

Cottage Gardens, Central Valley Style

Dorothy Downing and Dianne Sharples, UC Master Gardeners



A cottage garden is informal and individualistic with dense plantings mixing ornamental and edible plants including annuals, perennials, roses, shrubs, vines, small trees, herbs and vegetables. They often have pathways, may be defined by hedges, fences and arbors and are filled with a variety of textures and colors. Garden art is common as are bird feeders, bird and bat houses, bird baths and a host of other items that add to the ambiance of the garden. A cottage garden “Central Valley Style” has the same characteristics, but uses water wise plants that grow well in zones 8 and 9, and makes use of many native plants. Examples of plants that work well in Central Valley Cottage Gardens may include but are not limited to:

Shrub Hedges:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size H x W	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Dark Star Ceanothus	<i>Ceanothus</i> “Dark Star”	6’ x 10’	Dark cobalt blue	Spring	Full	Evergreen
Bottlebrush	<i>Callistemon citrinus</i>	10’x10’	Red	Year Round	Full	Evergreen
Photinia	<i>Rosaceae</i>	6’-20’	White/red or black berries	Spring Flower/Fall Berries	Full	Evergreen/red foliage, berries attract various birds

Trees:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Bay Laurel	<i>Umbellularia californica</i>	Medium	Yellow	Spring	Full-Shade	Evergreen
Chinese Pistache	<i>Pistacia chinensis</i>	Medium	Bright Fall Foliage		Full	Deciduous
Chaste Tree	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	Small	Purple flower spikes	Summer-Fall	Full	Deciduous, often has multiple trunks
Fruit Trees			White, Pink, Red	Spring	Full	Most require at least regular water
Western Redbud	<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>	Small	Deep Pink	Winter/Spring	Full	Deciduous
Desert Willow	<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	Medium	Pink, Burgundy, Lavender	Spring to Fall	Full	Deciduous, Long seed pods
Chinese Fringe Tree	<i>Chionanthus retusus</i>	Medium	White	Spring	Full	Deciduous, Interesting bark patterns
Crape Myrtle	<i>Lagerstroemia</i>	Medium	Red, pink, purple, coral	Summer	Full	Deciduous, Red/orange/burgundy leaves in fall
Marina Madrone	<i>Arbutus ‘Marina’</i>	Small	Pink clusters/Red Berries	Fall/Winter	Full	Evergreen, copper bark, attracts hummingbirds

Shrubs: All are water wise unless otherwise noted.

Common Name	Scientific Name	H x W	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	4-8’	Pinks, Blue, White	Summer/Fall	Full to partial	Regular water
C. Marie Simon	<i>Ceanothus x pallidus</i>	6 x 6	Pink	Spring	Full to partial	Semi deciduous
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron hybrid</i>	4-6’	Pink, White, Red, Purples, Coral	Spring	Partial	Evergreen, Regular water, Brooks & Monrovia Hybrids bred for higher drought tolerance
Lilac	<i>Syringa</i>	6-8’	Shades of lilac	Spring	Partial	Regular Water, Deciduous, Needs chill time
Camellia	<i>Theaceae</i>	6-12’	Pink, Rose, White	Winter/Spring	Partial	Regular water for 3 years, then more drought tolerant
Cut Leaf Lilac	<i>Syringa x laciniata</i>	5-8’	Lilac	Spring	Full to partial	More drought tolerant & disease resistant
Bush Anemone	<i>Carpenteria californica</i>	4-6’	White	Spring	Partial	Evergreen
Winter Daphne	<i>Daphne odora</i>	4 x 6’	White	Winter	Partial/shade	Evergreen, intensely fragrant
Golden Currant	<i>Ribes aureum</i>	6 x 4’	Yellow	Winter/Spring	Full/partial	Grows well under oaks, deciduous, butterflies
Western Spice Bush	<i>Calycanthus occidentalis</i>	4-12’	Maroon Red	Spring	Partial/shade	Deciduous, yellow leaves in fall
Snowy River Wattle	<i>Acacia boormanii</i>	10 x 6’	Yellow	Winter	Full/partial	Evergreen
Hybrid Tea Olive	<i>Osmanthus x fortunei</i>	15 x 6’	N/A	Spring/Summer	Full/partial	Evergreen
Miniature Euryops	<i>Asteraceae</i>	3 x 4’	Yellow	Spring-Fall	Full	Evergreen
St. Catherine’s Lace	<i>Eriogonum giganteum</i>	2 x 4’	White	Summer	Full/partial	Evergreen, white/gray leaves, butterflies & birds
Butterfly Bush	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	4-10’	White, pink, purple	Summer	Full/partial	Deciduous
Lantana	<i>Verbenaceae</i>	various	wide variety	Summer – Fall	Full	Height depends on variety
Purple spot mock orange	<i>Philadelphus ‘Belle Etoile’</i>	5 x 8’	White	Spring/Summer	Full/Partial	Evergreen, fragrant
Texas Sage	<i>Leucophyllum frutescens</i>	6-8’	Light Purple	Summer	Full	Evergreen, Silvery foliage

