

Friends of Five Creeks hopes these signs will intrigue and inform people about the roles of native plants in natural areas.

These 5" by 7" signs use a picture and short lively text with topics such as Native American uses or how plants interact with animals, other plants, or the environment. Calscape QR codes lead to more details. Printed and laminated, signs will last for years.

We hope that others will use or modify these signs. Email f5creeks@gmail.com for instructions, original pictures, or files. There is no copyright.

To view signs as a slide show with any .pdf reader, go to "slide show" or "full screen" and use arrow keys.

Rawwen SOAP PLANT

Chlorogalum pomeridianum



Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for the Chochenyo translation, and CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Native Americans lathered this plant's bulbs into soap. They boiled them to make glue. They threw mashed bulbs into pools to stun fish – or in lean times, the bulbs could be slow-roasted and eaten. No wonder tribes valued this plant!



DOUGLAS IRIS

Iris douglasiana



Native iris flowers' showy lines guide insects to nectar and pollen. The tough, toxic leaves, by contrast, repel grazers.

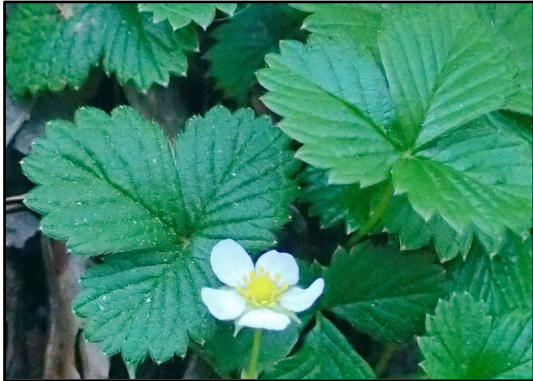
Many California tribes patiently stripped and rolled the leaves' two outer fibers, making strong rope and nets.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



WOODLAND STRAWBERRY

Fragaria vesca



Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.

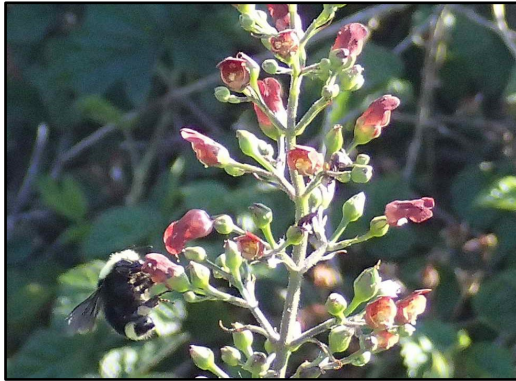


Who doesn't love wild strawberries? Just like us, deer, raccoons, skunks, squirrels and ground-feeding birds like robins relish those red morsels. The cheerful white flowers draw bees with guidelines we can't see.



Bee plant

Scrophularia
Californica



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



While small maroon flowers feed bees large and small, this woodland plant serves some butterflies another way: Larvae eat the leaves, taking in a toxin that drives off hungry birds.



PACIFIC SANICLE

Sanicula crassicaulis



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes



Some tribes used this modest wildflower of woodland edges as a gambling charm or to draw out snake venom. This led to names more colorful than the chartreuse flowers: “gamble weed” and “blacksnakeroot.”



COW PARSNIP

Heracleum maximum



This big streamside plant has a busy life! Anise swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on leaf undersides. Bees take nectar from big white flower heads. Deer eat foliage, and spring shoots are a Native American vegetable.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



CALIFORNIA ASTER

Symphotrichum chilense



Blooming in our dry summer and fall, this tough little native is a gift to bees, butterflies, and other insects. A long blooming season means bugs stay around – and provide protein that birds need.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



YARROW

Achillea millefolium



You've probably noticed yarrow by its long-lasting flower heads. So have the pollinators! Beloved by butterflies, this ferny-leaved native flourishes in many environments and spreads rapidly.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Hiišen (hee-sh-en)

MUGWORT

Artemisia douglasiana



In the lives of Native Americans, aromatic mugwort could produce sacred dreams, ward off ghosts, and heal in dozens of other ways.

