

10 Tips for a Water-Smart Landscape

Successful gardens are founded on three legs: Design, Build, Maintain. All three legs needed for *balance*.

1. MAKE A PLAN - Start with professional design advice. Read a book, attend a class, get a consult, do a drawing at the very least. It's worth the thought and time.

Lay out your hardscape first: It's where your money goes for durable materials; it's the hardest to change later. Practical and accessible gardens get used more often.

2. CONSIDER THE WATER - Movement in your landscape: SLOW SPREAD SINK (Known in the industry as grading and drainage.)

Think past concrete and lawn. Make surfaces permeable so water flows through, not under or across. Gravel, mulch, un-mortared stone, decomposed granite, permeable pavers.

3. Industry Secret: HYDROZONE - Group plants by water use.
WaterWonk.us for plant water use by region.

4. SHADE IT! - Choose and site appropriate trees.

Think of cooling and sheltering your home from sun and wind. Reduce hot expanses of street pavement, driveways, stucco walls. Breaking up urban wind tunnels. Sacramento Tree Foundation '[Shady Eighty](#)'.

5. RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE - Avoid crowding plants, plan for mature size.

Hint: Helps with maintenance later!

Sunset Western Garden Book

6. NO INVASIVES PLEASE! - AVOID Pampas Grass, Mexican Feather Grass, Broom, Vinca major, Fig trees, Ivy; see PlantRight.org

7. REBATES! Irrigation upgrades or replacements, Smart Controllers. See your water provider.

8. MAINTAIN! Plan for maintenance time, especially early on. AKA monitoring walks...

Even LOW maintenance gardens require an eyeball... monthly or weekly walkabout.

80% of gardening is observation.

Catch problems before they blow out of proportion.

Irrigation leaks, plant failure, weed or animal problems, storm damage, etc.

A 2" weed seedling is easy to scuff out with your toe; a 2' weed could pull your back out.

9. MULCH - *Please no plastic sheeting or rock scapes.*

To 4" minimum, organic, maintained yearly. Conserves moisture in the root zone, reduces erosion, promotes healthy soil life and discourages weeds. Makes everything look clean and neat. Just keep it a few inches away from tree/shrubs.

Rescape.org Mulch brochure

10. CREATE HABITAT - Incorporate native plants, plant for year round blooms & berries to encourage pollinators, invite birds. Avoid sprays by using IPM to solve pest problems. ipm.ucanr.edu ; CNPS.org; Xerxes.org; <http://millionpollinatorgardens.org/>.

Handout courtesy of Soleil Tranquilli, TranquillGardens.com