



Landscape Care Guide for Homeowners



A Message from the General Manager

Dear SCV Water Homeowner,

I want to thank you for participating in our Lawn Replacement Program, and for the time and effort you put into creating your new water-wise landscape.

As you may know, your new landscape may save as much as half the residential water used outdoors on turf, while also reducing water wasted to runoff. Beyond water savings, the benefits of a sustainable landscape include:

- Saving water on your landscape and money on your water bill.
- Maximizing beauty while minimizing yard work.
- Creating an environmentally friendly haven for wildlife, birds, bees, butterflies and more.



Planting a water-wise landscape is just the beginning. Inside our Landscape Care Guide for Homeowners, you'll learn more about the wide variety of benefits that go along with your new water-wise landscape as well as best practices that will keep your yard looking beautiful all year long!

Thank you again for your investment in water savings and for promoting water-efficiency and sustainability as a way of life. The famed impressionist painter Claude Monet once said, "My garden is my most beautiful masterpiece."

I hope you will enjoy your own masterpiece.

Sincerely,


A handwritten signature of Matthew G. Stone in black ink.

Matthew G. Stone
General Manager | SCV Water



CONTENTS



01	A Message from the General Manager
03	Benefits of a Sustainable and Drought-Tolerant Landscape
06	General Maintenance
08	California Native Landscape Care & Maintenance
10	Seasonal Maintenance
10	 Spring
12	 Summer
14	 Fall
16	 Winter
18	Additional Information
20	 Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
22	Water Conservation Resources



Benefits of Owning a SUSTAINABLE AND DROUGHT-TOLERANT LANDSCAPE

Congratulations! You have converted your lawn into a new, drought-tolerant landscape that will bring about many benefits. There are a lot of factors to consider from this point on. The goal is to maintain your new landscape so that it can grow happy and healthy. This guide will give you just enough information to better understand your new landscape and how to properly sustain it.

Overall Benefits

- 🌿 Potential for conserving half of your current outdoor water usage for the area converted
- 🌿 Improves soil health
- 🌿 Reduces water runoff from clay soils when converting to high-efficiency irrigation
- 🌿 Encourages biodiverse habitats and attracts beneficial wildlife
- 🌿 Reduces maintenance and green waste
 - 💧 Captures carbon and produces oxygen
- 🌿 Prevents water and soil pollution
- 🌿 Helps to secure safe, clean water for future generations
- 🌿 Adds beauty
 - 💧 Drought-tolerant plants are beautiful for their many colors, forms, textures, and aromas
 - 💧 With mindful plant selection, your garden can have flowers year-round



Long-term Environmental Benefits

- 🌿 Less air and water pollution and a reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels
 - 💧 No gas-powered lawn mowers means reduced carbon footprints
- 🌿 Restoring native plants can create wildlife habitats that are otherwise lost by urban sprawl
 - 💧 Encourages a healthy ecosystem
- 🌿 Reduces landfill waste
- 🌿 Helps control stormwater runoff

Economical Plus Side

- 🌿 A sustainable landscape can save you money
 - 💧 You'll use less water and no fertilizers or pesticides
- 🌿 More time on your hands as long as you avoid over-planting your new garden

A sustainable landscape can give you beauty and color that is welcoming to both you and local wildlife, while saving time and money in the long run.



General Maintenance



Walk the property and look for signs of irrigation problems such as leaks or broken fixtures

This alerts you to potential issues before working in the garden



If you have remaining turf, mow the lawn to the proper height to better shade the soil

The longer the turf, the more shade provided to the soil and less water needed



Deadhead spent flowers

Keeps plants looking tidy and extends flowering





Prune dead branches from trees and shrubs

Keeps dead material – a potential fire hazard – out of the landscape



Rake mulch to cover bare soil

Helps conserve moisture in the soil

Maintain 3" to 4" of organic mulch

Use "Gromulch" near the house in high fire-prone areas



Clean garden debris near the house

Reduces the chance of becoming a fire hazard



Pest control

If necessary, use insecticidal soap, neem oil, or other environmentally-friendly measures. A healthy garden should be able to withstand some pests



