

“CAST-IRON” PLANTS

Adaptable Ornamentals for Central Valley Gardens

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Spiky plants like yuccas add a strong architectural statement to the garden and require little water or maintenance.

YEAR-ROUND VALLEY GARDENING

Gardeners moving to the Central Valley of California, especially those from “back east” states with continental climates and summer rain, find themselves confronted with an entirely new set of options for creating a garden.

New Valley gardeners discover quickly that we can garden twelve months of the year. Colorful shrubs like winged euonymus and ornamental grasses add a long fall season of interest to the garden.

In addition, winters in the Central Valley are mild enough to grow cool season annuals like sweet peas, pansies, larkspurs, poppies and lupines and winter vegetables like kale, Swiss chard and lettuce.

Summer dormant perennial plants, like *Alstroemeria*, add to the fall and winter garden when they leaf out at the first sign of cooler weather and short days. Many bulbs have leaves emerging in the

fall and early winter and blooms starting in February and continuing through March and April. Freesias, daffodils and iris are vigorous in our climate and naturalize to return year after year. In shady areas, cyclamen, summer snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) and Spanish squill (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) are reliable winter features that reward with spring bloom.

Summer gardening brings the challenge of dry heat, wind and high light intensity. Plants with small leaves, succulents, and spiky plants like yuccas and agaves have leaves adapted to low humidity and high solar radiation. “Sculptural” plants like coral yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) can be placed to create focal points and winter structure.

What about herbaceous perennials—plants that die to the ground in the winter? Adapted to evade freezing winters, here in the Central Valley these plants die to the ground or to a small mat and can cause our gardens to “disappear” in winter. For the twelve-month gardener they need to be combined with evergreen, structural plants.

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RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE

Probably the hardest part of gardening anywhere is knowing exactly what plant will do well in which environmental conditions. Some plants prefer sun, others shade. With an understanding of the orientation of the garden to the four points of the compass you can take advantage of microclimates around buildings. Morning sun is the coolest sunshine and is gentle on plants. Eastern exposure is a good location for delicate plants that burn in our hot summer afternoon sun. Southern and western exposures, where a plant gets sunshine in the middle of the day in summer, are suitable for only the toughest plants, but a strategically placed tree can provide a respite in mid-day and expand your plant choices.

If you like to grow tender plants in containers, take advantage of overhangs and south walls to extend the growing season. Your tender container plants will only need to come inside in the coldest, freezing weather.

Some gardeners are uncertain about the trend toward low-water-use landscape designs using California natives and other drought tolerant plants. Will a favorite garden plant be adaptable enough to tolerate these conditions? One strategy is to organize your garden by “hydrozones,” with the moisture-loving plants close to the patio, deck, or wherever you are most active. Then you can place low-water plants, and irrigate infrequently, in the areas farthest from activity along the perimeter of the garden.

TOUGH, ADAPTABLE TREES

People who grew up with New England autumn color yearn to grow maples and birches to capture and enjoy the colorful fall season. One maple that tolerates our water quality and soil condition and still produces good fall color is *Acer truncatum*, the

purpleblow maple. For orange lovers, the calamondin, \times *Citrofortunella microcarpa*, is a tough plant with beautiful little orange fruits, good for their lime-like juice or for making jams and jellies. For smaller yards that require small trees, the Washington hawthorn,



Crataegus phaenopyrum, is a tough plant with beautiful orange-red fruit in autumn and winter. The beautiful and dependable crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia indica*, is another excellent choice.

For large shade trees, consider the deciduous Kentucky coffee tree, *Gymnocladus dioica*, or the giant valley oak, *Quercus lobata*. A little water to get them established and occasional summer irrigation is all they need. For lawn areas, a large tree that will absorb air pollution, cool the air, provide shade and increase your property values is the chinquapin oak, *Quercus muehlenbergii*, a fountain-shaped tree similar to our lost American elms.

