

## Don't Be Fooled by *Unwise* Water-Wise Plant Choices

California's drought is popularizing low-water landscaping: lawns are coming out, xeriscaping is going in.

Fortunately, water agencies, nurseries, and garden media are all promoting drought-tolerant plant lists to guide purchasing decisions and reduce water usage. Unfortunately, in this rush for water conservation, invasive plants are creeping onto some of these lists! Maybe you've already noticed...

There is little surprise that many invasive plants are drought-resistant. By definition, invasive plants can spread into new regions and take over without extra fertilizers or irrigation. Water-wise lists that include drought-tolerant plants are missing the point, however.

Why? An invasive plants' damaging impacts are numerous. For example, in Southern California green fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) plants do not provide habitat or forage for wildlife and add considerable fuel-load to wildfires. Other plants can alter soil composition, influence erosion, or even affect our waterways. Giant reed (*Arundo donax*), was previously a common ornamental that now grows densely in stream banks, increasing flood impacts and clogging water passages. Lastly, the use of herbicides on invasive plants, while in many cases the best available option, poses risk to water quality in our streams, aquifers and oceans.

With this in mind, gardeners and landscape professionals can be truly "water-wise" by:

1. Insisting on non-invasive plants when designing drought-tolerant landscapes. Plants that we've seen (in order of prevalence) on drought-tolerant plant lists include:
  - Mexican feathergrass (*Nassella or Stipa tenuissima*) – emerging invasive,
  - Green fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*),
  - Highway iceplant, (*Carpobrotus edulis*),
  - Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*),
  - Capeweed (*Arctotheca calendula*) and
  - Big leaf periwinkle (*Vinca major*).

Visit [www.PlantRight.org/regions](http://www.PlantRight.org/regions) to determine where in our state these plants are a risk and to find beautiful alternatives to use instead.

2. When you see invasive plants on drought-tolerant plant lists, let the creators of that list know. The staff at PlantRight would also appreciate learning about this in order to help to find noninvasive, water-wise alternatives to recommend instead.

Thank you for helping to protect our water - in California's ornamental *and* natural landscapes!

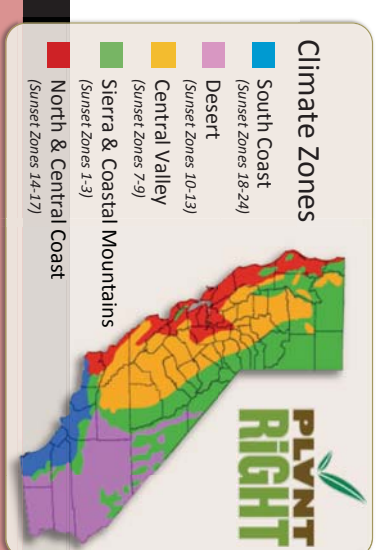
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# Suggested Alternatives for Invasive Garden Plants

PlantRight's 2014 list identifies 15 plants that are invasive in areas of California, yet are still grown and sold in the nursery trade. Each invasive plant (highlighted below), has beautiful and noninvasive alternatives that can serve the same purpose in a garden or landscape while protecting California's environment. Regional information is included because a plant's invasiveness is largely a matter of location and climate. Thank you for joining us in Planting Right!

