



Getting Started with Native Plants

Radhika Thekkath, California Native Plant Society, Santa Clara Valley Chapter. March 3, 2021



Today's Agenda

- Benefits of native plants
- Debunking some myths
- A sample of native plants for the garden
- Getting started: planting, watering, care
- A native garden through the seasons in pictures
- Resources



Benefits of Native Plants



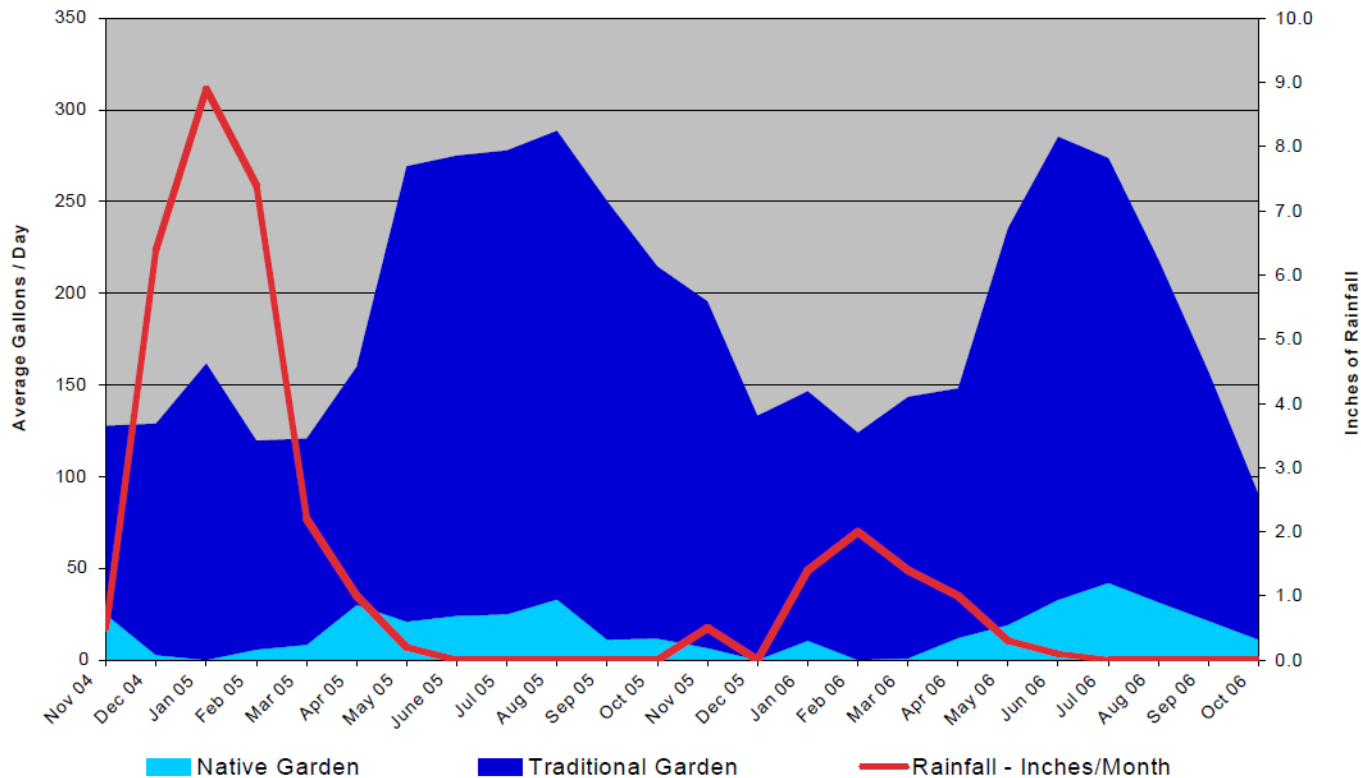
Benefits of Native Plants

- Economics: choose low water varieties, low maintenance, no inputs, water district rebates
- Ecological boost: local bees, butterflies, moths, insects, and birds benefit
- Beautiful flowers, form and textures

