

Don't plant a pest!

Give them an inch and they'll take an acre...



A dense stand of pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), a garden plant that has invaded California wildlands.

Gardening Responsibly

California is a gardener's dream. Our mild climate allows us to have fantastic gardens, showcasing a wide variety of ornamental plants from around the world. Unfortunately, some of these plants have become invasive, threatening California's biodiversity and economy. They "jump the fence" when seed, root or stem fragments spread to our natural areas. Once established in natural areas, these plants grow so fast that they crowd out native vegetation, block streams causing flooding, and produce so much biomass that they become serious fire hazards. They also increase landscaping maintenance costs and contribute to the loss of recreational opportunities in our natural areas. Once invasive plants spread and take over natural areas, public resources are required to restore these lands.

Gardeners don't plant invasive or fire-prone species intentionally. Like other Californians, gardeners have a deep respect for our state's rich natural heritage. The good news is that most garden plants behave perfectly well in their intended roles. By choosing suitable replacements for the few problem plants, we can save ourselves and our neighbors trouble and expense while helping to protect California's natural landscape from invasive plants. Not to mention reducing the risk of flood and fire damage to our homes and property!

Invasive plants are by nature a regional or local problem. A plant that jumps out of the garden in one climate and habitat type may behave just fine in another. The problem plants listed here have escaped from gardens and invaded natural areas throughout Southern California.



Pampas grass invading a natural area in Carlsbad, CA, where it has become a fire and flood hazard.

How to use this brochure:

This brochure suggests safe alternatives for the most common invasive plants that are sometimes still used as ornamentals in Southern California. The alternatives listed here are acceptable for vegetation management zones because they can be pruned to decrease the accumulation of deadwood.

When buying new plants, consider these alternatives, or ask your local nursery for other non-invasive, non-fire hazard plants. If one of these invasive plants is already in your yard, especially if you live near a natural area, consider replacing it with a suggested alternative.

- full sun
- part shade
- full shade
- regular water
- medium water
- low water
- fire hazard
- California native

The alternatives listed here have been selected to have similar appearance and landscape function, and growth requirements as the invasive plants they replace. Alternatives include both California native plants, for those wanting to rediscover California's unique natural heritage, as well as non-invasive plants from elsewhere. Many of these alternatives are readily available, though others may be easiest to find in specialty or native plant nurseries.

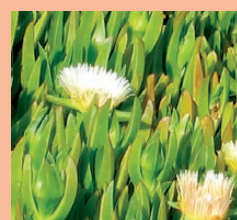
Pay close attention to plant names, since a few of our recommended plants may have invasive relatives. Some invasive plants, such as pampas grass, fountain grass, and brooms have many cultivars and varieties. Until these have been fully tested, they are not recommended as safe alternatives.

Note that if the recommended alternatives are not watered and pruned, they themselves could become a fire hazard. Be sure to maintain fire-safe landscaping. Also, because non-native plants adapt over time, there is a slight possibility that one of the recommended alternatives will become invasive in the future. If you ever notice one of these plants invading natural areas, notify Cal-IPC.

Thank you for keeping invasive plants out of California's natural areas!

GROUND COVERS

DO NOT PLANT!



iceplant or hottentot fig
(*Carpobrotus edulis*)

This vigorous groundcover forms impenetrable mats that compete

directly with native vegetation, including several rare and threatened plants. Small mammals can carry seeds of iceplant from landscape settings to nearby natural areas. Pieces of the plant can be washed into storm drains and into natural areas where they become established.

Photo courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

DO NOT PLANT!



English ivy, Irish ivy, Algerian ivy
(*Hedera helix*, *H. hibernica*, *H. canariensis*)

Ivy can smother understory vegetation, kill trees, and harbor non-native rats and snails. It's difficult to distinguish problem species from less invasive ones. Do not plant or dispose of ivy near natural areas, and maintain ivy so it never fruits.



periwinkle
(*Vinca major*)

Vinca's trailing stems can root wherever they touch the soil. Their ability to resprout from stem fragments enables periwinkle

to spread rapidly in shady creeks and drainages, smothering native plants. Also avoid Cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*).

Photo by Richard Old www.xidservices.com

TRY THESE GROUND COVERS INSTEAD

wall germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*, *T. lucidrys*)



This plant can be sheared into a neat groundcover or allowed to grow to full height (about one foot), and produces lavender flowers in the spring. Compact cultivars are available.

