


The best = of the = best native plants

Experts from across the country pick their favorite high-impact stars



What makes native plants so great? According to some experts, it's because these plants are practically perfect: They are built to thrive in the conditions of a specific region without complaint and are an essential component in wildlife preservation. Yet the topic of native plants can spark a debate unlike any other in the gardening world. Some gardeners claim that natives are easier to grow and require less water than nonnatives. Other gardeners dispute these broad claims and assert that not all natives are created equal—some may actually require more TLC than their imported counterparts. Regardless of this ongoing discus-

sion, there is no escaping the fact that land across the country is being overdeveloped. Why would this matter to the average gardener? For starters, we need to do our best to make way for nature in our landscapes if we want to do our part in preserving biodiversity. The overload of information, however, has left many of us wondering what native plants are worth buying. With this question in mind, *Fine Gardening* reached out to several native-plant experts from across the country to ask them. The following are their top picks for nearly every region—native plants that are built tough and have a wide variety of aesthetic and environmental benefits.

Northeast



THE EXPERT:

Vincent A. Simeone is a horticulturist from Oyster Bay, New York, and the author of several books on flowering trees and shrubs, evergreens, and winter gardening.

TOP PICK

Summersweet offers delicious-smelling flowers and good fall color

NAME: *Clethra alnifolia* and cvs.

USDA HARDINESS ZONES: 3 to 9

SIZE: 6 to 8 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, fertile, acidic, well-drained soil

Summersweet is a wonderful shrub that offers 3- to 5-inch-long, spiky white flowers that possess a strong spicy fragrance in late summer. The dark green foliage turns pale to golden yellow in fall, and old seed heads will persist through winter, giving this plant some off-season appeal.

Summersweet is an adaptable species, growing in moist, shady woodland conditions as well as hot, dry, sunny exposures in sandy soils. This shrub generally works well in mixed borders and is a great companion for most herbaceous plants. It will also attract a wide variety of pollinators to the garden. If you simply don't have the space for the straight species, try 'Compacta', which features a dense habit that's only 5 to 6 feet tall and wide but has the same magnificently fragrant flowers as well as unusually dark green foliage.



Northeast

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Winterberry

NAME: *Ilex verticillata*

ZONES: 5 to 8

SIZE: 6 to 10 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil

Although evergreen hollies usually get all the attention, winterberry is a wonderful deciduous holly that typically grows near streams and ponds. It provides a great show in fall and early winter with golden yellow foliage and clusters of glossy, bright red fruit on each stem. But remember that fruiting hollies generally need a male pollinator close by. The berries of winterberry are prized by many bird species including northern cardinals and American robins.



Shadbush

NAME: *Amelanchier canadensis*

ZONES: 3 to 7

SIZE: Up to 20 feet tall and 10 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, fertile, acidic, well-drained soil

Shadbush can be found in natural areas along the coast from Maine to South Carolina. In spring, small bouquets of delicate white flowers cover the entire plant. In early summer, small blueberry-like fruit change from green to red and finally blue when ripe and are delicious—for birds and humans alike. Dark green summer leaves give way to yellow, orange, and rich red fall foliage. In winter, the smooth, silvery gray bark offers added interest. For the best fruiting, plant an apple shadbush (*A. × grandiflora*, Zones 3–7) nearby because the cross-pollination will help produce a healthy crop of berries.



Little bluestem

NAME: *Schizachyrium scoparium* and cvs.

ZONES: 2 to 7

SIZE: 2 to 3 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; fertile, well-drained soil

Without question, little bluestem is one of the most spectacular native grasses out there. With its blue-green foliage in spring and summer that turns brilliant shades of golden yellow to reddish bronze in fall and winter, this grass never disappoints. Soft, silvery white seed heads form later in the season and will persist even when the plant is dormant. Masses of little bluestem will illuminate the winter landscape. Although typically seen along roadsides and in wild, natural areas, little bluestem is now being used, as well, in cultivated gardens. There are, in fact, several cultivars with even deeper blue summer foliage that offer great appeal.



Flowering dogwood

NAME: *Cornus florida* and cvs.

