



# OFFICIAL WATER CONSERVATION GUIDE

Santa Cruz County

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**THE WATER CONSERVATION COALITION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**  
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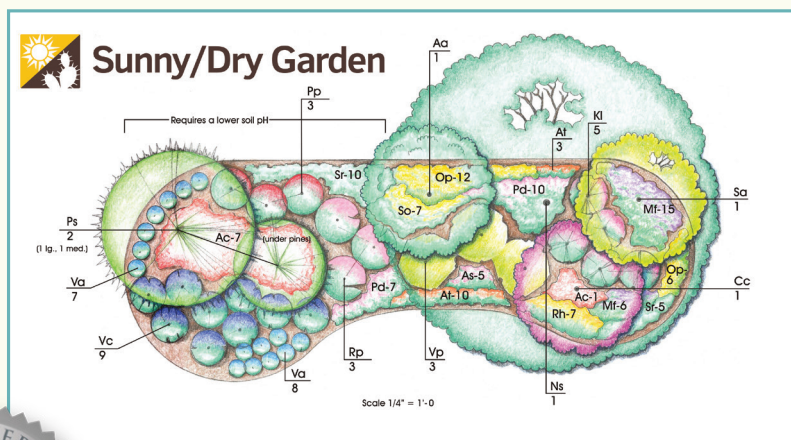


# Ready to Reimagine your Lawn?



**IMPORTANT!**  
A pre-site inspection is required before any lawn is removed. Contact the Water Conservation Office to schedule 831-420-5230.

Your project may be eligible for up to a \$1,000 rebate for pre-approved lawn area that is converted to a low-water use, climate appropriate landscape.



Please see, [www.cityofsantacruz.com/rebates](http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/rebates) for additional rebate program details.

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# OVERVIEW

## of WATER IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY



### Welcome to the Water Conservation Guidebook for Santa Cruz County.

This book was created by the Water Conservation Coalition, a partnership between all of the local Water Districts in Santa Cruz County, the County Water Resources Division, and Ecology Action. Santa Cruz County surface water and groundwater provide drinking water for residents and visitors, critical habitat to numerous threatened and

endangered species, and opportunities for recreational and commercial activities. Like many other areas of California, the County faces water resource challenges including impaired water quality, inadequate water supply, overdrafted groundwater basins, depleted streams, and degraded riparian habitat.

The overwhelming majority of Santa Cruz's water supply is locally derived – a unique situation in a state supported by large federal and state water projects. Domestic supply within the Region is provided by eight public agencies, mutual water companies, and individual and shared wells and springs. The City of Santa Cruz, Live Oak, and parts of the North Coast rely on surface water from streams and reservoirs. The San Lorenzo Valley uses both surface and groundwater. From Capitola/Soquel South to Watsonville as well as Scotts Valley, water supply is almost entirely reliant on groundwater resources. Approximately 55% of the human water use in the County is for residential uses, about 45% goes to agriculture which is concentrated in the South.

Even before the current drought began, surface water supply was barely sufficient to meet demand and many of our groundwater basins were in overdraft and at risk of saltwater intrusion. Ongoing water supply problems are aggravated by drought, and will not be resolved by a single storm or wet year. Changes in weather patterns threaten water resources into the future. Balancing water supply with environmental needs and other uses is a challenge that requires a collaborative effort. Since our domestic supply is local, we have both the opportunity and responsibility to find solutions to these challenges ourselves. Local water agencies are working toward long term solutions to ensure our water security, but using less water is one critical piece of the water supply puzzle.



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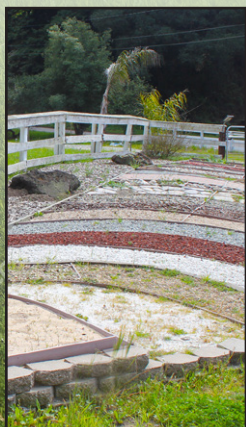


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# ARE MY FIXTURES EFFICIENT?

Sometimes it is hard to determine if existing fixtures in your home are water wasters, but the good news is, you can usually figure it out with a little detective work!

## Toilets

- Many newer toilets have a stamp behind the toilet seat and/or stamped inside the toilet tank wall which shows the flush rate in gallons per flush (GPF).
- If the inside of your toilet tank does not show your GPF, it may still show a manufacture date.
- If your toilet was manufactured before 1992 it may be a 3.5 or 5 GPF! If it was manufactured between 1992 and 2013, it is probably a 1.6 GPF. Toilets sold since 2014 should be 1.28 gpf or less.
- Keep in mind, toilets tend to lose efficiency as they age! An older 1.6 GPF toilet may in fact be using a lot more per flush.



## Showerheads

- Showerheads should have the flow rate stamped on the device. You may need a magnifying glass, or to clean the shower head to see the small text. Flow rate is usually shown in gallons per minute (GPM).
- If you cannot easily see the flow rate, try a flow bag. These are plastic bags with markings that enable you to easily gauge the flow rate. Simply hold the bag around a shower head or faucet, run the fixture for the predetermined number of seconds (a stopwatch or timer is needed for this part), then note the water level in the bag - done!
- If you don't have a flow bag, try a bucket. If it takes 30 seconds to fill up a one-gallon bucket, you have a 2 GPM showerhead.
- All showerheads sold in California should be 2.0 GPM or less. Fixtures 1.5 - 2.0 GPM easily rinse shampoo out of hair.



