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NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS IN HOME LANDSCAPING

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The purpose of this paper is to encourage the use of native trees and shrubs for general garden culture and decoration.

Before going into a discussion of the use of native plants in the beautification of the home grounds we wish to remind you that the exotic plants, the well-known nursery plants that we use in our gardens, are all descendants of native, wild plants of far-away places. In the tree and shrub plantings of the average home landscape treatment we would probably discover plants that are the offspring of native plants of China, Australia, Africa, Europe and South America, but in that garden we would not find a plant that is native of our own state.

We do not condemn the use of these plants from far countries in our home gardens, for, besides being adaptable to our garden culture, they do add geographical and historical interest to our gardens, if we are curious enough to learn their origins. Our California native plants, too, have character and interest equal to and sometimes excelling that of exotic plants. Both have a place in our home landscape planting.

The nurseryman, the landscape planner and the home gardener must have knowledge of the habits of growth and cultural needs of exotic and native plants if either are to be successfully grown and afford pleasure to the home owner for twenty or more years. For example:

Hakea laurina, a native of Australia, with the common name of Sea Urchin Bush because of its showy crimson flowers resembling colorful sea urchins, and *Rhus laurina*, California Sumac, a handsome native shrub, have very similar growing habits and cultural needs. These plants will grow best on the dry side of the garden or on a hillside where a chaparral type of covering is desired.

The native plant from the Australian "bush" and the native plant of the California "chaparral" are cited as species of tree-like shrubs from widely separated but similar natural environments. To grow either exotic or native plants successfully we must know something of the life histories of the plant material we desire to bring into our gardens.

Visitors to the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden have been intrigued with the attractive use of native plants along the entrance road, the canyons, the hill slopes and the mesas, and the groupings of plants in the Special Gardens, the Wild Flower Seed Garden, the Cactus Garden, and other special arrangements. Of outstanding interest is the practical use of native trees,

*Torrey Pines, La Jolla, California.

shrubs and smaller plants in landscaping the areas about the Picnic Grounds, the Assembly Hall and the Administration Building.

These plantings are the result of 22 years of testing and experimenting. It was the vision of Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, a native of California and the creator and founder of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, to bring into cultivation every possible native California plant. This vision is a reality today, a living memorial to its founder. Within a period of almost a quarter of a century thousands of native plants, representing the flora of California from the Oregon border on the north to the Mexican border on the south, have been established in the Garden.

Mention has been made of the landscape treatment about the Picnic Grounds, the Assembly Hall and the Administration Building. It may be of interest to the reader to know something about the life histories of the outstanding native trees and shrubs used in these areas.

Before going into an account of plantings a brief statement should be made regarding the general soil conditions in the 200 acres that comprise the site of the Botanic Garden. Within the Garden are hillsides, rolling mesas, and numerous narrow canyons. This rugged topography presents exposures from every point of the compass. The soil map of the area shows twenty principal types, with clay types predominating. In general the planting conditions in the Botanic Garden are much less favorable for growing trees and shrubs, and even the smaller plants, than one would find in the average home location. Therefore, the results that have been obtained at the Garden in establishing native plants should encourage the plant enthusiast with the possibility of using the native trees and shrubs in home landscaping.

PICNIC GROUNDS

The picnic area was developed about eight years ago to provide facilities for visitors who attend Garden tours and lectures on designated visitors' days. Shade was created for the picnic tables by planting a grove of California Sycamores. The location of the picnic ground on a dry barren ridge seemed a most unlikely situation to grow Sycamores. Adverse conditions were overcome by excavating large holes for the trees and back-filling with good soil. When the trees had attained a height of about twelve feet the heads were cut back and the branches trained outward to form a wide canopy.

The natural habitat of the California Sycamore, *Platanus racemosa*, is along stream courses of canyons and valleys from central California southward into Lower California. This beautiful native tree is so much a part of our California landscape that it does not seem necessary to describe its virtues. It is very adaptable to garden culture and is a desirable tree for patio planting and as a street tree.

