

Native Plants for the Las Vegas Landscape

Annuals:

- Sow seeds in Fall and germinate before Thanksgiving.
- Rake seeds into the top ½ inch of soil or they will wash/blow away.
- Water over the winter for good spring blooms

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Baileya multiradiata</i>	Desert Marigold	Short lived perennial with silvery white leaves and bright yellow flowers. Blooms nearly year-round.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant, needs full sun for best flowering, is ok on or off irrigation. 	Easy to grow from seed.
<i>Chylismia brevipes</i>	Sun Cups	Evening Primrose Family. Bright yellow flowers common around Lake Mead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water seedlings in winter for strong spring bloom. • Full sun 	There are many Evening Primrose Family plants that make great wildflowers. <i>Chylismia claviformis</i> is a white flower with a brown center.
<i>Eschscholzia californica ssp mexicana</i>	Mexican Gold Poppy	Small version of the coastal California Poppy that is gold in color and a true annual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water seedlings in winter for strong spring bloom. • Full sun/Part shade 	All <i>Eschscholzia californica</i> plants will grow well in the Mojave Desert, but the small gold subspecies <i>mexicana</i> is native.
<i>Linum lewisii</i>	Blue Flax	Pale blue flowers on tall skinny stalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water seedlings in winter for strong spring bloom. • Full sun/Part shade 	Looks great amongst grasses or small shrubs.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Phacelia campanularia</i>	Desert Bluebells	Bright blue flowered annual. Early spring bloomer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water seedlings in winter for strong spring bloom. • Full sun/Part shade 	Extra water in the spring will prolong the bloom period extensively. Re-seeds easily once established. There are many <i>Phacelia</i> species native to the desert that make great wildflowers. Handle with care some people are allergic to the sap.
<i>Thymophylla pentacheata</i>	Dyssodia Dog Weed	Small Short-lived perennial that blooms nearly year-round.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant but prefers irrigation for great blooms. • Full sun/Part shade 	One plant will spread seed around an entire area.

Perennials:

- Many are short lived and re-seed easily.
- Great pollinator plants

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Asclepias subulata</i>	Rush Milkweed	Medium sized shrub with long leafless vertical branches creates a grassy look. Blooms intermittently from spring to fall with cream colored flowers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very drought tolerant but looks best with irrigation. • Full sun 	Sometimes available at the nurseries. Attracts tarantula hawks, Monarch and Queen butterflies. Usually has orange milkweed aphids that do minimal damage to the plant.
<i>Astragalus preussii</i>	Preuss Milkvetch	Short lived perennial or annual if grown with no irrigation. Blooms very early in spring and reseeds on bare soil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation allows green plant to survive summer • Needs full sun to bloom well 	Easy to grow from seed.
<i>Maurandya antirrhiniflora</i>	Climbing Snapdragon	Small wiry vine with red or purple flowers. Native to rocky canyon areas can handle some shade and likes extra water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs irrigation to stay alive multiple years • Full sun to shade 	Easy to grow from seed.
<i>Mirabilis multiflora</i>	Colorado Four O'clock	Long lived plants that create deep tuberous roots. Blooms in the spring or with summer rains but will stay green and bloom periodically with irrigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant, but needs summer irrigation • Full sun for best bloom 	Can go deciduous with lack of water. Sphinx moth pollinator and larval host plant.
<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i>	Tufted Evening Primrose	Lush green plants with huge white flowers. Needs water to remain perennial.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers irrigation • Full sun/Part shade 	Many Oenothera species native to the Mojave Desert. Large plants with yellow flowers <i>O. hookeri</i> . Small birdcage primrose <i>O. deltoides</i> .

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Penstemon ambiguus</i>	Gilia Penstemon	Shrubby penstemons that grow in sandy washes. Flowers are light pink and bloom later in the spring than most Mojave Desert plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant, but blooms intermittently all summer with irrigation • Full sun/ part shade • Best in sandy soils 	Shrubby penstemon. Very similar to <i>Penstemon thurberi</i> also native but smaller plant with darker pink flowers.
<i>Penstemon</i> sp.	Beardtongue	Grows throughout the winter, blooms in spring bright red or coral colored flowers. Dormant in summer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does best with irrigation • Prefers full sun 	Short lived perennials, but with irrigation plants will get larger every year and should re-seed in area. <i>Penstemon eatonii</i> , <i>P. parryi</i> , <i>P. superbis</i> etc...
<i>Rumex hymenosepalus</i>	Desert Rhubarb	Large tropical looking leaves with showy red/purple seed heads. Plant completely disappears in summer. Re-sprouts in fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes some water in the winter • Prefers full sun 	Creates a tuberous root system that gets larger every year. Long lived. Prefers sandy soils
<i>Senna covesii</i>	Coues' Senna	Bright yellow flowers in spring and with summer rains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does best with irrigation • Full sun 	Blooms whenever water is available. Short lived, but re-seeds easily.
<i>Xylorhiza tortifolia</i>	Mojave Aster	Iconic wildflower of the Mojave Desert in and around Las Vegas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant • Does not need irrigation, but will stay greener in summer with extra water • Full sun 	Plants are long lived, but dormant and ugly in summer. Can be carefully pruned back to minimize summer dormant look.

