



# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Monday, May 21, 2018

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## Life

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### GOING NATIVE

## Beautiful garden built on local favorites

By LINDA SULLIVAN BAITY, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT  
April 21, 2018 6:10 AM

One of the most frequently proffered pearls of wisdom given by veteran gardeners to beginners seeking their advice is the familiar trope "right plant, right place." Sounds like a simple idea and one that should be easy to implement, but finding just the right plants that will thrive in your garden often takes patience and persistence. And a good sense of humor comes in handy, too.

When UC Master Gardener Diane Galvan searches for the right plants for her suburban corner lot, she almost always ends up selecting a species native to California. Naysayers who argue that native plants can be hard to establish, slow to grow and not all that attractive even when they do survive would be converted on the spot by the eye-catching bed that now borders the Galvans' yard.

More than a dozen California native species are featured, each plant vying with its neighbors to generate maximum visual impact. The variety of sizes, colors and textures on display is proof positive that aesthetics do not have to be sacrificed to create a sustainable, water-wise garden. But this is a conclusion Ms. Galvan reached only after much trial and error — and more than a little embarrassment.

It was 10 years ago that Ms. Galvan and her husband, Larry, decided to stop watering the grass that encompassed most of their 1/3 acre lot in the unincorporated Noleta section of Santa Barbara. Thus ensued a painfully long period when she couldn't quite decide what her next step should be.

"After the grass died came the big, sad hiatus when our yard looked so awful. I didn't want anyone to know I was a Master

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Diane Galvan's front-yard collection of colorful succulents and California natives.  
LINDA SULLIVAN BAITY PHOTOS



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Gardener! At first, we planned to redo everything all by ourselves, then finally we came to our senses and sought professional help."

A local designer laid out plans for a low-maintenance, low-water landscape featuring lots of variety and excitement. A mounded bed extending the entire street-side length of the property is anchored on one end by an enormous yellow brugmansia and on the other by a bright green ginkgo tree. In the middle stands a large purple vitex shrub surrounded by succulents of every shape and size — aloes, agaves, aeoniums, dudleyas, euphorbias and senecios provide drive-by drama no matter the season.

Not long after this new bed was installed, Ms. Galvan began volunteering in the native plant nursery at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, and the more she learned about natives, the more confident she felt that her own garden was the right place to plant them. Soon her happy succulents were joined by a host of California natives, including Jelly Bean monkeyflower, red buckwheat, Cleveland sage, white cistus, Purissima tree mallow, artemisia, yarrow, fuchsia and poppies. She takes particular pride in growing 'De La Mina' verbena and 'Canyon Pink' heuchera — two California native species that were introduced by the botanic garden.

Behind the fence in her backyard, Ms. Galvan continues her quest to "nativize" her landscape. In a raised bed against the house, she has a row of Catalina silverlace — yet another botanic garden introduction. With their arching branches of finely filigreed white foliage, the bushes form the striking centerpiece of a cool palette of blues, purples, limes and silvers. Ms. Galvan started with one specimen, quickly decided "This looks good here!" so she planted more, and they look even better. Violets, lavender, pink Maderense geranium, Mexican sage, white alyssum, wisteria and purple heart spiderwort are all part of the mix.

Other plants with a community connection are a 'Lotusland' begonia, discovered in Santa Barbara in the 1960s and named in honor of our local landmark, and a big leaf kalanchoe that, according to legend, was first found off Modoc Road — practically in Ms. Galvan's backyard! Trailing geranium, Ric Rac cactus, lemongrass and a beautiful Julia Child rose bush are sentimental favorites from her grandmother's garden, and cuttings from friends and neighbors have found a place in her yard, and in her heart. There are many acquisitions from associates in the Santa Barbara County Horticulture Society and the Santa Barbara Little Gardens Club. "Gardening is about being in touch with others, (and) connects me to them," says Ms. Galvan. "Plants are made to be shared."

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Top, a cool color palette in the side yard is anchored by wisteria.  
Bottom, towering Missouri cedar shades Spanish moss and clivia.



Geraniums and roses are sentimental favorites.