

After careful garden design, planting techniques, and proper water-wise irrigation, it is quite a joy to see our plants establishing and some even blooming especially as temperatures soar! Summer color can bring that cheery vivaciousness to any sun-drenched landscape. I have picked some great garden goodies to plant this coming fall that will provide floriferous color next summer.

The various microclimates on the Central Coast can have drastically differing soils, sun exposures, and temperature extremes. Even modest topographical elevation change within your neighborhood can affect these conditions; cold air is heavy and will persist much longer in uphill environs. Be sure to do a bit of research regarding your particular microclimate when choosing new plants for your garden.

My favorite summer-flowering California native perennials that can bloom under the most rugged and harsh temperatures are in the genus *Eriogonum* or the buckwheats. Several different varieties of this perennial are available at local nurseries supporting native plants. For example, the compact **Saffron Buckwheat** (*Eriogonum crocatum*) has stark white leaves with a flurry of sulfur yellow flower heads suspended a few inches above the foliage. The **Rosy Buckwheat** (*Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*) is a splendid plant with another compact habit, bright green leaves with white undersides supporting a dizzying bouquet of blush, rosy pink flowers. Finally, **St. Catherine's Lace** (*Eriogonum giganteum*) is a large sub-shrub touting giant pale pink umbels, eventually turning to a rustic metallic color. These large umbels make great dried cut-flowers. Buckwheats tend to invite good beneficial insects into the garden.

Summer-flowering shrubs need not be overlooked for added height and interest. A rich merlot-hued leaf of the **Smoke Bush** (*Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple') combined with its smoky plumes of miniature inflorescence make this deciduous shrub irresistible. Of course, a summer garden would not be complete without fluttering butterflies

Black-eyed Susans



HOT SUMMER PLANTS

indulging on the various colorful blossoms and cultivars of the **Butterfly Bush** (*Buddleia* sp.). And a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but not perform as well as the pure-white double blossoms of the **Iceberg Rose** (*Rosa* 'Iceberg').

A mixed perennial summer border would be undone without the colorful companions of **Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*). Some of my favorite new varieties are the dark wine-red **'Paprika,'** erect bright yellow **'Sunbeam,'** soft peach **'Terra Cotta,'** rabbit-resistant, compact, white **'Sonoma Coast,'** and pure pastel **'Island Pink.'** Most yarrow makes great cut-flowers. Some additional summer cut-flowers are the cobalt-blue Mediterranean **Globe Thistle** (*Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'), **Echinacea purpurea** 'White Swan' with its elegant slender stem and white petals, and **Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia hirta*).

If you live in a windy locale, plant summer-flowering ornamental grasses and use nature

as a way to make them dance and create movement in the garden. A strong vertical statement when blooming is the native **Deer Grass** (*Muhlenbergia rigens*). A stiff structured grass with a silvery cloud of steel wool is **Heavy Metal Switchgrass** (*Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal'). To remind you of the family trip to the fair, plant the unmistakable cotton-candy-flowering **Pink Muhly** (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*). For a glaucous-blue excellent evergreen grass use **Canyon Prince Wild Rye** (*Leymus condensatus* 'Canyon Prince').

If you just can't wait until the ideal fall weather for planting these hot summer plant picks, be sure to supplement with adequate irrigation to prevent wilt or worse, desiccation (botanic term for plant death). Enjoy your summer and your gardens.

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TODD DAVIDSON OWNS
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