



Santa Clara Valley Chapter

## Local Perennial Native California Grasses

### Full Sun Grasses

Scientific Name	Common Name	Blooms	Comments
<i>Danthonia californica</i>	California Wild Oat Grass	Apr - June	To 40", generally 2½' to 3'
<i>Danthonia californica americana</i>	Hairy California Wild Oat Grass	Apr - May	Shorter than species; hairy sheath
<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	Blue Bunch Grass	Apr - June	To 40"; generally lower; open panicle
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue	May - June	To 40"; open panicle
<i>Hordeum brachyantherum</i>	Meadow Barley	Apr - June	To 28"; inflorescence a spike
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	June Grass	Apr - June	To 24"; inflorescence an interrupted spike
<i>Melica californica</i>	Western Melica	Mar - June	To 52"; generally 3'; dies down in summer
<i>Nassella cernua</i>	Nodding Needle Grass	Apr - May	To 3'; inflorescence more delicate than <i>N. pulchra</i>
<i>Nassella pulchra</i>	Purple Needle Grass	Mar - June	To 40"; generally 2½' to 3'
<i>Poa secunda secunda</i>	Pine Bluegrass	Feb - May	To 40"; generally 24"

### Partial Sun-Shade Grasses

Scientific Name	Common Name	Blooms	Comments
<i>Bromus carinatus</i>	California Brome Annual - Biennial	Mar - July	40" - 48"; open panicle
<i>Elymus californicus</i>	California Bottle Brush Grass	May - July	To 80"; generally 6'
<i>Melica imperfecta</i>	Small Flowered Melica	Mar - June	To 44"; generally 24" - 30"; inflorescence open
<i>Melica torreyana</i>	Torrey's Melica	Mar - July	To 40"; generally lower, spreading; inflorescence strict
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Deergrass	June - Sept	Leaves to 2½' to 3'; spiked inflorescence to 5'; dramatic

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## Shade Grasses

Scientific Name	Common Name	Blooms	Comments
<i>Bromus laevipes</i>	Woodland Brome Grass	May - July	To 3'; generally lower; inflorescence folded hand
<i>Deschampsia elongata</i>	Slender Hair Grass	May - July	Low tuft, inflorescence to 40", generally lower
<i>Festuca californica</i>	California Fescue	Mar - May	3' +; open panicle
<i>Festuca occidentalis</i>	Western Fescue	Apr - July	To 40"; generally lower; open panicle
<i>Hierochloe occidentalis</i>	California Vanilla Grass	Jan - May	To 36"; generally lower
<i>Melica geyeri</i>	Geyer's Onion Grass	Mar - July	To 80"; generally 4'; bulbous base
<i>Melica subulata</i>	Alaska Onion Grass	Mar - July	To 48"; bulbous base
<i>Trisetum canescens</i>	Tall Trisetum	May - Aug	To 32"

With one exception (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), all of the above grasses are found between Route 280 and Skyline. *Muhlenbergia rigens* grows from Monterey County south, in the central valley, the foothills of and in the Sierra Nevada mountains east to Texas and into Mexico.

CULTURE: Plant 4" or gallon can size in late fall just before the rains. Use compost (but no fertilizer) as a mulch. March is the second-best planting time.

SOURCES: Most of the common names and blooming periods are taken from Thomas' Flora of the Santa Cruz Mountains of California; heights are from Munz' A California Flora; modified heights are my local observations.

by Sally Casey, 4/99

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California Native Plant Society  
Santa Clara Valley Chapter  
3921 E. Bayshore Blvd., Palo Alto, CA 94303  
phone: 650-691-9749

[www.cnps-scv.org](http://www.cnps-scv.org)