Thanks Sogorea Te Land Trust for e Chochenyo name, and CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



NARROW-LEAF GUMPLANT

Grindelia stricta



Lining the Bay, gumplant's sunny flowers add a pop of color to the dry late summer. Looking closely at this plant's flowers, you can see a sticky milky substance that helps keep away pests, and was used by Native Americans as glue.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



SPANISH CLOVER

Acmispon americanus



Blink and you'll miss it! Spanish clover completes its entire life cycle in just one year. In the summer, it can produce an impressive "superbloom" of little pink flowers.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



CALIFORNIA BRITTLEBUSH



Encelia californica



Beautiful yellow daisy-like flowers cover this bush in the spring, drawing in pollinators and flower lovers alike! This tough Southern California native may flourish even more here as the climate warms.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes, and to milliebasden on iNaturalist for



NEEDLEGRASS

Stipa pulchra, lepida, cernua



Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



The threadlike, twice-bent awns on these grasses' sharp seeds actually walk! They bend on dry days and straighten on damp nights. This also helps drill the sharp seed into the ground.



CREEPING WILD RYE

Elymus triticoides



Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Grasses provide essential cover and food for small critters of all kinds. This tall native, spreading by roots, also locks in soil and crowds out invasives. It tolerates salt, drought, and flooding and stays green longer than most other grasses.



CREEPING WILDRYE

Elymus triticoides



This tall native grass is a rock star at stabilizing soil! Its dense network of roots locks in soil and crowds out invasives. It also tolerates salt, drought, and flooding.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



COMMON RUSH

Juncus patens



Expect these spreading clumps of wiry grey stems, trimmed with tan flowers, almost wherever they find water: in sun or shade, on muddy or dry banks, in almost any soil.

For small animals, they offer seed and cover.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes



Xuyxuy VALLEY SEDGE

Carex barbarae



Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for Chochenyo translation, and CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Indigenous families tended plots of this grass-like plant, digging and splitting its long roots to weave baskets. Those same roots filter water and stabilize soil on the stream banks where it thrives. Wetland birds relish the seeds.



HORSETAIL

Equisetum



Silica supports these ancient plants, which evolved before wood. This makes horsetails useful for scrubbing, sanding, or polishing. They also are used in medicine – and eaten.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



'Enésmin CALIFORNICA BLACKBERRY

Rubus ursinus



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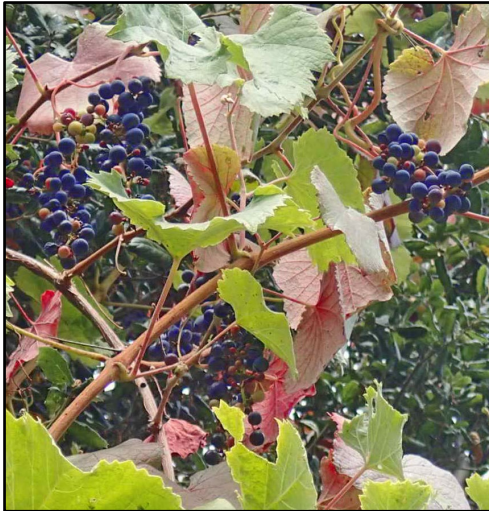


Between shrub and vine, native blackberry offers dense cover for wildlife in our woods. Canes have only small prickles – not big thorns. Berries are edible, but small and few – pick the invasive ones instead!



CALIFORNIA GRAPE

Vitis californica



Grapes brought by missions and settlers may have left no truly wild grapes. These hardy vines come close, though – and make great jelly!

Birds relish the tart little fruits and the caterpillars that eat the leaves.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



CALIFORNIA PIPEVINE

Aristolochia californica



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols
and QR codes.



Pipevine's curled flower lures and briefly traps tiny gnats. They escape, but covered with pollen. Pipevine swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs only on these vines. Munching the leaves, the caterpillars build up toxins that deter birds.



PINK HONEYSUCKLE

Lonicera hispidula



Whether growing as a vine or groundcover, our native honeysuckle is a feast for wildlife. In the springtime hummingbirds, bees, and moths flock to the nectar in its pink tubes. Robins and bluebirds enjoy the bright red berries.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Poison Oak

*Toxicodendron
diversilobum*



Growing as a shrub or vine, poison oak brings us flaming fall colors. It has other virtues. Birds love the berries. Deer browse twigs and leaves. Native Americans braved the rash to make baskets and black dyes.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



WILD CUCUMBER

Marah fabacea



Delicate yet vigorous, this vine shoots up in late winter. In dry late summer it withers, storing energy in a massive root until rains return. The root's shape, and uses for medicine and spells, led to the name "manroot."

