



Family: Rhamnaceae

Genus: Ceanothus

Common Name: California Lilac

Approximately 60 Species

Shrubs

From 1-6 feet high
e.g. 'Joyce Coulter'



Small Trees

Up to 15-20 feet tall
e.g. 'Ray Hartman'



Leaves

- ◆ Unique leaf-vein structure
- ◆ 3 parallel veins
- ◆ Opposite or alternate
- ◆ Small, 1/2 "- 3"
- ◆ Serrated margins



Flowers

- ◆ Tiny, mostly blue, sometimes white or pink
- ◆ Intensely fragrant clusters
- ◆ March - May





Food plants for larvae of some butterfly and moth species - attract bees and other beneficial insects



<http://www.hazmac.biz/seedphotos/1stgenus.html>



Big-pod Ceanothus reproduces by stored seeds

- Cannot reproduce by re-sprouting after a fire - relies on seeds stored in the 'natural mulch' (duff) - ~ 2 million seeds/acre
- Seed pods burst open, flinging the heavy seeds
- Seeds have thick, tough seed coat - can lie in waiting for years (probably hundreds of years)
- Ceanothus seeds only germinate in response to range fires and forest fires in the wild.

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Propagation = by seed - germinate in response to range/forest fires - can also sprout from roots and/or stems

History

Ceanothus - derived from Greek keanothos meaning “spiny plant”

Also Latin for “thistle”

Ceanothus thyrisflorus - first California species introduced into European gardens (1837)



Ceanothus thyrisflorus
(blueblossom)

Traditional Uses

Native Americans used dried leaves as an herbal tea

Early pioneers used *C. americanus* as substitute for black tea (red root tea)



Lather from the
flowers used as
relief of poison oak,
eczema, and rash





Native Americans used *C. Integerrimus*
(deer brush) to ease childbirth

When to Plant

- ◆ Late fall through early winter to allow deep root growth with winter rains
- ◆ Water deeply and infrequently the following summer
- ◆ Once established, Ceanothus needs little or no water



Good drainage + full sun + less water =
success!!

Natural life cycle of 10-15 years



Shape by tip pruning - like hungry deer
in the wild (mmmm - my favorite!)



Ceanothus roots fix nitrogen in the soil
Fertilizing not recommended - might kill
off good micro-organisms in the soil

Where to Plant

- ◆ Specimens
- ◆ Screens
- ◆ Hedges
- ◆ Groundcovers
- ◆ Next to a wall
- ◆ Shrub borders
- ◆ Near oak trees



