

El Cerrito Community Native Plant Garden - Species List

April 2005

This plant list is arranged by common name, with the botanical name and family name in parentheses. The number of plants growing in the garden is also indicated, although this number changes. A brief description of the plant, including horticultural information, is generally followed by information about native Californian uses, with a focus on local Costanoan uses if available. Sources for the information are listed at the end.

1. **Black sage** (*Salvia mellifera* – Lamiaceae) (3). Salvias are members of the aromatic mint family, which typically have fragrant, textured leaves. Birds and small mammals eat its seeds, and bees throng to its flowers. Two types of black sage, members of the chaparral community, grow in this garden – a prostrate and upright form. This shrub



will get large quickly in the garden (up to six feet). When its leaves drop to the ground chemicals in the leaves inhibit the growth of other plants around it. The small whitish-purple flowers growing in whorls along its stems are not as showy as its cousin *Lepechinia calycina*, but the black sage's diverse medicinal properties were more highly valued by natives. A concentrated brew made from the plant was ingested to relieve coughs. It was used in baths to treat paralysis. Leaves were heated and applied to the ear for pain, and wrapped around the neck for sore a throat. Green leaves were chewed to relieve gas, and soaked in water for heart disorders (Bocek).

2. **Blue elderberry** (*Sambucus mexicana* – Caprifoliaceae) (1). A deciduous, multitrunked tree typical of coastal range



canyon bottoms, blue elderberry can grow to heights of 25 feet. In the garden, you can prune it to a single trunk if desired. It will thrive in sun or shade. Nectar-rich bunches of creamy white flowers appear April to August, and exude a strong perfume in the early evening. Late summer brings powdery blue bunches of berries loved by birds.

Modern and ancient peoples have valued elderberry. Though not very sweet in raw form, the fruit will yield wonderfully flavored preserves, syrups, pies, and wine. Elderberry was recognized for its medicinal properties since the 19th century at least and is one of nature's richest sources of vitamin C (Clarke). Local natives ate the fruit cooked or dried, as fresh berries may cause nausea (Strike). A concentrated brew made from its smelly leaves acted as a purgative and could stave off a cold. Native Americans often pruned shrubs to obtain the hollow, straight branches for making arrow shafts, pipes, and flutes, and to make fires (Bocek). Flutes made from elderberry wood were the most universally used musical

instruments by California natives (Strike). The twigs and fruit of elderberry might have been used to make a purplish-black dye, and its leaves a yellow-green dye (Strike).

3. *Blue-eyed grass* (*Sisyrinchium bellum* – Iridaceae) (several). Blue-eyed grass is a hardy, half- to one-foot perennial that can be found on grassy, sunny slopes throughout the California foothills. Blue-eyed grass is in the iris family, as its leaf shape suggests, but contrary to what its common name indicates. Its flower is also purple, rather than blue, with a yellow “eye.” Extremely adaptable, the plant thrives in sand or clay soils, under wetter or drier conditions. It spreads through creeping rootstocks to create large colonies. The one-



inch blue flowers emerge in profusion at the end of blade and endure for long periods, usually between February and June. The plant will die back after blooming.

Costanoans made a tea from the plant to treat stomachaches and reduce fever (Strike).

4. With more than 100 species in California, *buckwheats* (only distantly related to the grain buckwheat) are found all over the state in a wide range of plant communities, ranging from tiny cushioned mounds that grow in stressful high-mountain environments, to the large flamboyant shrub (*E. giganteum*) that grows in the protected environment of the Channel Islands.

Buckwheats can provide focus and filler in a variety of garden areas. Bees love crawling around on their round or flat-topped clusters of long-lasting blooms that endure late into the summer.

California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* – Polygonaceae) (4) possesses whitish-pink flowers that cluster atop branches

flanked by bright green, needle-like leaves. Along with its flowers, the leaves and seeds of California buckwheat are



important food sources for smaller animals. Natives used a concentrated brew of the plant to treat urinary problems, colds, and coughs while other preparations eased headache and stomach ailments (Heizer and Elsasser). The stems may also have been eaten (Heizer and Elsasser).

