



California Nature Corner

Botanical Notes

Plant of the Month—May 2021

Scientific name:

Eriogonum fasciculatum

Common name:

California Buckwheat

Taxonomy:

Family Polygonaceae

(Division Magnoliophyta – Eudicot)

Habitat: Chaparral, Coastal sage scrub, dry slopes, and in canyons

Description of the species:

California buckwheat is an evergreen subshrub about 30 cm to 1 m (12 to 39 in) in height. Branches and stems are slender, long, and flexible. Its leaves are bright green, thick, and about 2.5 cm (1 in) long; taper at both ends, growing in clusters. Tiny flowers (only a few millimeters in diameter) form a compound umbel. This inflorescence consists of numerous flower stalks spread out from a common point like the ribs of an umbrella. Each flower is white and pink with long stamens and dark pink anthers. Flowers turn chocolaty in color as summer progresses, creating an attractive look on the slopes later during the fall. The blooming period goes from April to September. There are over 125 species of buckwheat (*Eriogonum*) in California.



Use in landscape:

This species loves full sun and well-drained sandy soils. It is drought tolerant and easy to grow. It requires little water during summer (once a month) and after it is established. Best ground cover for slopes and to add bold areas in your garden. It can be used in combination with other native plants in mini hedgerows defining the limit of your property.



Pollinators attracted by the plant:

Flowers of buckweeds are an excellent source of nectar for different bee species and several native butterfly and moth species such as the Mojave-dotted blue and Mormon Metalmark butterflies.



An ethnobotany note: “The seeds of various species of buckwheat were eaten and gathered in the summer months. Desert dwellers also ate the young shoots of this plant. A decoction of buckwheat leaves would alleviate headaches and stomach pain. The flowers were used to make an eye-wash.” (taken from *California Indians and Their Environment: An Introduction* by Kent Lightfoot, Otis Parrish; 2009).