

the dirt



SPRING 2022 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

The beauty of California indigenous plants.



Select a variety of native species for blooming cycles all year round.

More than 7,000 plant species are native to our state. Forming a striking mosaic of colors, textures, shapes and sizes, these indigenous plants are naturally adapted to our local climates and soil conditions. They save water, serve as habitat for native insects, birds and other animals that feed on their nectar, pollen and seeds... And they're beautiful.

So, why not go the extra step this spring and select only California native plants for your landscape? Our coastal

sage scrub plant community supports a mixture of evergreen and drought-deciduous plants perfectly adapted to local conditions. Many of these plants go dormant during summer. But give them a little time, and they quickly snap out of it when conditions are right. Plan around this and select a variety of indigenous plants to establish blooming cycles all year-round. Some ideal plants for our region include: California elderberries, scrub oaks, buckwheat, lilacs and sages.

Visit the California Native Plant Society at [CalScape.org](https://www.calnativeplantsociety.org) to learn more.



Check out The Shed Show!

IRWD's new fun and informative video series features everything you need to know about creating a beautiful landscape without wasting water. Episode 1 shows you how to plant a pollinator garden. Visit [IRWD.com/ShedShow](https://www.irwd.com/shedshow) to watch.

Pollinators: more than just the birds and bees.



Ian Swift

Ian Swift | Natural Resources Manager

Ian Swift is IRWD's natural resources manager. Trained in environmental biology, he oversees the District's wetland habitat, natural treatment system sites, and more.

<< At a research station in Costa Rica, Swift befriends the pet javelina Maria, who loved to have her belly rubbed.

What are pollinators, and why are they important?

Swift: Pollinators move pollen from the male to female parts of plants, assisting in fertilization. They include mammals and birds, but mainly insects. Plants have evolved to develop ingenious methods to lure pollinators for reproduction, which has led to an increase in diversity of species that is both complex and fascinating.

What native pollinators might we find in our gardens?

Swift: There are hundreds, including beetles and moths, flies, bees, wasps and hummingbirds. White-lined sphinx moths are common, as are fiery skippers and ladybugs.

What's your favorite pollinator fact?

Swift: There is a group of orchids in Central and South America whose flowers look like a spider. This fools spider-hunting wasps to attack the flower by trying to sting it. In



White-lined sphinx moth



Bembix sand wasp



Ladybug

doing so, the wasp is unknowingly coated in pollen, which it spreads to other plants.

What benefits do pollinators bring to a garden?

Swift: Native flowering plants give a much-needed boost to native pollinators, and pollinators help increase the number of flowers or fruits you have in your garden.

How are pollinator populations changing?

Swift: As habitat loss and climate change take a toll on our natural world, pollinators and the plants they depend on have suffered. Non-native species like honey bees brought in to pollinate crops escape into the natural world and displace native species. More research is needed to find suitable native

pollinators for agriculture, and whenever possible, open spaces should be planted with native plants to boost native pollinator populations.

Heart-leaved penstemon,
Keckiella cordifolia

Go wild with your landscape.

The right focal point will bring harmony to untamed borders.

When it comes to beauty, nature does it best. So why not incorporate the wilderness of unspoiled meadows and pristine wetlands into your landscape design?

Start by creating an attractive focal point. A bioswale lined with rock and native grasses can establish a theme and anchor your design with functional appeal. These landscaped depressions mimic dry creekbeds and ponds that provide habitat to watershed species, supporting indigenous plants and capturing rainwater so it isn't wasted.

When selecting plants, choose a variety of heights to add interest and dimension to your yard. Consider pairing tall grasses with succulents and low-lying groundcover—sprinkling in an abundance of native flowering shrubs to establish bursts of color year-round.

Spring is a great time to get started. Once established, these native plants will need little to no water, and maintenance will be a cinch.



Incentives and inspiration

Mulch Madness

giveaway: Get 50% off bulk mulch now through the end of the year. Visit IRWD.com/MulchMadness.

Turf rebate: IRWD is offering up to \$4 for every square foot of turf you remove for your project. Visit RightScape.com.

Garden planner:

The California Native Plant Society offers an online planner that recommends plans based on four easy questions. Visit GardenPlanner.CalScape.org.



Juan's tip of the season.

Spring clean your yard

Early spring is the perfect time to begin prepping your landscape for the season. Inspect your plants for issues such as winter damage or pests. Lightly prune evergreen plants to encourage new growth, but do not trim plants that bloom in the spring.

Clear your landscape of weeds and apply a well-balanced mixture of organic fertilizers for green foliage and flower development. Adding compost to the topsoil is also recommended to increase worm and microorganism activity in the soil, which helps break down nutrients—making them available for uptake by plants. Lastly, inspect your sprinkler system for leaks and issues and make sure it's working efficiently.

Participate in our webinars and community events

April 20 | Noon | Plants for the Planet

Select the right plants for your landscape. In this virtual webinar, we'll discuss California natives, seasonal water needs, and horticultural care tips. Sign up at RightScape.com/events.

Find more classes and events each month at RightScape.com/events.

Tap RightScape resources

Visit RightScape.com for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at RightScapeResources.com.

Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list

- **March – Mulch:** Few things brighten a garden more than mulch. It minimizes evaporation, deters weeds and promotes healthy soil. You can save 50% off a bulk purchase at IRWD.com/MulchMadness.
- **April – Manage pests:** Take care of pest problems now to prevent bigger problems in the summer. For environmentally friendly solutions, visit ipm.ucanr.edu.
- **May – Test, tune up:** As the weather warms up and plants come out of dormancy, test your irrigation system to ensure your plants get the proper amount. Check for any broken sprinklers, water lines or clogged drip lines.

About The Dirt

The Dirt is a quarterly gardening resource from Irvine Ranch Water District, created to help you grow a more beautiful, water-efficient garden. Each newsletter brings you seasonal tips to keep plants thriving all year long.

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