

SHRUBS OF LAS FOSADAS

by

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SHRUB LIST

- (1) Poison Oak - *Rhus diversiloba*
- (2) The Manzanitas - *Arctostaphylos* sp.
- (3) Blue Blossom - *Ceanothus* sp.
- (4) Toyon or Christmas Berry - *Heteromeles arbutifolia*
- (5) Buckthorn & Cascara - *Thamnus* sp.
- (6) Chamis - *Adenostema fasciculatum*
- (7) Mock Locust - *Amorpha californica*
- (8) Sweet-scented Shrub - *Calycanthus occidentalis*
- (9) Creek Dogwood - *Cornus californica*
- (10) Western Redbud - *Cercis occidentalis*
- (11) Chaparral Pea - *Pickeringia montana*
- (12) California Hazel - *Corylus californica*
- (13) Birchleaf Mahogany - *Cercocarpus betuloides*
- (14) Scrub Oak - *Quercus dumosa*
- (15) Flowering Ash - *Fraxinus dipetala*
- (16) Coyote Brush - Fuzzy Wuzzy - *Baccharis pilularis*
- (17) Choke Cherry - Bitter Cherry - *Prunus demissa* & *emarginata*
- (18) California Grape - *Vitis californica*
- (19) Western Azalea - *Rhododendron occidentale*
- (20) Rock Spirea - *Holodiscus discolor*
- (21) Red-flowered Currant - *Ribes sanguineum*  
Hillside Gooseberry - *Ribes californicum*
- (22) Snowberry - *Symphoricarpos albus*
- (23) Thimbleberry - *Rubus parviflorus*  
Blackberry - *Rubus* sp.
- (24) Blueberry Elder - *Sambucus caerulea*
- (25) Tree Poppy - *Dendromecon rigida*
- (26) Western Huckleberry - *Vaccinium occidentale*

## SHRUBS OF LAS POSADAS

Shrubs are defined as woody plants which usually develop several stems instead of a single one, and which are usually not more than ten to fifteen feet tall. There are many species and some are broad-leaf evergreen and some deciduous. Many shrubs can grow on more shallow and sterile soil than will trees, and some can survive much drier conditions. Thus several million acres of foothill and mountain country in California is covered with a more or less dense growth of shrubs known under the general term, "chaparral," or just "brush." Many of the shrub species sprout vigorously from the roots when cut or burned and the seeds of some of them are able to withstand the heat of fires that destroy trees and tree seeds. Thus a good deal of country that was formerly covered by a fine stand of timber now supports only a dense stand of shrubs of "brush" which has little economic value, but which occupies the soil so completely that it is virtually impossible for tree seedlings to come back. A good deal of the north and east portions of Las Posadas are in this condition following successive fires. However, some of the shallow and rocky soils probably never supported a growth of valuable timber trees. Some shrubs have value as ornamental plants; a few are useful as forage for wild animals or livestock, and nearly all have utility in holding the soil on slopes against erosion by heavy rains.

The following are some of the more common or conspicuous shrubs of the Las Posadas and surrounding areas:

(1) POISON OAK, Rhus diversiloba, is said to be the most widespread in distribution of any shrub in California and it is perhaps also the greatest nuisance to man because of its irritating oil which causes swelling and blistering of the skin. It occurs very widely throughout California except in very dry areas and at elevations above about 5,000 ft. in mountain country. It is really a sumac, but has a shiny leaf made up of three leaflets each of which resembles the leaf of a live oak. Before the leaves are shed in the fall they often burn a brilliant red color which is so attractive that the unwary often collect the foliage for house decorations to their great discomfort. Poison oak may be a stout shrub or a thin-stemmed vine which clings to tree trunks and may thus reach 50 or more feet above the ground. It often forms dense masses of foliage on the top of old stumps or fence posts, and is thus very similar in habit to the poison ivy of the eastern part of the country. Its flowers are small, greenish white and quite inconspicuous, but the clusters of berries are white and may be rather ornamental.

Most people are somewhat susceptible and many may be badly incapacitated by exposure to this plant, so it is well for all to learn to know it and avoid contact with it as much as possible. Grubbing and spraying with brush-killing solutions have eliminated most of the poison oak from the immediate surroundings of camp, but it is very widely distributed throughout the forest and brush fields, so all should guard against it. After exposure to poison oak it is well to wash the entire body with moderately warm water and good suds of strong laundry soap to remove the irritating oil from the skin. The oil clings to clothing so that this should be carefully washed before being worn again. Swabbing the skin of ankles and wrists with cotton soaked in alcohol will remove the worst of the oil from the skin.

Poison oak patches may be effectively killed out by spraying the foliage in early summer with the chemicals known as 2,4-D, 2,4,5-T, and 2,4,6-T though application the second season to some surviving sprouts may be necessary.