A large gray-green foliaged shrub forms a strong accent in the screen planting at the right of the public rest rooms. This shrub is the Island Tree Poppy, *Dendromecon Harfordii*, a native of Santa Catalina, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, often tree-like in size and attaining a height of 20 feet. The flowering period is through April and often into June. At this time the shrub is a glorious golden mass of large yellow flowers. At other seasons of the year

the large oval, glaucous leaves continue the attractiveness of this plant. The Island Tree Poppy and the mainland Tree Poppy, *Dendromecon rigida*, grow in association with other chaparral plants and, like many of our Southern California natives, do best in well drained soils and with very little water during the summer months.

Another tree-like shrub in the general screen planting is Red-Bud, *Cercis occidentalis*. Western Red-Bud grows over a wide range in the southwestern states and is a familiar shrub in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, in the North Coast Range, and, in scattered localities, southward into eastern San Diego County.

This deciduous shrub greets us in the spring time with a grand display of magenta-colored flowers along each of its many branches. Soon after the flowers appear the bronze infant leaves emerge, soon to turn into rounded, glossy green leaves. Later in the season the reddish-purple to straw-colored, flat pods carry on the decorative charm of this interesting native.

The Western Red-Bud can be successfully grown in the home planting. Given reasonable care, a partially shady site, ample growing space and fair drainage, this native will grow to a height of over twenty feet. Shrubs five years after planting may be ten feet in height and about the same distance across. One of the attractive features of Red-Bud is that it provides an excellent source of material for flower arrangements. Moderate cutting for this purpose is beneficial and promotes vigorous new growth for the flowering and fruiting of the succeeding year.

On the ridge to the west of the picnic area one may find specimens of Sugar Bush, *Rhus ovata*. This member of the Sumac Family is a native of the chaparral belt of the foothills and mountains from Santa Barbara southward through San Diego County and into Lower California. This species of *Rhus* is one of the best native plants for the home planting but, like the Red-Bud, must have ample space. It stands pruning and can be trained into a low shrubby bank cover or into a large broad-crowned tree, ten or fifteen feet in height. Its charm is its clean, evergreen foliage and its clusters of pink flower-buds, which appear during the late winter and early spring months. The fruits are small flattened drupes, grayish to red in color and covered with a velvet-like coating. This coating is somewhat acid-sweet to the tongue and it is this feature that has inspired the common name Sugar Bush.

Another member of the Sumac Family which grows in the Botanic Garden and can be mentioned here is *Rhus integrifolia*, the Lemonade Berry, which derives its name from the sticky, extremely acid covering on its flattened seeds. A small handful of these seeds stirred about in a pint of water, with a little sugar added, makes a very refreshing, lemon-like drink.

Lemonade Berry occurs throughout the coastal area of Southern California and for a considerable distance into Lower California. Near the southern limits of its range the writer has found this plant growing to true tree proportions, with trunks two feet in diameter and thirty feet in height.

This plant is a very satisfactory garden shrub and has been used as such from San Diego to San Francisco. It is an attractive plant with rich, dark-green leaves. A handsome plant at any season of the year, during the spring

Plate XIX—Two views of the Administration Building at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, showing planting of natives. Upper from the north, with *Pinus remorata* in left foreground, *Libocedrus*, the narrow conical trees, and *Cupressus* to right, *Prunus Lyonii* in center. Lower view from west, with *Cupressus Sargentii* and *Forbesii* to the left, *Quercus agrifolia* and various shrubs to the right. Upper view by Robinson, lower by Wolf.

months, if conditions are favorable, *Rhus integrifolia* produces a display of pink flowers in clusters at the end of the branchlets. Then follows the fruiting period, which extends over several months. The flat drupes are at first bright green and covered with a frosty-white, viscid coating, which contains the lemon-like flavor mentioned above. As the fruits mature they become pink, and when ripe, a dark red.

