

# Don't Plant a Pest!

Give them an inch and they'll take an acre...



A dense stand of pampasgrass (*Cortaderia selloana*), a garden plant that has invaded California wildlands

Suggested alternatives for invasive garden plants. More information available at [www.cal-ipc.org](http://www.cal-ipc.org)

**Central Coast Version**  
Covering San Luis Obispo & Santa Barbara Counties

## Gardening green

California is a gardener's dream. Our mild climate allows us to have fantastic gardens, showcasing a wide variety of ornamental plants from all around the world.

But sometimes, our garden plants "jump the fence" and invade natural areas. These invasive plants can become serious wildland weeds that threaten California's biodiversity and economy.

Over half of the plants currently damaging California's wildlands were originally introduced for landscaping purposes. Garden escapes like pampasgrass and French broom may have desirable characteristics in a garden setting, but outside the garden these plants displace native species and alter natural processes.



English ivy destroys forest understory vegetation

Gardeners don't plant invasive species intentionally. Like other Californians, gardeners have a deep respect for our state's rich natural heritage. The good news is that most garden plants behave perfectly well in their intended roles. By choosing suitable replacements for the few problem plants, we can save ourselves trouble and expense in our garden and help to protect the natural California landscape at the same time.



French broom invades parts of SLO County

Some of these plants show weedy tendencies in the garden as well. For example, English ivy can take over a yard and damage buildings and fences. Likewise, when birds drop seeds near a stream, English ivy can take over native vegetation and degrade wildlife habitat.

Many of the characteristics that make a plant a good choice for the garden may also make it a successful invader:

Garden Plants	Invasive Plants
Easy to propagate	Broad germination
Establish rapidly	Colonizer
Mature early	Mature early
Abundant flowers	Prolific seeds
Pest / disease tolerant	Few natural predators

Invasive plants are by nature a regional problem. A plant that jumps out of the garden in one climate and habitat type may behave perfectly in another. The problem plants listed here have escaped from gardens throughout the Central Coast.

### How to use this brochure:

This brochure suggests safe alternatives for these plants. When you are buying new plants, consider these alternatives, or ask your local nursery for other non-invasive plants. If one of the invasive plants is already in your yard, especially if you live near wildlands, you may want to remove it and replace it with a recommended alternative. Think about why you might plant one of the problem plants in the first place. Is it just for the way it looks? If so, finding a replacement is often easy—some of the alternatives listed here are selected especially for their similar appearance. Or maybe you need a plant to fill a functional role, such as a groundcover that grows well in a shady place, or a border plant that likes full sun. Alternatives listed here thrive in the same environments as problem plants while offering added benefits such as attracting wildlife. Many of these alternatives are readily available, though others may be easiest to find in specialty or native plant nurseries.

- Full sun**
- Part shade**
- Full shade**
- Drought tolerant**
- Low water**
- Moderate water**
- Regular water**
- High water**
- California native**
- Deer resistant**
- Fire resistant**

Both native and non-native plants have been recommended as alternatives in this brochure. Care has been taken to ensure that none of the recommended non-natives is invasive. However, plants can adapt over time, and there is no guarantee that some of these plants will not themselves become pests in the future. If you notice one of these alternatives invading natural areas, notify Cal-IPC. Pay close attention to plant names, since a few of our recommended plants may have invasive relatives—even in the same genus.

## G roundcovers & Perennials

**STOP DON'T PLANT:**

### iceplant or Hottentot fig

(*Carpobrotus edulis*)

Small mammals can carry seeds of iceplant from landscape settings to nearby coastal dunes and other sensitive areas. The vigorous groundcover forms impenetrable mats that compete directly with native vegetation, including several rare and threatened plants along the coast.



Charles Webster © 1988 California Academy of Sciences

**Instead of iceplant or Hot tentot fig, TRY THESE VARIETIES:**



David Fenwick © 2003 The African Garden

### hardy iceplant

(*Delosperma cooperi*)  
A non-invasive iceplant with smaller, succulent leaves and brilliant violet-pink flowers May through October. Salt tolerant.