Top to bottom: California poppy, globe gilia, ruby chalice clarkia, blazing star

Water Requirements

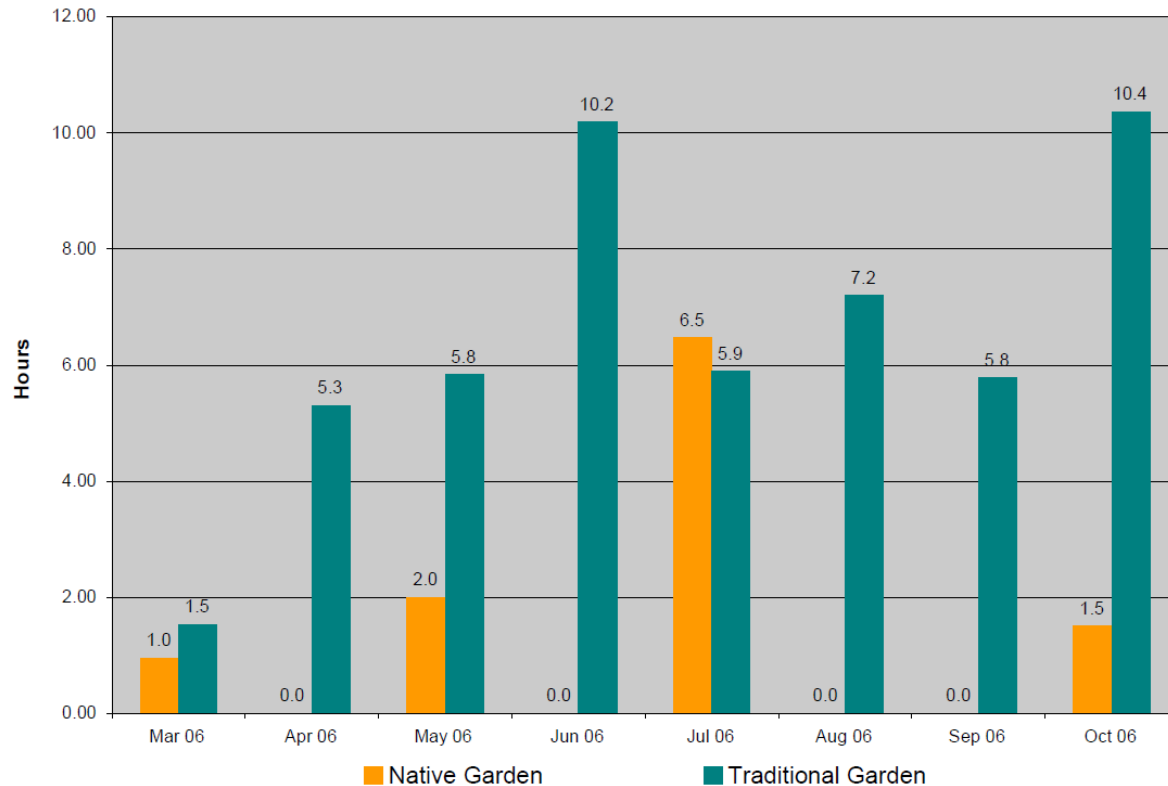
Figure 1 - Water



A native garden uses 1/7 to 1/10 of the water of a traditional garden

Maintenance Requirements

Figure 2 - Labor



A native garden needs 1/5 the labor of a traditional garden.

Eliminate Inputs—No Chemicals Needed

No pesticides
No herbicides
No fertilizers



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Save money
Save the Bay



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Create organic compost at home
with leaves and kitchen waster



Landscape Replacement Rebates

Check your local water district and city for rebates:

- lawn replacement
- sprinkler head replacement
- watering timers

Habitat Value

- Plants are at the bottom of the food chain--fauna depend on very specific types of flora from coevolution



- Doug Tallamy's talk (CNPS-SCV YouTube channel from Nov 2020) provides a deeper understanding of the ecological issue as it pertains to entomology and birds



Pale Tiger Swallowtail on a narrow-leaved milkweed, Mt Hamilton Range



Myths

About Native Plants



Myth #1:

