
Ground covers, perennial

Ajuga

reptans

Bronze, green, and giant bronze are available. Prefers dry-ish shade. Rots readily if watered more than about once a week, and can tolerate it less often.

Carpet bugle

Aptenia

cordifolia

Popular succulent with red flowers. Rampant! Blooms freely, smothers weeds. Bees love it. Frost turns leaves to mush sometimes, but it quickly resprouts in spring.

Red apples

Arctotheca

calendula

Vigorous, spreading, kind of coarse looking, grey-green leaved ground cover with yellow daisy flowers. Great for big areas. Tolerates drought or watering. Full sun or very light shade. Invasive in the Bay Area.

Cape weed

Armeria

maritima

Makes little mounds of dark shiny green needle-like leaves. Pink flowers are very showy in spring. Easy to grow, but wants to be on the dry side.

Sea Pink

Bacopa

For the ground cover usually sold as Bacopa, see Sutera. This plant is an aquatic.

Campanula

porschaskyana

Very adaptable plant with pretty blue flowers on trailing (or climbing!) stems in April-May. Soft green leaves, spreads steadily in shade or sun (not hot afternoon sun). Regular watering. 'Alba' is a white variety

Serbian bellflower

portenschlagiana

Like a small version of *C. porschaskyana*. Usually available in 4" pots, not in flats.

Dalmatian bellflower

Carpobrotus

edulis

The big-leafed succulent iceplant used by CalTrans. Not for small areas.

Ice plant, Hottentot fig; freeway

Cerastium

tomentosum

Fuzzy silver leaves on a 3" mat. Takes full sun, or light shade; dry soil or regular watering. Pure white flowers in cover the plant in March - April. The plant looks a little shaggy after bloom, so mow or shear it lightly. May die out here and there, but fills back in.

Snow in Summer

Chamaemelum

nobile

The ground cover chamomile. Tea is made from the flowers of *Matricaria recutita*. Full sun or very light shade. Moderately drought tolerant. Looks shaggy after it blooms; just trim or mow it.

Chamomile

Cymbalaria

muralis

This is a pesky weed along the coast, but is much more restrained here. Delicate looking leaves and violet flowers. Nice in baskets or as a small ground cover in the shade. Won't tolerate drought.

Kenilworth ivy

Delosperma

cooperi

A very cold hardy ice plant which can take sun or light shade. Very low-growing, with purple flowers in summer.

Ice plant

x John Proffit

A very cold hardy ice plant which can take sun or light shade. Very low-growing, with purple-pink flowers all summer.

Ice plant

Delosperma

nubigenum

A very cold hardy ice plant which can take sun or light shade. Grows very low, with yellow flowers in late spring.

Ice plant

Dianthus

gratianopolitanus Tiny Rubies

Very dense, low mat to only 3" tall. Cute as the dickens! Little fragrant pink flowers in great profusion in spring. The rest of the year it's a dark green carpet.

Diascia

hybrids

Trailing plants with little spikes of flowers in spring, early summer, sometimes longer. Plant in partial shade. Not a large scale ground cover; cute around other perennials. Rots in wet cold soil. Mostly shades of pink.

Twinspur

Dichondra

repens

Can be mixed with grass for shady lawn. Damaged in hard freezes, but recovers. Flea beetles and fungus can cause it to die out, so we don't recommend planting it by itself. Drought-tolerant.

Dichondra

Drosanthemum

species

These are the ice plants with tiny, crystal-like dots on the leaves. Damaged in cold winters here.

Ice plant

Duchesnea

indica

Rampant! Spreads freely. Birds eat the fruit and spread the seeds. Prefers some shade. Best if you mow it occasionally.

Mock strawberry

Dymondia

margaretae

Very tough, low-growing ground cover for dry areas. Little yellow flowers. Some die-out if overwatered. May be damaged in cold winters, but recovers. Excellent between step stones. Used as a lawn alternative.

Dymondia

Epilobium

species

Several species and varieties, ranging from 6" to 2'+. Bright orange-red flowers in late summer through fall attract hummingbirds. Tolerate drought or infrequent watering. Will grow in very light shade or full sun. Cut back when they look rough in the winter.

