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**ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE ENTITLED
“ON THE PLEASURES OF GROWING
NATIVES”**

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Ceanothus, the ubiquitous California lilac. Doesn't everybody have a favorite *Ceanothus* image or two? The spectacular deep purple of *C. cyaneus* in San Diego County; a cultivated tree, possibly *C. 'Ray Hartman,'* in a yard in Santa Barbara; the *Ceanothus* display in Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens in April.

Ceanothus are among the most reliable of the natives in all senses. They tend to be aesthetically pleasing—that is, they grow into predictable horticultural shapes, rather than wild masses, as for example, the exuberant *Encelia californica* or *Salvia clevelandii*. Also they have, as a whole and particularly the hybrids, a variety of garden-enhancing assets.

Ceanothus may be ground covers or shrubs of varying sizes, usually naturally shapely, or small trees. They retain their leaves throughout the

seasons and maintain their attractiveness year-round. To top it off, they have flowers—in wonderful colors like knock-out cobalt blue or pale gray, maybe lavender-as-the-mist or simply true blue or snowy showy white—and are easy to grow, making them simply musts for every native garden.

A FEW NOTABLES:

Ceanothus thyrsiflorus 'Snow Flurry' A two-year-old plant (pot to ground) is 8 feet, flowers profusely in pure white racemes, grows in semi-shade, granite soil, minimal water. Better near coast.

Ceanothus griseus horizontalis provides a handsome ground cover, but is a sparse bloomer of a pale blue.

Ceanothus 'Yankee Point' also has a nice flower.

Ceanothus 'Snowball' is valued for its hardiness (highly drought-tolerant and sun/dry wind resistant) and overall form. The Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden has several specimen on display.

Ceanothus 'Blue Jeans' does well in adverse conditions and is a compact medium shrub, and blooms lightly. Its flowers are that mysterious lavender/gray/blue that many gardeners find attractive.

Two cultivars, *C. 'Julia Phelps'* and *C. 'Joyce Coulter,'* may do quite well in San Diego County, as opposed to more inland climates.



CNPS Gardening Committee

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Thanks to Meryl Faulkner for her help on this brochure.