

Guidelines for Pruning and Managing Native S. California Plants

Type of pruning	Time of year	Specific plants/plant groups	Specific Pruning Recommendations/Notes
<p>Removing dead, diseased or crossed branches; safety concerns</p> <p>Model: removal of dead & diseased branches by wind, water</p>	<p>Any time needed for health & safety; dormant season often best, but do not prune during rainy periods if possible</p>	<p>All plants</p>	<p>Take care to sterilize tools after pruning diseased branches; in general, prune as little as possible with most native plants</p>
<p>Tip-pruning (pinching) to promote bushy, full growth</p> <p>Model: browsing of new growth by birds, animals</p>	<p>During active growth season (often spring, but may be other times depending on species)</p>	<p>Diplicus/Mimulus (Monkeyflowers)</p>	<p>Needed to produce bushy, well-shaped plant</p>
		<p>Epilobium canum (CA Fuschia)</p>	<p>Lightly tip-prune young shoots to promote fuller shape</p>
		<p>Fremontodentron species</p>	<p>Lightly tip-prune young plants to promote fuller shape</p>
		<p>Gambelia (Galvezia) speciosa (Island Snapdragon)</p>	<p>Tip prune to shape, encourage full growth</p>
		<p>Lepechinia fragrans (Fragrant Pitcher Sage)</p>	<p>Pinch tips to promote full growth</p>
		<p>Plants in Mint Family (Monardella species; Clinopodium/Satureja – Yerba Buena;)</p>	<p>Pinch tips to promote full growth</p>
		<p>* Pinus species (CA native pines)</p>	<p>Remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the new growth (the 'candle') to promote bushy growth; remove entire candle to eliminate elongation of a branch</p>
		<p>Ribes viburnifolium (Catalina perfume)</p>	<p>Pinch tips to promote full growth</p>
		<p>Trichostema lanatum (Woolly Blue Curls)</p>	<p>Pinch tips of young plants to promote full growth</p>

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Pruning to shape or train: particularly important for young plants Model: wind	Best during dormant season in fall or winter; do not prune during rainy periods if possible	Most trees and woody shrubs, vines	Prune to shape when plant is young – first 1-3 years will determine final shape
		Cercocarpus species (Mountain Mahogany)	Can be pruned & trained to shape
		Clematis species (Virgin's Bower)	Can be trained, even espaliered
		* Cornus species (Dogwoods)	Prune to shape when young
		Lonicera species (Native Honeysuckles)	Can be trained, even espaliered
		* Pinus species (CA native pines)	Remove branches to shape
		Prunus ilicifolia (Holly-leaf Cherry)	Can be trained, even espaliered
		Rhus ovata (Sugar Bush)	Can be trained, even espaliered
		Rhus integrifolia (Lemonadeberry)	Can be trained, even espaliered
		Ribes species (Currants & Gooseberries)	Remove branches to shape, particularly in young plants; can be espaliered
	Quercus species (oaks)	Prune as little as possible; remove no more than 10-15% of mass in one season	
	Vitis species (Wild Grapes)	Can be pruned & trained to shape	
Light Pruning/ 'Deadheading': remove old flowering heads/stalks Model: grazing of seed heads by birds & animals	Best - summer after blooming	Ceanothus species	Selectively prune branches back to trunk for shaping.
		Rhamnus californica (Coffeeberry)	Selective prune out branches to shape
		Many flowering perennials	Remove spent seed heads & flowering stalks back to first set of healthy leaves; save seeds or scatter for reseeding & bird food
		Ceanothus species	Deadhead to improve appearance, plant vigor
		Diplacus/Mimulus (Monkeyflowers)	As above; promotes second bloom
		Gambelia (Galvezia) speciosa (Island Snapdragon)	Deadhead as flowers fade; promotes prolonged bloom.
		Penstemons	As above; promotes second bloom
		* Philadelphus lewisii (Mock Orange)	Deadhead as flowers fade; promotes prolonged bloom.
		Succulent plants (Agave, Dudleya)	Deadhead to improve appearance, or later to provide seed for birds
		Verbena lilacina	As above; nearly year-round blooms

