

Audubon at Home

Gardening for Birds & Butterflies



CHUCK WELING



Species such as the Hermit Thrush (above) and Lesser Goldfinch benefit from the urban oases created with native plant gardens. These pockets of wildlife-friendly habitat play a vital role when multiplied many times over. (Toyon berries shown above.)



MARY CLAYPOOL



RESOURCES CLOSE TO HOME

Some of California's Audubon chapters, California Native Plant Society chapters and native plant nurseries offer gardening workshops where you can learn more about the techniques of gardening for wildlife. For more information on the *Audubon at Home* program visit www.audubonathome.org. Start your wildlife garden today.

Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.



Acorn Woodpeckers
KAREN STRAUSS

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RESOURCES

NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES

Las Pilitas Nursery, Escondido
760-749-5930 • www.laspilitas.com

California Native Nurseries List
www.plantnative.org/nd_ca.htm

Tree of Life Nursery, San Juan Capistrano
949-728-0685 • www.treeoflifenuresry.com

Moosa Creek Nursery, Valley Center
760 749-3216 • www.moosacreeknursery.com

BIRDING & BUTTERFLY INFORMATION

National Audubon Society • www.audubon.org

Audubon California • www.audubon-ca.org

San Diego Audubon Society
858 273-7800 • www.sandiegoaudubon.org

NATIVE PLANT GARDENING INFORMATION

CalFlora (California Native Plant Information)
www.calflora.org

California Friendly Garden Guide
www.bewaterwise.com

California Native Plant Society • www.cnps.org

California Native Plants for the Garden (book)
Bornstein, Fross & O'Brien

Care and Maintenance of Southern California Native Plant Gardens (book)
O'Brien, Landis, & Mackey



CREATE A WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY GARDEN WITH A DISTINCTLY CALIFORNIA STYLE



KAREN STRAUS



The aromatic Cleveland sage (in foreground) and California buckwheat are drought resistant and colorful in the blooming season.



MARY CLAYPOOL



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Migratory birds, such as the Yellow-rumped Warbler (far left), Western Tanager (center) and Cedar Waxwing, rely heavily on pockets of habitat providing food, water and "safe harbor." Native plants cultivated in a semi-natural state bring these birds back year after year.

YOUR AUDUBON CALIFORNIA GARDEN

From Crescent City and Klamath Lakes in the north, to San Diego and the Salton Sea in the south, California's unique climate and topography support an abundance of plant and animal species. The Golden State is also a key link in the migratory flyway for millions of birds. Your yard can become a slice of California's natural landscape if you focus on native plants, a wildlife friendly design, and healthy gardening practices. By also providing the three basic things birds need – food, water and shelter – you can create a natural California habitat complete with birds and butterflies in your own backyard.

To encourage this process, the National Audubon Society and its regional affiliate, Audubon California, have instituted the *California Audubon at Home* program. This

statewide program encourages homeowners to design their garden or landscape with wildlife and resource conservation in mind.

The key to a healthy California garden lies in selecting plants, especially native plants, that are adapted to the soil and climate in your yard. Species that are part of your local plant community will require a minimum amount of supplemental water, fertilizer and maintenance. The garden need not be 100 percent native, but native plants should be the majority of your plantings. Plants that produce seeds, berries or nectar for birds and butterflies are especially desirable. Add a water source, even a simple bird bath that is easily cleaned, and you will have a natural aviary at your doorstep. Homeowners are discovering that birds and butterflies add song and motion to complement the quiet beauty of a garden.

CREATE A HEALTHY GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE FOR PEOPLE ... AND FOR WILDLIFE

A naturally healthy garden is one that:

- Provides habitat for wildlife
- Conserves water
- Uses native plant species
- Doesn't use pesticides
- Avoids using invasive plants
- Requires minimal fertilizer



KAREN STRAUS



WHY USE NATIVE PLANTS?

Native plants are the species that were present in California before Europeans arrived. Here are six good reasons for using native plants in your garden.

- **Attract Birds and Butterflies**

California is on a major migratory flyway for both birds and butterflies. A garden that offers food and shelter for these winged migrants makes an inviting rest stop. Also, local species may become daily visitors in a yard that offers natural habitat.