California fuchsia

Erigeron

karvinskianus

Very tough ground cover with small green leaves and pale pink daisy flowers. Blooms nearly all the time. Spreads steadily for several feet, rooting here and there. 'Profusion' has slightly larger flowers.

Santa Barbara daisy

karvinskianus moerheimii moerheimii

This form has a low, mounding habit, narrower leaves, lavender-pink flowers.

Santa Barbara daisy

Erodium

chamaedryoides

Cute little pink flowers on a mat-forming plant. Not reliable enough for large areas, as it tends to die out. Should go a little dry between waterings.

Cranesbill

Festuca

ovina glauca

Tufts of silvery grey grass for edging, small ground cover, or to contrast with shiny, red, or burgundy foliage. Full sun best. Should go a little dry between waterings. Great to provide accent along stone paths.

Blue (grey) fescue

Fragaria

chiloensis

The true ornamental strawberry, not mock strawberry (*Duchesnea indica*). Fussy about drainage and prone to yellowing if it is overwatered. Tends to die out after 2 - 3 years here.

Ornamental strawberry

Gazania

many varieties available

G. leucoleana forms spread, have silver foliage, yellow or orange flowers. Clumping types have showier flowers, but don't cover ground as thoroughly--better in perennial borders.

Gazania

Glechoma

hederacea

Very vigorous, somewhat invasive ground cover which can be mixed in shady lawns or used as a lawn substitute. Will take considerable sun, but burns when planted along sidewalks or driveways in full sun. Variegated form is less vigorous.

Ground ivy

Hedera

canariensis

The big-leaved ivy you see taking over yards and providing habitat for rodents. Slow to get going, but becomes rampant. Acceptable large-scale ground cover where it can be mowed annually. Burns in afternoon sun.

Algerian ivy

helix varieties

'Hahn's' is the most common small-leaved English ivy with leaves that are as broad as long. 'Glacier' is variegated. 'Needlepoint' is the common narrow-leaved variety. There are many other varieties which differ in leaf shape and variegation. Slow to become rampant--but it eventually does, and roots into whatever it's growing on.

English ivy

Helxine

soleirolia

See Soleirolia.

Baby's tears

Herniaria

repens

Flat, green carpet of foliage. Flowers are barely visible. Slow, but great between step stones. H. glabra is taller, more open, a little faster.

Green carpet

Hypericum

calycinum

Showy golden flowers in May, but several drawbacks. Spreads by rhizomes to cover large areas. Hard to eradicate once established. Nearly always gets rust fungus. Fertilize and mow regularly to manage the disease; fungicides won't control it.

St. Johnswort

Ilysanthes (Linderna)

floribunda

Groundcover with tiny blue flowers.

Lampranthus

spectabilis

Spectacular flowers in purple, pink. Widely used in So Cal. May be damaged in frost, but usually recovers.

Trailing Ice plant

Lantana

sellowiana

Lavender flowers; there is also white and pinkish forms. Grows to a foot tall, with each plant spreading 6 - 10'. Very tolerant of heat and drought, and more frost-tolerant than other lantanas. Cut back in spring if you want it lower. Also sold as L. montevidensis.

Trailing Lantana

Lithodora

diffusa

Vivid, true blue flowers on a slow-growing mat. Fussy: needs excellent drainage; avoid overwatering. Basically this plant always dies.

Mazus

reptans

Flat mat suitable between stepstones. Small lavender (or white) flowers are cute and profuse in spring and early summer.

Mazus

Mentha

requienii

Wonderful pennyroyal mint fragrance. Needs good drainage, even moisture. Not reliable as a large-scale ground cover, as it is susceptible to rot even when carefully watered.

Jewel mint of Corsica

Mesembryanthemum

crystallinum

This is an annual plant which grows along the coast. The ground covers formerly sold under this name are now called Lampranthus. Delosperma and Carpobrotus are other iceplants.

Ice plant

Myoporum

parvifolium

Fast-growing, very drought tolerant ground cover that gets a few inches tall and many feet across. This is for large areas. 'Putah Creek' has larger leaves and flowers and gets to a foot tall. There is also a form with light pink flowers.

