



# Foothills

## Nature Notes

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CITY OF PALO ALTO • COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT • OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND GOLF DIVISION

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### Shrubs of the Foothills

A shrub is a difficult thing to define; the term means different things to different people. Most botanists would agree however, that a shrub is a woody, perennial plant, commonly without a distinct trunk, and about two to 12 feet in height. It is not always easy to distinguish between a shrub and a small tree or between a shrub and an herb with a woody base. (Herbs are plants generally lacking woody parts above ground.)

If we use the term “shrub” very loosely and include a few local vines, we find that the foothills are home to no less than 40 species of shrubs. All are native plants except two Brooms which have come from Europe. Both French and Scotch Broom, conspicuous when in bright yellow bloom, are invasive plants with seeds that may be viable up to 70 years.

On the reverse side is a descriptive checklist of shrubs that can be found in the foothills Open Space preserves. Some shrubs listed are very rare within our boundaries, in some cases known only from one location. Thus while Bugle Currant, Chaparral Pea, Oso Berry, Pacific Ninebark, and Western Choke Cherry are listed, they are unlikely to be encountered in a casual stroll.

Chamise can form almost pure and impenetrable stands of brush that are often quite extensive. It mixes with other shrubs – Manzanita, various species of Ceanothus, Mountain Mahogany, and Scrub Oak – to form that distinct plant community of hard, woody, scrubby brush we call chaparral.

A number of native shrubs are beautiful plants when in bloom, and their colorful displays rival those of the wildflowers. In addition, every month of the year boasts at least a couple of species of shrubs in bloom. Some of the most beautiful and most unique bloom in the springtime. Blue Blossom Ceanothus, sometimes called California Mountain Lilac, puts on a showy exhibition of bluish, lilac-like blossoms.

Some shrubs are at their best in the fall or winter when in fruit rather than in flower. Thus the Toyon or Christmas Berry is weighed down by limbs drooping with dusters of bright red berries at the winter holiday season. Red, marble-sized rose hips representing the ripened fruit of the California Wild Rose are conspicuous in early fall. This plant grows in the cooler hollows. The fruit of the Holly-leaf Cherry can be gathered and eaten in the late fall, though somewhat lacking in taste. Tastier, if you can find them, are the ripened fruit of the California Blackberry found along shady stream courses.

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*List of shrubs revised and updated by Ted Cbandik*

Take along a guidebook and see how many shrubs you can find from the list on reverse.

## Partial List of Shrubs Found In The Foothills

Habitat Abbreviations: Ch & Chap: *Chaparral* Gr: *Grassland* Str: *Stream* Wd: *Woodland*

HEIGHT RANGE OF MATURE PLANTS	HABITATS	FLOWERING MONTHS FROM / TO		COMMON NAME	FAMILY NAME	EVERGREEN UNLESS NOTED	
<b>Up to 4 Feet</b>	Chap-Wd	Mar	July	Bush Monkey Flower	Figwort		
	Chaparral	April	July	Pitcher Sage	Mint	Deciduous	
	Woodland	May	July	Common Snowberry	Honeysuckle	Deciduous	
	Chap-Gr	May	Oct	Deer Weed	Pea		
	Chap-Gr	July	Nov	California Sagebrush	Sunflower		
<b>4 to 6 Feet</b>	Chap-Wd	Jan	Mar	Leatherwood	Daphne	Deciduous	
	Chap-Wd	Jan	April	California Gooseberry	Gooseberry		
	Chap-Wd	Jan	Sept	Blue Witch	Nightshade		
	Chaparral	Feb	April	Manzanita	Heath		
	Chap-Wd	Feb	May	Red Berry	Buckthorn	Deciduous	
	Stream	Mar	April	Flowering Currant	Gooseberry		
	Ch-Gr-Str-Wd	Mar	May	Poison Oak	Sumac	Deciduous	
	Chap-Gr	Mar	Aug	Coyote Bush	Sunflower		
	Chaparral	Mar	May	Virgin's Bower (vine)	Buttercup	Deciduous	
	Chaparral	Mar	July	French Broom	Pea		
	Ch-Gr-Str-Wd	Mar	Aug	California Blackberry (vine)	Rose	Deciduous	
	Chap-Wd	April	June	Scotch Broom	Pea		
	Chaparral	April	July	Bush Poppy	Pappy		
	Chaparral	April	July	Yerba Santa	Phacellia		
	Stream-Wd	April	July	Creambush	Rose	Deciduous	
	Stream-Wd	April	July	Pacific Ninebark	Rose	Deciduous	
	Stream-Wd	April	Oct	California Wild Rose	Rose	Deciduous	
	Chaparral	May	July	Chamise	Rose		
	Chaparral	May	July	Chaparral Pea	Pea		
	Chaparral	Oct	April	Chaparral Currant	Gooseberry	Deciduous	
	<b>6 Feet and Up</b>	Chap-Wd	Jan	April	Coast Silk Tassel	Silk Tassel	
		Woodland	Feb	April	Oso Berry	Peach	Deciduous
		Chaparral	Feb	Aug	Buck Brush	Buckthorn	
Chaparral		Mar	May	Blue Blossom	Buckthorn		
Chaparral		Mar	May	Mountain Mahogany	Rose		
Chap-Wd		Mar	June	Holly-leaf Cherry	Peach		
Stream-Wd		Mar	June	Smooth Dogwood	Dogwood	Deciduous	
Stream-Wd		April	-	Bugle Currant	Gooseberry		
Chaparral		April	June	Jim Bush	Buckthorn		
Chaparral		April	June	Scrub Oak .	Oak		
Ch-Gr-Stream		April	June	Blue Elderberry	Honeysuckle	Deciduous	
Woodland .		April	June	Western Choke Cherry	Peach	Deciduous	
Chap-Wd		May	July	Coffeeberry	Buckthorn		
Woodland		May	June	Hairy Honeysuckle (vine)	Honeysuckle		
Chap-Wd		June	July	Toyon	Apple		