- **Reduce Water Consumption**

Native plants from chaparral or other upland shrubby plant communities are adapted to long dry seasons. Once established, they require minimal extra water if planted in a setting similar to their natural environment. If water rationing becomes necessary, low-water native plants will provide a sustainable garden and landscape for your home.

- **Less Maintenance Needed**

There is rarely a need to use soil additives or fertilizers if you select native species common in your area. Also, less time will be needed for watering, spraying and weeding – leaving more time for bird watching. Occasional pruning will keep native plants attractive and healthy, and you never have to mow them.

Several species of drought-tolerant native Ceanothus can be found at local nurseries.

CHUCK WELLING

- **Reduce Insect Problems**

Most natives tolerate browsing by insects, but if an outbreak occurs, do not apply harmful pesticides. Instead, use a hose to wash off insects or try other non-toxic alternatives. Remember, the majority of insects are beneficial and insects are a very important food source for birds.

- **Offset Habitat Loss**

As natural habitat is lost through development, native animals are displaced and their numbers decline. This is especially true in Southern California where so much coastal sage scrub habitat has been lost. Recreating even a small amount of dwindling native habitat will benefit wildlife, help sustain plant species, and add richness to your garden's life.

- **Native Plants are Beautiful**

Native plants offer all the color, variety and natural beauty of ornamental species. By choosing plants that bloom in different seasons or have interesting foliage colors, a native plant garden can have color year round. Gardeners can choose from many hybrids, varieties, cultivars, and sub-species of native species to meet their specific needs. For example, over 40 kinds of California Lilac (*Ceanothus*) are grown by a single nursery.

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SCOTT STREET

Common urban species, such as Anna's Hummingbird, find backyard habitat excellent for nesting.

Left: Monkey Flower and White Sage. Below: Black-headed Grosbeak.



BRAD WEINERT

To attract butterflies, you must have the right plant species. Butterflies will only lay their eggs on the host plants that their caterpillar larvae can feed on. However, butterflies are much less selective about flowers that provide nectar. Consult the reference material to find out what plant species will support the butterflies that you are interested in attracting.



CREATING A HEALTHY GARDEN

A healthy garden is one that is in balance with nature. Plan your landscape or garden by seeing it through a bird's eyes. Birds prefer a diverse vegetation structure that varies from open areas (herbaceous flowers and grasses) to low shrubs to hedges and trees. They like the edge zones between open areas and bushy shrubs. This allows for a quick retreat to cover should a hawk or other threat approach. Leave some leaf litter around the plants for insect habitat and to improve the soil.

Before selecting plants for your yard, visit a native plant garden to see mature plants. Many native plant nurseries and nature centers have demonstration gardens and can explain when plants bloom, how big they get, and if they will attract birds or butterflies. Some nurseries have planting guides, catalogs, or websites that describe water requirements, soil preference, sun or shade needs, and other useful information for each species of plant.

In designing your garden, group plants with similar needs together. Don't put a thirsty, shade-loving fern near a drought tolerant, sun-loving sage. The same rule applies to soil type. A sage that requires sandy soil will not do well in clay. Many native plants do very well in clay, so use those species if that is your garden soil.

When you plant, dig a hole about half again the diameter of the pot and the depth of the root ball in the pot. Fill the hole with water and let it soak in (twice) to saturate the soil. Remove the plant from the pot by turning the pot upside down and tapping it on a firm surface. Make three, shallow 2" grooves in the root ball to expose some of the roots, then place the plant in the hole so the base of the stem is slightly above ground level. Pack



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the soil firmly around the roots and water again to remove air bubbles. Spread up to 2" of mulch around the plant, but keep it away from the stem. Mulch holds moisture in the soil and reduces weed growth. For specific information on watering and pruning, consult the Internet or published material on native plant gardening. (See page 1 for resources.) October through January is the best time to plant since winter rains will help roots become established before the heat of summer arrives.

The final steps in creating a wildlife garden are adding a water source, such as a simple birdbath, and feeders with a variety of foods to attract different species.

Lorquin's Admiral

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Heavy mulching keeps the water consumption of the native plant hillside (shown above) quite low, and makes the natural path more appealing and resistant to erosion. Installing bird baths and small pools of flowing water help complete the natural habitat recreated in your yard.

Far left: Townsend's Warbler