



## NATIVE PLANTS FOR CONTAINERS



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Many California natives can be grown as outdoor container plants. The plants on this list, as well as those with the container icon (above) on our nursery signage, will grow well in pots.

### KEEPING CONTAINER PLANTS HAPPY

**POT SIZE:** Deep pots are best for most native plants (except succulents, which are naturally shallow rooted). Use a container that is no more than 2-4 times its current container size, and repot to a larger size every year or two **when the plant's roots** have completely filled the pot.

**POT MATERIAL:** Nearly any durable solid-walled object with a drainage hole can be used as a pot, so be creative! Glazed ceramic and plastic pots retain more soil moisture and require less-frequent irrigation than more-porous wood containers or unglazed or low-fire terra cotta. For full sun locations, avoid dark-colored or metal pots that can heat up and damage roots.

**SOIL:** Choose a potting mix that crumbles easily and drains quickly, such as a **"cactus mix"** that contains perlite, a light mineral that aids drainage. The Foundation sells an excellent potting soil, containing a slow-release fertilizer, which we use for all of our potted plants.

**WATER:** No plant is drought tolerant in a container (except succulents), and container plants should be watered regularly (except succulents that generally prefer less-frequent irrigation). Aim to keep the soil slightly moist at all times, allowing only the top inch or two of soil to dry out between watering. Always water thoroughly until water drains from the bottom. If using saucers, empty excess water from them.

Never allow soil to dry out completely (unless you are growing bulbs that need to be dry during summer dormancy). If the soil becomes so dry that it no longer absorbs water, break up the surface with a fork or cultivator, then soak the container in a tub or bucket of water until the soil is thoroughly moistened.

**FERTILIZER:** Though most natives are fine *without* fertilizer, natives in containers should be fed sparingly – with fertilizer diluted to ¼ strength – once or twice each year at the start of the growing season. Do not fertilize during dormancy or immediately after transplanting.

**TOP DRESSING:** A decorative top dressing of pebbles, rocks, wood mulch or tumbled glass can add a finished look to your containers and visually tie groupings of potted plants together. Top dressings also help to retain soil moisture, allowing you to water less often.

**SUMMER CARE:** During spells of hot weather, cluster containers together to help retain soil moisture and keep roots cool, or double-pot them by slipping small containers inside larger ones.

(over)



## NATIVE PLANTS THAT ARE HAPPY IN CONTAINERS

### LARGE SHRUBS & TREES

- Abutilon palmeri* (Palmer's Indian mallow) -- A tough shrub that loves hot conditions.  
*Acer circinatum* (vine maple) – Produces beautiful fall colors especially in colder climates.  
*Berberis aquifolium* var. *aquifolium* (Oregon grape) -- Best in part shade; slow-growing.  
*Calliandra californica* (red fairy duster) -- Heat-loving Baja native with red bottlebrush-like flowers.  
*Calocedrus decurrens* (incense cedar) – Fragrant foliage and pyramidal form.  
*Carpenteria californica* (bush anemone) -- Shiny foliage and white fragrant spring flowers.  
*Cercis occidentalis* (western redbud) -- Deciduous tree with showy spring flowers.  
*Frangula californica* and cvs. (coffeeberry) -- Neat evergreen shrubs for part shade.  
*Gambelia* spp. and cvs. (bush snapdragon) – Evergreen foliage and red flowers for hummingbirds.  
*Heteromeles arbutifolia* (toyon) – A must for every native garden; full sun to part shade.  
*Umbellularia californica* (California bay) – Upright tree with aromatic evergreen foliage.

### PERENNIALS & SMALL SHRUBS

- Aquilegia formosa* (Western columbine) – Spectacular flowers and ferny foliage; needs shade.  
*Berberis aquifolium* var. *repens* (creeping barberry) – Attractive multi-colored foliage.  
*Calliandra eriophylla* (pink fairy duster) – Desert plant with pink bottlebrush-like flowers.  
*Erigeron* spp. and cvs. (seaside daisy) – Pretty pink daisy-like flowers on low-growing plants.  
*Heuchera* spp. and cvs. (coral bells, alum root) – Good for small containers; does best in part shade.  
*Eriogonum crocatum* (Conejo buckwheat) – Rare local species with chartreuse flowers.  
*Euphorbia misera* (cliff spurge) – Semi-succulent from Baja California; unusual and easy.  
Ferns, inc. *Woodwardia*, *Adiantum*, *Polystichum* spp. – All are best in part to full shade.  
*Limonium californicum* (California sea lavender) – Neat mound with delicate lavender flowers.  
*Salvia spathacea* (hummingbird sage) – Fragrant foliage; grows quickly and blooms in spring.  
*Verbena lilacina* and cvs. (lilac verbena) – Blooms much of the year; attracts butterflies.

### GRASSES & GRASS-LIKE PLANTS

- Carex* spp. (sedge) -- Some are arching, others more upright; most prefer some shade.  
*Deschampsia cespitosa* ssp. *cespitosa* (tufted hairgrass) – Compact plant with graceful form.  
*Equisetum hyemale* ssp. *affine* (horsetail) -- Shade- and water-loving; thin upright stems.  
*Festuca* spp. and cvs. (fescue) – Some have bluish foliage, others green; all prefer light shade.  
*Juncus* spp. (wiregrass) – Upright stems and architectural form.  
*Muhlenbergia rigens* (deergrass) – Large rounded grass with tall flower spikes.

### CACTI & SUCCULENTS

- Agave* spp. (agave) – Striking accent plants; best in full sun.  
*Cylindropuntia* spp. (cholla) and *Opuntia* spp. (prickly pear) – Spiny cacti for full sun.  
*Dudleya* spp. (live-forever) – Beautiful rosettes in gray or green; part shade is okay.  
*Hesperoyucca (Yucca) whipplei* (chaparral yucca) – Bold, sharp-tipped, heat-tolerant and local.  
*Sedum* spp. (stonecrop) – Succulent but best in part sun or shade with semi-regular water.

### TO CASCADE OVER CONTAINERS

- Clinopodium douglasii* (yerba buena) – Fragrant, trailing native mint groundcover.  
*Fragaria* spp. and cvs. (coast and wood strawberry) – Fast growing; edible fruit; best in part shade.  
*Heliotropium curassivicum* (salt heliotrope) – Pretty gray-green leaves and tiny white flowers.