California Native Landscape Care and Maintenance

Watering:

- 🦋 Native plants require much less water than ornamental garden plants (This one fact might make it difficult to establish California native plants because we tend to overwater)
- 🦋 During the second year, the landscape will require half the water as the first year
- 🦋 During the third year, water half of the amount watered during the second year or seasonal rain (You did it! Now try turning off your irrigation system.)
- 🦋 Irrigating during dry seasons will keep plants green and healthy (know your plants)
 - 🦋 Some native plants DO NOT want water during the summer months
 - 🦋 The intervals between irrigation events will vary depending on your climate and soil type
 - 🦋 Most of Santa Clarita Valley has clay soil
 - 🦋 The summers are hot, arid, and clear and the winters are cold, wet, and partly cloudy
 - 🦋 Temperatures vary from 44°F to 95°F and are rarely below 37°F or above 103°F

Cleveland Sage is a fast growing, small shrub that requires little to no water during the summer. Hummingbirds will swarm this very aromatic plant.



- ✎ Do not allow the ground to remain soggy for long periods of time in the summer
 - ✎ This encourages disease
- ✎ Avoid overhead irrigation during the hot part of the day during the warm season (irrigate early mornings)
- ✎ Continuously maintain a 3" to 4" layer of mulch (conserves moisture in the soil)
 - ✎ As the plants mature, the trees and shrubs will start providing their own mulch of fallen leaves, flower parts, and other plant "litter"
 - ✎ This is good for the plant and provides habitat for beneficial insects, birds, and other species
- ✎ Native plants are remarkably resilient against pests and disease in the landscape
 - ✎ Most potential problems can be averted by good watering practices

There are more than 40 species of Manzanitas native to California that range in size from 25-foot trees to low-growing forms rising only a few inches off the ground.



Manzanita



California Fuchsia

SPRING (March, April, May)

Common name:
California Poppy

Botanical name:
Eschscholzia californica

The California poppy is an annual and the California State flower. It is easy to grow, drought tolerant, and reseeds readily. This plant can grow from 8 to 12 inches tall and wide, and its flowers bloom from March to May. It looks best as a mass planted groundcover during Spring. If you plant California poppy seeds in the Fall or early Spring, they will germinate when the soil warms, producing spring blooms.



Seasonal Maintenance

SPRING (March, April, May)

IRRIGATION

- Adjust Irrigation schedules monthly to reflect longer, warmer days
 - Avoid over-irrigating and waterlogging soil
- Check your irrigation system for leaks and broken emitters; perform maintenance as needed
- While uncommon in spring, if frost is predicted, water your plants, keeping the root zone moist but not soggy

SOILS

- Apply 2" - 3" of mulch where an existing layer is thin, or soil is bare
 - Keep mulch back 12" from tree trunks and 6" from perennials to discourage root rot
- Apply 1" of compost around landscape plants and work it in lightly
- Avoid walking on wet soil
 - Do not work on or dig soil if it is wet
- Aerate and fertilize lawn areas (early May)

PLANTS

- Fertilize ornamental plants after determining the nutritional needs of the landscape
- Start mowing warm season turf
- Inspect plants for root rot (result of excessive water and poor drainage)
- Cover frost-tender plant species if needed (succulents)
- Prune dead, diseased, and distorted twigs, stems, and branches from winter-flowering shrubs
- Clean up diseased material from the area below and around your plants
 - Do not compost diseased material

PESTS / WEEDS

- Manage weeds using non-chemical methods such as cutting off weeds just below the soil surface with a sharp hoe (cultivation), hand weeding, or mowing or trimming with a weed trimmer
- Eliminate standing water to deter mosquitos
 - Gutters, drainpipes, flowerpots, etc.
- Clean winter debris from ponds, fountains, and bird baths
- Monitor for pests
 - April - May: ants, aphids, borers, mosquitoes, slugs, snails, yellowjackets, scale
 - May: spider mites
 - Use insecticidal soap or neem oil to control populations of soft bodied pests
 - To control snails and slugs, encourage birds, snakes, lizards, toads, frogs, ground beetles to visit your garden before releasing synthetic baits into the garden
 - Go to **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** section for tips to control garden pests

