

11. Poison Oak



Anacardiaceae – Sumac Family – *Toxicodendron diversilobum*

This plant's Genus name is Toxicodendron, and the TOXIC says it all. If you have ever heard the saying, "Leaves of three, let it be", and were wondering what plant it referred to, wonder no longer. This is it, along with its cousin Poison Ivy. Poison Oak is a medium-sized toxic vine or shrub that is native to California, western North America, and Mexico. It lives in forest, woodland, grassland and chaparral environments, where it is common in shady, wet areas, on damp slopes, or near creeks. It has shiny reddish green leaves with 3 lobes, and small, white flowers. The toxicity comes from urushiol oil in the sap of the leaves and stems, which can cause severe dermatitis. Animals are immune. Poison Oak blooms from March to June, and is used by many beneficial insects. It's just people that don't like it! Interestingly, Native Americans had many uses for this plant, and could apparently develop immunity to the oil over time. Chumash Indians wove its stems, roots, and leaves into baskets, made black dye to decorate their baskets with boiled plant juice, cooked ground roots into a thin gruel to eat, and applied fresh leaves to a rattlesnake bite to counteract the venom. Don't try this at home though, as you will certainly experience a severe allergic reaction, in the form of an itchy rash and even blistering of the skin. It is best to avoid touching Poison Oak, and to wear long pants and closed-toed shoes when hiking in areas where it is abundant. When Poison Oak is burned it produces toxic fumes, so again, do not try this at home!

12. Coyote Brush



Asteraceae – Sunflower Family – *Baccharis pilularis*

This plant is also known as Dwarf Chaparral Broom, and is very common by the coast, in canyons, and in disturbed, damp places. Coyote Brush is a native shrub that lives in coastal strand and scrub environments, as well as chaparral, foothill and forest habitats. It is known as a pioneer plant because it is one of the first to appear after fire or destruction, and it helps to establish other species in the habitat. This, along with its drought tolerance and the reluctance of deer to eat mature plants, is why it is often used in habitat restoration projects. Coyote Brush can grow up to 10 feet in height, and can be either erect or spreading. The leaves become fragrant and sticky with resinous oils on hot summer days. These oils are unappetizing and may protect the plant from being eaten by animals. It blooms from September to January, and the female flowers have cottony, branched clusters. The male flowers have yellow pollen that smells like soap! Early pioneers called it "fuzzy wuzzy" because of its silky seeds. Coyote Brush is a food source for bees, wasps, butterflies like the Common Buckeye and Gray Hairstreak, flies, and other nectar and pollen-eating insects. Native Americans used the heated leaves to reduce swelling, and the wood to make arrow shafts and for building houses.

13. **California Everlasting**



Asteraceae – Sunflower Family - *Pseudognaphalium californicum*

California Everlasting is an annual or perennial herb native to California and elsewhere in the United States. It is commonly found in grassland and dry hills, and can grow up to 3 feet tall. This plant is not long living and grows in disturbed areas. The American Painted Lady and the Virginia Lady Butterfly use California Everlasting as food for their larvae. Everlastings are named for their enduring flowers and their long lifespan during the summer. The flowers are very sticky and fragrant. It is also known as California Cudweed, Ladies' Tobacco and Maple Syrup Plant, because it smells strongly of syrup. Mmmmm...pancakes!

14. Milkweed



Apocynaceae - Dogbane or Milkweed Family - *Asclepias californica*

Milkweed is a native, perennial plant that is found in fields and grass regions. Milkweed is named for its milky, white sap, which mainly consists of a latex containing alkaloids. Some species are known to be toxic. Milkweed blooms from April to July, and the color of the flower on milkweed can vary by species. The seeds are produced in long pods, which open up when ripe. The wind disperses the seeds, which float away on white, silky filaments or floss. Not only is Milkweed important as a source of food for Monarch butterfly larvae, its pollen and nectar feed adult Monarch butterflies, and many species of bees. Insects aren't the only ones to use Milkweed, people all over the United States and Southern Canada use Milkweed for fiber, food, and medicine. Carl Linnaeus named the genus after Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, because of the many folk-medicinal uses for the milkweed plants, such as treating warts, gall stones, and kidney stones. The stems have tough fibers that can be used for making cords and ropes or for weaving a coarse cloth, the leaves can be used as a hypoallergenic filling for pillows, and the sap can be used to make latex gloves.

15. **Coast Bladderpod**



Brassicaceae – Mustard Family – *Cleome isomeris*

Coast Bladderpod is a perennial shrub native to and endemic to California, which means it is only found in California. Coast Bladderpod is also known by the names Burrofat and California Cleome. It is common near the coast and in the low desert, and is also found in the Joshua Tree Woodland. It can grow up to 6 feet tall, and grows in a dense, spreading fashion. It is very fast growing, and has brittle branches, bad smelling leaves, large yellow flowers, and fruits in large, inflated pods. Coast Bladderpod may flower many times in a year, and many species of native and introduced bees love the plant because of this. The plant is also used by game birds, like the California quail, and songbirds for cover and for food, as they eat the seeds. The Serrano tribe and Kiowa tribes added the pods to foods as flavoring.