PLANTS THAT ADAPT TO SUN OR HIGH SHADE

Under tall deciduous trees there is a special environmental condition referred to as “high shade.” This allows light to plantings but it is mostly indirect, re-radiated and reflected light that does not heat up the plant foliage as intensely as direct sunlight. Some plants are amazingly adaptable and can tolerate either high shade or direct sun, as long as they have adequate soil moisture. Deer grass, *Muhlenbergia*

rigens, is an adaptable native grass that is tough in full sun, yet still makes a visual statement in partial shade. Ornamental quince is another tough and adaptable plant that flowers best in full sun but will also tolerate part shade. January flowers to decorate your table at Chinese New Year are the reward for growing this plant.

SPIKY PLANTS AND GRASSES

We are very lucky in the Central Valley that we can grow many spiky and architectural plants that provide evergreen forms for the winter garden season. Agaves, nolinias and yuccas are well-adapted to dry heat, and many will also tolerate winter moisture in heavy soils. *Agave parryi* var. *huachucensis* is one favorite, resembling a cabbage in its rounded form and leaves. *Yucca filamentosa* is also hardy, although its tolerance of clay soils still remains to be tested.

Some of the easiest and most adaptable ornamental grasses are *Miscanthus sinensis*, or eulalia grass, now available in dwarf forms that allow them to fit in today's smaller gardens. Some *Pennisetum* forms are beautiful over a long season. *P. orientale* is one of our favorites, with spring and summer flowers into fall for three seasons of interest. *P. alopecuroides* ‘Hameln’ has done well on the Arboretum banks and combines beautifully with *Sedum* ‘Autumn Joy’. Avoid the invasive *Pennisetum setaceum*.

FIND THESE PLANTS AT ARBORETUM SALES

Many of these adaptable plants will be available at the members-only Spring Plant Sale and Social on March 12, as well as Arboretum plant sales on April 2, April 23, and May 14. All sales take place at the Orchard Park Nursery from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Bring your membership card for the 10% member discount. Anyone may join at the door.

CAST-IRON PLANTS FOR THE CENTRAL VALLEY

These plants will tolerate a wide range of garden conditions

PLANTS FOR SUN OR PARTIAL SHADE

<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	deer grass
<i>Nandina domestica</i>	heavenly-bamboo
<i>Zephyranthes candida</i>	Argentine zephyr lily
<i>Artemisia</i> 'Powis Castle'	Powys Castle wormwood
<i>Aster</i> , many forms	Michaelmas daisy
<i>Chaenomeles</i> , hybrids and cvs.	flowering quince
<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>	Mexican daisy
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Oregon-grape
<i>Ruellia brittoniana</i> 'Katie'	dwarf ruellia
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> cultivars	Japanese boxwood
<i>Pittosporum tobira</i> and cultivars	Japanese pittosporum
<i>Syringa</i> × <i>laciniata</i>	cut-leaf lilac
<i>Salvia microphylla</i>	mint-bush salvia

PLANTS FOR SHADE

(will tolerate morning sun with afternoon shade)

Shrubs

<i>Brunfelsia pauciflora</i> cvs.	yesterday-today-and-tomorrow
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> and cvs.	Japanese boxwood
<i>Calycanthus occidentalis</i>	western spicebush
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i>	sasanqua camellia
<i>Cocculus laurifolius</i>	laurel-leaf moonseed
<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	Japanese aralia
<i>Nandina</i> , many cvs.	heavenly-bamboo
<i>Osmanthus fragrans</i>	tea-olive
<i>Osmanthus</i> × <i>fortunei</i>	hybrid tea olive
<i>Ribes viburnifolium</i>	evergreen currant
<i>Sollya heterophylla</i> and cvs.	Australian bluebell creeper
<i>Sarcococca hookeriana</i> var. <i>humilis</i>	dwarf sweet box

