

Welcome to the Nurture Nature Network!

Creating a Home Garden to Nurture Nature



Sierra Club North County Group (NCG) invites you to join the Nurture Nature Neighborhood Network as we plant native plants, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood for the benefit of butterflies, birds, pollinators, people, and all beings!

We learn, plan, and plant natives together and keep track of our collective effort to increase ecological productivity in our own back (and front) yards, patios, and balconies.

It doesn't matter how large or small your planting area is. Even one native plant can benefit many species. For example, one oak tree helps 163 butterfly species or one Fuschia-flowered gooseberry can help 71 species. Even the diminutive California aster can help up to 10 species.

There is a lot to learn so please don't be overwhelmed. Here's our step-by-step approach below.

Creating Your Homegrown Nurture Nature Garden

Step 1: Get the list of plants best suited to your area

Go to the CALSCAPE website <https://calscape.org/>, plug in your address and make a list of the plants that are native to your property. This is an amazing resource. If you are interested in butterflies, you can also print out your list in order of the plants that support the most butterfly species. This list is important because you are likely to have more success if your plants are truly native to the areas.

Step 2: Two Important Reads

A. CALSCAPEs Planting Guide <https://calscape.org/planting-guide.php>

This is the most important thing to read to orient ourselves toward native plants and what they need. It isn't long, but it is great!

B. Nature's Best Hope for Inspiration (optional but fun!)

Highly recommended is [Nature's Best Hope](#) by Douglas Tallamy for inspiration and information. He reminds us that native plants, insects, and birds all co-evolved for millions of years. Many/most introduced or non-native species cannot be eaten or used by local species. This leaves much of non-native or exotic landscapes with low to no ecological benefit. This is just one of many reasons that making the switch to native plants is nature's best hope.

Step 3: Use the Calscape Garden Planner

Fill out the CALSCAPE Garden Planner and see what you think <https://gardenplanner.calscape.org/> This will help you think about what your goals for your native plant garden are. Do you want to support birds, butterflies, and pollinators? Do you want to ultimately water less? Do you want year-round flowers? Do you want more trees? A hedge? Flowers?

Step 4: Pick your area and draw a map.

Decide where you'd like to try native planting first. If this is your first attempt, maybe the smaller the better. Make a drawing of the site. Figure out what kind of sun and shade it has. Are the soils clay, loam, or sandstone? Flat or on a bank? Turns out, all these things matter.

Step 5: Pick the best plants

This is the fun part. Now, go back to your Calscape list and pick the species that fit your goals above. You'll see they are organized by trees, shrubs, low water, full sun, shade, damp areas etc.... Doing this will really narrow your list. (My particular favorite category is the 'Very Easy'!)

Step 6: Learn about and remove invasive species.

Invasive plants are a **HUGE** problem. Some are worse than others. Some are on the '[Don't Plant](#)' list. Major candidates are Fountain Grass, vinca, heavenly bamboo, Chinese Pepper Trees, and Pampas Grass. There are a few that you will want to remove if you have them for more success. Here is a [list of alternatives to some non-native plants](#) that serve similar functions but are MUCH more beneficial to nature. Here is [another list of great alternatives](#).

Step 7: Learn Even More

Natives best for Shade: <https://californianativeplants.com/blog/workshops/shady-with-katie/>

Natives for Butterflies: <https://californianativeplants.com/blog/workshops/the-art-science-of-butterfly-gardening/>

Plants for our area: <https://californianativeplants.com/blog/intermediate-gardening/>

Step 8: Check out the native plant nurseries

- [Moosa Creek](#), Valley Center but you must buy through a local dealer, they will also come plant your plants for you if you'd like.
- Tree of Life, San Juan Cap, [great catalogue, amazing info https://californianativeplants.com/](#)
- Native West Nursery (formerly RECON) <https://nativewest.com/plants>
NativeGrownNursery@gmail.com, Eric Landelius, local Escondido business, 760-472-3117, will deliver plants and mulch and you can buy Moosa Creek plants through him.
- [El Plantio](#) in Escondido is also a place to purchase plants from Moosa Creek.



Monarch on narrow-leaf milkweed in an Escondido Nurture Nature Garden

Step 9: Create the beginning list of plants you are interested in and draw out your plan.

Start looking more closely at your list, learning about what they need, and who they grow well will. Here the Tree of Life Nursery materials and website are super helpful. You can also read Greg Rubin's [Cal Native Landscapes](#) (he's a great designer and local to Escondido!) I have a couple other books you are welcome to check out. If you have some space, designate an area that is OK to look a little raggedy during part of the year so you can use highly beneficial plants that go dormant but have amazing ecological benefits. It is also good to designate a wood or stick pile area that is out of sight. Last, native bees often need mud and bare earth as they are ground nesters. Save some space for these needs too!

Step 10: Learn how to water natives

<https://californianativeplants.com/blog/watering-native-plants/>

Especially when they are just planted or through the first year, native plants will need watering. This is an interesting topic that we need to study to do well. Depending on how large your first native plant garden it, will matter how you water it through the first summer.

Step 11: Buying and Planting

General wisdom I have heard is that October or November is really the best/safest time to plant your natives. But lots of plants, especially the tough ones, can be planted in the spring. You may just have to watch them more carefully through the summer. Milkweed can be planted in the spring. There is an annual Cal Native Plant Society Plant Sale in Balboa Park every fall. You can also go to the nurseries when you are ready.

Here is how to plant natives! <https://californianativeplants.com/blog/planting-guide/>

Step 12: Learn about mulch/top dressing

This video by Mike Evans at Tree of Life has it ALL! The first 30 minutes at the science and background of top dressing. To see the types start at 28 minutes. It is great.

<https://californianativeplants.com/blog/workshops/the-low-down-dirt-on-mulch/>

Step 13: Join Great Groups, Help Others

- Sierra Club North County Group <https://sierraclubncg.org/>
- San Diego California Native Plant Society <https://www.cnpssd.org/>
- [Lake Hodges Native Plant Club](#) Facebook Group
- [Escondido and Valley Center CA Native Plant Fans](#) Facebook Group

OPTIONAL: Native Plant Landscape Designers

If you want to hire a professional designer (highly recommended!) here are some great ones.

1. Greg Rubin <https://www.calown.com/index.html> Greg has a great list of 'favorite plants!' https://www.calown.com/nativegarden_plants.html
2. Revolution Landscape <https://www.revolutionlandscape.com/>
3. Kay Stewart, is a wonderful designer, <http://www.kaylarch.com/process.php>
4. NativeGrownNursery@gmail.com, Eric Landelius, local Escondido business, 760-472-3117, will deliver plants and mulch and you can buy Moosa Creek plants through him. Located in North County.

Rainwater Harvesting

Before planting natives you may want to plant the rain. Sky Mountain Water Harvesting specializes in rainwater tanks, greywater systems and earthworks to maximize the use of the rain that falls on your property. Check out Sky Mountain Rainwater Harvesting Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/Sky-Mountain-Permaculture-179999305352524/about/?ref=page_internal or contact Aldenhough1@gmail.com or call at 760-975-6523

Contact us and let us know how it's going and report your success?

Conservation@sierraclubncg.org