Plants to KEEP

Native Shrubs: Many of our native plants are critical for wildlife, and are fairly fire resistant. By limbing up lower branches, and keeping shrubs at least 5-10 feet away from your house, you can reduce the risk of them carrying fire.

Elderberry (Sambucus nigra)

Elderberry bushes can grow to 20 feet high, and do well with pruning in the winter. Removing dead branches can reduce their fire risk. The produce flowers that support native pollinators, and their berries are important for birds in the later part of the summer. We have several along Watson Road.

Photos from Calflora photos (calflora.org)

California Buckeye (Aesculus californica)

This beautiful small tree is the first to leaf out and flower in the spring, and loses its leaves in late summer. It is an important plant for birds and insects, as well as providing edible leaves for deer. The large fruits are food for squirrels. The lower limbs can be pruned to reduce fire risk.

©2004 George W. Hartwell  © 2014 Christopher Bronny
Plants to KEEP

Toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia)
This native member of the rose family has white flowers in the spring, and bright red berries in the fall and winter. Like the elderberry, this bush is important for birds and pollinators. Pruning up the lower limbs can reduce fire risk, although leaving the bush with lower limbs intact is better for wildlife.

Manzanitas (Arctostaphylos spp.)
These native shrubs are slow growing, but critical for wildlife. They burn hot in wildfires and should not be planted next to your home. The lower limbs can be pruned up to reduce risk. Be aware that they do not sprout from stumps or cut limbs, so careful pruning will work best for this beautiful shrub.
Plants to KEEP

Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*)
Found only in California, this amazingly hardy oak grows on harsh soils in hot, dry conditions. It is a critical food source for wildlife, including acorn woodpeckers, deer, and squirrels. Its leaves turn a green blue color as they mature. Limb up the lowest branches to reduce fire risks.

Oracle Oak (*Quercus x morha*)
We have a couple of Oracle oaks on Watson. This is an uncommon hybrid between a black oak and a live oak. This half deciduous tree that has traits from both parents, and leaves that look like a cross between both oaks.

All native oaks have some fire resistant qualities, as well as providing critical habitat for wildlife. When possible, avoid damaging them or removing them from the landscape. Avoid driving/parking under their canopy, and don’t water them in the summer.