### beach strawberry or wood strawberry

(*Fragaria chiloensis* or *Fragaria vesca* ssp. *californica*)

This perennial, evergreen groundcover forms a lush, low-growing mat. Leaves are dark-green and glossy with a red tint in winter. Mow or cut back the plants in early spring to encourage new growth.



Chris Moore, SLO County Department of Agriculture

### germander

(*Teucrium chamaedrys*, or *T. x lucidrys*)

This plant can be sheared into a neat groundcover or allowed to grow to full height (about one foot), and produces lavender flowers in the spring. Compact cultivars are available.

### showy dewflower or rosea iceplant

(*Drosanthemum floribundum*)  
A succulent with silver-gray leaves and an abundance of pink flowers. Requires little or no water, especially along the coast. Tolerates some salt spray.

## G roundcovers & Perennials

**STOP DON'T PLANT:**

### periwinkle

(*Vinca major*)

This aggressive grower has trailing stems that root wherever they touch the soil. This ability to resprout from stem fragments enables periwinkle to spread rapidly in shady creeks and drainages, smothering the native plant community.



© 1995 Br. Alfred Broussseau, Saint Mary's College



Courtesy Ken Owen, Channel Islands Preservation

Vinca has escaped from landscaped areas into wildland habitats throughout the Central Coast, and due to its nursery availability there is the potential for increasing problems associated with this commonly used groundcover. In the adjacent photo, volunteers hand remove vinca on habitat-rich Santa Cruz Island in Santa Barbara County. Vinca has invaded several riparian areas and oak woodlands on the island, having escaped from a horticultural planting years ago.

### English ivy or Algerian ivy

(*Hedera helix*, *H. canariensis*)

When birds carry the seeds of these popular plants into wildlands, ivys can smother forest trees and understory plants by completely shading them, which also prevents regeneration of new tree and shrub seedlings. Ivy also harbors pests, such as rats and snails.

Ornamental ivy has already escaped in many local areas, causing severe problems for our native habitats. In this photo, English ivy invades Arroyo Grande Creek, smothering trees and crowding out vegetation along the banks.



Marc Lee, SLO County Department of Agriculture

## G roundcovers & Perennials

**Instead of periwinkle, English ivy or Algerian ivy, TRY THESE VARIETIES:**



Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

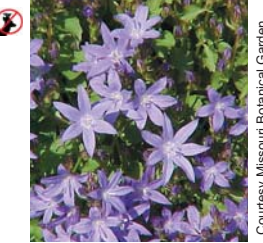
### pachysandra

(*Pachysandra terminalis*)  
Grows more slowly than Vinca and Hedera, but has a crisp, neat growth form. New foliage is bright green, changing to dark green with age. Variegated cultivars are available.

### Serbian bellflower

(*Campanula poscharskyana*)

Produces a profusion of lilac-blue, star-shaped flowers spring to fall. Grows quickly and easily, but could overwhelm a carefully manicured garden.



Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

### ivory star jasmine or asian jasmine

(*Trachelospermum asiaticum*)

Has glossy, dark green leaves and pale yellow, pinwheel-shaped flowers with a jasmine scent.



### evergreen currant

(*Ribes viburnifolium*)

A low-growing evergreen shrub with fragrant, dark-green leaves. Can tolerate full sun along the coast but needs partial shade in the hotter, inland areas. Once established, evergreen currant does not need irrigation and is an excellent choice for growing under native oaks where supplemental watering is discouraged.



### giant alumroot or coral bells

(*Heuchera maxima* and hybrids)

This evergreen groundcover has heart-shaped leaves and tiny, bell-shaped, pink and white flowers that hang gracefully from thin stalks. There are many hybrid varieties available with a wide range of leaf colors and textures.

## G roundcovers & Perennials

**wild ginger**  
(*Asarum caudatum*)

A California native, this evergreen groundcover has heart-shaped leaves and unusual maroon flowers.



© 1999 Beatrice F. Howitt, Calif. Academy of Sciences



Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

### bear's foot hellebore

(*Helleborus foetidus*)  
Unusual foliage and delicate, complex flowers. The intriguing pale green and purple flowers often have a pleasant fragrance.

