



# Recommended Plants for Sonoma County for Small Gardens

The selection of plants on this list is not intended to be exhaustive. There are many more plants that can be—and are—grown successfully in Sonoma County. The selected plants are likely to be the most successful. Our 30 very favorites, which we call the Sonoma Superstars, are marked with a star in the left margin.

Where space is limited, select naturally small-growing species or dwarf cultivars of larger plants. Be sure to check information tags at time of purchase for ultimate height and width that will suit your planting area.

See our glossary of plant list descriptors at [http address] for explanations of these descriptors.

- ★ = Sonoma Superstars
- s = small
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- g = large
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## Trees

Arbutus unedo (strawberry tree)	s m	L	S A P	W B E D	2 3 4
<i>When mature, prune lower branches to expose multiple branches and peeling bark. Can be grown as large shrub or small tree.</i>					
★ Cercis occidentalis (western redbud)	s	V	S A P	N W D C	2 3 4
<i>Can be grown as a large shrub or small tree. Remove dead or twiggy branches. Clean up seed pods as they drop.</i>					
Crataegus phaenopyrum (Washington thorn, Washington haw)	m	M	S	W D	3
<i>Once established tolerates infrequent watering.</i>					
Ficus carica (edible fig)	m	M	S	W D	3
Luma apiculata (Chilean myrtle)	s	M	S A P	E D	3
<i>Beautiful bark. Good hedge or screen or specimen plant. Can be grown as large shrub or small tree.</i>					
Vitex agnus-castus (chaste tree)	s	L	S	B	3 4
<i>May be grown as shrub or small tree. Dormant for 6 months of the year. Blooms in mid-summer.</i>					

## Shrubs

Abelia x grandiflora (glossy abelia)	s m g	M	S A P	E	3
<i>Prune selectively to maintain graceful arching shape. Compact and dwarf cultivars are available.</i>					
★ Arctostaphylos spp (manzanita)	s m g	L	S A P	N W B E D C	1 2 3 4
<i>Plants vary from creeping groundcovers to treelike shrubs. A. densiflora 'Howard McMinn' is one of the most garden tolerant manzanitas and is native to Sonoma County. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>					
Artemisia spp (sagebrush)	s m	L V	S	E D C	3 4
<i>Woody perennials vary from prostrate to mounding. Prune to maintain shape and rejuvenate. Avoid planting 'Valerie Finiss' and 'Silver King' which may spread too vigorously.</i>					
★ Berberis thunbergii and cvs (barberry)	s m g	M	S A P	W D C X	3
<i>Some species are deciduous. Many cultivars have attractive foliage colors such as lime green and burgundy. Dwarf varieties available. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>					

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Buxus spp (boxwood) <i>English boxwood (B.sempervirens) is sensitive to sunburn and drought; Japanese boxwood (B.microphylla japonica) is more resilient and in complete shade survives with no supplemental water.</i>	s m	M	S A P F	E D	X	3
Callistemon spp (bottle brush) <i>Red, pink, or yellow bristly flower clusters resemble bottle brushes. Varies from 3' dwarf to tree size. Do not prune into bare wood. Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s g	L	S A P	W E D		3 4
★ Ceanothus spp and cvs (California lilac) <i>The most drought tolerant and deer resistant have small, dark green, crinkly leaves. Those with larger glossy foliage benefit from summer irrigation and shade inland. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>	m g	M L	S A P	N W B E D C		3 4
Cistus spp (rock rose) <i>Needs good drainage. Tolerates poor soil and neglect. Remove dead interior branches; replace woody plants after several years.</i>	s m	L	S	E D		3 4
★ Correa spp (Australian fuschia) <i>May be hedged.</i>	s m	L	S A P	W B E D		2 3 4
Daphne spp (daphne) <i>Extremely fragrant flowers. D. odora is low water use; may be finicky. All need excellent drainage. Compact forms available.</i>	s m	M L	A P	E D	X	3 4
Encelia californica (coast sunflower) <i>Will drop leaves if no summer irrigation.</i>	s	L	S	N B E C T		3
Erica spp (heath) <i>Prefer acid soil with organic content. Require good drainage. Some frost tender.</i>	s m	M	S A P	E D		3
Escallonia spp (escallonia) <i>Good hedge or screen. Long summer bloom. In hard freeze can die back, but recovers. 'Kompakta' is a dwarf variety.</i>	s m g	M	S A P	E D		3
Euonymus japonicus (evergreen euonymus) <i>Many cultivars available.</i>	m g	L	S A P	E	X	2 3 4
Grevillea spp (grevillea) <i>Huge variation in size and form. Needle-leaved species are deer-proof. Avoid phosphorus fertilizers. Remove rangy growth.</i>	s m g	L	S A P	W E D C		3 4
Hebe spp (hebe) <i>Many varieties. Good as accent plants or small hedges. Remove woody interior stems.</i>	s m	M	S A P	B E		3
Helianthemum nummularium (sunrose)	s	L	S	B E D C		3 4
★ Hydrangea quercifolia (oak leaf hydrangea) <i>Tolerates dry conditions. Great fall color. Prune immediately after bloom. Dwarf cultivars available.</i>	m g	M	S A P		X	2 3
Lavandula spp (lavender) <i>Many varieties of varying sizes. Shear annually to green buds near woody base.</i>	s	L	S	B E D		3 4
★ Loropetalum chinense (fringe flower) <i>Burgundy-leaved cultivars make wonderful specimen plants. New dwarf varieties available. Remove dead interior branches.</i>	s g	L	S A P	E		2 3 4
Luma apiculata (Chilean myrtle) <i>Beautiful bark. Good hedge or screen or specimen plant. Can be grown as large shrub or small tree.</i>	g	M	S A P	E D		3

