

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'



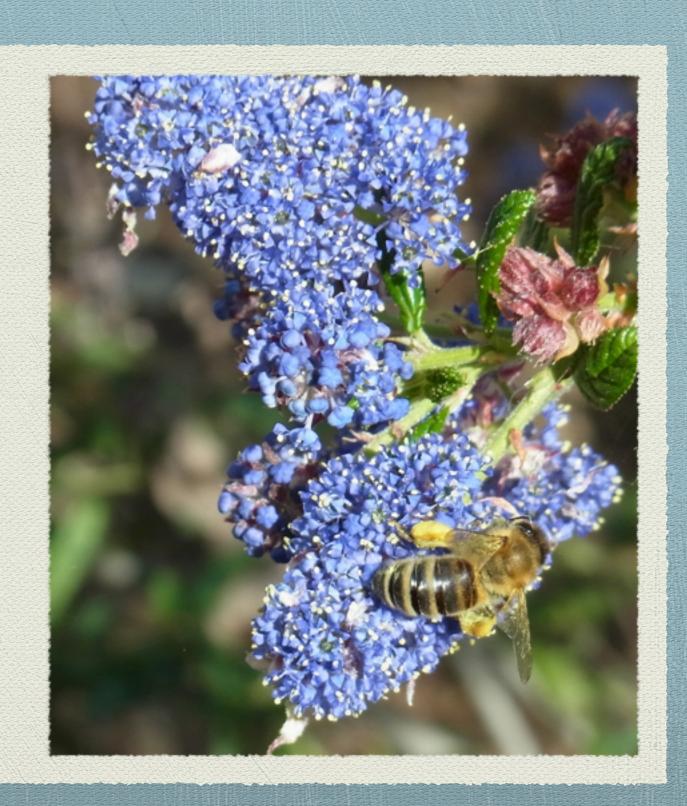
Leaves

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



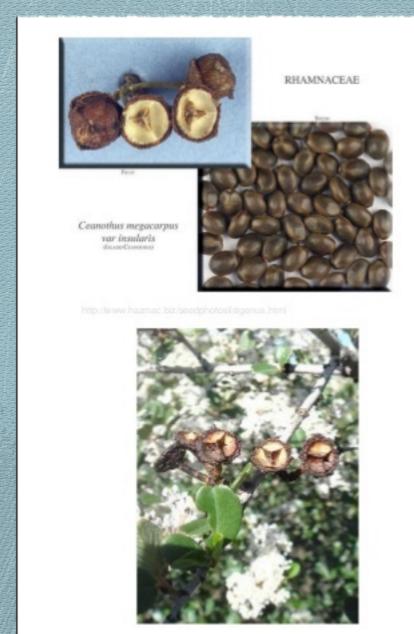
Flowers

- Tiny, mostly blue,sometimes whiteor pink
- Intensely fragrantclusters
- March May





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



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

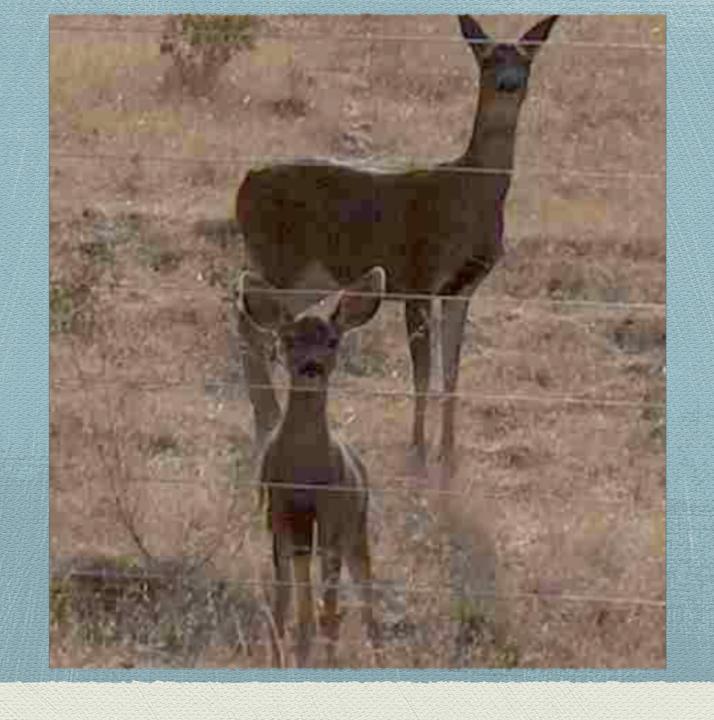
When to Plant

- 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

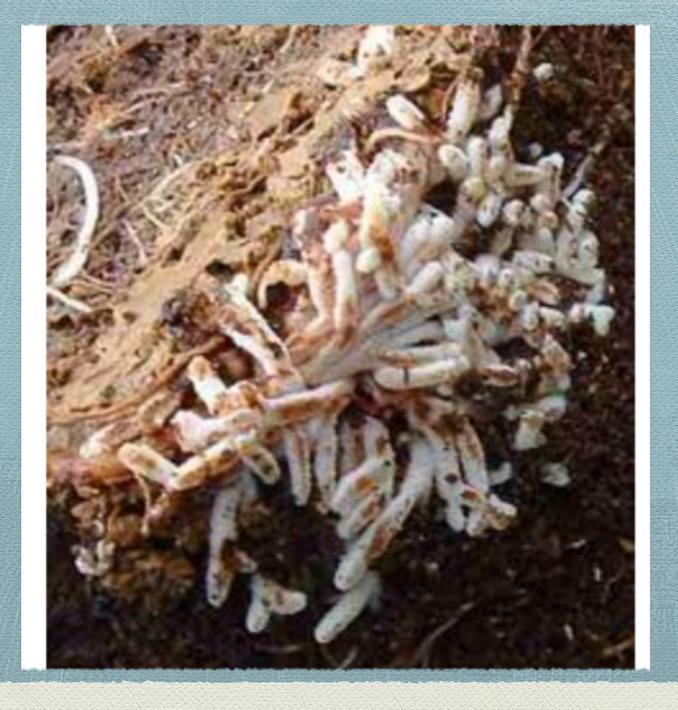


Good drainage + full sun + less water = success!!

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



