

Garden 1

Unbridled Meadow

Our garden has evolved during the more than thirty years that we've lived here. I'd like to say that it was intentional and planned, but – especially in the early days with young children, a home remodel, and both of us working – the garden was pretty much happenstance. My dad gave me an azalea for my birthday; my dear mom added a climbing Queen Elizabeth and brought irises from her garden in San Diego; my sweet neighbor Jane shared a few anemones that had been divided from those given to her by another neighbor, and so it grew. With love and good wishes and never enough care or planning.

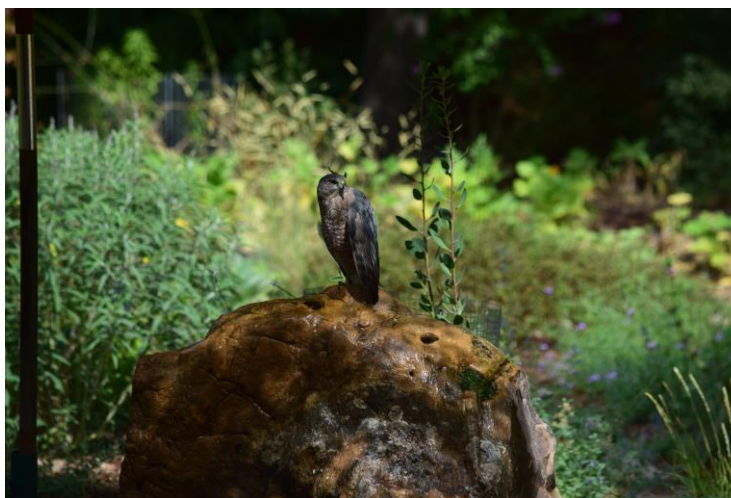
When the kids were little we had a play area – a climbing structure, a zipline, and a small lawn, usually including a vegetable garden. We always visited gardens when we traveled. I learned about Piet Oudolf after visiting the High Line in New York City and the Lurie Garden in Chicago, and especially loved his soft, colorful meadows. When I retired in 2016 we removed the lawn in back, converted the irrigation system to drip, and created mounds for an increasing number of *Arctostaphylos* species, listed below. We learned that mounds create drainage for plants that don't want wet feet, and over the years we added many.

Currently the garden has a large number of salvias, penstemons and ornamental grasses, along with *Arctostaphylos*. We've kept about half of the roses because they are hard to give up! We have certainly not planted California natives exclusively, but I try to incorporate them as much as I can. I am guided by a desire to reduce water use, use plants that will thrive despite our increasingly hot summers, and provide blossoms for the pollinators and for me throughout the year. In January the hummingbirds are happy with the many *Arctostaphylos* blossoms.



The Corsican hellebores, *Daphne*, *Freesias*, and those bumblebee favorites—the *Ceanothus* in the front yard—arrive in late winter. Of course, the garden is bursting with bloom in spring. The *Phacelia californica* is a magnet for one variety of native bees (*Osmia*) in the summer, and many *Salvias* deliver in the summer and fall. The desert mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*) is simply lovely in the blasting heat of the middle of the summer, then the *Salvia leucanthas* take over in the late fall with purple fireworks.

After the lawn transitioned to a “meadow,” gophers discovered our backyard. In order to protect our plants we dug up many and replanted them again in gopher cages. That year, and since, the gopher cages saved the garden. During COVID we added a bubbling rock with the help of Bill Williams and Spirit Space. This past year we removed the fruit trees—planted thirty years ago and in poor health—and replaced them with a desert willow and several smoke trees.



And now this spring we've had a literal vole (meadow mice) invasion. These creatures enjoy the cover provided by grasses and other meadow plants; however, they can be



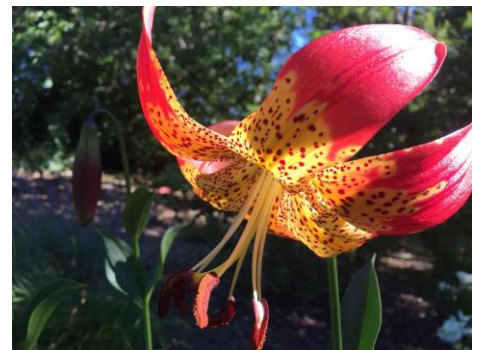
very destructive to gardens. We did not wish to harm other visiting wildlife—including hawks and foxes—and so, somewhat desperate to be ready for a garden tour(!), we’ve been using unbaited mousetraps to control the population.

Among my favorite plant genera is the *Arctostaphylos* – we have eighteen all together— including eight of the *Arctostaphylos* manzanita ‘St Helena’ variety.

I’ve greatly benefitted from the wisdom, guidance and plants provided by Pete Veilleux, owner of ‘East Bay Wilds,’ a native plant nursery in Oakland. Two *Arctostaphylos* are tiny, purchased as 2” starts this past fall from a specialty grower at a Pacific Horticulture Society meeting, which I attended as a delighted guest. The others have been planted over the past two to eight years. They are slow growers and can be tricky to establish, but I’m pleased overall with how they’re faring.

I have enjoyed experimenting with light and water for our dwarf hydrangeas; there are three of the same variety—*Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Ruby Slippers’—all planted at the same time several years ago. Two are in dappled shade, and receive more frequent irrigation, and the third receives much more sun and less irrigation. The third has smaller leaves, and is overall a smaller plant, but is healthy despite being somewhat starved of water during the summer months. I call it a success!

Ornamental oreganos are sporadically distributed – these are fun, fragrant, and drought tolerant additions. I am pleased with the introduction of some native bulbs, including *Triteleia laxa* ‘Queen Fabiola,’ and *Lilium pardalinum* (Leopard Lily). These won’t be in bloom at the time of the tour.



The continual evolution of our garden gives me so much joy, I hope that I’ve been able to impart some of this pleasure to you.

Several species of *Arctostaphylos* (Manzanitas) are listed here.

<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>densiflora</i>	Sentinel
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>hookeri</i>	Wayside
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>hookeri</i> ssp <i>franciscana</i>	Hooker's Manzanita
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>manzanita</i>	Saint Helena
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>manzanita</i> x <i>media</i>	Peter Ehrlich
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>pajaroensis</i>	<i>pajaroensis</i> Paradise
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>uva ursi</i>	Massachusetts
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	<i>uva ursi</i> x <i>nummalaria</i>	Emerald Carpet