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

- California native plants require very little pruning during the first year of the establishment period
 - Fast growing plants like sages might benefit from a little tip pruning after flowering to provide good shape

- Things to watch out for during the first few months:
 - Dry plants or over-watered plants (water management)
 - Damage from gophers, rabbits, ground squirrels and other plant predators
 - Insect damage from soft bodied pests
 - Plant diseases
 - Usually caused by waterlogged soils and over-watering

SUMMER (June, July, August)



Common name:
Island Pink Yarrow

Botanical name:
**Achillea millefolium
'Island Pink'**

This drought-tolerant, native, evergreen Yarrow can be used as a groundcover or as a mass planting. Its flower color is highly variable and it has dark green foliage with clusters of bright pink flowers on 1 - 1/2' tall stems. It tolerates almost any soil type and it is best to plant it in part-sun to shade inland. This nectar plant blooms from Spring through Fall and promotes butterflies and other pollinators.



Seasonal Maintenance

SUMMER (June, July, August)

IRRIGATION

- Adjust irrigation schedules to reflect the long, hot days of summer
 - Use the "Cycle & Soak" method to eliminate water runoff
- Established perennials, shrubs and trees need infrequent but deep watering
- To reduce evaporation, water when temperatures are cooler and there is little wind
 - Usually in the early morning before the sun rises
 - Water deeply to moisten the root zone, but no deeper

SOILS

- Apply 2" - 3" of mulch where existing layer is thin, or soil is bare
 - Protects against heat and water stress in growing root zones
- Apply 1" of compost around landscape plants and work it in lightly into the top 2"

PLANTS

- Clean up fallen fruit and nuts to discourage fungal growth and pests from around fruit trees
 - Compost fallen leaves
- Fertilize plants if needed
- Raise the cutting height of your lawnmower 1" to 1.5" to help grass survive drought and heat (encourages deep roots and reduces water demand)
 - Leave grass clippings on the ground for nutrients and as a mulch layer

PESTS / WEEDS

- Continue managing weeds using nonchemical methods such as cultivation
- To reduce fire hazard, keep wild grasses and weeds mowed or trimmed with a string trimmer
 - Leave a 30-ft swath (where possible) around your property
 - Trim dead growth from shrubs and trees and prune any branches that overhang the eaves
 - Remove leaves and debris from the roof
- Pests to watch out for:
 - June - Aug: ants, aphids, borers, carpenter worm, mosquitoes, spider mites, yellowjackets
 - June: scale insects
 - Go to **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** section for tips to control garden pests

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

- Most California native plants prefer dry conditions during the summer months, but some can take some water to keep their color green
- This time of the year is a resting period for many native plants, where very little care is needed

FALL (September, October, November)

Common name:
California Fuchsia

Botanical name:
Epilobium canum

The California fuchsia is a fast growing, semi deciduous groundcover plant that grows up to 1 1/2 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide. It does best and will flower most profusely in full sun and in the Santa Clarita Valley, it will require some summer irrigation to keep it flowering. It is best to prune the plant to the ground after the blooms have stopped to prevent it from getting untidy. The California fuchsia could be considered fire-resistant.



Seasonal Maintenance

FALL (September, October, November)

IRRIGATION

- Reduce the irrigation time on the irrigation controller monthly by 25% to reflect the shorter, cooler days
- Consider turning off irrigation controllers in late Fall

SOILS

- Avoid working in wet soil or using heavy equipment on wet soil to avoid compaction

PLANTS

- Prune evergreen, summer-flowering shrubs (Sept)
- Prune deciduous trees and shrubs that need pruning such as apple, pear, and stone fruits (Oct)
 - Remove dead, diseased, broken branches
 - Improve tree structure by opening canopy to bring sun and air circulation to tree interior
 - Note: apricot and cherry trees are the exception; prune in July/Aug only
- **Do not** prune evergreen trees during Fall
- Clean up leaf debris for composting or recycle pick-up
 - Leaf debris can be used as mulch on unprotected soil if plants are not susceptible to fungi
- Clean up diseased material from the area below and around your plants
 - Compost fallen leaves
- Prepare for rainfall
 - Deep water trees that are adapted to summer rainfall
 - Prevent water from pooling around trunks and foundations
- Watch for frost warnings (mid-Nov)
- Protect sensitive plants from cold injury if frost is predicted
 - If frost is predicted, protect citrus, sub-tropical and tender plants
 - Keep the root zone moist but not soggy

