



**2.** California hazelnut (*Corylus californica*)—Characterized by multiple trunks, felt-like leaves, and showy male catkins. Hard nutlets inside vase-shaped, papery fruits are sweet and edible. Related to market filberts.



**3.** Western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*)—identified by large and showy, glossy-green fronds. Note the "rusty" undersides, due to the maturing double-rowed sori, from which new ferns develop from shedding spores. This fern thrives in cool, shady, moist sites, and (to an extent) frequents the borders of huckleberry thickets or the shade of bay woodlands.



**4.** Wood fern (*Dryopteris arguta*)—The soft, feathery appearance of this fern readily distinguishes it from the dark, leathery fronds of the sword fern. This true dweller of shaded woodlands tolerates more dryness than the sword fern.

**5.** Latent successional stage—The bay trees you see are shading out all competition; eventually a barren understory of spindly sword ferns and huckleberries may survive. Under large individual trees or groves the understory is so depleted that soil erosion may become more prominent. However, bay performs erosion control in other circumstances. The spicy aromatic leaves can be used to season soups and stews, although they are four to five times as potent as commercial sources. Note the sprawling, distinct burls.

**6.** Manzanita barren—note the exposed, rocky soil; the manzanitas are the shrubby pioneers. Young huckleberries, seeded in by bird droppings, are already slowly taking over the low manzanita canopy. With time, the huckleberries will completely enshroud and kill these chaparral pioneers and succession will develop onward.



**7.** Douglas iris (*Iris douglasiana*)—The thickened, grass-like leaves and the elegant purplish-blue flowers of spring distinguish the Douglas iris. Here it prefers the moist seepage areas. Indians used the outermost strands of fiber from the leaf margins for weaving. There are two forms of this species in the Preserve.



**8.** Western leatherwood (*Dirca occidentalis*)—Flowers December to March. Deciduous. Just before leatherwood breaks dormancy, the intricate naked branchlets produce striking lemon-yellow blooms at the tips. Due to the peculiar S-shaped arrangement of its wood fibers, leatherwood has very flexible, pliable branches, hence its common name. Extremely rare. Please treat this unique species with care.



**9.** Jimbrush (*Ceanothus soledadensis*)—The thorny, rigid, twiggy growth produces soft blue blossoms in spring. Like most Ceanothus, it is an ardent pioneer of disturbed or burned-over soils. Native Americans made a shampoo from the flowers of this species.

**10.** Canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*)—There are coast live oak and interior live oak here also, but this oak can be identified by the sometimes grayish, but usually golden, fuzz on the leaf undersides. Stout acorns rest in thickened, fuzzy, golden cups. Uncommon in the East Bay; predominantly a tree of mountainous canyon regions. Also has a basal burl.



**11.** Coast huckleberry (*Vaccinium ova-tum*)—Flowers April to May. Bright or dark glossy-green leaves, hedge-like growth, and black berries identify the huckleberry. The rarer variety (*V.o.* var. *saporosum*), having pear-shaped fruits with a sweeter flavor, also grows in this Preserve. Huckleberry crown sprouts readily after mechanical or fire damage.

**12.** Intermediate successional stage. Notice the tall, dense canopy of leaves. You may also notice, by stooping, the dead and rotting, moss-covered burls of brittleleaf manzanita beneath, or the dying pallid manzanitas, sometimes toppling over. Even though chinquapin creates a dark, more or less competition-free understory in earlier life, the faster-growing huckleberry will eventually overgrow and kill the chinquapin.



**13.** Chinquapin (*Castanopsis chrysophylla* var. *minor*)—Flowers June to September. The boat-shaped, dark green leaves with a golden fuzz on undersides, and the spiny, yellow, burr-like fruit encasing several hard nutlets, make the chinquapin hard to be mistaken. Flickers and jays extract the nutlets from the thorny burrs in fall and winter. Note the basal burl.



**14.** Brittleleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos crux-tacea*)—Flowers February to March. The low, spreading growth and bright green, petioled (stalked) leaves distinguish this manzanita. It is the shrubby pioneer of the barrens, and forms dense colonies. Note the very large, swollen basal burl.



**15.** Pallid manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pallida*)—Begins flowering as early as mid-November. The reddish, smooth, crooked branches, tightly clustered grey-green leaves, and the tall, arboreal growth readily distinguish this rare jewel. Probably more widespread in the ridgeline of Skyline Boulevard at one time; now almost wholly confined to the Preserve and one small area on Sobrante Ridge near El Sobrante. Very rare. In summer, the sticky, viscid berries may adhere to your clothing.



**16.** Coast Silktassel (*Garrya elliptica*)—Flowers December to February. The compacted, rounded growth and dark green leaves with a whitish fuzz on undersides help to distinguish this plant. Silktassel is dioecious, having separate male and female plants. The males have long, silky catkins that hang like tinsel. The females have short, beaded fruits in catkins, with the purplish fruits giving off a purplish stain. Coast silktassel also has basal burls.



**17.** Pink-flowering currant (*Ribes glutinosum*)—Flowers January to March. Similar to leatherwood in that while breaking out of its winter dormancy, long, pendulous racemes of pink blooms dangle, followed by the unraveling of highly aromatic, sticky leaves. Blue and black berried forms of this species grow in the Preserve.

Text by Ben Johnson.