## Clothes Washers

- Before new standards were adopted in 2010, traditional top loading clothes washers used around 30 to 45 gallons per load. Newer top loaders have improved to around 30 gallons per load but cannot compete with the water saving ability of new front-loading machines which typically use under 15 gallons per load.
- If you aren't sure how old the machine is, try locating the serial number (not the same as the model number). The date of manufacture is encoded in the serial number. Some manufacturers use two letters to denote the month and then the year. For example, DE89 embedded in the serial number is December 1989.
- If you still cannot determine the age write down the entire serial number and search online. Some websites are able to provide the date of manufacture simply by entering the serial number and a few other bits of information.

Still need help? Discover an inefficient fixture and want to see if you could get a rebate to replace it? Contact your local water agency and discover what programs are available in your area! <https://watersavingtips.org/learn/rebates>



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# SAVE YOUR RAIN FOR A SUMMER DAY

Winter rainfall is wonderful for the garden, and wouldn't it be nice to capture some of it for use in the summer? Installing a rainwater catchment system can save both water and money. One family in Aptos installed enough rain catchment tanks to store 6,500 gallons of water. "We worked with local vendors and water district employees who helped make the project fairly straightforward," said the owners. "And, on top of the free water we will use for irrigation, we received rebates from Soquel Creek Water District that are worth nearly a year's supply of potable water!"



There are five components to a rainwater harvesting/catchment system, the;

- 1) Collection Surface, 2) Conveyance, 3) Container, 4) Outflow and 5) Overflow.

1. **Collection Surface:** First you'll need to identify the surface that you'll "catch" the water on usually a rooftop. Then identify the way to get the water to the container and then from the container, out to the landscape. See if you can gravity feed the water in the system the entire way, otherwise you'll need a pump.
2. **Conveyance:** Now you'll need to find a way to get the water from the collection surface to the container- usually a gutter and downspout, but you can use different types of plastic pipes as well. To keep your tanks clean from summer dirt and debris, install a pre-filter or first-flush device before the water enters the containers.
3. **Container:** Containers come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors and materials and there are many businesses in our county that sell them. Your containers should be secured to the ground on a flat area and must have a backflow prevention device if they are connected to your potable water supply. Containers must have mesh mosquito guards at both inflow and outflow points and if the container is 5,000 gallons or more, you'll need to pour a concrete pad and get a permit.
4. **Outflow:** The outflow to the landscape can be achieved by a watering can, bucket or hose. If the container is high enough, you can gravity feed with a hose (each foot you raise the tank will increase pressure about a half pound per square inch (psi). Make sure it's secure!
5. **Overflow:** Last but not least, you'll want to estimate the amount of water that will be shed from your collection surface. The formula is: Square feet of roof in square feet x 0.625 gallons of water = gallons of water per inch of rain. Since you'll store much less water than is "caught" you'll need a place for the overflow. This is the time to get creative and really use your rainwater to your advantage. For more information on handling rainwater run-off, see the Stormwater, Drainage and Erosion materials found here:

<http://www.rcdsantacruz.org/publications>

"It feels great to be irrigating our landscape and gardens with water harvested from the sky," one owner says. Most local water districts offer rebates on purchased catchment tanks. Find your district's offer on our rebate chart on page 16!

If you want an in-depth and fascinating read, try any of Brad Lancaster's books: *Harvesting Rainwater for Drylands* and *Beyond*.



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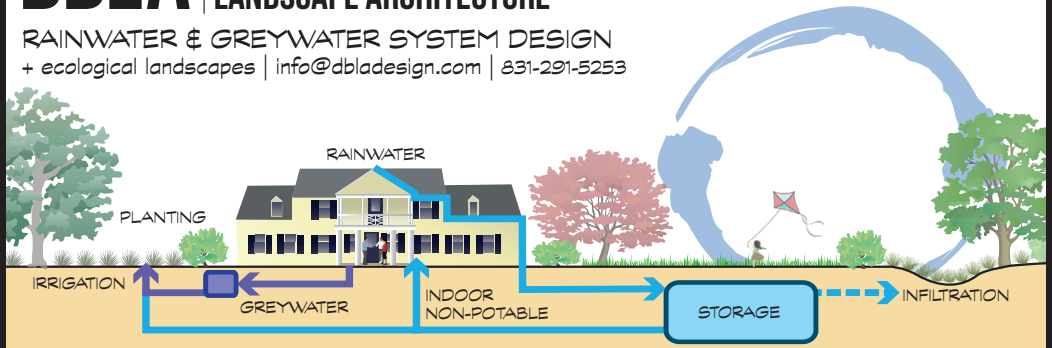
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# PREVENTING AND DETECTING LEAKS



Water pressure regulator

Leaks at your home or business cost money and waste our shared water resources. The good news is that most leaks are preventable or can be detected early.

*The easiest way to avoid and detect leaks is:*

- Learn to **read** and monitor your water bills and meter
- Test your toilets, irrigation system, and water pressure regularly

Pay attention to your water bills and call your water supplier with any questions you may have - they are there to help you! Your meter is an important tool that can save you water and money. Most water agencies have instructions on their websites about how to check their specific meters and the units of measurement they use for billing.

Constant leaks are those under pressure that keep the meter running all the time, such as a supply line leak. Intermittent leaks are those that don't always leak or show on your meter. For example, some types of leaks will only happen if a toilet flapper valve is leaking or when an irrigation valve is turned on.

