

March 8, 2017



Redbud and Ceanothus: Native Superstars!
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Two exceptional native shrubs that you might want to consider adding to your yard are the Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) and/or a “California Lilac” or “wild lilac” which are common names for *Ceanothus* (species varies.... there are many to choose from!).

Both of these shrubs are native to our county, need no summer water once established (after the first several years), and have beautiful flowers. They also are great at attracting and supporting native pollinators - truly these are superstars!

Be careful not to confuse the Western Redbud with its very different cousin, the Eastern Redbud. The Eastern Redbud is a tall tree and is, as its name suggests, native to the East Coast. The Western Redbud by contrast is smaller, perfectly adapted to our County, and is very attractive to our local pollinators and other insects. It can be left as a multi-branched tall shrub, or pruned to be a single trunked small tree.

The Redbud shines especially in the spring, covered with a several weeks display of richly colored magenta flowers. Native bees of many shapes and sizes flock to its flowers, as do our native butterflies. The shrub is simply stunning and is a wonderful spring focal point. You’ve probably seen them in March or so as you travel Highway 50 through Cameron Park towards Sacramento.

As beautiful as the Western Redbud is in spring, it has interest in other seasons as well. In the summer it is covered with green leaves even with no supplemental water; in fall interesting hanging seedpods appear; and in winter its red stems are a lovely contrast to gray days. The Western Redbud even shows up on many fire-resilient lists, an added benefit for foothill gardens.

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The second native shrub you should surely consider is a *Ceanothus*, pronounced "See-uh-noth-us." I say 'a' *Ceanothus* because there are so many different species! Indeed there are over 80 species/varieties in California, with 9 being native to our own county. They range from groundcovers to tall 6 foot shrubs. Many cultivars of these natives have also been developed for use in gardens.

Ceanothus flowers range from deep, striking blue to white or cream-colored. *Ceanothus integerrimus* is native to the Placerville area and higher, and has a loose, open form with gentle white flower clusters. In contrast, the *Ceanothus Dark Star* is a cultivar of a native that can take the shape of an erect small tree, covered in deep blue flowers from about now through March and maybe beyond. Both need no supplemental water in the summer after the first few years and, like Redbud, attract many beneficial insects.

To see which *Ceanothus* might be native to your own particular location, type your physical address into the www.calscape.cnps.org website and look through the shrubs that come up. Both the *Ceanothus Dark Star* and the Western Redbud are growing well in the native garden at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden (SDG) behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado campus. You can see them "in action" when the demonstration garden opens again to the public on April 1.

These popular native shrubs can often be found at many nurseries. The California Native Plant Society is hosting a Plant Sale at 9:00 a.m. on April 1 at the Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Drive, Placerville. A large variety of native shrubs will also be found at the annual Master Gardener Plant Sale on April 29 at the SDG.

Consider joining me for a tour of the SDG Native Garden and its many plants for foothill gardens on Saturday, March 18, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. I will introduce the plants there, the methods of establishment, unique ways of watering, added wildflowers, concepts of native garden design, and we'll have time for discussions. The address is 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville.

For those especially interested in vegetable gardening, the SDG is hosting a "Saturday with Barry" on Saturday March 11. Master Gardener Barry Wold will explain various planting, thinning, and pest control needs for the success of your home garden. The class time will be 10:00 a.m. to noon and you'll have an opportunity to visit the demonstration garden before our spring opening.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530)621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.