

PLANTING NATIVE PLANTS

An important part of Acterra's habitat restoration is planting native plants. We and our wonderful volunteers weed out invasive species and spread mulch, hay, or seed so that weeds don't return. We also plant the native species that co-evolved with our local wildlife over tens of thousands of years. Birds, invertebrates, mammals, and reptiles use native plants for food, cover, and nesting areas.

All of the plants we install are native not just to California, but to this specific watershed. When you plant a native plant correctly, you are helping preserve genetic biodiversity, and creating healthy homes for local deer, rabbits, bees, lizards, coyotes, phoebes, tree frogs, earthworms, and more!



**ARASTRADERO
PRESERVE**
STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Step 1: Find a plant

Plants are usually "staged" in the planting area. This means that Acterra staff have placed them in the location or habitat where they will grow and thrive. Some plants may be hidden under coyote brush or other native cover. **Look** for a native plant in the black plastic container from our nursery. If the ground is particularly rocky or for some other reason you can't plant it right there, you can **move** the plant a little bit to be in a similar area where it's easier to install it.

Native bunchgrasses are often in flats; with lots of little plants together. **Plant** clumps of 3 to 5 plugs together spread out along the planting area.



Usually, plants will be flagged. The flag colors help us distinguish natives from invasives later on when weeds may have grown up or conditions may have changed.

Flags are color-coded to plant types.

Blue = grass, sedge, or rush

Yellow = herbaceous forb, annual or perennial fleshy plant, wildflowers

Orange = trees or woody shrubs

Red = warning or species unknown (you should not have any red-coded plants!)



Step 2: Clear the area

Many of our restoration areas have weeds, mulch, rocks, or other materials in the places where native plants should go. Using a shovel, McLeod, or small mattock, **scrape** and **clear** the ground of anything that will block the plant from expanding.



Hand-pulling Poison Hemlock
Using a McLeod to scrape the ground.

Dig out any deep-rooted weeds such as mustard, cheeseweed, or dock. **Pull** out any type of weeds with seeds or flowers, such as lolium, scarlet pimpernel, or bur-clover and **bag** them. Also **bag** poison hemlock, as it is toxic.



Step 3: Dig a hole

Using a small spade or trowel for grasses and small plants, and a larger shovel for trees and large plants, **dig** a hole slightly deeper than the plant itself.



Pick out any weeds and **bag** those that have flowers/seeds, **toss** to the side those that are just leaves.

Pile the dirt to one side as you will use it later.



Step 4 - Prepare the hole for planting.

Test the depth of the hole by placing the plant in its container inside - the rim should be level with the ground. Water will pool around plants that are installed too deeply and this can drown the plant or cause it to rot.



Checking that the



plant is level.

Loosening the soil.

Remove the plant again, and with your shovel, **mash** or **chop** up the ground a little bit. This loosens the soil so that the roots have an easier time burrowing down.

Step 5: Plant it!

Med/large plant: Firmly **grasp** the plant in both hands. Either upright or on its side, **squeeze** it and **roll** it back and forth for a couple of partial turns. This loosens the plant from the container



walls.



Over the hole, **turn** the plant upside down while **placing** one hand, fingers spread, over the top. The plant should slide out, but be caught by your hand.

Take the container off, **place** your other hand underneath the plant, and **tease** or **massage** out the roots **GENTLY** from the bottom of the soil. This encourages the roots to stop conforming to the shape of the pot and start growing down into the earth. **Turn** the plant right side up, and **place** it gently in its hole.

For *small plants and grass plugs*, either carefully **poke** out the plant from the bottom with a finger, or **skip** the step of rolling the container on its side, and **go** directly to turning the plant upside down into your hand. Then **continue** with the rest of the procedure.



Step 6: Pack in the dirt around the plant.

With your shovel or hands, **push** the dirt back into the hole around the plant.



Make sure the dirt is flat around the plant and up to the center, not going down to make a bowl. Gently, with both hands, **push** down on the dirt so that it settles in around the plant and **add** more dirt from surrounding areas if necessary.



Pushing down the dirt after filling it in.

Step 7: Add straw, transfer flag, and water.

If native grass straw is available, **take** a couple of handfuls and **spread** it around the plant, covering up the newly dug dirt. This helps protect the disturbed earth from growing more weeds, and also helps people see that a native plant has been installed there.

Make sure the colored flag is gently inserted at least several inches deep into the earth, as close to the central stem of the plant as possible. If it is not raining or the ground is not very moist, **get** a bucket of water and slowly **pour** it over the newly installed plant. If the dirt settles down very far with the water, **add** more dirt.



Step 8: Enjoy, begin again.

Take a step back and **admire** your newly planted native plant!

Congratulations and good job!

If you want, you can **ask** any Acterra staff person about the name of the plant and its particular habitat value or benefits to local wildlife. Once you are sure your plant is correctly installed, **return** to step one and **begin** again with a new plant!