This versatile shrub is at home in the sand-dunes of the coastal area, where it grows as a low ground cover. It is also adaptable for use as a hedge plant, for it stands heavy pruning and shaping, and in the patio it can be trained into a small tree with a wide crown thirty feet in diameter.

But we have wandered away from the Picnic Ground and its interesting association of native plants. Varieties of *Penstemon*, shrubby Monkey Flowers, *Diplacus* species, and other plants adaptable to the home garden could be described. There are two plants in this general grouping which deserve special mention:

Red Berry, *Rhamnus crocea*, is used as a low hedge at the west end of the parking area, near the public rest-rooms. This handsome native ranges from Sonoma, Lake and Napa counties southward through the coastal counties and into Lower California.

On the windward slopes of Torrey Pines Park and other exposed situations it forms dark-green mats of verdure. Throughout the late summer months the small, bright-red berries colorfully decorate these shrubs. This plant will grow in most garden soils, but must have good drainage. It will stand heavy pruning and forms a very satisfactory hedge planting.

Relatives of Red Berry which have proven to be worthwhile garden plants are Hollyleaf Redberry, *Rhamnus crocea* var. *ilicifolia*, and Coffee Berry, *Rhamnus californica*. Both are tree-like shrubs with interesting foliage and red fruits.

PLANTINGS ABOUT THE ASSEMBLY HALL

Here we find several members of the Buckwheat Family used most effectively above and below the rock retaining wall fronting the Hall.

The queen of the Buckwheats, Saint Catharine's Lace, *Eriogonum giganteum*, is a large, freely branching shrub with immense, flat flower clusters, the flowers shell-white or pinkish. The flowering period is from April to October. This giant of the Buckwheat Family grows to a height of over eight feet. And it is long lived. Specimens are growing at Torrey Pines Lodge, Torrey Pines Park, which were planted in 1926. Saint Catharine's Lace is a native of Santa Catalina Island.

Island Buckwheat, *Eriogonum arborescens*, is another attractive native which takes kindly to garden culture. This shrub occurs on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands. It is an erect or spreading shrub from 2 to 6 feet high, with grayish-green foliage and during the summer months the leaves are almost hidden by the mass of large flower heads of pink bloom.

Another Buckwheat which graces the collection is the Santa Rosa Buckwheat, *Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*, from Santa Rosa Island. The foliage of this plant is a rich gray-green; the deep pink, or red flowers are borne in

Plate XX—Above, *Arctostaphylos glauca*, taken near Jacumba, San Diego Co. showing dense rounded habit. Below, *Rhus ovata*, in the Botanic Garden, a plant with excellent dense foliage and small clusters of reddish winter buds. Photos by Wolf.

clusters on long stems. This is an ideal rock-garden plant, for it blooms over a long period during the spring and summer months.

Alum-Root, *Heuchera maxima*, a native of the canyon walls of the Channel Islands, grows along the base of the garden wall and combines well with the Buckwheats. There are many other native species of *Heuchera* that are also adaptable to the home rock-garden.

The native Sand Strawberry, *Fragaria chiloensis*, a native of the coast of San Luis Obispo County and northward into Oregon, has been used as a ground cover in front of the Assembly Hall. This Strawberry may be used for a patio ground cover and for planting gentle slopes. The specific name, *chiloensis*, indicates that this Strawberry is also a native of faraway Chile, having originally been named from the island of Chiloe. Plants from Chile were sent to Europe in 1712, and, through crossing with other varieties of strawberries, are the ancestors of our present day garden strawberries.

In the screen planting flanking the Assembly Hall is another member of the Sumac Family, commonly called California Sumac, or the Laurel-leaved Sumac, *Rhus laurina*. This Sumac is found on the Channel Islands, in the frost free coastal areas and southward to the Viscaïno Desert of Lower California. In the Santo Domingo Valley, near the southern limits of its range it forms extensive, orchard-like plantations, with many trees fully twenty feet high. It seems to thrive in the hot, dry locations, but adapts itself to any type of soil.

