



# A Guide to Native Plants in Santa Barbara County

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Santa Barbara County has a number of native plant communities, including coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Coastal sage scrub is often found below 3000 ft and occupies areas with little annual rainfall near the coast. Shrubs found in these communities are not usually completely woody and show distinct seasonal variation. Chaparral communities also occur in regions of low annual precipitation, however, they characteristically exhibit thick woody growth, which often creates barriers to movement of large animals. Chaparral communities are often associated with higher elevations, and areas with reduced coastal influence.



Landscapes often exhibit great variation in floristic communities, with variation being forced by a number of physical characteristics.



Common plants in the Santa Barbara backcountry include (clockwise from bottom left) Coyote Bush (*Baccharis pilularis*), Sticky Monkey Flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), California Sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California Sunflower (*Encelia californica*), and California Buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). These species are usually found in coastal sage scrub communities, but can often be found interspersed along the margin of chaparral communities.



Additional species that can be easily spotted include coast prickly pear (*Opuntia littoralis*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), California lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.), and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Many of the species seen in Santa Barbara County are drought resistant, utilizing unique adaptations to live through the long dry summers. These communities are known for their resiliency to intense external stressors, such as fire, and some species have developed complex life histories that rely on fire for seed germination.