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Mimulus [Diplacus] aurantiacus and hybrids (sticky monkey flower) <i>Woody-based perennial. Thin out twiggy growth; cut back annually to emerging buds on woody base.</i>	s	L V	S A P	N	B E D C			3 4
Myrsine africana (African boxwood) <i>Useful hedge in hot dry climates</i>	m g	L	S A P		E D			2 3 4
Myrtus communis (common myrtle) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s g	L	S A P		E D			3 4
★ Nandina domestica & cvs (heavenly bamboo) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	M L	S A P F		E D	X		2 3 4
Osmanthus heterophyllus (hollyleaf osmanthus)	s m g	M	P		E D			3
Pinus mugo (mugo pine) <i>To ensure small size, plant named cultivars only.</i>	s m	L	S		E D			3
Pittosporum tenuifolium (black stem pittosporum) <i>Excellent as a hedge. Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	M	S		E	X		3
Pittosporum tobira (mock orange) <i>Dwarf and variegated varieties available.</i>	s m g	L	S A P		B E	X		3 4
Punica granatum (pomegranate) <i>Dwarf version available for smaller gardens.</i>	s m g	L	S A P		B			3 4
Rosmarinus officinalis (rosemary) <i>Varies from groundcover to upright or trailing shrubs.</i>	s m	L	S A P		W B E D C		1	3 4
Salvia greggii & hybrids (autumn sage)	s m	L	S A P		W B	D T		3 4
Spiraea spp (spiraea, bridal wreath) <i>Dwarf cultivars are available.</i>	s m g	M	S A P		W B			3

## Ground Covers

Artemisia pycnocephala 'David's Choice' (sandhill sage) <i>A particularly fine cultivar of this Sonoma County native. Short-lived; replace every 2 or 3 years.</i>	s	V	S		N W B E D C			3
Chamaemelum nobile (chamomile) <i>Sheer as a lawn substitute; 'Treneague' requires no mowing.</i>	s	L	S A P		W E D		1	3 4
★ Dymondia margaretae (dymondia) <i>Excellent walk-on lawn substitute.</i>	s	L	S A P F		E D		1 2	3 4
Euonymus fortunei (winter creeper) <i>Many cultivars available.</i>	m g	M	S A P		E C	X	1	3
Grindelia stricta [G. arenicola] (Pacific grindelia, gumplant)	s	L	S A P	N	B E D T		1	3 4
Lupinus albifrons collinus (prostrate lupine)	s	V	S		N B E D C		1	3 4
Mahonia repens [Berberis aquifolium var repens] (Oregon grape) <i>Needs part shade in hottest locations.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N W	E D C		1 2	3 4
Ophiopogon japonicus nanus (dwarf mondo grass) <i>Full sun only in coastal regions.</i>	s	M	A P F		E D C		1	3
Ribes viburnifolium (evergreen currant, Catalina perfume)	m	L	P F	N W	D C		2 3	4
Rubus calycinoides (trailing thimbleberry) <i>Requires little water in shade.</i>	m	M	S A P	W	E D C		1 2	3
Satureja [Clinopodium] douglasii (yerba buena)	s	L	P F	N W B E	D C		1 2 3	4
Tanacetum densum ssp amani (partridge feather)	s	L	S A P		E D			3
Teucrium cossonii majoricum (Majorcan germander)	s	V	S		B E D		1	3 4
★ Verbena spp (verbena)	s	M L	S		B E D		1	3 4

