

**EROSION CONTROL AND FIRE SCAPING  
WITH CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS**  
(Central and Southern Coastal California Counties)

**DROUGHT TOLERANT & FIRE RESISTANT SHRUBS**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
Lemonade Berry	<i>Rhus integrifolia</i>
Coffee Berry	<i>Frangula californica</i>
California Fuchsia	<i>Epilobium canum (Zauschneria californica)</i>
Cleveland Sage	<i>Salvia clevelandii</i> (other native sages as well when maintained properly. See note below))
California Lilac, Blue Blossom	<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i> (and others)
Golden Yarrow	<i>Eriophyllum confertiflorum</i>
California Rose	<i>Rosa californica</i>
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>
Bush Poppy	<i>Dendromecon rigida</i>
Big Berry Manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos glauca</i>
Silk Tassel	<i>Garrya elliptica</i>
California Sunflower	<i>Encelia californica</i>
Toyon	<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>
Dudleya	<i>Dudleya species specific to geographic area</i>
Coastal Saltbush/Quai Bush	<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i>
Prickly-Pear Cactus	<i>Opuntia littoralis (and others)</i>
'Canyon Gray' Prostrate Coastal Sagebrush	<i>Artemisia californica</i>
Sugar Bush	<i>Rhus ovata</i>
Laurel Sumac	<i>Malosma laurina</i> (prune top down, leave sprouts)

**FIRE RESISTANT TREES**

Coast Live Oak	<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>
Black oak	<i>Quercus kelloggii</i>
Madrone	<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>
CA Buckeye	<i>Aesculus californica</i>
California Wax Myrtle	<i>Morella (Myrica) californica</i>
California Bay Laurel	<i>Umbellularia californica</i>
Catalina/Santa Cruz Island Ironwood	<i>Lyonothamnus floribundus</i>
Western Redbud	<i>Cercis occidentalis</i>

**FIRE RESISTANT TREES & SHRUBS (riparian, irrigated or wet areas)**  
Where soil is moist year-round, all vegetation has higher moisture content, making it more fire-resistant than plants growing in dry locations

Western Sycamore	<i>Platanus racemosa</i>
Big Leaf Maple	<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>
Blue Elderberry (upland as well)	<i>Sambucus nigra</i> var. <i>caerulea</i>
Thimbleberry	<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>
California Hazelnut	<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i>
Creek Dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i> ssp. <i>occidentalis</i>
Flowering Currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i> var. <i>glutinosum</i> and/or California Blackberry
Bush Anemone	<i>Carpenteria californica</i>
Red or White Alder	<i>Alnus rubra</i> (red); <i>Alnus rhombifolia</i> (white)
Pink Chaparral Currant	<i>Ribes malvaceum</i>

### **FIRE RESISTANT NATIVE PERENNIAL FORBS**

CA Rush Grass	<i>Juncus</i> spp.
Yarrow	<i>Achillea</i> spp.
California Poppy	<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>
Penstemon	<i>Penstemon</i> spp.
Blue-Eyed Grass	<i>Sisyrinchium bellum</i> .
California Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus californicus</i>

### **FIRE RESISTANT NATIVE GRASSES & GROUNDCOVERS**

#### **GRASSES:**

Pine Grass	<i>Calamagrostis rubescens</i>
Idaho Fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>
California Fescue	<i>Festuca californica</i>
Molate Fescue*	<i>Festuca rubra</i> (shade tolerant)
California Oat Grass	<i>Danthonia californica</i>
Needlegrass	<i>Stipa lepida</i>
Purple Needlegrass	<i>Stipa pulchra</i>
Melic.Grass	<i>Melica</i> sp.
Salt Grass	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>

#### **GROUNDCOVERS:**

Alum Root*	<i>Heuchera</i> , spp.
Yankee Point Ceanothus	<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i> var. <i>griseus</i> 'Yankee Point'
Yerba Buena*	<i>Clinopodium</i> ( <i>Satureja</i> ) <i>douglasii</i>
Wild strawberry*	<i>Fragaria californica</i>
Bee's Bliss	<i>Salvia</i> sp. (When maintained properly. See note below)

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\*Grows near perennial water

*Note: All the above plants have soil erosion/protection qualities. Many of these plants are also drought tolerant but may require some supplemental irrigation during initial establishment. Ensure species are appropriate for, and compatible with, local soil type/properties, aspect and slope. The grasses on the list would be considered fire resistant when in winter spring growth and hydrated, but some (Stipa in particular) do go dormant in summer fall and need to be grazed, burned or pruned down seasonally to remain resistant to fire. Locally sourced native species should be used whenever possible for restoration projects and home landscapes where there is potential for hybridization.*

In general, fire resistant plants:

1. Have a low sap or resin content.
2. Grow without accumulating dead branches, needles or leaves.
3. Are easily maintained and pruned.
4. Grow low to the ground with exception of trees and some shrubs.
5. Have low biomass or low density.
6. Have large and/or thick leaves with high moisture content that don't ignite quickly like plants with small leaves such as chamise and junipers.

Note: Space plants so there is horizontal and vertical discontinuity. Keep space between tree canopies and shrubs beneath them. This will decrease the likelihood of the fire spreading to tree canopies and from plant to plant.

## **INVASIVE AND/OR HIGH FIRE HAZARD SHRUBS AND TREES**

Stay clear of non-native plants including but not limited to: Acacia; pampas and jubata grasses; juniper; cypress, eucalyptus; bamboo; palms; periwinkle/vinca; Algerian, English or German ivy; French, Spanish and Scotch broom, Arundo and hemlock..

Discourage the establishment of the following native plants in close proximity of homes and high value property improvements: Chamise; most conifers (except redwood); coyote brush/greasewood and other plants that have a high oil content and/or produce a lot of dead plant materials. These types of plants all have a higher fire hazard and should be planted 100 feet or further from any structure.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Regarding other plant choices and fire resistant landscaping ideas Contact:  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [www.ca.usda.nrcs.gov](http://www.ca.usda.nrcs.gov).  
Consult also with a local chapter of the California Native Plant Society, a local plant ecologist, Certified Professional Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist, and/or the U.C. Cooperative Extension for more detailed site specific native plant recommendations.

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*Note: This list was prepared and updated by Rich Casale, Certified Professional Erosion & Sediment Control Specialist #3 following the 2008 Summit Fire, Martin and Trabing Fires in Santa Cruz County; 2017 Wine Country Fires in Sonoma and Napa Counties, and the 2017-18 Thomas Fire-Ventura/Santa Barbara Counties when he was employed by or under contract with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The list was developed in consultation with the Santa Cruz, Sonoma & Southern CA Chapters of the California Native Plant Society, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, NRCS Plant specialists, and Kathy Lyons, native plant ecologist.*