



# Groundcover Plants

that generally do not attract rats

**Roof rats** (*Rattus rattus*, also called black rats, fruit rats, ship rats) use densely-leaved groundcovers and climbing plants as hiding places and nesting sites. One of their favorite plants is Algerian Ivy (*Hedera canariensis*, also called Canary Islands ivy), a popular groundcover in Orange County. Using this plant practically guarantees a roof rat infestation.

You can discourage roof rats by removing the plants they like and installing plants they dislike. *Generally, they dislike plants that require less water, have no succulent foliage or fruits, are fewer-leaved, produce little leaf litter, are thinned out, or are too low to the ground to hide beneath.* The plants listed on this page are generally not favored by roof rats. These plants can be grown in Orange County, however, check with your local nursery to be sure that the plants you chose are appropriate for your yard's location, soil, slope, sunlight, and watering schedule.

**Bronze Ajuga** (*Ajuga reptans* 'purpurea' [sometimes sold as *Ajuga reptans* 'atropurpurea'], mint family). Native to Colombia. Bronze or purple leaves, blue flowers, very hardy. Good in sun or shade. Grows 2-4 inches tall. Space 6 to 12 inches apart.

**Giant Ajuga** (*Ajuga reptans*, mint family). Native to Colombia. The giants ajugas are similar to bronze ajuga (above) but are larger and have bright green leaves ('Giant Green', 'Jungle Green') or purple to bronze leaves ('Giant Bronze', 'Jungle Bronze'). Takes sun or shade. Grows to 6-10 inches tall. Space 12-18 inches apart.

**Chamomile** (*Anthemis nobilis*, sunflower family). Native to western Europe. Produces a pleasant fragrance when leaves are crushed. The leaves and stems form a turf-like mat that can withstand some light foot traffic. Dried flowers make a fine tea. Good around stepping stones and walkways. Grows to 10 inches tall, but is often mowed to keep it 3-6 inches tall. Space 6-12 inches apart.

**Creeping Speedwell** (*Veronica repens*, plantain family). Native to Europe. Dense green leaves with blue spring flowers. Prefers sun or light shade. Grows to 6 inches tall. Space 12 to 18 inches apart.

**Creeping Thyme** (*Thymus serpyllum*, mint family). Native to Europe. Small light green leaves with lavender, white, or pink flowers. Prefers sunny areas. Grows to 4 inches tall. Space 10 inches apart.

**Dichondra** (*Dichondra repens* [sometimes sold as *Dichondra carolinensis*], morning-glory family [not a grass!]). Native to New Zealand and Australia. Has low trailing stems and kidney-shaped leaves. Used as a lawn plant or as groundcover. Can stand light foot traffic. Grows to 3 inches tall. Sow seed or space plugs 6-12 inches apart.

**Germander** (*Teucrium chamaedrys*, mint family). Native to Europe. Bright green foliage. Spreads well. Lavender flowers appear in spring. Prefers sun and warm climate, spreads rapidly. Grows to 6-18 inches tall, but can be trimmed to remain shorter. The form 'Prostratum' grows to only 4-6 inches tall. Space 24 inches apart.

**Goldmoss Stonecrop** (*Sedum acre*, stoncrop family). A hardy, succulent evergreen which will do well in sun or shade. Grows 2-5 inches tall. Space 10-12 inches apart.

**Mondo Grass** (*Ophiopogon japonicus*, asparagus family [not a grass!]). Native to Japan and parts of mainland Asia. A hardy evergreen, but a slow-grower, it forms a rolling sea of dark green grass-like leaves. Flowers are lilac-colored, fruits are blue. Grows to 10 inches tall. Space 6-8 inches apart.

**Sand Strawberry** (*Fragaria chiloensis*, rose family). Native to the Pacific coasts of North and South America. A strawberry relative that has attractive dark green palmately-divided leaves and white flowers with yellow-orange stamens. A popular ornamental plant in Orange County. Very hardy and rapid-spreading. Grows to 8 inches tall. Space 12-14 inches apart.

**Snow-in-Summer** (*Cerastium tomentosum*, carnation family). Native to Europe. A low spreading perennial with grayish foliage and white flowers. Does well in hot, dry areas. Grows to 6-8 inches tall. Space 12-18 inches apart.

**Spring Cinquefoil** (*Potentilla neumanniana* 'Nana' [sometimes sold as *Potentilla verna*], rose family). Native to Europe. A strawberry relative that has attractive dark green palmately-divided leaves and bright yellow flowers with yellow-orange stamens. Spreads rapidly and is very hardy. Grows 2-6 inches tall. Space 12-14 inches apart.

**Trailing African Daisy** (*Dimorphotheca fruticosa* [sometimes sold as *Osteospermum fruticosum*], sunflower family). Native to southern Africa. Very hardy, good for erosion control. Can be invasive, so should not be planted near wild lands. Prune often to keep confined to the intended garden. Blooms through spring and summer. The central flower disk is blue to purple, the rays are white or pink to purple. Grows to 18 inches tall. Space 12-18 inches apart.

**Woolly Yarrow** (*Achillea tomentosa*, sunflower family). Native to Europe and Asia. Has olive-green foliage covered in soft white hairs, which make the plant look gray. Spreads rapidly, good for erosion control. Produces bright yellow flowers in the spring. Grows to 6-10 inches tall. Space 6-12 inches apart.

For suggestions that use less water and require far less care than these plants, see our bulletin, *California Native Plants for the Home Landscape*.

