



Maintaining a Healthy Landscape in a Drought

California is in a serious drought, and we don't know how long it will last. That's why every drop saved today counts. Here's how you can maintain a healthy, resilient landscape if you're faced with watering restrictions or limited water availability.

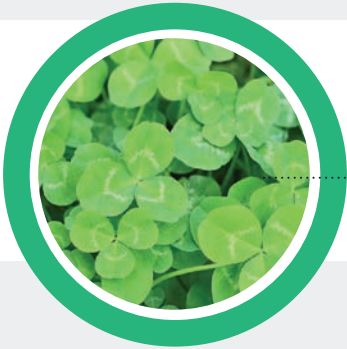
There are big and little steps you can take to conserve. Consider using the hot summer months as an opportunity to turn off your irrigation and sheet mulch to remove grass. Then, in the fall, you can replace your lawn with beautiful California Friendly® and native plants with the help of a rebate.



More Helpful Tips [➤](#)

Lawns //

- Create a “green sponge”
 - Aerate your lawn using a spike aerator or core aerator and add compost.
- Reduce mowing and keep your grass blades four inches or higher



Add some diversity to your landscape with clover, it needs less water to stay green.

Give back 20% to nature

Create a two-foot boundary between grass and hardscape to prevent runoff. You also can remove a two-foot border of grass from your lawn and replace it with mulch, compost, and California Friendly® and native plants. You will want to remove sprinklers in this space and relocate other sprinkler heads, so they evenly water the grass that remains.



What is hardscape?

Design elements in your landscape like concrete, rocks, bricks, pavers, stone and wood.

- Check for broken, sunken or misaligned sprinklers
 - This directs more water to your lawn instead of the sidewalk or driveway.

- Cycle and soak
 - Short bursts of watering (four to five minutes each) allows time for water to soak into the soil instead of running off your lawn.

Shrubs/Flowers/Groundcovers //

- Water deeply and early in the morning
 - Check the weather and choose the coolest and most overcast day of the week to water. Plants prefer a weekly deep watering over more frequent shorter watering.
- Replace your sprinkler system with drip irrigation, which is more efficient and often not subject to watering restrictions.
- Shade your plants where possible
 - Shaded plants need less water. Shading can be done with sun cloth, canopy tents or umbrellas.



- Brown is the **NEW** Green
 - By brown we mean MULCH. Mulch around your plants retains water and soil moisture and extends your watering day(s).
 - Do not irrigate mulch; pull it away from plants when watering and then put back into place once watered.



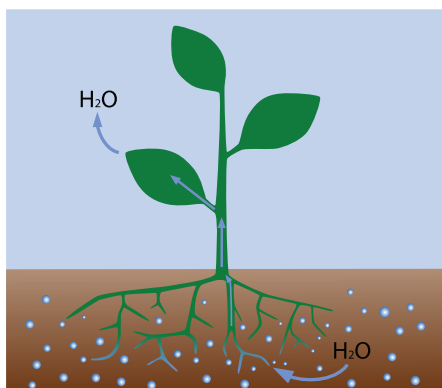
- Drench the plant with compost tea, which will help nurture fungal relations, and improves water retention.
- Prune plants to reduce leaves; plants with fewer leaves have lower rates of transpiration and need less water.

What is compost tea?

Compost teas are a great way to give your plants the nutrients they need without having to shovel and carry heavy loads of compost around your yard. Compost tea is full of beneficial bacteria, fungi and other nutrients.

What is transpiration?

Transpiration occurs when water in a plant is warmed by the sun, turns into vapor (evaporates) and passes through thousands of tiny pores (stomata) mostly on the underside of a leaf's surface.



Let true Mediterranean and California native plants go drought dormant. These plants evolved to withstand periods of low water availability, let them do what they do best. Once the rain returns, these plants will open up again and show off their beauty and resiliency.

Weed regularly to direct water to the targeted plant.



Clay soil

Add clay into your planting mix to improve soil's water holding capacity. If your soil is very sandy, skip this step.



Clay soil that is made up of small, flat mineral particles or pieces helps retain more water.

Trees //

- Hand water early in the morning and make sure to give trees a good soak.
- For trees within lawns, remove the grass and create a four-foot perimeter around the tree. Add mulch and a dedicated drip irrigation line.
- Remember, our beautiful, native California Oak trees don't like summer watering.



Alternative Groundcovers //

Looking for great alternatives to a thirsty lawn? Since turf grasses are not suited for Southern California's semi-arid climate, groundcovers are great low-maintenance, no-mow and environmentally friendly options for your yard. They quickly spread to fill grassless spaces and will keep your yard green and healthy – all while saving water.



Beach Strawberry

A California native plant that grows up to 12 inches tall, with glossy green leaves. It also produces white flowers in spring and early summer.

Kurapia

A low-water groundcover developed for drought conditions and extreme weather. Establishes fast and can be mowed into a low turf.

Dymondia

This California Friendly® evergreen forms a silver-green mat and grows no more than 1-3 inches tall. It also tolerates foot traffic well.

Myoporum

This flat, rapidly-growing groundcover creates a nice green carpet, with periodic small white blooms in the summer.

Common Yarrow

Another California native that is extremely easy to grow. It commonly flowers from May through June and is often found in butterfly gardens.



About Metropolitan

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative of 26 member agencies – cities and public water agencies – that serves 19 million people in six counties. Metropolitan imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies and helps its members develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource management programs.



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