



## I Planted California Natives: What Do I Do in June and July?

### Water

How much and how frequently you water depends on many variables including your location, soil type, slope, sun exposure, and whether your plants are new or established. Run your irrigation system and check for any breaks, broken sprinklers, or clogged lines that need repair.

Check your soil often by feeling six to eight inches below the surface between waterings. The key is to let excess moisture in the soil drain fully and water again before it becomes completely dry. New plantings and shallow-rooted plants may need water more often. Follow the weather forecast, then water deeply and slowly during cool days ahead of any predicted heat wave. Hand water, use a hose-end sprinkler, or set the sprinklers to run to apply the equivalent of 1-1.5" of rainfall. [Watering Native Plants](#) suggests the "Occasional Deep Soak Plus Frequent Refreshing Sprinkles" method.

Certain native plants including Dudleya, Monkeyflowers, and Sages prefer no or very little summer water - check each plant's requirements and adjust your irrigation plans accordingly.

### Prune

You can rest from heavy pruning chores in June. Pinch off spent flowers and branch tips from Ceanothus. Carefully deadhead Alum Root/Coral Bells, California Bush Sunflower, Coyote Mint, Matilija Poppy, Monkeyflower, and Sage. You may be rewarded with some repeat blooms. You can cut Penstemon stalks to the ground. You may also remove deadwood, and a few select branches of shrubs to enhance their looks, give their health a boost, and reduce the fuel load.

You may mow Foothill Needlegrass, Nodding Needlegrass, Purple Needlegrass (*Stipa* species) and other cool season grasses to the ground after they dry out. Deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) can be left alone without grooming for years at a time. If yours has become unwieldy, it can be cut down to 3-4 inches at this time. This will improve the production of flowering stems. Afterwards, you may spread some compost or light fertilizer around the base to compensate for the loss of nutrients.

### Plant

Planting season is behind us, but you may still have success planting selected species, such as California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) or Scarlet Monkeyflower (*Erythranthe cardinalis*), in shade or in containers. You may also plant warm season grasses, such as Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) or Purple Three Awn (*Aristida purpurea*). These will need regular water to sustain them in the heat.

If you live a mile or more from the coast, you can plant young milkweed plants from March through August with regular watering. The warmer temperatures and longer days help the plants become established. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation [recommends growing native, winter-dormant milkweeds](#) to prevent disruptions in the Monarch Butterfly's winter dormancy period and avoid spreading disease. Plant California Milkweed (*Asclepias californica*), Narrow Leaf Milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*), or Woollypod Milkweed (*Asclepias eriocarpa*), all native to this area. Native milkweed naturally grows in open grassy areas and does well in full sun or partial sun with afternoon shade in the summer. The Santa Monica Mountains Fund [Milkweed Planting and Care Tips](#) provides details for how to grow this vital habitat plant successfully.

If you live within a mile of the beach, plant nectar plants such as Seaside Daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*), Silver Carpet Aster (*Corethrogyne filaginifolia* 'Silver Carpet'), or Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) instead of milkweed.



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### Sow or propagate

If you have an area that receives dappled shade, you can still sow wildflower seeds if you keep the patch moist. Try Desertbells (*Phacelia campanularia*), Goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), or Clarkias (*Clarkia* species).

You can try propagating shrubs such as [Blue Elderberry](#) (*Sambucus mexicana*), Golden Currant (*Ribes aureum*), or Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolium*). Cut stems into lengths of 4 to 10 inches and strip off the lower leaves. Treat the rooting end of cuttings with liquid or powder rooting hormone and place in pots with a soilless rooting medium such as perlite and potting soil. Keep moist until rooting occurs, then carefully transplant into pots.

### Mulch

Check that you have enough mulch. If the lower branches of your shrubs and groundcovers are shading the root zone well, natural leaf litter is collecting underneath the branches, and there are few weeds, you may not need extra. Leave old mulch layers; use a hand cultivator or shrub rake to scratch the layers up and turn them over to break up clumps to make sure water from irrigation penetrates. Spread mulch to bare areas that need additional moisture retention.

### Clean up

Keep weeding! An advantage of long periods between watering is the suppression of significant weed growth. Even so, be on the lookout for warm season weeds such as Common Purslane, Crabgrasses and Spotted Spurge. Pull them up while the soil is still soft. Make sure you dig up Field Bindweed and Bermudagrass completely, so their horizontal stems (stolons and/or rhizomes) don't take hold and spread. If you're unsure whether a seedling is a weed or a wildflower, see if you can identify the plant using the [UC IPM Weed Photo Gallery](#), or the phone app Seek by iNaturalist.

### Online Resources mentioned in this article

Watering Native Plants

<https://californianativeplants.com/blog/watering-native-plants/>

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation Milkweed FAQs

<https://xerces.org/milkweed-faq>

Milkweed Planting and Care Tips

<https://www.samofund.org/milkweed#Milkweed-Planting-and-Care-Tips>

How do I propagate blue elderberry?

<https://ucanr.edu/site/california-elderberries/how-do-i-propagate-blue-elderberry>

UC IPM: Weed Photo Gallery

[https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/weeds\\_intro.html](https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/weeds_intro.html)

### References

Bornstein, Carol, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien. California Native Plants for the Garden. Los Olivos, CA: Cachuma Press, 2005.

O'Brien, Bart, Betsey Landis, and Ellen Mackey. Care & Maintenance of Southern California Native Plant Gardens. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Los Angeles California. Claremont, CA: Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, 2006. (out of print)

Popper, Helen. California Native Plant Gardening: A Month-by-Month Guide. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Available for loan from the [Ojai Library](#) (hard copy) and the [Blanchard Community Library](#), Santa Paula (hard copy and eBook).