## Vines

Clematis spp <i>Plant in sun but provide shade for roots. Some can be rampant. Some are evergreen. Small varieties are available.</i>	s m g	M	S A P			X		3
Clematis lasiantha (pipestem clematis)	m g	L	S A P	N	B	D	X	2 3 4



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Eriogonum spp (wild buckwheats) <i>Many native species, all great habitat plants. E. grande rubescens is especially showy</i>	s m	L V	S	N W B E	D C		3 4
Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve' (wallflower)	m	L	S A P		B E D		3 4
Eschscholzia californica (California poppy) <i>Native has orange or yellow flowers. Cultivars available with red, pink, white, cream, salmon flowers.</i>	s	V	S	N	B D		3
Euphorbia x martinii (Martin's euphorbia) <i>Less invasive than other euphorbias.</i>	m	L	S A P		E D	X	2 3 4
Fragaria vesca (woodland strawberry) <i>Can be used as a groundcover.</i>	s	M	S A P	N	E D		1 3
Gaillardia grandiflora (blanket flower)	s m	L	S		E		3 4
Gazania spp <i>May be used as lawn substitute.</i>	s	M	S A P		E D		3
Geranium spp (cranesbill, hardy geranium) <i>Plants in some shade require less water. Many cultivars available. Some are invasive.</i>	s	M	S A P		E		3
★ Helleborus spp (hellebore, Christmas rose) <i>Water requirements vary greatly by species. H. orientalis needs moderate water. H. argutifolia and H. foetidus are most drought-tolerant.</i>	m	M L	A P F		E D	X	2 3 4
Heuchera spp (coral bells) <i>Non-native species typically have dramatic foliage.</i>	s	M	P				2 3
Heuchera maxima (island alum root)	s m	M	S A P	N	E	T	2 3
Heuchera micrantha (alum root) <i>Native to Sonoma County.</i>	s	M	S A P	N	E		2 3
Iberis sempervirens (candytuft) <i>Will tolerate dry conditions. Shear after bloom to stimulate growth.</i>	s	M	S A P		E D		3
Iris douglasiana (Douglas iris hybrids, Pacific Coast iris) <i>Takes full sun along coast, some shade inland. Tends to self-sow in shade.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	E D		2 3 4
Kniphofia spp (red hot poker, torch lily) <i>Needs very little water once established. Groom in spring to maintain appearance.</i>	m	L	S A P	W	E D		3 4
Lessingia [Corethrogyne] filaginifolia (California aster, silver car) <i>Does best on dry, rocky slopes. 'Silver Carpet' is best variety.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	B D		3 4
Limonium perezii (sea lavender, statice) <i>Does well in seaside gardens.</i>	m	L	S		D T		3 4
Liriope spp (lily turf) <i>Grass-like perennial. Suitable for dry shady areas.</i>	s	M	S A P F		D		3
Lupinus bicolor (blue and white lupine, miniature lupine) <i>Short-lived native perennial.</i>	s	V	S	N	B E D		3 4
Monardella villosa (coyote mint)	s	V	S A P	N	B D		2 3 4
★ Nepeta spp (catmint or catnip)	s m	L	S A P		B D		3 4
Origanum spp (oregano)	s m	M	S A P		B D		3
Penstemon spp (penstemon, beard tongue)	m	M	S A P		B		3
Penstemon heterophyllus (blue foothill penstemon, California penstemon)	s	L	S A P	N	B		3 4
Perovskia atriplicifolia (Russian sage) <i>Dwarf cultivars available. Cut to emerging low buds after last frost.</i>	s m g	L	S		B D		3

