



Strengthen your communities

Plants live with their **Best Friends.**

Left on their own, plants arrange themselves into communities of their friends based on common microclimates, and interactions with each other, with insects, birds, and other animals, and with the physical environment. Most communities tend to occur repeatedly in the landscape under similar environmental conditions.

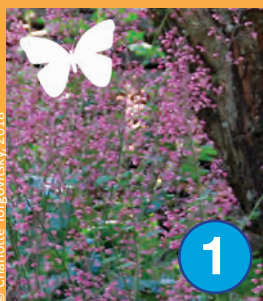
While non-native plants may be equally adapted as native plants to the climate conditions of a particular area, local native plant communities have evolved together and will grow so well together that they will reject “outsiders” and work together to out compete them. So, we recommend learning something about the Marin County plant communities and selecting plants that like to live together from those lists.

Many of the plants in Marin are adapted to the seasonally dry Mediterranean climate. But there are plants which prefer to

gather near the shoreline or creekbed and tolerate significantly wetter conditions. Some plants prefer dry shade, and others are happier out in the sunshine of open space.

The most iconic plant community lives within the shade of California native oaks. The oak trees themselves are extremely drought-adapted and will not tolerate watering of plants beneath them. Coast Live Oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) grow an extensive system of feeder roots under a litter of leaves, and Blue Oaks (*Quercus douglasii*) lose their leaves during extremely dry summers, so the plants that live with them must be able to tolerate the highly fungal environment. These trees survive in clay soils that hold moisture in the rainy season, but become completely dry during much of the year. The fungal network connects many root systems underground, which enables all the plants in the community to share resources to weather all seasons.

California Oak Woodland



1 *Heuchera* 'Old La Rochette'
Coral Bells



2 *Aesculus californica*
California Buckeye



3 *Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*
Blue Elderberry



4 *Melica harfordii*
Harford's Oniongrass



5 *Lonicera hispidula* var. *vacillans*
Hairy Honeysuckle

Keep **Friends** in community

California Mixed Evergreen Forest



1 *Sisyrinchium californicum*
Yellow-eyed Grass



2 *Rhododendron occidentale*
Western Azalea



3 *Alnus rhombifolia*
White Alder



4 *Carex tumulicola*
Foothill Sedge



5 *Aquilegia formosa*
Western Columbine

Mixed Evergreen Forest plants thrive along watercourses and lakes, and on moist shady hillsides. The atmosphere in these places is often cool, and the native plants here are moderate water use plants. Many of these plants will tolerate winter inundation and heavy, soggy soil conditions. In the garden, these plants do best next to organically maintained lawn areas that receive some limited summer watering.

California Grassland / Meadow



1 *Eschscholzia californica*
California Poppy



2 *Calamagrostis foliosa*
Leafy Reedgrass



3 *Pacific Coast iris*
Pacific Coast Iris Hybrids



4 *Festuca idahoensis*
Idaho Fescue



5 *Oenothera elata* ssp. *hookeri*
Yellow Evening Primrose

Grasslands feature shrubless vegetative groundcover; these can appear either in moist, shady exposures, or in hot dry conditions. Grasses blend easily with a mixture of annual wildflowers, broad-leaved perennial plants, and bulbs. This community is essential for insects, birds, and other wildlife, and is largely deer resistant. In landscapes, these plants require some patience, as they take two or three years to fully establish and become self-sufficient. The meadow plants featured here grow best in open, sunny conditions and on slopes.

California Inland Chaparral



1 *Berberis aquifolium*
Oregon Grape



2 *Garrya elliptica*
Silk Tassel Bush



3 *Cercocarpus betuloides*
Mountain Mahogany



4 *Stipa pulchra*
Purple Needlegrass



5 *Salvia apiana* var. *apiana*
White Sage

Chaparral plants have adapted to poor, gravelly soils that do not retain moisture, and often are found on hot dry slopes. Very little leaf litter collects around these plants, and several of these species have small or resinous leaves that help reduce evapotranspiration. Many beautiful flowering natives, which are very drought tolerant and deer resistant, grow in these conditions. In landscapes, these plants need a hot sunny location and good drainage.