

Multiplying Mulefat

Published CNPS San Diego Newsletter Nov 2005

Seasonally dry streams in San Diego are often lined with mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), an aromatic member of the Sunflower family that withstands floodwaters and other disturbance. As its Latin name implies, mulefat looks a lot like willow but can grow in drier areas. Like willow, its roots help stabilize stream banks. A mulefat-lined stream is a delightful place of sweet-smelling filtered sunlight. Propagating mulefat is an easy way to jump-start riparian restoration.

To add mulefat to a stream restoration project:

- Choose the right time of year – after the winter rains have moistened the soil.
- Use several mature shrubs close to the restoration site – this helps provide both plants adapted to site conditions and some genetic variation.
- Cut a stem of mulefat at least as long as your arm and as wide as your finger – the stem contains the sugars needed for growth. Thicker stems (> 1” diameter can be a bit shorter). A few cuttings from a single shrub will not harm it.
- Cut the bottom of the stem at an angle, so you remember which part to put in the ground.
- Strip off all of the leaves – this keeps the stem from drying out and dying. At this point, you may place the stems in a bucket of water and wait a week or two before planting.
- Take the stem to the planting site and push the cut end into the moist soil, as far as possible, but leaving at least two buds above the soil surface.
- Wait. New leaves with sprout in about two months. You should have robust plants growing in your canyon in no time!

Photo guides and more information about mulefat:

www.sdnhm.org/fieldguide/plants/bacc-sal.html

www.calflora.net/bloomingplants/mulefat.html (shows male and female flowers)

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