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## The Dirt On Soil Amendments

By Lawn & Garden Retailer



There are steps you can take to ensure the health and growth of plants before you even dig a hole. Healthy soil makes all the difference. Think of the soil as the plant's home and you want it to be as welcoming as possible. If you ever visit a garden center and ask for advice when it comes to soil or what plants like, an expert will likely reference some of the terms below. It's time to share with you what they mean and their importance.

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## California Native Planting Guide

By Moosa Creek



*Ceanothus, or California Lilac is easily spotted with its blue flowers. There are more than 50 varieties ranging in size from 18" (Cliff Schmidt) to 20' tall (Ray Hartman).*

**Here are tips for planting and caring for natives.**

- > Group plants with similar water requirements together.
- > Dig a hole slightly wider than the plant root ball.
- > If the ground is dry, fill the hole

at least 2 times (more with very dry soil) with water and let it drain from the hole.

- > Carefully remove the pot from around the plant's root ball and place the plant into the hole, with the crown of the plant about 1/2 inch above the surrounding grade.

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## Firewise Landscaping Tips

By Walter Andersen Nursery & Monrovia

While there are no guarantees to landscaping a home to withstand a fire storm, there are things to plant that literally don't add as much fuel to the fire. In a fire situation, the dead trees and shrubs surrounding your home act as fuel for fire. Removing flammable vegetation reduces the threat of fire.

These fire wise planting tips come from our friends at Monrovia.

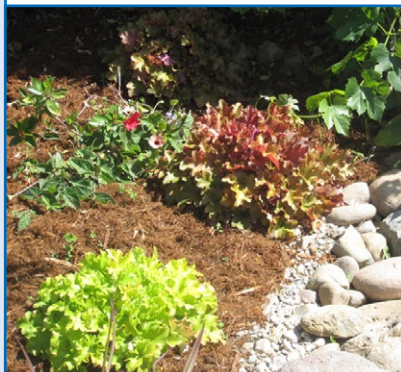


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## Soil Amendments

continued from p1



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*Mulching not only enhances the appearance of your planting area by giving it a finished look, as it breaks down it will add nutrients to the soil. It also helps retain moisture.*

### Soil Amendments

Soil amendments modify the soil structure as they decompose, allowing it to absorb and retain water and nutrients more efficiently. Soil-borne insects, worms, fungi and other organisms help decompose organic material, but require energy from available nitrogen in the soil to do so. For this reason, the soil must often be augmented with nitrogen when organic soil amendments that are not composted are applied. Many products classified as natural organic fertilizers are also organic soil amendments.

Organic soil amendments include peat moss, Big Harvest Soil Conditioner Planting Mix, Soil Booster and others. Gypsum is an example of a nonorganic amend-ment added to soil to improve water infiltration on high-sodium soils.

### Fertilizer

Synthetic fertilizers are chemically manufactured materials containing one or more of the primary nutrients necessary for plant

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## California Native continued from p1



Toyon



Manzanita



Gooseberry

- > Normally soil amendments are not necessary or desirable.
- > Backfill the hole with soil.
- > Place mulch, 2 to 4 inches thick, on top of the soil around the plant in a 3-4-foot diameter circle.
- > Leave a small circle of bare dirt right next to the main stem.

The best mulch is oak leaf mulch, shredded redwood, or shredded cedar bark. Composted green waste will also work. Generously water plant. The first watering is the most important. You cannot overwater the first time!

### PLANT MAINTENANCE

#### Watering

After the initial planting, most natives benefit from some supplemental irrigation. The amount of supplemental irrigation depends upon the origin of the plant and the time of year the plants were installed. Immediately after planting, water heavily (avoid long soggy periods) and then reduce the frequency of water after a few months. For the first year, the plants should be checked regularly for soil moisture. Check 1-2 inches below the soil surface for moisture and if dry, water. For the second and

succeeding years, water during the months of December through April. Occasional watering during the hot summer months will be appreciated. Desert plants, which are used to summer rain showers, and coastal plants benefit from up to a once-a-week sprinkling. Many hybrids also require more summer supplemental water.

#### Mulching

Use a generous covering of mulch to retain moisture, reduce weed growth and cool roots. Do not apply mulch within 6" of plants crown.

#### Fertilizer

Fertilizer is usually not necessary but can be used in the late fall and early spring at half the dose recommended by the manufacturer.