Chinese Fringe Bush	<i>Loropetalum chinensis</i>	6-10'	Pink, purple	Spring/Anytime	Full/Partial	Evergreen, Green/purple/red foliage
Orchid Rockrose	<i>Cistus purpureus</i>	4' x 4'	Reddish Purple	Spring/Summer	Full	Gray foliage
California Lilacs	<i>Ceanothus: Concha, Ray Hartman, Valley Violet, El Dorado</i>	Small to Medium	Various shades of purple/blue	Spring/Summer	Full/Partial	Evergreen
Toyon/Calif. Holly	<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	6-10'	White flowers/red berries	Spring/Winter	Full/Partial	Evergreen, attracts Cedar Wax Wings
Firethorn	<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	8-10'	White flowers/red berries	Spring/Winter	Full	Evergreen, Moderate water, attracts Cedar Wax wings
Heavenly Bamboo	<i>Nandina domestica</i>	6 x 4'	Pinkish white/red berries	Spring/Berries summer-winter	Full to Shade	Leaves colorful in fall, but "evergreen"

Roses (Rosa): The ones identified here are drought tolerant roses with less maintenance requirements.

Common Name	Size HxW	Type	Color	Bloom Season	Notes
Knockout	3 x 3	Shrub	Pink, Red	May to Frost	Low maintenance
Red Drift	18"x 36"	Groundcover	Red, pink, apricot, coral White, peach	Spring - Frost	Low maintenance Light shade OK
Butterfly Rose	7' x 4'	Bush	Orange, yellow, pink all on one bush	Year Round	Single petals, new stems are burgundy
Iceberg	Floribunda 5x5	Floribunda Bush or Climbing	White	Spring - Frost	Bush can be trained to medium or large
Golden Pearl	6x4	Polyantha Shrub	Apricot to golden pink	Spring - Frost	Fewer thorns

