Ceanothus
California Lilac
Family: **Rhamnaceae** (Buckthorn)
Pronounced as Ram-nay-zi-yuy or Ram-nay-zi-ee

**Genus: Ceanothus**
Derived from Greek word Keanothos “Spiny Plant”
Pronounced as ce·a·no·thus / see-ya-no-thus

**Species: Approx. 60**
Species native to California are called California Lilacs

Common names of various Ceanothus species include California Lilac, Mountain Lilac, Wild Lilac, Buckbrush, and, less commonly, Blueblossom (C. Thyrsiflorus)
Geographic Distribution

- Found on dry, sunny hillsides from coastal scrub lands to forest clearings, and from the Rockies in British Columbia to the Coastal ranges of California
- Found near sea level to 9,000 feet in elevation
- *C. Arboreus, C. Thyrsiflorus, C. Cyaneus* are a few species native to California
Common Traits of Plants in Genus CEANOTHUS

• Most species possess Nitrogen Fixing Root Nodules
• Majority of the species are evergreen
• Leaves may be arranged opposite to each other on the stem, or alternate (depending on the species)
PLANT TYPE

• Eudicot: a type of Dicot
• Perennial: Life expectancy 15 to 25 years
• Growth habit: anywhere from 6 inches (*Ceanothus hearstiorum*) to 20 ft. tall (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*), and spread from 2 ft. to 12 ft., based on the species
• Small tree, shrub, groundcover
• Fast grower
Flowers

- Range from cobalt blue to lavender to white, a few are pink
- Inflorescence, generally raceme or panicle like
- Tiny flowers produced in large, dense axillary or terminal clusters
- Intensely fragrant
- Bloom period: March into May
Fruit

- Flowers give way to three lobed seed pods
- *C. Cuneatus* fruit
Leaf

- Evergreen, Simple
- Glossy upper surface, vary in size from 1/2 inch to 3 inches.
- Oblong, Ovate or Elliptic in shape
- Lightly to moderately serrated
- Leaves feel rough to the touch
- Unique leaf-vein structure: Three prominent veins extending from the leaf base to the outer margins of the leaf tips
- Foliage: Dark green to variegated
Variegated Hybrids

C. THYSIFLORUS “EL DORADO”

C. “COOL BLUE”
Our Very Own California Lilac

• **Ceanothus Cyaneus**, San Diego Buckbrush and Lakeside Ceanothus
• Found in Peninsular Ranges mountains of San Diego County
• Grows to 15 feet in height
• Gray-green leaves
• Remaining natural specimens confined to small areas in the hills around Lakeside and Ramona in San Diego County
• Can tolerate garden conditions
Ceanothus Prefers

- Full sun, afternoon shade in hotter areas
- Good drainage
- No fertilization
- No drip irrigation/ additional summer water once established
- Minimal pruning
- Planting in late fall to early winter

Remember- California Lilac is best left to fend for itself
Propagation

• By seed
• Seeds remain viable for hundreds of years and germinate only in response to forest fires
• Estimated that there are about two million seeds per acre in forest habitats
• Can also sprout from roots and/or stems
Plant Pests, Diseases, Environmental Disorders

- **Pests:** Include Ceanothus Aphids, and whiteflies: can be treated with an insecticidal soap, if needed
- **Diseases:** Canker, Root rot, Powdery Mildew
- **Environmental disorders:** Poor water management, Excess fertilizer, or both
• Early California Indians used flowers, lathered into a soap to relieve eczema and rash
• Native Americans used dried leaves as herbal tea
• Miwok Indians of California made baskets from Ceanothus branches
• *C. Integerrimus* has been used by North American tribes to ease childbirth
Interesting Facts

• The Royal Horticultural Society received seeds of *Ceanothus Thyrsiflorus* in 1837, making it the first California species to be introduced into European gardens.

• California lilac is not a true lilac and does not belong to the genus *Syringa*.
Landscape Use

• Versatile: Can be planted as specimens, screens, hedges, groundcovers, next to a wall, and in shrub border
TOPIARY

FREE GROWING
SPECIMEN TREE

TRAINED UP A WALL
POTS/ CONTAINERS

TRELLIS
Why plant California Lilac

- Attracts pollinators, and beneficials
- Food source for larvae, birds, moths and mule deers (do not like *Ceonothus* that is not watered, prefer only the nutritious spring growth)
- Integral part of an Integrated Pest Management program
- Useful in Fire resistant landscapes
- Non toxic for pets
- California native, non invasive
- Creates shelter, breeding and nesting habitat for California bird species and migratory birds
ECHO BUTTERFLY ON CEANOThUS
Sources

- UC Master Gardeners Diggin’it in SLO
- http://sonomamg.ucanr.edu/Plant_of_the_Month/Ceanothus_796/
- https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=25779
- http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/PLANTS/ceanothus.html
- http://calscape.org/Ceanothus-cyaneus-(San-Diego-Ceanothus)
- https://www.laspilitas.com/groups/ceanothus/southern_california_lilacs/southern_california_lilacs.html