### Corsican hellebore or Lenten rose

(*H. argutifolius* or *H. orientalis*)

Besides bear's foot hellebore, there are several other perennial hellebore species available that can grow well in Central Coast gardens.

### Bergenia or winter saxifrage

(*Bergenia cordifolia* and hybrids)

An evergreen groundcover, with large, dark green leaves, and clusters of bright, deep pink flowers.

## Other Potential Plant Pests

The plant pests detailed in this brochure represent those invaders that have escaped in our area and are also commonly found in nurseries. There are many other troublesome weeds found along the Central Coast that were intentionally introduced into this area. In most cases, it was years or even decades before these plants were recognized as causing serious economic and ecological damage to our local natural resources.

The list below includes additional garden plants that have escaped into our local rangelands and wildlands. Although these are not often sold in nurseries any longer, it is important to be aware of them and avoid planting them whenever possible. You may also consider removing them if they are already growing on your own property, especially if your land is adjacent to a natural or open space area.

**Other Invasive Garden Plants:** Arundo/Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*), Cape Ivy (*Delairea odorata*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and Salt Cedar/Tamarisk (*Tamarix spp.*).

## Don't Plant a Pest! Central Coast Version

Produced by  
San Luis Obispo County Foundation  
for Agriculture Awareness  
(805) 543-3654  
San Luis Obispo County  
Department of Agriculture  
(805) 781-5910 www.sloag.org

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT INVASIVE PLANTS, VISIT:

San Luis Obispo County Weed Management Area  
www.sloag.org/wma

Santa Barbara County Weed Management Area  
www.countyofsb.org/agcomm/wma

California Invasive Plant Council  
www.cal-ipc.org

The Nature Conservancy  
http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu

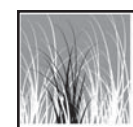
California Department of Food and Agriculture  
www.cdffa.ca.gov

National Invasive Species Council  
www.invasivespecies.gov

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS, VISIT:

California Native Plant Society  
SLO County Chapter: www.cnps-slo.org  
Channel Islands Chapter: www.cnpsci.org

This edition of the "Don't Plant a Pest" brochure was adapted from the original version developed for the San Francisco Bay Area by Cal-IPC with participation from the following organizations: BMP Ecosciences, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Native Plant Society, Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture, Daar/IPM Consulting Group, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Faultline Magazine, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin County Department of Agriculture, Monrovia Nursery Company, The Nature Conservancy, Point Reyes National Seashore, Return of the Natives Restoration Education Project, Santa Clara Weed Management Area, Sloat Garden Centers, Strybing Arboretum, Suncrest Nursery, UC Cooperative Extension, UC Davis Arboretum, and UC Botanical Garden.



**Cal-IPC**  
California Invasive Plant Council

www.cal-ipc.org

## Shrubs

### STOP DON'T PLANT:

#### broom

(Scotch, French, Spanish, Portuguese)  
(*Cytisus scoparius*, *Genista monspessulana*, *Spartium junceum*, *Cytisus striatus*)

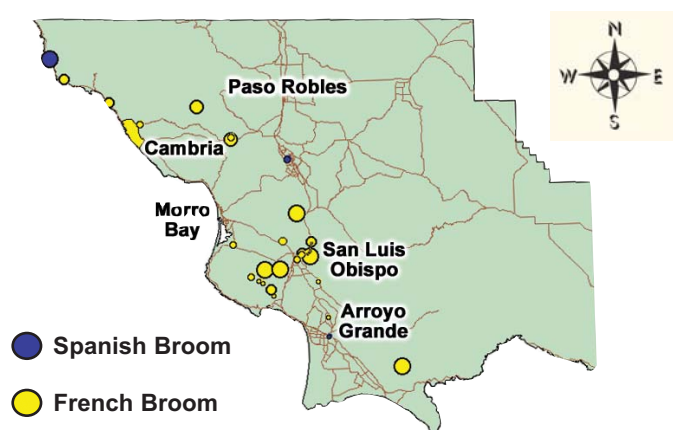
These four brooms have invaded over one million acres in California. The flowers produce thousands of seeds that build up in the soil over time, creating dense thickets that can decimate entire plant and animal communities. Besides crowding out native plants and damaging wildlife habitat, French broom is highly flammable and creates an increased fire risk in local canyons and forests.