## **The three most common leaks in homes are businesses are:**

1. The main supply line from your meter to your building
2. Toilets
3. Irrigation systems

### **Checking for Supply Line Leaks - Constant Leaks**

If you think you may have a leak, make sure all water is turned off and check your meter to see if it's moving. If it is moving, see if you have a "house" valve where the water enters your home or business. You can turn off this valve (slowly and smoothly) in order to isolate whether a possible leak is before or after this valve (the meter will stop moving if the leak is after the valve). If you don't locate the leak yourself, a plumber or leak detection company can be consulted.

### **Checking for Toilet Leaks - Constant or Intermittent**

Even a small leak in a toilet can waste up to 200 gallons per day. Most toilet leaks are silent and invisible. Here's how to test your toilets:

- Open the tank and check the water fill line- it should not be overflowing into the fill tube. After that is adjusted, put dye tablets/strips or 3-4 drops of food coloring in the tank (behind the bowl).
- Don't flush the toilet for about 15-20 minutes, then check the toilet bowl to see if colored water has escaped into it from the tank.
- If you see colored water in the bowl, you should replace the flapper and/or the fill valve inside the toilet tank. Directions can be found online. Bring your old parts to the hardware store if you're a DIYer.

### **Checking for Irrigation Leaks**

Irrigation systems can leak before, within, or after the irrigation valves that serve specific zones in your landscape. Constant leaks would indicate there is a leak in the hard piping before each valve, or in the landscape valve itself.

- Run each valve for 5 minutes and take a meter reading before and after. When you tally up how much water went through the meter for each valve/zone that ran, investigate the one with an unusually high flow. As well, while the zone is running, inspect for breaks, mis-directed heads, puddles, sunken or soft soil, etc.

### **Keeping Water Pressure at a Safe Range**

If you live in an area with high water pressure, you'll need a pressure regulator (or PRV) for your home or business. A pressure gauge will tell you if it is over 80 psi. If so, you should adjust, replace, or install a new regulator so it keeps pressure between 60 and 80 psi for indoor plumbing. High pressure on pipes is like high blood pressure in your body - it needs to stay within normal range to prevent blow-outs.



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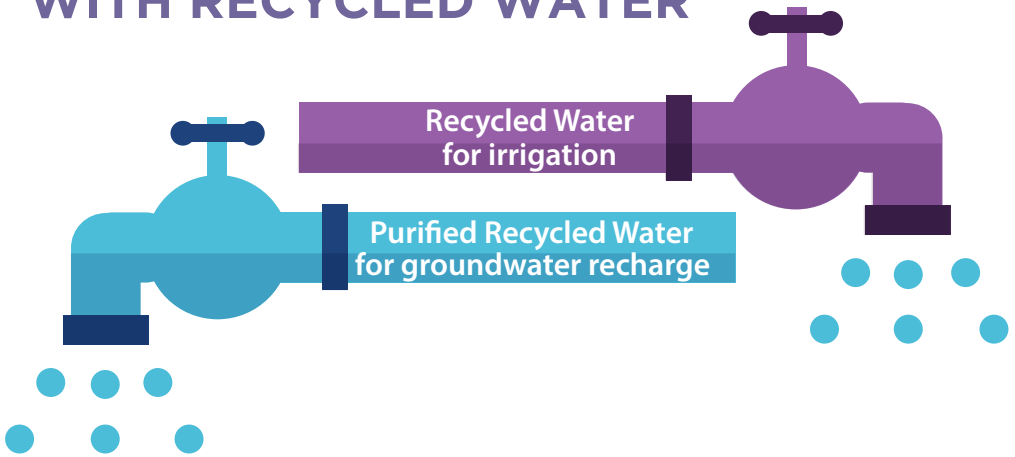
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# EXTENDING WATER RESOURCES WITH RECYCLED WATER



Did you know that local agencies in Santa Cruz County have been recycling water for over 10 years? Recycling helps extend our water resources.

Water that goes into the region's wastewater collection system gets treated through two stages: primary and secondary levels that include physical, biological and chemical treatment processes. The water is then discharged out to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Instead of wasting this water it can be further filtered to make recycled water. It is then distributed through a separate purple piping system.

Scotts Valley Water District (SVWD) has utilized recycled water since 2002. Scotts Valley uses the water for construction projects, to irrigate city parks, schools and large residential and commercial landscapes. This water supply reduces SVWD's pumping of groundwater water by 10-15% a year from the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin. In addition to irrigating in Scotts Valley, extra secondary treated water is piped to the Pasa Tiempo Golf Course, where they further treat and use about 40 million gallons a year on their greens.

Since 2009, the Watsonville Wastewater Recycling Facility has delivered recycled water to farmers along the coast of South Santa Cruz and North Monterey Counties. Every year, the facility recycles over a billion gallons of wastewater! The City of Watsonville and Pajaro Valley Water partner to provide recycled water to 5,000 acres of coastal farmland that is experiencing the effects of seawater intrusion.

Soquel Creek Water District is currently developing Pure Water Soquel (PWS). An upgrade and expansion of the City of Santa Cruz's recycled treatment facility will be built at the existing wastewater treatment plant. Recycled water will be used for irrigation and construction projects. The recycled water will also be pumped to the PWS Purification Facility to go through reverse osmosis, ultraviolet light, and advanced oxidation. The purified water will be used in recharge wells to replenish the Mid-County groundwater basin and create a freshwater barrier to prevent seawater intrusion.

Along with water conservation, the use of recycled water is an example of water agencies taking action to extend our limited local water supplies. The recycled water saves groundwater, helps prevent seawater intrusion, and significantly reduces wastewater discharges into the Monterey Bay.