Perennials:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Size	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Hellebore/Lenten Rose	<i>Helleborus</i>	Medium	Pink, Green	Winter - Spring	Partial - full shade	Foliage evergreen
Poker Plant	<i>Kniphofia</i>	Large	Orange to Gold	Winter	Sun - partial shade	Attracts hummingbirds
Pigsqueak	<i>Bergenia crassifolia</i>	Small	Pink	Winter	Partial-full shade	Good as a border
Becky or Shasta Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum superbum</i>	Medium	White	Spring – Fall	Sun - partial shade	Good cut flowers
Monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus</i>	Medium	Yellow, red, orange	Spring	Full sun	Attracts hummingbirds
Rose de Mal	<i>Dianthus plumarius</i>	Medium	Pink, white	Spring - Fall	Full sun	Deadhead blooms
Hummingbird Mint	<i>Agastache</i>	Medium	Orange, red	Spring-Summer	Sun - partial shade	Attracts Hummingbirds
Blue-eyed Grass	<i>Sisyrinchium bellum</i>	Small-Med	White, purple	Spring-summer	Sun - partial shade	Native
Blue Mist Bluebeard	<i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i>	Small	Blue, pink	Summer	Full Sun	
Siberian Wallflower	<i>Erysimum x allionii</i>	Small	Orange, yellow	Summer	Sun - partial shade	
Pincushion Flower	<i>Scabiosa caucasica</i>	Medium	Blue, lavender, white	Summer-Frost	Sun	
Bear’s Breeches	<i>Acanthus mollis</i>	Large	White, rose, purple	Summer	Sun to full shade	Lose leaves in summer
Coral Bells	<i>Heuchera</i>	Small-Med	Coral, white, pink	Spring – Fall	Partial-full shade	Attract hummingbirds
Dead Nettle	<i>Lamium maculatum</i>	Small	Pink, white, yellow	Summer	Partial-full shade	Variegated leaves
Giant Lady’s Mantle	<i>Alchemilla mollis</i>	Medium	Lime green	Summer	Sun - shade	Self sows
Chinese Foxglove	<i>Rehmannia elata</i>	Medium	Rose	Summer	Sun - shade	Self sows
Kashmir Sage	<i>Phlomis cashmeriana</i>	Large	Yellow, purple, lilac	Summer	Sun	Not particular about soil
Autumn Joy	<i>Sedum</i>	Medium	Pink to copper	Fall	Sun - partial shade	
Silver Frost Lavender	<i>Lavandula</i>	Medium	Purples	Fall	Sun	Attracts Butterflies
Moonshine Yarrow	<i>Achillea</i>	Medium	Yellow	Summer – Fall	Sun	
Sunrose (Dazzler)	<i>Helianthemum</i>	Small	Burgundy	Spring - Fall	Sun	Evergreen Foliage
Sunfire	<i>Coreopsis</i>	Medium	Yellow	Spring – Fall	Sun - partial shade	
Coneflower	<i>Echinacea</i>	Medium	Red, yellow, purple, white, pink	Summer – Frost	Sun	Birds like the seeds
Chocolate Flower	<i>Berlandiera lyrata</i>	Medium	Yellow	Spring – Fall	Sun	Smells like chocolate
Blanket Flower	<i>Gaillardia</i>	Small-Med	Orange, red, yellow	Summer - Frost	Sun	
Fleabane Daisy	<i>Erigeron speciosus</i>	Medium	Purple, pink, blue	Summer- Frost	Sun - partial shade	
Apricot Mallow	<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	Medium	Pink, Orange, White	Summer – Fall	Sun	Doesn’t like wet winters
Beard Tongue	<i>Penstemon</i>	Med-large	Wide variety	Spring-Summer	Sun - partial shade	Attracts hummingbirds
Mullein	<i>Verbascum</i>	Large	Yellow, white, pink	Summer	Sun	Tall spikes
Larkspur	<i>Delphinium</i>	Med-large	Blue, purple, pink,white	Late spring-summer	Sun	Attract birds, butterflies
California Fuschia, Hummingbird Flower	<i>Zauschneria, Epilobium</i>	Medium	Red, orange	Late summer-Fall	Sun	Attracts hummingbirds
Sage/Salvia	<i>Sage</i>	Small-large	Variety-perennials mostly purple	Spring – Fall	Sun	Attracts hummingbirds

Annuals: Can require more water

Common Name	Scientific Name	Height	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Pansy/Johnny Jump Up	<i>Viola species</i>	3-8”	Wide Variety	Winter-Spring	Sun	Johnny Jump Ups reseed
Calendula (Pot Marigold)	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	12-36”	Yellow, orange	Winter-Spring	Sun	
Snapdragon	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	6-24”	Wide Variety	Winter-Spring	Sun	Attracts hummingbirds
Stock	<i>Matthiola</i>	12-36”	Wide Variety	Winter-Spring	Sun-partial shade	Fragrant
Clarkia/Godetia	<i>Clarkia</i>	10-36”	Pink, lavender	Spring	Sun-partial shade	Available in wildflower mixes
Sweet Pea	<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>	2 – 10’	Variety	Spring	Sun-partial shade	Easily grown from seed
Nasturtiums	<i>Tropaeolum</i>	18” – 6’	Variety	Spring	Sun-partial shade	Water wise, edible
Bachelor’s Buttons	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	12-18”	Variety, Many blues	Spring-Summer	Sun	
California Poppies	<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	8-24”	Variety	Spring-Early Summer	Sun	Drought tolerant

