

WHAT TO DO NOW???

THE END OF THE SUMMER DOG DAYS

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In case you haven't noticed, this is the most challenging and demoralizing time for a native garden, especially a new native garden. The reason for this is that a native garden, or any garden for that matter, always has a component of trial and error. Most of us tend to focus on the "error", what didn't work and what died? This was indeed the case at a recent consultation I went to last week where the new garden was going through its rough first year.

Most native plants flower intensely in spring but by summer things are going the other way. There are non-violent solutions to all of this and things to do like maintenance and planning. You can start cutting back things that "need it". Things that need it are Salvia's, Sphearalcea, Encelia, grasses and even Matilija Poppies but not Ceanothus or Manzanita. Clear out leaf litter except under oaks-my preference. Weed and spread mulch. That will give everything a much neater and cleaner look while keeping the ground cooler and plants greener.

Planning! What croaked and what didn't? What looks good during the summer heat? Most casualties occur in the first year. While there are many reasons for plant casualties, it's generally "wrong plant, wrong place", but you may not know this until the first summer. Then you find out. What to do? *Repeat the successes and not the failures.* Look at those things that did well and plant more of those. Go to the native plant nursery (Matilija Nursery) or botanical garden in summer/fall and see what looks nice and in flower!!!!. Then, plant the plants that are both flowering and/or look nice. Flowering plants put the focus of your eye on the flowers and not the part of the landscape going to seed or into dormancy. Here's a partial list of what is flowering now: Lessingia, Ergonum grande rubescens-red buckwheat(finishing), California fuchsia, Chilopsis linearus (desert willow), Malacothamnus nutalii (bush mallow) and Abutilon palmeri.

Yes, Matilija Bob will now do consults for about \$100 per visit depending on where you live and you get a 20% discount certificate good for 60 days on nursery plants to boot. Way better and cheaper than a psychologist!