ZONES: 5 to 8

SIZE: 20 to 30 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; rich, moist, well-drained soil

Flowering dogwood is a great East Coast species that has seen a renaissance over the past decade. There is nothing quite like the striking white and pink bracts that surround the tree's yellowish green flowers in spring. After the flowers finish putting on their show, rich, dark green summer foliage emerges, changing to brilliant shades of orange, crimson, and purple by fall. The clusters of red fruit usually don't last long because birds eat them rather quickly. But flowering dogwood has winter interest, too: from its rounded, upright habit; rough, alligator skin-like bark; and silver gray buds that glisten in the winter sun.



MYTH: Pests and diseases don't bother native plants.

REALITY: When planted in gardens with soil and water attributes that are different from their conditions of origin, natives are going to be stressed. And when plants become stressed, they invite pests and diseases. Take, for example, the decline of madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*, Zones 7–9) in the Northwest. Sensitive to grading alterations, madrones recently started dying off from fungal disease in record numbers when put under this stress.

Mid-Atlantic



THE EXPERTS:

Susan Tantsits (left) and **Louise Schaefer** (right) own Edge of the Woods Native Plant Nursery in Orefield, Pennsylvania.

TOP PICK

Butterfly weed thrives under less-than-ideal conditions

NAME: *Asclepias tuberosa*

ZONES 4 to 9

SIZE: Up to 3 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; sandy or gravelly, well-drained soil

This herbaceous perennial's bright orange blossoms provide nectar for at least six species of butterflies and countless beneficial insects and pollinators. Its leaves also provide larval food for monarch caterpillars. Butterfly weed is a taprooted plant that is found naturally in dry fields and shale barrens. In fall, silken seeds burst from mature pods and waft toward new sites to create oases for pollinators and migrating monarch butterflies. Although the plant is in the milkweed family, it lacks the trademark white sap, and it does not spread aggressively, like common milkweed. Now at risk of extinction in five Northeast states, this plant is a "must have" for any dry, sunny landscape.

Mid-Atlantic

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Zigzag goldenrod

NAME: *Solidago flexicaulis*

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 1 to 4 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Partial to full shade; moist to dry soil

Zigzag goldenrod thrives under many conditions and provides essential late-season nectar for butterflies. The plant is wrongfully accused of causing hay fever, which is actually an allergic reaction to wind-borne pollen from plants such as ragweed. Its name derives from the way the stems zigzag from leaf to leaf, and its upright form contrasts well with many plants. The flowers are host to numerous insects, bees, and other bugs, which are, in turn, important food sources for songbirds.



Turtlehead

NAME: *Chelone glabra*

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 2 to 3 feet tall and 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun (in wet soil) to partial shade; moist to wet soil

This is one plant whose common name holds no mystery: Its flowers resemble the head of a turtle. The plant is an important part of the complex life cycle of the orange-and-black Baltimore checkerspot butterfly, which depends on it as a host plant on which to lay eggs. Bees pollinate the almost-inaccessible flower tube by clinging to the hairs and ridges of its lower side. Not every gardener will attract a Baltimore checkerspot by planting turtlehead, but this plant is, nevertheless, a beautiful reminder of the intricate way that the lives of insects and plants are linked.



Sassafras

NAME: *Sassafras albidum*

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: Up to 60 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, acidic, well-drained soil

Sassafras delights year-round: In spring, its unpretentious chartreuse flowers are followed by leaves unfurling into three distinct shapes: three lobed, mitten shaped, and simple (no lobes). In late summer, birds love to visit the dark blue drupes (or berries), cupped atop bright red stalks. In fall, the leaves turn shades of orange, red, and yellow. And in winter, its deeply fissured bark and crooked stems add texture to a barren landscape. The leaves provide larval food for the promethean silk moth and spicebush swallowtail butterfly. All parts of the plant exude a spicy, pleasant aroma.



Pawpaw

NAME: *Asimina triloba*

ZONES: 6 to 8

SIZE: Up to 20 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, fertile, slightly acidic, well-drained soil

Pawpaw is the largest edible fruit native to North America and is rich in amino acids. The tree provides visual interest galore: droopy, tropical-like leaves; small maroon flowers; and lumpy fruit that ripen on the branches. Zebra swallowtail caterpillars feed exclusively on its leaves, and the fruit is eaten by box turtles and small mammals. A prehistoric tree that is older than bees, pawpaw is pollinated by beetles and flies. It fruits best in full sun, and its flowers must be cross-pollinated from genetically distinct plants (and pollinated by hand if beetles or flies are not present).