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Light Pruning/ 'Deadheading': remove old flowering heads/stalks	In fall/winter, after seeds have been eaten or collected	Any flowering native plant	Remove spent blooms to improve appearance
		* Abutilon palmeri	tip-pruning & light pruning for shape
		* Artemisia pycnocephala 'David's Choice'	Cut back flowering stalks to first set of healthy leaves
		Eriogonum species (Buckwheats)	Remove spent flower stalks
		Penstemons Salvias (Sages) – Salvia apiana (White Sage); Salvia leucophylla (Purple Sage); Salvia mellifera (Black Sage)	Remove spent flower stalks to ground after seeds are gone Remove spent seed heads/flowering stalks back to first set of healthy leaves
Thinning: moderate, selective pruning (removing up to 1/3 of growth) to promote fuller growth & control size* * Model: significant browsing by rabbits, deer, wind damage, etc.	Usually when plant is dormant, in fall or winter	Artemisia californica (CA Sagebrush)	Remove top 1/2 of branch length; do not cut into old wood. For 'Canyon Gray' remove central upright branches as they appear.
		Adenostoma fasciculatum (Chamise)	Prune to shape as needed, late summer
		Baccharis species (Mule Fat; Coyote Bush)	Thin entire branches (for shaping) or remove up to 1/3 of branch length to encourage new growth
		Berberis species	Prune out old canes to promote new growth; leave new canes with buds
		Ceanothus species	Prune branches back to trunk for shaping.
		Cercocarpus species (Mountain Mahogany)	Remove unwanted trunks to base; remove branches to thin
		Dendromecon harfordii	Selectively prune outer branches; tip-prune upper shoots
		Diplacus/Mimulus (Shrubby Monkeyflowers)	Cut back to 4-6 in. above old wood (leave 4-6 buds)
		Keckiella species (Climbing Penstemons)	Prune by 1/3 to 1/2
		Malacothamnus species (Bush Mallows)	Remove top 1/3 of plant
		Monardella species (Coyote Mints)	Remove long, leggy stems
		* Perityle incana (Guadalupe Island Rock Daisy)	Cut back by 1/3 each year to keep plant neat and vigorous
		Ribes aureum	Cut old canes (3 years old) to ground, leaving younger canes to flower
Rosa californica (CA Wild Rose)	Selectively prune to thin		
* Sphaeralcea ambigua (Apricot/Desert Mallow)	Prune back to 4-6 inches after blooming		

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Moderate, selective pruning (removing up to 1/3 of growth) to promote fuller growth & control size**	Spring	Clematis species (Virgin's Bower)	Prune out over-long branches in early spring	
		Constancea/Eriphyllum nevinii (Catalina Silverlace)	Prune branches back to 3-6 sets of sprouting leaves. Early spring	
		Eriodictyon species (Yerba Santa)	Prune only as needed to shape to 2-4 inches above old wood. Spring or early summer only.	
		Lepechina species (Pitcher Sages)	Prune by 1/2, early spring or after flowering; see 'Shearing' for Lepechinia calycona 'Rocky Point'	
	After blooming in late summer	Arctostaphylos spp (Manzanitas)	Prune as little as possible; remove for health only is best	
		* Carpenteria californica (Bush anemone)	Cut stems to 1/3 to 1/2 of length following blooming	
		Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon)	Selectively prune to open foliage; remove suckers	
		* Justicia californica (Chuparose)	Selectively remove older branches to promote next year's blooms	
		Keckiella cordifolia	Can cut back stems to 6 in. stubs in summer	
		* Philadelphus lewisii (Mock Orange)	Selectively remove old canes	
		Prunus ilicifolia (Holly-leaf Cherry)	Selectively prune to open foliage	
	Hedge-shearing as needed. Most of these plants do not require hedge-shearing, but will tolerate light to moderate shearing Model: browsing of new growth by rabbits, deer	As needed during the growth season, or (better) once a year after plant has completed yearly growth, flowering and fruiting (fall/winter).	Atriplex lentiformis	Can be lightly to moderately hedge-sheared in winter
			Berberis nevinii (Nevin's Barberry)	Shear to hedge in fall
Cercocarpus species (Mountain Mahogany)			Can be hedge-sheared;	
* Garrya (Silk Tassel)			Can be hedge-sheared;	
* Juniperus californicus			Can be lightly hedge-sheared in winter after fruiting	
* Myrica californica (Wax Myrtle)			Can be hedge-sheared;	
Prunus ilicifolia (Holly-leaf Cherry)			Can be moderately hedge-sheared;	
* Rhamnus species (Coffee- & Red-berry)			Can be hedge-sheared after fruiting	
Rhus ovata (Sugar Bush)			Can be very lightly hedge-sheared;	
Rhus integrifolia (Lemonadeberry)			Can be hedge-sheared;	
* Umbellularia californica (CA Bay)			Can be hedge-sheared;	

