

LA BIODIVERSITY GUIDELINES

# HABITAT





COVER PHOTO: NURIT KATZ

## **Use a diverse plant palette to create, enhance, or restore habitat**

Develop a diverse planting palette for the site or project with an array of native plants, shrubs, and trees with different heights, and densities, to create complex habitat structure with multiple microhabitats for wildlife, where appropriate. For best results, aim for no less than 70% locally native species in landscaping designs. Ensure that the site has the appropriate conditions (e.g., sunlight, water, soil, space) for the selected plant species to mature and thrive. Many native plants are able to thrive in small spaces and in pots/containers. Use the following zip code-specific plant finders to select appropriate native species for your site:

- [Calflora's Planting Guide](#)
- California Native Plant Society's [Calscape Tool](#)
- Xerces Society's [Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists](#)
- The Butterfly Net's [Lepidoptera Conservation Tool](#)



## Do not plant invasive species

Avoid use of all species on the lists published by [CAL-IPC](#) or on the [PlantRight Invasive Plant List](#) for the South Coast ([PDF](#)).



## Use local plant material

Use [locally-collected native seeds and propagules](#) which are best adapted to local conditions and help protect the local genetic pool. The act of seed collection should be left to experts that understand and respect collection protocols to protect plant populations and sensitive ecosystems. This is particularly significant in restoration projects.

## Source plant stock from local native plant nurseries

Support nurseries that are utilizing best management practices for nursery management and pathogen reduction or via organizations and regional seed banking partnerships like [SeedLA](#), which safely collect seeds and propagate stock locally. Visit, learn more, and shop at:

- [The California Botanic Garden](#)
- [The Theodore Payne Foundation](#)
- [El Nativo](#)
- [S&S Seeds](#)
- [Las Pilitas Native Plant Nursery](#)
- [Hahamonga Native Plant Nursery](#)
- [Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's Native Plant Nursery](#)
- [Tree of Life Nursery](#)
- [Matilija Nursery](#)





## Preserve existing native vegetation

Protect and preserve native shrubs and trees on site as feasible and permitted. In particular, retain urban woodlands, individual native trees, and large canopy trees that provide shade.



## Enhance wildlife connectivity

Help create habitat patches and corridors through urban areas, by planting locally appropriate California native species in key locations that can help connect large natural parks and open spaces. Efforts can range from planting large native shrubs and trees that provide cover for large mammals or planting species that will be utilized by birds, butterflies, and other pollinators. See the '[Built Elements](#)' section for ways to enhance wildlife connectivity in the built environment.

## Use historical ecology as a guide

The [Historical Ecology of the Los Angeles River Watershed](#) and the [Los Angeles Ecotopes Framework](#) provide useful information for understanding the local microclimate, soils, and naturally adapted plant communities for your property. Locally appropriate native plants adapted to site conditions provide the best opportunity for plant health, ecological benefits, and support for native biodiversity. Keep in mind that the climate is warmer and development has significantly reduced permeability and surface water resources compared to earlier periods.



PHOTO: NURIT KATZ



**Support pollinators**

Plant native California milkweeds, pollinator-friendly nectar plants, and pollinator host plants, including large shrubs, to support LA’s pollinator species, like the monarch butterfly. Xerces maintains [a list](#) of host and nectar plants for our region, widely available at nurseries. Do not plant tropical milkweed. Provide insect hotels to support ground burrowing pollinators.



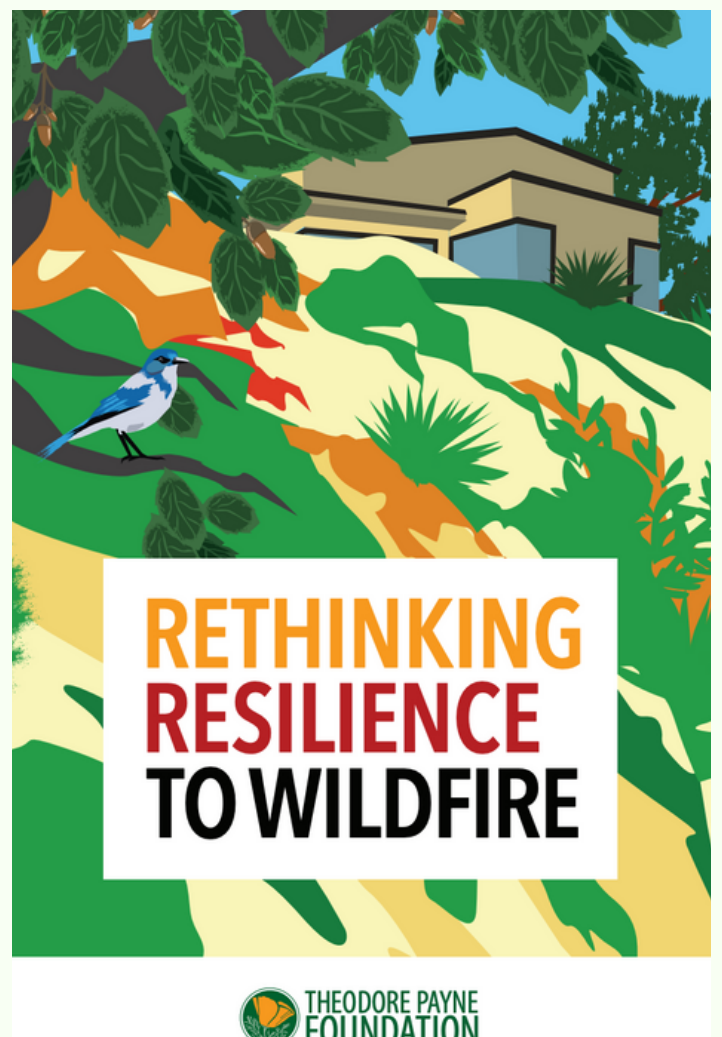
**Retain natural materials, such as woody debris and leaf litter, on site to provide wildlife shelter and to enrich soils**