MYTH: All cultivars of native plants are regarded as natives, too.

REALITY: Most experts agree that cultivars of native plants are true natives—although a minority of purists would disagree. The one caveat is when a native tree is grafted onto nonnative rootstock. So if you find a witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*, Zones 3–8), which is native to eastern North America, spliced on top of Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*, Zones 5–8), which is native to Eurasia, you don't have a native plant in your shopping cart.

Midwest



THE EXPERT:

Jim Ault is a plant breeder and the director of ornamental plant research at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe, Illinois.

TOP PICK

Twinleaf is an exciting woodland gem—from start to finish

NAME: *Jeffersonia diphylla*

ZONES: 5 to 7

SIZE: 12 to 18 inches tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Dappled to full shade; moist, rich, slightly acidic to slightly neutral, well-drained soil

Perhaps my favorite woodland wildflower, this underutilized native is fun to watch from spring to autumn. Twinleaf emerges before the trees leaf out, its purplish foliage and stems exploding out of the ground (inset photo, below), turning green with hints of copper, then producing their individually borne, 1-inch-wide glistening white flowers—all in a matter of days. Watch closely for the blossoms because they are, at best, fleeting. Twinleaf will remain in foliage well into summer and maybe even autumn. The 6-inch-long, blue-green summer leaves are so deeply divided that each leaf looks like the pair of wings of a luna moth. Older plants form handsome mounds of foliage. You will be rewarded the following spring with self-sown seedlings that you can share with friends.



Midwest

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Bottle gentian

NAME: *Gentiana andrewsii*

ZONES: 3 to 7

SIZE: 1 to 2 feet tall and 12 to 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to dappled shade; moist, rich, acidic to neutral soil

Bottle gentian is a harbinger of autumn, with its month-long late-summer to early-fall display of 1950s-era rocketship-shaped flowers in various shades of rich blue to violet. Pry one of the flower tips open, and take a close look at its wonderfully fringed and striped pleats. Be on the lookout for bumblebees lurking inside! Plant by the oodles in moist shade gardens, prairies, or wildflower meadows. Plants will clump up nicely over time.



Royal catchfly

NAME: *Silene regia*

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to light shade; rocky or sandy, well-drained soil

Royal catchfly's clusters of scarlet flowers are guaranteed to incite hummingbird turf battles for the duration of its July and August bloom. It is a rare species in the wild but, fortunately, amenable to cultivation in well-drained soil. The stems are spindly, so cultivate it with the support of surrounding plants—but not to the point of shading it. If you touch its sticky stems, leaves, and green calyx tubes, you'll understand how the plant got its common name. I grow a large patch next to our deck, where the hummingbirds are so distracted by the flowers that we can watch them up close.



Plains false indigo

NAME: *Baptisia leucophaea* (syn. *B. bracteata* var. *leucophaea*)

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 1 to 2 feet tall and 18 to 48 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; moist to dry, well-drained soil

This is the earliest of the false indigos to bloom, and I admire it for its copious, oversize, cream to butter yellow flowers. It won't swallow its neighbors as will its more robust relative, the blue false indigo (*B. australis*, Zones 3–9). Plant plains false indigo at the edge of a border, in prairie restorations, and in meadow openings where the flowers can readily be seen. Stems can go dormant by late summer, so plant individually rather than en masse so that the holes created by its dormancy aren't conspicuous.



Michigan lily

NAME: *Lilium michiganense*

ZONES: 3 to 7

SIZE: 2 to 5 feet tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to dappled shade; moist, rich, well-drained soil

Michigan lily is native from wet meadows and prairies to low woodlands and swamp edges. Its early-summer turkscape flowers in gaudy shades of yellow, orange, and red with purple-brown spotting will be visited by a plethora of hummingbirds, moths, and butterflies seeking its nectar. Under favorable conditions, the rhizomatous bulbs will form modest clumps. As with many lilies, this one prefers its feet in the shade and its head in the sun. Plant in fall only, and mulch the bulbs. Be sure to protect it from deer and rabbits, which delight in mowing it down.



MYTH: If a plant is considered a native, then it must be native in my area.