Another species in the garden, *Coast buckwheat* (*Eriogonum latifolium*) (1), though not native to the East Bay, was traded and used by local native peoples. Its



rounded, quarter-sized leaves are more typical of buckwheat leaves than California buckwheat. A coastal form, it has adapted to an exposed, windy setting by lying low to the ground and reflecting sun from its leaves with tiny white hairs. Its cheery ball-shaped, pink flowers poke up to greet insects like butterflies, for which it is an important food source.

5. *California bee plant (or figwort)* (*Scrophularia californica* – Scrophulariaceae) (several). California bee plant is a two- to four-foot perennial with three-foot spikes of small red flowers and triangular leaves. It is native along the coast from Los Angeles north, colonizing open areas in wood- and scrubland. In a watered garden it will spread but it is not hard to control. Al-



though California figwort is sometimes found in sand, it prefers heavy clay. Not very tolerant of heat, it will do fine inland with some shade and water. Like the monarch

butterfly in its relation to milkweed, the Chalcedon checkerspot butterfly lives on bee plant and sequesters Iridoid glycosides from the plant, making the larvae poisonous and adults unpalatable.

6. *California coffeeberry* (*Rhamnus californica* – Rhamnaceae). (2) A handsome plant that shoots up quickly, from one foot along the coast to six to ten feet inland, this evergreen shrub with its dark-green oblong leaves and reddish branches maintains a graceful shape in the garden without pruning, and can be used as a robust hedge

plant. Adaptable, this plant will take sun to part shade. It can be found among its chaparral companions ceanothus, chamise, toyon and California sage, and the more shade-inclined huckleberry.



Its leaves curl under slightly to conserve moisture. It is reportedly not appealing to deer. The tiny greenish flowers are undistinguished, but the berries, red and then black, attract birds, and contain seeds reminiscent of coffee beans. Natives ate the berries raw (Bocek, Heizer and Elsasser). A concentrated brew made from leaves was used to treat poison oak rash. A brew made from the inner bark was dried and ground for use as a laxative (Bocek).

7. The garden features two grasses – *California fescue* (*Festuca californica* – Poaceae) (taller, with wider, blue-green blades - see photograph) and *Alkali sacaton* (*Sporobolus airoides*) (reddish to purple tones with a delicate, spreading flowering stalk) (several). They

represent a typical native California plant community – perennial bunchgrassland – which was once widespread in the East Bay. Bunchgrasses form clumps that allow space in between



for annual grasses and wildflowers to thrive (unlike sod-forming grasses, like lawns, which grow densely and harbor fewer wildflowers). Their deep, netlike root systems allow excellent infiltration and erosion control. With their beautiful arching blades and flower spikes, native grasses can create a beautiful effect in the garden interspersed with shrubs and flowers. They are also an excellent choice for slopes requiring erosion control, and particularly for areas near open space or parkland. Although California fescue may go dormant (turn greenish or gray-brown) in summer without water, it will retain a beautiful silhouette. Alkali sacaton is not particularly drought-tolerant.

Perennial bunchgrasses played a central role in the Costanoan diet and life. In spring Native American women collected grass and wildflower seeds and bulbs in baskets slung on their backs. The seeds would be roasted and eaten, or parched, mixed together, and ground into a meal called *pinole* (the town of Pinole is named for the Mexican word meaning “a meal made from parched seeds” [Edwards]). Following the annual harvest, fields were often burned to encourage new growth the following spring. Today’s grasslands scattered with oaks remind us of what early explorers saw when they first encountered the area over 200 years ago. When Spanish and later settlers arrived, they introduced ranching and eventually farming, bringing annual grasses from their native lands to provide forage for livestock. Intense and year-round grazing by cattle, in contrast to the seasonal grazing of native wildlife, in combination with competition from these hardy European annuals, has led to the near total displacement of our native lowland grasses

(giving the grasslands a smooth rather than “bumpy” look). Including native bunchgrasses in home gardens can be a nice reminder of our grassland heritage.

