

Tired of Your Thirsty Turfgrass?

Outdoor water use in the Sacramento region accounts for more than half of a household's total water use, which can be 250 gallons per day in the summer. About 30 percent of outdoor water use is wasted from evaporation and overwatering. Watering in the early morning hours and installing WaterSense-labeled irrigation timers can reduce this water waste.

Another option is to replace traditional cool season turfgrass with lower-water use plant options like **turfgrass alternatives** and **turfgrass substitutes/ground cover plants**. These plants are more suited to the Sacramento region's Mediterranean climate.

Turfgrass Alternatives

Turfgrass alternatives are low-water use grasses that have the look and feel of turfgrass but require half the water to thrive.

COMMON NAME	WATER USE	SUN	FOOT TRAFFIC/WEAR	DESCRIPTION
UC Verde Buffalograss	1/4 of the amount compared to traditional turfgrass	Full Sun	Tough and durable	Warm-season turfgrass; looks its best during the summer; dormant to semi-dormant in winter; straw-green color; drought tolerant; nearly pollen free; height peaks at 4-6" tall; depending on preference, mow every 2-3 weeks; for a more natural look mow less frequently, but at least once per year; disease and insect resistant; dense habit at maturity, helps to reduce weed growth.
90/10 Tall Fescue Includes: Penn RK4, Rebel XL4, Firecracker SLS Tall Fescue & Ridgeline Kentucky Bluegrass	Moderate	Sun, Partial Shade	High, residential, wear recovery very good	Certified by the Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance (TWCA) & Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf A-List for drought tolerance & deep roots; cool season grass, stays green year round; adapts to partial shade; salt & heat tolerant, improved disease resistance; mowing height 1-1/2 to 2"; can mow higher to reduce stress; water needs can depend upon tolerance for varying shades of green.
Native Mow Free™	Low, 50% less water than traditional turfgrass; drought tolerant, per grower	Full sun; up to 50% shade tolerance	Clumpy, not for sports activities	CA natives; fine leaf blade texture; can be maintained as a turf lawn or left unmowed for a meadow-like appearance; provides erosion control on slopes.

UC Verde Buffalograss



Credit: Florasource, Ltd.

90/10 Tall Fescue



Credit: Delta Bluegrass Company

Native Mow Free™



Credit: Laura Morton Design

Turfgrass Substitutes/Ground Cover Plants

Turfgrass substitutes are lawn-like small plants that grow together to cover an area and have the same lush green appearance of traditional turfgrass with less maintenance (limited mowing needed!).

COMMON NAME	WATER USE	SUN	PLANT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Kurapia	Low	Full Sun	Evergreen	Blooms light lavender-pink in spring, summer, and fall. Dense, flat growth; does not require mowing; does not produce seeds; spreads by runners; may need edging to retain within area of coverage; excellent for erosion control & on slopes due to extensive root system; attracts bees but flowers are sterile; if grown in part shade, plant will grow taller and will not be as compact.
Dymondia, Silver Carpet	Low	Full Sun/ Partial Shade	Evergreen	Blooms yellow in summer. Perennial. Spreads by underground stems; other than weeding, maintenance free; tolerates light foot traffic.
Creeping Red Fescue, Molate Red Fescue	Moderate	Full Sun/ Partial Shade	Evergreen	Blooms greenish-tan in spring and summer. Perennial grass with blue-green color; left unmowed gives meadow-like appearance; useful on slopes; spreads by underground stems; tolerates clay soil.
Common Thyme	Moderate	Full Sun	Herbaceous	Blooms purple in spring and summer. Perennial. Useful in kitchen garden; aromatic leaves.
Creeping Rubus	Moderate	Full Sun/ Partial Shade	Evergreen	Blooms white in spring with bright green leaves; trailing stems root as they touch the soil; dense; bright red fruit.

Don't Forget to Upgrade Your Sprinkler System, Too!

Important: Changing plant types doesn't automatically reduce a household's outdoor water use. The property's irrigation timer and watering schedule must be adjusted to meet the reduced water needs of the new plants. The irrigation system itself can be replaced with more efficient options like drip systems. For more information about how much water your yard needs and efficient irrigation systems, visit BeWaterSmart.info

KURAPIA



Credit: Cheryl Buckwalter



Credit: Delta Bluegrass Company



Credit: Delta Bluegrass Company



Want More Information on Turfgrass Alternatives and Substitutes? Visit BeWaterSmart.info/lawn-options for a larger list of plants, availability, purchasing options, and more!