California Sumac's place in the home planting is where tall background masses are desired, or effective cover for dry slopes. It is, however, one of our ornamental native plants, with red-brown branches, dark green foliage and panicles of creamy-white flowers, and, after the flowers pass by, red-brown clusters of small flat seeds. In the springtime, or following judicious pruning, this shrub displays a colorful array of new growth, the young twigs and foliage range in hue from rich mahogany-red to a bright cherry-red.

Across the road, to the east of the Assembly Hall, and on a hill to the north we note a plantation of native pines. This grove comprises interesting forms of coastal pines that are suitable for street and yard planting:

The Bishop Pine, Prickle-Cone Pine, *Pinus muricata*, ranges from Mendocino southward into northern Santa Barbara County. It forms a medium sized tree, 30 to 60 feet high, with clusters of dark green needles, two in a short sheath. The cones are composed of prickly scales, which gives it one of its names, Prickle-Cone Pine. When ripe the cones are a rich russet-brown and they may remain attached to the tree for many years, weathering to a pleasant silver-grey. This decorative pine has been recommended by the California Association of Park Administrators as a tree suitable for parkway planting in the southwestern United States.

Monterey Pine, *Pinus radiata*, a native of the region about Monterey and also found along the coast of northern San Luis Obispo County, is a near relative of the Bishop Pine. It forms a large picturesque tree and has been extensively used as a garden and street tree.

The Santa Cruz Island Pine, *Pinus remorata*, is a native tree of Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, and is also found in a limited area of Lower California

and at the northern end of Cedros Island. It is one of the rare pines of the western hemisphere, and is a medium sized tree, bearing small oval cones that stand straight out from the branches. This interesting and unique tree of our west coast may prove very adaptable to general garden culture and useful as a yard and street tree.

On the hill some distance to the north and east of the Assembly Hall is a thicket planting of tall, slender pines. These are Torrey Pines, *Pinus Torreyana*, a truly unique California Pine, found only in two very limited areas. One habitat is restricted to the coast of San Diego County, between Del Mar and La Jolla; the second habitat is one hundred and seventy miles to the northwest on the northeast shore of Santa Rosa Island. The Torrey Pines of the Garden, because of the close planting and the inland environment, in no way resemble the rugged, broad-crowned natives of the seacoast.

Discovered as a new species of pine in 1850, the year that California was admitted to the Union, the Torrey Pine may well be designated "California's Birthday Tree." It has been grown as a garden and street tree for many years and is another native pine recommended by the California Association of Park Administrators for street planting. If given elbow room and average care the Torrey Pine will become a garden giant. The largest tree of record is the "Ward Torrey Pine" planted in a home yard in Carpinteria, near Santa Barbara, in 1890. This tree today is over one hundred feet in height, has a crown spread of 125 feet and is over five feet in diameter at four feet above the ground.

The Director's house, on the right as we pass on to the Administration area, is screened from general view by a grove of Coast Live Oaks, *Quercus agrifolia*. This planting of twenty year old trees indicates the fairly rapid growth of this native. Inasmuch as they are long lived trees the home owner might consider planting Live Oaks where large, permanent shade trees are desired.

PLANTINGS ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Approaching the Administration Building from the Assembly Hall the visitor notes the effective use of large native shrubs as background planting.

One of the ornamental shrubs of this planting is the Toyon, Christmas Berry, *Photinia arbutifolia*. This native is truly a small tree, sometimes growing to a height of over twenty feet. It is an erect evergreen with thick, leathery leaves which are dark glossy green above and light green on the underside; in late June it is covered with masses of creamy-white flowers, borne in large terminal clusters. The clusters of crimson fruit ripen in late October and, if not taken by the birds or appropriated by some avaricious human, will give us Christmas pleasure surpassing the finest imported Holly.

