



Recommended Plants for Sonoma County for Dry Shade

The selection of plants on this list is not intended to be exhaustive. There are many more plants that can be—and are—grown successfully in Sonoma County. The selected plants are likely to be the most successful. Our 30 very favorites, which we call the Sonoma Superstars, are marked with a star in the left margin.

These plants are adapted to thrive in heavy shade of trees, overhead structures or buildings with little or no watering once they become established. For best success, provide irrigation for the first year or two after planting.

See our glossary of plant list descriptors at [http address] for explanations of these descriptors.

- ★ = Sonoma Superstars
- s = small
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- g = large
- H = high water
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- V = very low water
- S = full sun
- A = afternoon shade
- P = part shade
- F = full shade
- N = CA native
- W = wildlife habitat
- B = beneficial insects
- E = evergreen
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- 1 = for ground covers
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Trees

Arbutus unedo (strawberry tree)	s m	L	S A P	W B E D	2 3 4
<i>When mature, prune lower branches to expose multiple branches and peeling bark. Can be grown as large shrub or small tree.</i>					
★ Cercis occidentalis (western redbud)	s	V	S A P	N W D C	2 3 4
<i>Can be grown as a large shrub or small tree. Remove dead or twiggy branches. Clean up seed pods as they drop.</i>					
Laurus nobilis (sweet bay)	m	L	S A P	E	2 4
<i>Grows as shrub or small tree. Leaves can be used in cooking.</i>					
Lyonothamnus floribundus ssp aspleniifolius (Catalina ironwood)	g	L	S A P	N W E D T	2 4
<i>Flowers persist; must be removed manually.</i>					
Quercus kelloggii (black oak)	g	L	S A P	N W B D	2

Shrubs

★ Arctostaphylos spp (manzanita)	s m g	L	S A P	N W B E D C	1 2 3 4
<i>Plants vary from creeping groundcovers to treelike shrubs. A. densiflora 'Howard McMinn' is one of the most garden tolerant manzanitas and is native to Sonoma County. Remove dead or twiggy branches.</i>					
★ Correa spp (Australian fuschia)	s m	L	S A P	W B E D	2 3 4
<i>May be hedged.</i>					
Elaeagnus pungens (silverberry)	g	L	S A P	E D	2 4
<i>Tough plant; withstands harsh conditions. Good screen or hedge.</i>					
Euonymus japonicus (evergreen euonymus)	m g	L	S A P	E X	2 3 4
<i>Many cultivars available.</i>					
Garrya elliptica (coast silk-tassel)	g	L	S A P	N W E D	2
<i>Has dramatic winter catkins. Can be pruned to control size and shape. For large gardens only.</i>					
★ Heteromeles arbutifolia (toyon, California holly)	m g	L	S A P	N W B E D C X	2 4
<i>Excellent fall/winter interest. Usually grown as a shrub but can reach tree size.</i>					
Holodiscus discolor (cream bush, ocean spray)	g	L	S A P	N W B D	2
★ Hydrangea quercifolia (oak leaf hydrangea)	m g	M	S A P	X	2 3
<i>Tolerates dry conditions. Great fall color. Prune immediately after bloom. Dwarf cultivars available.</i>					

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Lonicera nitida (box honeysuckle) <i>Drought tolerant once established. Can be sheared into hedge. Can be invasive.</i>	m	L	S A P	E	C	2	4
★ Loropetalum chinense (fringe flower) <i>Burgundy-leaved cultivars make wonderful specimen plants. New dwarf varieties available. Remove dead interior branches.</i>	s g	L	S A P	E		2	3 4
Myrsine africana (African boxwood) <i>Useful hedge in hot dry climates</i>	m g	L	S A P	E	D	2	3 4
★ Nandina domestica & cvs (heavenly bamboo) <i>Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	M L	S A P F	E	D	X	2 3 4
Phormium hybrids (New Zealand flax) <i>Needs good drainage. Very attractive to gophers and voles. Dwarf varieties available.</i>	s m g	L	S A P	W	E D	2	4
Physocarpus capitatus (Pacific ninebark) <i>Needs part shade in inland areas.</i>	g	L	S A P	N W	D	2	4
★ Rhamnus [Frangula] californica (coffeeberry)	m g	L	S A P	N W B E	D C	2	4
★ Ribes spp (currant or gooseberry) <i>Thornless species are called currants; thorned species are called gooseberries.</i>	m g	M L V	S A P F	N W	D C	2	4
★ Sarcococca ruscifolia (sweet box)	m	L	P F	E	D	2	4
Styrax redivivus (snowbell bush, California styrax)	m	L	S A P	N W		2	
Symphoricarpos albus (snowberry) <i>Named cultivars are less likely to spread.</i>	s m	L	P	N W B	D C	X	2