#### Pruning

Pruning can greatly enhance the attractiveness of California native plants. Arctostaphylos and Ceanothus can be pruned to achieve desired form and grasses should be cut back hard at least once per year. •



## Soil Amendments

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Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) & Potassium (K) are primary nutrients for plant growth

growth: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Natural organic fertilizers are derived from either plant or animal products containing a significant quantity of one or more of the primary nutrients necessary for plant growth: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Nutrient content must be labeled on the package. Most natural organic fertilizers provide significant quantities of organic matter, so they can also be classified as soil amendments.

Natural organic fertilizers include Dr. Earth and E. B. Stone fertilizers, manures, sewage sludge and bone meal.

### Quick-Release Fertilizers

Quick-release fertilizers, also known as “fast-acting” fertilizers, are water-soluble chemicals that once applied are readily available to the plant. If properly applied, plants green up quickly.

However, if too much is applied, quick-release fertilizers have a tendency to burn. These materials are easily leached with rain or over-irrigation and require frequent application. They are the least expensive

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## Firewise continued from p1

Things gardeners should consider when choosing plants for a fire-safe landscape.

- Local area fire history.
- Site location and overall terrain.
- Prevailing winds and seasonal weather.
- Property contours and boundaries.
- Native vegetation.
- Plant characteristics and placement (water and salt retention ability, aromatic oils, fuel load per area, and size).
- Irrigation requirements.

### Zones

To create a more fire-safe landscape, the primary goal is fuel reduction. Gardeners should landscape using the zone concept. Zone 1 is closest to the structure; Zones 2-4 move progressively further away.

**Zone 1.** This well-irrigated area encircles the structure for at least 30 feet on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in the event of an emergency. Plantings should be limited to carefully-spaced fire-resistant species.

**Zone 2.** Fire-resistant plant materials should be used here. Plants should be low-growing, and the irrigation system should extend into this section.

**Zone 3.** Place low-growing plants and well-spaced trees in this area, remembering to keep the volume of vegetation (fuel) low.

**Zone 4.** This furthest zone from the structure is a natural area. Thin selectively here, and remove highly flammable vegetation.

- Eliminate small trees and plants growing under trees. They allow ground fires to jump into tree crowns.
- Space trees 30 feet apart and prune to a height of 8 to 10 feet.



*Italian Buckthorn 'Rhamnus alaternus'*

- Place shrubs at least 20 feet from any structures and prune regularly.
- Provide at least a 10 to 15 foot separation between islands of shrubs and plant groups to effectively break-up continuity of vegetation.
- Landscape your property with fire-resistant plants and vegetation to prevent fire from spreading quickly.
- Maintain a well-pruned and watered landscape to serve as a green belt and protection against fire.
- Keep plants green during the dry season and use supplemental irrigation, if necessary.
- Trim grass on a regular basis up to 100 feet surrounding your home.
- Take out the “ladder fuels”—vegetation that serves as a link between grass and tree tops. It can carry fire to a structure or from a structure to vegetation.
- Keep trees and shrubs pruned. Prune all trees up to 6' to 10' from the ground.
- Remove leaf clutter and dead and overhanging branches.
- Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.

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## Soil Amendments

continued from p3

fertilizers and are always synthetic products.

Quick-release fertilizers include ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate, calcium nitrate and urea.

### Slow-Release Fertilizers

Slow-release fertilizers, sometimes called water-insoluble types, release nitrogen over time. They are often applied at higher rates and less frequently than quick-release formulas. The initial response of turf is slower than quick-release types but these materials continue to provide nutrients over a period of eight to 10 weeks or more. They will not burn the turf even if applied at high rates and are not prone to leaching. These products are a little more expensive and include certain synthetic fertilizer products and all-natural organic fertilizers.

Slow-release fertilizers include sulfur-coated urea, urea formaldehyde, isobutylidene diurea (IBDU) and organic fertilizers.

### Slow Release–Quick Release Mixtures

Some fertilizers are formulated with both water-insoluble (slow-release) and water-soluble (quick-release) nitrogen. Plants green up quickly and continue to receive nutrients over a period of time. For the most effective product, at least one-fourth of the nitrogen should be in the water-insoluble, or slow-release, form.

Source: *Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California* •



## Firewise continued from p3

- Stack firewood at least 30 feet from your home.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.