Courtesy Mark Souder, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau

Of the four invasive brooms, both Spanish and French broom have already escaped in San Luis Obispo County, with French broom becoming an emerging local problem. French broom is found in shady canyons throughout the county and is most widespread in the Cambria area, where it often grows under the pine forest canopy (See map below for details).

### Broom Infestations within SLO County



## Shrubs

### Instead of broom, TRY THESE VARIETIES:



© Monrovia

**forsythia** ☀️💧💧  
(*Forsythia x intermedia*)  
Often the first plant to bloom in spring, forsythia produces an astounding display of bright yellow flowers. Dozens of cultivars are available. Grows quickly.

### winter jasmine

(*Jasminum nudiflorum*)  
Arching green stems and bright yellow flowers that bloom in winter characterize this deciduous shrub.



Courtesy Washington Park Arboretum

### Lady Banks' rose

(*Rosa banksiae*)  
Readily available in local nurseries and easy to grow, Lady Banks' rose is a hearty climber with few pest problems. It has glossy evergreen leaves, the stems are nearly thornless, and it produces large clusters of small, yellow blooms each spring. Can be trained on an arbor or fence or used to cover banks and other large areas.



Karen Lowmison, SLO County Department of Agriculture



© Monrovia

**Japanese kerria** ☀️🌧️💧💧🚫  
(*Kerria japonica*)  
Golden yellow flowers first appear in spring on this graceful shrub, and continue into summer. Stems remain bright green in winter after leaves fall.

### golden currant

(*Ribes aureum*)  
A California native, this shrub has a profusion of bright yellow flowers that turn into edible berries suitable for jams and jellies. Birds and butterflies love this plant.



Dr. Robert Thorne and Margaret Or © 1999 Calif. Academy of Sciences

## Shrubs



© Joy Creek Nursery

**Jerusalem sage** ☀️💧💧🚫  
(*Phlomis fruticosa*)  
Has bright yellow flowers and gray-green, textured leaves.

### bush poppy

(*Dendromecon rigida*)  
A native California shrub that is not yet widely available in nurseries. Very drought tolerant once established, bush poppies will produce showy yellow flowers from spring through early summer. Needs pruning to maintain compact, landscape friendly form.

### shrub hypericum

(*Hypericum 'Rowallane'*)  
This shrub produces bright yellow flowers through summer and fall. Tolerates poor soil.

### STOP DON'T PLANT:

#### cotoneaster

(*Cotoneaster lacteus*, *C. pannosus*)  
Birds have spread the berries and seeds of these specimen shrubs to many different habitat types. With their rapid growth and competitive roots, cotoneasters displace native plants and animals.



© Monrovia

### Instead of cotoneaster, TRY THESE VARIETIES:

### toyon

(*Heteromeles arbutifolia* and cultivars)  
This California native is an evergreen shrub that produces delicate white flowers and large clusters of brilliant red berries that birds love.



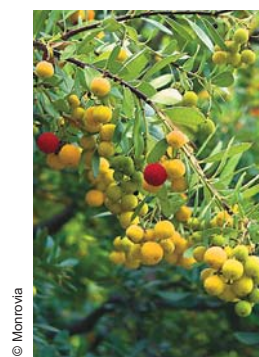
J. E. (Jed) and Bonnie McChellan © 1999 California Academy of Sciences

## Shrubs

**pineapple guava** ☀️🌧️💧🚫  
(*Feijoa sellowiana*)  
This evergreen shrub has scarlet and white flowers, as delicious as they are beautiful, and waxy blue-green fruits with a minty pineapple flavor. It is easily shaped into a small tree.



