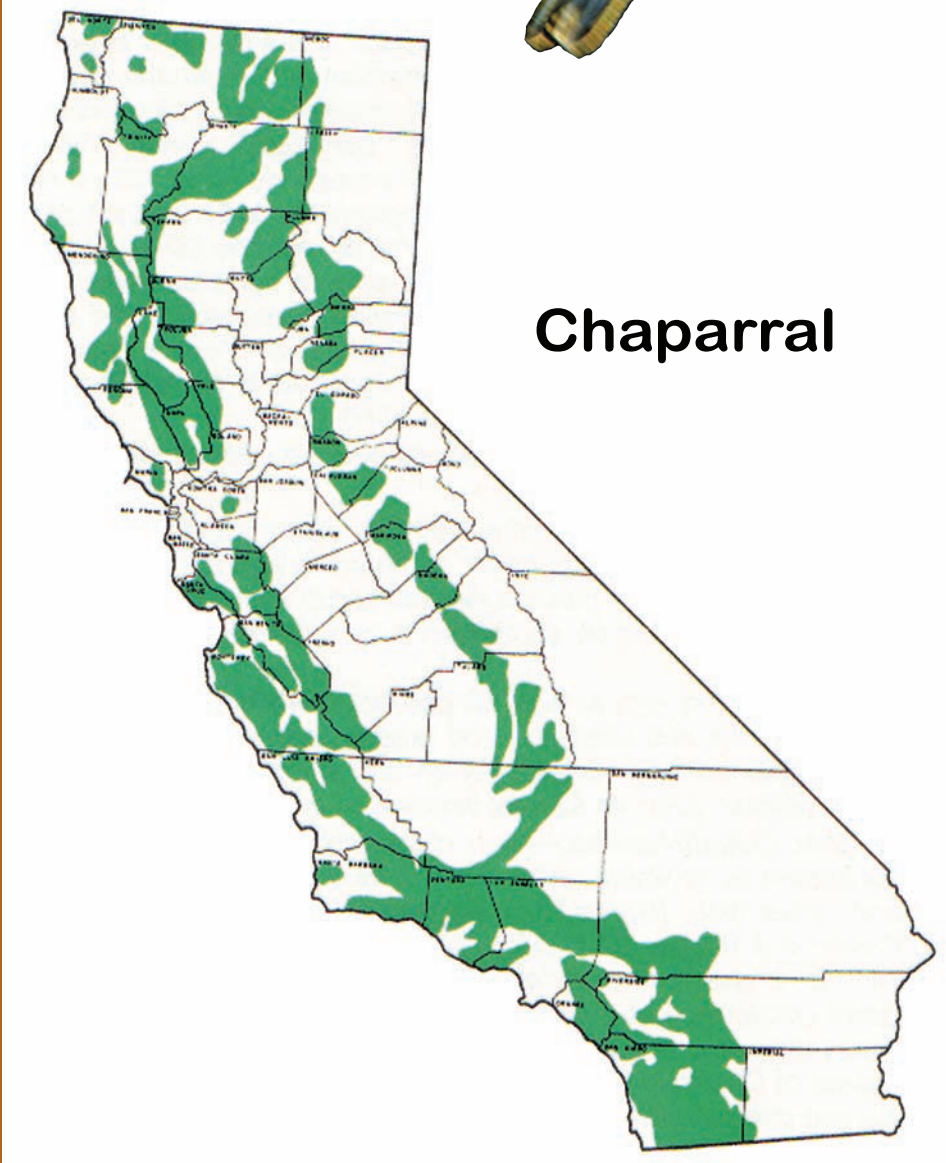


# Chaparral Community



## What is chaparral and where is it found?



Chaparral

Steep, south-facing slopes, hot and arid summers, poor soil, frequent fires—this is a tough environment for plants! But chaparral species are well suited for these difficult conditions.

Adaptations that allow their survival include small, thick leaves with waxy cuticles or hairy surfaces; summer dormancy with most growth during the cooler, wetter winter months; and the ability to recover quickly from fires by seed-banking and/or stump-sprouting.



werc.usgs.gov/fire/chaparralfire.jpg

## What role does fire play in the chaparral?

Spotted Towhee



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Chaparral that has not been burned forms dense, impenetrable stands. It's not particularly good habitat for animals, and species diversity tends to be low. When fire does sweep through such old-growth chaparral, it is often devastatingly hot and damaging. But when chaparral burns on a regular basis, and in relatively small patches, new growth and increased species diversity provide good habitat for many animals.

Deer, gray fox, bobcats, rattlesnakes, brush rabbits, quail, spotted towhees, bushtits and wrentits are frequent visitors and residents of this fire-enriched chaparral.

Native Americans regularly fired chaparral in California to improve habitat for animals they hunted. Today, fire suppression has resulted in the spread of old stands too near developments and towns—just where they shouldn't be!

Gerald and Buff Corsi © 1999 California Academy of Sciences

Bobcat



Monkeyflower

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## What plants live in the chaparral?

