



Plant This, Not That

A guide to invasive species

Create beauty while you establish natural habitat by replacing invasive plants with native ones.

This guide will steer you in the right direction at the nursery — away from commonly seen invasive plants that grow aggressively, spread quickly, and displace native plants in our ecosystem.



Ornamental Grasses

Grasses can provide a wonderful textural element to your garden. Unfortunately, many commonly found in the marketplace have proven to be prolific seeders that create an invasive mess in our natural environment. Some of the biggest offenders include pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), Mexican

feathergrass (*Nassella tenuissima*), and fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceum*).

We suggest going with a native alternative like leafy reedgrass (*Calamagrostis foliosa*). This plant is compact in size, has delightful flowers, and supports habitat for moths and skippers. If you're looking for something a little larger, consider deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), which looks great throughout the year, handles drought like a champ, and produces seeds that provide food for many different bird species.



Ground Covers

Ground covers help prevent erosion, reduce soil moisture loss, knit plants together in design, and support habitat. Unfortunately, some nonnative options are among the most aggressive in the invasive plant world. One common example to avoid is bigleaf periwinkle (*Vinca major*). This plant grows in moist conditions in both sun and shade

and is particularly problematic in riparian zones.

Why not try some wild strawberries (*Fragaria vesca* and *F. chiloensis*) instead. Both of these native species serve as lovely ground covers for partly shady areas, and both support habitat for a wide array of moths and skippers.



Shrubs

Shrubs are woody plants that provide a vital foundation for any garden. In California, we are fortunate to have some of the most iconic, beautiful shrubs in the world. However, among invasive shrubs, you'll find Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), which forms monocultures that don't support much wildlife, and orange cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster*

franchetii), which is a super spreader that chokes out native plants.

A much better option is deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*). This perennial subshrub grows quickly and performs well in a variety of habitats and conditions, from dry hillsides to coastal sandy zones. Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) also makes a great hedge plant. It produces beautiful red berries that attract and feed birds in winter, in addition to providing habitat to several kinds of butterflies, moths, and skippers.



Trees

Nothing is better than enjoying your summer landscape in the cool shade of an established tree — preferably with a cold drink in hand!

Instead of the Brazilian pepper tree (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), which has become a massive nuisance, plant an oak (*Quercus* sp.). Coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*) provide vital structure,

shade, and habitat for a variety of butterflies, moths, and skippers. One oak alone can support up to 500 species of caterpillars that, in turn, help feed songbirds and other creatures. We also recommend the island oak (*Quercus tomentella*) and, for spots farther south in California, the Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*), which has a beautiful overall form and develops gnarled, spreading branches over time.