REALITY: Every plant is native to somewhere—even if it's Japan. So just because a perennial grass is native to California doesn't mean it's native in Connecticut. Research your plant choices diligently before making the determination of whether a plant would be considered native to your backyard. To help you determine a plant's native range, go to plants.usda.gov.

Southern Plains



THE EXPERT:

Andrea DeLong-Amaya is director of horticulture at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas.

TOP PICK

Hop tree is a fragrant delight

NAME: *Ptelea trifoliata*

ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: 15 feet tall and 10 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist to dry, well-drained soil

Despite what its two common names—wafer ash and hop tree—might lead you to believe, this plant is neither an ash nor a hop but rather a member of the citrus family. Hop tree, however, is a mainstay for the orange dog, the citrus-orchard pest name for the ravenous caterpillar of the otherwise beloved giant swallowtail butterfly. Feeding the anticipation and delight of humans and small pollinators alike, scrumptious vanilla-clove aroma perfumes the air come spring, when this understory tree unfolds its clusters of tiny, yellowish green flowers. Its true elegance lies in the ascending, interwoven, light gray branches, which look their best under the skilled hands of a master pruner. At its mature height, hop tree won't interfere with power lines. And its bitter papery fruit, called a samara, has been used as a substitute for hops in brewing beer. What more could you ask of just one plant?



Southern Plains

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Prairie rain lily

NAME: *Zephyranthes drummondii* (syn. *Cooperia pedunculata*)

ZONES: 7 to 10

SIZE: 1 foot tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

Like an ethereal angel, the ephemeral prairie rain lily epitomizes purity. Its strappy, gray-green leaves can easily hide in lawns when planted en masse or among other low-growing plants. Then, as perhaps a forgotten surprise, the flowers burst out of seemingly nowhere for a few short days after a good rain in spring and early summer. Lightly fragrant upon emerging, the 2-inch-wide trumpets top single, unbranched stems. They open at dusk and fade to translucent pink the following morning.



Texas sacahuista

NAME: *Nolina texana*

ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: 3 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

With virtually no maintenance, this woody lily (yes, technically, it's a lily) makes an audacious statement in grand swaths, as a solitary focal point, or as an accent in a large container. Its long slender leaves flow from a woody base with firm gracefulness. With a fluid arching form, Texas sacahuista evokes flowing water and looks great pouring over rocks, over a wall, or down a hillside. Clusters of tiny cream-colored flowers barely emerge above the wave of leaves in mid- to late spring. This deer-resistant, leathery evergreen is best adapted to dry, shaded woodlands but takes full sun if treated to extra moisture.



Violet twining snapdragon

NAME: *Maurandella antirrhiniflora*

ZONES: 9 to 11

SIZE: Vining 6 to 10 feet

CONDITIONS: Full sun to light shade; moist, well-drained soil

Looking for a dainty climber that won't overwhelm that cute little trellis you just found at a garage sale? Violet twining snapdragon is fitting for a small frame, rambling unceremoniously over an old woodpile or hanging casually from a bluff. This delicate yet vigorous twiner sports triangular-shaped, luminous green leaves and offers violet to rose-pink blooms throughout the warm months of the year. It's not a true snapdragon but a relative. It is favored as a host plant for the common buckeye butterfly, but thankfully, it's generally not relished by deer.



Twist-leaf yucca

NAME: *Yucca rupicola*

ZONES: 7 to 11

SIZE: 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

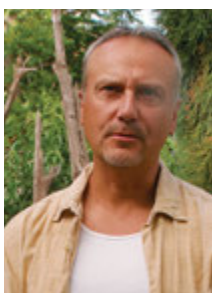
Yuccas are typically selected for rock gardens in full sun, but twist-leaf yucca is ideal for dry, shaded woodlands; rocky meadows; and unirrigated gardens. The leaves twist gently with age, providing a novel form and texture that has similar conditions to and combines aesthetically with Texas sacahuista, cedar sage (*Salvia roemeriana*, Zones 7–10), and other woodland species. Single plants are easily lost in a bed, so plant groupings large enough in scale to hold the space. Mid- to late spring brings 2½-inch-long, eye-catching, bell-shaped, greenish white blossoms borne atop 5-foot-tall straight stems.



