

Memorial and Habitat Garden

Frequently Asked Questions



**SANTA ROSA
RURAL
CEMETERY**

Q: What is a National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat?

A: It is anything from an apartment balcony to a huge farm or school or business space that has been certified by The National Wildlife Federation as a Backyard Wildlife Habitat. All that is required is a place to raise the young of your local critter or critters, a source of water and a source of food. To apply for certification or to learn more about creating a wildlife habitat, go to www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx

Q: What is a “Monarch Waystation”?

A: A Monarch Waystation provides the proper habitat and special food that Monarch caterpillars must have in order to survive: milkweed. To apply for certification as a Monarch Waystation or to learn more about the needs of the Monarch butterfly and their larvae go to www.monarchwatch.org/waystations.

Q: What is a native plant?

A: A native California plant is one that grew here before non-native peoples arrived.

Q: Why use native plants?

A: Native plants have been evolving with the geology, climate changes, and animals of this area for thousands of years. They grow well here and provide food for native bees and native caterpillars that only they can provide. Certain caterpillars starve if they try to eat the wrong food. Certain native bees can only pollinate certain plants because of the structure of their body parts. Sonoma County has more plants and animals that are only found here than most other areas of the world. Another big advantage of native plants is that they are easy to grow when planted in soils and in light and water conditions they are used to. For people looking to discourage deer from entering their gardens, native plants are a good choice as they seem to be less attractive to deer than more exotic plants.

Q: Why did you choose these particular plants?

A: The Rural Cemetery Preservation Committee researched the type of plants that would do best in our soil and light conditions. We also checked to see what types of butterflies would frequent this particular habitat and chose plants that those butterfly larvae would thrive on. We knew it was important to have pollen and nectar sources year round for the hummingbirds and native bees, so we checked the flowering season for various plants to try to ensure something would be blooming in every season as much as possible. We have some very good handouts from the Master Gardeners’ Program that we used as reference. We also considered food and nesting requirements for birds when we chose plants, and received excellent information from the California Flora Nursery in Fulton. They can be reached at (707)528-8813. For Master Gardeners’ handouts please contact Becky Montgomery at (707)573-0103. If leaving a message please leave your address and the materials you are interested in.

Q: Why no mulch, no dead-heading, and very little pruning?

A: We don't bring in mulch for a few reasons: When we weed, if the weeds are seed-free, we put the dead weeds back on the ground to serve as a natural mulch; some native bees need bare dirt to build their homes; and we want our plants to reseed and spread, and mulch discourages that process. We do not dead-head spent flowers until late in the season because many of our birds, like gold finches, eat the seeds and even examine the seed heads for small insects. We don't prune much because several of our native bees make their homes in dead stems and wood. We also make small brush piles for ground dwelling birds, lizards, frogs, toads, etc. We make small rock piles for reptiles and amphibians, too. Our area of the country is a major salamander and frog habitat, so we try to consider their needs. Both creatures are very sensitive to toxins in the air and soil and so are great indicators of a good environment for humans.

Q: Why do you water once a week?

A: Many of our plants look beautiful without special watering. Most would probably survive not being watered once a week or so, but they wouldn't look as good, and this is a demonstration garden. Watering by hand allows us to check out each plant regularly to see how it's doing. We spend about twenty seconds on each plant we water.

Q: Where do we get native plants?

A: You can find plants labeled "native" in many nurseries. Our experience has been that they don't always tell you where they are native to. We purchased a "native" that turned out to be from Texas. The safest bet is to either take along a good native plant handbook or go to one of the local native plant nurseries. Our favorite is California Flora Nursery because they know our Santa Rosa area well. They have excellent quality plants and will not try to sell plants that are past their prime or unsuitable for your area. They can be reached by phone at (707)528-8813, and are located at 2990 Somers Street in Fulton. Their website is www.calfloranursery.com. Mostly Natives Nursery has a good selection of plants that work well on the coast or in shady areas, and in the spring have a nice selection of spring annuals. They can be reached at (707)878-2009 or www.mostlynatives.com, and are located at 27235 Highway 1 in Tomales. North Coast Native Nursery in Petaluma is another good choice; they are located at 2700 Chileno Valley Road, and can be reached at (707)769-1213 or www.northcoastnativenursery.com.

Q: Where do we go to learn more about native plants?

A: There are many good native plant gardening handbooks available. Visiting gardens with native plants is a great way to learn what grows in your area. It is also a good way to see what mature plants look like. For the list of plants we grow in our garden click here. Gardens include Sonoma State's Native Plants Garden and the Botanical Garden in Tilden Regional Park in Berkeley. The Milo Baker Chapter of the Native Plant Society is a good resource, and they have monthly meetings where you can meet very knowledgeable people who are very generous with their information: www.cnpsmb.org.