



A dynamic, inspiring field-based restoration ecology training program - www.goldenhour.org

Resources for identifying native plants and vegetation

...BACKGROUND...

The Bay Area is often defined as the 9 county area that surrounds, or shares shoreline with, the San Francisco Bay. Within just nine counties, it is estimated that there are more than 4,000 plant species, varieties, and subspecies found in our wildlands. That's more than most states in the US! Of these, about 2/3 are considered to be native to California, and another 1/3 are considered to be "rare, unusual, or special status plants".

...SKILLS...

The identification of general plants is not difficult. In fact, most people should be able to learn 30- 50 easily identifiable plants in a half day hike. Learning these plants requires the use of all 5 senses, which will help you remember plants by more than just "the color of the petals". So, when you look to "memorize a plant", look at other important characteristics that will give you a clue about how it is different from other plants. Here's a short list of "tips" for helping open up your botanical world:

1. look beyond just colors of petals, but count the petals, sepals, number of seeds in a fruit, etc.
2. look at the pattern of where and how the flowers are arranged – are they single flowers, in clusters, do they tower above the plant, or are they throughout the plant.
3. if you are certain you won't get a funny rash, touch the plant in order to determine if it is soft, spiny, like dad's face after not shaving, etc.
4. look at the leaves of the plant and determine their shape, size, color, and any other unusual characteristics
5. smell the plant, its flowers, its leaves, its roots and bark if possible and safe
6. look at how the plant is growing – is it a single individual, is it in a patch, does it cover the entire ground
7. look at where the plant is growing, is it wet, dry, are the soils different colors, does it seem really sunny or shady there
8. look at the seeds of the plant, often people won't try to identify a plant after it's flowers are gone, but seed size, shape, color, and other characteristics may be the only way to determine which species you have.
9. keep a field book and take notes, take samples only when appropriate
10. learn to identify weeds and help mother nature out by pulling them out where appropriate

GOLDEN HOUR

Restoration Institute

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... RESOURCES...

V I A W E B

CalFlora – online plant encyclopedia – www.calflora.org

California flower photos – www.calphotos.berkeley.edu

USDA plants website – www.plants.usda.gov

Online Jepson Manual (Master CA Plant ID book) -
http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/interchange/l_treat_indexes.html

Wildflowers of East Bay Regional Park District -
http://www.ebparks.org/resources/pdf/plan_stew/plants/photo_guides/1-EBRPD_Wildflowers.pdf

Wildflowers of the San Francisco Bay Area - <http://www.wildflowers-cdrom.com/>

I N P R I N T

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