PESTS / WEEDS

- Manage rainy season weeds before they flower, using non-chemical methods
- Remove dead, diseased, and borer-infested wood
- Monitor for pests for Fall
 - Sept: aphids, borers, and spider mites
 - Sept - Oct: yellowjackets
 - Sept - Nov: ants
 - Go to **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** for tips on how to control garden pests

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

- Fall is the best time to plant California native plants
- Plant California natives, bare root deciduous trees, shrubs, and vines

- Water every 7 to 10 days to encourage a healthy root system and deep rooting
- Use "Cycle & Soak" method for deep percolation into the soil
 - Avoid water runoff
- Apply 3" to 4" of clean, weed-free organic mulch to the area around the plants
 - Will help cool the soil, retain precious soil moisture, keep weeds to a minimum
 - Avoid "green" (fresh) sawdust and hot manure products
- Most native plants are cool season growers
- For very poor soil, use an all-purpose, organic fertilizer for cool season feedings (Oct - May)
 - One light application mid-summer will help get the plants ready for fall growth
 - The rates recommended on the bag can be reduced to half strength for native plants
 - Remember, weeds also benefit from the plant foods you apply!
 - Use fertilizer within the root zone of each plant rather than spreading it over bare soil

WINTER (December, January, February)



Common name:
**Toyon or
Christmas Berry**

Botanical name:
**Heteromeles
arbutifolia**

The Toyon is a fast growing, evergreen shrub that will grow up to 25 feet over time. It is very drought tolerant with deep roots and excellent for erosion control on hillsides and slopes. This plant can be used as a screen or a specimen in the landscape. Toyon grows best in full sun and well-draining soil but will tolerate clay soil and shade. It's great for bird and butterfly gardens.



Seasonal Maintenance

WINTER (December, January, February)

IRRIGATION

- Reduce irrigation run times or turn irrigation system completely off if rainfall is adequate

PLANTS

- Watch for frost warnings and protect sensitive plants
 - Light Frost 32° - 29°
 - Medium Frost 28° - 25°
 - Heavy Frost 24° and below for 4+ hours
 - Use landscape fabric or a light bedsheet to spread over sensitive plants
 - Be sure to anchor the fabric to the ground so wind doesn't blow it off and to block cold air from slipping under
- Protect citrus, sub-tropical and tender plants
 - Pull the mulch 1 to 2 feet away from the trunk of the trees and water wells
 - Keep the root zone moist but not soggy
- Fertilize citrus trees in Jan/Feb, just prior to bloom
- If not done in Nov, prune deciduous fruit and nut trees such as apple, pear, and stone fruits
 - Apricot and cherry trees are the exception; prune these in July/Aug only
- Prune winter flowering shrubs just after bloom
 - Woody shrubs and evergreen trees; hardy deciduous trees; dormant shade trees
 - Roses should be pruned by mid-Feb
- Wait to prune spring flowering trees and shrubs until after they bloom

SOILS

- Do a general clean-up of the landscape on a dry day; avoid walking on wet soils
- Correct any low or poorly draining areas in the landscape
 - Add soil amendments for better draining
 - Adjust irrigation system to use less water in low area
 - Nothing will grow in an anaerobic environment (waterlogged)
- Add mulch to garden beds and to areas where weeds have been removed
- Prevent soil compaction and poor aeration of soil by avoiding working or walking on wet soil

PESTS / WEEDS










- Inspect lawn and manage rainy season weeds before they flower
 - Destroy all roots and underground parts
- General pests to watch out for:
 - Feb: ants, earwigs, snails, slugs and yellowjackets
 - Go to **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** section for tips on how to control garden pests

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

- Be sure that California native plant root balls remain moist since this is the active growing season
- Do Not overwater the plants in clay soils if we are receiving seasonal rain

Additional Maintenance Considerations

In the Santa Clarita Valley, it is acceptable to use either drip irrigation or high-efficiency overhead sprinkler irrigation since it is dry with low humidity, unlike coastal conditions where overhead irrigation may cause leaf spot and other fungal pathogens. Be careful while using overhead irrigation on slopes because excessive runtimes can cause soil erosion. In most cases, drip irrigation is a better way to irrigate hills and slopes to reduce erosion and runoff.