Salvia	<i>Salvia farinacea & others</i>	12-36"	Variety	Spring-Frost	Sun	Many are water wise
Serena Purple (Angustifolia)	<i>Angelonia</i>	12-18"	Variety	Summer	Sun	Heat tolerant
Verbena	<i>Verbena</i>	6-12"	Variety	Summer	Sun	Water wise, attracts butterflies
Star Zinnia	<i>Zinnia angustifolia</i>	12-24"	Orange, yellow, white	Summer-Frost	Sun	
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus</i>	3-8'	Yellow, orange, red	Summer-Fall	Sun	Some dwarf varieties
Marigold	<i>Tagetes</i>	6-36"	Yellow, orange, maroon	Summer-Fall	Sun	
Wax Begonia	<i>Semperflorens begonia</i>	6-12"	White through red	Spring – Fall	Sun-partial shade	Foliage green, red, bronze
Alyssum	<i>Lobularia maritime</i>	4-6"	White, pinks, purples	Spring-frost	Sun-partial shade	Reseeds
Milas/Corn Cockle	<i>Agrostemma githago</i>	6-12"	Pink, purple, white	Summer-Fall	Sun	Reseeds
Cosmos	<i>Cosmos</i>	1-6'	Variety	Summer-Fall	Sun	Reseeds
Hummingbird Sage	<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	24-36"	Variety	Summer	Sun	Reseeds, hummingbirds
Periwinkle	<i>Vinca</i>	6-24"	Variety	Summer-Fall	Sun – shade	Reseeds

Vines:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Wisteria	<i>Wisteria</i>	Blue, white, pink	Spring	Sun	Prune and train, can get very large if not managed, Deciduous
Lilac Vine	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple, white, pink	Winter-Spring	Sun-partial shade	Evergreen, Trim to fit space
Star Jasmine	<i>Trachelospermum</i>	White	Spring-Summer	Sun-partial shade	Evergreen, blooms fragrant, trim to shape
Black-eyed Susan	<i>Thunbergia</i>	Variety	Summer	Sun-partial shade	Annual in Zones 9-10. Grow well from seed
Cecile Brunner	<i>Rosa (Climbing)</i>	Pink	Summer-Fall	Sun	Polyantha Rose, few thorns, traditional cottage garden rose
Cardinal Climber	<i>Ipomoea x multifida</i>	Red	Summer - Frost	Sun-partial shade	Annual Vine, attracts hummingbirds & butterflies, drought tolerant
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera</i>	Variety	Summer-Fall	Sun-partial shade	Semi-evergreen, attracts hummingbirds
Violet Trumpet Vine	<i>Clytostoma calystegioides</i>	Violet	Spring	Sun-partial shade	Evergreen, attracts hummingbirds
California Pipevine	<i>Aristolochia californica</i>	Green	Winter	Sun-partial shade	Drought tolerant, deciduous, pipevine swallowtail butterfly