## Find out more about water recycling in our community:

- Visit the Soquel Creek Water District Learning Center featuring Pure Water Soquel: 831-475-8500 x142
- Attend a public tour of the recycled water treatment plants: City of Scotts Valley 831-438-0732 or City of Watsonville Wastewater Plant 831-768-3170



# MANAGING GROUNDWATER IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Groundwater supplies approximately 75% of Santa Cruz County's water. The other 25% comes from water you can see on the surface (in reservoirs, creeks, and rivers). Groundwater is rainwater that has infiltrated deep underground into saturated layers of sand and gravel. Wells are drilled into these layers where we pump the water up for our communities to use.

In 2015, California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) went into effect, because groundwater levels across the state have been declining for decades due to over pumping. This law requires that each basin create a plan to bring their basin into balance by 2040 and keep it balanced for 30 years into the future.

Santa Cruz County groundwater pumping is concentrated into three main groundwater basins (a collection of aquifers separated by mountains, layers of clay or geologic faults) and three agencies have formed to manage the groundwater in each:

Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin includes the eastside of Santa Cruz, Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, Capitola, and Seaside. The basin is designated by the State as being critically overdrafted, with seawater intrusion in wells near the coast and reduced water flows in streams. A partnership of the Santa Cruz County, City of Santa Cruz, Soquel Creek and Central Water Districts, and private well owners-together referred to as the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA). [www.midcountygroundwater.org](http://www.midcountygroundwater.org)

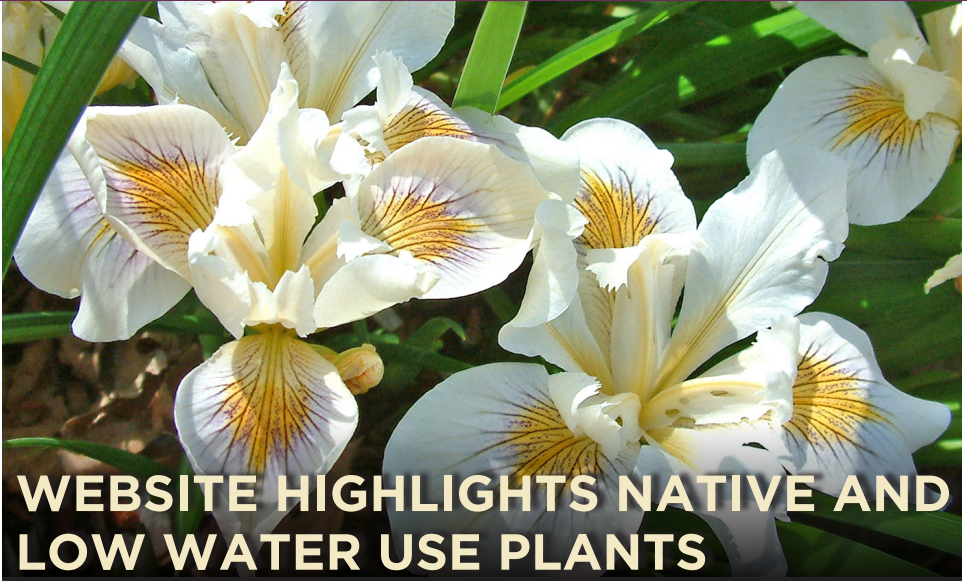
Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin includes Scotts Valley, Felton, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, and Lompico. This basin is not designated as being in critical overdraft, but has had a significant decline in groundwater levels and stream flows. A partnership of the County, Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley Water Districts, and private well owners - together referred to as the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency (SMGWA). [www.smgwa.org](http://www.smgwa.org)

Pajaro Valley Groundwater Basin includes Watsonville, Freedom, Pajaro, Larkin Valley, Corralitos, and surrounding farmland. This basin is designated as being in critical overdraft, with large portions of the valley's groundwater levels below sea level and seawater intrusion extending inland to Highway 1. PV Water manages this basin and has a groundwater sustainability plan, (known locally as the Basin Management Plan) approved by the California Department of Water Resources. [pvwater.org](http://pvwater.org)

How we manage our groundwater will influence the quality of water we have, the cost, and how much will be available for our use in the future. Learn more by visiting the websites listed above or attend public meetings in your groundwater basin area.



# WATER-SMART GARDENING



A considerable amount of water savings can be achieved through landscape changes.

If you've let your lawn turn brown consider replanting this fall with water-wise plants. There is a useful website called Water-Smart Gardening in Santa Cruz County ([www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com](http://www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com)) that can help inspire your garden redesign or replanting with information about plants, watering, and resources that fit the Santa Cruz County environment.

This mobile-friendly website has several key features:

1. **“Plants” keyword search:** Use this tool to get information about your favorite plants by searching the specific plants' names. For example, you can type 'salvia' in the search box in the top menu and get a listing of all the salvias on the site.
2. **Helpful Plant Lists:** There are 30 popular plant lists including deer tolerant plants, lawn substitutes, California natives, low water perennials, erosion control, and other useful categories.
3. **Guided Search:** The guided search (under the “plants” menu) asks a series of questions about your desired plant to focus your list. The questions include plant type, height, color, bloom season, sun exposure, and soil type. At the end of the questions you'll be provided with a focused photo list of plants that meet your garden's needs. Clicking on each photo reveals the plant's details including water needs. Note: plants that are California Natives are denoted with a California poppy icon over its photo.
4. **My List:** Use this tool to add your favorite plants and gardens to a saved list as you search for them. You can print out the list and take it to a nursery, share it on social media, or email it to your gardener or landscaper.
5. **Resources:** In this section you'll find information on how to design and install a water-wise garden, irrigation methods, and equipment that will help you to water your landscape more efficiently, as well as suggestions on how to easily and effectively maintain your new garden.
6. **Watering Guide:** The watering guide has tips and information on what time to water, how much you should water during a particular time of year, and information on watering devices, irrigation challenges, and water schedules.