MYTH: The label at the nursery says a plant is “native,” so therefore, it is.

REALITY: Because the popularity of natives has increased twofold in the last decade, plant breeders and marketers have, of course, hopped on the bandwagon. You can't always trust the label. Just as “natural” foods might be natural but aren't necessarily organic, you can't trust a plant that is labeled a “native beauty” to be necessarily a true native.

Mountain West



THE EXPERT:

Dan Johnson is associate director of horticulture and curator of native plants at the Denver Botanic Gardens in Colorado.

TOP PICK

Bigtooth maple provides blazing autumn color

NAME: *Acer grandidentatum* (syn. *A. saccharum* ssp. *grandidentatum*)

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: 20 to 40 feet tall and 15 to 30 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil, drought tolerant when established

With a wide but scattered range—from Idaho to northern Mexico—bigtooth maple reaches its zenith in the Wasatch Range of Utah. It may go unnoticed much of the year, mingling quietly with box elder, oak, and aspen in shady ravines or open meadows, but in fall, it cannot be overlooked. This is the Interior West's answer to the blazing sugar maple (*A. saccharum* and cvs., Zones 4–8) of the Northeast, illuminating the canyons in every shade of yellow, rose, orange, and red. Its moderate size makes it ideal for smaller properties, and its drought tolerance makes it suitable even in xeric gardens. In open conditions, expect a dense oval form. Partial shade will create an open, irregularly shaped tree with softer autumn shades. This is one of the West's most underused gems.

Mountain West

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Baby blue rabbitbrush

NAME: *Chrysothamnus nauseosus* var. *nauseosus* (syn. *Ericameria nauseosus* var. *nauseosus*)

ZONES: 4 to 9

SIZE: 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

Rabbitbrush gilds the roadsides of the West in gold each September and October, providing a late summer feast for native pollinators. Baby blue rabbitbrush is a compact and hardy Colorado variety that forms a perfect dome of blue-green all summer, transforming to gold as the days shorten. Fluffy seed heads add interest all winter, and an easy spring trim to 6 to 8 inches tall will ensure a uniform habit.



Bristlecone pine

NAME: *Pinus aristata*

ZONES: 4 to 7

SIZE: Up to 20 feet tall and 15 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil, drought tolerant when established

This is the quintessential symbol of the rugged high country in the West. Despite its high-elevation origins, it is quite adaptable to life down among the rest of us. In habitat, the tree is windswept and gnarled with age, and can live more than 2,000 years. In the garden, expect the densely bristled branches to add about 6 inches a year, with a pyramidal shape in its youth. After many years, bristlecone pine takes on a more irregular character. This quality can be enhanced by judicious pruning throughout its life, creating a sculpted specimen to pass on to the next generation.



Golden columbine

NAME: *Aquilegia chrysantha* and cvs.

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 30 inches tall and 15 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to full shade; average, well-drained soil

Golden columbine seems almost magical when found in the wild. Delicate tufts of leaves perched on shaded red-sandstone ledges or flanking hidden springs are a welcome delight in the arid Southwest. Despite this sense of rarity, this is one of the easiest and most persistent columbines for the garden. Most soils suit it, and it will reseed itself readily in thin gravel mulch. The bloom season lasts from spring until frost, improved by deadheading. Thriving in full sun, it is also especially welcome in dryish shade. If other varieties are growing nearby, hybrids in various color combinations will result.



'Coombe's Winter Glow' beavertail cactus

NAME: *Opuntia aurea* 'Coombe's Winter Glow'

ZONES: 5 to 10

SIZE: 10 inches tall and up to 5 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; dry, well-drained soil

Can anything be easier to grow than this great cactus? Drop it on the ground and your work is done! (And while that may be true, I recommend actually planting it.) The pads root easily, thrive in full hot sun, and are unfazed by drought. They turn a rich burgundy purple in winter. By spring, the pads return to blue-green, with fat buds that burst into crepe-papery, hot pink blooms for several weeks. 'Coombe's Winter Glow' beavertail cactus lacks long spines but still has tiny glochids that are irritating, so handle with care. Any dry border will be enhanced by this cactus.



MYTH: Most sun-loving native plants require less supplemental water than ornamental imports.

