



### Las Flores Learning Garden

#### Low-water, Low-maintenance and color all year around Garden

##### Plant information

###### Little 'Ollie' Olive

This little gem's latin name is *Olea europaea* and is a miniature fruitless olive variety. Olives are native to the lands around the Mediterranean Sea and olive leaves are considered the enduring symbol of Peace. The Little'Ollie' variety are evergreen & fruitless with small insignificant flowers that still attract birds and bees in the spring. Planted in loose well draining soil this small olive displays dense green leaves with silver undersides. When the wind blows these leaves, shiny when new and fading into matte when mature, look like the plant is shimmering with those silver undersides fluttering.

Perfectly happy in containers as patio specimen plants, trimmed and formed in hedges or just allowed to thrive 'as is' this plant needs full sun and actually enjoys the heat. Once established the Little 'Ollie' Olive needs little water. Requiring only regular water during extremely dry conditions. Though virtually pest free the plants can get root rot if they are overwatered and sometimes scale insects infestations. If these plants are left 'as is' they only need occasional pruning to keep the desired 4 foot by 6 foot wide and tall globular shape. They can be trained into one or multiple trunks and as a hedge sheared rather than hand pruned for shape. While not needing any regular amendments or fertilizers, compost added to the soil is always well received.



###### Star Jasmine

This plant's latin name is *Trachelosperum jasminoides* and it is a member of the Dogbane or *Apocynaceae* family. The family name Dogbane comes from the Greek word Apocynum meaning "dog-away" a reference to the fact that some taxa were used as dog poison. Also, the plants in this family, when cut, have a white milky sap that could be a skin irritant and gums up tools & stains clothing. Star Jasmine are native to Eastern and Southeastern Asia. With bright shiny leaves, sweet smelling white flowers in spring and a vining growth habit these plants lend themselves well to arbors and can grow to 20-30 feet when supported. They also do well as a ground covering plant growing to 3 feet tall with a 3-6 foot spread. Do be aware of the Star Jasmine's tendency to climb and invade the surrounding plants. Plant in well draining soil 5 feet apart in full sun. These beauties will, once established, tolerate drought conditions with additional water during extreme heat. Just remember heat=add'l water. As to pests the Star Jasmine is virtually pest free with only mealy bugs, sooty mold and scale a slim possibility. Fertilizing isn't recommended as

applying it tends to reduce the production of those sweet smelling flowers. Though compost is usually well received at any time. Pruning this plant depends on how it is displayed. If it is flowing up a fence or trellis keep the wild shoots trimmed back to keep the form and to help reduce the weight on the structure. As a ground cover just keep the vines from overwhelming neighboring plants and to contain the total size of the plant. A hedge trimmer works well to maintain both the vertical and horizontal growing methods.



### **Pink Muhly Grass**

Latin name *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, member of the Grass plant family and native to Florida and Eastern US. This plant is evergreen in temperate areas and deciduous in colder climates. The Pink Muhly Grass's long narrow upright leaves and stems lend vertical interest to the garden and as well as in containers when mixed in with other plants. In the late fall this grass plant grows 12 inch tall stems that produce fluffy, feathery pink blooms. When planted singly, in clumps in the garden and/or on hillsides to prevent erosion, this display of pink cotton candy-like blooms is quite spectacular. Pink Muhly Grass doesn't like wet feet so plant in well draining soil in full sun. Once established, water sparingly but remember to water more regularly in very dry conditions. This grass plant has few pests, is deer resistant and attracts ladybugs. The management of the Pink Muhly Grass is very easy. In fact it seems to thrive on neglect. As with the other two plants fertilizer isn't needed. In the late winter, if the grass goes dormant, the plants can be cut to within 6 inches from the ground. In our Napa Valley it seems to be a mix in that in some garden climate zones they go dormant and others they remain green all year. This grass can be divided into smaller clumps and replanted if they get too large in late winter as well. If they remain green just the removal of spent blooms is all that is required. Though the spent blooms do provide late winter seeds for the birds.



**Raywood Ash** with the Latin name of *Fraxinus oxycarpa* (or *angustifolia*) 'Raywood' this tree was already growing in this area of the Las Flores Learning Garden and looks to be about 30 yrs old. Both the UC Master Gardeners and the City of Napa staff value healthy established trees and so the tree was left in the general garden design. This tree

seems to have almost reached its maximum rounded height of 50 feet and canopy width of 20-30 feet. With a lower trunk of a light gray rough bark and upper branches of smooth gray the tree has the possibility to grow up to 24 inches in a year until that final height is reached. Being deciduous the Ash has spear-shaped 3-4 inch long leaves that turn a wonderful deep red in the fall and then drop in early winter. These leaves are somewhat of a mess to clean up but no other debris during the rest of the year other than occasional small branches broken during heavy winds are in evidence. This tree requires little or no pruning to shape as it grows and this particular tree has had none to date. Safety first is always observed so any pruning of a tree this size will require a professional. Considered to be smog tolerant and having roots that tend to be deep these trees can be planted in a row at least 10 feet apart creating a screen for maximum effect. They are deer resistant and grow best in full sun or part shade. These trees when stressed have some susceptibility to root rot, sooty mold, Verticillium and Beetle Borers, scales and white fly but are resistant to Armillaria. Raywood Ash is apparently less drought tolerant than previously believed so occasional deep watering during the drought season and pruning to thin canopies will help to keep the tree healthy and avoid stress.