Photo courtesy Missouri Botanical PlantFinder

San Diego marsh elder
(*Iva hayesiana*)



This fast growing native is widely used for slope coverage and erosion control. Grows 1'-2' tall and 4'-6' across with inconspicuous flowers. Summer watering will help maintain a more lush appearance. Prune annually to encourage new growth.



ivy geranium
(*Pelargonium peltatum*)

Glossy, bright green leaves with flowers in white, pink, rose, red and lavender. Vigorous ground-cover recommended for flat areas only, not suitable for erosion control.

Also try: elijah blue fescue (*Festuca cinerea* 'Elijah Blue')

ivory star jasmine or asian jasmine
(*Trachelospermum* species)



Evergreen, vining groundcover up to 20' across. Glossy, dark green leaves and pale yellow, pinwheel-shaped flowers with a jasmine scent.

beach strawberry
(*Fragaria chiloensis* or *Fragaria californica*)



Forms lush compact mat 4"-6" high. Glossy dark green leaves, white flowers. Mow or cut back annually to force new growth.



common yarrow
(*Achillea millefolium*)

Perennial groundcover from 1'-4' high. Can be used as a lawn substitute, will tolerate foot traffic. Produces white flowers and should be pruned or mowed annually.

Also try: California wild grape (*Vitis californica* or *V. girdiana*), yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*), bear's foot hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*), California honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata* var. *denudata*) or winter saxifrage (*Bergenia cordifolia* and hybrids)

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

DO NOT PLANT!



fountain grass
(*Pennisetum setaceum* and all cultivars and varieties)

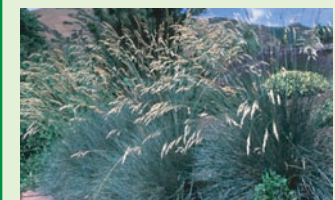
Spreads aggressively by seed into natural areas by wind, water, or vehicles. Fast grower, impedes the growth of locally native plant species and eventually takes over natural areas. Also raises fuel loads and fire frequency in natural areas.



pampas grass
(*Cortaderia selloana*, *C. jubata* and all cultivars and varieties)

Wind can carry the tiny seeds up to 20 miles. The massive size of each pampas grass plant with its accumulated litter reduces wildlife habitat, limits recreational opportunities in natural lands, and creates a serious fire and flood hazard. Sharp blades are hazardous to people, and plants harbor pests such as rats and snakes. 'Sterile' varieties of this plant can still contribute to invasive populations and are not recommended as substitutes.

TRY THESE GRASSES & GRASS-LIKE PLANTS INSTEAD



blue oat grass
(*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)

Evergreen, bright blue-gray, narrow leaves in fountain-like clump, 2'-3' high and wide.

California fescue
(*Festuca californica*)

Native bunch grass grows 2'-3' tall, flower stalks reach 5' tall, blue-green leaves.



Photo courtesy Santa Barbara Botanical Garden



lavender
(*Lavandula* species)

With their purple flowers, lavenders can easily replace fountain grass. There are many species and varieties of lavender. Sweet lavender is able to tolerate

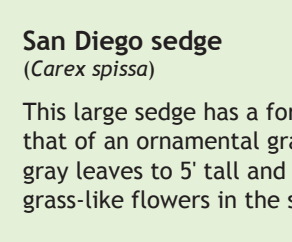
a wide range of conditions including heat, humidity and cold. Other popular varieties of lavender are goodwin creek gray, French, and English lavender. They are fragrant and grow to 2' tall and bloom with bright lavender flowers which can be dried

Also try: purple needle grass (*Nassella pulchra*), purple three awn (*Aristida purpurea*), or alkali dropseed (*Sporobolus airoides*)



deer grass
(*Muhlenbergia rigens*)

Clumping perennial grass growing up to 3' tall with 2' plumes rising above the plant. Native Americans used it for making baskets.



San Diego sedge
(*Carex spissa*)

This large sedge has a form similar to that of an ornamental grass. Produces gray leaves to 5' tall and yellow, grass-like flowers in the spring.



wild rye
(*Leymus condensatus*)

Large clumping grass 4'-5' across and reaches 6'-8' tall in bloom. 'Canyon Prince' cultivar has distinct silver-gray foliage and smaller stature. Prune annually to encourage new growth.