© Monrovia



© Monrovia

### strawberry tree

(*Arbutus unedo*)  
A gorgeous evergreen tree available in compact, shrub-like varieties that are easy to grow. It produces masses of beautiful white flowers, and textured, strawberry-like fruits.

### sandankwa viburnum

(*Viburnum suspensum*)  
This evergreen shrub produces tight clusters of small, waxy, pinkish-white flowers that give way to bright red berries. Several compact varieties are available. There are many other viburnum species available, including several additional evergreen species grown for both their foliage and flowers, such as *V. rigidum* (Canary Island viburnum) and *V. tinus* (Laurustinus).



© Courtesy Mark Shelby, University of Florida-IFAS Extension

### calamondin orange

(*Citrus mitis* or *x Citrofortunella microcarpa*)  
A natural hybrid between the tangerine and kumquat. Evergreen with shiny green leaves, and small, fragrant, waxy white flowers followed by long-lasting, bright orange fruits that make great marmalade.

## Ornamental Grasses

### STOP DON'T PLANT:

#### pampasgrass or jubatagrass

(*Cortaderia selloana* and *Cortaderia jubata*)  
Both of these South American plants, originally introduced into California through the nursery trade, have escaped cultivation and invaded wildlands along the Central Coast. Jubatagrass is the more severe problem in San Luis Obispo County, while both pampasgrass and jubatagrass have invaded parts of Santa Barbara County.



© Monrovia

Pampasgrass is still widely available in nurseries, while jubatagrass is rarely sold locally but may be found advertised in various seed and flower catalogs. Although female pampasgrass plants can be grown without escaping cultivation, it is very difficult to distinguish between male and female plants or even between jubatagrass and pampasgrass. It is best to avoid using any of the *Cortaderia* species, especially in our vulnerable coastal areas.

Both grasses have large characteristic flower plumes, sharp leaf blades, and can form large clumps over five feet tall. The massive size of each pampasgrass plant reduces wildlife habitat, limits recreational opportunities, and creates a serious fire hazard. Individual plants can produce thousands of tiny seed which can be carried by wind for miles.

#### green fountain grass

(*Pennisetum setaceum*)  
This perennial grass produces large amounts of seed that are spread by vehicles, animals, and wind into natural areas. Fountain grass is still widely available in nurseries, and is spreading rapidly throughout California. Dense infestations can crowd out native species, as well as raise fuel loads increasing fire frequency and intensity.



Chris Morris, SLO County Department of Agriculture

## Ornamental Grasses

### Instead of pampasgrass, jubatagrass or green fountain grass, TRY THESE VARIETIES:

#### deer grass

(*Muhlenbergia rigens*) ☀️🌧️💧💧🚫  
This large perennial California native has dense clusters of narrow, bright green leaf blades and tall, slender flower stalks. Bold enough to be used as a focal point of the garden, it also partners well with other perennials, flowers and shrubs. Once established, deer grass is extremely drought tolerant and fits in perfectly with a water-conscious California garden.

#### Lindheimer's muhly grass

(*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*)  
This large, dependable, and showy ornamental grass has blue-gray foliage and flowering spikes in the fall and winter. Good in poor soils, it grows up to five feet tall. Works well as a specimen plant or massed into an attractive border.



Courtesy Bluestem Nursery www.bluestem.com

#### New Zealand flax

(*Phormium tenax*) ☀️🌧️💧💧🚫  
Although not a true grass, New Zealand flax fills a similar function in the landscape as many of the popular ornamental grasses. Individual plants are large, hardy, and require minimal care while offering a bold point of interest to any garden. Numerous varieties and hybrids are now available, coming in a range of sizes and leaf colors, including many with striking stripes of red, yellow and green.

#### Cape thatching reed

(*Chondropetalum tectorum*)  
This decorative, "grass-like" plant produces attractive flowers that are ideal in cut flower arrangements. Grows three to four feet tall.

#### San Diego sedge

(*Carex spissa*) ☀️🌧️💧💧🚫  
This large sedge has a form similar to that of an ornamental grass. Produces gray leaves to five feet tall and yellow, grass-like flowers in the spring.