Shrubs:

- Many from higher elevations require extra water.
- Act as nurse plants for annuals, perennials and young cacti.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Atriplex confertifolia</i>	Shadscale	Medium sized shrub with silvery white leaves and pink fading to tan seeds that cover the plant in fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Drought tolerant • Full sun • Does not need irrigation • Thrives in heavy clay soils 	Easy to grow from seed. Older plants can look rough and are easily replaced with seedlings. Larval host of the Western Pygmy Blue Butterfly.
<i>Atriplex hymenelytra</i>	Desert Holly	Medium sized shrub with silver holly shaped leaves creates a blanket of leaves and seeds beneath plant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Drought tolerant • Full sun • Does not need irrigation • Thrives in heavy clay soils 	Easy to grow from seed. Cold, heat and drought stress cause the plant to turn an attractive pink/purple color. Larval host of the Western Pygmy Blue Butterfly.
<i>Encelia farinosa</i>	Brittlebush	Silver leaved shrub with masses of yellow daisy-like flowers in the spring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant does not need irrigation • Full sun 	With irrigation plants become very large and will bloom in the fall and winter. Re-seeds easily. Hedge spent flowers in May for best look.
<i>Ericameria laricifolia</i> and <i>E. linearifolia</i>	Turpentine Bush	Small shrubs with dark fragrant evergreen foliage and bright yellow daisy like flowers. <i>E. Laricifolia</i> blooms in the Fall and <i>E. linearifolia</i> blooms in the spring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant but prefers some supplemental water • Full sun 	Plants can grow to look rangy after a few years. Can be pruned lightly or removed as seedlings emerge. Resents heavy pruning.
<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i>	Apache Plume	Evergreen shrub with white flowers and especially showy seeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant but needs irrigation • Full or part sun 	Plants can become unattractive after several years. May want to replant or rejuvenate older specimens.
<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Creosote Bush	Evergreen shrub with showy yellow flowers in spring and fall. White/gray hairy seeds in summer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Drought tolerant • Full sun • Does not need irrigation 	Commonly available at local nurseries and easy to grow from seed using soak and rinse method for 4 to 5 days. Prefers sandy/rocky soils.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Purshia mexicana</i>	Cliffrose	Large irregular slow growing shrub with fragrant flowers in the spring and sometimes in the fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs irrigation • Full sun/part shade 	High elevation tree/shrub. Great gnarled features in mature plants. Very long lived.
<i>Rhus trilobata</i>	Three Leaf Sumac	Medium to large deciduous shrub with good fall color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs irrigation • Full sun to shade 	Great woodland or understory shrub. Berries are edible and attractive to birds.
<i>Salvia dorrii</i>	Purple Sage	Open medium sized shrub with fragrant silver leaves. Mint family flowers usually blue flowers on purple bracts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does best with irrigation • Full sun 	Extra water encourages spring and fall blooms. Short lived shrubs that look rangy after 5 to 10 years and need to be replaced.
<i>Scutellaria mexicana</i>	Mexican Bladdersage	Medium sized shrub with purple flowers followed by unusual tan fruits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does best with some irrigation • Full sun to part shade 	Very tough native shrub. Blooms in spring and fall with supplemental water. Dormant in summer.
<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	Globemallow	Shrubby perennial with fuzzy leaves and prolific spring blooms. Flower color varies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant does not need irrigation • Full sun 	Many nurseries are carrying this plant. Best to buy in bloom to get the flower color desired.

Trees:

- Most native trees are large shrubs unless given extra water and pruned into trees.
- Trees require long infrequent watering to get the roots down deep into the soil.
- Desert trees are often spiny.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Celtis laevigata</i> var. <i>reticulata</i>	Netleaf Hackberry	Small deciduous tree with orange/tan berries and attractive fall color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular irrigation • Full sun/Part Shade 	Native to higher elevations, needs regular water to grow into an attractive tree. Mature trees have gnarled and twisted branches creating a dramatic silhouette when the leaves have fallen. Birds are attracted to the fruit.
<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	Desert Willow	Small deciduous tree with showy and fragrant flowers. Blooms from May to October with regular irrigation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant but prefers regular irrigation. • Full sun for best blooms 	Long infrequent watering encourages deep roots. There are many named cultivars that produce many blooms with minimal seeds. Native seed will yield shrubby trees with irregular growth habits and lots of seed pods
<i>Fraxinus velutina</i>	Arizona Ash	Medium sized deciduous tree native to wet areas. Attractive fall color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular irrigation • Full sun/Part shade 	Makes an attractive street tree. Is the parent of many Ash tree cultivars grown in Las Vegas.
<i>Parkinsonia microphylla</i>	Foothill Palo Verde	Very slow growing small tree with cream colored flowers and olive-green colored bark.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers some supplemental water for best appearance but irrigation not required. • Full sun 	Very tough small tree native to rocky hillsides in the desert. Attractive display of flowers in April followed by edible seeds. Needs supplemental water and pruning to create an attractive tree shape. Loses leaves in summer if drought stressed.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Parkinsonia florida</i>	Blue Palo Verde	Medium sized tree with blue/green bark and bright yellow flowers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very drought tolerant but needs some irrigation to create a tree form. • Full sun 	This tree is not recommended due to a rampant virus that causes witches broom. Best to plant a hybrid such as the "Desert Museum" Palo Verde.
<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i> <i>var. torreyana</i>	Western Honey Mesquite	Fast growing medium sized tree that loses most of its leaves in the winter (semi-deciduous).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant but needs extra water when young to create a tree form. • Full sun 	If grown with no irrigation, this plant will create a large spiny shrub. With irrigation and appropriate pruning an attractive tree shape can be achieved. Seed pods are edible and very sweet. Once mature can go years with no supplemental water. Roots fix nitrogen and create rich soil in the drip zone of the branches.
<i>Prosopis pubescens</i>	Screwbean Mesquite	Fast growing medium sized deciduous tree. Has bright yellow flowers and twisted seed pods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less drought tolerant than other mesquites. Regular irrigation is required to create a tree form • Full sun 	With irrigation and appropriate pruning an attractive tree shape can be achieved. Trees have beautiful shaggy brown bark and the most attractive flowers for a Mesquite tree. Roots fix nitrogen and create rich soil in the drip zone of the branches.
<i>Quercus gambelii</i>	Gambel Oak	Medium sized slow growing deciduous tree with attractive lobed leaves and nice fall color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher elevation tree that needs extra water. Regular irrigation is suggested. • Full sun/Part Shade 	Plants in the wild often form thickets due to deer browsing. Can become a nice sized tree with age. Easily grown from fresh acorns.
<i>Quercus turbinella</i>	Scrub Oak	Small slow growing tree with blue/gray spiny leaves. Mostly evergreen but will lose some leaves in the winter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher elevation tree that needs extra water. Regular irrigation is suggested. • Full sun/Part Shade 	Grows into a dramatic specimen with age. Purchasing older plants is suggested but trees grow easily from fresh acorns.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Senegalia greggii</i>	Cat Claw Acacia	Small deciduous tree with recurved spines and fragrant cream colored flowers in May.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely drought tolerant but needs extra water when young to create a tree form. Full sun 	Extra water and appropriate pruning will create a tree with an attractive vase shape. Tends to re-seed in the landscape.
<i>Washingtonia filifera</i>	California Fan Palm	Wide trunked and slow growing fan palm native to wet areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular irrigation is required. Full sun 	Beautiful tropical looking palm with edible fruit. Leaving the dead fronds on the tree to form a skirt and planting several trees together creates an attractive oasis. Tends to re-seed in the landscape.

Cacti and Succulents:

