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Going Native!

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Why should we care about California native plants? Why plant natives when we live in a region that will support plants from around the world with abundant, sometimes spectacular, choices for our gardens here in El Dorado County?

Habitats have been diminished or destroyed as people have continued to move into the wild parts of our county. As gardeners, it's just a good idea for us to set aside an area of native plants for the many creatures that have come to depend on them. If you've never watched the buzz of activity surrounding yarrow in full bloom, you have missed the myriad insects that feed on the flowers. As they feed on the plants, they help pollinate them. Native bees, butterflies and their caterpillars, and the critters that feed on them, have developed close relationships with native plants living here in California. Not only that, but once established, there are many native plants that need very little water even during our hottest weather. Bonus: many of them have evolved ways of discouraging deer – fragrant or poisonous blooms, and/or non-tasty foliage.

But just because a plant is a "California native," doesn't mean that it is the right plant for your garden. The many plants of our coastal areas may not grow successfully here, as would the indigenous plants of the Sierra Nevada foothills. The classic example is the coastal redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, whose natural range is just 30 miles inland from the coast with its foggy mornings and higher rainfall.

Once you decide to try "going native," you may not be sure what to get or where to go for these plants? Check out the Sherwood Demonstration Garden in Placerville where Master Gardeners have created sixteen different gardens, including one focusing on natives. This offers you a chance to see plants full size, labeled with their common and botanical names, and volunteer docents are on site to answer questions you might have. Go to [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu) > demonstration garden for more information. Master Gardener Alice Cantelow will be leading a Native Gardens Class/Tour on September 29, from 9 a.m. to noon, so come with questions!

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The California Native Plant Society has a science-based website at [calscape.org](http://calscape.org) that is helpful as well. Type in your zip code and it returns native plants that will do well in your area, in categories such as trees, shrubs, grasses, perennials, shade, sun, etc. It has excellent photos and descriptions including drought tolerance, size at maturity and requirements for optimal growth, lists of companion plants, and sources for obtaining the plants. They will need water during the hottest times of the year during the first year, less the second, and some may not any at all by the third year - depending on the plant.

So, let's plan on "Going Native!"

Master Gardener Mike Pavlick will lead a class on "Gardening for Small Spaces" where he will cover site location, design, raised bed options, container gardening, and other methods that will allow anyone to have a vegetable garden in a small setting. This free class will be at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park, on Wednesday, August 8, 9:00 a.m. to noon.

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](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind the Folsom Lake College-El Dorado Center. Admission is free, on-campus parking is \$2. We're open 9:00 a.m. to noon, Fridays and Saturdays.

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](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news). You can also find us on Facebook.