8. *California fuschia* (*Epilobium canum* – Onagraceae) (several). Also called “hummingbird fuschia,” this plant offers abundant red, trumpet-shaped flowers in late summer and early fall, providing an important nectar source for pollinators at a time when few other flowers are still blooming. Hummingbirds and other birds can see the color red, which is not as apparent to insects. For humans, the plant also offers a visual feast of brilliant red against gray-green foliage at a time when most grasses and wildflowers are dormant. The low-growing variety provides a hardy drought-resistant ground cover that spreads rapidly through deep underground rootstocks. (An upright variety also appears in the garden.) Use a hand lense to notice the tiny white hairs that give the leaves a gray color to reflect the sun and reduce water loss. Natives used a concentrated brew of the plant as a general remedy, as well as for urinary problems, infant fever, and infected sores (Bocek).



9. *California goldenrod* (*Solidago californica* – Asteraceae) (many). A fast-growing perennial with showy yellow flowering stalks that shoot up to three feet high, this plant offers wonderful late



summer and early fall color. It grows naturally in open places, and will attract all sorts of insects and birds. It is vigorous and will spread through creeping rootstocks, so space should be allowed in the garden. Goldenrod is drought tolerant but will accept some summer water. Cut back the stalks, which dry up after the plant flowers, if you want a neat look to your garden. Natives used a concentrated brew of leaves to cleanse sores and burns; they also toasted and crushed the leaves to sprinkle on wounds (Bocek). They may've also eaten young leaves of the plant (Strike).

10. *California or Coast sagebrush* (*Artemisia californica* – Asteraceae) (3). A common member of the “soft” chaparral community, California sagebrush shares the coastal scrub areas of California along with other species, such as monkey flower, coffeeberry, and California buckwheat (all

found in this garden). It is closely related to the well-known Great Basin sagebrush that occupies vast tracts of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. Like chamise, it contains compounds such as camphor pinene, thymol, and eucalyptol which give its finely divided leaves a characteristic scent and repel predators. Its narrow gray leaves reduce exposure to the dehydrating sun. The low-growing variety can extend about four feet, and creates a striking effect in rock gardens and flowing down rock walls. The upright variety grows in an open branching form to about four feet, creating a lovely feathery silhouette in the

garden. In the wild, sagebrush can go summer dormant, but if it receives occasional water during the hot season it will retain its striking gray foliage. Not to be confused with



culinary sage, the leaves from this plant nevertheless can be used to season food. Costanoans sought its medicinal properties for toothaches, colds, cough, and rheumatism. A treatment for asthma consisted of a concentrated brew taken internally, along with poultices applied to the back and chest.

11. *California wild rose* (*Rosa californica* – Rosaceae) (2). One of nine native rose species found in California, this species grows in moist places and often near creeks. It will send up shoots from underground roots, forming sprawling hedges up to several feet high. Its pink flowers, smaller than those of the cultivated rose, bloom through summer and exude a subtle per-

fume. In the fall, flowers give way to red “hips” or fruit covered by birds. Containing more vitamin C, phosphorus, and iron than oranges (Clarke), the hips have also been widely used in folk and contemporary recipes for herbal teas, perfumes, candy, jelly, and tea. They provide a tart acid flavor and red coloring. Local natives may have used the hips as a food and beverage (Heizer and Elsasser) in addition to its medicinal properties. A concentrated brew made from



the hips helped alleviate indigestion, sore throat, fever, colds, rheumatism, kidney ailments, and acted as a cleansing wash for scabs and sores (Bocek).

12. *Chamise* (*Adenostoma fasciculatum* – *Rosaceae*) (2). A shrub covered with small needle-like leaves, chamise forms the foundation of the chaparral community in California. Chaparral is the dominant type of native vegetation that has evolved in adaptation to Mediterranean conditions of hot, dry summers and mild wet winters throughout the Coast Ranges and the Sierra. The plant’s small leaves reduce surface area exposed to the sun, which helps reduce water loss during the hot season. The wonderful smells of chaparral plants such as chamise come from oils called terpenes that protect the leaves from water loss, repel predators, and inhibit weed growth as leaf litter falls around the plant. These flame-attracting oils cause chaparral to succumb to summer fires as part of a natural cycle that burns away old growth, kills pathogens, and returns nutrients to the soil. In spring, small creamy-white flowers crowd on its branches like throngs of



white-winged insects, creating startling patches of white on entire hillsides. Chamise thrives in full sun and with good drainage. Reaching heights of three to ten feet, the shrub makes a good evergreen screen and provides erosion control. Once-a-month watering makes the shrubs less flammable.