The Toyon was introduced into England and Holland a hundred years ago and there has been successfully propagated and is today considered one of their choice garden shrubs. It adapts itself to ordinary garden culture, and can be used as material for a tall hedge, trained as a bank cover, or grown as a yard or street tree.

Another native shrub growing near the Toyon is, because of its clusters of red berries, called Summer-Holly. This shrub, *Comarostaphylis diversifolia*,

is not a Holly but is a member of the Heath Family and a first cousin of the manzanitas, and also related to our native *Arbutus*.

Summer-Holly is one of the rare tree-shrubs of the chaparral and occurs sparingly along the coast of Southern California from Santa Barbara County southward into San Diego County, and is found in the canyons of the larger Channel Islands. It is a handsome evergreen shrub or small tree, sometimes growing to a height of twenty feet. The large elliptical leaves are dark glossy green above and almost white on the underside. It flowers in the spring months and displays a shower of small, pearly-white bells hanging in pendent clusters. In late summer the tree is decorated with chains of crimson berries. The fruits somewhat resemble small round strawberries and are pleasantly acid in flavor. This attractive native will grow well in the home garden, where it may be used as the accent, "feature plant" in composing the garden plan.

The manzanitas are recognized by their glossy, rich brown trunks and branches, and are among the native shrubs that home owners desire to grow in their gardens.

These predominant shrubs of the chaparral areas of California are of many varieties and range from the sand dunes of the seacoast to the high country of the mountains and onto the desert slopes. The common name Manzanita was applied to these shrubs by the early Spanish colonists and literally means "little apple," so called because the small fruits, when green, resemble little apples.

One species of this shrub, the Big Berry Manzanita, *Arctostaphylos glauca*, seems most adaptable to garden culture. This species is an erect shrub, or small tree, sometimes attaining a height of over twenty feet. Its decorative qualities are the smooth, reddish-brown bark of the trunks and larger branches, the pale green branchlets, the silver-gray foliage, and its long flowering period, which often extends from November into the late spring months. The flowers indicate that the manzanitas belong to the Heath Family. The white or pink heather bells are borne in profusion in short terminal clusters and are later followed by the clusters of large green fruits, which are red-green or brown when mature.

Another group of native shrubs introduced into the Botanic Garden and planted about the buildings, in the canyons and along the approach roads, are some of the many species of *Ceanothus*, generally called California Wild-Lilac. They are not related in any way to the true Lilac, which belongs to the Syringa Family and came into our gardens from S. E. Europe. The name "lilac" is of Arabic origin. Our shrubs belong to the Buckthorn Family. There are over forty species and varieties of the genus *Ceanothus* in California, and they range in form from low, prostrate shrubs a foot or so high to a small tree thirty feet high, with a trunk diameter of sixteen inches.

Among the species of *Ceanothus* suitable for garden culture are:

The Santa Rosa Island *Ceanothus*, *Ceanothus arboreus*. This tree is a native of Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz and Santa Catalina Islands. This is the largest member of the genus and under cultivation will attain a height of over twenty-five feet. It has smooth gray bark, felt-like evergreen leaves, and in the early spring is covered with masses of blue flowers.

Plate XXI—To the right, *Ceanothus insularis*, a young shrub in the Botanic Garden in full bloom, April, 1949. To the left, *Prunus Lyonii*, the Catalina Cherry, in the Botanic Garden, May, 1949. Photos by L. D. Robinson.

Greenbark Ceanothus, *Ceanothus spinosus*, is a large shrub, or small tree, with shining, evergreen foliage. The trunk and branches are greenish yellow. The flowering period is from February to May, at which time the tree displays masses of pale blue bloom, which varies to white. Greenbark and Santa Rosa Ceanothus require room and should be considered for locations where a mass effect is desired.

