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FUN FOR KIDS

A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE, PUBLISHED MONTHLY TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY AND ART

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This Month's Theme: California Native Plants



What is a Native Plant?

A native plant is a plant that grows naturally in a particular location. Coast Redwood trees and California Poppies are native to California. Eucalyptus trees are native to Australia. There are well over 4,000 native plant species in California! To find out more about native plants, check out the California Native Plant Society's website at www.cnps.org. They are dedicated to the preservation of California native flora.

Why Grow California Natives in Your Garden?

Many California natives are adapted to our Mediterranean climate, with its cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers, and so they need little summer water. If we grow these plants, they can help us to save precious water in our gardens. There are many beautiful California native plants that attract native wildlife like hummingbirds and butterflies to the garden. Non-natives may be invasive and can escape to become weeds in natural areas where they often crowd out native species.



Who Is Albert R. Valentien?

About 100 years ago, the artist Albert R. Valentien was given an important project. He was hired by Ellen Browning Scripps to undertake the huge task of painting all the wildflowers and other native plants of California. For the next ten years (1908-1918), he traveled all over the state, collecting plant specimens from which he created over 1,024 watercolor paintings, showing a total of 1,500 species. These beautifully-detailed paintings, botanically correct, yet vibrant in their subtle coloring, are now owned by the San Diego Natural History Museum. Sadly, Valentien never saw his work published before he died. But, thanks to the San Diego Natural History Museum, you can view them at the Wildling Art Museum in Los Olivos from April 12 through June 11.



Where Can I Find Native Plants?

Sometimes it's hard to find native plants in a city. Often

our gardens are filled with beautiful plants that are brought into the area from outside of California. A good place to start is the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. There you can find docents who will help point out native plants and share where you can find them in the wild. You may want to take a hike into the backcountry along one of the many trails into the foothills behind Santa Barbara or in the Santa Ynez Valley. See how many natives you can spot and name. You can also go to local nurseries to find native plants and buy them to add to your garden.

When Will I Finish This Native Plant Puzzle?

Across

- A California native shrub with blue or white flowers. Indians used these flowers to make soap.
- This "giant" tree is the biggest tree in the world. It is the tree with the greatest volume and it grows in the Sierra Nevada.
- The Santa Barbara County Tree is a type of Island Ironwood. It is named after the large offshore island where it grows.
- This is the State Flower of California.

Down

- A non-native tree that is commonly planted here. It produces fruits that are pressed to make oil.
- California has well over 4,000 species of these kinds of plants.
- California's native flora is threatened by this kind of foreign plant.
- California has many native species of this fragrant plant. Its common name also means "wise."
- A California native pine tree that is the oldest tree in the world.
- This tree is a native of Australia and provides food for Koalas. It is often planted in California.
- A native shrub with red bark. Its name means "little apple" in Spanish.
- The tallest tree in the world. This tree is found along California's foggy northern coastline.
- California has many native species of this tree. Its acorns provide important food for animals and people of the past.

Use these words in the puzzle:

BRISTLECONE
CEANOTHUS
EUCALYPTUS
INVASIVE
MANZANITA
NATIVE
OAK
OLIVE
POPPY
REDWOOD
SAGE
SANTA CRUZ
SEQUOIA

How Do I Make A Native Plant Bookmark?

The first step is to start a few days ahead and gather some native flowers or plants. **NOTE: Make sure you only pick flowers or plants that are common and abundant. It is best to use plants that you have grown in your garden or at your school. Along highways, in the National Forest, and in parks it is usually against the law to pick plants without a special permit.** Using a telephone book, lay your flowers or plants between the pages in the middle of the book. Next, close the book and set something heavy on top. Over the next few days, the flowers or plants will dry out, become flat, and ready to use.

When you are ready to make your bookmark, you will need: Wax paper, scissors, a warm iron and, if you would like, crayon shavings or glitter.

- On a flat surface, lay down one sheet of wax paper.
- Lay your dried flowers or plants on top of the wax paper (be careful to arrange them so they will fit inside the bookmark you want to make. Leave at least 1/2 inch space around the plant material.) If you want, sprinkle in a little crayon shavings and/or glitter.
- Lay one sheet of wax paper on top.
- Using a warm iron - slowly and carefully iron the two wax paper sheets together. The crayon and paper should melt together around the plant material.
- When the wax paper has cooled, use your scissors to cut out a rectangle the size you want for your bookmark.



Page prepared by Holly Cline, Wildling Art Museum; Sally Isaacson and Joan Evans, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

Watercolors by A. R. Valentien. From upper left: *Eschscholzia californica* (California Poppy), *Quercus kelloggii* - fall (California Black Oak), *Romneya trichocalyx* (Hairy Matilija Poppy), *Adiantum aleuticum* (Five Finger Fern). Images courtesy of San Diego Natural History Museum.

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