REALITY: When you put a native plant into an environment that has been altered in some way, causing runoff patterns to change or soil protection to be eliminated (like raking away layers of fallen leaves), you risk altering the soil moisture levels that these naturally occurring plants are used to. To rectify the situation, you might need to use organic mulch and to water frequently.

Southern California



THE EXPERT:

Rob Moore is a principal of California Native Landscape Design, a design/consultation firm, and a board member of the Orange County chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

TOP PICK

‘Howard McMinn’ manzanita is stunning—from its blooms to its bark

NAME: *Arctostaphylos densiflora* ‘Howard McMinn’

ZONES: 7 to 9

SIZE: 6 to 10 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

With its chocolate-red bark, architectural branching pattern, and winter display of flower clusters, this plant exemplifies the beauty of California’s chaparral. It remains a mystery to me why this shrub isn’t more popular. ‘Howard McMinn’ manzanita puts to rest all myths regarding the finicky nature of this genus. It adapts well to many soil types and microclimates and to pruning; it even tolerates occasional summer irrigation under the proper conditions. This manzanita also boasts wildlife value as a nectar source for the monarch butterfly. It is known for attracting hummingbirds, too, which is sure to make it a focal point for any Southern California garden.



Southern California

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

‘Winifred Gilman’ Cleveland sage

NAME: *Salvia clevelandii* ‘Winifred Gilman’

ZONES: 8 to 10

SIZE: 4 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil

‘Winifred Gilman’ Cleveland sage is native to the dry slopes of San Diego County’s coastal plant community. This salvia is a favorite due to its incredibly aromatic nature (it smells like a mixture of suntan lotion and chaparral). Its benefits include a late bloom (it is one of the last to flower in my garden) and a compact upright habit. Use it in containers, in rock gardens, on slopes, or in a transitional area, such as a perennial bed. It is adaptable to many soil conditions and microclimates, and is a hummingbird magnet.



Toyon

NAME: *Heteromeles arbutifolia*

ZONES: 7 to 10

SIZE: 12 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to full shade; dry to poor, well-drained soil

California’s European settlers, thinking the leaves and berries of this plant resembled English holly, called it Christmas berry. This, coupled with its abundance in the area of what is now Hollywood, is believed to be the reason for the city’s namesake. Today, toyon is recognized as a hardy plant, adaptable to most soil types and microclimates—from the shade of mixed forest and oak woodland to the full sun of coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Toyon’s signature red berries appear in winter but begin in spring as white flower clusters that have a spicy aroma, attracting butterflies and a wide variety of birds.



Seaside daisy

NAME: *Erigeron glaucus*

ZONES: 5 to 8

SIZE: 1 foot tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun (along the coast) to partial shade (inland); well-drained soil

Seaside daisy—as its name implies—belongs to the daisy family and is commonly found along the central and northern coast of California, especially in the Monterey area. It is one of my favorite front-of-the-border plants for the garden. With regular deadheading and moderate supplemental irrigation during summer, seaside daisy will bloom nearly year-round. Its low-growing, cheerful flower groupings attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and positive comments from passersby. If used inland, place this species carefully as its foliage will parch if not protected from the afternoon sun.



Lanceleaf liveforever

NAME: *Dudleya lanceolata*

ZONES: 9 to 10

SIZE: 6 inches tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

In Southern California, you’ll find lanceleaf liveforever growing in the peninsular mountain ranges east of Los Angeles and San Diego. The plant gets its name from its linear olive-colored leaves. It sends up flower stalks that attract hummingbirds and other pollinators, and is recognized as an outstanding performer in containers and rock gardens. When planting, position lanceleaf liveforever at a 30-degree angle. This will ensure the sharp drainage the species prefers. Artfully grouped amid rocks or with a piece of deadwood, this succulent can easily create a striking native bonsai.



MYTH: All natives have a wild appearance that looks messy in a garden setting.

REALITY: Many of the showiest, most well-behaved plants are natives. Take, for instance, shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*, Zones 3–7) in the Northeast. It sports a plethora of white flowers in spring, wildlife-friendly fruit in summer, spectacular fall color, and a statuesque habit (not to mention smooth silvery bark) in winter. Most nonnatives would be hard-pressed to match that focal-point power.