Invasive Photos	Climate Zones	Plant Names	Featured Information
		<b>Invasive: Capeweed</b> ( <i>Arctotheca calendula</i> ) - fertile and infertile varieties	Drought tolerant, hardy, similar texture, and has several colors. Weedy in SoCal
		African daisy ( <i>Arctotis hybrids</i> ) Dymondia ( <i>Dymondia margaritae</i> ) Manzanita groundcovers ( <i>Arctostaphylos edmundsii</i> , <i>A. Emerald Carpet</i> )	Tolerant of drought, cold, salt sprays, light foot traffic and poor soils. Slower growing Tolerant of drought and poor soils. Slower growing, white/pink flowers, reddish bark
		<b>Invasive: Highway Iceplant</b> ( <i>Carpobrotus edulis</i> ): <b>Crystalline Iceplant</b> ( <i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i> )	Low maintenance, cold-hardy, very similar shape, showy pink flowers
		Trailing iceplant ( <i>Delosperma cooperi</i> ) Wild strawberry ( <i>Fragaria chiloensis</i> , <i>F. californica</i> )	Good in sandy or well-drained soil, moderate water needs
		White trailing iceplant ( <i>Delosperma 'Alba'</i> )	Drought-tolerant but can take regular water; similar leaves, white flowers
		Rosea iceplant ( <i>Drosanthemum floribundum</i> )	Good for erosion control, tough, moderate to minimal water, weedy on coast
		Prostrate coyote brush ( <i>Baccharis pilularis</i> )	Easy care, best when cut back in early spring before new growth
		Prostrate grevillea ( <i>Grevillea x gaudichaudii</i> )	Takes sun, best in part shade. Spreads to 15 ft. wide. Moderate water
		<b>Invasive: Periwinkle</b> ( <i>Vinca major</i> )	Same aesthetic but smaller leaf size and stature, grows in wide range of soils
		Dwarf periwinkle ( <i>Vinca minor</i> ) Hardy geranium ( <i>Geranium 'Rozanne'</i> )	Similar flowers in spring to early summer, medium water, hardy, 2 ft tall x 3 ft wide
		Serbian bellflower ( <i>Campanula poscharskyana</i> )	Similar flowers in spring to early summer, low water, fast growth, 8" tall, spreading
		Star / Asian jasmine ( <i>Trachelospermum jasminoides / asiaticum</i> )	Fragrant and abundant flowers, shrub-like, grows as mat or on trellises, 2' x 10'
		Ceanothus groundcovers	Blue flowers, low water, slower growing. Many varieties: ask for local options
		Hummingbird sage ( <i>Salvia spathacea</i> )	Medium water, showy flowers, large foliage, spreads rhizomatically, shade
		Taiwan raspberry ( <i>Rubus pentalobus</i> )	Dense, mild autumn color, creeps over sidewalks and rocks, slower growing
		<b>Invasive: Water Hyacinth</b> ( <i>Eichhornia crassipes</i> )	Big purple flowers, floating leaves, roots in bottom soil
		King of Siam water lily ( <i>Nymphaea 'King of Siam'</i> ) Pickerel weed ( <i>Porterodeira cordata</i> )	Similar flowers, not free-floating, for ponds, dormant in winter, spreads vegetatively
		Cape pondweed ( <i>Aponogeton distachyos</i> )	Bright, fragrant flowers, foliage floats on water, dormant in winter
		<b>Invasive: Yellow Water Iris</b> ( <i>Iris pseudacorus</i> )	Many colors and sizes available, robust in ponds, needs to be wintered indoors
		Canna species ( <i>Canna hybrids</i> ) Japanese iris ( <i>Iris ensata</i> and cultivars)	Best on pond margins, not to be submerged, showy flowers
		Laevigata iris ( <i>Iris laevigata</i> and cultivars)	Grows in shallow water, available flower colors are purple, red or white. Poisonous




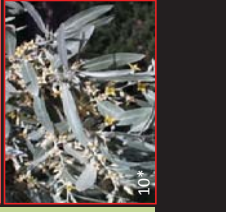
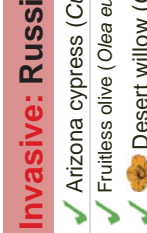

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(2014: v3)  
In 2014, PlantRight removed plants from its list because they are only rarely found in California's nursery trade. These plants are still invasive, and should not be used for ornamental purposes: Giant reed (*Arundo donax*), Blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), Saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), Bridal veil broom (*Retama monoacantha*), Striated broom (*Cytisus stricatus*), Jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*), and Scarlet Wisteria (*Sesbania punicea*).

= noninvasive alternative  
 = California native plant

Got feedback? Contact us at [PlantRight@suscon.org](mailto:PlantRight@suscon.org)

Invasive Photos	Climate Zones	Plant Names	Featured Information
		<b>Invasive: Green Fountain Grass (<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>)</b>	
			
		<p>✓ Oriental fountaingrass (<i>Pennisetum orientale</i>) Drought tolerant, very similar aesthetic, cold hardy</p> <p>✓ <i>Pennisetum setaceum</i> 'Rubrum', 'Skyrocket', 'Fireworks' &amp; 'Fairy Tails' Drought tolerant, sterile, very similar aesthetic, trim in winter</p> <p>✓ Purple fountaingrass (<i>Pennisetum macrostachyum</i> 'Rubrum') Drought tolerant, sterile, burgundy leaves, trim in winter</p> <p>✓  California fescue (<i>Festuca californica</i>) Drought tolerant, frost tolerant, needs drainage, will tolerate shade</p> <p>✓ Pink Muhly (<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i> 'Regal Mist') Drought tolerant, frost tolerant, needs drainage, good in mass</p>	
		<b>Invasive: Mexican Feathergrass (<i>Nassella / Stipa tenuissima</i>)</b>	
			
