

12 HIGH PERFORMING PLANT TYPES FOR THE MONTEREY BAY

What is a high performing plant?

One that is well adapted or native to our Mediterranean climate in the Monterey Bay area. These plants are the workhorses of your garden, offering a high return on your gardening investment, which means they:

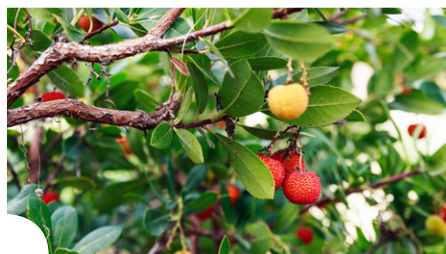
- Have low water needs and thrive with little or no rain/irrigation
- Stay alive for more than three growing seasons (perennial)
- Are easy to care for, with little fertilizing, pest control, or pruning
- Offer long displays of blossoms or foliage

We are so lucky to be able to grow a large variety of plants that meet this criteria in our area. We've highlighted twelve of our favorites below. Although each species of plant can be quite different in color, size, etc., some reliable genus (plant groupings) are:



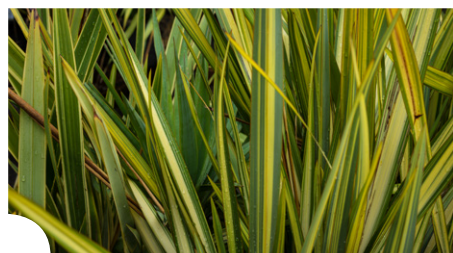
Smoke Tree (Cotinus) – Deciduous shrub or small tree, can be pruned to any size. Classic foliage color is burgundy, but also comes in red, orange, lime green and violet! Distinctive “smoke-like” blooms in late summer, with some species changing leaf color in the fall. Full sun, well-drained soil.

Strawberry Tree/Madrone (Arbutus) – Pretty red flaky bark, with small bell-like blossoms in spring and pretty green, to yellow to red (actually edible) berries in the fall. Adapts to all soil types, generally grows 8-12 feet tall, with rounded shape, tolerates incremental pruning.



Pin Cushions (Leucospermum) & Cone Plants (Leucadendron) – Both in the Protea family from South Africa, evergreen, and rounded (Leucospermum) and upright (Leucadendron) forms, with strong leaves, 3-8 feet tall. Unusual shapes and forms, adds structure to cut flower bouquets.

New Zealand Flax (Phormium) – This easy-to-grow strappy plant adds year-round dramatic foliage. Comes in many sizes and colors. Can tolerate coastal air and winter frost, and has a variety of sun requirements, depending upon which of the many cultivars chosen.



Sage (Salvia) – Easy to grow, in over 900 varieties, the hardy perennial types are recommended. Intense and varied coloring, with a long blooming season, that attracts pollinators. Deadhead old blooms and prune back hard in fall or spring. Very drought tolerant, likes well-drained soil and full or dappled sun.

Continued on page 20.

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Penstemon – Several hundred species, with many native to North America, these plants come with a variety of blooms, colors, and heights to choose from. Very resilient plant that reseeds itself, and attracts pollinators such as hummingbirds. Deadheading will encourage more blooming. Prune light in fall and heavier in spring.

Yarrow (Achillea) - Showy, upright, self-spreading plant, great for border plantings. Medicinal plant to native people, with distinct pungent foliar odor. Prefers hot, sunny, and dry conditions in well-drained soil. Attracts butterflies and available in many colors, with yellow being common.



Wormwood (Artemisia) – Hardy herbaceous, low shrubby plants in the aster family. Their color adds a beautiful silver to olive hue in the garden that contrasts beautifully with burgundy, yellow, and cobalt blue. Full sun to partial shade, likes moist, well-drained soil.

Fringe Flower (Loropetalum) – Deep burgundy foliage with clusters of rich, pink, fringed flowers that bloom repeatedly throughout the year. Works well with containers or beds, alone or in mass plantings. Full to partial sun, with weekly watering. 4-6' tall and wide at maturity.



Blanket Flower (Gaillardia) - Showy, “daisy-like,” long blooming flowering plant. Typically shows in oranges, yellows, and reds, attracting butterflies. Grows from 10-30” tall. Good cut flower that can grow in containers or beds. Full Sun, well-drained soil.

African Daisy (Osteospermum) – Colorful, varied flowers that thrive in warm, full sunlight. Blooms close at night, so not ideal for evening viewing. Will reseed itself in the fall if you allow flowers to dry out at the end of the season.



Succulents – Frequent genus include aloes, aeoniums, sedums, and echeverias. Easy to grow and propagate, adding architectural forms and variety to the garden. Easy to grow in containers or beds, some are frost tender.

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