Also try: Bigelow's bear grass (*Nolina bigelovii*)

Suggested alternatives for invasive garden plants in greater Southern California



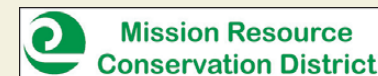
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Cal-IPC is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting California's lands and waters. Charitable donations from concerned Californians provide critical funding for our programs across the state. For more information, see:

www.cal-ipc.org

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Council for Watershed Health
San Diego Weed Management Area
San Dieguito River Park (JPA)
Southern California Horticultural Society
University of California Cooperative Extension
USDA Forest Service

SHRUBS

DO NOT PLANT!



broom (bridal, French, Portuguese, Scotch, Spanish)

(*Retama monosperma*, *Genista monspessulana*, *Cytisus striatus*, *Cytisus scoparius*, and *Spartium junceum*)

Brooms have invaded over one million acres in California. The flowers produce thousands of seeds that build up in the soil over time, creating dense thickets that obliterate entire plant and animal communities. Grows quickly, easily creating a fire hazard in residential landscapes. 'Sterile' varieties of these plants haven't been independently verified or tested and are not recommended as substitutes.

Photo courtesy Joseph M. DiTomaso

SHRUBS

DO NOT PLANT!



acacia or western coastal wattle

(*Acacia cyclops*)

Coastal wattle has invaded many natural areas in southern California including wetlands and dry hillsides. It grows fast, quickly out-competing any surrounding native plants and produces large amounts of seed, ensuring its success. It grows so fast it's sure to take over your garden as well. Also avoid green wattle (*Acacia decurrens*) and golden wattle (*Acacia longifolia*).

SHRUBS

DO NOT PLANT!



myoporum

(*Myoporum laetum*)

Grows aggressively and produces many seeds, creating dense stands which displace surrounding native vegetation. Seeds are also spread by birds. The outside of the plant is lush and green but the interior of large plants accumulates many dead branches, making the plant a potential fire hazard.

PALMS

DO NOT PLANT!



Mexican fan palm and Canary Island date palm

(*Washingtonia robusta* and *Phoenix canariensis*)

Palm trees are not native to coastal southern California. These two species of palms are extremely invasive, quickly becoming a pest in your garden and natural areas. Birds spread the fruits of these two palms into areas where they grow quickly, displacing native trees and other plants. Dense groups of palms with untrimmed fronds harbor rats and snakes and can be a fire hazard.

TREES

DO NOT PLANT!

Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)



Pepper trees are not from California, they are from South America. Seeds are transported by birds and mammals into natural areas. The aggressive growth of peppers enables them to displace native trees and form dense thickets in natural areas. They can also take over your yard and become a maintenance nightmare. They produce undesirable suckering and sprout countless unwanted seedlings throughout any landscape.

Also avoid: tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Bailey acacia (*Acacia baileyana*), tamarisk species (*Tamarix* spp.), and Peruvian or 'California' pepper (*Schinus molle*)

DO NOT PLANT!



blue gum and red gum

(*Eucalyptus globulus*, *E. camaldulensis*)

Grows aggressively, displacing surrounding native plants. Excessive leaf litter and shade eliminates understory plants. Fire departments throughout Southern California recommend against using these eucalyptus trees for landscaping.

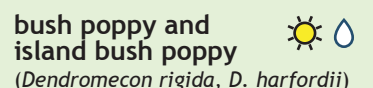
TRY THESE SHRUBS INSTEAD



bush marigold

(*Tagetes lemmonii*)

Perennial shrub that can grow up to 6' tall. Evergreen leaves with yellow flowers that bloom in winter and spring.



bush poppy and island bush poppy

(*Dendromecon rigida*, *D. harfordii*)
Evergreen shrub growing up to 6' tall or can be maintained at 3'. Leaves are blue-gray-green and the bush is covered in beautiful yellow blooms.



Cleveland sage

(*Salvia clevelandii*)

A California native with graceful silvery-green leaves, arching branches, and whorls of purple flowers in spring and summer. Grows up to 4' tall.

Also try: San Diego sunflower (*Viguiera laciniata*)

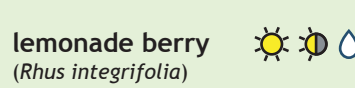
TRY THESE SHRUBS INSTEAD



pineapple guava (*Acca sellowiana* or *Feijoa sellowiana*)

This evergreen shrub has scarlet and white flowers, as delicious as they are beautiful, and waxy blue-green fruits with a minty-pineapple flavor. It is easily shaped into a small tree.

