

## San Francisco Drought Tolerant Plants

San Francisco has a variety of soil types, weather (including wind and fog) and water sources. San Francisco plants evolved in plant communities associated with those varied soils, weather and water sources. San Francisco plant communities include dune, northern coastal dune scrub, oak woodland, chaparral, riparian/creekside, tidal/brackish marsh, fresh water marsh, salt water marsh and lakes/ponds.

Not all California native plants are drought tolerant. Plants that evolved in or near our riparian/creekside, tidal/brackish marsh, fresh water marsh, salt water marsh and lakes/ponds are not drought tolerant.

When native plants are drought tolerant, they grow best when watered regularly, at least weekly, for the first 2 years or two after they are planted. That's why it's advised that you plant smaller plants (1 gallon pots or 4 inch pots) because they are more likely to survive between watering periods while they grow their roots systems.

WUCOLS (water use classification of landscape species ) is a University of California extension database of native and non-native/introduced plants need for water across the state of California. If your water district funds replacement of current plants or pavement with drought tolerant plants, then your water district will require that you select WUCOLS Very Low or WUCOLS Low plants.

[https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant\\_Search/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant_Search/)

WUCOLS Very Low and Low plants are easier to establish in new gardens with less watering after planting. These plants exist in dune, northern coastal dune scrub, oak woodland and chaparral plant communities. Only the easiest lowest water native plants are on this drought tolerant plant list below.

This list is a combination of plants rated Very Low from the UC extension WUCOLS website, plus recommendations from Calscape for Very Low water use, plus plants recommended as easy to grow by a variety of local gardeners

### **Ground covers**

Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica* 'Canyon Gray', 'Montara' ground cover selections) - full sun, gray foliage, WUCOLS Low

Seascale (*Atriplex leucophylla*) - full sun, yellow flowers, WUCOLS Very Low

Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis* 'Twin Peaks No. 2', 'San Bruno Lady', ground cover selection) - full sun, WUCOLS Low

Beach Evening Primrose (*Camissoniopsis cheiranthifolia*, *cheiranthifolia* ssp. *cheiranthifolia*, *cheiranthifolia* ssp. *suffruticosa*, *micrantha*) - full sun, yellow flowers, WUCOLS Low

Yerba Buena (*Clinopodium douglasii*) - pt shade/shade, flat x 3, tiny white flowers, edible leaves, WUCOLS Low

Sand Pygmy Stonecrop (*Crassula connata*) succulent - sun, WUCOLS Low

Bluff Lettuce (*Dudleya farinosa*) succulent - sun, yellow flowers, WUCOLS Low

Seaside Daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*) - sun/pt shade, pink flowers, WUCOLS Low

Gumweed (*Grindelia stricta* var. *platyphylla*) - yellow flowers (long bloom June-Sept), WUCOLS Low

San Bruno Mountain Golden Aster (*Heterotheca sessiliflora* ssp. *bolanderi* 'San Bruno Mountain') - ground cover, sun, yellow flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Douglas Iris (*Iris douglasiana*) - pt shade/shade, purple flowers (other colors available), WUCOLS Low  
Beach Knotweed (*Polygonum paronychia*) - ground cover, all sun/shade, sand only, WUCOLS Unknown  
Yellow Stonecrop (*Sedum spathulifolium*) succulent - sun, yellow flowers, WUCOLS Low  
California Aster (*Symphotrichum chilense* and *subspicatum*) - sun/pt shade, lavender flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Dune Tansy (*Tanacetum bipinnatum*) - yellow flowers (long bloom July-Oct), good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Low  
Miner's Lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*) - ground cover, annual, summer deciduous, shade, no WUCOLS available but needs about 8 inches of rain to sprout, flower and go to seed, grows well in Los Angeles, as well as in San Francisco

