

Lawns to Habitat with California Native Plants



Conejo Valley Audubon Society

www.conejovalleyaudubon.org

Concept: Provide New Bird Habitat One Yard at a Time



CVAS: Lawns to Habitat in a Nutshell

- 2013: Dee Lyons proposed sponsoring a contest to the CVAS board
 - Concept: Develop Lawns-to-Habitat demonstration yards
 - Provide plants and volunteer labor to help
- We whole-heartedly approved and funded the concept
 - First winners were the Brian and Amy Stark in 2013
 - Scott Trautman was the 2014 winner with Tricia Munro as designer and \$300 worth of plants
 - In addition 40 applicants received \$100 plant credit at Matilija Nursery
 - 25 applicants received a one hour consult with our landscape designer, Tricia Munro
 - We had about 100 people contact us during 2013-2014 efforts
- The 2015 water rebate program really kick-started folks interest
 - We have been promoting CA Native Plants at Earth Day, Arbor Day, and in our speaking engagements to local libraries and other groups
- In 2015, we received a grant of \$2,000 from National Audubon
 - Being used to convert 3 lawns to habitat (emphasis on Hummingbird habitat)
- CVAS's big new project is in the planning stages for the changeover to California Native Plants at Heritage Park, Thousand Oaks
 - Start 2015 and finish 2016

CVAS Sponsored Conversions



Public Out Reach

- We promote CA Native Plants everywhere we go
 - Earth Day
 - Arbor Day
 - Bird Fest
 - Speaking engagements to local libraries and other groups

SAVE WATER

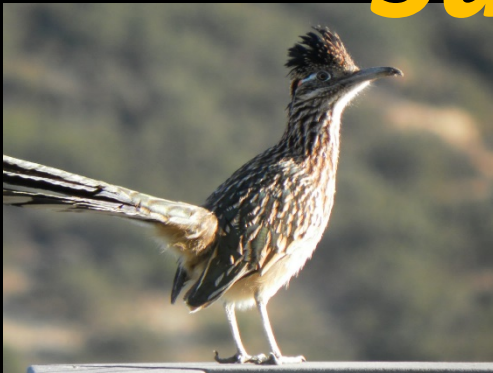




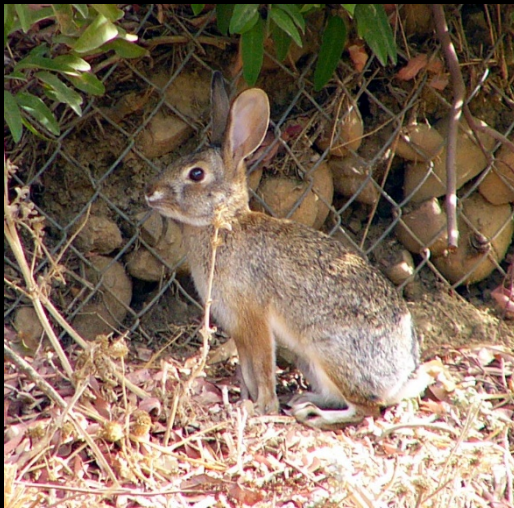
LOWER MAINTENANCE

INVITE WILDLIFE





*Support your local
Wildlife*



Conejo Valley Audubon Society

- Who?
 - CVAS is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society
 - Our group is actively involved in promoting the conservation and enjoyment of all natural habitats, wildlife, and plants with a special emphasis on birds
 - Our members participate in weekly bird walks, monthly presentations and sponsor educational and conservation projects throughout Ventura County
 - The past few years, Dee Lyon, our conservation chair, has been leading our efforts to educate the community on the benefits of changing lawns to native habitats

Our Thirsty Urban Habitats

- Why change?
 - SoCal Climate = Low Rainfall (~10-13 inches in “normal” years)
 - Much less during droughts
 - Droughts occur regularly throughout the history of the SW US
 - Sometimes for only a few years
 - Sometimes for decades!
 - Need to use water wisely even in the “normal” years
 - Most plants we use in our yards are non-native, thirsty imports
 - Lawns are one of the worst offenders in terms of water use and lack of productive habitat for other fauna

Productive Habitats

- What do we change to?
 - Local Southern California Native Habitats
 - Oak Woodlands and Chaparral
 - Coastal Sage Scrub
 - Native plants are adapted to our California climate
 - They are tough!!
 - Have to be to survive: fires, draught, foraging animals
 - They are also very attractive to native animals
 - They create a natural habitat for native birds, animals, and insects
 - Food, shelter, and nesting sites
 - Can also be used to create very attractive native gardens for us!