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Ranunculus californicus (California buttercup)	s	V	S	N	B			3
Rudbeckia spp (gloriosa daisy, black eyed susan)	m	M	S A P	W	B	D		3
★ Salvia spp, non-native (sages) <i>Many varieties available. Recommended species are S. leucantha, S. chamaedryoides, S. officinalis</i>	s m g	M L	S A P	W	B	D	T	3 4
★ Santolina spp (lavender cotton)	m	L	S A P		E	D		2 3 4
Scabiosa spp (pincushion flower)	s m	M	S		B			3
Stachys byzantina (lamb's ears)	s	L	S A P		E	D		2 3 4
Tanacetum parthenium 'Aureum' (feverfew) <i>Chartreuse foliage. Excellent for beneficial insects. Reseeds.</i>	m	L	S A P F		B			3
★ Teucrium chamaedrys (germander)	s	L	S		B	E	D	3 4
Thymus spp (thyme) <i>Genus includes ground-covers and upright or mounding perennials.</i>	s	L	S A P		B	E	D	1 2 3
Tulbaghia violacea (society garlic) <i>Attracts bees.</i>	s	L	S		B	E	D X	3 4
Verbena lilacina 'De La Mina' (Cedros Island verbena)	m	L	S A P	N	B	E	T	3
Zauschneria [Epilobium] spp (California fuchsia) <i>Attractive to pollinators. Cut back after bloom to renew. May spread to form colonies.</i>	s m	L	S	N	W	B	D C	3 4

## Succulents

Agave spp (agave) <i>Many smaller species available, suitable for small gardens. Some are frost tender. Avoid A. americana which grows large and is difficult to remove.</i>	s m g	L V	S			E	D C T	3 4
Aloe spp (aloes) <i>Most make outstanding container plants.</i>	s m g	L	S A P			E	T	2 3 4
Cotyledon spp (cotyledon)	s m	L	S A P			E	D T	2 3 4
Dudleya spp (cliff lettuce, live forever)	s	L	A P	N	E	T		2 3 4
Sedum spp (stonecrop) <i>Large genus with much variation. Some are frost tender.</i>	s m	L	S A P		B	T		2 3 4
Sedum spathulifolium (common stonecrop) <i>Purpureum has deep purple foliage.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	W	B		2 3
Sempervivum spp (houseleek) <i>Tolerates both wet and cold conditions.</i>	s	L	S A P		B	D		2 3 4
Senecio mandraliscae (blue chalk fingers)	s	L	S A P				T X	3 4
Yucca filamentosa and cvs (yucca) <i>'Bright Edge' and 'Color Guard' are recommended dwarf cultivars.</i>	s m	L	S			E	D	3 4

## Grasses and Grass-like Plants

Bouteloua gracilis (blue grama grass) <i>Retains its attractive shape even when dormant. Attractive reddish flower heads in summer.</i>	m	L	S A P	N	W	B	D	3 4
★ Calamagrostis foliosa (Cape Mendocino reed grass)	s m	M	S A P	N	B	E	D	3
★ Carex spp (sedge) <i>Brown, green, or variegated varieties provide contrast in color and texture.</i>	s m	M	S A P F	W	B	E	D C	3
Carex texensis (catlin sedge)	s	L	A P F		B	E	D C	2 3 4
Carex tumulicola (foothill sedge)	m	L	A P F N		B	E	D C	2 3 4
Chondropetalum tectorum (cape reed) <i>Tolerates standing water. May be grown in rain gardens.</i>	m	L	S A P	W	E	D		2 3 4

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Deschampsia cespitosa (tufted hair grass) <i>Subspecies D. holciformis is good for rain gardens.</i>	m	L	S A P	N	E D	3 4
Festuca californica (California fescue)	s	L	S A P F	N	E D	2 3 4
Festuca glauca (Elijah blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	L	A P		D	2 3 4
★ Festuca idahoensis (Idaho blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	V	S A P	N	B E D	2 3 4
Festuca rubra (red fescue) <i>Great lawn replacement in shade. Does not require mowing.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	B E D C	2 3 4
Helictotrichon sempervirens (blue oat grass) <i>Needs good drainage.</i>	m	L	S A P		E D	3 4
Juncus patens (California grey rush) <i>Thrives in moist soil or shallow water. Good for rain gardens. Shear back old clumps to renew.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N	E D C	2 3 4
★ Lomandra longifolia (mat rush) <i>Extremely drought tolerant once established.</i>	m	L	S A P		E D	2 3 4
Muhlenbergia spp (muhly grass) <i>M. dubia, M. dumosa, M. capillaris are recommended. Cut to ground every two years.</i>	m g	L	S	W	E D C	3 4
Pennisetum orientale (fountain grass)	m	M	S A P		D C	3
Sesleria spp (moor grass)	s	M	S A P		E D	3
<b>Ferns</b>						
Polystichum munitum (western sword fern)	m g	M		F N	E D C	3