



CALIFORNIA SAGE BRUSH

Scientific name: *Artemisia californica*

Plant family: Asteraceae

Natural Information

California sage brush flowers in the fall, on slopes and coastal sage scrub. Mostly found at elevations below 2000', plants usually grow in sand, sandy loam, clay, gravelly loam, and unconsolidated soils. As a dominant species, this plant requires full sun and light shade. Providing favored nesting sites for black tailed gnatcatchers, *Artemisia californica* is ecologically vital as a keystone species.

Physical Description

- Branches: lower branches woody; do not exceed 1/4" in diameter; side shoots form from leaf axils
- Flower: inconspicuous inflorescence; forms a dense panicle
- Leaves: thin; small ones appear wilted during dry season but become hydrated again within hours of rainfall
- Roots: shallow
- Stem: woolly; multiple stems arise from root crown

Garden Tips/Extra Facts:

Fragrant due to the presence of terpenes, the aroma is released when brushed against. During the first post-disturbance growing season, the plant's steady germination often prevents the development of an adequate seed bank for recruiting large numbers of seedlings. Seeds buried near the surface of moist soil generally germinate without any other special conditions. Those buried below the level of light penetration required exposure to charred wood leachate before germinating. In the wild, germination rate is moderate to high in fire-free seasons. The shrubs are also capable of growing from roots if basal portions of the stem remain attached. Stem growth most frequently occurs during the winter. Can grow from 2' to 5' tall.



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