Municipal Outreach

- Dee Lyon contacted by city employee she knows
 - Removing lawn from Heritage Park in Thousand Oaks, CA
 - Would CVAS like to help plant it with Natives?
- Board approved and funded effort ~\$3K
 - CVAS provides: Design, signage, native plants, volunteers for planting
 - City provides: Removal of non-natives, hardscape changes, boulders, mulch and required labor and maintenance

Heritage Park Landscape Proposal – Designed by the Conejo Valley Aububon Society



KEY:  - Over 10 feet tall  - Between 3-10 feet tall  - Under 3 feet tall

- AB - Ashy-leaved Buckwheat (3-6' tall X 3-10' across)
- A - Indian Mallow (3-5'tall x 3-5'across)
- CB - Coyote Brush (3-8'tall x 8' across)
- CC - Ceonothus "centennial"(8-12"tall x 4-5'across)
- CO - Ceonothus "Concho" (6'tall x 6'across)
- D - Deergrass, new plants
- DL - Deergrass, old plants, leave in place
- DU - *Dudleya caespitosa* "Frank Reinelt" (6-9"tall x 12" or more across)
- E - Saffron Buckwheat (1-2'tall x 2-3'across)
- FD - Fairy Duster (1-3' tall x 3-4'across)
- GF - Island Snapdragon "Firecracker"(2-3'tall x 3'across)
- GU - Island Snapdragon (upright 3-4'tall x 5-8'across)
- H - Island Alum Root (2-3' tall x 2'across)
- J - *Juncus patens* (1-2'tall x 2' across clump)

- MC - Manzanita "Carmel Sur" (1-2'tall X 6' across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MD - Mananita "John Dourley"(4'tall x 6'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MP - Manzanita "Pacific Mist" (2'tall x 6'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MS - Manzanita "Sunset" (5-8'tall x 8'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- PP - Pigeon Point-Coyote Brush (2' tall x 8'across)
- R - Redberry (3-8'tall x 8'across)
- RH - Lemonade Berry (4-20' tall x 4-20'across). May substitute Sugarbush
- T - Toyon (8-15' tall x 8-15' across)
- W - Desert Willow "Burgundy Lace" (12-20'tall x 12-20'across)
- Z - California Fuchsia "Hurricane Point" (1-2'tall x 2-4' across) or equivalent variety
- Q - Valley Oak (40 feet in height and width in 25 years.)

Heritage Park:

I. Scope of Work

A. Conejo Valley Audubon Society (CVAS) will create an attractive bird and butterfly-friendly garden at Heritage Park by replacing turf and non-native plants with native plants.

i. CVAS will provide a landscaping plan with map and proposed plants.

a. TO City will either approve or negotiate changes to the plant palette.

ii. TO City will tear out turf and unwanted non-native plants including grasses

a. Under oak & sycamore canopy - leave Deergrasses and hand remove society garlic, cotoneaster, and asparagus fern. (The patch of ferns in NE corner okay to keep. If it is removed, CVAS will

relandscape with 'Centennial' Ceonothus at this location.)

b. Ask TO City for the CVAS option to hand remove deergrass in advanced of removal with heavy equipment. This way it can be used for other bird habitat gardens around the CVAS community.

iii. TO City will provide sitting boulders, wood chips, Biochar, water bubblers, and deal with the ``stream bed.``

iv. TO City will pre-augur holes for the planting of 5 and 15 gallon plants and the boxed *Quercus lobata*.

v. CVAS will be responsible for the planting

a. TO City will need to provide a hose bib/hose or water buffalo for proper planting.

B. Signing - CVAS will create an interpretive sign about the drought tolerant, native plant, bird & butterfly-friendly garden for people at Heritage Park.

i. CVAS will provide the sign with city approval.

ii. CVAS and TO City will collaborate to determine size, material, mounting, and location of the sign.

iii. CVAS will apply for a Grant to help fund the sign.

- B. Annual native wild flowers and perennial milkweed will be established between the groundcover, shrubs, and trees while the garden is young.
 - i. poppies - seeds
 - ii. lupine - seeds
 - iii. milkweed – one gallon or seeds?
 - a. Narrow leaf milkweed, *Asclepias fasciculatum*
 - b. Indian Milkweed, *Asclepias eriocarpa*?

- C. Volunteer workers will be used for planting
 - i. CVAS Members
 - ii. Community Volunteers?
 - a. Scouts, high school/college students, or other civic organizations
 - iii. Paid day laborers will be an alternative if volunteers are not adequate.

- D. Timeline
 - i. Be ready to plant in December
 - a. Where to store plants in advance of planting?
 - b. Can we get plants delivered the day of planting?
 - c. Plant in phases to be more manageable?
 - ii. City said project must be completed before first of the year 2016
 - iii. CVAS Proposal into city by Mid-October

- E. Birdhouse will be sited at the Heritage Park Garden
 - i. Oak Titmouse, House Wren, or for other species?
 - ii. Where?



