

Episode Eleven: California Native Plants



Follow along with Billy Goodnick and Owen Dell as they dispel the myths surrounding California native plants. Owen is up a tree upset that not enough people are using native plants. On a visit to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Owen vents his frustrations while Dexter, an old friend, finds sustainable alternatives for his inappropriate plant shopping list. He learns that many natives would be better suited for his needs. Next, travel through the micro-climates of Santa Barbara to see great examples of gardens suited to their location. Finally, Owen and Billy provide step by step instructions on how to choose a native plant and properly plant it.

key concepts

1. The Manifesto - Native Plants at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

- California native plants can reduce the need for water, pesticides, and fertilizers in the garden when used appropriately.
- Native plants can improve a garden with fragrance, color, water conservation, and longer blooming seasons.
- Penstemon 'Margarita Bop' can grow in full sun while being drought tolerant and having a long blooming season. It even attracts hummingbirds.
 - Verbena Lilacina 'de la mina' blooms nearly year, attracts butterflies, and has a wonderful fragrance.
 - Lemonadeberry is an evergreen shrub that is drought tolerant and can be formed or cut into a formal hedge.
 - Grey Pine can be used for light shade while offering the ability to grow plants beneath it.
 - Coast Live Oak grows a large canopy offering great shade and long life.
 - Various types of native Ceanothus make great ground covers and they can provide some slope stability.
 - Monkey Flower can have beautiful red, orange, yellow, white, and even pink blossoms.
 - Other blooming native plants include Common Yarrow and Canyon Sunflower. Both can be used to add color and create the effect of a perennial garden.
- California natives do not have to be used specifically in California looking gardens.



Even a Japanese tea garden can be created with plants native to California.

- Make use of various foliage colors such as the grey-green of Manzanita or even the silver color of the Guadalupe Island Rock Daisy to add interest and diversity to a garden.
- Even lawns can use native plants. Dune Sedge is a low growing sedge that requires little water, fertilizer, and mowing.
- With the wide variety of climates in California there will always be a perfect native plant for the garden.



2. Micro-Climate Planting

- Many different micro-climates exist in Santa Barbara. From the foggy coastal zones of Arroyo Burro Creek Restoration area to the riparian woodland of Stevens Park each presents its own planting requirements. When selecting native plants consider where you are and what the characteristics are of your climate.



3. Create a Garden of Native Plants

- Site Analysis: Look at the slope steepness, which way the slope faces, soil type, sun, and shade of the area.
- Think about Function: What do you want from your garden?
- Aesthetics and Beauty: Consider not only the color, size, shape, and form of the plant, but also the surrounding plants and structures such as walls or steps.



- Sustainability: Use local materials for walls and recycled green waste for mulch.
- Irrigation: It is a myth that native plants do not need water. Use appropriate watering to establish plants and arrange drip lines in a grid to soak the roots. A little bit of water occasionally will keep a native from going dormant during certain seasons.
- Pick Your Native Plant: By considering blooming season, foliage color, and the form of a native plant it can be used to add interest to any garden regardless of the season.
- Planting Your Native: Do not add fertilizers to native plants. Dig a hole so that the top of the roots and plant stem is about $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the surrounding soil. Make sure to release some of the roots by lightly scratching the root ball. The first watering should be a long deep soak.