(2) The MANZANITAS, Arctostaphylos sp. The manzanitas are very common chaparral shrubs throughout California. They have broad and generally quite leathery leaves of which some are green and others gray in color, dainty bell-like white or pink flowers in drooping clusters, and fruits which resemble little apples which gives to them their common name. It means little apple in Spanish. Manzanitas are usually from four to ten feet in height, though there are some larger and some dwarf forms. They can usually be recognized by the smooth, dark-red bark on the stout stems. The wood of branches and roots is heavy and hard and makes excellent fuel. There are several manzanitas in the Las Posadas area including Arct. manzanita, Arct. canescens, etc.

(3) The BLUEBLOSSOM, BUCKBRUSH, WHITETHORN, etc., Ceanothus sp. comprise a variety of shrubs which are very common in both foothill and mountain chaparral areas. Some are tiny, prostrate forms which crawl on the ground. Others are tall, widely branched shrubs which reach 20 ft. in height. Some are evergreen; others deciduous. In some the leaves are opposite; in others alternate in arrangement. Some like the deerbrush are excellent forage plants; others are of no value for livestock or wildlife. All have dense clusters of tiny blue or white flowers, somewhat resembling the cultivated lilac and later the ripened capsules contain tiny, round and hard coated seeds which are exceedingly resistant to the heat of fires. Several native forms are very decorative and many fine ornamentals are being developed by hybridization. Wedgeleaf Ceanothus or "Buckbrush" is perhaps the most common shrub in the foothills; Blueblossom often called "tick-brush" is most common in the coast redwood region, Deerbrush is the excellent forage species found at middle elevations in the mountain country while Snowbrush or "Tobacco brush" and others are found at higher elevations. Many of the species have leaves marked by three prominent veins.

(4) TOYON OR CHRISTMAS BERRY, Heteromeles (photinia) arbutifolia, is one of the best known and loved shrubs of California because of its widespread use as Christmas decorations. Its dark evergreen leaves have finely toothed margins; the flowers are small, white and borne in dense clusters in late spring. These ripen in November into bright red berries borne in heavy clusters. These berries are not only sought after for decorations, but are favorite food of robins and other birds. Toyon reproduces well from sprouts and is a feature of the chaparral at lower elevations in the coast mountains and foothill country of the Sierras.

(5) The BUCKTHORNS comprise several shrubs of which the best known are CALIFORNIA COFFEE BERRY, Rhamnus californica, and CASCARA SAGRADA, Rhamnus purshiana. Coffee berry has gray-green leaves and succulent dark brown berries containing a flat-sided seed resembling the coffee bean. Cascara becomes a small tree in the north coast and Oregon hills where its bark is collected to provide the well known cathartic medicine. Its leaves are larger than those of coffee-berry, shiny green, and broadly oval in shape.

Both of these are deciduous shrubs, but there is another called HOLLY LEAVED BUCKTHORN, Rhamnus ilicifolia, in the foothills which has small, evergreen, holly-like leaves and bright red berries which give it a very decorative character. Buckthorn berries constitute the food of several animals and birds.

(6) CHAMISE OR CHAMISCO, Adenostema fasciculatum, is typical of the poorest, driest and often steepest slopes in the foothill chaparral country. Its tiny narrow leaves are in clusters and the cream colored flowers are borne in spikes. It is of little value for animal or bird food, but sprouts vigorously after fires which also stimulate growth of seedlings so it covers thousands of acres of burned over country to the exclusion of more valuable plants. There are dense areas of chamise to the north and east of the Las Posadas playfield on the poor, sterile soil which is unfavorable for the growth of most other shrubs and trees.

(7) INDIGOBUSH OR MOCK LOCUST, Amorpha californica, is a small shrub with compound, locust-like foliage having a musty odor. It has dainty flower clusters and some of the species are grown as ornamentals. At Las Posadas it is found sparingly in clusters usually in partial shade of the forest. Another very similar species is common in the mountains of southern California and the southwest, A. fruticosa.

(8) CALIFORNIA SWEET SHRUB, Calycanthus occidentalis, usually occurs near streams where its large, tapered opposite leaves and attractive dark-red flowers give it a fine ornamental quality. The foliage when crushed has a sweetly pungent odor. It has little value as a grazing plant, and by some is thought to be poisonous.

(9) CREEK DOGWOOD, Cornus californica, is another opposite leaved shrub with tapered leaves, bright red stems and clustered heads of tiny white flowers. It is usually found in clumps along streams or in moist glades with good soil moisture for much of the season. It is not so large nor showy as the tree dogwood found on slopes throughout the forest, but is an attractive streamside shrub. It is browsed by deer and is excellent food for them.

(10) WESTERN REDBUD, Cercis occidentalis, is a favorite ornamental shrub of the chaparral country wherever it occurs. Its heart shaped leaves appear shortly after the purplish-red, pea-like flowers have clothed the dark stems with their spring beauty. These ripen into flat pods which are dark red in color during much of the summer and hang on the shrubs long after the leaves have dropped in the fall; sometimes well through the next growing season. Redbud is the official county flower of Lake County where an annual festival is held during its period of bloom.

(11) CHAPARRAL PEA, Pickeringia montana, is another attractive shrub of the legume family, having small purplish flowers, small evergreen leaves and a much branched, spreading and spiny form. It is not common at Las Posadas.