Northwest



THE EXPERT:

Nelson Salisbury is a restoration ecologist for EarthCorps, a Seattle-based non-profit organization, and a botanist with a local chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society.

TOP PICK

Evergreen huckleberry has edible berries for you and the birds to adore

NAME: *Vaccinium ovatum*

ZONES: 7 to 9

SIZE: 2 to 10 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist to slightly dry, acidic, well-drained soil

Evergreen huckleberry should be high on the list as a champion in the native gardener's landscape. Rows of small, intricate, urn-shaped, cream to pale pink flowers bloom in late spring, eventually giving rise to shiny, black to dark purple berries that burst from beneath the stems in fall. The berries have been, historically, an important food source for indigenous peoples of the Northwest; today, wildlife and people alike seek out the berries to eat. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and bumblebees visit the flowers, while the berries are foraged by numerous species of native birds. Evergreen huckleberry will not reach its full height if grown in a sunny location, although direct sun may cause the plant to produce more berries and the leaves to take on a crimson hue. This shrub thrives in acidic, well-drained soil and, once established, requires little to no maintenance.

Northwest

MORE FAVORITE PICKS

Western columbine

NAME: *Aquilegia formosa*

ZONES: 3 to 9

SIZE: 1 to 3 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to filtered shade; moist, well-drained soil

Western columbine's spurred, pendant flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies, and its seeds are foraged by birds. While deadheading can prolong blooms, leaving seed heads on their stalks will promote self-propagation of this short-lived perennial. It prefers consistent moisture and does well growing among lower-growing shrubs and ground covers. It has a tendency to get leggy after flowering, but the plants can be cut back to the ground to rejuvenate the foliage.



Pacific bleeding heart

NAME: *Dicentra formosa* and cvs.

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: 6 to 18 inches tall, spreading up to 3 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Partial shade; moist, fertile, humus-rich, well-drained soil

Pacific bleeding heart's lacy, smooth, fernlike leaves emerge early in spring and are followed by delicate, heart-shaped pink flowers that can persist through midsummer. Deadheading can spur additional blooms. Hummingbirds and bees frequent the flowers, and the foliage provides food for the larvae of the clodius parnassian butterfly, which is native to western North America. A vigorous perennial when conditions are right, this plant will spread both vegetatively and by seed, gracefully colonizing shady, moist areas of your garden.



Broadleaf sedum

NAME: *Sedum spathulifolium* and cvs.

ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: 3 to 5 inches tall and up to 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; dry, gravelly, well-drained soil

Broadleaf sedum is a great addition to rock gardens, borders, or any sunny location that does not receive much water. This evergreen spreader provides year-round color with succulent rosettes of blue-green or reddish-tinged leaves, exquisitely covered with a glaucous bloom. The star-shaped, bright yellow flowers persist from late spring through midsummer and are swarmed by butterflies and bees attracted to their nectar. Broadleaf sedum makes an excellent container species and is low maintenance once established.



False lily-of-the-valley

NAME: *Maianthemum dilatatum*

ZONES: 4 to 7

SIZE: 4 to 12 inches tall, spreading indefinitely

CONDITIONS: Partial to full shade; moist, acidic, well-drained soil

False lily-of-the-valley creates a lush green carpet in woodlands throughout the Pacific Northwest. Racemes of delicate white flowers bloom from April to May and produce green- and brown-mottled berries that turn bright red in fall. Indigenous tribes of the Northwest coast used the entire plant for medicinal purposes. Use it in the garden as an attractive ground cover in areas of dappled light beneath trees and tall shrubs. This species spreads aggressively by branched, creeping rhizomes and should not be planted where it has the potential to crowd out weaker plants.



MYTH: Native plants are low-care options for the landscape.

REALITY: There are some spots where many native plants just don't survive—or will only limp along with significant attention. Most of these spots are urban areas—like parking strips, traffic circles, and parking lots—or along driveways. Many natives will struggle when subjected to soil compaction, limited moisture, and tons of environmental stress.

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The best **NEW PLANTS** —|for|— **2018**

BY DANIELLE SHERRY

For gardeners, what's the equivalent of unwrapping a bunch of presents on Christmas morning? Finding out what amazing new plants are being offered this season, of course. This year features quite a few perennials and shrubs that sport better drought tolerance, enhanced disease resistance than ever before—others (like