Costanoans used wood from the shrub to fashion arrow foreshafts and baskets (Bocek). They may have made use of its flammable properties in making torches and coals for roasting food (Strike). The seeds were also eaten (Heizer and Elsasser).

13. *Coast silk tassel* (*Garrya elliptica* – *Garryaceae*) (1). Silk tassel is named for its gray-green flowers that hang pendulously from tree branch ends in winter (Jan. – Feb.), maturing to cotton-puff like seeds that are carried away on winter winds. The male tree has a showier inflorescence, while the female develops a fleshy blackish-purple fruit in a hard casing. The dry bracts remain on the



tree through spring and summer. You can see coast silk tassel growing wild in Huckleberry Regional Preserve and Las Trampas Park (Keator 1995). The tree contains quinine, an alkaloid which is used to reduce fever, treat malaria, and as a painkiller. The inner bark was a traditional cure for fever (Strike).

14. *Coyote mint* (*Monardella villosa* – Lamiaceae) (2). Yet another mint, with another wonderful fragrance! Found throughout the foothills, coyote mint is adapted to hot summer sun, and needs good drainage. The plant's long-lasting purple flowers are borne on ball-shaped heads with delicately etched leaves. It is loved by butterflies and bees. If you water this plant too much or your soil is too rich, the plant may become leggy; simply trim it back to create a fuller growth habit (and to remove dried flower heads). It was traditionally used in the form of concentrated



brews and salves for respiratory problems. Compresses placed on cuts made in upper back were said to draw out "bad" blood in cases of pneumonia (Bocek). The plant was also brewed as a hot

beverage and to season food, as we do with other mint species. The Spanish likely learned from the natives to use this plant for sore throats.

15. *Douglas Iris* (*Iris douglasiana* – Iridaceae) (several). Abundant along the coast from northern Santa Barbara county to Oregon,

the Douglas iris may look familiar to those acquainted with the many exotic irises grown in home gardens. Its long narrow leaves surround showy lavender-purple petals that display patterned nectar guides for pollinators. Irises develop into colonies on grassy slopes and open areas. You can see the iris growing in Huckleberry Regional Preserve, Tilden, and Redwood Regional Park (Keator 1995).

Testament to their deep knowledge of plant life, natives learned that the Douglas iris

possesses a single fiber in each leaf margin (two total) that is very strong and flexible. Huge bunches of iris leaves were harvested in fall and stored



until needed (Strike). The fiber was used to make cordage, and then fashioned into baskets, fishing nets, snares, hair nets, bags, and ropes. Men typically braided fibers against a bare thigh in the sweathouse, working for as long as six weeks to make a twelve-foot long rope (Balls).

16. *Fuschia-flowering gooseberry* (*Ribes speciosum* – Grossulariaceae) (1). This gooseberry offers a luscious display of pendant-like fuschia flowers between January and May, but its spiny thorns ward off intimate admirers. This prickliness has not discouraged gardeners in England, where it is planted widely – much more so than in its native land. Also found along the coast and inner Coast Ranges, though not common in the East Bay, the shrub grows



to four feet and will keep its shiny dark green leaves year round if not under drought stress. It will tolerate situations of high shade to full sun.

17. *Holly-leaf cherry* (*Prunus ilicifolia* – Rosaceae) (1). Found on dry slopes and fans in the coast ranges, this evergreen shrub with its shiny holly-like leaves is commonly planted as an ornamental. It can be pruned as a hedge or allowed to slowly reach tree heights of up to 25 feet. Its spikes of white plum-like flowers give way to large purplish-red fruits. Birds feed on the sweet flesh, and hikers also enjoy the fruit. Like other chaparral plants, holly-leaf cherry gives off chemicals called terpenes that suppress the growth of plants around it. Natives sometimes ate the fruit but more commonly they dried the pits to reach the inner kernels, which they then soaked and roasted. Cherry wood was sometimes used to make bows (Bocek). Native peoples in southern California crushed and leached



the kernel of the seed for soup, used the bark to make a tea to relieve colds, and pressed the fruit

to make a drink (Clarke).

