: Green
Flower Season: Summer, Fall
**Botanical Name:** Ceanothus griseus var. horizontalis  
**Common Name:** Carmel Creeper Ceanothus  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Low  
This versatile, low-growing evergreen lilac will reach 6'+ while staying under 2' in height. Glossy green leaves and light blue blossoms characterize this ground cover. It is ideal for mass plantings on slopes and will drape attractively over retaining walls. Providing some afternoon shade in inland sites will improve performance, but on the coast full sun is recommended.

**Botanical Name:** Cerastium tomentosum  
**Common Name:** Snow In Summer  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover, Perennial  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Medium  
Masses of snow white flowers highlight this plant during the early summer season. This attractive ground cover is a great filler among other plants and rocks. Foliage is silver gray or gray/green and is woolly. This plant tolerates coastal conditions and desert areas. Use in rock settings, in hanging baskets, containers, or as a lawn substitute. Cut back in fall to refresh plant.

**Botanical Name:** Ceratostigma plumbaginoides  
**Common Name:** Dwarf Plumbago  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover, Perennial  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Medium, Extra in Summer  
Intense blue flowers adorn the glossy green leaves of this plant in summer. This mat-forming ground cover, 12”-18” tall and wide, does well in full or part sun, needing regular watering and more during hot summer spells. Dark green leaves turn reddish in fall. This plant spreads by rhizomes. This plant does best in well draining soil but will tolerate clay soil.
**Botanical Name:** Cistus salviifolius 'Prostratus'  
**Common Name:** Sageleaf Rockrose  
**Plant Type:** Shrub, Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full  
**Water:** Very Low  
This low growing rockrose, reaching 2’ tall, has gray green, wrinkled, evergreen leaves and a wide spreading habit of 6’ or more. Early spring flowers are white with orange yellow centers. This shrub does best in full sun with well draining soil. It is drought tolerant once it’s established. It’s a great plant for hot, dry hillsides and has low fuel for fires. It tolerates coastal conditions.

**Botanical Name:** Correa reflexa  
**Common Name:** Common Correa, Australian Fuchsia  
**Plant Type:** Shrub  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Very Low  
This Australian native is reliable in areas that are frost free. It can be prostrate or reaching up to 5’ tall and wide, depending on cultivar. Leaves are evergreen, oval shaped, gray green or olive green, hairy or smooth, depending on cultivar. Flowers can be bell-shaped or tubular, in varying colors such as cream, red, green with contrasting color tips. Blooms spring thru fall, attracting hummingbirds and other pollinators. Likes full to part sun in coastal areas as well as warm inland valleys. Prefers well draining soil and becomes drought tolerant once established. It is deer and wind ...

**Botanical Name:** Diascia hybrids  
**Common Name:** Hybrid Twinspur or Diascia  
**Plant Type:** Perennial, Annual  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Medium, Extra in Summer  
Diascia hybrids are annual that come in different colors, depending on the variety such as pink, red, white or salmon. They reach 10”-16” tall and spread 12”-18” wide. Because they are upright and spreading in a short time, they look great in hanging pots or in planters in full sun. Diascia blooms in summer and needs moist, fertile soil. Extra water needed during hot spells. Prune after bloom period to keep the plant tidy and perhaps encourage a second bloom.
Botanical Name: Gazania Trailing  
Common Name: Trailing Gazania  
Plant Type: Ground cover  
Sun: Full, Half  
Water: Low, Extra in Summer  
This somewhat hardy perennial will grow 6"-12" high and 24" wide. It produces wonderful, bright yellow flowers with soft, gray green leaves. Other flower colors available depending on variety. They do best in full sun with well draining soil. It tolerates most kinds of soil. Looks great in hanging baskets or on hillsides or as a lawn substitute. Once established, it has low water needs but will need extra summer water. Bloom period is typically spring, summer and fall.

Botanical Name: Grevillea lanigera 'Coastal Gem'  
Common Name: Coastal Gem Grevillea  
Plant Type: Shrub, Ground cover  
Sun: Full, Half  
Water: Very Low  
Coastal Gem Grevillea is a low-spreading shrub that grows to 1 foot tall about 4-5 feet wide. It has narrow grayish-green leaves on arching stems. It has condensed flowers pinkish-red and cream in color. The flowers, looking fuchsia like at a distance, bloom at the end of stems in winter to late spring. It grows best in neutral to slightly acidic soil. It needs full sun to light shade. Established plants are drought tolerant and do not like being overwatered. Use this plant in rock gardens, borders and certainly as a ground cover. It is wonderful for attracting nectar feeding birds.

Botanical Name: Liriope spicata  
Common Name: Lilyturf  
Plant Type: Perennial  
Sun: Full, Half  
Water: Medium  
Lilyturf has thick leaves emerge in vertical form, but soon grow too tall to remain erect. Instead, they arch over gracefully. This arch is fortuitous not just attractive. It is a groundcover whose dense growth remains erect—such as true turf grass—still permits sun to penetrate to minute areas of exposed earth, where seeds can receive enough light to germinate.
Botanical Name: Monardella villosa  
Common Name: Coyote Mint  
Plant Type: Shrub  
Sun: Full  
Water: Very Low  
Perennial native to CA coast ranges grows 2’ tall and wide, with gray-green foliage and light purple clusters of flowers in summer. Prefers part shade to sun and is drought tolerant but takes garden water if given perfect drainage. Grows in sand, clay, or serpentine soil and also does well on dry slopes. Smells like a minty toothpaste and was used by Spanish as cure for sore throats. Nectar source for butterflies - place in sunnier locale for more butterflies. Usually deer resistant. Cut back in winter for compact appearance. Drought tolerant.

