

San Francisco Bay Area and Inland



Pacific Ocean

The Coastal Strip
 Right along the shore, steady winds and salt spray make windbreaks useful. Just a few miles inland, more heat and less wind greatly improve gardening conditions.

San Francisco's Summer Fog
 As warm summer air moves over California's cold coastal waters, it cools and condenses into low clouds and fog. At the same time, Central Valley air heats and rises, creating low pressure at ground level that pulls moist marine air in from the coast. The fog thickens as it moves over San Francisco, the coastal side of Bay Area mountains, and lowlands all the way to the San Joaquin Delta, where the air warms and the fog clears. This process creates San Francisco's cool summers—great for everbearing strawberries like 'Seascape', rhododendrons, camellias, New Zealand Christmas tree, cool-season vegetables and flowers, and stretching out the perennial bloom season, but disastrous for corn, melons, peppers, and other heat-loving plants.

San Pablo Bay
 Marine air flowing through the Golden Gate causes steady afternoon winds in summer.

San Francisco Bay
 As you move south from San Francisco, summer temperatures increase and fog decreases.



Climate Zones 7 8 9 14 15 16 17

ZONE 14

Northern California's inland areas with some ocean influence

CALIFORNIA: PAGES 43, 44, 46-47

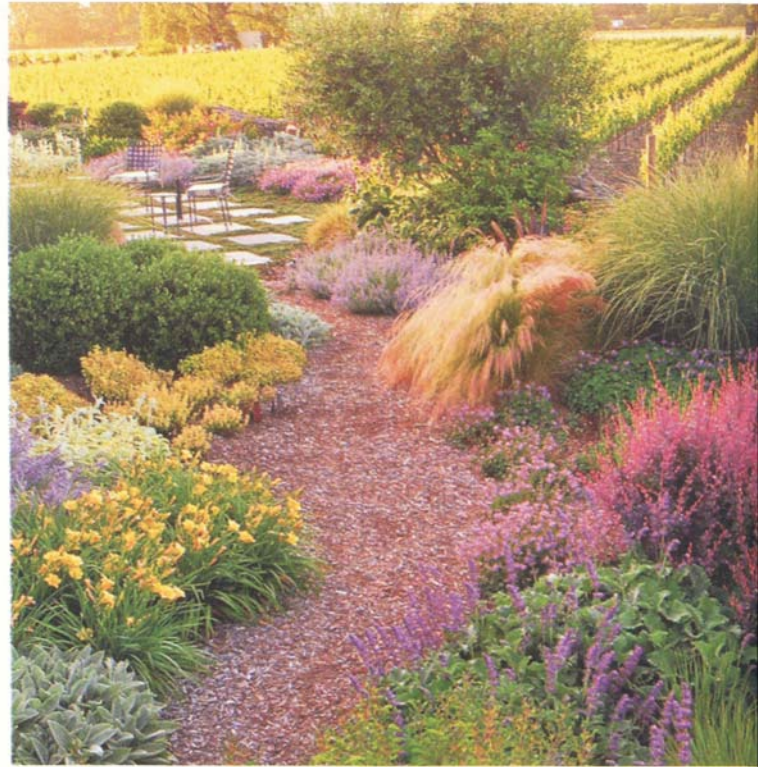
Growing Season



Marine air moderates parts of Zone 14 that otherwise would be colder in winter and hotter in summer. The opening in Northern California's Coast Ranges created by San Francisco and San Pablo bays allows marine air to spill much farther inland. The same thing happens, but the penetration is not as deep, in the Salinas Valley. Zone 14 includes the cold-winter valley floors, canyons, and land troughs in the Coast Ranges from Santa Barbara County to Humboldt County.

The milder-winter, marine-influenced areas in Zone 14 and the cold-winter inland valleys within Zone 14 differ in humidity. For example, lowland parts of Contra Costa County are more humid than Sacramento.

Fruits that need winter chill do well here, as do shrubs needing summer heat (oleander, gardenia). Over a 20-year period, this area had lows ranging from 26 to 16°F (-3 to -9°C). Weather records show all-time lows from 20 down to 11°F (-7 to -12°C).



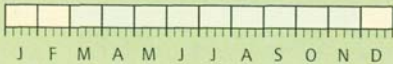
A mix of unthirsty perennials, grasses, and shrubs borders a naturalistic path in a Napa Valley garden.

ZONE 15

Chilly winters along the Coast Range

CALIFORNIA: PAGES 43, 44, 46-47

Growing Season



Zones 15 and 16 are areas of Central and Northern California that are influenced by marine air approximately 85 percent of the time and by inland air 15 percent of the time. Also worthy of note is that although Zone 16 is within the Northern California coastal climate area, its winters are milder because the areas in this zone are in thermal belts (explained on page 28). The cold-winter areas that make up Zone 15 lie in cold-air basins, on hilltops above the thermal belts, or far enough north that plant performance dictates a Zone 15 designation.

Many plants that are recommended for Zone 15 are not suggested for Zone 14 mainly because they must have a moister atmosphere, cooler summers, milder

winters, or all three conditions present at the same time. On the other hand, Zone 15 still receives enough winter chilling to favor some of the cold-winter specialties, such as English bluebells, which are not recommended for Zones 16 and 17.



