



# Water Efficient Landscaping in San Diego County: Resources for Homeowners

## County of San Diego Landscaping Ordinance

The County updated its Landscaping Ordinance to implement measures that were approved by the Board of Supervisors with adoption of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2018. The update requires less use of water in irrigated landscapes and two trees planted for each new single-family residence. Implementing these CAP measures decreases greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, conserves natural resources, and improves air and water quality.

This guide is intended to assist homeowners in choosing low- and medium-water use plants for their drought tolerant, waterwise, and fire-resistant landscaping.

CAP Website: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sustainability/cap.html>



## What varieties of plants can be used in water efficient landscapes?

Water efficient landscapes feature plants that are both **climate-appropriate**, and **native to our region**.

- San Diego county has a Mediterranean climate and while Mediterranean plants may be climate-appropriate for our region, every plant grows best in its native place.
- Local native plants are adapted to thrive in our region, can be fire-resistant, and help to build healthy soils that retain water. They also attract native pollinators like birds and butterflies to your yard!
- Selecting climate-appropriate and native plants for your yard will ensure that your landscaped area is water efficient and adapted to our unique region.

## Where can I learn more?

**County of San Diego Water Efficient Design Manual:** Provides an overview of the County's Landscaping Ordinance, tree planting guidelines, ignition-resistant, and fire-prone and invasive species lists.

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/LandscapeOrdinance.html>

**San Diego Sustainable Landscapes:** Provides guidance on planting landscapes that build healthy soil, contain climate-appropriate plants, and efficiently use water.

[https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/watersheds/residential/San\\_Diego\\_Sustainable\\_Landscape\\_Guidelines.html](https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/watersheds/residential/San_Diego_Sustainable_Landscape_Guidelines.html)

**Water Use Classification of Landscape Species:** Search plant types by water use classification for your home address.

[https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant\\_Search/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Plant_Search/)

**California Invasive Plants Council:** Provides guidance on invasive ornamental plants in the state.

<https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/profiles/>

## Quick Reference Guide to Selecting Climate Appropriate Plants in San Diego County

Look for these characteristics in climate-appropriate plants:

- **Stiff, leathery leaves** hold on to water and stay evergreen for most of the year.
- **Silver or hairy leaves** reflect sunlight and hold moisture longer.
- **Small leaves** retain water and are easier to keep cool.
- **Solar tracking leaves** minimize hot sun exposure and retain moisture.



Below are examples of climate-appropriate plants for the San Diego region. Additional plant lists are provided in the resources listed on the left.

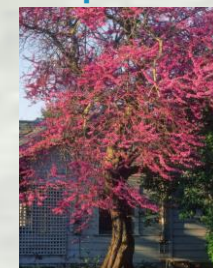
## Examples of low water landscape trees



*Chilopsis linearis*  
Desert Willow



*Parkinsonia*  
Desert Museum  
Palo Verde



*Cercis occidentalis*  
CA Redbud

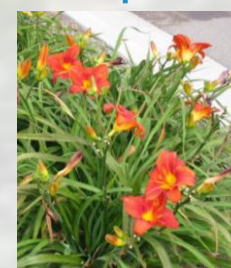


*Lyonothamnus floribundus*  
Catalina Ironwood

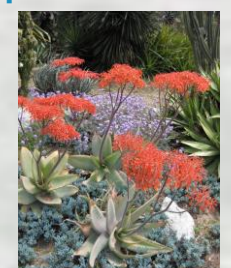


*Arbutus 'Marina'*  
Hybrid Strawberry

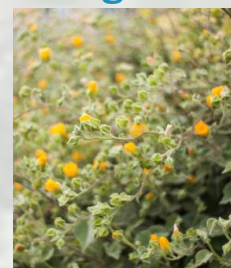
## Examples of plants that resist ignition



*Hemerocallis hybrids*  
Daylily Hybrids



*Aloe striata*  
Coral Aloe



*Abutilon palmeri*  
Indian Mallow



*Convolvulus cneorum*  
Bush Morning Glory



*Platanus racemosa*  
CA Sycamore

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