### Firewise Plants

#### Fire Resistant Trees

Lemon bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*)  
 Toyon, California holly (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)  
 Myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*)  
 Catalina cherry (*Prunus lyonii*)  
 Italian buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*)  
 California pepper tree (*Schinus molle*)  
 Brazilian pepper tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)

#### Fire-Resistant Shrubs

The trees listed above and Evergreen sumacs (*Rhus*)  
 Rosemary (*Rosemarinus officinalis*)  
 Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)



Deerweed '*Lotus scoparius*'

#### Fire-Resistant Native Plants

Yarrow (*Eriophyllum* species)  
 California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)  
 Deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*)  
 Annual lupines (*Lupinus* species)  
 Penstemon (*Penstemon* species)  
 Sticky Monkey Flower (*Mimulus* species)

Chia (*Salvia columbariae*)  
 Creeping Sage (*Salvia sonomensis*)  
 Woolly Blue Curls (*Trichostema lanatum*)  
 California species (*Zauschneria* species)

### Fire-Resistant Introduced Plants

Silver (*Artemisia caucasica*)  
 Saltbrush (*Artiplex glauca*)  
 Creeping Saltbrush (*Artiplex semibaccata*)  
 Rockrose (*Cistus crispus*)  
 Sageleaf Rockrose (*Cistus salviifolius*)  
 Lavender Cotton (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*)  
 Green Santolina (*Santolina virens*)

### Other Choices

Sea Fig (*Carpobrotus* species)  
 White Trailing Ice Plant (*Delosperma 'Alba'*)  
 Trailing Ice Plant (*Lampranthus spectabilis*)  
 Croceum Ice Plant (*Malephora crocea*)  
 Rosea Ice Plant (*Drosanthemum floribundum*)  
 Cape Weed (*Artotheca calendula*)  
 Prostrate Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*)  
 Creeping Coprosma (*Coprosma kirkii*)  
 Trailing Gazania (*Gazania rigens leucolaena*)  
 Lippia (*Lippia canescens*)  
 Myoporum (*Myoporum parvifolium*)  
 African Daisy (*Osteospermum fruticosum*)  
 Lavender Cotton (*Santolina* species)  
 O'Connor's Legume (*Trifolium fragiferum* var. O'Connor's)  
 Periwinkle (*Vinca* species) •

## Old Ben: Feeding Wild Birds In The Fall

By Old Ben



Fall is a fantastic time to feed the birds. These fall bird feeding tips can help you attract a wide variety of both resident birds and migrating birds to your backyard feeders.

### Fall Bird Feeding Myths

The idea that if the birds have a steady source of food available in the fall, they won't migrate, and then when those feeders are empty the bird will starve is a total misconception. A reliable food source is only a minor factor that affects how birds migrate. Daylight levels, climate and instinct play import roles in seasonal migration. Feeding birds in fall does not prevent migration, but can help it. Migrating birds require lots of calories for energy necessary to fly hundreds or thousands of miles. Feeders can provide an energy boost to passing migrants as well as help resident birds build up fat reserves for falling temperatures.

It is also a myth that there simply are not enough birds around to

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## Fall Bulb Choices Include Drought-Tolerant Selections

By David Ross



*We call them fall bulbs since that's when they are available to plant.*

Audrey Hepburn said, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." David Ross said, "Planting bulbs, rhizomes and corms takes a whole lotta faith!"

The fall bulb season is upon us and that means both our stores will soon be well stocked with Bearded Iris, Daffodils, Narcissus, Tulips, Hyacinth, Ranunculus, Freesias, Watsonias and much, much, more.

At first glance, these bulbs don't look like anything we should be wasting our time with. I mean, they look brown and dry and certainly don't look like the easy to grow, armloads of flowers they'll turn into in just a few months! But that is exactly what these are, or will be. Planted in containers or in the ground, alone or with existing plants, these bulbs will be blooming in just a few months.

We call them fall bulbs because that is when they are available to be planted, though most of these will bloom during winter and spring. Many will naturalize here and bring flowers year after year with minimal care.

### Look for the following:

**Bearded Iris:** We will have about a dozen varieties of one of the most

durable, drought tolerant perennials you can plant. These strong, upright bloomers are fragrant and make excellent cut flowers.

**Watsonia** is another durable, drought tolerant grower that makes an excellent cut flower. It multiplies fairly freely, so give it space, or divide regularly.