Support wildlife by retaining dead trees, also known as snags, when safe to do so, letting plants go to seed, and retaining leaf litter on site to shade the soil, hold moisture, and serve as slow-release mulch. Avoid gas-powered leaf blowers and follow other guidance presented in the ‘Sustainable Practices’ section.



## Perform wildlife-friendly vegetation management

Take care to undertake vegetation management for fire prevention and creation of defensible space in a way that limits impacts to biodiversity and reduces the spread of invasive species, while adhering to [LAFD protocols](#). This may include removing dead plant material, trimming low branches, and weeding out invasives, but should not result in removal of living (including dormant) shrubs. In areas prone to wildfire, adhere to the [Plant Selection Guidelines](#) set forth by LA County Fire. Refer to the Theodore Payne Foundation's [Rethinking Resilience to Wildfire](#) for best practices on wildfire-resilient garden design.



## Certify your space

Take the [Xerces Pollinator Protection Pledge](#) or certify your habitat via the [National Wildlife Federation](#), the [Surfrider Foundation](#), and/or [Audubon International](#) to demonstrate commitment to sustainable, wildlife-friendly practices. Display relevant signage/placards on site to advertise your certification(s).





## Follow best practices for work in the public parkway

If working in the parkway within the City of LA, adhere to the City's [Residential Parkway Landscaping Guidelines](#) which includes a list of [Preferred Drought-Tolerant Plant Species](#). If you live in a different city or unincorporated LA County, adhere to locally relevant guidelines.



PHOTO: THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION, MARIE ASTRID GONZALEZ

## Additional Information

Refer to the '[Maintenance](#)' and '[Sustainable Practices](#)' sections for more information on creating and sustaining wildlife habitat using wildlife-friendly management practices

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- Use local plant material: Use locally-collected native seeds and propagules which are best adapted to local conditions and help protect the local genetic pool. The act of seed collection should be left to experts that understand and respect collection protocols to protect plant populations and sensitive ecosystems. This is particularly significant in restoration projects.
  
- Source plant stock from local native plant nurseries that are utilizing best management practices for nursery management and pathogen reduction or via organizations and regional seed banking partnerships like SeedLA, which safely collect seeds and propagate stock locally. Visit, learn more, and shop at:
  - The California Botanic Garden
  - The Theodore Payne Foundation (In Sunland and at the Los Nogales Nursery at the LA Audubon Center at Debs Park)
  - El Nativo
  - S&S Seeds
  - Las Pilitas Native Plant Nursery
  - Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy's Native Plant Nursery
  - Tree of Life Nursery
  - Matilija Nursery
  
- Preserve existing native vegetation: Protect and preserve native shrubs and trees on site as feasible and permitted. In particular, retain urban woodlands, individual native trees, and large canopy trees that provide shade.
  
- Enhance wildlife connectivity: Help create habitat patches and corridors through urban areas, by planting locally appropriate California native species in key locations that can help connect large natural parks and open spaces. Efforts can range from planting large native shrubs and trees that provide cover for large mammals or planting species that will be utilized by birds, butterflies, and other pollinators. See the 'Built Elements' section for ways to enhance wildlife connectivity in the built environment.

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- Support pollinators: Plant native California milkweeds, pollinator-friendly nectar plants, and pollinator host plants, including large shrubs, to support LA's pollinator species, like the monarch butterfly. Xerces maintains a list of host and nectar plants for our region widely available at nurseries. Do not plant tropical milkweed. Provide insect hotels to support ground burrowing pollinators.
- Retain natural materials, such as woody debris and leaf litter, on site to provide wildlife shelter and to enrich soils: Support wildlife by retaining dead trees, also known as snags, when safe to do so, letting plants go to seed, and retaining leaf litter on site to shade the soil, hold moisture, and serve as slow-release mulch. Avoid gas-powered leaf blowers and follow other guidance presented in the 'Sustainable Practices' section.
- Perform wildlife-friendly vegetation management: Take care to undertake vegetation management for fire prevention and creation of defensible space in a way that limits impacts to biodiversity and reduces the spread of invasive species, while adhering to LAFD protocols. This may include removing dead plant material, trimming low branches, and weeding out invasives, but should not result in removal of living (including dormant) shrubs. In areas prone to wildfire, adhere to the Plant Selection Guidelines set forth by LA County Fire. Refer to the Theodore Payne Foundation's Rethinking Resilience to Wildfire for best practices on wildfire-resilient garden design.
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# GET IN TOUCH

LASAN's Biodiversity Program oversees the City's efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity. The program originated in 2017 when the LA City Council adopted the Biodiversity Motion and directed LASAN to lead Citywide biodiversity efforts.

☎ 800-773-2489

➤ [lacitysan.org/biodiversity](http://lacitysan.org/biodiversity)