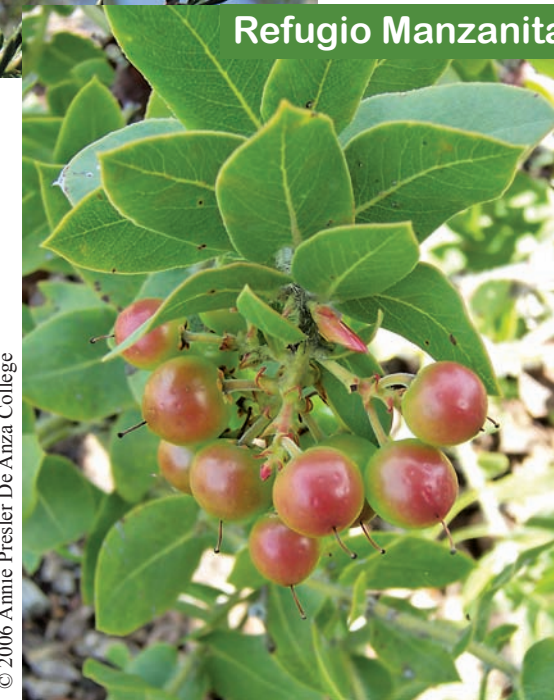


Chamise

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Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) is one of California's most common chaparral species. Its tiny resinous leaves slow water loss, and it takes advantage of periodic fires by using the ash left as welcome fertilizer.

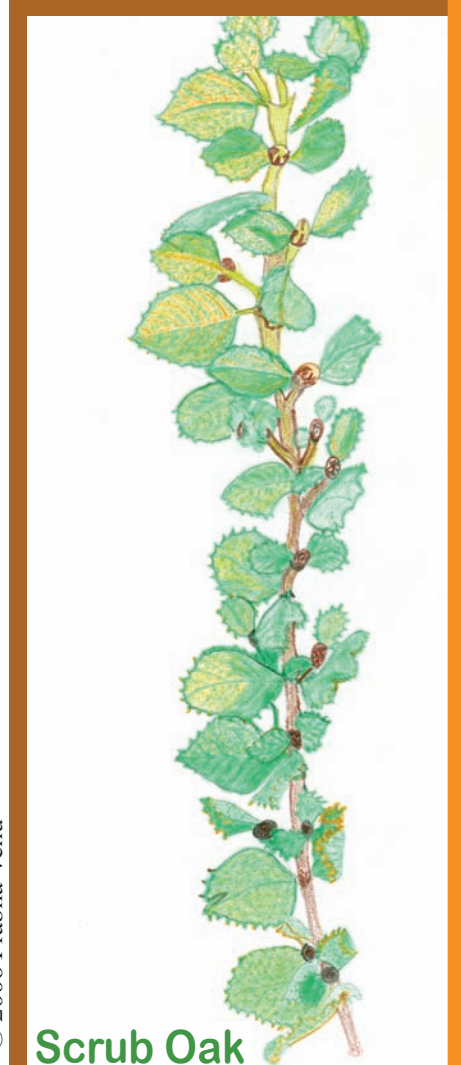
Scrub oaks are also important components of the chaparral. Unlike most oaks, the scrub oak tends to be much more shrub-like and produces small acorns that are eaten by birds and small mammals.



Refugio Manzanita

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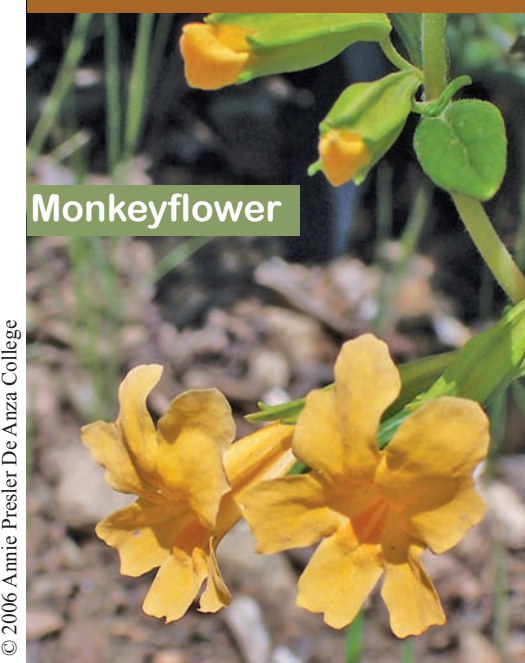
Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.) is another common chaparral plant. This lovely shrub to small tree has glossy red bark on sculptural limbs, delicate bell-like flowers and leaves that are held at right angles to the sun's path through the day. The word manzanita is Spanish for "little apple," a reference to the apple-like fruit that can be used to make a drink similar to apple cider.



Scrub Oak

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## How can chaparral plants be used in landscapes and gardens?



Monkeyflower

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Chaparral species are gaining in popularity with people seeking drought-resistant, tough plants for gardens. It's easy to see why; not only are these species tough—they're beautiful!

Species of *Ceanothus* (aka California "lilac") have profuse blooms of white, pale blue or purple early in spring. Furthermore, plants such as monkeyflower and honeysuckle penstemon attract native animals including hummingbirds, butterflies and a variety of mammals dependent on the plants for food, nesting sites and cover.



Ceanothus

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Honeysuckle Penstemon



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