**Freesias** are easy to grow, very fragrant, and come in many colors

**Daffodils** and **Narcissus** are great planted in groups and will do better where they will get afternoon shade.

**Tulips** and **Hyacinths** will need to be refrigerated in paper bags, not plastic, for at least six and up to 12 weeks prior to planting. They do great in containers as well. •



*Watsonia*



## Old Ben

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feed them in the fall. Bird feeders will still see plenty of activity. Your backyard flocks will change as some birds will leave and more northern birds will arrive.

### Why Feed Birds in The Fall

Fall is an ever-changing season and it can be a very rewarding time to feed birds. You should always keep your feeders stocked in the fall to:

- > Help resident birds build fat reserves for energy.
- > Provide an easy food source for migrating birds passing through your area.
- > Offer supplemental food when natural food sources are depleted.
- > Help birds imprint on the location of reliable food sources so they will return to the same place next year.

### Best Fall Bird Foods

To give migrating birds the best nutrition and energy for their long journeys, you should provide high caloric foods with high oil content like: Old Ben's Classic, No Mess, Special Finch Blend, nyger, peanuts and hummingbird foods.

### Tips For Feeding Fall Birds

There is more to feeding fall birds than just providing the right foods. By keeping your backyard safe and meeting birds' other needs, a fall flock will be healthy and active.

- > Check feeders for damage and repair them so they are safe.
- > Choose fall plants that offer evergreen cover and lasting berries, nuts or fruits for fall and winter food.
- > Keep bird baths filled with fresh, clean water.

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## To Do List: September

### Fertilize

For lawns, use Marathon Fertilizer for tall fescue, and Hi-Yield Weed & Feed to feed grass and control broadleaf weeds. Feed ornamentals with Gro-Power. Feed vegetables with Gro-Power Tomato and Vegetable Food or Dr. Earth Organic Tomato and Vegetable Food. Feed citrus, avocado, and fruit trees with Gro-Power Citrus and Avocado Food. Feed palms and tropicals with Gro-Power Palm Tree and Tropical Food. Last feeding for Camellias, Azaleas, and roses for the year.

### Plant

- > Plant Sweet Peas, winter annuals like Calendulas, Stocks, Pansies, Violas, Mums, and Snapdragons.
- > Plant winter vegetables. For your veggie planting, don't miss broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, lettuces and greens, potatoes, radishes, and peas.
- > Cool-season tomatoes are here!

### Look For

- > Fall bulbs (Daffodils, Tulips, Hyacinths, Crocus, Saffron Crocus, Ranunculus and Freesia). For the best selection, buy them early. Tulips, Hyacinths, and spring-blooming Crocus will need to be pre-chilled in the refrigerator for 6-8 weeks to 'fake' winter before planting outdoors.
- > We have Crape Myrtle, Arbutus, Bougainvillea, and Agapanthus. •



*Fertilize grass to control weeds*



*Use Dr. Earth Tomato & Vegetable Food*



*Plant Mums, Violas & more*



*Look for fall bulbs*

## Old Ben

continued from p6

> Allow leaf litter to build up under trees and shrubbery to attract insects, fallen seeds and other foods.

> Protect exhausted backyard migrants from predators such as cats.

Feeding fall birds can be a rewarding way to enjoy the changing season. By following these fall bird feeding tips, it is possible to attract a wide range of fall bird species and ensure they are fed throughout the season. •



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## Garden Classes: September

Saturday classes are **FREE** and last about an hour. Complimentary coffee is served. During inclement weather, classes are held indoors in San Diego and on the covered, heated patio in Poway. Topics are subject to change. See the full schedule at <https://www.walterandersen.com/classes-events/>.

### SAN DIEGO | 9:00AM

9/3

No Class

Labor Day Weekend

9/10

Attracting Pollinators  
with Ryan

9/17

San Diego Seed Co.  
with Brijette Romstedt

9/24

Foxfarm  
with Corey Hansen

### POWAY | 9:30AM

9/3

No Class

Labor Day Weekend

9/10

Design of a Functional  
Food Forest  
with Tyler Trimble

9/17

Winter Rose Care  
with David & George

9/24

Edible Landscapes  
with Chuck McClung

## Visit Our 2 Locations

### SAN DIEGO

3642 Enterprise Street  
San Diego, California 92110

**619-224-8271**

Open 8am-5pm | 7 Days-A-Week

### POWAY

12755 Danielson Court  
Poway, California 92064

**858-513-4900**

Open 9am-5pm | 7 Days-A-Week

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