- Cacti may not need supplemental water but will look a lot better if given some.
- Do not tolerate shade.
- Flowers can be amazingly showy and short lived.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa</i>	Buckhorn Cholla	Bush like cholla to 6 feet tall with tan spines and yellow, orange or red flowers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some supplemental water is necessary to maintain health. • Full sun 	Does not tolerate shade. Great barrier plant. Somewhat irregular growth and showy flowers.
<i>Cylindropuntia echinocarpa</i>	Silver Cholla	Bush like cholla with silvery spines and green to yellow flowers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation not necessary. Some supplemental water is beneficial. • Full sun 	Smaller in stature than the Buckhorn Cholla with smaller segments. Looks best when back lit and is an excellent foil for green leafy plants or grasses.
<i>Echinocactus polycephalus</i>	Cotton Top Barrel	Short clumping barrel. Very slow growing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation not necessary. Some supplemental water is beneficial. • Full sun 	Does not tolerate shade. Mature specimens may have many heads but remain low to the ground. Flowers in summer are often obscured by the spines.
<i>Ferocactus cylindraceus</i>	California Barrel Compass Barrel	Large slow growing barrel cactus to 6 feet tall or more. Red spines with yellow flowers in early summer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation not necessary. Some supplemental water is beneficial. • Full sun 	Does not tolerate shade. Mature specimens lean to the southwest. Spines turn bright red when wet. Amazing specimen plant.
<i>Opuntia basilaris</i>	Beavertail Pricklypear	Common cactus in the Mojave Desert. Small blue/green pads with bright coral colored flowers in spring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation not necessary. Some supplemental water is beneficial. • Full sun 	Does not tolerate shade. Mature specimens form clumps and create an amazing display of flowers. Prone to damage from cactus bug.
<i>Opuntia polyacantha</i> <i>var. erinacea</i>	Grizzlybear Pricklypear	Small padded opuntia thickly covered with long white spines. Flowers in spring can be pink or yellow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some supplemental water is necessary to maintain health. • Full sun 	Does not tolerate shade. Mature specimens create a low spreading mound that can die out in the center. Flowers are showy. Parent plant to many colorful blooming cultivars on the market.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Yucca baccata</i>	Banana Yucca	Ground hugging yucca with long blue/silver colored leaves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High elevation plant needs extra water to survive. • Full sun/Part shade 	Native to much of the Western US. Has large cream and purple flowers followed by fruit that is vaguely shaped like a banana and is edible.
<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	Joshua Tree	Tall trunk forming and multi-branched yucca with short olive-green leaves. Icon of the Mojave Desert.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High elevation plant needs extra water to survive. • Full sun 	Plants need extra water to survive, but too much water creates excessive elongated growth that destroys its natural silhouette. Easy to grow from seed, but very slow growing.
<i>Yucca schidigera</i>	Mojave Yucca	Trunk forming yucca with long bright green leaves. Smaller in stature than the Joshua tree and rarely branches. Often grows in clumps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation not necessary. Some supplemental water is beneficial. • Full sun 	Extra water will ensure healthy green plants and good blooms in the spring. Easy to grow from seed, but extremely slow growing.

Grasses:

- Will require supplemental water.
- Add great texture and natural look to gardens.
- If you need to prune, cut back to 2” above ground.

Latin name	Common name	Description	Culture	Comments
<i>Aristida purpurea</i>	Purple Threeawn	Fine textured grass with a slight purple tone to the leaves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some supplemental water necessary for best health. • Full sun/Part shade 	Turns purple later in the season. Re-seeds easily in landscape and can be pruned back to the ground annually to removed dead foliage.
<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	Blue Grama Grass	Short fine textured grass with unusual seed heads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires irrigation • Full sun/Part shade 	Attractive seed heads. Cultivar “Blonde Ambition” is available at nurseries and is especially showy. Cut to the ground annually for best display.
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Deer Grass	Large grass that stays green most of the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires irrigation • Full sun/Part Shade 	Dead leaves can be raked out. Can be pruned to the ground, but only do so every 3 to 5 years if necessary.
<i>Sporobolus airoides</i>	Alkali Sacaton	California prairie grass with clouds of seed heads in summer and fall. Turns tan for the summer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires irrigation • Full sun 	Prune back annually in mid-winter.

Resources

- Springs Preserve Spring and Fall Plant sales:
Spring sale occurs end of March or beginning of April. Fall sale is in September
- Star Nursery:
There are many locations around Las Vegas. Can usually find Creosote Bush, Brittle Bush, Globemallow and Firecracker Penstemon
- Nevada Division of Forestry State Tree Nursery:
9600 Tule Springs Road, Las Vegas NV, 89131
Unique selection of native trees and shrubs. Spring and Fall plant sale events.
- Cactus Joe's Blue Diamond Nursery
12740 Blue Diamond Road Las Vegas, NV 89161
Can find some native cactus and succulents and some native shrubs and perennials.
- Desert Survivors Nursery
1020 W Starr Pass Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85713
This is an amazing native plant nursery that grows many species of Mojave Desert plants from locally collected seed. Sadly, it is in Tucson not Las Vegas.
- High Country Gardens:
www.highcountrygardens.com
Mail order nursery that offers a variety of plants native to the Western US, most are from higher elevations than Las Vegas, but there are a few gems including Prince's Plume.
- Plants of the Southwest:
www.plantsofthesouthwest.com
Mail order seed resource for many wildflower and shrubs that are suitable for Las Vegas:
- Alplains:
www.alplains.com
Mail order seed resource for a huge variety of native plants for the Western U.S. Many of the seed species offered will not grow in Las Vegas.

- Lerner Seeds:
www.lernerseeds.com
Native California wildflower seed distributor.
- Theodore Payne Foundation:
www.theodorepaynfoundation.org
Specialize in California native plants and seeds. The nursery has lots of live plant material including a small section of Mojave Desert Natives and the seed repository will ship online orders.