

Garden Dormancy

This year the [Theodore Payne Foundation](#) is holding a [Garden Tour followup](#) to celebrate native plant gardens at the height of their dormancy. On October 6 TPF invites you to join a [free Zoom session](#) during which gardens from the [April 2021 TPF Garden Tour](#) will show off their browns. Let me just say, I love this idea!



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-garden-tour-update-dormancy-tickets-169667681603?aff=ebsdoporgprofile>

Dormancy in my garden

Although I was not on this year's garden tour, I'd like to share a couple of photos of my front yard when it was wild with color, and right now, when it shows off its subdued browns, tans, and grays.

Weeding Wild Suburbia

All About Gardening with California Native Plants
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September 2021

Seasons elsewhere

Anyone who has lived in most other parts of the country knows that gardens look different during different seasons. In the East Coast, where I grew up, the spectacular reds, yellows and oranges of fall are followed by the subdued browns, grays, and whites of winter. As the days lengthen and temperatures rise, the natural world wakes up with the emergence of soft greens, crescendoing to wildly colorful springtime flowers. The world then turns a deep, lush green in summer, until the first yellow or red leaf reminds all that the cycle will begin anew.

But here in southern California we expect our gardens to be filled with colorful flowers, forest green trees, and verdant lawns all year long, Our mild Mediterranean climate accommodates us, so long

as we add water, lots and lots of water.

Even if water were unlimited - which it is not - there are many downsides to this artificial world. Lawns and overly lush plants require mowing, blowing and pruning, with the accompanying noise and air pollution. Water from sprinklers, held in something as small as a fallen leaf, provides breeding grounds for mosquitos. Lush growth encourages other insect pests as well. But what we miss most is a yearly cycle of life as the seasons pass.

The beauty of our seasons

[In my garden](#), native plants receive very little water through the dry season, and it shows. As the days shorten and temperatures decline, I start to yearn for the outrageous colors of the spring wildflowers. However, even while thinking of the springtime, I marvel at the tenacity of plants that can survive months of hot, dry weather.

They and I rest when the temperatures reach into the nineties and beyond. I only venture out during cool mornings and evenings. I sweep the fallen leaves from the walks, and admire the rusty brown, dry buckwheat flowers. The seasons in southern California are pronounced and beautiful. They can be experienced in our gardens but we must embrace the richness and subtly of their colors.

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Deergrass (front, left) stays green through the summer with a minimum of supplemental water. The leathery leaves of manzanitas (back) maintain their rich green color throughout the year. These and a few other remarkable [summer-green native plants](#) provide important habitat and keep my garden from looking completely dead during the dry season.