Native Plants for Residential Gardens
Guidelines for Achieving Successful Plant Groupings
Bob Perry
Northern Latitude
Climate zones of northern latitudes are marked by colder winter temperatures, fewer growing season days and greater levels of annual precipitation in contrast to southern zones of the state. Precipitation exceeds evapotranspiration loss for several winter months of the year. Summers are cool and moist along the coast; inland valleys and foothills are warm and dry with periods of high temperatures and increased moisture stress.

Northeastern Interior Latitudes
Continental climate influences dominate much of Plant Climate Zones 1 and 2 throughout northeastern California, resulting in extreme temperature and precipitation ranges. Vast areas have very short growing seasons due to the coldest and longest winter weather conditions in the state; winter precipitation is dominated by snow. In contrast, hot summer temperatures and low relative humidity also result in high summer evapotranspiration rates.

Pacific Ocean
The Pacific Ocean moderates temperatures along the entire length of California’s coast. Winter cold is less extreme than in inland areas; summer heat is milder and less arid. Relative humidity is increased and moisture stress is reduced by the damp and cooling influence of marine air. As a result, Plant Climate Zones 17 and 24 have the lowest evapotranspiration levels in the state.

Topography
California’s topography is filled with an abundance of ranges and valleys of diverse size, elevation and character. This diversity leads to many variations in climate conditions in terms of temperature, precipitation and growing season. Plant climate zones fit into this topography; both the diversity and boundaries of these zones are largely a result of the varied topography throughout the state.

Southern Coastal Latitude
Climate Zones 18-24 in coastal and inland areas of southern California have mild winters and warm summer temperatures. Rainfall can offset evapotranspiration losses for 2-3 months during winter; however, supplemental irrigation is commonly needed to offset increased levels of evapotranspiration during the summer. The growing season ranges from 10-12 months as long as sufficient water is available to landscapes.

Southern Interior Latitudes
Extended periods of cold, heat and aridity with limited winter precipitation dominates the climate of the intermediate and high desert areas in Plant Climate Zone 11. In contrast, the low desert that occurs in Plant Climate Zone 13 is equally dry, but winters are mild with limited frost. Evapotranspiration loss is highest in these two zones than any other area in the state.
Reference Evapotranspiration Zones

California Evapotranspiration Map - Annual Moisture Loss
The California Landscape
Over 5,800 Species + 1,150 Subspecies & Varieties: Over 2,150 Endemic Species
Redwood Forest - Northern California
Coast Redwood Plant Community
Coastal Foothills - Cambria
Grassland, Oak Woodland and Riparian Plant Communities
Inland Foothills - San Gabriel Mountains
Southern California Chaparral Plant Community
Palm Springs - Coachella Valley
High Desert Plant Community
Southwestern Chaparral

Plant Palette

Southwestern Chaparral

This palette combines a diverse mixture of plants that are native to the dry climates and habitats found in many parts of southern California and the southwestern United States. The result is a list of drought tolerant plants that are rich in character, attractive to wildlife and suggestive of the chaparral, sage scrub and low desert plant communities.

The effort to identify and select plants from dry climate zones for use in ornamental landscapes and gardens has been a long standing goal of many people and organizations. This reflects a full range of values associated with sustainable landscapes. These include the protection and conservation of natural habitats and species, efficient and appropriate use of water, celebration of species diversity and desire to use plants from the region.

This landscape example reflects these values and illustrates one of many planting possibilities for use in southern California. It features several spectacular flowering species such as the flannel bush, our Lord’s candle and bush poppy. It also relies on the use of boulders, stone walls, decomposed granite and topography for additional interest and spatial definition. Rainfall provides all moisture during winter; drip irrigation is used to provide low amounts of supplemental moisture to selected plants during summer. A wide variety of birds, butterflies, native honeybees and lizards are seen in this landscape.

This palette is adapted to Plant Climate Zones 18-24 with plants showing a high tolerance to sun and heat. The best growth occurs in well-drained soils with little organic matter. Most plants need very little summer moisture; plants with moderate water needs can be grouped together in microclimates and hydrozones, and be sustained with drip irrigation. Surfaces can be covered with decomposed granite and gravel to help control weeds.

Horticultural Preferences

This palette is adapted to Plant Climate Zones 18-24 with plants showing a high tolerance to sun and heat. The best growth occurs in well-drained soils with little organic matter. Most plants need very little summer moisture; plants with moderate water needs can be grouped together in microclimates and hydrozones, and be sustained with drip irrigation. Surfaces can be covered with decomposed granite and gravel to help control weeds.

Irrigation Group 2 - Southwestern Chaparral

- **ETa**
- **PF**
- **H/M**
- **M/L**
- **L/VL**

Seasonal Moisture and Irrigation Schedules

- **Jan**
- **Feb**
- **Mar**
- **Apr**
- **May**
- **Jun**
- **Jul**
- **Aug**
- **Sep**
- **Oct**
- **Nov**
- **Dec**

Plant Climate Zones

- **Plant Climate Zones 18-24**

California Plant Climate Zones

This chart shows the common plant climate zones for this palette; individual plants may grow in other zones.

Below: *Hesperoyucca whipplei*
King Way Residence
Southwestern, Chaparral, Sage Scrub
King Way Residence
Southwestern, Chaparral, Sage Scrub
King Way Residence
Boulders, Stone Walls, Decomposed Granite
King Way Residence
Fremontodendron ‘California Glory’ - Flannel Bush
King Way Residence
Trichostema lanatum - Woolly Blue Curls
King Way Residence
Hesperoyucca whipplei - Our Lord’s Candle
King Way Residence
Mimulus aurantiacus (M. longiflorus), Dudleya pulverulenta
King Way Residence
Arctostaphylos ‘Howard McMinn’ - McMinn Manzanita
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Space: Several areas, No spatial enclosure or circulation
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Mediterranean Climate, Plant Climate Zone 18; Frost 10-12/Year
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Microclimate: Deep Shade to excessive sun - Dual Plant Palette
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Site Issues: Large Driveway, Tight Planting Areas
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Soils: Excellent Drainage, Low Organics + Nutrients
Wess Residence - Site Inventory/Analysis
Topography: Flat, Sloping Away from House
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Define Spaces, Circulation and Hydrozones
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Trees: Add Structure, Climate Mitigation, Anchor Spaces
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Shrubs: Reinforce Outdoor Spaces and Circulation
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Installation: Grading and Stone Placement
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Installation: Placing Plants - June 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Installation: Installing Decomposed Granite - June 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Site Review - 4 Months following installation - November 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Installation: Placing Plants - June 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Finished Landscape - November 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Site Review - 4 Months following installation - November 2008
Wess Residence - Planting Design
Site Review - 18 Months after installation - March 2010
Perry Residence - Conversion to Native and Mediterranean Plants
Perry Residence
Native Annuals - California Poppies
Perry Residence
Mediterranean Biennials - Tower of Jewels
Perry Residence
Native Perennials - Lilac Verbena + Monkeyflower
Perry Residence
Native Shrubs - Island Bush Poppy
Perry Residence
Natives - Western Redbud
Perry Residence
Natives - Ribes sanguineum var. glutinosum
Perry Residence
Back Yard - Cutting Garden
Perry Residence
Back Yard - Citrus Trees
Perry Residence
Back Yard - Studio, Recycled Concrete

Calabanus hookeri - Pot Planting