



# Winter Planting Guide

Compiled by The Theodore Payne Foundation for Wildflowers and Native Plants, Inc.  
10459 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352 Phone: (818) 768-1802 <http://www.theodorepayne.org>

## Plant

▶ . . . just about everything. If winter rains drench your soil, hold off until things dry out a bit, especially if you have clay soils. Don't back-fill a hole with muddy soil; it's bad for the root ball.

## Wild Flowers

▶ You can still sow wild flower seeds. Soils soaked by winter rains help your seeds along. Be sure to get them in place by the end of January!

## Watering

▶ If winter rains haven't shown up, or if they haven't blown through in the past three weeks, give everything a long, deep soak. In dry periods, check and fix watering basins and fill up once or twice to get a deep soak. But if we've gotten a strong series of rain storms, break the water

wells and let the water flow away from the base of the plant.

▶ In any case, refresh your mulch!

## Divide

▶ You can still dig up and divide cool season grasses such as Festuca, Nassella, Leymus, Calamagrostis, and Melica. Make sure each clump has a good root ball. Water well. Also divide Sisyrinchium, Carex and Juncus species. See sidebar pointers on dividing Heuchera. Iris start growing again about this time and can be divided as well, though it's better to do so in the December dormant period. Prune and Cut Back

▶ If you haven't pruned back last year's growth, consider doing it before plants get too leggy with new growth.

Salvia, Eriogonum, Penstemon, Artemisia, and Zauschneria can be pruned now. If you experience frost, hold off until early spring.

▶ Acer, Amelanchier, Betula, and Sambucus are all dormant and should be pruned, trimmed, and trained.

▶ Garrya should be pruned after those amazing catkins fade, but before new growth starts in late winter or early spring.

▶ HOLD IT! Don't prune Ceanothus until after they bloom. Much of your shrub and perennial pruning should be reserved for late spring and early summer when the spring bloom has faded.

▶ There aren't too many sources of information on pruning California natives. But "Pruning and Training" by the American Horticultural Society does contain information on the most common local natives and provides good basic concepts

## Heuchera Tips

Our native coral bells are some of the most dependable perennials for the California native plant garden. But after a few years, they can get leggy. Test your green thumb and make a few new plants: dig up an old plant and divide it up as indicated below. This technique can also be used on Geum species.

Pull apart new, healthy sections from the edges of the plant, cutting apart as necessary.

- Take care with the roots and cut back any that are damaged or broken.
- Separate into as many rosettes as you can or need.
- Trim back any old leaves.
- For long stemmed sections, cut away from the base of the plant, leaving two or three inches of the stem.
- You can dip cut sections into rooting hormone if you'd like, but it's not necessary. Heuchera are tough and will root fairly easily.
- Either place divisions back into your garden or pot up until the roots establish.
- Keep watered if we head into a dry spell.

Divided plants probably won't bloom this year, using their energy to grow new roots instead. But next year, you'll have strong, vigorous plants that will return with a strong bloom. And you'll probably have a few plants left over to share with family and friends.

Check the Theodore Payne Nursery for a selection of our local coral bells, such as Heuchera elegans from the San Bernardino Mountains and Heuchera maxima from the Channel Islands. Both have beautiful, clear white flowers that rise above dense mounds