



Spring

IT'S TIME FOR DIRTY JOBS

We ask a resident expert how to make your growing grounds pop this season.

WRITTEN BY WENDY HINMAN

“IN THE SPRING, AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOU SHOULD SMELL
LIKE DIRT.” – MARGARET ATWOOD

Our traditional rainy months, November and February, have delivered abundantly this year. Our good earth is set up to deliver a spectacular spring. It is easy, when we see the greening, to want to answer nature’s invitation to get our hands dirty. Every nursery has their person, and Anderson’s La Costa Garden Center has Steven Froess. He’s the resident expert and is excited about spring’s possibilities. Before you don your gardening gloves, here are some helpful thoughts from Froess.

Carlsbad Magazine (CM): It’s spring. If we didn’t plant bulbs that are coming up, what is the best way to bring color to our gardens?

Steven Froess (SF): If you’re not sure what you want, go to a local nursery/garden center, look around and ask questions! The staff is always happy to help and give you recommendations, and you’re sure to be inspired by all the available blooming plant varieties. I will also tell people if they are driving or walking around to take pictures of trees, plants and flowers that they like and we can help them see if their space meets the needs of that particular plant.

CM: What are some drought-resistant plants to establish here?

SF: With drought-resistant plants, I always like to begin with California natives. Ceanothus (California lilac), Eriogonum (buckwheat), Salvia (sage), just to name a few of the common genus. There are so many to choose from and depending if they are coastal or inland, the selections may change. They also encourage the native ecosystem (pollinators, wildlife, etc.). If that didn’t quite suit your style, then stick with the plants in the Mediterranean genre, which can range from European (Olive, Rockrose, Teucrium, Lavender, Rosemary, etc.) or the more exotic Australian and South African (Grevillea, Leucospermum, etc.).

CM: Can you say something about hardy, easy-spreading ground covers?

SF: There isn’t a ton to say about ground cover that is too exciting. Some of our most popular perennial ground covers include Grevillea “Mt Tamboritha,” Westringia “Mundi,” Ruschia “Nana” (dwarf carpet of stars), Ceanothus “Yankee Point” (native) or other California native ground covers such as native Aster (Chilensis “St. George” or Erigeron glaucus) or Salvia “Jade carpet” or “Bee’s bliss.”



a) Steven Froess is the gardening expert at Anderson's. b) Westringia Wynyabbie Highlight. c) Yellow Protea and d) Delta Pro Clear Light Blue Pansies are some of the plants found at Anderson's La Costa Nursery.

CM: How can something called “carpet of stars” or “bees bliss” not be exciting? What are the tropicals that do well here?

SF: Our climate is closer to a desert with rainfall amounts. However, with the correct watering (regular), soil amending (they prefer nutrient-rich soils) and fertilizing, we are fortunate enough to grow these types of plants. Usually what stands out most about tropical plants is dramatic foliage or colorful and fragrant flowers. Most popular tend to be Bromeliads (for colorful foliage), Palms (again, not my favorite), Plumeria (OK, I have a soft spot for these and their fragrant flowers), Hibiscus (be careful of the whitefly!), and most of the best selection comes in the late spring/summer months when the weather is warmer.

CM: What annuals and perennials have the longest bloom span in spring?

SF: Annuals will always have a short life but usually flower during most of it! Sometimes annuals will reseed readily so I tell people to be careful where you plant them in case they take over an area you didn’t want them in. Popular annuals for spring include California Poppies (we carry orange, dark orange and yellow), Pansies and Violas (edible flowers), Marigolds (for the vegetable gardens) and Nasturtiums (edible flowers).

CM: Do certain ornamentals attract beneficial pollinators or birds here?

SF: I would say that almost any plant with a flower and or seed will attract some kind of pollinator. California native plants provide habitats for native birds and wildlife. The flowers depending on their shape will attract different pollinators. Flowers that are more open tend to attract bees (Encelia Californica, for example), whereas closed tubular-shaped flowers will attract hummingbirds and butterflies (Arctostaphylos or Epilobium, for example). Try any of the California Buckwheat (Eriogonum Grande Rubescens is one of my favorites), Ceanothus sp. (California Lilac) or any of the flowering Salvias (“Winifred Gilman” has vivid purple flowers), amongst other native plants for pollinators. For other non-native ornamentals for pollinators you can’t beat Pentas for both hummingbirds and butterflies, or the many types of Grevillea will bring tons of hummingbirds.

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