Bulbs: Tubers

Common Name	Scientific Name	Height	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Dutch Iris	<i>Iris (Bulbous hybrid)</i>	18-24"	Purple, white, yellow	Late Winter-Spring	Sun	
Daffodils, Narcissus, Jonquil	<i>Narcissus</i>	6-12"	White, yellow, orange	Late Winter-Spring	Sun-part shade	
Hyacinths	<i>Hyacinthus</i>	12"	Variety	Winter-Early Spring	Sun	Fragrant, treat as an annual
Amaryllis	<i>Hippeastrum</i>	12-24'	Red, pinks, oranges, variegated	Winter-Summer	Sun-partial shade	Bloom season depends on variety
Crocus	<i>Crocus</i>	3-6"	Variety	Winter-Early Spring	Sun	Some hybrids bloom in fall
Snowdrops	<i>Galanthus</i>	6-9"	White	Winter-Spring	Sun	
Tulips	<i>Tulipa</i>	10-36"	Wide variety	Late Winter-Spring	Sun-partial shade	Chill 6 weeks before planting
Spanish Iris	<i>Iris (hybrid)</i>	18-24"	Variety	Spring	Sun	Bloom little later than Dutch Iris
Stargazer Lily	<i>Lilium/Oriental hybrid</i>	3-5'	White, red, pink – spotted	Spring-Summer	Sun-partial shade	Fragrant
Dahlia	<i>Dahlia</i>	1-7'	Variety	Spring-Fall	Sun-partial shade	Tall varieties need staking
Ranunculus	<i>Ranunculus</i>	12-18"	Variety	Spring	Sun-shade	Roots don't like water in summer
Windflower, Anemone	<i>Anemone</i>	8-24"	Variety	Spring-Fall	Sun-shade	Excess moisture rots tubers
Spanish Bluebells	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	20"	Blue, white, pink	Spring	Light shade	Reseed readily
Blazing Star	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	2-3'	Rose, white, lilac	Summer	Sun	
Daylilies	<i>Hemerocallis</i>	2-4'	Wide Variety	Summer-Fall	Sun-partial shade	Evergreen-deciduous, adaptable
Crocsmia	<i>Crocsmia</i>	2-4'	Red, orange, yellow	Summer	Sun	Attracts hummingbirds
Lily of the Nile	<i>Agapanthus</i>	2-4'	Blue, White	Summer	Sun-partial shade	Attracts hummingbirds
Bearded Iris	<i>Iris (rhizomatous hybrid)</i>	1-4'	Wide variety, many mixed colors	Summer	Sun	
Autumn Crocus	<i>Colchicum</i>	6"	Pink, rose, lavender, purple	Fall	Sun	

Argentine Rain Lily	<i>Habranthus robustus</i>	6-12"	Pink, white	Late Summer-Fall	Sun-partial shade	Attracts Butterflies
Spider Lily	<i>Lycoris radiata</i>	18"	Coral Red	Fall	Sun-partial shade	Works well in containers too
Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen</i>	4-6"	White, pink, rose, red	Fall-Winter	Partial-full shade	Grow well under oak trees

Vegetable Examples:

Colorful Leafy Vegetables (require more water and partial shade): Leaf lettuce, Cabbage, Chard

Vegetables that require sun: Artichokes, Tomatoes, Bell & Chile Peppers

Herbs:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Height	Bloom Color	Bloom Season	Light	Notes
Lavender	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	8-24"	Lavender, white, pink, blue	Summer-Fall	Sun	Perennial, Drought tolerant, other lavenders not healthy in food, attract birds and butterflies
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	18 -48"	Purple Blue	Most of year	Sun	Evergreen perennial, Drought tolerant, various bush sizes, attract birds and butterflies
Oregano	<i>Origanum</i>	6 – 18"	Pink, purple, white	Summer-Fall	Sun	Deciduous perennial, drought tolerant, attracts butterflies
Tarragon	<i>Artemesia dracunculus</i>	6 – 24"	White	Summer	Sun	Deciduous perennial, drought tolerant, blooms only in Russian variety. French variety better flavor, few blooms. Great in pots.
Mint	<i>Mentha</i>	12-36"	Insignificant Bloom		Sun-partial shade	Invasive, grow in pots to manage growth. Requires regular water. Varieties have different flavors of mint.
Chives	<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	24"	Purple or White	Spring	Sun	Grows well in pots, makes good borders
Parsley	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i>	12-18"	Yellow-Green	Summer-Fall	Sun-partial shade	Grows from seed. Slow growth but hardy, Biennial, Needs regular water
Basil	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	24"	White, Purple	Summer	Sun	Annual, several varieties with interesting and tasty foliage, requires regular water