### **Shorter flowers**

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) - any sun/shade, white flowers, WUCOLS Low  
Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*) - white flowers, WUCOLS Low  
Dune Sagewort (*Artemisia pycnocephala*) - full sun, 2x3, gray foliage, WUCOLS Low  
Quail Bush (*Atriplex lentiformis*) good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Unknown  
California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) - full sun, 2x3, orange-red flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Mock Heather (*Ericameria ericoides*) - yellow flowers, good drainage/sand, (long bloom Sept-Nov), WUCOLS Low  
Coast Buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*) - cream flowers, good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Low  
Nude Buckwheat (*Eriogonum nudum*, *nudum* var. *nudum*) - cream flowers, good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Low  
California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) - orange flowers annual, WUCOLS Very Low  
Checker Lily (*Fritillaria affinis*) - yellow and orange flowers bulb, WUCOLS Very Low  
Gumweed (*Grindelia stricta*, *stricta* var. *angustifolia*) - yellow flowers (long bloom June-Sept) , WUCOLS Low  
Coyote Mint (*Monardella villosa*, *villosa franciscana*) - purple flowers, WUCOLS Very Low  
Phacelia (*Phacelia californica*) - purple flowers, WUCOLS Low  
Cudweed (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) - white flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Bee Plant (*Scrophularia californica*) - tiny red flowers, WUCOLS Low

### **Shrubs**

California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) - full sun, 3x4, gray foliage, WUCOLS Low  
Mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*) - sun/pt shade, 8x4, gray foliage, WUCOLS Low  
Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) - full sun, 10x12, yellow flowers, (long bloom Sept-Jan), evergreen, WUCOLS Low  
Golden Yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*, *lanatum* and *staechadifolium*) - sun/pt shade, 5x5, yellow flowers, evergreen, good drainage/sand, (long bloom Feb-Aug) WUCOLS Low  
Coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*) - any sun/shade, 15x15, evergreen, shearable, WUCOLS Low  
Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*) - shade/pt shade, 16x15, white scented flowers, good drainage/sand (long bloom May-July), WUCOLS Low

White Pitcher Sage (*Lepechinia calycina*) - sun/pt shade, 5x5, white flowers, evergreen, good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Low

Coastal Bush Lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*) - full sun, 7x4, yellow flowers, evergreen, WUCOLS Low

Dune Bush Lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*) - full sun, 7x3, purple flowers, evergreen, good drainage/sand, WUCOLS Unknown

Malva Rosa (*Malva assurgentiflora*) - any sun/shade, 13x10, dark pink flowers, evergreen, (long bloom Feb-July) WUCOLS Low

Bush Mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus, fremontii*) - full sun, 16x10, pink flowers, evergreen, WUCOLS Very Low (not SF native) (long bloom June - Sept)

Chaparral Currant (*Ribes malvaceum, menziesii, menziesii var. menziesii*) - sun/pt shade, 8x5, pink flowers, good drainage/sand, (long bloom Dec-March) WUCOLS Very Low

Sage (*Salvia Celestial Blue, brandegei*) - full sun, 5x4, blue flowers, WUCOLS Low

### **Grasses**

Giant Wildrye (*Elymus condensatus*) sun, 3x2, WUCOLS Low

Blue bunchgrass (*Festuca idahoensis*) sun, 2'x0.5', WUCOLS Very Low

Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) - sun/part shade, low growing bunch grass, can be mowed 1'x2', WUCOLS Low

Melica (*Melica imperfecta*) - sun, 4'x1', summer deciduous, WUCOLS Very Low

Purple Needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra, cernu, lepida*) - sun, 3'x1.5', WUCOLS Very Low

### **Vines**

Morning Glory vine (*Calystegia purpurata, purpurata ssp. purpurata, soldanella*) - showy pink and white flowers, WUCOLS Low

Clematis (*Clematis lasiantha*) WUCOLS Low, showy white flowers, deciduous

Pacific Pea (*Lathyrus vestitus*) - pink flowers, (long bloom March-May)

WUCOLS Unknown, probably low

Pink Honeysuckle (*Lonicera hispidula*) showy pink flowers, deciduous, WUCOLS Low

### **Trees**

Coast Silk Tassel (*Garrya elliptica*) - sun/part shade, fog loving, 16 ft evergreen tree, showy tassels on males, WUCOLS Low

Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) - full sun, evergreen, showy red berries, white flowers, 30 ft evergreen tree, WUCOLS Low

Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) - full sun, 70 ft evergreen tree, keystone oak woodland tree, best grown from an acorn, acorns available from large oak trees in October, WUCOLS Very Low

Blue Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea*) - all sun/shade, edible blue berries, white flowers, 30 ft deciduous tree, WUCOLS Medium, behaves like WUCOLS Low

**Containers, pots and window boxes** - all these plants do well in the ground as well as in containers

One Leaf Onion (*Allium unifolium*) - sun, pink flowers bulb, WUCOLS Very Low

Soap Plant (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum, pomeridianum var. pomeridianum, pomeridianum var. divaricatum*) bulb, sun/pt shade, white flowers, WUCOLS Very Low

Miner's Lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*) - shade/pt shade, ground cover, annual, edible, summer deciduous, shade, WUCOLS Unknown

Farewell-to-Spring (*Clarkia unguiculata*) - sun/part shade, multiple colors include pink, purple, red, melon and cream, WUCOLS Unknown  
Blue Dicks (*Dipterostemon/Dichelostemma capitatum, capitatum ssp. capitatum, congestum*) - sun, blue-purple flowers bulb, WUCOLS Very Low  
Blue Field Gilia (*Gilia capitata, capitata ssp. chamissonis*) - sun, purple-blue flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Goldfields (*Lasthenia californica, glabrata, glabrata ssp. glabrata, minor*) - sun, yellow flowers annual (long bloom Feb-June), WUCOLS Unknown  
Lupine (*Lupinus bicolor, nanus*) - sun, blue or purple flowers depending on species (long bloom Apr-July), WUCOLS Unknown  
Baby Blue Eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*) - sun/pt shade, blue flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Phacelia (*Phacelia ciliata, distans, douglasii, malvifolia, nemoralis, ramosissima*) - sun, purple flowers, WUCOLS Unknown  
Dotseed Plantain (*Plantago erecta*) - sun, WUCOLS Unknown  
Chia sage (*Salvia columbariae*) - sun, blue flowers, edible leaves, flowers and seeds, WUCOLS Unknown  
Blue Eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) - sun/pt shade, purple-blue flowers bulb, WUCOLS Very Low  
Ithuriel's spear (*Triteleia laxa*) - sun/pt shade, purple flowers bulb, WUCOLS Very Low

Calscape is CNPS's plant selection tool with California native plant pictures, plant size at full growth, soil types, sun/shade needs, water needs, butterfly and moth caterpillar value (chewed leaves are the sign of happily fed butterfly caterpillars and are good!) and nurseries with plant availability.

<https://www.calscape.org/>

Calflora has detailed bloom periods for California native plants

<https://www.calflora.org/>

Las Pilitas Nursery has details about growing drought tolerant plants

<https://www.laspilitas.com/garden/drought.html>

California drought monitors and drought visualization

<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

<https://www.drought.gov/states/california>

<https://www.californiadrought.org/drought/current-conditions/>

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/>

Check your local water district's website. Your local water district may provide incentives to remove your lawn and replace your lawn and/or paved areas with WUCOLS Very Low and WUCOLS Low plants.

WUCOLS (water use classification of landscape species) is a University of California extension database of native and non-native/introduced plants need for water across the state of California.

[https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant\\_Search/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant_Search/)

California native plant leaves feed butterfly caterpillars. Please plant our native plants, avoiding introduced plants and invasive plants, to feed beautiful local butterflies. Chewed leaves are the

sign of happily fed butterfly caterpillars and are good! More information about these lovely plants and butterflies is available on butterfly plant lists in CNPS-YB's biodiversity resources website and on Calscape.

<http://cnps-yerbabuena.org/biodiversity/biodiversity-resources/>

<https://www.calscape.org/>

Edible plant information is from Daniel Moerman's Native American Ethnobotany book and database which detail how Indian tribes used native plants for food, medicine and tools.

<http://naeb.brit.org/>

California Native Plant Society - Yerba Buena (San Francisco) chapter offers free plant lists, free hikes and free speaker series

<http://cnps-yerbabuena.org/>

<http://cnps-yerbabuena.org/biodiversity/biodiversity-resources/>