

Benefits of Converting from a Lawn to a Native Plant Garden

California boasts a diverse and beautiful array of native plants. Consider converting your lawn to a native plant garden to see the following benefits:

Save Water

Many native plants are considered “summer-dry” plants, which means they are adapted to using little to no water during California’s dry summers. By replacing a lawn with summer-dry plants, you will not only save water but also money.

Reduce Maintenance

Native plants require less maintenance than lawns because they are adapted to local soil and weather conditions. While some care is required, you will spend less time maintaining a native plant garden than mowing, fertilizing, and watering a lawn.

Less Pesticide Use

Native plants have adapted defenses to many pests and diseases, making pesticides and herbicides unnecessary – this keeps pesticides out of your garden and our watersheds.

Attract Wildlife

Hummingbirds, butterflies and other beneficial insects rely on native plants for food and shelter. In turn, these animals help keep your landscape free of mosquitoes, plant-eating bugs and other pests.



Monarch Butterfly



Margarita BOP Penstemon
Penstemon heterophyllus ‘Margarita BOP’

Photo: Grace Mulvihill



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium

Photo: Grace Mulvihill



California fuschia ‘Calastoga’
Epilobium canum ‘Calastoga’

Photo: Grace Mulvihill

What is Sheet Mulching?

Sheet mulching is an effective way to convert a lawn to a native plant garden. Using mulch reduces weeds, keeps moisture in the soil, insulates plant roots from temperature extremes, reduces soil compaction, and minimizes soil erosion. Follow the instructions below to convert your lawn into a beautiful native plant garden and enjoy the benefits of saving money, water and time, and supporting wildlife.

1. Prepare the Site

Knock down or mow the lawn area and remove only the woody or bulky plant material. The lawn will decompose and add nutrients to the soil. Use a flat-edged shovel to dig out the lawn around sidewalks or hardscapes. Dig 8 to 12 inches wide and at least 3 inches down to create a trench that will prevent mulch from spilling onto the sidewalk and will stop grass from sprouting up near the edges.

2. Install a Weed Barrier

Recycled cardboard makes a great weed barrier because it is thick enough to block out the sun and will decompose over time. To start, overlap cardboard pieces 6 to 8 inches to ensure complete ground coverage, leaving space only around established plants you want to save. Wet down the weed barrier to keep it in place and support the decomposition process.

3. Place Your Mulch Layer

Wood chips are the most commonly used mulch product. Apply a 3- to 5-inch layer of mulch over the top of your cardboard. Remember, do not pile mulch directly around trunks or stems of plants, as this can cause rot. Maintain 6 to 12 inches of space around the base of trees and shrubs.

4. Install Your Native Plants

Cut a hole in the cardboard, dig a hole as deep as the root ball, and place plants in the soil. You may also want to add a small amount of compost around the plant’s roots.



Photo: Grace Mulvihill

East Bay
Regional Park District

Healthy Parks Healthy People

East Bay Regional Park District

ebparks.org

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For callers that have hearing or speech disability,
call 711 for Telecommunications Relay Service.

Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach

Eighth Street and Otis Drive, Alameda, CA

More Resources

Learn more about garden designs, plant suggestions, water-saving tips and other ideas that will help you create a native plant garden.

- ebmud.com
- stopwaste.org/sheetmulch
- cnps.org
- rescapca.org
- ccwater.com
- yerbabuenanursery.com



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Cover: Douglas iris, *Iris douglasiana*

Cover photo: John Rusk

Native Plant Demonstration Garden

ROBERT W. CROWN MEMORIAL
STATE BEACH, ALAMEDA



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Welcome

to the Native Plant Demonstration Garden at Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach

This area was transformed from an underutilized grass lawn to a native plant garden which now provides habitat for wildlife, uses less water, and requires minimum maintenance. We hope this garden inspires you to consider native plants for your own yard.

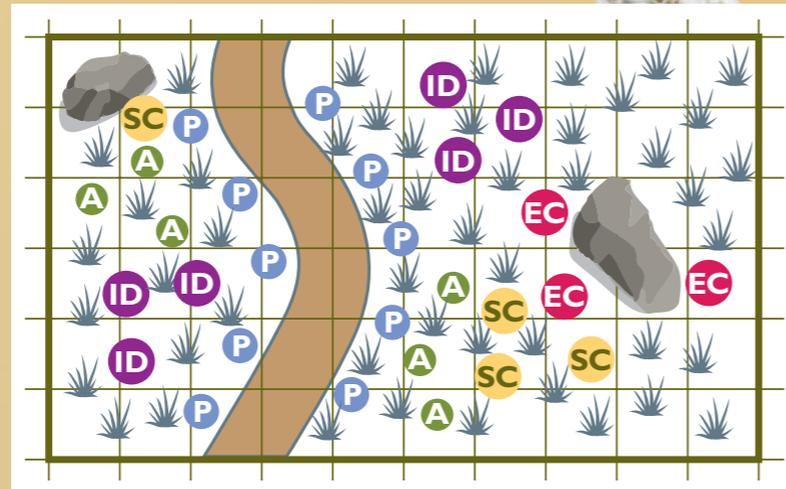


What is a Perennial Garden?