The website also features “Garden Tours” and “Garden Gallery” photos that show plant ‘tags’ over the photo to identify the plants in the garden. You can hover over or click on the plant tag to get more information and add it to your customized list. Give it a try and get inspired at [www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com](http://www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com).



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## Rebated Items

Pajaro Valley  
Water Management Agency



[pvwater.org](http://pvwater.org)



[centralwaterdistrict.us.com](http://centralwaterdistrict.us.com)






[cityofwatsonville.org](http://cityofwatsonville.org)

Lawn Replacement			\$0.75/sq.ft Max \$500 residential; \$1,000 commercial.
Greywater Laundry to Landscape (L to L)	\$100 for L to L		See PV Water
Rainwater	\$0.25/gal. up to \$750 (3000 gal.)		See PV Water
High Efficiency Toilet (1.28gpf)		\$50	Free replacement or up to \$100
Ultra High Efficiency Toilet (<1 gpf)		\$50	\$100
High Efficiency Washer		\$50	\$100
Weather based Irrigation Controller			
Free Water Wise House Call			Yes
Drip Irrigation			
Downspout Redirect			
Hot Water Recirculation System			
Impervious Hardscape Replacement			
Pressure Reducing Valve			
Other Rebates			



# YOUR LOCAL WATER AGENCIES

 cityofsantacruz.com	 slvwd.com	 svwd.org	 soquelcreekwater.org
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Up to \$150	Up to \$200	\$100/toilet or waterless urinals	\$175 commercial cust. \$250-\$300 waterless urinals
Up to \$150	Up to \$200	\$125	\$100 residential
\$100-\$200 Energy Star	Up to \$100		Up to \$100 res., \$600 HOA/com.
	Up to \$125	Up to \$100	\$75-\$125 or Up to \$600/acre
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		\$0.50/sq. ft.	\$20/100 sq. ft.
		\$75 per downspout with max of 4	\$40/per down spout max of 2
			\$150
		\$1 /sq. ft.	
		\$50	Up to \$50
up to \$50 for Energy Star Dishwashers			Pool Cover up to \$75

# 12 HIGH PERFORMING PLANT TYPES FOR THE MONTEREY BAY

## What is a high performing plant?

One that is well adapted or native to our Mediterranean climate in the Monterey Bay area. These plants are the workhorses of your garden, offering a high return on your gardening investment, which means they:

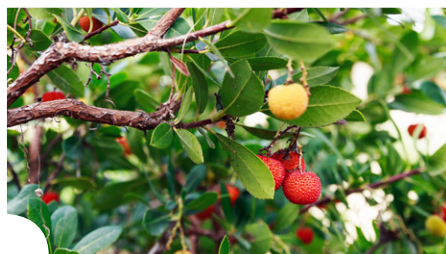
- Have low water needs and thrive with little or no rain/irrigation
- Stay alive for more than three growing seasons (perennial)
- Are easy to care for, with little fertilizing, pest control, or pruning
- Offer long displays of blossoms or foliage

We are so lucky to be able to grow a large variety of plants that meet this criteria in our area. We've highlighted twelve of our favorites below. Although each species of plant can be quite different in color, size, etc., some reliable genus (plant groupings) are:



**Smoke Tree (Cotinus)** – Deciduous shrub or small tree, can be pruned to any size. Classic foliage color is burgundy, but also comes in red, orange, lime green and violet! Distinctive “smoke-like” blooms in late summer, with some species changing leaf color in the fall. Full sun, well-drained soil.

**Strawberry Tree/ Madrone (Arbutus)** – Pretty red flaky bark, with small bell-like blossoms in spring and pretty green, to yellow to red (actually edible) berries in the fall. Adapts to all soil types, generally grows 8-12 feet tall, with rounded shape, tolerates incremental pruning.



**Pin Cushions (Leucospermum) & Cone Plants (Leucadendron)** – Both in the Protea family from South Africa, evergreen, and rounded (Leucospermum) and upright (Leucadendron) forms, with strong leaves, 3-8 feet tall. Unusual shapes and forms, adds structure to cut flower bouquets.

**New Zealand Flax (Phormium)** – This easy-to-grow strappy plant adds year-round dramatic foliage. Comes in many sizes and colors. Can tolerate coastal air and winter frost, and has a variety of sun requirements, depending upon which of the many cultivars chosen.



**Sage (Salvia)** – Easy to grow, in over 900 varieties, the hardy perennial types are recommended. Intense and varied coloring, with a long blooming season, that attracts pollinators. Deadhead old blooms and prune back hard in fall or spring. Very drought tolerant, likes well-drained soil and full or dappled sun.

*Continued on page 20.*



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## Home & Garden EXPO OF MONTEREY



# October 12 & 13

Monterey County Fairgrounds  
2004 Fairgrounds Rd., Enter through Gate 3 on Garden Rd.



Find your water conservation professionals at the Home and Garden EXPO in Monterey.

◀ Plus great water conservation ideas in these two publications!