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<p>Yearly shearing or mowing (regularly removing much of new growth),</p> <p>Model: severe browsing by rabbits, deer.</p>	<p>When plant is dormant or has completed flowering & growth, in late summer through fall or even early winter</p>	Achillea millefolium (Yarrow)	Mow or cut back to 2-4 inches
		Anemopsis californica (Yerba Mansa)	Mow or cut back to 2-4 inches
		Artemisia douglasiana (Mugwort)	Cut back spent stems nearly to the ground
		* Calycanthus occidentalis (Spicebush)	Can be sheared to shape, even hedge-sheared
		Encelia californica (CA Encelia)	Cut back to 4-6 in each fall for shrubby full shape
		Gambelia (Galvezia) speciosa (Island Snapdragon)	Can be cut back to 6 inches in late winter to promote lush foliage
		Grindelia species (Gumplant)	Cut back flowering stems or shear almost to the ground
		Heterotheca (perennial)	Shear with scissors or weed trimmer
		Iris douglasii (and cultivars)	Old leaves can be cut to several inches yearly (never pull off)
		Lepechinia calycona 'Rocky Point'	Cut back to 4-6 inch stubs
		Mimulus cardinalis (Scarlet Monkeyflower)	Cut back stems to 1-2 inches
		Salvia spathacea (Hummingbird Sage)	Cut back spent flowering stalks to the ground yearly once established
		Sisyrinchium bellum (Blue-eyed Grass); also * S. californicum (Yellow-eyed grass)	Cut back to ground when dormant for tidier appearance
		Solanum species (Nightshades)	Cut flowering stalks to base of plant
	Venegasia carpesioides (Canyon Sunflower)	Cut back to 4-6 inches yearly to promote bushy shape, flowering	
	<p>In winter, after flowering/fruiting</p>	Baccharis pilularis (Coyote Bush)	Easily hedge-sheared; can even be used to topiary
		Epilobium species	Yearly to 1-2 in. tall
		Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon)	Selectively prune to open foliage; remove suckers
		* Lonicera involucrate (Twinberry)	Cut back to 4-6 inches for more flowers and better form
		* Romneya coulteri (Matilija Poppy)	Prune back entire plant to 4-6 in. tall just prior to re-growth season
Solidago species (goldenrods)		Cut back spent foliage to ground after flowering	

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<p>Severe pruning to rejuvenate old plants – occasional (every 10-20 years)</p> <p>Model: fire, flood or other extreme disturbance event</p>	<p>Late winter/early spring – just prior to the growth period</p>	<p>Many sub-shrubs & perennials in Asteraceae (Sunflower), Lamiaceae (Mint) families</p>	<p>Prune back to 4-8 inches (several sets of leaves) when new growth first appears; as needed when plants become leggy</p>
		<p>Baccharis salicifolia (Mule Fat)</p>	<p>Can coppice old, woody plants when needed</p>
		<p>Baccharis pilularis (Coyote Bush)</p>	<p>Recommended every 3-5 years; cut back to 6-12 inches</p>
		<p>* Myrica californica (Wax Myrtle)</p>	<p>Coppice older plants to rejuvenate in late fall/winter</p>
		<p>* Carpenteria californica (Bush Anemone)</p>	<p>Coppice older plants to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>* Rhamnus californica</p>	<p>Coppice older plants to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>Rhus integrifolia (Lemonade Berry)</p>	<p>Coppice older plants to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>Rhus ovata (Sugar Bush)</p>	<p>Coppice older plants to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>Sambucus cerulea (Blue Elderberry)</p>	<p>Cut back nearly to ground every year or two for a shrubby (as opposed to tree-like) form</p>
	<p>Summer/early fall – after the bloom period</p>	<p>Comarostaphylis diversifolia (Summer Holly)</p>	<p>Cut back old plant to basal burl to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>* Cornus species</p>	<p>Can prune heavily to rejuvenate as needed</p>
		<p>Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon)</p>	<p>Cut back severely only to rejuvenate an old, leggy plant; coppice to produce a low, mounded shrub</p>
		<p>* Philadelphus lewisii (Mock Orange)</p>	<p>Cut back plants with sparse, woody foliage to promote dense new growth; recommended about every 5 years</p>
		<p>Ribes viburnifolium (Catalina perfume)</p>	<p>Cut old plants back severely with string trimmer to rejuvenate</p>
		<p>Rosa californica (CA Wild Rose)</p>	<p>Cut old plants to the ground to rejuvenate</p>