-  After irrigating your lawn, use a soil probe to see how far the grass roots and water go down below the soil
-  Remember, any water that moves below the root zone of the turf is wasted water
-  Consider using a ***Smart Controller**, which will adjust irrigation runtimes based on the weather, to easily help conserve water
-  Get the most from your irrigation system by calibrating the controller to irrigate based on the weather, plant, soil, and sprinkler types
-  Use the following functions on the controller to fine tune your irrigation schedule
 -  Use the function **"Cycle & Soak"** on the irrigation controller to prevent water runoff and allow water enough time to soak into your clay soil
 -  Use the **"Seasonal Adjust"** function on the irrigation controller to easily change the run-times as the seasons change
-  Add a rain sensor to your irrigation controller to pause your irrigation when it rains
 -  In the SCV, NO watering is allowed for 48 hours after significant rainfall greater or equal to a quarter inch



***SCV Water's Residential Conservation Rebate Programs**



- 🦋 Replace conventional pop-up sprinkler nozzles with ***High-efficiency Nozzles** to help reduce runoff and in many cases, improve distribution uniformity
- 🦋 Add ***Pressure Regulating Sprinkler Bodies with Check Valves** to the lower sprinklers on hills and slopes to stop low-head drainage and hold water inside the PVC pipelines
- 🦋 Add ***Pressure Regulators** to your irrigation system for better performance and to stop sprinklers from misting
- 🦋 Convert overhead sprinklers to ***Drip Irrigation** and cover with mulch
 - 🦋 Using drip irrigation under mulch will eliminate some drought-related restrictions
- 🦋 Install a ***Soil Moisture Sensor** to monitor the moisture level in the root zone of the soil instead of guessing when the best time is to water your garden
- 🦋 Take advantage of our short rainy season and incorporate ***Rain Barrels** into your garden to capture rain from your rain gutter to water potted plants or to supplement the irrigation system
- 🦋 Install a ***Pool Cover** and you will save, on average, an inch of evaporation from your pool and spa
 - 🦋 As much as 3 inches of water is lost during the hottest summer days
 - 🦋 Lowers the cost to heat a pool and spa
- 🦋 Take advantage of the **“Free Residential Water Efficiency Kits”** to save even more water indoors and out! (Visit SCV Water’s Customer Care office)
- 🦋 If you have native plants, install a ***Bee Hotel** to provide a home for their native pollinators!
- 🦋 Install ***Owl Box Houses** to naturally control rodents without the use of harmful rodenticides



Owl Box House



Bee Hotel



Rain Barrel

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is not a single pest control method, but rather, a series of pest management evaluations, decisions, and controls. In practicing IPM, gardeners who are aware of the potential for pest infestation follow a four-tiered approach.

APPROACH

- Setting Action Thresholds
- Monitoring and Identifying Pests
- Prevention
- Control



IDENTIFYING

First, you must be able to properly identify the damage and responsible "pest"

- Monitor or sample environment for pest population
- Pest present/absent?
- Distribution – is it all over or only in certain spots?
- Increasing or decreasing in numbers?



ACTION THRESHOLD

Setting the Action Threshold is the first decision that you will need to make for IPM. You must first decide when it's time for action!

- Is it at the first sign of finding pests in your garden?
- Can your garden handle a slight infestation of pests because the natural wildlife is helping to control the garden pests?
- The threshold you choose needs to be before the use of any insecticidal soap or neem oil solution
- Using any natural or synthetic pesticides in the garden must be a last resort!