Unlike annuals, which need to be replanted each year, perennials show off beautiful foliage and flowers year after year, making them a great alternative to water-thirsty lawns.



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium
Photo: Peter Milosevic



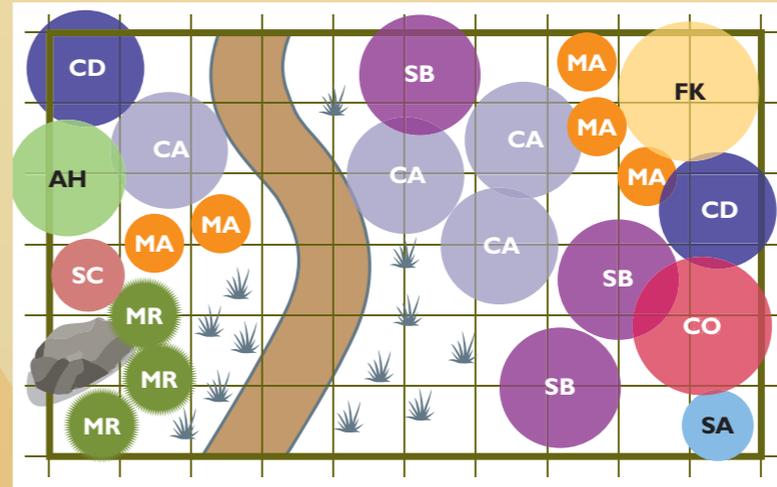
A Perennial Garden Plan
Scale: each square equals 3' x 3'
Garden design: Yerba Buena Nursery, Half Moon Bay

Our demonstration garden includes the following native perennials, which thrive in a sunny, dry meadow:

- A** **Yarrow** *Achillea millefolium*
- EC** **California fuchsia**..... *Epilobium canum*
- MR** **Red fescue**.....*Festuca rubra*
- ID** **Douglas iris***Iris douglasiana*
- P** **Margarita BOP penstemon**.....*Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Margarita BOP'
- SC** **Goldenrod***Solidago californica*

Perennial Garden Care and Maintenance

These plants will thrive in all parts of the Bay Area, in sunny conditions with little or occasional water and in any type of soil. Cut back the flowering stalks of yarrow in December. Cut the California fuchsia to the ground in December to keep it looking fresh. If desired, remove brown iris leaves with a quick tug or cut the plant to the ground after the first rains for lush, green new growth in the spring. Tidy up the penstemon by deadheading. Remove flowering stalks and dry leaves of goldenrod in the late fall.



A Habitat Garden Plan
Scale: each square equals 4' x 4'
Garden design: Yerba Buena Nursery, Half Moon Bay



Sticky monkeyflower
Mimulus aurantiacus

Habitat Garden Care and Maintenance

All these plants will flourish with full sun, little water and any type of soil. Avoid watering ceanothus and redbud to prolong their life. Plant fremontia in the fall and never water in the summer. Tip pinch or prune the monkeyflower to promote compact growth. Cut the deergrass to the ground in December every third or fourth year, or whenever it starts looking ragged. Prune the spent flower stalks of white sage in December.

What is a Habitat Garden?

A habitat garden includes a mix of grasses, wildflowers, groundcovers, and large shrubs to provide food and shelter for birds, bugs and other wildlife. Our demonstration garden includes the following plants to attract local wildlife:

- AH** **Howard McMinn manzanita**.....*Arctostaphylos densiflora* 'Howard McMinn'
- CA** **Anchor Bay ceanothus**.....*Ceanothus gloriosus* 'Anchor Bay'
- CD** **Dark Star ceanothus**.....*Ceanothus* 'Dark Star'
- CO** **Western redbud***Cercis occidentalis*
- MR** **Idaho fescue**.....*Festuca idahoensis*
- FK** **Ken Taylor fremontia**.....*Fremontodendron* 'Ken Taylor'
- MA** **Sticky monkeyflower***Mimulus aurantiacus*
- MR** **Deergrass**.....*Muhlenbergia rigens*
- SA** **White sage***Salvia apiana*
- SB** **Bee's Bliss sage**..... *Salvia* 'Bee's Bliss'
- SC** **Cleveland sage**.....*Salvia clevelandii*