All California Native Plants Tolerate Drought

- There are over 5,000 species of native plants, and not all are alike—so choose well for your garden
- Some require less water, some require a lot of it
- Some require sun, some require shade
- Some require slopes and lean soil, some do well in clay, or sand, or rich soil

All young plants, native or not, require “regular” water until fully established



Myth #2:

Native plants are fire-prone

- All plants, native or not, burn when heated to a high temperature
- All plants, native or not, are dehydrated during California summers and are at risk
- Some non-native plants like eucalyptus and invasive annual grasses are also fire hazards
- Some native plants have high oil content
- Homeowners should follow guidelines for fire-safe landscaping using zones around homes



Myth #3: Native Gardens are not Pretty

- Early settlers wrote glowing accounts of California flowers and plants
- Botanists started visiting California from the 1700s, documenting its flora and taking seeds back to Europe
- Some California plants (ceanothus, manzanita, poppy, and clarkia) have been grown in European gardens for over two centuries





Getting Started

With Native Plants



Native Plant Samples with Planting & Care Guide

- Annuals / wildflowers
- Perennials / bulbs
- Shrubs
- Trees



Annuals

- California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)
- Blue Field Gilia (*Gilia capitata*)
- Ruby Chalice Clarkia or Farewell to Spring (*Clarkia rubicunda*)
- Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii*)
- Elegant Clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*)

California Poppy

(*Eschscholzia californica* – esh-SHOLE-tzee-a)



Blue Field Gilia

(*Gilia capitata* - JEE-lee-a ka-pi-TAY-ta)





Ruby Chalice Clarkia

(*Clarkia rubicunda* - KLAR-kee-a ru-bi-CUN-da)

Meadowfoam

(*Limnanthus douglasii sulfurea* – lim-NAN-thus dug-las-ee-i sul-FUR-ee-a)





Elegant Clarkia

(*Clarkia unguiculata* - KLAR-kee-a un-gwik-yoo-LAY-ta)

How to Plant Wildflowers/ Annuals

In situ (in place)



Germinate & transplant





Planting Seeds In Situ

1. Weed bed thoroughly.
2. Remove big organic matter like leaves or mulch.
3. Scrape soil lightly (no need to turn it over).
4. Broadcast seed over bed.
5. Throw a little dirt on top to cover seeds
6. Tamp lightly to establish seed-soil contact.
7. Water well.

Best time to plant: fall after first rains



Germinate Seeds & Transplant

1. Press seeds into divided seedling trays or 4" pots.
2. Water every other day until roots reach bottom of pot.
3. Transplant to desired spot in garden.
4. Plants will need regular water after transplanting (from rain or irrigation).

Can be attempted at any time of year.



Wildflower Care

- Water regularly
(including winter when there is no rain)
- Weed regularly
(native wildflowers can't compete with
invasive annual species)
- Guard against snails and slugs
(beer, diatomaceous earth, Sluggo, hand-
picking early in the season controls
population size)



Perennials

- One Leaf Onion (*Allium unifolium*)
- Harvest Brodiaea (*Brodiaea elegans*)
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- Douglas Iris (*Iris douglasiana*)
- California Aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*)
- California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum* ssp. *Latifolium*)

One Leaf Onion

(Allium unifolium)



Harvest Brodiaea

(*Brodiaea elegans*)



Common Yarrow

(*Achillea millefolium*)



Douglas Iris

(*Iris douglasiana*)





California Aster

(Symphyotrichum chilense)

California Fuchsia

(Epilobium canum ssp. latifolium)





How to Plant Nursery Stock

- Dig a hole 1' wider than the pot diameter and as deep as the soil in the pot
- Remove plant from pot and place it in the hole; plant's soil level must be 1" above the surrounding soil
- Straighten out or prune potbound roots
- Fill the hole with a mix of the original soil and compost/humus, and tamp lightly
- Water deeply and mulch around the base (do not allow mulch to touch the stems)



Watering Rule of Thumb

- 1st year: once a week
- 2nd year: once in 2 weeks
- 3rd year: once in 3 weeks
- 4th year and later: once a month