Ophiopogon

japonicus

Very shade tolerant, slow-growing grass-like plant with dark green leaves. Even successful as a houseplant or in terrariums (I had some for months in a fishtank!). Tough roots compete with trees. 'Nana' is a very dwarf, slow-growing form.

Mondo grass

Osteospermum

fruticosum

Purple and white daisy flowers. Fast, dense, smothers weeds. Big and vigorous; not for small yards! Note: there are new shrubby hybrids that spread moderately and are nice in perennial borders.

African daisy

Pachysandra

terminalis

Common ground cover for shade, but prone to iron deficiency which causes it to get chronically anemic in Davis and Woodland. 'Variegata' has creamy white stripes.

Japanese spurge

Pachysandra

terminalis 'Variegata'

white edge,non-invasive

Persicaria

capitata

Formerly Polygonum; has pretty pink flowers, makes a great ground cover in sun or shade. Deciduous for a brief period in winter. Very drought tolerant.

Knotweed, Pink clover***Phyla***

nodiflora

Also sold as Lippia repens. Very tough, vigorous ground cover. Pretty flowers, but weedy and invasive.

Lippia

x

Sterile hybrid in the genus of Lippia. Patented plant whose distribution is tightly controlled by the patent owner. Drought tolerant ground cover. Very vigorous.

Kurapia***Potentilla***

verna

One of the woody-looking yellow-flowered ground covers used in past years by landscapers (Duchesnea is the other one). Spreads quickly, but prone to various leaf-attacking fungus and tends to die out after a couple of years. Then it resprouts and is hard to get rid of. Not recommended.

Cinquefoil***Pratia***

pedunculata

Very pretty mat-forming ground cover with blue flowers. Needs good drainage and careful watering. Not reliable for large areas.

Blue star creeper***Raoulia***

australis

Interesting tiny-leaved, grey, fuzzy ground cover. Keep it dry.

Vegetable sheep***Rosmarinus***

officinalis 'Prostrata'

Pale blue (lavender) flowers all winter. This is the only variety commonly available in flats.

Rosemary

officinalis 'Renzel's Irene'

Dark blue flowers on a trailing plant. One of the nicest forms. Often just sold as 'Irene'.

Rosemary***Sagina***

subulata

Not really a moss--prefers sun! Needs good drainage. Dark green shiny foliage on *S. subulata*, golden foliage on *S. subulata* 'Aurea'. *Arenaria verna* is similar. Good for small areas between stepstones.

Irish moss, Scotch moss

Scaevola

X 'Mauve Clusters'

Mauve flowers, shiny leaves on a 6" plant which trails. Prone to rot if overwatered; keep it on the dry side. Several varieties of *S. aemula* with different colored flowers have been introduced.

Scaevola

Sedum

anglicum

Low growing succulent ground cover. Tolerates sun or shade, drought or watering. Yellow flowers are pretty but not showy. Excellent between step stones.

English sedum

brevifolium

Fast-spreading, low, dark green succulent. Looks a bit rough after bloom. Tolerates some shade, good in full sun. Average watering or drought. Good between stepstones.

Stonecrop

confusum

Dense, slow-growing succulent with shiny yellow-green leaves and showy yellow flowers. Great for edging; mix with grasses, use in pots, around stepstones. Takes sun or moderate shade, drought or average watering.

Golden sedum

guatemalense

See *Sedum rubrotinctum*

Pork and beans

rubrotinctum

Formerly *S. guatemalense*. Leaves look like little beans. Slow-growing succulent for edging, borders, small ground cover areas. Nice around stepstones, but brittle. Yellow flowers are pretty but not showy.

Pork and beans

spathulifolium Cape Blanco

Slow-growing, clean-looking succulent ground cover with blue-green leaves that have a reddish-purple tinge. Yellow flowers are pretty but not showy. Takes sun to moderate shade; drought to average watering. 'Purpureum' is darker.

Stonecrop

spurium

'Dragon's Blood' is most common: a very low succulent grown for attractive reddish-bronze leaves. Tolerates sun or some shade; average watering or drought. 'Tricolor' has leaves that are white, pink, and green.

