

# Master Gardeners of Alameda County Livermore Demo Garden 2019 Plants of the Month

## JANUARY: PLANT OF THE MONTH



### Christmas Cheer Hot Poker- *Kniphofia uvaria* 'Christmas Cheer'

This is a true favorite among the MGs and visitors, genuine standout especially in a winter garden. 'Christmas Cheer' is an assembly of bright red/orange scepters towering above broad green leaves. It blooms from mid-November to February and will rebloom again in April if deadheaded and conditions are right. Hummingbirds love this plant. Overall height of plant is over 3' when in full bloom but it is summer deciduous so will disappear mid-summer. Low water, full sun. We got this as part of the Davis trials in their Arboretum Allstars

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/plant/Christmas-cheer-poker-plant>

## FEBRUARY: PLANT OF THE MONTH



### African Corn Flag - *Chasmanthe floribunda*\*

We thought this was a *Crocsmia* for years until a visitor politely reminded us that *Crocsmia* blooms in summer and the corm *Chasmanthe* blooms mid to late winter. Both are South African members of the Iridaceae family but *Chasmanthe* comes from wet winter locations rather than the wet summer locations where the *Crocsmia* were found. Naturally, *Chasmanthe* thrives in Northern California with little care since it survives on the winter rains and then disappears the rest of the year. Their Orange/red flowers look similar to the *Crocsmia* from a distance but are much more tubular with one petal longer than the rest. They will continue to bloom for years without being divided but dividing clumps every three to four years will lead to heavier flowering. In areas where they seem to spread in an undesirable way, cut to ground late spring just before they set seed. \* Can Self Seed to a point of being invasive – so plant with care.

\* On [Cal-IPC](#) Watch List

MARCH: PLANT OF THE MONTH



***Ceanothus maritimus* 'Valley Violet'**

This is the best smaller *Ceanothus*, California Lilac, for our dry hot summer environment. It is covered in lilac blue blooms February to April and beyond with deep evergreen leaves the rest of the year. Like all *Ceanothus*, it does well in a summer dry environment, but this variety tolerates being in a mixed garden better than other *Ceanothus* that tend to be short lived in an irrigated garden. It is a bee haven for winter! Complements well with *Grevillea*.

UC Davis Arboretum All Star

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/plant/valley-violet-maritime-ceanothus>

APRIL: PLANT OF THE MONTH



**Bees Bliss Creeping Sage-  
*Salvia* x 'Bee's Bliss'**

This rambler with grey green fragrant foliage is covered in blue flowers throughout the spring. A native *Salvia*, that grows to 6-8' wide but stays under 1' in height. It is a great option for slopes and it attracts bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other birds to the garden.

It needs little water once established but looks best with occasional water. Extreme drought may cause summer dormancy, but it will bounce back once winter rains or irrigation applied.

MAY: PLANT OF THE MONTH

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**Jupiter's Beard -*Centranthus ruber***  
**'Coccineus'** AKA: Red valerian or Keys to Heaven.

These lovely plants have dense clusters of pink flowers on long stems that gently dance and sway in the breeze. They attract bees and butterflies galore. A hardy perennial, it's fragrant, exceptionally drought tolerant and blooms generously. Jupiter's beard is low maintenance and Deer resistant. It grows 1-2 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide, blooming spring to frost. Jupiter's beard makes excellent and long-lasting cut flowers. It can be propagated from cuttings, division or seeds. Because Jupiter's beard is freely seeding, it is considered invasive and weedy by some. To prevent the spread of the seeds (they look like dandelion seeds and are easily carried by wind), deadhead flowers when they are done blooming.

JUNE: PLANT OF THE MONTH

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**Pincushion flower –**  
***Scabiosa atropurpurea* \***

While most flowers in the garden are fading in June, the *Scabiosas* are flourishing with beautiful white and purple flowers. It will flower from early summer to late fall. It grows to be 1-2 feet tall with flowers 2-3" wide. This plant is easy to care for but needs well-draining soil. It needs full sun to flourish but can tolerate part shade. It attracts bees, butterflies and beneficial insects, and is deer resistant. *Scabiosa* makes an excellent addition to any garden adding pleasing colors, texture and movement as it sways in the breeze. *Scabiosa* is self-seeding and considered invasive; deadheading flowers is highly recommended before they go to seed. The tap root that helps it thrive in mid-summer makes it difficult to remove once the plant gets over 12" tall. Check out this article about creating a Monarch Butterfly Habitat using plants like *Scabiosa*. <http://acmg.ucanr.edu/files/304497.pdf>

