

Q: I irrigate my garden with well water that has tested high in Boron. What kinds of plants can I grow?

A: You may have noticed the serious leaf-tip and edge browning that occurs when many plants have high concentrations of Boron available to them, although plants in the *Malus*, *Prunus* and *Pyrus* species may show the damage as twig die-back and gummy 'weeping' in the leaf axils and buds. If you were interested in growing soybeans or alfalfa, there is information on boron tolerant varieties, but unfortunately, not much has been published about ornamentals.

Your first step is to test to find out what the percentage of Boron in the water is. If the levels are as high as 6.0-8.0 mg/L, there are very few plants that you will be able to grow successfully. The three ornamental plants that will tolerate those levels are *Raphiolepis indica* or Indian Hawthorn; *Carrissa grandiflora* or Natal plum, and *Oxalis bowiei* or Oxalis.

If the percentage of available boron is within the 2.0-4.0mg/L category, the list expands to include *Callistemon citrinus* or Bottlebrush; *Eschscholtzia californica* or California poppy; *Buxus microphylla* or Japanese boxwood; *Nerium oleander* or Oleander; *Hibiscus rosa-senensis* or Chinese Hibiscus; *Lathyrus odoratus* or Sweet Pea and *Dianthus caryophyllus* or Carnation. You may want to check with your local chapter of the California Native plant Society to see if they have recommendations of native plants that can tolerate the level of Boron that your water contains.