18. *Hummingbird sage* (*Salvia spathacea* – Lamiaceae) (several). Native to lightly wooded areas in coastal California, from Napa to Orange, this perennial grows to one foot and spreads by rhizomes. Showy magenta flowers grow to one-inch and cluster in groups of ten to twenty along a one- to two-foot spike. The broad, spade-shaped leaves are wonderfully fragrant, like most mints. Hummingbirds and butterflies enjoy this plant, but deer don't. The dried stalk can be trimmed back in late summer if a neat look is desired. Hummingbird sage is adaptable, thriving in full or part sun to full shade, and clay soil.



19. *Lupine* (*Lupinus albifrons* var. *douglasii* – Fabaceae) (2). The showy blue flower spikes and silvery palmate leaves of this shrub make it a distinctive and easily recognized native plant. The flowers, which attract butterflies, develop into seedpods typical of the pea family, which dry and twist open to release their seeds. Below ground, the plant

roots harbor a mutualistic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, which help the plant obtain necessary nitrogen in nutrient-poor soils. (Gardeners and farmers often grow pea family plants as cover crops to enrich soil.) The plants in this garden were grown from seed produced by a locally native species of lupine planted along the Ohlone Greenway, a bike and pedestrian



trail where the community group Sustainable El Cerrito has also planted many natives. This perennial shrub grows from three to five feet and needs full sun and good drainage. Lupine will tolerate some water but thrives when kept on the dry side. Deer seem to stay away from this plant.

20. *Milkweed*, including the two varieties seen here – *narrow-leaf milkweed* (*Asclepias fascicularis* - Asclepiadaceae) (2) and *showy milkweed* *Asclepias speciosa* (several) – grow in dry, gravelly places and disturbed areas below 6000 feet. Milkweeds are the sole host plant for larvae of the monarch butterfly. Interestingly, the caterpillar larvae are able to feed on leaves of the plant which contain poisonous alkaloids, providing the mature butterflies protection from predators. The insect's black and orange wing coloration signals danger to its would-be predators. If you want butterflies or beautiful white, black and yellow caterpillars in your garden, include this plant topped by clusters of white (*A. fascicularis*) or pinkish (*A. speciosa*)



flowers. The showy variety has large ovate leaves covered in dense white hairs that reflect summer heat, giving it a gray, fuzzy look and feel; it will form a large clump through spreading rhizomes. After the plant flowers, the fruit appears in a large (2.5 – 4”) pear-shaped pod. A perennial, the plant dies back completely after blooming and reemerges the next year.

Compounds derived from milkweed are used in modern medicine to regulate heart contraction. Natives may have used it medicinally as a salve, for snakebites, measles, coughs, rheumatism, and to control swelling (Barbour et al.). Most commonly, the plant was used recreationally. The milky sap from the stem was heated until solid, then salmon fat or deer grease was added to produce a long-lasting chewing gum. In addition, the plant was collected in early winter for its fiber to create cordage for nets, cloth for aprons (Barbour et al.), and games (cat's cradle) (Strike). Its leaves, pods, stems, and roots may also have been eaten (Strike).

21. *Mountain mahogany* (*Cercocarpus betuloides* – Rosaceae) (2). This fast-growing large shrub/small tree grows in an open, branching shape to eight or ten feet and

tolerates clay and sandy soil. A graceful evergreen presence in the garden, mountain mahogany makes a splashy show in late summer – fall with its silver, feathery flowers and fruits. The shrub will build rich soil with its nitrogen-fixing roots and provides good erosion control and forage for wildlife (deer will feed on it). Natives obtained a red dye from its bark and roots

(Heizer and Elsasser). Its dense wood was preferred to make digging sticks to harvest worms, roots, tubers, and bulbs with a minimal disturbance of the soil (Edwards). Other implements made from the wood included spears, clubs, housing, harpoons, and bows (Heizer and Elsasser).