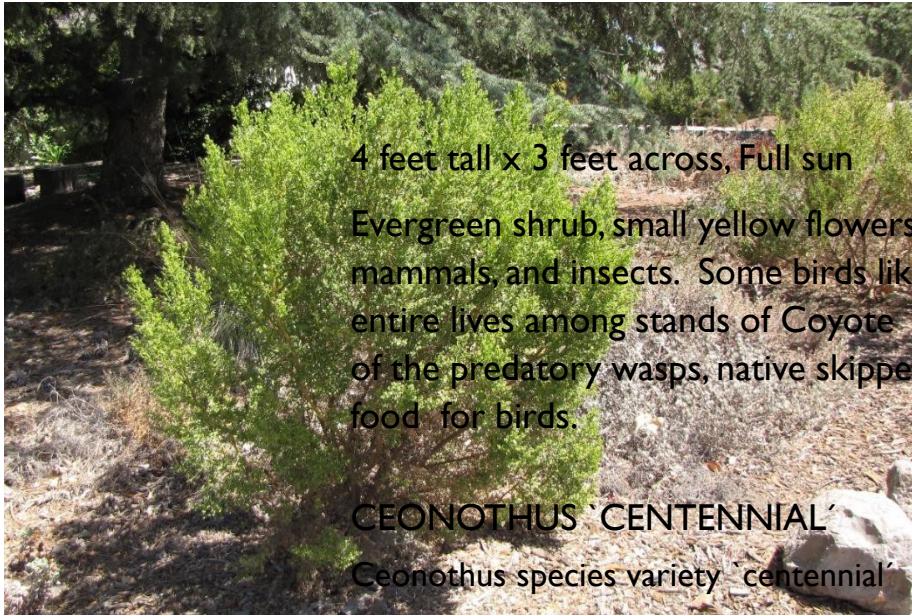
- Heritage Park Bird



- Friendly Garden

Plant selection





COYOTE BRUSH

Baccharis pilularis

4 feet tall x 3 feet across, Full sun

Evergreen shrub, small yellow flowers, provides food and cover for a across variety of birds, mammals, and insects. Some birds like Wrentits and White-crowed Sparrows, may spend their entire lives among stands of Coyote Brush. *Baccharis* species are the nectary sources for most of the predatory wasps, native skippers (small butterflies) and native flies, which in turn provides food for birds.

CEONOTHUS CENTENNIAL

Ceanothus species variety 'centennial' 8 to 12 inches tall x 4 to 5 feet across

Centennial spreads quickly producing a 4-8' ground cover within 2 years. The tiny, dark green leaves have a glossy surface that gives a polished backdrop to the intensely blue, button-like flower clusters in spring.

Drought tolerant once established but best with occasional water. Grows in full sun, part shade, or shade. If their utility and beauty are not enough enticement, then consider the habitat value of ceanothus. The button-like or puffy panicles of tiny blue to white flowers are an important source of food for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. The leaves nourish larvae of several kinds of butterflies and moths. All of these insects in turn provide food for insectivorous birds.

Birds also use the dense twiggy growth as shelter and for nest building. Ceanothus seeds, which can be heard exploding out

of the drying capsules, are eaten by many kinds of mammals.





CEANOTHUS ``CONCHA``

Ceanothus species variety 'concha'

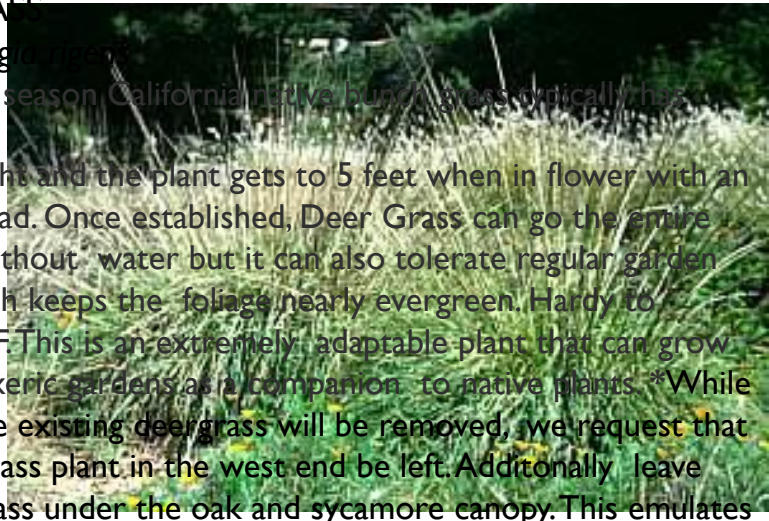
Mounding, 6 to 8 feet tall X 6 to 8 feet across

``Concha`` flowers heavily, beginning in late winter, and produces 1 ½ inch long clusters of luminous cobalt blue flowers. Its dark, narrow leaves have a warty surface that glints appealingly in the sun, and is one of the most adaptable dark-flowered ceanothus available. The button-like or puffy panicles of tiny blue to white flowers are an important source of food for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. The leaves nourish larvae of several kinds of butterflies and moths. All of these insects in turn provide food for insectivorous birds. Birds also use the dense twiggy growth as shelter and for nest building.