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Tuyuk TOYON

Heteromeles arbutifolia



Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for Chochenyo translation and to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Admired for its bright red berries and evergreen leaves, this shrub's fruit matures in fall and persists into winter. Also known as the Christmas berry, it is loved by birds, coyotes, and bears. Talk about spreading winter cheer!



CALIFORNIA LILAC

Ceanothus



As groundcovers, shrubs, or trees, in woods and brush, breathtaking blue flowers of these evergreens draw butterflies and bees and mature to seeds relished by birds.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Warep Hoowuk COFFEEBERRY

Rhamnus californica



Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for Chochenyo translation and to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



This tough, fast-growing evergreen native is an expert at erosion control and tolerates drought, flooding, and shade. Birds and bears love the berries. For people, though, the berries and bark are a laxative!



COAST SILK-TASSLE

Garrya elliptica



Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



These big evergreen shrubs are rugged individualists. Tough leaves discourage munching. Plants are male or female. They need only wind to carry pollen from the silky male catkins to short female ones. These grow into berries that birds eat.



STICKY MONKEYFLOWER

Diplacus aurantiacus



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols
and QR codes.

What's so remarkable about this flowery shrub is its cheerful orange and yellow blooms -- some say they resemble a monkey's face! Native Americans used the colorful flowers on wreaths and in children's hair.



MANZANITA

Arctostaphylos



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Whether groundcovers or small trees, manzanitas have smooth reddish bark on twisted branches. Blooming as early as December, they form edible berries that animals carry away. Seed then stays in soil for years, sprouting with wildfire.



BLACK SAGE

Salvia mellifera



Highly aromatic, this common Californian sage was and is valued in Ohlone cultures for its soothing properties. Leaves could be used as heating pads to ease earache, or on necks for sore throat.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Miryān

CALIFORNIA SAGE

Artemisia californica



Rub a few silvery leaves of this common coastal shrub and you will see why people around the world found medicinal uses for aromatic plants like these. Those fragrant oils also discourage animals from eating their leaves.

Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for the Chochenyo translation, and CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



CALIFORNIA ROSE

Rosa californica



Spreading by roots, this native rose forms dense thickets that offer cover to small animals. Blooming through summer, it helps insects seeking nectar and pollen. Many people eat the vitamin-C-rich hips or ease stomachache with tea from dried petals.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



NINEBARK

Physocarpus capitatus



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Identifiable by shreddy bark, this streambank shrub's dense stems are a great nesting place for birds, which also eat the seeds. Ninebark's fibrous, branching roots hold soil well, curbing erosion.



RED-FLOWERING CURRANT

Ribes sanguineum



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Hummingbirds and insects value these early spring flowers. Reddish tubular flowers like these often “partner up” with hummingbirds, which become their primary pollinators as they seek the abundant nectar.



CHAPARRAL CURRANT

Ribes malvaceum



Hairy leaves trap moisture, making chaparral currant more drought-ready than its smooth-leaved cousin common along streams. Fragrant, vase-shaped pink blooms from winter to early spring draw insects and hummingbirds.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



OCEAN SPRAY, CREAMBUSH

Holodiscus discolor



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Bushtits nest in this dense shrub, and it hosts larvae of many butterflies. In contrast to the delicate flowers, the wood is surprisingly tough. Hardened with fire and polished with horsetail, it became arrows, digging sticks, and other tools.



SPICEBUSH

Calycanthus occidentalis



Native Americans ease coughs and colds with this big shrub's fragrant bark. The wine-colored flowers use scent differently: A musky odor lures beetles that feed on decay, tricking them into carrying pollen between flowers.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



BEAKED HAZELNUT

Corylus cornuta



In late winter, wind carries pollen from gold male catkins to tiny female flowers. The result: small tough-shelled nuts that animals and people love. But the animals usually get there first!

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Puusen COYOTE BRUSH

Baccharis pilularis



Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



This common shrub of coastlines and hills hosts dozens of native insects, especially when it blooms in the fall. Male plants have yellow flowers; females have white flowers.



