

## Tips for Water-Efficient Landscaping

### 1. Seasonal reminders:

- a. Winter is a great time to establish new landscapes or plants and make major changes or repairs to irrigation systems. If winter rains are adequate, you may be able to turn off the automatic sprinkler system.
  - b. Spring is the time to check the battery in your irrigation controller. Without a battery backup, a power failure could cause your irrigation timer to default to a built-in schedule that will apply more water than your landscape needs.
  - c. In summer, continue to monitor water use and the irrigation system to make sure plants receive the moisture they need in an efficient manner.
  - d. Fall is the time to gradually decrease water to your garden. Check soil moisture and condition of plants, especially during the Santa Ana winds.
2. Hardscaping (patios, decks, play areas, walkways, barbecue pits) can be a beautiful water-saving alternative to turf. Busy homeowners can incorporate low-maintenance designs into their yards without sacrificing beauty.
  3. Irrigate only if needed to maintain some moisture in the soil – increase or shorten irrigation times as the amount of daylight increases and decreases.
  4. You can add splashes of color to your garden with only small quantities of water-loving plants.
  5. Pull weeds as soon as they appear.
  6. Choose low-maintenance plants that require little irrigation.
  7. Groundcovers are an excellent substitute for turf, and generally require less water and labor to maintain.

### Benefits and Savings:

1. Save money on your water bill. Using less water could mean significant potential cost savings.
2. Lower landscaping costs. Your site looks healthier and more attractive when plants get the amount of water they need. Healthy landscaping needs fewer plant replacements, less fertilizer, and fewer chemicals. Properly watered landscape is better able to resist drought or temporary water shortages.
3. Lower irrigation system maintenance. A balanced system needs less maintenance and requires a smaller repair budget.
4. Fewer hardscape repairs. Sidewalks, driveways, wall, fences and buildings last longer with fewer repairs when overspray and runoff are reduced.
5. Increased property value. Attractive landscaping is one of the best investments you can make and produces higher than average revenue and return on investment.

### Before beginning your low-water-use garden, take the following seven steps:

1. **Planning and Design.** Planning and design require the skilled coordination of all seven California-Friendly landscape principles. Organizing a garden for aesthetics, practicality, and most of all, water efficiency, can be complicated, and is easier with the assistance of a professional. Work with your landscape architect or designer to create a tropical, cottage, Mediterranean, or any style Ca-Friendly garden you desire.

2. **Practical Turf.** Turf is the most water-thirsty landscape component. Design lawn areas for practical purposes; play, maintenance access, and light traffic. For some homeowners, a front lawn is unnecessary and can be replaced with trees, shrubs, boulders and pathways, or mulched areas.
3. **Efficient Irrigation.** Many recent innovations in irrigation technology enable slow, steady, and specific water application. Look for words such as “low gallonage” or “low application rate.” Consider drip systems for shrubs and trees, and always locate turf on a separate valve.
4. **Soil Analysis.** The addition of organic matter to the soil increases water retention and penetration. Get to know your soil and amend it prior to planting.
5. **Mulching.** Two to three inches of mulch will keep soil cool and reduce evapotranspiration and weed growth. Mulch can be rocks, wood chips, bark, or shredded wood.
6. **Appropriate Plants.** There is a place for every plant in a California-Friendly garden—when located correctly. Group plants according to their water and sun needs. This is called hydro-zoning. There are many interesting and colorful low-water-use plants now available. Take advantage of these whenever possible!
7. **Ongoing Maintenance.** Seasonal irrigation adjustments and efficiency checks are maintenance practices that save water. Organic fertilizers and composting will improve soil texture and maintain vigorous plant growth.