Ground Covers

★ Arctostaphylos uva-ursi and cvs (kinnikinnick) <i>Prostrate, spreading and rooting as it grows. Slow to establish. Recommended varieties are 'Radiant' and 'Point Reyes'. 'Point Reyes' is more tolerant of heat and drought. Remove dead or twiggy interior branches.</i>	s m g	L	S A P	N W B E	D C	1	2 4
Baccharis pilularis cvs (dwarf coyote brush) <i>'Pigeon Point' and 'Twin Peaks' are recommended varieties. Shear in early spring before new growth appears. Cut out old arching branches.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N W B E	D C	1	2 4
Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (dwarf plumbago) <i>Spreads by underground runners. Generally dies back in winter.</i>	s m g	L	S A P	W	D	1	2 4
★ Dymondia margaretae (dymondia) <i>Excellent walk-on lawn substitute.</i>	s	L	S A P F	E	D	1	2 3 4
Grevillea lanigera 'Coastal Gem' (grevillea 'Coastal Gem') <i>Avoid phosphorus fertilizers.</i>	m	L	S A P	W	E D	1	2 4
Mahonia repens [Berberis aquifolium var repens] (Oregon grape) <i>Needs part shade in hottest locations.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N W	E D C	1	2 3 4
Ribes viburnifolium (evergreen currant, Catalina perfume)	m	L	P F	N W	D C	2	3 4
Rubus calycinoides (trailing thimbleberry) <i>Requires little water in shade.</i>	m	M	S A P	W	E D C	1	2 3
Salvia spathacea (hummingbird sage)	m	L	A P	N W B	D C	1	2 4
Satureja [Clinopodium] douglasii (yerba buena)	s	L	P F	N W B E	D C	1	2 3 4

Vines

Aristolochia californica (California pipe vine) <i>Slow to establish. Pipe vine swallowtail butterfly larva feeds solely on Aristolochia.</i>	g	L	P F	N W	D	2	4
Clematis lasiantha (pipestem clematis)	m g	L	S A P	N	B	D	X 2 3 4

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Lonicera hispidula (western or California honeysuckle)	m	L	S A P F	N W B	C	1 2 3 4
<i>Can be grown as a ground cover.</i>						

Perennials

Aquilegia spp (columbines)	s m	L	S A P	W B	D	X	2 3 4
<i>Suited to woodland gardens. Most are not long lived and need to be replaced every 3 or 4 years.</i>							
Aquilegia formosa (western columbine)	m	L	S A P	N W B	D	X	2 3
Clivia miniata (Kaffir lily)	m	M	A P F		E D	T X	2 3
<i>Grows in deep shade. Leave clumps undisturbed for many years.</i>							
Erigeron glaucus (beach aster, seaside daisy)	s	L	S A P	N	B E D	T	2 3 4
<i>Needs some shade in hot areas.</i>							
Euphorbia x martinii (Martin's euphorbia)	m	L	S A P		E D	X	2 3 4
<i>Less invasive than other euphorbias.</i>							
★ Helleborus spp (hellebore, Christmas rose)	m	M L	A P F		E D	X	2 3 4
<i>Water requirements vary greatly by species. H. orientalis needs moderate water. H. argutifolia and H. foetidus are most drought-tolerant.</i>							
Heuchera spp (coral bells)	s	M	P				2 3
<i>Non-native species typically have dramatic foliage.</i>							
Heuchera maxima (island alum root)	s m	M	S A P	N	E	T	2 3
Heuchera micrantha (alum root)	s	M	S A P	N	E		2 3
<i>Native to Sonoma County.</i>							
Iris douglasiana (Douglas iris hybrids, Pacific Coast iris)	s	L	S A P	N	E D		2 3 4
<i>Takes full sun along coast, some shade inland. Tends to self-sow in shade.</i>							
Monardella villosa (coyote mint)	s		V S A P	N	B	D	2 3 4
Phlomis russeliana (phlomis)	m	L	S A P	W	E D		2 4
★ Santolina spp (lavender cotton)	m	L	S A P		E D		2 3 4
Stachys byzantina (lamb's ears)	s	L	S A P		E D		2 3 4
Thymus spp (thyme)	s	L	S A P		B E D		1 2 3
<i>Genus includes ground-covers and upright or mounding perennials.</i>							

Succulents

Aeonium spp	s m	L	A P F		E	T	2
Aloe spp (aloes)	s m g	L	S A P		E	T	2 3 4
<i>Most make outstanding container plants.</i>							
Cotyledon spp (cotyledon)	s m	L	S A P		E D	T	2 3 4
Dudleya spp (cliff lettuce, live forever)	s	L	A P	N	E	T	2 3 4
Sedum spp (stonecrop)	s m	L	S A P		B	T	2 3 4
<i>Large genus with much variation. Some are frost tender.</i>							
Sedum spathulifolium (common stonecrop)	s	L	S A P	N W B			2 3
<i>Purpureum has deep purple foliage.</i>							
Sempervivum spp (houseleek)	s	L	S A P		B	D	2 3 4
<i>Tolerates both wet and cold conditions.</i>							

Grasses and Grass-like Plants

Carex texensis (catlin sedge)	s	L	A P F		B E D C		2 3 4
Carex tumulicola (foothill sedge)	m	L	A P F N		B E D C		2 3 4
Chondropetalum tectorum (cape reed)	m	L	S A P	W	E D		2 3 4
<i>Tolerates standing water. May be grown in rain gardens.</i>							
Festuca californica (California fescue)	s	L	S A P F N		E D		2 3 4

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Festuca glauca (Elijah blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	L	A P		D	2 3 4
★ Festuca idahoensis (Idaho blue fescue) <i>Small, low clumps need replacing every few years.</i>	s	V	S A P	N	B E D	2 3 4
Festuca rubra (red fescue) <i>Great lawn replacement in shade. Does not require mowing.</i>	s	L	S A P	N	B E D C	2 3 4
Juncus patens (California grey rush) <i>Thrives in moist soil or shallow water. Good for rain gardens. Shear back old clumps to renew.</i>	s m	L	S A P	N	E D C	2 3 4
★ Lomandra longifolia (mat rush) <i>Extremely drought tolerant once established.</i>	m	L	S A P		E D	2 3 4
Muhlenbergia rigens (deer grass) <i>Cut to ground every two years.</i>	g	L	S A P	N W	E C	2