**Penstemon** – Several hundred species, with many native to North America, these plants come with a variety of blooms, colors, and heights to choose from. Very resilient plant that reseeds itself, and attracts pollinators such as hummingbirds. Deadheading will encourage more blooming. Prune light in fall and heavier in spring.

**Yarrow (Achillea)** - Showy, upright, self-spreading plant, great for border plantings. Medicinal plant to native people, with distinct pungent foliar odor. Prefers hot, sunny, and dry conditions in well-drained soil. Attracts butterflies and available in many colors, with yellow being common.



**Wormwood (Artemisia)** – Hardy herbaceous, low shrubby plants in the aster family. Their color adds a beautiful silver to olive hue in the garden that contrasts beautifully with burgundy, yellow, and cobalt blue. Full sun to partial shade, likes moist, well-drained soil.

**Fringe Flower (Loropetalum)** – Deep burgundy foliage with clusters of rich, pink, fringed flowers that bloom repeatedly throughout the year. Works well with containers or beds, alone or in mass plantings. Full to partial sun, with weekly watering. 4-6' tall and wide at maturity.



**Blanket Flower (Gaillardia)** - Showy, “daisy-like,” long blooming flowering plant. Typically shows in oranges, yellows, and reds, attracting butterflies. Grows from 10-30” tall. Good cut flower that can grow in containers or beds. Full Sun, well-drained soil.

**African Daisy (Osteospermum)** – Colorful, varied flowers that thrive in warm, full sunlight. Blooms close at night, so not ideal for evening viewing. Will reseed itself in the fall if you allow flowers to dry out at the end of the season.



**Succulents** – Frequent genus include aloes, aeoniums, sedums, and echeverias. Easy to grow and propagate, adding architectural forms and variety to the garden. Easy to grow in containers or beds, some are frost tender.

For more plant choices and a guided plant search, check out [www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com](http://www.santacruz.watersavingplants.com)







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# MONTEREY BAY FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES

## SAVE WATER IN A BEAUTIFUL WAY!



After years of drought, many residents have made lasting landscape changes to save water in their gardens. To help inspire and inform other gardeners who want to do the same, the Monterey Bay Friendly Landscape recognition program was started. This program helps residents and businesses transform once-thirsty landscapes into beautiful, healthy, and sustainable gardens and landscapes that send less waste to the landfill, conserve water and energy, and manage stormwater as a resource.

Certified Monterey Bay Friendly Landscapes are required to meet 10 ecological design and maintenance standards that maximize water and energy conservation.

1. Use mulch and compost to create healthy soil
2. Practice natural pruning and plant spacing
3. Remove invasive plants
4. Choose drought tolerant, climate-appropriate plants
5. Limit your functional turf areas
6. Practice weather-based irrigation scheduling
7. Utilize drip (or other low-volume) irrigation
8. Remove sprinklers near sidewalks and driveways
9. When it rains, “slow it, spread it, sink it”. This means to use green infrastructure, such as cisterns, rain gardens, and permeable pavements to manage rainwater in the landscape. These promote groundwater recharge and reduce flooding and stormwater pollution downstream.
10. Sign an ecological landscape maintenance agreement. All certified landscapes are required to implement a Monterey Bay Friendly Landscape ecological landscape maintenance agreement, which ensures the landscape will be managed to prevent irrigation waste, use less chemicals, and reduce dependence on landscape equipment that uses fossil fuels. This can be downloaded from the program site in English or Spanish.



*The Heart of Soquel Park is a great example of Monterey Bay Friendly Landscaping.*



# Low Water Landscaping Made Easy

Learn more about rebates and incentives at: [green-gardener.org](https://green-gardener.org)



Monterey Bay Friendly Landscapes go beyond traditional landscape water conservation. The program also offers resources for those interested in using rainwater or greywater for irrigating medium and high water use plants. Residential homeowners that participate in the landscape certification program also receive permanent discounts at participating local nurseries and landscape supply businesses, an attractive sign that can be displayed in their yard, and photos of their landscape on the website gallery. Businesses and multi-family housing HOAs with certified landscapes also receive public recognition on the gallery site <https://green-gardener.org/green-garden-gallery/>, a sign, and marketing material to show their clients they have invested in a greener, less-toxic environment in which to live and work. Real estate agents and property managers can certify landscapes of properties for sale or lease and use the program standards to create curb appeal that markets a low maintenance, healthy, green living environment instead of a high maintenance lawn.

Find a qualified rater and see if yours is a Monterey Bay Friendly Landscape! <https://green-gardener.org/find-a-rater/>

Interested in learning more? Check out the Monterey Bay Friendly Landscape program standards at [www.green-gardener.org](http://www.green-gardener.org)

The Monterey Bay Friendly Landscape Program was funded by a Prop 84 green infrastructure planning grant from the State Water Board. The program provides regional ecological landscape certification standards and incentives for public, commercial, and residential property owners who are leading by example to make sustainable landscapes the 'new normal' in our communities. This is a collaborative effort between Ecology Action, California Landscape Contractors Association, Ecological Landscaping Association, Monterey Bay Master Gardeners, Surfrider Foundation, Coastal Watershed Council, Resource Conservation Districts, and more than 20 public agencies representing water utilities, solid waste and recycling, and stormwater management.



Roof downspout is diverted to a bioswale in this Monterey Bay friendly Garden at Santa Cruz city hall

# LOSE YOUR LAWN AND IMPROVE YOUR SOIL WITH SHEET MULCHING

Sheet mulching is a way to eliminate your water-thirsty lawn which involves covering the lawn with cardboard or newspaper and then covering that with mulch. This combination suppresses grass and weeds, and over time biodegrades into healthy soil. Then, replant the area with drought-tolerant and native plants for a beautiful water-conserving garden!

