



Garden Certification Checklist

When you grow native plants, you build habitat connectivity and increase climate resilience in the Ojai Valley. The OVLC's Garden Certification checklist helps you assess your garden's value as habitat, providing forage and nesting sites for pollinators, birds and mammals. We address native plant composition and coverage, invasive species, sustainable gardening practices, and safe wildlife practices, all of which when combined can make a real difference for your local fauna.

This checklist helps evaluate your garden's effectiveness as habitat. There are 85 points possible.

Native Plant Composition [66 points possible]

Plants that have evolved in our specific local conditions provide the most benefit for wildlife. Gardens should include multiple types of plants and multiple canopy layers for most diverse habitat creation. Plants chosen from the Southern Oak Woodland, Coastal Sage Scrub, and Chaparral plant communities are appropriate, visit calscape.org for a complete directory.

Estimate the percentage of Southern California native plants (quantity or coverage) in the landscaped area applying for certification. You may choose to consider your entire property or just a portion.

What portion of your property are you certifying?

- Front yard only [5 points]
- Back yard only [1 point]
- Entire yard [10 points]
- Other _____ [up to 2 points]

In the planted area you are certifying, specify the percentage of plants that are Southern California natives.

- At least 30% native plants [25 points] **or**
- At least 50% native plants [35 points] **or**
- At least 70% native plants [45 points]

- Count the number of mature **native** trees and assign a point for each [up to 5 possible] _____

- Garden should include multiple layers of coverage. Native grasses/native shrubs/native wildflowers/any trees [1 point for each layer, minimum 2] _____



- Garden includes locally sourced plant genetics (i.e. plants procured from OVLC nursery) [2 points]

Total _____

Invasive Plants Removed [1 point possible, 1 required]

Some invasive plant species do a great deal of harm to our local ecosystems. Check that these are not part of the garden: Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), mustard (*Brassica nigra*), giant reed (*Arundo donax*), yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), pampasgrass (*Cortaderia selloana*), Russian thistle (*Salsola* spp.), Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*), tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), vinca (*Apocynaceae* spp.).

- No invasive weeds on the list

Total _____

Sustainable/friendly gardening practices adopted on property [9 points possible; minimum 3 required]

- Water conservation/stormwater management/erosion control measures taken, i.e. rain garden, rainwater harvesting, bioswale, sumps, French drain
- Water use, i.e. drip and soaker hoses, hand watering, appropriate watering frequency
- Elimination of or pledge to not use broad-spectrum chemical pesticides
- Removal of any amount of lawn to plant natives
- Mulching where appropriate
- Reduce or eliminate fossil fuel, i.e. electric tools
- Leaving leaf litter
- Elimination of chemical fertilizers
- Practice Integrated Pest Management i.e. owl/bat boxes, beneficial insects, soil testing to determine plant needs

Total _____



Habitat creation and safe wildlife practices on property [7 points possible, minimum 2 required]

- Dead trees/logs/snags/rock piles
- Water source, i.e. bird bath, fountain, shallow dish that you keep filled
- Nesting places, i.e. mature trees, burrows, nesting boxes
- No cats, cats indoors only, or wearing Birdsbesafe collar or Cat Bib
- Minimal lighting (avoiding uplighting; using motion sensors; dark-sky compliant fixtures)
- Anti-bird collision features on windows
- Permeable fences

Total _____

Additional habitat points [2 possible]

Overall landscaping keeping in the spirit of Rewild, i.e. non-native plants are drought tolerant and provide forage for pollinators, non-native mature trees, etc. [up to 2 points] _____

Total _____

Grand Total _____

Scoring

35 points = Basic level - Habitat Helper

50 points = Mid level - Habitat Steward

68 points = High level - Habitat Hero!

These guidelines are subject to change.

- Would you be interested in being featured in a Garden Profile for the OVLC website?**
- Would you be interested in being featured in a Native Plant garden tour in the Spring?**



Garden Certification Appendix

This appendix will help you work through the Garden Certification Checklist criteria. If you get stuck, reach out to rewild@ovlc.org.

The OVLC website has a list of plants grown in our nursery as well as other common local native plants. Visit ovlc.org/nursery/plants to see complete descriptions and clear images that can help you become familiar with these plants.

Please visit calscape.org for a complete directory of plants native to our local Southern Oak Woodland, Coastal Sage Scrub, and Chaparral plant communities. If you are struggling to identify a plant, the iNaturalist app is a great resource; just snap a picture and most things will be identified instantly.

Common drought-tolerant plants that are often confused with natives:



Salvia cultivars (*greggii*, etc).



Purple hopseed bush
(*Dodonaea viscosa*)



Lavender cultivars



Lantana (*Lantana camara*)



Agave attenuata



Agave americana cultivars



Common garden plants often confused for natives, continued....



Fountain grass cultivars
(*Pennisetum* spp.)



Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissim*)



Museum palo verde



Spurge (*Euphorbia* spp.)



Jacaranda tree



Oleander



Echinacea purpurea



Crape myrtle



Mexican sage (*Salvia leucantha*)



Coast rosemary (*Westringea fruticosa*)



Blanket flower (*Gaillardia* spp.)



Olive tree cultivars (*Olea europaea* spp.)



Measuring Native Plant Composition

To qualify for the certification, you need to estimate the relative quantity or percent cover of native plants in your garden. You are welcome to use any method to estimate or follow the guidelines below.

Calculating Native Plant Composition

Count the total number of plants in your garden, count the number of native plants in your garden, and divide the number of native plants by the total number and multiply by 100%. If you don't know what a certain plant is, use the iNaturalist app to help identify it, and check CalFlora.org to confirm if it is native to our area.

$$(\# \text{ of native plants} / \text{total} \# \text{ of plants}) * 100\% = \% \text{ Native Plant Composition}$$

Invasive Plants Removed [1 point possible, 1 required]

Invasive species are all around us, but some of these invasive species are targets for removal because of their outsized negative impacts on fire, water supply, and/or biodiversity. The index below will help you identify the invasive species of most concern so you can remove them from your property right away. If you need help with identification, use iNaturalist.



Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)



Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)



Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)



Invasive species continued....



Tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*)



Giant reed (*Arundo donax*)



Russian thistle (*Salsola spp.*)



Mustard (*Brassica nigra*)



Castor bean (*Ricinus communis*)



Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*)



Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*)



Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)



Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*)



Tamarisk (*Tamarix spp.*)



Vinca (*Apocynaceae spp.*)