Dragon's Blood sedum

Sedum

spurium 'Tricolor'

tricolor foliage

Soleirolia

soleirolii

Grows fairly fast in partial shade to full shade. Won't take hot sun. Can become somewhat invasive. Soft green moss look. Needs plenty of moisture.

Baby's tears

Sphaeralcea

munroana

Vigorous, tough plant with reddish-salmon blooms all summer and fall. Very tolerant of heat and drought.

Mallow

Stenotaphrum

secundatum

Coarse-bladed grass which spreads by rhizomes, used in Southern California as a lawn substitute. Invasiveness and brown winter appearance are drawbacks.

St. Augustine grass

Teucrium

majoricum

same as *T. cossonii* majoricum

prostrate Germander

Thymus

lanuginosus

See *T. pseudolanuginosus*.

Woolly thyme

pseudolanuginosus

Fuzzy grey-leaved mat-forming thyme used between step stones. Keep it on the dry side.

Woolly thyme

species

There are several species of creeping thymes in the trade: pink thyme, mother-of-thyme, elfin thyme, etc.

Thymes

Thymus

citriodora 'Doone's Valley'

compact, green and yellow

Verbena

Breeders have introduced many new types with great mildew resistance, a range of electric colors, and heights ranging from mat-forming (Tapiens) to 4 - 6" as ground covers. All love heat, sun, dryish soil, and most die back to some degree in winter. Mow them in spring when the weather warms up.

'Tapiens' hybrids

Very low growers with finely cut leaves which resist mildew. Very vivid flowers--the blue and deep purple iare outstanding

Verbena

'Temari' hybrids

Low-growing ground cover forms with broad leaves (unlike the 'Tapiens') which are nice, dark green. Especially bright flowers.

Verbena

peruviana 'St. Paul'

The best of the original ground cover verbenas, this one has rosy-pink flowers and is an especially abundant bloomer.

pink Verbena

tenuisecta

An old-fashioned type with divided leaves, similar to the 'Tapiens' varieties but taller, rangier.

Verbena

Veronica

repens

Very low mat-forming ground cover to use between step stones in sun or light shade. Can take some drought. Little clusters of flowers are cute but not showy.

Speedwell

Vinca

Looks best in partial shade; can take considerable sun but burns in afternoon or reflected sun (along sidewalks, e.g.). Watering too often leads to crown rot (actually a fungus called Phomopsis).

major

Shiny leaves, 1 - 3' deep, and pretty periwinkle flowers. Can become rampant. Considered invasive in the Bay Area. Variegated form is more restrained. Survives total drought but looks best if you water occasionally.

Periwinkle

minor

Purple, white, and variegated forms available. They are all less vigorous than the 'Bowles' variety more commonly sold in flats. Prefer shade or part sun, not afternoon sun. Overwatering leads to crown rot.

dwarf Periwinkle

minor 'Bowles'

The most common and most vigorous dwarf periwinkle, with bright blue flowers. Grows to 6 - 12" tall, spreads steadily.

dwarf Periwinkle

Viola

hederacea

Very low-growing with light green leaves. Bicolor light and darker lavender flowers nearly all season. Vigorous but not rampant. Not fragrant.

Australian violet

labradorica

According to the SWGBook, the plant we sell under this name is actually *V. riviniana* 'Purpurea'. Easy, vigorous but not rampant, with dark purple flowers for a long period in spring. Not fragrant.

odorata

This is the sweet violet of Shakespeare, with wonderfully fragrant flowers. Spreads slowly by runners, but also reseeds profusely. You will never be rid of this once you plant it. A gall midge deforms the foliage. Not available in flats, sometimes in 4" pots. Very prone to spider mites in wholesale production. 'Rosina' is pink. 'Royal Robe' has larger purple flowers, and there is a white form as well.

Sweet or English violet

Zauschneria

species

See *Epilobium*.

California fuchsia

Zoysia

tenuifolia

Very dense, interestingly lumpy grass ground cover with needle-fine leaves. Dormant (brown) in winter. Very tough.

Korean grass