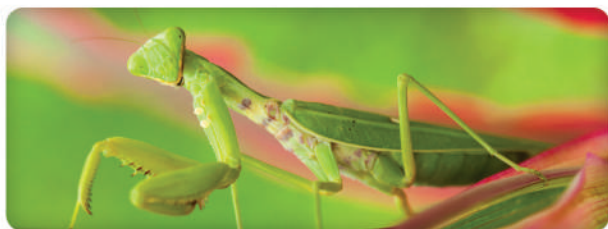
CHOOSE APPROPRIATE COMBINATION OF MANAGEMENT TACTICS (MONITORING AND PREVENTING)

- Remove plants that are creating pest infestations
 - Hibiscus, Bird of Paradise, avocado and some citrus trees attract whiteflies to the garden
- Good air circulation through the center of the plant reduces places where pests can hide and multiply
- Planting plants in the right place
 - If a plant is stressing, it is more susceptible to pest infestations
 - Strong plants resist diseases, outgrow weeds, and are less likely to succumb to insects



CHOOSE APPROPRIATE COMBINATION OF MANAGEMENT TACTICS (MONITORING AND PREVENTING)

- Only use overhead irrigation in the morning, allowing the plants to completely dry out before nightfall
- Remove weeds that could be attracting pests
- Use pest-resistant plant varieties developed by plant breeders
- Release natural predators into the landscape
 - Lady beetles, praying mantis, lacewings, garden assassin bugs



INSECTICIDAL SOAP RECIPE*

- 2.5 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 2.5 tablespoons of pure liquid soap
- 1 gallon of water (distilled recommended)



EVALUATE RESULTS (CONTROL)

- Did your actions have the desired outcome?
- Were you able to control or prevent the pest to your satisfaction?
- Was the method used something that can be done on a regular basis?
- How about the unintended side effects?
- Will you continue to use this method, or will you try another method?



NEEM OIL RECIPE*

- 1 teaspoon of neem oil
- 1 quart of warm water
- 1/3 teaspoon of liquid soap

*Use all the soap or neem oil solution within a week. The solution loses effectiveness over time.



Water Conservation Resources

Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency: <https://yourscvwater.com/conservation-tips/>
American Water Works Association: <https://www.awwa.org/>
California Department of Water Resources: <https://water.ca.gov/>
California Water Boards: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/>
Southern California Water Coalition: <https://socalwater.org/>
Metropolitan Water District – CA Friendly® Maintenance Guide: <https://bit.ly/3A70JXG>
Western Municipal Water District – SoCal Yard Transformation: <https://bit.ly/3A7oZJ9>

California Native and Drought Tolerant Plants

Theodore Payne Foundation: <https://theodorepayne.org/>
Tree of Life Nursery: <https://californianativeplants.com/>
California Botanical Garden (Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden): <https://www.calbg.org/>
California Native Plant Society: <https://www.cnps.org/>
CalScape plant search tool: <https://calscape.org/>
Naturehood webinars: <https://www.cnps.org/gardening/webinars>
Bloom! California: <https://bloomcalifornia.org/>

Local Nurseries

Green Thumb Nursery: <https://www.greenthumb.com/santa-clarita-green-thumb-nursery/>
Green Landscape Nursery: <https://greennurseriescv.com/>
ISI Landscapes, Inc. : <https://isilandscapes.com/>
Artemisia Nursery: <https://www.artemisiannursery.com/>
Matilija Nursery: (805) 523-8604



When the hills are alive...



It's time to turn off your sprinklers!

- When the rainy season arrives in the Santa Clarita Valley, remember that Mother Nature is taking over the watering duties.
- Adjust your sprinklers by either turning off your timer or reducing the number of days/minutes your sprinklers are on.
- Cooler weather and shorter days indicate that your lawn and plants do not need much water. After significant rainfall, the soil will remain moist for days/weeks.
- Take a look at the hills. If they are alive and green, Mother Nature has turned on her sprinklers, which means we can turn off ours and expect similar results.
- Warm-season grasses such as Bermuda and St. Augustine go dormant during winter months and will turn yellow and/or brown until Spring when the soil warms up.
- No amount of water will turn a warm-season lawn green during the winter months, so be careful not to overwater.





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 SCV Water

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