



HUMBOLDT BOTANICAL GARDEN

Eureka, California

Welcome to the Lost Coast Brewery Native Plant Garden!

During the winter months, most of the plants in the Native Plant Garden are in a dormant or semi-dormant state, having finished flowering and not yet starting new growth in earnest. December, January and February are months when little is in bloom in the Native Plant Garden. The manzanitas are an exception to this, and usually several plants will be in bloom at any given time throughout the winter, attended by bumblebees and Anna's hummingbirds. The Garden's plant textures are still of interest and perhaps most evident during the season's low-angled morning or afternoon sunshine. Ground foraging winter bird use is high, evidenced by the mulch scattered onto the garden paths each day by their ambitious work. The vine maples, red alders, dogwoods, Oregon ash, cascara, and willows, ninebark, and spicebush have lost the last of their leaves, exposing interesting branches and bark textures. The native plant garden's "bones" will be in full view for the next few months.

Keeping weeds at bay is the most important chore to be accomplished during this time of the year. Removing annual and perennial weeds is a constant necessity without which the garden would soon be overgrown and not worthy of display. A common myth about gardening with California native plants is they are maintenance free. Although generally pest free and not needing supplemental soil amendments, fertilizer or irrigation, attractive native plant landscapes do require regular weeding and a little pruning. Winter is a great time to stay ahead by frequent weed pulling and by adding a thick layer of mulch to native plant garden beds. Mulch helps smother small weeds, protects the soil from erosion, and retains soil moisture during the dry season. It is usually a good idea to keep the mulch away from within a foot or so of the native plant's base to discourage disease.

Winter is also the time of year for coppicing (severe pruning) many of the larger shrubs including **California rose** (*Rosa californica*), **Matilija poppy** (*Romneya coulteri*), **Spicebush** (*Calycanthus occidentalis*), and **Mock Orange** (*Philadelphus lewisii*). While it may appear severe, this type of heavy pruning every two to three years results in vigorous, fresh growth the following season. Bunchgrasses such as **Pacific reed grass** (*Calamagrostis nutkaensis*), **deer grass** (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) and **California fescue** (*Festuca californica*) also are sheared at this time of year to remove dead thatch and stimulate new growth.

We have planted over 700 specimens to the Native Plant Garden over the last four years, including many new and rare manzanitas (we now have 50 different manzanita species, hybrids, or cultivars), ceanothus, sages, monkeyflowers, and buckwheats. Combined with the large driftwood pieces and small boulders already in place, we anticipate an even more interesting display for 2020.

Come explore the Native Plant Garden on a winter's day and enjoy a quiet walk along the plant-lined gravel paths. You just might discover a few California natives to try in your garden!

---Mark Moore, Volunteer Curator, mmoore1229@gmail.com

For more information or to volunteer please contact the Humboldt Botanical Garden, PO Box 6117, Eureka, CA 95502, (707) 442-5139, www.hbgf.org Be an Ambassador for the Garden. Like us and share your Garden experiences on our Facebook site at "Humboldt Botanical Garden" or on your favorite social media!