Add Native Plants – Even a Few Matter.

Native plants have evolved with the bees and other insects that have lived in and among them so they should form the foundation of your garden plans. Plant them in sweeps or patches at least 1.5 meters by 1.5 meters – this makes a larger, easier target for pollinators and makes visiting worth their while. It will also make your garden look great, too.

Buckwheats are great for pollinators and they come in a range of shapes from medium to large-sized shrubs like Saint Catherine’s lace (Eriogonum giganteum) or low groundcovers like Warriner Lytle California buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum ‘Warriner Lytle’). Sages (Salvia spp.), manzanitas (Arctostaphylos spp.), and California lilac (Ceanothus spp.) are also stars in this category.

Remove Invasive Plants.

Not all non-natives are invasive. However, it’s important to know which ones are – and avoid them. Invasive plants outcompete other species and make habitat inhospitable, causing damage to your local ecosystem.

Some invasive plants look beautiful but don’t be fooled. Once established invasives are challenging to remove and can unintentionally make their way far beyond your garden boundaries. For instance, instead of planting ivy (Hedera spp.) or periwinkle (Vinca major), consider an evergreen groundcover like Catalina currant (Ribes viburnifolium) which does well in the shade.
Keep Blooming.

Cover the seasons with flowers – make sure you always have at least one thing blooming so the flowers can feed insects, birds, and animals all year long.

With a little water, some of our California natives are strong bloomers for much of the year. Two that just don’t seem to stop are Gran Canon Baja bush snapdragon (*Gambelia juncea* ‘Gran canon’) and De La Mina verbena (*Verbena lilacina* ‘De La Mina’).

Leave the Leaves.

Fallen leaves not only return nutrients to the soil but are also an important part of a garden ecosystem. Beneficial insects and other critters use them as food and habitat which creates the base of your food web for other life such as lizards and birds.

Oaks are an example of a native tree that provides tremendous value when it comes to biodiversity. Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) leaves make great mulch for trees and shrubs.

Partner with Your Allies.

Native plants help promote the species that control pests like aphids and whiteflies. Lady beetles, hover flies, and lacewings are just a few of the many beneficial insects that police your garden and help to maintain order. The nectar and pollen of your flowering natives give energy to these natural enemies while also supporting pollinators.

California coffeetree (*Frangula californica*) and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) are two great options of “insectary” plants which means they attract, feed, and shelter beneficial parasites.