LIZARD TAIL

Eriophyllum staechadifolium



The lobed leaves of this seaside ever-gray shrub can look like little lizards! Masses of yellow flowers give it another name, sea-side woolly sunflower. Gray leaves reflect sunlight, fuzzy hairs trap moisture, and small leaves limit water loss. All these help in

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



YELLOW BUSH LUPINE

Lupinus arboreus



Can you believe this grayish seaside shrub is related to peas? Come in the spring and you'll see large stalks of yellow, pea-like flowers that later develop into fuzzy pods.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



QUAIL BUSH

Atriplex lentiformis



This big gray bush with abundant seeds offers food and shelter to many animals. Quail bush's edible, slightly salty leaves; abundant seeds; and roots supply Native Americans with both food and soap.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



WESTERN REDBUD

Cercis occidentalis



Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols
and QR codes.



Western redbud's bright pink to magenta flowers brighten canyons and foothill chaparral as early as February. Indigenous groups throughout the West decorated baskets with the reddish bark and white peeled stems.



CREEK DOGWOOD

Cornus sericea



Moisture-loving creek dogwood's red-barked branches root to form dense thickets that birds love -- along with the berries. Tribal uses include basketry, tools, and smoking mixtures.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



CALIFORNIA BUCKEYE



Aesculus californica



Well adapted to our climate, this tree loses its leaves in our long summer drought. It attracts native pollinators while fending off predators with toxin-filled leaves, stems, and seeds. Native Americans used the mashed nuts to stun and harvest fish.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



ARROYO WILLOW

Salix lasiolepis



Pioneering along creeks, willows sprout from broken branches and quickly knit a dense mat of roots.

For Native Americans, willows made baskets, rope, and medicines to reduce pain and fever.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes



ARROYO WILLOW

Salix lasiolepis



This shrubby pioneer of wet places forms thickets that welcome myriad insects. Some seek pollen from catkins. Others lay eggs that form galls. Caterpillars munch leaves. Birds in turn feed on the bugs and nest in the thickets.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



RED WILLOW

Salix laevigata



Red willow trunks, bark cracked into intricate ridges, may soar or sprawl. But like other willows, these creekside pioneers are “built to fail.” Fallen or broken limbs root quickly where they find water, forming new trees whose dense root mats hold soil.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



RED ALDER

Alnus rubra



Along moist Pacific coasts and rivers, tall red alders partner with tiny soil bacteria to harness nitrogen, enriching soils. Bark is gray -- the name comes from red inner bark, used for dyes, and hard wood, used for tools.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



WHITE ALDER

Alnus rhombifolia



White alder's eye-like branch scars decay and become nest holes for woodpeckers. Early-spring catkins of this tall tree of inland streams welcome bugs and birds. Later, tiny "cones" release seeds through winter, another feast for hungry birds.

Thanks to CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



BOX ELDER

Acer negundo



Male and female box elder trees show off at different seasons. Early in spring, wind spreads pollen from male trees' delicate tassels. Females' big seed clusters hang on after leaves turn gold in autumn.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Tapao

BLUE ELDERBERRY

Sambucus mexicana



Umbrellas of tiny white flowers become berries that birds and people relish. Cook them first to neutralize cyanide! Native Americans hollow out the stems to make flutes and clappers.

Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for the Chochenyo translation, and CalScape for the use of animal symbols and QR codes.



BIG LEAF MAPLE

Acer macrophyllum



Wrapping food, making rope and baskets, carving tools, thickening soups – this tree is big in California Native American culture. Birds, squirrels, mice, and larvae of mourning-cloak and swallowtail butterflies relish it, too.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



Yúukoš

COAST LIVE OAK

Quercus agrifolia



Thanks to the Muwekma Language Committee for Chochenyo translation and to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.



This majestic evergreen provides food and homes for dozens of bugs, birds, and small mammals. Tiny fungi and soil animals feed on its litter and help feed it and nearby plants. It is a keystone, almost an ecosystem in itself.



COAST REDWOOD

Sequoia sempervirens



Known for being the world's tallest trees, coast redwoods can live for over 2,000 years. Abundant in tannin, with thick, fibrous bark, they resist fire and insects. The needles collect fog, forming droplets that water the tree and nearby plants.

Thanks to CalScape for use of animal symbols and QR codes.