In Palo Alto, graceful eucalyptus trees and tough poolside plantings are reflected in the water.

Most of this zone gets a nagging afternoon wind in summer. Trees and dense shrubs planted on the windward side of a garden can disperse it, and a neighborhood full of trees can successfully keep it above the rooftops. Lows over a 20-year period ranged from 28 to 21°F (-2 to -6°C), and record lows from 26 to 16°F (-3 to -9°C).

ZONE 16

Central and Northern California coast thermal belts

CALIFORNIA: PAGES 43, 44, 46-47

Growing Season



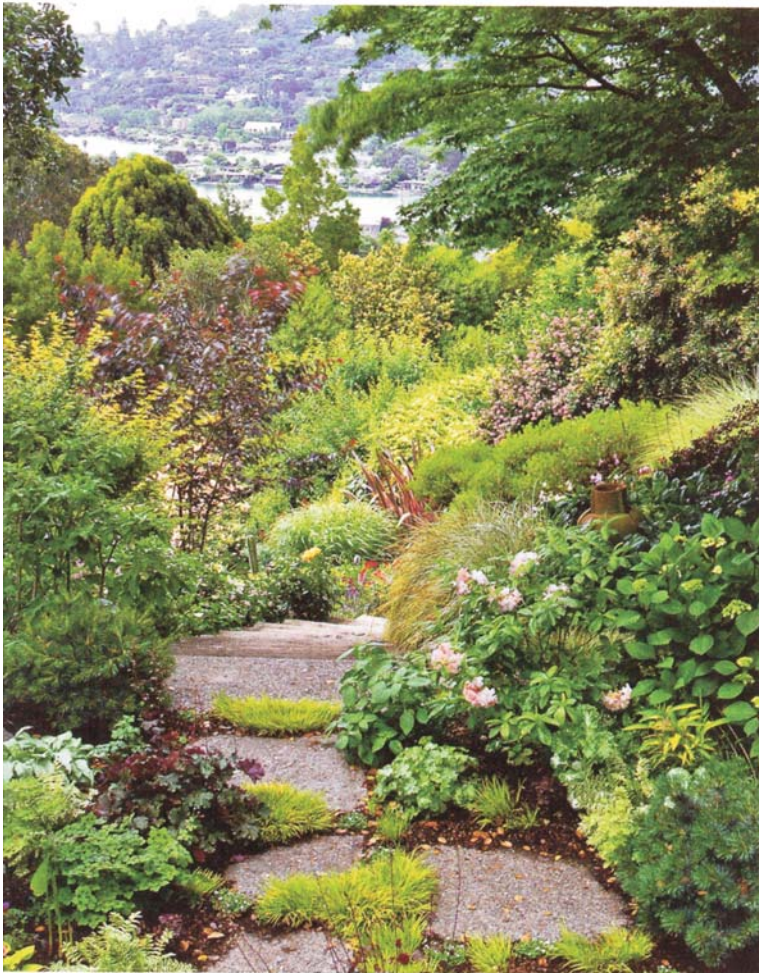
This benign climate exists in patches and strips along the Coast Ranges from western Santa Barbara County north to northern Marin County. It's one of Northern California's finest horticultural climates. It consists of thermal belts (slopes from which cold air drains) in the coastal climate area, which is dominated by ocean weather about 85 percent of the time and by inland weather about 15 percent.

Typical lows in Zone 16 over a 20-year period ranged from 32 to 19°F (0 to -7°C). The lowest recorded temperatures range from 25 to 18°F (-4 to -8°C). This zone gets more heat in summer than Zone 17, which is dominated by maritime air, and has warmer winters than Zone 15. That's a happy combination for gardening.

A summer afternoon wind is an integral part of this climate. Plant trees and shrubs on the windward side of your garden to help disperse it.



Chaparral-cloaked slopes surround this poolside patio in Monte Sereno.



The influence of the nearby ocean keeps Zone 17 mild and lush, as seen in this El Cerrito garden.

ZONE 17

Marine effects in Southern Oregon, Northern and Central California

CALIFORNIA: PAGE 43, 44, 46-47

Growing Season



The climate in this zone features mild, wet, almost frostless winters and cool summers with frequent fog or wind. On most days and in most places, the fog tends to come in high and fast, creating a cooling and humidifying blanket between the sun and the earth, reducing the intensity of the light and sunshine. Some heat-loving plants (citrus, hibiscus, gardenia) don't get enough heat to fruit or flower reliably.

In a 20-year period, the lowest winter temperatures in Zone 17 ranged from 36 to 23°F (2 to -5°C). The lowest temperatures on record range from 30 to 20°F (-1 to -7°C). Of further interest in this heat-starved climate are the highs of summer, normally in the 60 to 75°F (16 to 24°C) range. The average highest temperature in Zone 17 is only 97°F (36°C). In all the other adjacent climate zones, average highest temperatures are in the 104 to 116°F (40 to 47°C) range.

