

## Mediterranean Climate Plants: A Survival Strategy

Hairy Matilija Poppy  
**Romneya trichocalyx**

Blue Lupine  
**Lupinus pilosus**

**Azara Dentata**

Presenting exceptional garden design that addresses environmentally sensitive issues is the cornerstone of The Late Show Garden. Drought tolerant plants native to the Mediterranean climates provide an option that speaks to these issues in times when the word “global” is used ubiquitously to describe both the means of production and destruction. Embracing the uniqueness of the world’s Mediterranean flora becomes a survival strategy.

There are five mediterranean climates that cover approximately two percent of the earth’s surface, and if you think about the regions famous for wine production you most likely will be identifying one of those climates. The five regions include large parts of western California, central Chile, the southern tip of Africa, areas of southern Australia and, of course, the Mediterranean Basin. Plants native to these zones have evolved to survive long dry summers, short, wet winters and costal conditions. Here are a few plants from each of the mediterranean climates to try in your garden.

The stately, if somewhat whimsical, African Silver Tree (**Leucadendron argenteum**) epitomizes the characteristics that have evolved among Mediterranean flora to help them survive drought conditions. The surface of each leaf is relatively small and vertically oriented; the leaves are comparatively thick and in the case of this tree, covered in a silver hair that gives the plant its name. All these characteristics help the plant to retain precious moisture in otherwise harsh, dry conditions. Just in case you have become jaded to the silver tree in your years of horticultural experience, try its close familial relative, the **Leucospermum reflexum var. Luteum**, which has the same silver coloring but is smaller in size and more spectacular in flower.

Colors like silver and gray-blue are common in plants of the Mediterranean climates, because this palette reflects intense sunlight. The Australian Blue Bush (**Acacia covenyi**) has the characteristic creamy white to yellow flower of the Acacia, but does not share the invasive tendencies of other trees within that genus.

Closer to home, the Hairy Matilija Poppy (**Romneya trichocalyx**) is so named because of the distinguishing characteristics of its sepals. Vying for the title of “Queen of California Wildflowers” with its cousin, **Romneya coulteri**, this big, bold beauty is considered aggressive in its growth habit and demanding in needing neither too much nor too little water. Despite these royal proclivities, this California native is worth a try even for beginning gardeners.

A more demure Mediterranean flowering plant is the Blue Lupine (**Lupinus pilosus**). Lupines thrive in harsh conditions found in places like Texas, California and Israel, the home of this amazing blue-black flower. Not only stunningly beautiful, it is used ethnobotanically to fight the infection of herpetic Whitlow disease, should you ever be so unfortunate as to be cursed with this malady.

Lastly, if you are looking for a small, white multi-trunked shrub with dark, green leaves that are interestingly paired one large and one small, with flowers like small yellow, cottony orbs that emit a distinctively mellow fragrance and which eventually form snow-white berries, look no further than the **Azara dentata** from Chile. It even comes in a variegated form.

These Mediterranean beauties will ensure a unique garden that is both handsome and environmentally sound.

Silver Tree

**Leucadendron argenteum**

**Leucospermum reflexum**

Blue Bush

**Acacia covenyi**

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