Sheet mulching can be done year-round, but it is best to start in the fall so that your new plants can benefit from winter rains.

## STEPS FOR SHEET MULCHING:

- 1. Prepare the site**
  - Remove undesirable and invasive plants, especially those that spread through rhizomes or have very persistent roots .
  - Mow or knock down tall weeds so they lie flat.
  - Remove your sprinkler system or convert it to drip irrigation.
  - Wet down the area.
- 2. Plant Large Plants**
  - Plant trees and shrubs 5 gallons or larger.
- 3. Add a Weed Barrier**
  - Select a biodegradable weed barrier such as newspaper, cardboard, or burlap.
  - Lay material over prepared ground making sure to overlap it 6 – 8 inches so no sunlight can shine through.
  - Wet down the material with water as you go to keep it in place and start decomposition.
- 4. Layer with compost and mulch**
  - Add 1 – 2 inches of compost and 3 to 5 inches of mulch on top of your newspaper or cardboard.
- 5. Plant**
  - Add additional plants by cutting holes in the weed barrier
  - Re-mulch your new plants, making sure not to put mulch right up to the base of the plant, which may encourage rot.
- 6. Maintain your new landscape**
  - Install drip irrigation (if using)
  - Help new plants get established with carefully applied water. Even drought tolerant species need a little extra water when they are young.

For more information and resources, visit [green-gardener.org](https://green-gardener.org)

<https://green-gardener.org/lose-your-lawn-with-sheet-mulching/>



*Friends of Aptos Library replaced their turf with water wise plants.*



# Home & Garden EXPO OF MONTEREY

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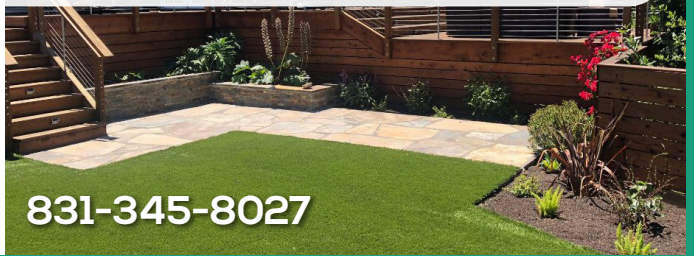


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# GREYWATER IRRIGATION PREVENTS WATER AND MONEY FROM GOING DOWN THE DRAIN



Have you ever watched the spiraling bathwater go down the drain and wished it could be used to water the garden? Your wish for that “grey water” can be a reality! Since 2009 state plumbing codes have been changed to make greywater systems much easier and cost effective to install.

Greywater is wash and rinse water from washing machines, showers, bathtubs and bathroom sinks that is reusable out in your landscape. It is not water from kitchen sinks, dishwashers or toilets.

Greywater reuse will stretch your water dollar by lowering the amount of potable water needed out in the landscape. The most reliable, economical, and low-maintenance greywater systems require no pumps, filters, or storage tanks. Greywater can be piped directly to the landscape and be discharged into mulch basins around plants. Laundry-to-landscape systems use the clothes washer’s internal pump to push greywater to the landscape, whereas branched drain systems from bathroom sinks, showers, and tubs, rely on gravity to send greywater outside.

Mulch Magic! Greywater needs to be dispersed under at least two inches of cover and cannot be sprayed into the air. For both methods, adding wood chips to small dug out ditches around plants, acts as a treatment system that digests organic debris, soap, and any potential pathogens (bad bacteria). Landscapes that are flat or uphill from the greywater source may require an effluent pump system.

A Laundry-to-Landscape system does not require a permit to build if it meets code guidelines. It’s the easiest to install, change or remove. A family of four can produce about 120 gallons of laundry greywater per week with a high efficiency washer. That’s a lot of water that can go out to perennial plants, like bushes and fruit trees, as well as other edible plants (if they don’t touch the greywater). It’s a great feeling knowing that your washing machine is not only cleaning your clothes but also watering your plants! There are Laundry-to-Landscape classes and workshops every year through Cabrillo College Extension Program too!



# PREVENT LEAKS AND SAVE MONEY BY MAINTAINING IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Irrigation systems help us control the timing, volume, and duration of water applied to our landscapes. When these systems are designed and maintained properly, they are key to creating beautiful, water-efficient, and easily-maintained landscapes.

When planning an irrigation system, important design requirements include:

- “Head-to-head” coverage for spray irrigation
- Using common irrigation zones/valves/circuits for plants with similar watering needs
- Placing emitters of the same type on the same irrigation zone (high or low volume, same manufacturer, same distribution rate)
- Situating heads two feet away from adjacent hardscapes to prevent run-off

Irrigation systems are designed to save time and money, as they operate automatically. However, they cannot maintain themselves! Regular monitoring and inspecting are key, since irrigation breaks are among the top three causes of water leaks. Here are some maintenance guidelines to keep in mind.

1. **Monitor your water bills and meter, and create a water budget.** These are the feedback tools that tell you if you’re on track with efficient water use, or have leaks. A water budget requires you to know your plants’ water needs for specific months of the year as well as the unique features of your landscape, such as sloped or shaded areas.
2. **Inspect your system while irrigation is running.** Do this at least monthly. Read your water meter before and after one complete cycle has run so you’ll know how much water you’re using on your landscape, and have a baseline of typical water usage.

