

# Ceanothus - California Wild Lilac

**California Wild Lilac, Ceanothus, is one of the most popular native plants for landscapes. This group of evergreen woody shrubs is full of diversity, known for its deep green foliage and vibrant flowers. It can't be beat for drought tolerance and authentic natural beauty. We grow an array of species and varieties in forms ranging from low, spreading groundcovers and mounding shrubs, to small trees. Flower colors vary from white, light blue, cobalt, deep purple and bright blue. Ceanothus are unmistakable in the spring, when showy sprays of butterfly-attracting, fragrant blooms are at their peak.**

	SPECIES OR VARIETY, COMMON NAME	FLOWER COLOR	SIZE (FT. H X W)	OUTSTANDING FEATURES
GROUNDCOVER	'Centennial'	royal blue	<1 x 4	very low, fast growth
	<i>gloriosus</i> 'Point Reyes'	light blue	1 x 4-6	sturdy, good on coast
	<i>gloriosus</i> 'Anchor Bay'	dark blue	1 x 4	tolerates part shade
	<i>griseus horizontalis</i> 'Yankee Point'	medium blue	2-3 x 6 +	dependable, clean
	<i>heartsiorum</i> , Hearst's Ceanothus	dark blue	1 x 6	best on coast, flat
	'Heart's Desire'	blue	1 x 3-4	tolerates part shade
	<i>maritimus</i> , Maritime Ceanothus	light blue	2 x 5	tolerates part shade
	<i>maritimus</i> 'Frosty Dawn'	light blue	1-2 x 3-4	slow-growing
	<i>maritimus</i> 'Popcorn'	white	1 x 2-3	good in rock gardens
	'Mount Vision'	light blue	1-2 x 3-4	long-lived, small leaves
<i>thyrsiflorus</i> 'Arroyo de la Cruz'	blue	2-4 x 5	mounding, fast growth	
MEDIUM	'Blue Jeans'	faded denim	4-6 x 6	tolerates heavy soil
	'Concha'	dark cobalt blue	5-6 x 6	heavy bloom, especially garden tolerant
	'Dark Star'	deep blue	4 x 6	rich blue flowers
	<i>griseus</i> 'Louis Edmunds'	bright blue	6 x 8	profuse bloom, rapid growth
	<i>griseus</i> 'Santa Ana'	deep purple-blue	6 x 12	tolerates part shade
	'Joan Mirov'	dark blue	4 x 5-8	shade tolerant
	'Joyce Coulter'	rich blue	3-5 x 12	large-scale groundcover
	'Julia Phelps'	dark indigo	6' x 8'	angular branching habit
	'Kurt Zadnik'	royal purple	4-5 x 8	unique blue-violet bloom
	<i>rigidus</i> 'Snow Ball'	white	2-4 x 5	early, profuse bloom, small leaves
	<i>thyrsiflorus</i> 'Skylark'	dark blue	3-5 x 5	compact habit
	<i>verrucosus</i> , Wartystem Ceanothus	white	6 x 6	needs good drainage
'Wheeler Canyon'	dark blue	5-6 x 6	profuse bloom, pink buds	
LARGE TREE/SHRUB	<i>arboreus</i> , Island Ceanothus	light blue	15-20 x 12	decorative small tree
	<i>crassifolius</i> , Hoaryleaf Ceanothus	white	3-12 x 8	chaparral plant
	'Frosty Blue'	sky blue with white	8-10 x 10 +	symmetrical growth
	<i>leucodermis</i> , Whitebark Lilac	white to pale blue	6-12 x 10	grey-green bark
	<i>megacarpus</i> , Big Pod Ceanothus	white	4-8 x 8 +	heavy bloom, stiff branches
	'Ray Hartman'	bright blue	15 x 10	especially garden tolerant
	'Sierra Blue'	deep blue	15 x 15	good screen plant
	'Sierra Snow'	creamy white	8-10 x 8 +	profuse blooms
	<i>spinousus</i> , Greenbark Ceanothus	light blue	6-8 x 8 +	coastal shrub, "wild" looking
	<i>thyrsiflorus</i> 'Snow Flurry'	white	6-12 x 10	shiny, light green foliage
<i>tomentosus</i> var. <i>olivaceus</i> , Woollyleaf Ceanothus	azure blue to white	6-10 x 8 +	drought tolerant	

As a member of the Buckthorn Family (*Rhamnaceae*) *Ceanothus* wood is very attractive for carving or turning.



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## CARE AND MAINTENANCE

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### INITIAL CARE

Like all California natives in the landscape, *Ceanothus* require much less water, fertilizer and doting attention than common ornamental plants. The ideal planting period is Fall, Winter, and Spring, to take advantage of the winter rains. Little or no soil amendment is required as *Ceanothus* are well adapted to our alkaline soils and are quite efficient at extracting nutrients. It is always best to match the plant variety to the soil onsite rather than attempting to drastically alter the soil.

During the initial establishment period the root ball and the area around the new plant should be watered with sufficient frequency to keep the soil moist, but not water logged.



### WATERING

Once the plants are established, most *Ceanothus* will thrive on one deep watering every two or three weeks during the dry season. In hot, inland locations, avoid wetting the leaves during the summer, as this could cause a fungal branch dieback.

Careful water management is necessary in order to avoid root rot disease, especially during periods of high temperatures in the dry season. In heavy soils, some *Ceanothus* will succumb to root rot if the root zone is waterlogged in summer. Good drainage, an organic surface mulch for cooling the soil, and deep, infrequent waterings are important factors in providing the ideal environment for *Ceanothus* to thrive in the garden for many years. For additional information on summer watering see our “Summer Water” Sage Advice.

([www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com/PDFs/Sage-Advice/summer\\_water.pdf](http://www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com/PDFs/Sage-Advice/summer_water.pdf)).

### PRUNING, FERTILIZER AND LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE



Prune for overall shape. *Ceanothus* provide important browse for deer in their habitat. This provides us a clue on maintenance. The plants benefit from tip pruning as needed rather than cutting them drastically down to stumps. Some varieties will

not sprout from old wood. Light pruning after they finish blooming will increase longevity. In most soils, *Ceanothus* require very little fertilizer, as they are so well adapted to our climate and soils. They also fix atmospheric nitrogen in a process similar to legumes.

As a general rule, *Ceanothus* will look good in the garden for up to 15-20 years. Consistent stress on the plant from over-watering will shorten the life of a *Ceanothus*. When they start to appear woody and overgrown, it is time to take them out or to replace them.

### CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, a California native plant garden is not complete without one or more varieties of *Ceanothus*. This is one of our most conspicuous and important plant types. Additional information can be found at our website: [www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com](http://www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com) or, in these recent books: *Ceanothus* by David Fross and Dieter Wilken; and, *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien.