22. *Pallid manzanita* (*Arctostaphylos pallida* – *Ericaceae*) (3). California is the center for manzanita diversity in the world, with 50 to 70 species that range from low-growing groundcovers to small trees. *A. pallida* is rare species of manzanita that is endemic to the East Bay (grows nowhere else) and is endangered in the state of California. You can see it in pure and hybridized form only in the Berkeley-Oakland Hills, especially at Huckleberry Regional Preserve. (Another species of manzanita, *Arctostaphylos pajaorensis*, also appears in the back of the garden. This species with a bluish leaf is not native to the East Bay but is native to California.) All specimens in this garden were obtained at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park, which showcases



California's largest collection of manzanitas (100 of 135 taxa worldwide) and offers many of them for sale at their nursery.

Many are familiar with this shrub with its distinctive smooth red bark. It can form nearly undiluted, dense stands in harsh chaparral conditions, or mix with other members of this community, such as chamise. Its vertically oriented, leathery leaves angle away from direct sun and reduce water loss under intense sun exposure. Beautiful clusters of urn-shaped pinkish-white flowers bloom from December to early March, providing a winter treat for pollinators like hummingbirds that have few sources of nectar during this season. Later in the spring and summer the reddish

“little apples” (manzanita in Spanish) appear, relished by bears that once roamed the area (the





scientific name *arctostaphylos* means “bear grapes”), although the fruit is grainy and bitter.

Costanoans were fond of the raw fruits but more often

steeped them in cold water to produce a refreshing cider with a spicy, acid flavor. They also dried and stored them for winter consumption and sometimes crushed and cooked them to make bread or mush (Edwards). In addition to being a food source, the plant was used to cure bladder ailments (Bocek), and its wood was used for housing and many kinds of implements (Heizer and Elsasser). The Spanish used the green berries to make beverages and jelly.

23. *Pink-flowering currant* (*Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum* – Grossulariaceae)

(1). Growing to five feet, this early blooming shrub jumps out from its drab surroundings in winter to early spring with a striking display of pendulous pink blooms that appear on bare branches just beginning



to leaf out. These “flowers” are mostly made up of sepals (bud coverings) rather than flower petals. Later, berries ripening from red to blue provide food for birds and other wildlife. Found in canyons in the Coast Ranges, this currant likes shade or part shade and some water in inland gardens, though it is fairly

drought tolerant. If it receives adequate water, this deciduous shrub will leaf out before losing its old leaves, making it practically evergreen. Its textured, lobed leaves are wonderfully fragrant and reminiscent of salvias (sage plants). Natives used its delicate berries to make pemmican, a staple made with dried berries, pounded and mixed with meat and animal fat, and then formed into cakes to be eaten while traveling (Strike).

24. *Pitcher sage* (*Lepechinia calycina* – Lamiaceae) (2). Pitcher sage is part of the aromatic mint family which has provided us with familiar herbs used in cooking and perfumes – the various mints as well as sage, marjoram, lavender, thyme, and rosemary. Several members of the mint family appear in this garden. Often attractive to humans, the odoriferous mint family is also highly seductive to honeybees, although the scent may discourage some predators. No exception, the textured leaves of pitcher sage are wonderfully scented, like many other chaparral shrubs. As the lavender-tinged, tubular two-lipped blossoms give way to fruits, the sepals at the base of the flower inflate around the fruit, reminiscent of pitchers that the plant is named for. This sage grows into a large shrub of three to five feet in



height. The plant is a strong anti-oxidant with many medicinal uses. A strong brew made from its leaves was used as a traditional cure for fever, chills, headaches, and colds (Strike).

25. *Soap plant* (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum* – *Liliaceae*) (3). Soap plant grows on dry slopes, mesas, and pastureland west of the Sierra up to 5000 feet. Long wavy green leaves up to a foot long sprout fountain-like from the crown of the bulb. In the spring elegant flowers, white to purplish with green or deep purple veins, hover in the air, borne aloft by delicate branching stems. The flowers open in late afternoon, earning the plant the name “four-o’clock” in some areas. When the leaves dry up in late summer, only a patch of coarse fibers protruding from the crown of the bulb remain.