San Diego Ceanothus, *Ceanothus cyaneus*, is a native restricted to a few localities in San Diego County, the center of distribution being in the mountains east of Lakeside. This tall erect shrub is the most beautiful of all the Ceanothus. Its charm is its glossy green foliage, and, in the months of May and June, its large, 6 to 10 inch, terminal clusters of dark blue flowers. This shrub must be planted in a location that has perfect drainage; it cannot stand wet feet. The late summer months are its rest period, therefore it should be given very little water between the blooming period and the first rains. Let Nature take over.

This list should include one of the dwarf Ceanothus suitable for bank cover or rock gardens. For such locations the home gardener might use the Wavy-Leaf Ceanothus, *Ceanothus foliosus*. It is a native of the dry ridges and rocky slopes southward and into the mountains of San Diego County. This species is a low spreading shrub, 1 to 3 feet high, with slender creeping branches, and small evergreen leaves, which have wavy edges. During the flower period, March to May, this Ceanothus presents a sky-blue array of small flower clusters.

Along the walk leading to the garage, on the west side of the Administration Building, we again note the use of Red Berry as a low hedge plant.

In the planting along the south side of the automobile court is another small native that makes an effective low hedge or colorful bank cover. This plant, *Cneoridium dumosum*, Berryrupe, is a distant relative of the orange. It is a rare native limited to Orange and San Diego counties and southward into Lower California. Berryrupe, or Spice Bush, is a low, much branched shrub, 2 to 3 feet high, with fragrant yellowish green leaves, small, orange-like blossoms and red-brown berries.

Mass plantings of Oregon Grape, *Berberis Aquifolium*, form an effective approach to the Administration Building. Oregon Grape, sometimes called Hollyleaf Mahonia, is a native of the Northwest Coast and ranges from British Columbia southward into Trinity and Humboldt counties, in California. This erect, branching shrub, with glossy green young foliage shading to bronze with age, yellow flowers and blue berries is a desirable ornamental for home planting.

Other members of the Barberry Family are represented in nearby plantings. Of special interest is Nevin's Barberry, *Berberis Nevinii*, a rare species occurring in limited areas in Los Angeles County. Nevin's Barberry is a long lived species that may grow to a height of 10 or more feet. It has gray, very spiny foliage, yellow flowers and red berries, and is considered one of the choice natives for single and group planting. It will make a thick, almost impenetrable screen planting for gardens and for protection about windows.

On the north side of the Administration Building a tall, effective hedge has

been created by a planting of Catalina Cherry, *Prunus Lyonii*, a native of Catalina Island.

The large area on the east side of the Administration Building is planted with an interesting ground cover, the Dwarf Chaparral Broom, *Baccharis pilularis*, which belongs to the Sunflower Family. The native habitat of this unique, evergreen, creeping shrub is along the windswept seacoast of northern California. Its satisfactory establishment in the Garden demonstrates the practical use of this plant as a bank and ground cover for seacoast home planting, and for similar exposed situations. The Garden planting has successfully withstood many drying Santa Ana winds, and a great range of temperature conditions.

There are other trees and shrubs about the Administration Building and throughout the Garden that deserve mention. It is anticipated that they may be described in later publications of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

The reader interested in obtaining further information regarding the culture of native trees and shrubs may find valuable advice in the following publications:

"Conspicuous California Plants," by Ralph D. Cornell, in particular Chapter 31, "Native Plants in The Garden," and the appended "Garden Notes."

"An Illustrated Manual of Pacific Coast Trees," by Howard E. McMinn and Evelyn Maino, with lists of "Trees recommended for various uses on the Pacific Coast," by H. W. Shepherd, Assoc. Prof. of Landscape Design, University of California.

"An Illustrated Manual of California Shrubs," by Howard E. McMinn, Prof. of Botany in Mills College, with appended chapters on "Use of California Shrubs in Home Design," by Fred H. Schumacher, Junior Landscape Architect, U. S. Forest Service.

An excellent article in the October, 1948, issue of Sunset Magazine entitled, "Natives as Garden Shrubs."

Former "Occasional Papers" and "Monographs" and "Leaflets" published by the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

"Annual Reports" and "Leaflets" of Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.