\* On [Cal-IPC Watch List](#)

**Master Gardeners of Alameda County Livermore Demo Garden 2019 Plants of the Month**  
**JULY: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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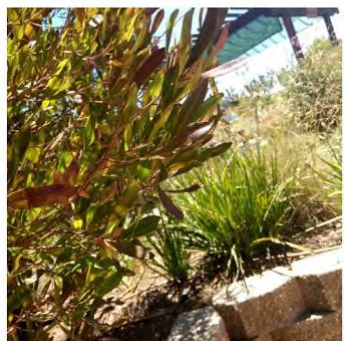


**Island Mountain Mahogany**  
*Cercocarpus alnifolius* aka *Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae*

Island Mountain Mahogany is a native evergreen chaparral shrub that is covered in featherlike curled flowers( and associated seeds) in mid-late summer; It tends to grow taller than wide and is a great vertical accent in any habitat garden (4'w x 10'h) Great option as a screening plant. Deer do tend to graze on the plant so not ideal in places where they frequent but otherwise it is a great addition to any garden due to its nitrogen fixing capability and ability to attract wildlife.

**AUGUST: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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**Purple Leafed Hop Bush**  
*Dodonaea viscosa* 'Purpurea'

This is a favorite fast-growing foliage plant. Summer foliage is green bronze that turns deep red as the temperatures drop. Creating an airy hedge It is a wonderful background to any garden. It can grow to 12'+ or can be maintained to any desired height.

It is a dioecious plant where male flowers and female flowers are born on different plants. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell until they are several years old. The female plants produce paper like blooms and pinkish fruit, which can produce more plants.

It is included on our More Outstanding Plants of Alameda County.

**Master Gardeners of Alameda County Livermore Demo Garden 2019 Plants of the Month**  
**SEPTEMBER: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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**Purple Dome Michaelmas Daisy**  
*Aster 'Purple Dome'*

This dwarf daisy with vibrant purple blooms, definitely grabs your attention when it is in bloom. Beneficial insects and butterflies love it! Its single drawback is that it only holds its blooms for a few weeks in the late summer/fall. Cut to ground in winter to renew.

UC Davis Arboretum All Star

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/plant/purple-dome-michaelmas-daisy>

**OCTOBER: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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**Autumn Joy Stonecrop**  
*Sedum spectabile 'Autumn Joy'*  
*Hylotelephium herbstsfreude*

This upright sturdy succulent blooms from late summer into fall. The blooms open up reddish pink and mature to a copper befitting of autumn. It is 2 feet tall and wide, with succulent stems and leaves. It dies back in the winter, but pops back out each spring.

Prune tips in late spring/early summer to keep shorter ( and prevent flopping) if desired but this may delay blooming.



**Master Gardeners of Alameda County Livermore Demo Garden 2019 Plants of the Month**  
**NOVEMBER: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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**Coyote Bush** *Baccharis pilularis*

This California native popped up in the Demo Garden - most likely planted by wind or birds. Coyote Bush is a major pollinator and a beneficial insect attractant and home for birds, moths and butterflies. It is said to be fire resistant. Its form is highly variable, ranging from upright to mounding to prostrate. This one is about 6' tall, but there is another subspecies in the garden that has finer foliage and topped out at 2.5'. This evergreen shrub tolerates garden water but thrives with no irrigation.

**DECEMBER: PLANT OF THE MONTH**

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**Chinese Pistache** *Pistacia chinensis*

This is a favorite tree in California for breath-taking fall color. It thrives in our summer dry climate and in poor soil. The trees grow to a moderate size, 30-60 feet with a beautiful round canopy. Chinese pistache is deciduous with leaves of a compound structure, and during the summer it will give the surrounding area lovely shade, but pull out the sunglasses in the autumn and get ready for an amazing show of bright orange or perhaps dark crimson red! It is spectacular! But it's not done! The female trees will produce beautiful red nut like berries which will last through most of the winter. Ours at the Demo Garden is shown below in full berry! If planted near patio or entry walk where berry drop may be a concern, the non-fruiting male cultivar 'Keith Davey' has the brilliant fall color without the berry mess.

Obviously, a MG favorite as the [Sonoma MGs also designated it as their plant of the month for December](#)