**Crape Myrtle** with the Latin name of *Lagerstroemia indica* seems to be ubiquitous in many landscape designs and street trees in our Valley. The 4 Crape Myrtle trees in this garden were left over from the existing design and as with the Ash above deemed healthy and worthy of keeping in the new design. Both the Crape Myrtle and Raywood Ash trees are examples of the ability to keep and incorporate established plants when creating a new or redoing an existing landscape. The Crape Myrtle can be grown as a single trunk or multi-trunk tree or a bush. They reach a maximum height of 15 feet with a canopy width of 6-15 feet depending on which display is desired, tree or bush. Our existing little multi trunked trees were overgrown and required some pruning and shaping and in two cases some minor repair of broken branches. All of this could be accomplished without the use of a professional as they are not tall. The deciduous leaves are oval and bronze, purple or reddish. Myrtles come in a wide range of colors, including white, lilac, and purple, many shades of pink and different shades of red. These incorporated trees are white, pink and lilac. Being deciduous means a fall cleanup of leaves but there are other litter issues with the Crape Myrtles. In the spring the flowers and in the fall fruit drop as well as the striking, light green, pink or red brown bark, though smooth underneath, that exfoliates regularly. All three items providing a continuous cleanup issue. The Crape Myrtles, when stressed, have a susceptibility to sooty mold and Aphids. On the plus side these trees require little water, once established, are deer resistant, attract birds and bees and are resistant to powdery mildew. Our lovely little trees provide wonderful continuous visual interest with their curving multiple trunks, lovely leaf and bark color and each spring a bountiful colorful floral display.



**Strawberry Madrone** in Latin *Arbutus unedo* are native to Southern Europe and Ireland. These rounded or vase shaped trees have evergreen oblong shiny dark green leaves and colorful red-brown exfoliating bark. The Arbutus can be grown as multi trunked shrubs or single trunked trees. The pink and white lantern shaped flowers are sprinkled all over the canopy of the tree or the bush and attract hummingbirds and the 1 inch sized pretty rounded fruit of sparkly bright yellow and red dangle throughout the foliage. The fruit is edible to humans but mealy and bland in texture and they are somewhat messy but the wildlife like to eat it. Interestingly the flowers and fruit seem to be produced on a rotating basis all year around in our area. Once established the trees grow to 35 feet tall and wide and require only occasional deep summer watering. These trees don't need pruning except to keep their height down to your preference. Plant in full sun to part shade and in well drained soil. Fertilizer isn't needed and the trees are reasonably pest free. Some possible problems might be Anthracnose, Phytophthora, Root Rot, Rust and Scale and Thrip but the Arbutus does have a resistance to Armillaria. These trees make quite a statement in a row with their lovely shape, cool striated bark, pink/white flowers and red and yellow fruit.

In conclusion, once established, these three trees require little water and maintenance. Additionally, they can be counted on to demonstrate visual interest at some time throughout the year.

The UC Master Gardeners and the City of Napa have joined in a partnership at the Las Flores Community Center where instructional events are planned for the last Saturday of the month through 2022. Topics will center on research-based horticultural and climate change issues by featuring water saving plants and soil care.



### **Yellow Twig Dogwood**

Silver and Gold

*Cornus sericea*

The Yellow Twig Silver and Gold Dogwood is grown for its variegated foliage and its yellow twigs in winter offering you year round beauty in your yard. It is lush and full attracting butterflies and birds and likes to be moist, not too wet or dry. It spreads by root suckers to form a thicket of stems. It is often planted in multiples to form a hedge.

This North American native plant is hardy in zones 3-9 and likes Full Sun to Part shade. It grows up to 5-7' x 6-8'. It is a deciduous bush and blooms May – June with delicate creamy white flowers which later form bluish tinged white berries which The song birds find it especially tasty. The leaves drop in winter exposing beautiful yellow twigs.

Pruning should be done in late Fall after the plant has shed all its leaves and is still dormant.

Prune branches at the base above the first node. Remove any old, dead or diseased twigs. The best color is on newer growth.

Every 2-3 years you may choose to do a hard prune cutting all stems to renew the bush. I find that just doing the pruning of old wood has kept me from doing a hard prune.

This dogwood is easy to propagate. It can be rooted in water or well drained soil. Cut stems 6 to 8" There is no need to use a root hormone. Then insert the twigs in a pot or vase.



### **Red Loropetalum**

Chinese Fringe Flower

*Loropetalum chinense*

The Red Loropetalum Chinese Fringe Flower is native to Japan, China and the Himalayas. It is a very hardy plant known for its longevity. The main use of this plant is as a foundation plant.