Perennials

<i>Ajuga reptans</i> 'Catlin's Giant'	giant ajuga
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> subsp. <i>bulbosum</i> 'Variegatum'	striped bulbous oat grass
<i>Bergenia crassifolia</i>	winter bergenia
<i>Carex albula</i>	blonde sedge
<i>Carex flacca</i> (syn. <i>C. glauca</i>)	blue sedge
<i>Carex oshimensis</i> 'Variegata' (syn. <i>C. morrowii</i> 'Variegata')	variegated Japanese sedge
<i>Carex testacea</i>	orange New Zealand sedge
<i>Carex tumulicola</i>	Berkeley sedge
<i>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides</i>	dwarf plumbago
<i>Cyrtomium falcatum</i>	Japanese holly fern
<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>	Mexican daisy
<i>Festuca glauca</i>	blue fescue
<i>Geranium</i> × <i>cantabrigiense</i> 'Biokovo'	Biokovo cranesbill
<i>Helleborus argutifolius</i>	Corsican hellebore
<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	bear's-foot hellebore
<i>Heuchera</i> 'Canyon Pink'	canyon pink coral bells
<i>Heuchera maxima</i>	Island alum root
<i>Lamium maculatum</i> cvs.	spotted lamium
<i>Leucopogon aestivum</i>	summer snowflake

<i>Liriope muscari</i> and cvs.	lily turf
<i>Liriope spicata</i> and cvs.	creeping lily turf
<i>Ophiopogon jaburan</i> and cv.	big mondo grass
<i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i> and cvs.	mondo grass
<i>Ophiopogon planiscapus</i> 'Nigrescens'	black mondo grass
<i>Oxalis purpurea</i> cvs.	Cape oxalis
<i>Sesleria caerulea</i>	blue moor grass

PLANTS FOR FULL SUN

(with no shade at all)

Grasses & Spiky Succulents

<i>Hesperaloe parviflora</i>	coral yucca
<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> , 'Yaku-jima', 'Nippon', 'Sarabande', 'Silberspinne'	dwarf forms of eulalia grass
<i>Muhlenbergia dubia</i>	Mexican deer grass
<i>Pennisetum orientale</i>	oriental fountain grass
<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> 'Hameln'	white fountain grass
<i>Agave parryi</i> var. <i>huachuensis</i>	Huachuca agave
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i> 'Gold Edge'	yellow-edged Adam's needle

Shrubs

<i>Ceratostigma griffithii</i>	Burmese plumbago
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> 'Helene'	white rose-of-Sharon
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i> hybrids and cvs.	crape-myrtle
<i>Jasminum nudiflorum</i>	winter jasmine
<i>Lonicera standishii</i>	daphne honeysuckle
<i>Rhus typhina</i> 'Laciniata'	lace-leaf staghorn sumac
<i>Ribes aureum</i> var. <i>aureum</i>	golden currant
<i>Rosa</i> , many cvs. and hybrids	rose
<i>Nerium oleander</i> , dwarf forms	dwarf oleander
<i>Salvia greggii</i> and hybrids	autumn sage

TOUGH AND ADAPTABLE TREES

<i>Abies nordmanniana</i>	Nordmann fir
<i>Acer buergerianum</i>	trident maple
<i>Acer truncatum</i>	purpleblow maple
<i>Cedrus deodara</i>	Himalayan cedar
× <i>Citrofortunella microcarpa</i>	calamondin
<i>Crataegus phaenopyrum</i>	Washington hawthorn
<i>Crinodendron patagua</i>	Chilean lily-of-the-valley tree
<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	Italian cypress
<i>Diospyros</i>	persimmon
<i>Glyptostrobus pensilis</i>	Chinese bald-cypress
<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	Kentucky coffee-tree
<i>Koelreuteria elegans</i> subsp. <i>formosana</i>	Formosan flame tree
<i>Lagerstroemia</i> hybrids, tree forms	crape myrtle
<i>Malus</i> 'Snowdrift', 'Spring Snow'	crabapple
<i>Pinus canariensis</i>	Canary Island pine
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	valley oak
<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	southern live oak
<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>	chinquapin oak
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	little-leaf linden