

With the likelihood that drought in California will continue, what can we substitute for lawns that require water? Julie R. Paso Robles

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There are many types of native ground covers that are drought tolerant, habitat for wildlife, and protect our soils from erosion and deterioration.

Some of the most common and useful are our native manzanitas and *Ceanothus*, both of which have several low growing hardy varieties and many have colorful flowers.

'Pacific Mist' manzanita is a gray green ground cover that is very fast-growing compared to other manzanita varieties. Low growing and sprawling, it loves beach sand, but tolerates clay. *Arctostaphylos Purrrissima*, another low growing manzanita, can also grow in sand in coastal regions. 'Yankee Point', a fool proof *Ceanothus*, is one foot tall, very tough, can take some foot traffic, and is an excellent weed barrier. *Ceanothus thryrsiflorus repens* 'Low blue blossom' grows prostrate with lots of attractive blue flowers.

Other attractive and useful natives include *Baccharis*, salvias and fuchsias. *Baccharis piularis* 'Pigeon Point' is a dwarf coyote bush and is an excellent ground cover for slope stabilization and grows in almost all regions. For inland gardens, try *Mahonia repens* which does well with afternoon or full shade. All sages and salvias are truly drought resistant California natives. *Salvia mellifera repens*, Creeping Black Sage, is a low-growing variety. *Salvia leucophylla* 'Point Sal' grows a few inches tall and spreads 3-4 feet. California fuchsia, known as *Zauschneria* or *Epilobium*, grows well in many plant communities. It has prolific red flowers and is a magnet for hummingbirds.

This is but a small sampling of appropriate, low-growing plants that require little water and maintenance. Water them deeply only when dry until they are established and growing well. Once established, no additional irrigation

is needed during the summer months or during the rainy season, except in times of extreme drought. If you choose native plants, no fertilizer is required or recommended. And as with all landscape plants, it is best to shop at local nurseries close to home to select varieties suitable for your area. Another good approach is to look around your neighborhood for thriving plants and choose from the neighbors' established plant pallet.