Soap plant takes its common name from one of its many uses by indigenous peoples (for which it was later also used by the Spanish and Anglos [Balls]). The fresh



bulbs were crushed in water to create soap and shampoo, or thrown into dammed streams to stupefy fish (though reportedly it does not harm frogs [Balls]). Overnight cooking in an earth oven would render the bulb edible; baking would also yield a kind of glue that was used to attach arrowheads to shafts or alternately, a substance that could be used as a poultice for skin sores. When mixed with charcoal, the baked bulb yielded a black substance good for tattooing (while fresh leaves would yield a green dye). The fibers surrounding the bulb were bound with cordage to make brushes for hair and for processing seeds and acorn meal in baskets. The glue from the bulb reinforced the handle end of the brush. Later settlers used the fibers to fill mattresses. Also eaten were the fresh leaves and bud stem, said to taste like asparagus (Edwards).

26. *Sticky monkey flower* (*Mimulus aurantiacus* – *Scrophulariaceae*) (2). Sticky monkey flower is a wide-ranging shrub that thrives especially along California’s central and northern coast, and is often seen in the company of California sage, coyote bush, and coffee berry. The small shrub boasts showy two-lipped, orange, tubular flowers that can bloom through the summer if watered. The lance-shaped leaves of the plant exude a sticky substance to reduce water



loss, like some other chaparral species; under continued water stress, leaves will drop off. After being pollinated, the flower will close up to prevent self-pollination (Keator 1995), stimulated to do so by the movement of the bee (sometimes this can be simulated with the touch of a finger). Natives made a concentrated brew from stems and leaves to treat kidney and bladder ailments (Strike, Bocek).

27. **Western redbud** (*Cercis occidentalis* – **Fabaceae**) (1). It is not known whether redbud grows native in the East Bay, or has made its way here through human introduction. Redbud is a large shrub/small tree that undergoes dramatic changes through the year – reminding us that there are indeed seasons in California. This plant grows to 14 feet and is tolerant of the clay soils found in the East Bay. Characteristic of chaparral and foothill woodland areas, the deciduous redbud is adorned by a cloak of striking magenta flowers in early spring, usually before leaves appear on its bare branches. In summer distinctive heart-shaped leaves appear, flowers dry up, and then, as fall approaches, leaves drop off and pendulous reddish purple seedpods develop on once-again bare branches.



The natives used this beautiful shrub to make baskets and dye. Shoots, both peeled or with bark intact, could be twined around thicker structural pieces in coiled baskets. As with other tree or shrub species used for basketry, like hazelnut, vine maple, and willow (Edwards), redbud was pruned or burned annually to encourage strong straight shoots for the following year (Strike). As pottery was not extensively used by the Costanoans, baskets served many purposes, such as traps for birds and fish, collection of seeds, acorn processing, and cooking (Edwards).



28. **Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium* – **Asteraceae**) (several). Yarrow is a perennial herb native to many plant communities in California below 13,000 feet. Growing to varying heights (depending on conditions), the herb possesses delicate fern-like leaves and forms a flattened cluster of small white flowers. The flowers hold their shape well for dried arrangements. Yarrow makes an excellent drought-tolerant groundcover, spreading easily through creeping rhizomes (roots); it can be invasive. Unless watered in summer, the plant will die back after flowering and resprout with the rains. Oils in the leaves produce a strong scent, and the leaves are used medicinally throughout the northern hemisphere (Keator 1990). California





natives used a concentrated brew made from the plant to treat stomachaches and cleanse sores. Heated leaves were applied to wounds to stop swelling, or placed in the mouth to relieve toothaches (Bocek).

29. *Yerba buena* (*Satureja douglasii* – *Lamiaceae*) (2). A good choice for a ground cover in a shaded situation, yerba buena benefits from the shade provided by the non-native tree on the south side of the garden. Thriving at the edges of forest, near the ocean, yerba buena is a low trailing plant that grows from six inches to two feet. Translated as “good herb,” yerba buena was once found throughout San Francisco, and gave the city its first name. The small scallop-edged leaves are wonderfully fragrant and yield a subtle mint tea. The plant’s tiny white tubular flowers emerge where leaves meet the stem. Local natives made a strong



brew from the plant to cure pinworms, or held it in the mouth for a toothache. Warmed leaves of the plant were also wrapped around the outer jaw as another toothache remedy (Bocek).



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