

the dirt

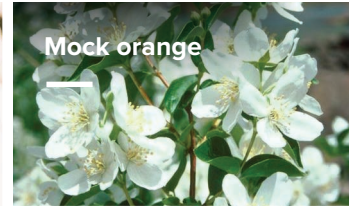


SPRING 2023 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Aromatic and alluring.

Let California natives bring a sensory dimension to your yard.

A flower's color entices pollinators to help in a plant's reproduction, but scent provides another powerful lure. Both are critical factors in the lifecycle of plants, and while many blooms can be identical in shape or hue, no two floral scents are exactly alike.



Mock orange



Brickell bush



Cleveland sage

There's nothing more rewarding than the scents of a garden: delicate aromas ranging from sweet to zesty, spicy to woody. Some stay close to the blossom, others get picked up by the breeze—and if you brush past a sage, chaparral or rosemary, the minty-musty scent will linger on your hands or clothes.

Plant these and other native varieties near your front door, along a garden path, or by the patio. Plan for a variety of scents so that as you pass through your garden, you can catch a staggered palette of aromas, which will change with the seasons.

Mock orange – Their lilac-shaped blooms produce a wonderfully sweet fragrance, great for cuttings or mixed in a bouquet with sage.

Brickell bush – These tiny flowers emit an especially powerful, sweet fragrance on balmy evenings in summer and fall.

Cleveland sage – Despite its showy flowers, it's the leaves that produce a very intense fragrance. Stems may be cut for indoors.

Visit calscape.org/search to do an advanced plant search by fragrance.

Native or imported milkweed: Do monarchs care?



Mike Evans

Mike Evans | President, Tree of Life Nursery

Mike Evans founded Tree of Life Nursery in 1978, and in 1981 teamed up with partner Jeff Bohn to grow and sell exclusively California native plants, including native milkweed, shown in the photos below. In 2021, Tree of Life customers took home and planted around 8,000 native milkweed to support the lifecycle of the monarch during its annual migration.



Narrow leafed milkweed



Showy milkweed



Woollypod milkweed

Why is milkweed important to the monarch?

Evans: In 2020, there was talk of listing the monarch butterfly as an endangered species, and that remains a real possibility. But efforts to save them just might be working: preserving habitat, cutting back on the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides, and promoting native milkweed. Monarch caterpillars are dependent on milkweed leaves as their sole source of food.

Is native milkweed better than non-native or tropical varieties?

Evans: Tropical milkweed can be bad for the monarch. Its longer bloom time has been linked to the spread of disease and negative effects on monarch migration. Because native milkweed goes dormant and dies

back to the ground in the fall, it doesn't trick monarchs into ending their migration—and the seasonal loss of all foliage eradicates pests and disease so that new growth comes back pristine in the spring.

How can I keep pollinators fed when my native milkweed is dormant?

Evans: You can provide nectar for pollinators all year long by planting flowering natives, specifically butterfly host plants that bloom at various seasons, such as California buckwheat (spring and summer), golden aster (fall), and California Lilac (winter).

For more information, visit [IRWD.com/demogarden](https://www.irwd.com/demogarden). To learn how to design, plant and water your landscape, watch The Shed Show at [IRWD.com/shedshow](https://www.irwd.com/shedshow).

Tree of Life Nursery, at 33201 Ortega Highway in San Juan Capistrano, specializes in native plants and seeds, and offers workshops, presentations and other services to help people establish their own native plant garden. Visit californianativeplants.com for more information.



Succulent style.

Bold in shape and color, these beauties turn heads.

From the majestic spikes of a towering agave to the petite, pale puffs of pink moonstones pachyphytum—there's no question that succulents will add interest and variety to your landscape.

Try the two-toned coral-shaped euphorbia to create a shock of red, like fire flames, next to a sea-foam colored sedum. Echeveria adds symmetry to the mix with circular spirals that complement the rugged teeth of an aloe leaf.



Small rosette succulents are great for containers, but in your yard, they quickly outgrow their beauty and require some cleanup: removing the rosettes, clearing the spent stems, refreshing the soil and replanting the tips as cuttings. They're the plants that keep giving.

When planning a succulent garden for your yard, start on the edges, lining driveways and paths with a patchwork of barrel cactuses, purple tree aeonium and jade. Many agave varieties provide seasonal sparklers with their melon-colored blossoms bursting from the tops of tall shoots. They look great in a terraced or sloped landscape.



Mid-sized aloes are good for borders and large-scale massing. Consider the aloe cameronii, a striking 2-foot aloe that stays red all year in full sun. Aloe vera, a more common variety, is dramatic planted in clusters.

For more ideas, visit our garden gallery at IRWD.com/gardentours. Pick your favorite succulents at rightscaperesources.com/search.php.



Heart-leaved penstemon,
Keckiella cordifolia



Juan's tip of the season.

Time to feed your landscape

Apply nutrient rich compost and organic fertilizers in early spring. Compost will not only enrich your soil, but it will also increase soil life. Microorganisms, fungi, insects, and earthworms aerate the soil and help plants take in nutrients. Use organic fertilizers made from natural materials that are not harmful to plants or the environment, such as feather meal for nitrogen (N) for green growth; bone meal for phosphorus (P) for roots and flowers; and langbeinite for potassium (K) for plant health and hardiness. Visit ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/landscapeplantscard.html for more information.



Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list

- **Irrigation:** Start adjusting watering schedules monthly, according to the weather and changing needs of your plants. Check for leaks and broken items.
- **Weeds and pests:** Hand weeding or mowing should be your first line of defense against weeds. For tips on integrated pest management, visit ipm.ucanr.edu.
- **Soil care:** Apply 1 inch of compost around your plantings, then add 3 to 4 inches of mulch, leaving an uncovered space 12 inches from trunks and shrub stems.

Stock up on mulch and save!

Go crazy with mulch this season—and get 50% off your purchase—thanks to IRWD's Mulch Madness incentive program. Visit IRWD.com/mulchmadness for details.



Tap our online resources

Visit IRWD.com/rebates for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at IRWD.com/plantlist.

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