Plants for Problem Places: Salt Spray

It’s a dream for many, living right on the beach. But that ocean view comes with a price. The salt from the spray can be very tough on plants. We have put together a list of plants that not only tolerate salt spray, but thrive in a coastal exposure.

Trees

• **Arbutus menziesii** or Pacific Madrone. Beautiful, moderate sized evergreen tree, very difficult to establish, but thrives in coastal areas. Messy leaf litter.

• **Arbutus unedo** or Strawberry Tree. Small evergreen tree with ornamental strawberry-like fruits in the fall. A close relative of our native Madrone.

• **Cryptomeria japonica** Japanese Cedar. Several cultivars available, small to medium sized conifers. Need moist summer soil to thrive.

• **Eucalyptus sp.** Eucalyptus. Several varieties of evergreen trees, small to large growing.

• **Ginkgo biloba** Ginkgo. Several cultivars available, from 10’ dwarfs to 40’ shade trees. Prefer deep soils. Spectacular fall color.

• **Nyssa sylvatica** Blackgum or Tupelo. Moderate sized shade tree, to 30’-40’, tolerant of wet soil. Brilliant fall color.


Shrubs

• **Acuba japonica** Acuba. Evergreen shrubs, ornamental berries, many cultivars available, best in shade.

• **Arctostaphylos sp.** Manzanita & Kinnikinnik. Moderate sized evergreen shrubs and groundcovers. Prefer well-drained soils, drought tolerant when established.

• **Ceanothus sp.** California wild lilac. Many cultivars available, most are evergreen with blue or white summer flowers. Drought tolerant when established.

• **Cistus** Rockroses. Evergreen shrubs, many cultivars available, growing from 2’-8’ depending on variety. Full sun, needs well-drained soils.

• **Elaeagnus sp.** Deciduous and evergreen shrubs, most are drought tolerant when established, many of the deciduous species have berries.

• **Erica sp.** Heather. Low, evergreen shrubs for sun and good soil. Both winter and summer blooming varieties are available.

• **Escallonia** Escallonia are evergreen shrubs, many cultivars available, with summer flowers of pale to deep pink. Can be sheared for hedging.

• **Euonymus japonica** Wintercreeper. Evergreen shrubs in many colors, shapes and sizes.

• **Gaultheria sp.** Salal and its relatives. Evergreen small shrubs or large groundcovers, prefer moist soil in summers and partial shade.

• **Hebe sp.** Shrub Veronicas. Evergreen shrubs and groundcovers, many with colorful foliage and flowers.
• **Hippophae rhamnoides** Seaberry. Vigorous deciduous shrubs with silvery leaves and edible, orange berries. Both male and female plants needed for fruit.

• **Hydrangea sp.** Bigleaf and other Hydrangeas. Deciduous shrubs, a variety of flower color and size available, all need summer moisture and prefer partial shade.

• **Juniperus sp.** Junipers. Available in many shapes and sizes, from low groundcovers to medium sized trees. All need well drained soils.

• **Lavandula sp.** Lavender. Shrubby herbs grown for their fragrant flowers. They need full sun and well drained soils.

• **Lonicera sp.** Shrub Honeysuckles. Deciduous and evergreen shrubs, many with fragrant flowers and/or ornamental berries.

• **Morella (Myrica) californica** Pacific Wax Myrtle. Evergreen shrub native to the West Coast. Can grow quite large if wind protected. Can be sheared for hedges.

• **Pittosporum sp.** Pittosporums or Tobira. Evergreen shrubs, most growing to 10’-12’ or more, easily hedged. Check hardiness for your site.

• **Rosa sp.** Species and Wild Roses. Many roses are quite tolerant of salt spray. Check for disease resistance if planting hybrids; the moist air can cause mildew and blackspot problems.

• **Rosmarinus officinalis** Rosemary. Shrubby evergreen herbs, needs well drained soils and full sun. Drought tolerant when established.

• **Viburnum sp.** Viburnums. Deciduous and evergreen shrubs in a wide range of shapes, sizes and flower color.

### Perennials & Bulbs

• **Achilla sp.** Yarrow. Low ferny foliage topped by flat flowerheads in summer. Many colors available.

• **Armeria sp.** Sea thrift. Grassy foliage topped in late spring by ball shaped flower heads, usually pink. Drought tolerant when established.

• **Camas sp.** Camas. Mid spring bloomers, most often blue, from bulbs. Tolerant of winter wet soils, often go dormant by early summer.

• **Erigeron sp.** Fleabanes. Many species of daisy like flowers native to the West Coast, and their hybrids.

• **Fritillaria sp.** Chocolate Lily. Native lily relatives with interesting checkered flowers in early spring. Summer dormant.

• **Iris tenax** Pacific Iris. Evergreen iris native to coastal California and Oregon.

• **Sedum sp.** Stonecrop. Deciduous and evergreen succulents, many colors and sizes, more often grown for leaf texture rather than flowers.

• **Lavatera sp.** Bush Mallow. Really a shrub, not a perennial, but best if cut to ground each spring. Prefers sandy, lean soils, full sun.

### Grasses

• **Calamagrostis sp.** Reed Feather Grass. Tall deciduous grasses, several named varieties.

• **Festuca sp.** Fescues. Short evergreen clumping grasses, several in blues and grays. Drought tolerant when established.

• **Helictotrichon sempervirens** Blue Oat Grass. Evergreen blue grass, moderated sized, to 2’, drought tolerant when established.

• **Pennisetum sp.** Fountain Grass. Deciduous clumping grasses, ornamental flowers.