Maintenance of Native Plants
Alison Shilling

A presentation at Bringing Nature Home, Transitioning to a Beautiful, Water-Wise, Native Garden

Native Gardening Workshop Presented by the Sacramento Valley Chapter of California Native Plant Society, September 8, 2012
Overview

- Planting – new plants, transplanting
- Pruning – for health and beauty
- Habitat
- Environmental disorders
- Pests
- Diseases
- Gardening for fire
Planting for Success

• Plant about same size as pot
  – no moss, root crown not covered
• Trees/shrubs, younger is better
• Shade young plants
• Transplant in cool season
  – the younger the better
• Beware root-bound plant
Pot-bound Achillea
Roots unraveled
Pruning for Health and Beauty

• Use the right tool
  – sharpened, sterilized, oiled

• Shaping, the younger the better
  – as tree or shrub
  – to get balance
  – to keep low or make denser
  – to open, to show form
Incorrect – this cut will leave a stub

Correct – this cut is close to the branch
Young Ceanothus
Artemisia before pruning
Artemisia
Arctostaphylos ‘Sentinel’ = Manzanita
Salvia ‘Ground Cover’
Timing

• Deciduous
  – usually dormant, can tolerate in summer
• Evergreen
  – little & often
  – conifers not into old wood
  – oaks in summer
  – manzanitas in spring
• If in doubt, after bloom or when producing new growth
Salvia half-pruned
Radical Pruning

• After blooming
  – Epilobium
  – Salvia leucophylla
  – some grasses
  – some annuals & perennials may rebloom

• To reinvigorate or change shape
  – trees/shrubs: redwood, willows

• Grape
Grape on Grapefruit Tree
Poppies in May
Poppies in July
Maintenance for Habitat

• Birds need
  – cover for nests: dense trees & shrubs
  – nest material: fluff, twigs
  – seeds [do not deadhead] & berries
  – insects in spring for their young

• Bees need
  – bare ground for nests: leave patches without mulch
  – pollen & nectar

• Care with pesticides
Finches on Sunflower
Environmental Disorders

• Sun exposure
  – leaf sunburn & bark sunscald
• Water Management
  – later deeply to supplement in winter
  – beware too much water
• Mulches
  – organic ones can help soil balance
• Mineral imbalances
  – can have too much nitrogen
  – selenium in Davis
Calycanthus occidentalis – Spicebush
Pests

- IPM principles: [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu)
- Monitor, tolerate a little damage
- Use barriers, beneficial insects
- Damage versus habitat
- Aphids
  - control ants that ‘farm’ aphids
- Slugs & snails
  - trap in wet newspaper or bait with beer
Mechanical Barriers

Below ground cage for gophers

Above ground cage for deer, rodents and birds
Caterpillar on Pipevine
Caterpillar with Aphids
Diseases

Molds, rots, mildews, fungi
Healthy Natives are quite resistant
Prune infected twigs to good wood
Rake & destroy infected leaves
If in doubt, avoid overhead irrigation
Weeds

- Physical control best
  - pull when young, especially before seeding
- Mow rather than till
  - no soil disturbance to expose weed seeds
- Mulch about 4” thick
  - BUT organic mulches decompose & can enrich soil too much
Fire Safety near House

• Zone nearest house [30’]
  – low plants, well-irrigated: ground cover, succulents

• ‘Fuel modification’ zone [30’ – 100’]
  – make ‘islands’ of vegetation + bare ground
  – ‘open’ trees, prune branches off ground

• Beware combustibles
  – conifers, brooms
  – oily leaves [e.g. Eucalyptus]
Some Low-Fuel Plants

- Manzanita – low
- Ceanothus – low
- Penstemon
- Monkey-flower
- Coral Bells
- Iris
- Columbine
- Succulents

- California Fuchsia
- Fuchsia-fld Currant
- Milkweed
- Sugarbush
- Desert Willow
- Western Redbud
- Toyon
- Holly-leaf cherry
Reference