

Plant Communities of the East Bay

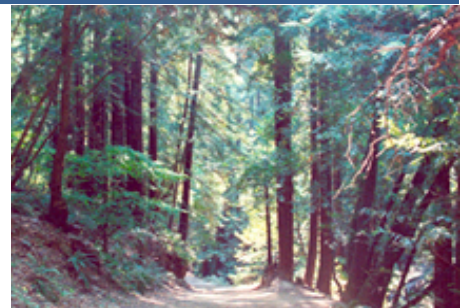
The East Bay consists of many different places, from the cool, moist saltwater marshes close to the water to the hot and dry eastern ridges and slopes. These places support a series of distinctive plant communities -- a group of plants that recurs with relative consistency, often dominated by a single species.

For your garden or landscape project, you can mimic natural processes by using the plant community concept to organize plantings. Many local native species are excellent landscape plants. This list features plant suggestions for some of the more common Bay Area plant communities.



Redwood Forest

In the East Bay, the Redwood Forest plant community exists in a shallow band across the Oakland and Berkeley hills. Redwoods are adapted to snag moisture from the summer fog with their leaves, which adds to precipitation and soil moisture. A distinctive group of understory species is adapted to the deep shade of the redwood groves. These plants tolerate part to full shade and some summer moisture. Most prefer loam or clay soil with significant amounts of organic matter, some prefer acid soil.



Botanical name	Common name
Trees	
<i>Sequoia sempervirens</i>	Redwood
Shrubs	
<i>Carpenteria californica</i>	Bush anemone
<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i>	Blue blossom
<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i>	Western hazelnut
<i>Myrica californica</i>	Pacific wax myrtle
<i>Rhamnus californica</i>	Coffeeberry
<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>	Pink-flowering currant
<i>Ribes viburnifolium</i>	Catalina perfume
<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	Huckleberry
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> , <i>S. mollis</i>	Snowberry
Herbaceous Perennials	
<i>Adiantum jordanii</i>	Five-finger fern
<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>	Western columbine
<i>Asarum caudatum</i>	Wild ginger
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Lady fern
<i>Dryopteris</i> sp.	Wood fern
<i>Heuchera maxima</i> , <i>H. micrantha</i>	Coral bells
<i>Oxalis oregana</i>	Redwood sorrel
<i>Polystichum munitum</i>	Western sword fern
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	California blackberry

<i>Smilacina racemosa</i>	False Solomon seal
<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i>	Foam flower
<i>Woodwardia fimbriata</i>	Giant chain fern

Valley and Foothill Woodland

Covering a large area of East Bay open space from near the coast to far inland, this community includes open oak savannah with grassy understory, dense oak groves crowded with shrubs and herbs, and shady bay laurel woods. This plant community is particularly rich in ecological diversity.

When planting under or near oaks it is important to choose species that are drought tolerant, as summer water can be injurious to these majestic trees. The shrubs and herbaceous perennials in this list do well in the dry, partially shaded understory conditions found in Valley and Foothill Woodland plant communities.



Botanical name	Common name
Trees	
<i>Aesculus californica</i>	California buckeye
<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>	Madrone
<i>Quercus agrifolia</i>	Coast live oak
<i>Quercus chrysolepis</i>	Canyon live oak
<i>Quercus kelloggii</i>	Black oak
<i>Quercus lobata</i>	Valley oak
<i>Quercus wislezenii</i>	Interior live oak
<i>Umbellularia californica</i>	California bay
Shrubs	
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	Manzanita (some species more shade tolerant than others)
<i>Ceanothus</i>	California lilac (some species shade tolerant)
<i>Cistus</i>	Rockrose
<i>Correa</i> 'Carmine Bells'	Australian fuchsia 'Carmine Bells'
<i>Garrya elliptica</i>	Coast silktassel
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i> *	Toyon
<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	Ocean spray
<i>Keckiella cordifolia</i>	Heartleaf keckiella
<i>Lepechinia</i>	Pitcher sage
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Oregon grape
<i>Myrica californica</i>	Pacific wax myrtle
<i>Physocarpus capitatus</i>	Ninebark
<i>Rhamnus californica</i>	Coffeeberry
<i>Ribes sanguineum glutinosum</i>	Pink currant
<i>Ribes speciosum</i>	Gooseberry
<i>Ribes viburnifolium</i>	Catalina perfume
<i>Rosa californica</i>	California rose
<i>Salvia spathacea</i>	Hummingbird sage

<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	Blue elderberry
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry

Herbaceous Perennials

<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	Mugwort
<i>Dryopteris arguta</i>	Wood fern
<i>Festuca californica</i>	California fescue
<i>Fragaria californica</i>	California strawberry
<i>Heracleum lanatum</i>	Cow parsnip
<i>Iris douglasiana</i>	Douglas iris
<i>Juncus patens</i>	Common rush
<i>Leymus condensatus</i> 'Canyon Prince'	Giant wild rye
<i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i> , <i>M. bifidus</i> , <i>M. puniceus</i>	Monkeyflower
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Deer grass
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Polypody fern
<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	Thimbleberry
<i>Rubus vitifolius</i>	California blackberry
<i>Satureja douglasii</i>	Yerba buena
<i>Stachys ajugoide</i>	Hedge nettle
<i>Tellima grandiflora</i>	Fringe cups

Vines

<i>Lonicera hispidula</i>	California honeysuckle
<i>Vitis californica</i>	Wild grape

Coastal Prairie

Occupying slopes close to the bay, this community is dominated by grasses and low herbs. Once consisting primarily of native perennial bunchgrasses and annual wildflowers, it now includes many weedy annual species brought here by successive waves of European immigration. Large portions of the Oakland and Berkeley hills were once Coastal Prairie, but have been converted to woodland in the course of urbanization.



Botanical name	Common name
Herbaceous Perennials	
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	White yarrow
<i>Calamagrostis nutkaensis</i>	Reed grass
<i>Calochortus luteus</i>	Golden mariposa
<i>Carex tumulicola</i>	Dwarf sedge
<i>Danthonia californica</i>	Wild oat grass
<i>Deschampsia caespitosa holciformis</i>	Hair grass
<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	Fescue bunchgrass
<i>Iris douglasiana</i>	Douglas iris

Pteridium aquilinum pubescens

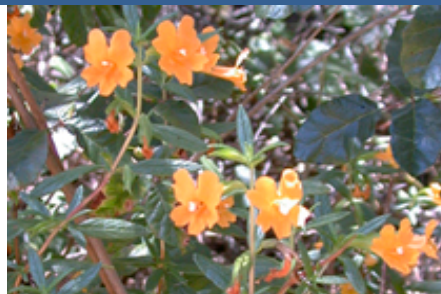
Bracken fern

Sisyrinchium bellum

Blue-eyed grass

Northern Coastal Scrub

Also known as "Soft Chaparral", the Northern Coastal Scrub plant community is often found close to Coastal Prairie on west-facing slopes of thin soil. Northern Coastal Scrub is also influenced by marine exposure, but is dominated by low shrubs.



Botanical name	Common name
Shrubs	
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> 'Pt. Reyes'	Manzanita
<i>Artemisia californica</i>	Coast sagebrush
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i> var. <i>consanguinea</i>	Coyote brush
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i> ssp. <i>pilularis</i>	Dwarf coyote brush
<i>Ceanothus gloriosus</i>	Ceanothus
<i>Ceanothus cuneatus</i>	Buckbrush
<i>Cercocarpus betuloides</i>	Mountain mahogany
<i>Diplacus aurantiacus</i>	Monkeyflower
<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i> *	Toyon
<i>Lupinus albifrons</i> *	Bush lupine
<i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i>	Sticky monkeyflower
<i>Rhamnus californica</i>	Coffeeberry
<i>Salvia melifera</i>	Black sage
Herbaceous Perennials	
<i>Chlorogolum pomeridianum</i>	Soap plant
<i>Epilobium canum</i>	California fuchsia
<i>Heracleum lanatum</i>	Cow parsnip
<i>Scrophularia californica</i>	Bee plant
<i>Wyethia angustifolia</i>	Mule's ears

Valley Grassland

Once common in interior valleys, Valley Grassland has suffered from agricultural development, introduction of invasive weeds, and urbanization. It now survives only in scattered remnants.



Herbaceous Perennials

<i>Calochortus luteus</i>	Golden mariposa
<i>Dichelostemma capitatum</i>	Bluedicks
<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	California poppy
<i>Nasella lepida</i>	Needlegrass
<i>Nasella pulchra</i>	Purple needlegrass
<i>Sidalcea malviflora</i>	Checkerbloom
<i>Sisyrinchium bellum</i>	Blue-eyed grass
<i>Solidago californica</i>	California goldenrod
<i>Triteleia laxa</i>	Ithuriel's spear
<i>Wyethia angustifolia</i>	Mule's ears

*Considered poisonous. Classified as "Major Toxicity" by California Poison Control System 2010.

The Bay-Friendly approach to landscapes and gardens was pioneered in Alameda County by StopWaste in collaboration with home gardeners, landscape professionals and public agencies. Find out more at www.StopWaste.org.