All young plants, native or not, need regular water until established



Shrubs

- Bees Bliss Sage (*Salvia x Bees Bliss*)
- Coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*)
- Pink-Flowering Currant
(*Ribes sanguineum var. glutinosum*)
- Sticky Monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*)
- California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*)
- Coyote Bush or Brush (*Baccharis pilularis*)



Bees Bliss Sage

(*Salvia x Bees Bliss*)



Coffeeberry

(*Frangula californica*)

Pink-Flowering Currant

(*Ribes sanguineum* ar *glutinosum*)





Sticky Monkeyflower

(*Mimulus aurantiacus* - a
MIM-yoo-lus aw-ran-TIE-a-kus)

California Buckwheat

(Eriogonum fasciculatum)



Coyote Brush

(*Baccharis pilularis*)





Trees

- Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)
- Holly-leaved Cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*)
- Blue Elderberry
(*Sambucus nigra* spp. *caerulea*)
- Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)
- Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*)



Toyon

(*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

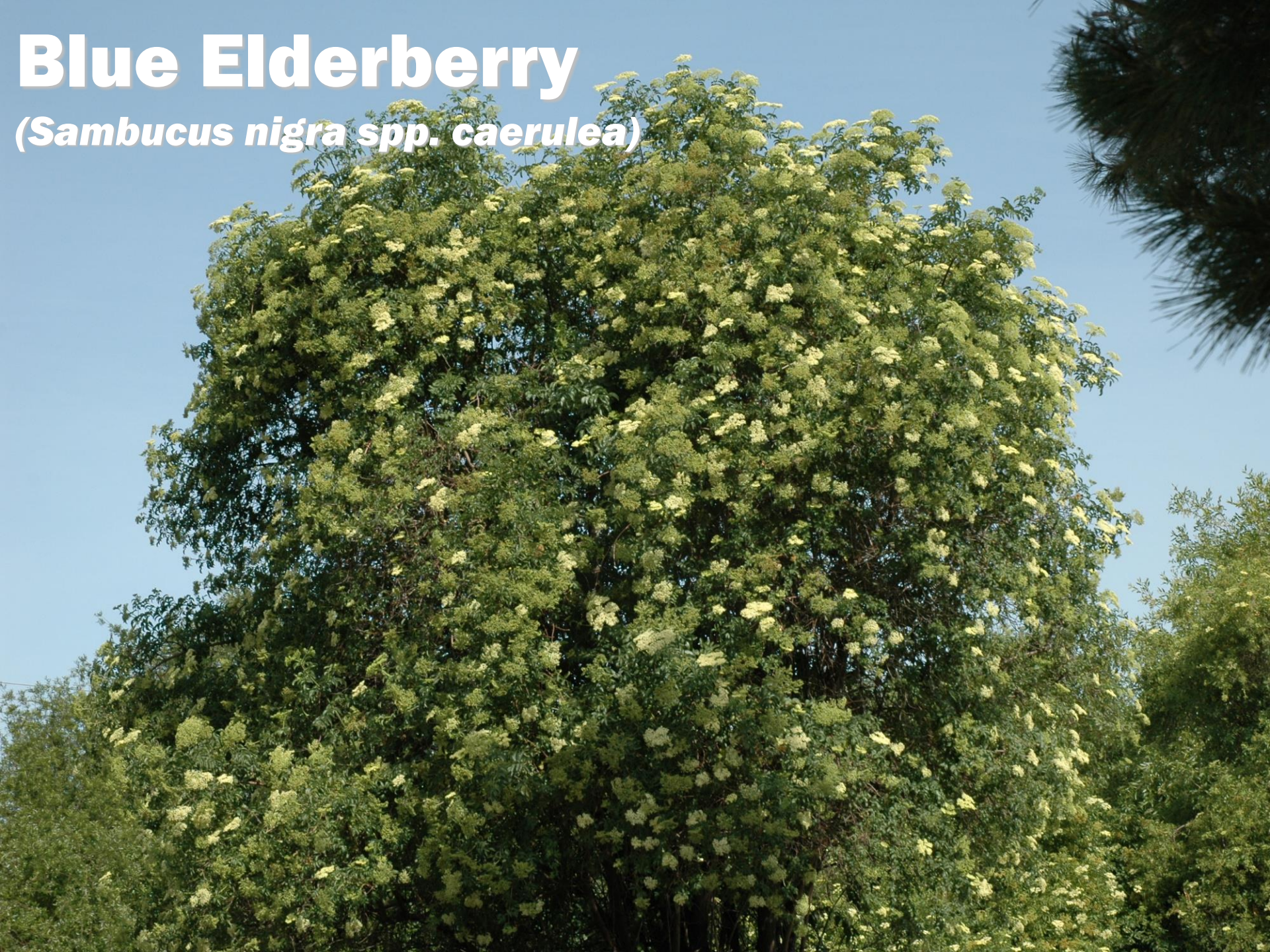
Holly-leaved Cherry

(Prunus ilicifolia)



Blue Elderberry

(*Sambucus nigra* spp. *caerulea*)