(12) CALIFORNIA HAZEL, Corylus californica, is usually a large shrub, but occasionally may reach tree size. It is usually found in partial shade in the forest where its beautifully formed, doubly serrate and wooly leaves borne on slender branchlets are an attractive feature of the understory. The flowers appear as long, drooping catkins in early spring before the leaves, and the hazelnuts are borne in a leafy, beaked capsule. These are so eagerly sought after by squirrels that they disappear when they are barely mature.

(13) BIRCHLEAF MAHOGANY, Cercocarpus betuloides, is one of the "mahoganies" which are usually shrub like in form, but occasionally reach tree size. The evergreen foliage consists of small leaves with toothed margins above the middle and tapered to a wedge-shaped base. The flowers are not conspicuous, but the seeds bear a long, silvery, twisted feather-like plume which sticks to the fur of animals and aids in their distribution. These are borne in such large quantities on many of the shrubs that they have a strikingly beautiful soft and silvery appearance. These shrubs are important forage plants for cattle, sheep and deer.

(14) SCRUB OAK, Quercus dumosa, is a common member of the chaparral from Mendocino County to southern California. It is usually a much branched shrub and only occasionally reaches tree size on good soil and in sheltered locations. The leaves are quite variable in size and shape, but the toothed margins give them a holly-like appearance though the color is generally a gray green. The acorns mature in one season and are also variable in size. The evergreen foliage is browsed by deer. It sprouts vigorously after fires and is an important sheep browse.

(15) FLOWERING ASH, Fraxinus dipetala, is similar to other members of the ash genus, having compound leaves in opposite arrangement on the twigs, but its flowers are white, showy and borne in great profusion in early spring. It is found in the chaparral in the inner coast ranges and the Sierra foothills and may not be present at Las Posadas.

(16) COYOTE BRUSH OR FUZZY WUZZY, Baccharis pilularis, is one of the commonest shrubs in coastal areas of central California. Its leaves are small, evergreen and have serrate margins. It blooms profusely in mid summer and the flowers develop into great quantities of cottony-winged seeds which fly long distances in the wind and come up readily on burns and other open areas. It is probably lightly browsed by deer, but has little value as forage for livestock. It is more common near the coast than inland and may be rare at Las Posadas.

(17) WESTERN CHOKE CHERRY, Prunus demissa, and BITTER CHERRY, P. emarginata, are probably present at Las Posadas or in the vicinity. They are thicket forming shrubs rarely becoming small trees with typical smooth cherry bark marked by prominent lenticels, long, oval serrate, deciduous leaves and white flowers which are borne in spikes. The bark is bitter to taste and if too heavily browsed by stock, leads to poisoning.

(18) CALIFORNIA GRAPE, Vitis californica, is generally found climbing over trees and shrubs along streams where it will reach to the top of the tallest trees. The small grapes are eaten by birds.

(19) WESTERN AZALEA, Rhododendron occidentale, is one of our most beautiful flowering shrubs. Its light green leaves are opposite in arrangement, 3 to 5 inches long and have fringed edges. The fragrant flowers are white or pink with a yellow blotch and are borne in clusters. The shrubs become 8 to 10 ft. tall and are usually found in shaded canyons.

(20) ROCK SPIREA, Holodiscus discolor, is a large shrub with alternate toothed or lobed leaves up to 4 inches long which are silvery white beneath. The small creamy white flowers are borne in panicles on drooping branches.

(21) RED FLOWERED CURRANT, Ribes sanguineum,  
HILLSIDE GOOSEBERRY, Ribes californicum, and other species of Ribes are found in the north coast ranges and when in full flower are very attractive plants. They have palmately lobed, small and dainty leaves; all of them are quite important browse for deer and cattle and the fruits are eaten by many birds.

(22) SNOWBERRY, Symphoricarpos albus, is an attractive shrub with opposite oval, entire leaves to two inches long which are silky beneath. They may be lobed on young shoots. The flowers are bell-shaped, and light pink in color, borne in clusters. The fruit is a snow-white berry.

(23) THIMBLEBERRY, Rubus parviflorus,  
BLACKBERRY, Rubus sp.

These are the familiar thorny vines which form impenetrable thickets in waste places and openings in the forest. The flowers are white and the berries red or black.

(24) BLUEBERRY ELDER, Sambucus caerulea. The light-green compound leaves of this elder are 6 inches long and have 5 to 7 oblong leaflets. The flowers are cream-white in flat-topped heads to 6 inches across. The berries are blue-black with a light bloom. Though usually shrubby, it sometimes becomes a tree to 50 ft.

(25) TREEPOPPY, Dendromecon rigida, is a small shrub with bright green foliage and attractive golden poppy-like flowers. It has a much branched form, evergreen foliage and grows in dry hillsides and road cuts where its bright flowers brighten its surroundings.

(26) WESTERN HUCKLEBERRY, Vaccinium occidentale, and similar species are small evergreen shrubs with dark-green, shiny foliage much used in floral decorations, inconspicuous flowers and blue or red berry fruits which are eaten by many kinds of birds.