It grows 3-6' x 7-10'. It is an evergreen with dark green and purple leaves and it blooms March-June producing red fringe flowers. The Loropetalum likes full to part sun, is drought tolerant once established and fast growing. It is a very popular plant in the residential gardens of Napa.

When planting, dig a hole 2-3 times the size of the rootball. After you've planted it add some natural fertilizer. Prune after the first flowering in late Spring. It is best to only prune 20% of the plant at a time. Prune by making cuts just above a leaf node. You can shape your plant by cutting different lengths.

If there are dead branches, cut them at their origin. Thinning cuts promote growth.

The Loropetalum is easy to propagate. You can do it by putting them in soil or rooting in water. Cut stems 6-9" and put in a pot with well drained soil and keep moist. It takes 5-6 weeks for them to root.



### **Meyeri Fern**

*Asparagus densiflorus*

The Meyer's Fern is not truly a fern as they propagate by seed and do not produce spores. The name most likely originated from the fact that they have clumping habits akin to ferns.

The Meyer's has outward sprawling fibrous roots.

They are a very hearty specimen for Zone 9-11 and flourish with limited care. They like Part Shade to Part Sun. If they are planted in the full sun they become more compact and dense. When established they are drought resistant and quite pest resistant.

They grow up to 2 feet x feet wide and tall and bloom in late winter to Spring.

They are an evergreen offering green foliage year round; first with their white flowers then forming red berries which are the seed pods. The birds enjoy these berries and will take the seeds and distribute them in different areas.

They are often seen in local landscapes and are also used in creative flower arrangements.

Spring is the best time for pruning and shaping. Pinch back stem tips as needed to maintain plant form. Cut back yellowed or dead stems at soil level. Every two to three years you can do a hard pruning to rejuvenate growth. Cut back 2-3" above soil.

This is also a great time to divide this plant in half or quarters.

Dig up the root ball and you will notice that there are tubers and fleshy roots. Look for a spot where you can divide, loosen and move roots out of the way to cut. It is much safer for the plant if you use a stick to enter the root ball and go slow in order not to destroy the roots.

Transplant the sections into a pot with moist acidic soil and place in light shade. There will be new growth in 1-2 months.



### **Glossy Abelia**

*Abelia x Grandiflora Kaleidoscope*

These variegated evergreen compact shrubs have wonderful showy color with a moderate growth rate to reach 2 feet x 3 feet high and wide. The glossy oval leaves emerge bright yellow and lime-green on red stems in spring, turn yellow in summer and take on a glowing orange and fiery red hue in the fall. The color intensifies as the summer

progresses. Plant in full sun to part sun with at least 4 hrs of sunlight and in well-drained soil. These plants not only provide constantly changing leaf color interest but add to the show with pink buds and by early fall small blooms that turn white as well. The Glossy Abelia has average water needs with more water needed in drought conditions. The shrubs are very disease, pest and deer resistant. Being very low-maintenance these plants only need shaping in late winter or early spring for the most part. If large scale reduction is required, wait until the third growing season to do so. Select the three longest, thickest interior stems and snip them off near ground level then continue pruning stems in a random, natural-looking pattern until you have removed up to one-third of the plant. To avoid stressing the plant, do only one-third a year. The Abelia produces flowers on new growth only, so don't prune back the plant after any new growth begins. These lovely plants attract many pollinators, bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.



### **Little Sur Manzanita**

*Arctostaphylos edmundsii*

These low growing, spreading unassuming plants are perfect for low-water and low-maintenance landscapes. The Little Sur Manzanita grows 1-4 feet high by 6-12 feet wide and has evergreen leathery dark green leaves. This California native plant has rounded oval shaped leaves that are shiny and new growth is often reddish or bronze. The plant prefers full or part sun and sandy soil but the can tolerate clay soil and can be propagated by softwood cuttings. Being drought tolerant, once established, the plant needs watering twice a month only during the dry season. Disease, pest and deer resistant it can get a naturally growing fungal pathogen on branches that should be cut out with pruners that have been sterilized between each cut. The small pink flower clusters appear in spring turning into red berries as summer progresses. The red berries turn reddish brown in the winter and provide food for birds. The birds, along with various bees, butterflies and hummingbirds find this virtually maintenance free plant a great food source.



### **Amber Carpet Rose**

*Rosa x NOA97400A'PP #17,098*

An easy care ground cover rose with the massive production of remarkably fragrant amber colored flowers. Growing to 2-3 feet high and 3-4 feet wide this groundcover rose is bred to be heat and humidity tolerant as well as disease resistant. Beautiful in containers and mass plantings this rose prefers full sun, well draining soil and is deciduous. Water requirement is low, needing watering only when the top three inches of the surrounding soil is dry. Blooming in great mounds in the spring the flowers start out tightly furled, opening to a lovely bronze amber and then fading to light apricot color. The Amber Carpet rose does have the common rose problems of black spot and mildew but that can be managed with a judicious watering program to prevent stress. This rose only needs shaping via hand pruners or shears with no need to remove old leaves or to be concerned about pruning at bud nodes. Bees and hummingbirds enjoy the flowers all during the growing season.



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