Coast Live Oak

(*Quercus agrifolia*)





Valley Oak

(*Quercus lobata*)



Through the Seasons

in Native Plant Gardens



Native Garden Maintenance

- Late Fall: cut back perennials
- Late Fall-Winter: planting
- Winter-Spring: weeding, mulching
- Late Spring: light pruning
- Early Summer: tidy up annuals
- Summer: some watering
- Summer: relax, read a book, plan for fall

February

(Yarrow, Lessingia)



March

2947

(Poppy, Manzanita, Ceanothus)





April

(Lilac Verbena, Poppy)

April

(Cream Cups, Poppy)



May

(Penstemon, Frying Pans, Cream Cups)



May

(Poppy, Red Ribbons)



May

(Penstemon, Poppy, Checkerbloom, Monkeyflower)





June

(Ruby Chalice Clarkia)



July

(Coyote Brush, Manzanita, Poppy, Pine Bluegrass)



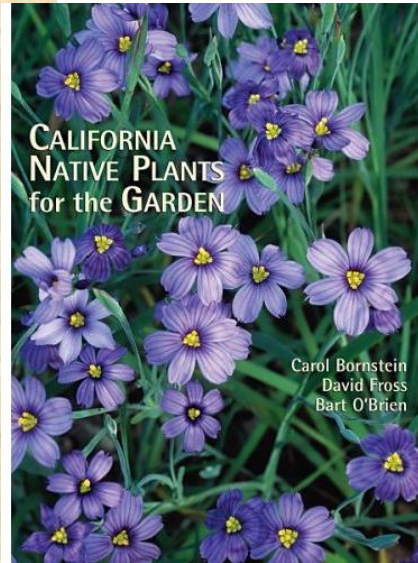
August

(Manzanita, Pine Bluegrass, Valley Oak, Coyote Brush)

September

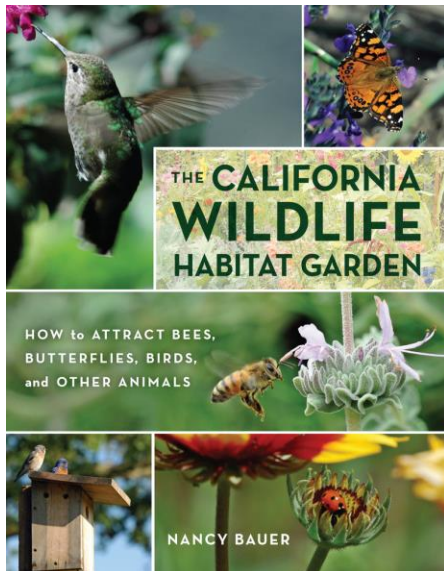
(*Epilobium* [*Zauschneria*], California Melic)





Resources

- Native Plants for the Garden,
Bornstein, Fross, O'Brien
- The California Wildlife
Habitat Garden,
Nancy Bauer
- Going Native Garden Tour:
www.gngt.org
- Gardening With Natives resources:
www.cnps-scv.org/gardening-resources
- California Native Plant Society:
www.cnps-scv.org



The End