As you walk the landscape while irrigation is on, look for overspray onto hardscapes and other sources of runoff, broken heads or leaking seals, obstructed or misdirected heads, and dying or drowning plants. Adjust or replace faulty heads and consider the new efficient rotary style heads.

Constant leaks can be occurring before each valve, while intermittent leaks can be happening only when the system is running and a leaking valve is activated.

3. **Know how to use your irrigation controller and consider purchasing a “smart” one** that automatically adjusts for recent rainfall and time of year. Some can be controlled and monitored from your smartphone. Also understand what your controller will do if there is a power outage - some revert back to basic factory settings that you may not want.
4. **Create a map of your yard** that indicates where each irrigation zone is located and the valve number that corresponds to that area. You may want to put that number on the actual valve, which can save lots of time when troubleshooting problems.
5. **Regulating and monitoring incoming pressure** is also important to prevent leaks from popping emitters and couplings, as well as misting of spray heads. If you live in a high-pressure area, you may need a regulator installed, adjusted, or replaced. Learn how to take static and active pressures in your system.

**Remember, it’s a fact that most people overwater their landscaping.** If you see moss, mushrooms, or overgrowth, this may indicate that you have a leak or are overwatering.

**Mulching helps to hold moisture in the landscape and prevent erosion on slopes.**

**Irrigate when the sun is down**, but inspect your system when the sun is up.

**Many people do not adjust their irrigation schedule with the four seasons.** The old adage of “set it and forget it” does not work and can cost you hundreds of dollars in unnecessary leaks and wasted water.

# GROWING TOMATOES WITH LESS WATER



Nothing is as good as a home-grown tomato. There are many tomato varieties that grow well in our area and most of them need about 2-3 gallons of water per week to yield flavorful tomatoes. Water conservation is an important part of our community, it is something that should be taken into consideration when growing your own tomatoes. There are several ways to use less water and still make sure your tomatoes are happy.

When picking out your starters or seeds take a look at days to maturity. The earlier the tomato, the less water it will require before it yields fruit. Most tomato varieties have a 45 to 60-day period before fruit appears. Another option to save water is to grow determinate tomatoes. Their growing season is much shorter than most tomato varieties. Determinate tomato varieties are often referred to as “bush” tomatoes because they do not continue growing in length throughout the growing season. They are generally smaller plants, usually growing only 4-5 feet tall. The fruit ripens in about two weeks and after that happens the plant will begin to diminish in vigor and will set little to no new fruit.

Another option to consider is dry farming. Dry farming tomatoes is a very simple process where you plant and water your tomatoes just as you normally would until the plant begins setting fruit. Once the fruit appears on the tomato plant, you stop watering. Varieties that do well as dry-farmed crops typically have an aggressive root system capable of reaching deep into the soil horizon to tap the stored moisture. “Early Girl” is a good choice for dry farming as it has the ability to set deep roots and consistently produce a good yield of high quality, flavorful fruits with no irrigation. “New Girl”, is closely related to ‘Early Girl’ and appears to have many of the same favorable characteristics but produces lower yields.

Growing your own tomatoes is a rewarding and delicious hobby. If you practice water conservation and want to grow with less water give it a try! Check with local nurseries, fellow gardeners, and friends to get the lowdown on producing quality tomatoes with less water.



# DRIP IRRIGATION AIDS CONSERVATION



An array of water-conserving irrigation systems often lumped under the heading of “drip irrigation,” are now available at landscape, gardening, and plumbing stores. These range from porous hoses that attach to a regular garden hose, to automated systems that incorporate programmable timers to water individual beds or plants on a preset sequence. The idea behind any drip irrigation system is to conserve water by directing it to the base of the plants, where it’s most needed. By keeping the foliage dry, drip irrigation also helps control mildew and fungus problems, as well as limiting weed growth.

Although they ultimately save water, drip irrigation systems have to be used more frequently than overhead systems. Because water from a drip system doesn’t fill the entire root zone, the roots are localized around that wet zone and you must maintain higher levels of moisture in that zone.

Drip irrigation is especially useful for plants that are sensitive to moisture-related diseases, such as cucumbers, squashes, potatoes, and many annual flowers. For densely planted beds of lettuce, carrots, beets, and other small plants, overhead watering with high-quality oscillating sprinklers remains the best option.

Another simple drip system uses a porous “soaker hose” made from shredded rubber that attaches to a regular garden hose. The leaky hose is laid along the length of the bed, or wrapped around trees or other perennial plantings.

Trees and perennials can also be watered with micro-sprinklers, small permanent spray heads that attach to narrow “spaghetti lines” fed by larger irrigation pipes. These systems not only save water, but save the hassle of moving hoses and sprinklers every time you need to irrigate. Trees should be watered in an area that extends from just inside the tree’s dripline to about five feet beyond the widest limbs, where most of the feeder roots lie (note the shadow cast by a tree’s foliage at midday— the shadow’s outside edge marks the tree’s dripline).

Produced by the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UC Santa Cruz. For more information about Center resources and activities, call 831/459-3240 or write CASFS, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

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### **City of Santa Cruz Water Department**

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### **Pajaro Valley Water Management**

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**SoquelCreekWater.org**

**The problem of saltwater intrusion and ongoing overdraft must be addressed. I am pleased the water District is responding to this serious issue before it is a full-scale crisis.**

**Craig Wilson**  
*Public Safety Official &  
District Customer*

**#InThisTogether**