Photo copyright 2003 by Floridata.com



lemonade berry

(*Rhus integrifolia*)

California native evergreen shrub with white to pink flowers and red berries. Makes a great hedge or screen. Areas with frost may have better luck with its sister plant sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*).



coffeeberry

(*Rhamnus californica*)

Attractive native California shrub, 6'-8' high. Bears black berries and tolerates all soil types. Ideal as a background or screen plant.

Also try: holly-leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *ilicifolia*)

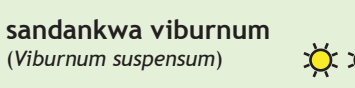
TRY THESE SHRUBS INSTEAD



toyon or Christmas berry

(*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

This California native is an evergreen shrub that produces delicate white flowers and large clusters of brilliant red berries that birds love. Can be pruned into a small tree.



sandankwa viburnum

(*Viburnum suspensum*)

This evergreen shrub produces tight clusters of small, waxy, pinkish-white flowers that give way to bright red berries. Several compact varieties are available.

Photo courtesy Mark Shelby, University of Florida-IFAS Extension



spiny redberry

(*Rhamnus crocea*)

Medium evergreen California native shrub. Grows 4'-10' tall, equally high as wide. Produces beautiful red berries in springtime.

Photo courtesy www.californiachapparel.com

Also try: Pacific wax myrtle (*Myrica californica*)

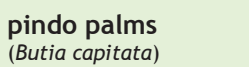
TRY THESE PALMS INSTEAD



king palm

(*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*)

Can grow up to 50' tall, with beautiful clustered amethyst flowers. Recommended for frost-free areas.



pindo palms

(*Butia capitata*)

Can grow up to 20' tall. Grey-green foliage with red flowers and edible fruits. Tolerates frost, heat, aridity, and poor soils.



blue hesper palm

(*Brahea armata*)

Blue-gray fronds with showy creamy yellow inflorescences. Can grow up to 45' tall. Grows well in coastal, inland, valley and desert areas

Also try: Mediterranean fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*), Guadalupe palm (*Brahea edulis*), Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*), California fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*)

TRY THESE TREES INSTEAD

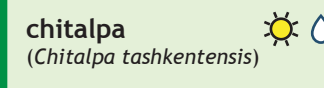


strawberry tree

(*Arbutus unedo*)

A gorgeous evergreen tree or large shrub, grows 8'-35' tall. It produces masses of beautiful white flowers, and textured, strawberry-like fruits.

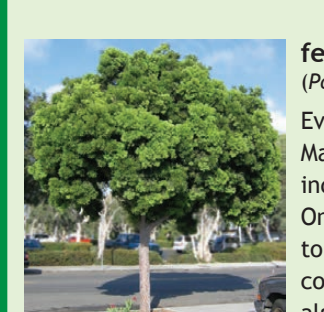
Photo courtesy Bob Perry



chitalpa

(*Chitalpa tashkentensis*)

Chitalpa makes a great street tree with its compact size and beautiful white or pink showy flowers. It is drought tolerant and sterile, no messy seed pods! Grows 20'-30' tall.



fern pine

(*Podocarpus gracilor*)

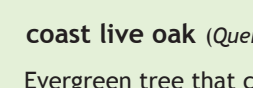
Evergreen tree, grows 20'-60' tall. Makes an excellent street tree or individual specimen in a park setting. One of the most pest-free trees, able to tolerate a variety of soil conditions and temperatures. Can also use as a hedge or screen plant.



Australian willow

(*Geijera parvifolia*)

Evergreen tree reaches a height of 25'-30' tall, with 3"-6" long, narrow, medium green colored leaves. Its main branches sweep up and out, while the smaller branches tend to hang down.



coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

Evergreen tree that can reach 40' tall and 20' wide. Native to California, drought tolerant and attracts many birds and butterflies to your garden.



Catalina ironwood, fern-leaved Catalina ironwood

(*Lyonothamnus floribundus* and *L. floribundus* ssp. *aspleniifolius*)

Medium to large slender, upright tree with glossy green leaves. Grows 30'-60' tall.

Photo courtesy Bob Perry

Also try: California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*), Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*)