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Severe pruning to rejuvenate old plants – occasional (every 10-20 years)	Fall/winter – during dormancy	Berberis species	Coppice plants with sparse foliage to promote dense new growth
		Cleome isomeris/Isomeris arborea (Bladderpod)	Old plants may be coppiced to rejuvenate
		Dendromecon harfordii	Risky
		Eriogonum species (Buckwheats)	Cutting back to 2-4 inches may rejuvenate – but may kill plant
		Heuchera maxima (and cultivars/hybrids that become tall & leggy)	Cut longer stems back to 1 inch as needed (every 2-5 years)
		* Iva hayesiana (San Diego marsh Elder)	Shear or mow back to the crown when becomes woody (every 4-5 yr)
		Keckiella species	Cut back severely to rejuvenate old, woody plants
		Lyonothamnus species (Ironwoods)	Old plants may be cut back to basal burl to rejuvenate
		Malacothamnus species (Bush Mallows)	Coppice older colonies (clones) that are experiencing die-back
		Rosa californica (CA Wild Rose)	Can be cut back severely to rejuvenate plant
		Symphoricarpus species (Snowberries)	Cut back to several inches to rejuvenate old woody patches
Dividing plants with corms, bulbs, rhizomes & plantlets. Divisions, plants & bulbs can be planted up for new plants Model: foraging of root-eating animals like skunks, bears	Late summer/early fall	Most native bulbs and corms (Allium; Bloomeria; Brodiaea; Chlorogalum; Dichelostemma; Tritelia)	Dig up every 2-3 years; scatter small bulbs/corms or plant in pots
	Fall/Winter	Iris douglasii (and cultivars)	Carefully divide when new white roots appear after fall rains begin. Replant promptly.
		Fern species (native)	Divide woody roots; dig up plants carefully
		Fragaria species (Wild Strawberries)	Remove plantlets when adequate roots have formed in fall/winter
		Most bunchgrasses (Calamagrostis; Festuca; Leymus; Melica; Nasella) Rushes (Juncus) and sedges (Carex)	Divide clumps, making sure each clump has a good rootball
		Heuchera species	Dig up parent plant; carefully divide and replant daughter plants

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Dividing plants with corms, bulbs, rhizomes & plantlets.	Fall/Winter, cont.	Sisyrinchium species	Divide clumps; plant plantlets as they begin to root
		Succulent plants & cacti (Agave, Dudleya, Opuntia)	Carefully remove 'pups' in fall
		Wetland species (Equisetum (Scouring rushes); Schoenoplectus/Scirpus (Tules); Typha (cattails);	Carefully divide when new roots appear after fall rains begin. Replant promptly.
Removing dead leaves & rejuvenating grasses & grass-like plants Model: browsing by deer; occasional cooler fires	Removing old foliage (leaves) in late fall to improve appearance	Most native spreading (rhizomatous) perennial grasses & some bunch grasses (Calamagrostis; Festuca; Muhlenbergia) and Carex spissa (San Diego Sedge)	Remove dead leaves by gently raking
	Occasional mowing during growth season	Most native perennial bunchgrasses (Deschampsia; Melica; Nassella; Poa; Sporobolus)	To improve appearance, use scissors or pruning shears cut dead 'thatchy' leaves to the ground, leaving new sprouting leaves.
		A few native grasses & sedges (Bouteloua; Carex; Distichlis; Leymus triticoides)	Cut high (4-6 inches tall) several times during growing season
	Rejuvenating overgrown clumps of bunchgrass in fall (after seeds have dispersed)	Most native bunchgrasses & Spikerush: Aristida, Eleocharis, Festuca, Muhlenbergia, Nassella, Sporobolus	Cut back clump to 4-6 inch height using pruning shears every 2-5 years (when plants become large and lose vigor)
	Rejuvenating other native grasses, sedges & rushes	Carex species (all but Carex spissa); Equisetum;	Cut back to several inches every 1-2 years, as needed
		Juncus species (rushes)	Cut back oldest leaves to ground very occasionally (3-5 years)
		Leymus condensatus 'Canyon Prince'	Cut back to 2-4 in. every year or every other year when dead leaves build up

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* Plant is a California native, but is not native to southwestern Los Angeles county

** Over the long run, pruning to limit size does not work well for most CA native plants