DEERGRASS

Mulhenbergia

This warm season California native bunch grass typically has foliage to 3 feet in height and the plant gets to 5 feet when in flower with an equal spread. Once established, Deer Grass can go the entire summer without water but it can also tolerate regular garden water which keeps the foliage nearly evergreen. Hardy to around 0 °F. This is an extremely adaptable plant that can grow in hot dry xeric gardens as a companion to native plants. *While most of the existing deergrass will be removed, we request that one deergrass plant in the west end be left. Additionally leave the deergrass under the oak and sycamore canopy. This emulates what naturally occurs in nature, as the native growing oak trees have worked out a fine balance over thousands of years of mutual existence



in its habitat

*Additionally, if possible, we would like permission to hand dig out the deergrass scheduled to be removed with heavy equipment, so we can use it in other bird restoration habitat projects.



FAIRY DUSTER

Calliandra eriophylla

1 to 3 feet tall x 3 to 4 feet across

It displays delightful puffs of colorful blossoms from late winter to early summer. Fairy duster is a sturdy yet fine textured shrub. Despite its desert origins, fairy duster grows surprisingly well in cooler environments. It requires no maintenance and is not bothered by insects or diseases. The Fairy Duster flowers are a pale pink color and are an attraction to animals that live in the desert. This plant attracts butterflies and hummingbirds when the flowers are blooming. This plant provides nectar for the animals that feed off of this plant such as hummingbirds and bees.

ISLAND SNAPDRAGON

Galvezia Speciosa

3 to 4 feet tall and 5 to 7 feet across

Evergreen shrub with red tubular flowers that the hummingbirds love.

Galvezia Speciosa 'FIRECRACKER' cultivar is a variety of *G. speciosa*. 'Firecracker' has tomentose (slightly fuzzy) leaves and a more compact habit. 2 to 3 foot tall x 3 foot across

Both plants are magnets for birds, butterflies, and beneficial insects. They are host plants for caterpillars and provide food and excellent cover for birds.



LEMONADE BERRY*

Rhus integrifolia

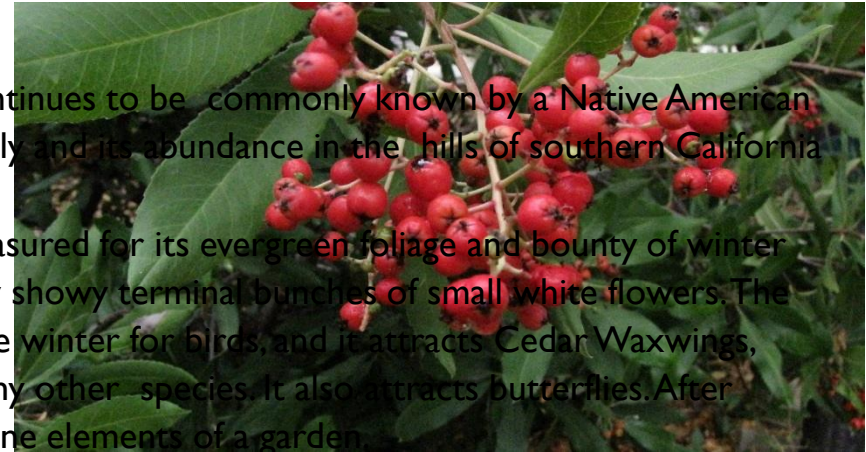


Heteromeles arbutifolia

8 to 15 feet in height and width

Toyon is the only California native plant that continues to be commonly known by a Native American name. Toyon's resemblance to the European holly and its abundance in the hills of southern California were the genesis of the name "Hollywood."

This widely adaptable, easy to grow shrub is treasured for its evergreen foliage and bounty of winter berries, which are preceded in early summer by showy terminal bunches of small white flowers. The fruits are one of the main sources of food in the winter for birds, and it attracts Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, Hermit Thrush along with many other species. It also attracts butterflies. After establishment, toyons become long-lived backbone elements of a garden.



VALLEY OAK

Quercus lobata

40 feet in height and width in 25 years

Deciduous tree, the elder statesman of California's oaks, and the namesake of the City of Thousand Oaks, possesses a quiet dignity derived from its size, longevity (400 to 600 years), and grace. These impressive, elegant trees are survivors. They have faced droughts, fire and pests, yet they persist and govern the landscape.

Young trees have a straight, rigid form but eventually a spreading crown with limbs that occasionally sweep to the ground. Songbirds highly favor valley oaks for food, shelter, and nesting.



Concept: Provide New Habitat
One Yard or Park at a Time!

