



# Where the garden pros shop

You too can score big at this fall's plant sales

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**AUTUMN IS SALE SEASON** at some of the best botanical gardens, plant societies, and horticultural schools around the West. Which is perfect timing, because many perennials, shrubs, and trees should be planted now. The cool months ahead (and, in many areas, the winter rains) will give plants a jump-start on developing strong roots, making them guaranteed crown jewels of the garden by next spring.

Shop at plant sales and you'll often have access to a more unusual selection of plants at low prices, but they'll be a far cry from the perfect specimens packing the neat aisles at your favorite nursery. Think of these sales as the flea markets of the botanical world: lots of dinged-up merchandise that could, with a little TLC, turn into treasures. >46



The UC Davis Arboretum sale

## THE LOWDOWN

**Set your alarm** Many of these sales become mayhem by midday. Arrive early (most open around 9) to get the best plants.

**Expect the unexpected**

You'll generally see more obscure plants than what the typical nursery stocks. Some sales post inventories online before the event, which gives you time to do a little research. Or, when you arrive, ask for a plant list, grab a cup of coffee, and take a few minutes to plan your attack.

**Look beyond the surface**

Many of the plants for sale will look rattier than those you'd find in a nursery. It's okay: They're just slowing down for winter. Given time to spread their roots, they'll come soaring back in spring.

**Cash, check, or charge?**

Find out before you go—there's nothing worse than having to pass on that one-of-a-kind acacia just because the sale accepts only cash and you didn't bring any. Unlike flea markets, though, these sales are usually fund-raisers—getting a bargain is fine, but bargaining itself isn't cool.

**BYO** Be a pro and bring some bags or a cart to get your haul to your car.

**Join the club** Become a member of your favorite garden or plant society. Chances are you'll get early access to its sale.



A roomy cart—and a helper to pull it—makes plant shopping easier.



**BEFORE & AFTER** You'd never see such a sad-looking salvia at a nursery, but plants often look a bit bedraggled at a nonprofit's plant sale. We sunk this *Salvia greggii* 'San Takao' into the ground in fall, and it made an amazing comeback the next spring.

**WHERE THE SALES ARE**

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**Oct 1 & 2, Oakland** Merritt College Fall Plant Sale Unusual edibles that you won't find at your local nursery. [merrittlandhort.com](http://merrittlandhort.com)

**Oct 8, Santa Cruz** Arboretum at UC Santa Cruz Colorful exotics and natives. [arboretum.ucsc.edu](http://arboretum.ucsc.edu)

**Oct 8, Walnut Creek** Ruth Bancroft Garden Fall Plant Sale Succulents and natives. [ruthbancroftgarden.org](http://ruthbancroftgarden.org)

**Oct 9, Davis** UC Davis Arboretum Teaching Nursery plant sale One of the best in the whole region, including plants adapted to growing in the Central Valley. [arboretum.ucdavis.edu](http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu)

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**Oct 1-31, Santa Barbara** Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Fall Plant Sale Spectacular California natives. [sbbg.org](http://sbbg.org) (click on "classes")

**Oct 15, San Diego** California Native Plant Society, San Diego chapter Natives for drought-tolerant gardens. [cnpssd.org](http://cnpssd.org)

**Oct 15 & 16, Encinitas** San Diego Botanic Garden Annual Fall Plant Sale California natives, cactus, succulents, bromeliads, fruit trees, and subtropicals. \$12 garden admission fee; [sdbgarden.org](http://sdbgarden.org)

**NORTHWEST**

**Oct 1, Beaverton, OR** Tualatin Hills Nature Park Fall Native Plant Sale Trees, shrubs, and flowering plants. [thprd.org](http://thprd.org)

**Oct 1, Seattle** Washington Native Plant Society's Central Puget Sound Native Bulb, Seed & Plant Sale The name says it all. [wnps.org](http://wnps.org)

**Oct 1, Tacoma** Tacoma Nature Center's Fall Native Plant Sale Trees, shrubs, flowering plants, and bulbs. [tacomanaturecenter.org](http://tacomanaturecenter.org)

**SOUTHWEST**

**Oct 15, Las Vegas** Las Vegas State Tree Nursery plant sale Native and desert-adapted plants and pine trees. [forestry.nv.gov](http://forestry.nv.gov)

**Oct 15 & 16, Phoenix** Desert Botanical Garden Fall Plant Sale Desert-adapted plants, along with just about every low-water-use landscaping plant under the sun. [dbg.org/plantsale](http://dbg.org/plantsale)

**Oct 15 & 16, Tucson** Tohono Chul Park Fall Plant Sale Arid area-adapted plants, including many Arizona natives. [tohonochulpark.org](http://tohonochulpark.org)

**MOUNTAIN**

**Sep 24, Denver** Denver Botanic Gardens Fall Plant and Bulb Sale Rockies plant sales tend to take place in September; this 10,000-bulb spectacular is one of the month's latest. [botanicgardens.org](http://botanicgardens.org)

BOTTOM: KIMBERLEY NAVABPOUR