		<p>✓ Blue grama grass (<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> 'Blonde Ambition') Drought tolerant, attractive flowerheads, best when cut back in winter</p> <p>✓ Alkali sacaton (<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>) Drought tolerant, slower growing, does well in range of soils</p> <p>✓ Mexican deer grass (<i>Muhlenbergia dubia</i>) Drought tolerant, evergreen in mild winters, likes well-drained soils, good in mass</p> <p>✓ White awn muhly (<i>Muhlenbergia capillaris</i> 'White Cloud') Drought tolerant, similar size and growing conditions, easy care</p> <p>✓ Autumn moor grass (<i>Sesleria autumnalis</i>) Drought tolerant, does well in range of soils, tough and long-lived</p>	
		<b>Invasive: Pampas Grass (<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>)</b>	
			
		<p>✓ Foerster's feather reed grass (<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i> 'Karl Foerster') Large, white plumes from early summer until frost, very durable and showy</p> <p>✓  Deer grass (<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>) Drought tolerant, smaller form and less showy plumes, easy to grow</p> <p>✓ Lomandra hystrix 'Katie Belles' and 'Tropicbelle' Drought tolerant, 4 ft with low spring/summer flwrs. Not for salty soils</p> <p>✓ Giant sacaton grass (<i>Sporobolus wrightii</i>) Drought tolerant, 3-4ft with summer/fall plumes to 7ft. Graceful, tough, evergreen</p> <p>✓ Lindheimer's muhly grass (<i>Muhlenbergia lindheimeri</i>) Drought tolerant, best w/ some water, 4ft with fall/winter plumes to 6 ft., deciduous</p>	
			
			
<p>✓ Yellow bush daisy (<i>Euryops pectinatus</i>) Yellow blooms most of year, moderate water, easy care, sensitive to frost, smaller</p> <p>✓ Bush marigold (<i>Tagetes lemmonii</i>) Yellow blooms most of year, minimal water, aromatic, sensitive to frost</p> <p>✓  CA flannel bush (<i>Fremontodendron californicum</i>) Yellow blooms late-spring to fall, drought tolerant, use dwarf cultivars: 'Ken Taylor' &amp; 'Dara's Gold'</p> <p>✓ Forsythia (<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>) Yellow blooms in early spring, moderate water, prefers cooler Northern CA climates</p> <p>✓ Knife leaf acacia (<i>Acacia cultriformis</i>) Yellow fragrant blooms in early spring, minimal water, 10-15 ft. tall and wide</p> <p>✓ Rose cultivars 'Golden Showers', 'Golden Celebration', 'Carpet Yellow') Large sprays of yellow flowers, typically spring to fall. Disease resistant</p>			
<b>Invasive: Myoporum (<i>Myoporum laetum</i>)</b>			
			
<p>✓ Griselinia (<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>) Easy care, fast and dense growth to 10 feet. Great as screen/windbreak</p> <p>✓ Sweet bay (<i>Laurus nobilis</i>) Slower growing to 12-40 feet, well adapted to CA climate, needs good drainage</p> <p>✓  Toyon / Xmas berry / CA holly (<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>) Dense shrub, 6-10 feet, red berries, minimal water, best when pruned</p>			
<b>Invasive: Chinese Tallow Tree (<i>Triadica sebifera</i>)</b>			
			
<p>✓ Chinese pistache (<i>Pistacia chinensis</i>) Autumn color, easy care, tolerant of many conditions, berry-like fruit, 30' to 60' tall</p> <p>✓ American sweet gum (<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>) Autumn color, good as screen, fruits are spiny balls, grows to 60'</p> <p>✓ Red maple (<i>Acer rubrum</i> 'October Glory') Autumn color, fast growing, not for urban use, 60' tall by 40' wide. Needs more water</p>			
			
			
		<p>✓ Arizona cypress (<i>Cupressus arizonica</i>) Evergreen conifer, 40' tall x 20' wide, good as screen, easy care</p> <p>✓ Fruitless olive (<i>Olea europaea</i> 'Swan Hill', 'Little Ollie', 'Wilson') Similar aesthetic to Russian olive, slow growth to 12 - 30 feet tall, no fruit</p> <p>✓  Desert willow (<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>) Deciduous, fragrant spring blooms, good along streambanks, 30' tall x 20' wide</p>	