Botanical Name: Myoporum parvifolium  
Common Name: Ground Cover Myoporum  
Plant Type: Ground cover  
Sun: Full, Half  
Water: Low, Extra in Summer  
This great groundcover will grow 9” high and 9’ wide and does well in partial or full sun with moderate watering. It produces delicate white flowers that bloom in summer and are surrounded by tiny, bright green leaves.

Botanical Name: Nepeta X faassenii  
Common Name: Catmint  
Plant Type: Ground cover, Perennial  
Sun: Full, Half, Shade  
Water: Medium  
Nepeta faassenii makes soft, grey-green, undulating mounds to 1.5’ high in bloom, spreading 3’-4’ wide. The small leaves are attractive to cats. This perennial has lavender blue flowers in summer. Catmint can be planted in sun or shade and needs medium amount of water. Prune spent flowers to encourage more blooms.
Botanical Name: *Nepeta ‘Limelight’*
Common Name: Limelight Catmint
Plant Type: Ground cover, Perennial
Sun: Full
Water: Low, Medium

A splendid look for a catmint: icy lime-green foliage sprinkled with blue flowers all summer long. Extremely low habit makes this plant a natural choice for borders or along garden paths. Very easy to grow if given sun and good drainage. Drought tolerant and deer-resistant. This spreading and trailing perennial quickly reaches an overall height of 8″ and spreads 32″. It makes a great groundcover. It does best in full sun with well draining, low organic soils. Give it average watering, letting soil dry out between waterings. Goes dormant in winter. Use in mass plantings, mixed beds, fence l...

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Botanical Name: *Origanum ‘Kent Beauty’*
Common Name: Kent Beauty Oregano
Plant Type: Perennial, Herb
Sun: Full, Half
Water: Low

Kent Beauty has rosy bracts make pendulous flowers resembling Hops. Prized as dried flowers. It is tolerant of full sun with lush silvery foliage that remains attractive all summer. Long blooming, the foliage has a spicy aromatic scent.

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Botanical Name: *Origanum vulgare*
Common Name: Oregano
Plant Type: Perennial, Herb
Sun: Full, Half
Water: Low

Native to Europe and Central Asia, Oregano is one of the central flavors in Italian cooking. It is a bushy, rhizomatous, woody-branched perennial that grows 1-3’ tall and 2’ wide on square stems clad with aromatic round to ovate leaves. Bears small, two-lipped, pinkish-purple or white flowers that rise above the foliage in summer. Easily grown in gardens or pots in warm, sunny gardens. It’s deer and drought resistant and performs in rocky or shallow soil.
**Botanical Name:** Persicaria capitata  
**Common Name:** Pink Knotweed  
**Plant Type:** Perennial, Annual  
**Sun:** Full, Half, Shade  
**Water:** Low  

Persicaria capitata has an attractive bronze-green foliage, with masses of pink flowers on this trailing plant. It grows 6”-8” high. It blooms most of the time. It is very tender to frost but will grow vigorously with adequate water during warm weather. It makes a good groundcover, rooting along as runners spread. Plant 12” apart.

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**Botanical Name:** Rosmarinus off. 'Huntington Carpet'  
**Common Name:** Huntington Carpet Rosemary  
**Plant Type:** Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Low  

In comparison to other varieties of the Rosmarinus, the 'Huntington Carpet' is less woody, and the leaf color is much greener. Also, it maintains a center foliage better that other prostrates.

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**Botanical Name:** Santolina chamaecyparissus  
**Common Name:** Gray Lavender Cotton  
**Plant Type:** Shrub, Ground cover  
**Sun:** Full, Half  
**Water:** Low  

This ground cover/small shrub will grow to 3’ tall and has small, grayish silver leaves with yellow flowers that bloom in the summer. A native of the Mediterranean region, Lavender Cotton has been cultivated in gardens since the sixteenth century. This slow growing shrub is very hardy. Its yellow flowers can be cut during or after they bloom in order to encourage fresh growth of the aromatic, gray foliage, which is not attractive to deer. Lavender Cotton’s stems have been used for household moth repellent and to produce oil for perfume. The plant also responds well to shearing and is used ...
Botanical Name: *Scaevola aemula* 'Blue Wonder'
Common Name: Blue Wonder Fan Flower
Plant Type: Ground cover, Perennial
Sun: Full, Half
Water: Low

Fast-growing evergreen perennial with a spreading growth habit to 6-8" tall x 3-4' wide. Highly-floriferous, forms a dense carpet of deep-green foliage accented with masses of showy, vibrant, fan-shaped violet-blue flowers that appear continuously from late-spring into fall or nearly year-round in mild climates. Well-suited to beds and borders as edging, groundcover or container specimen. Outstanding for hanging baskets. Grows best in rich, loamy, fast-draining soils and prefers a full to partial sun exposure with regular water.

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