



Lose the Lawn, Use the Rain Definitions

The following definitions are for terms and/or methods used in the planting plan, irrigation plan and videos for Lose the Lawn, Use the Rain. Please refer to the Resources for more information and how-to guidance.

Berms and Basins – A technique for slowing the flow of water, allowing it to be spread over an area. This method is useful on slightly sloped areas, such as those in many front yards. These low, rounded mounds of soil are created by excavating soil to create the basin and using that soil to create low mounds. The soil mounds are lightly compacted so each side of the mound is gently sloped for a natural look.

Creekbeds – Also referred to as streambeds, creekbeds are made of various sizes of rocks (stones, riverbed cobble, and boulders) to mimic a natural streambed in nature. When downspouts are directed to the creekbeds, the rocks help to slow the speed of the moving rainwater and disperse it to reduce erosion and direct it to rain gardens, berms and basins.

Mulch – Retains soil moisture, reduces weed growth, insulates roots from heat and cold, nourishes the soil, improves soil biology. Use organic (not synthetic), small to medium-sized, weed-free mulch. Apply mulch over the soil surface after planting. Replenish mulch in the spring and/or fall as needed to maintain a minimum layer of 3 inches. Keep mulch away from trunks of trees and the base of plants. Weed cloth (also known as landscape fabric) is *not* needed and prevents the cycle of air, water, and nutrients in the soil. It can interfere with the strategies used in these planting plans for letting rainwater soak into the soil and for keeping water in your landscape.

Parkway – Also referred to as parking strip, these narrow areas are between the street and front yard or street and sidewalk. Plants in these areas need to be low-growing so they do not obstruct the line of site when entering or leaving the driveway and at street corners. When the parkway is along the curb where vehicles park, leave some open space for walking through this planting area. Another option is to leave space along the curb, referred to as a step-out area, approximately 18 inches wide, depending on the width of the parkway.

Plant Hydrozones – The term hydrozone refers to the grouping of plants with the same water-use classification into its own section or zone. Moderate or medium water-use plants would be grouped into a separate hydrozone from the low-water plants. When installing irrigation systems, each hydrozone is on a separate valve so plants can be watered at the frequency and duration to meet their needs. Plants on these planting plans are all low water-use plants.

Plant Selection and Placement – Plants for these planting plans were selected from the [Water Smart Gardening in Sacramento](#) plant database on CAW’s website [Water Efficient Landscape Resources](#). Symbols on the plans represent plants at their mature size. Plants are placed and spaced to allow them to grow to maturity in their natural form, reducing the need for excessive pruning. Plants are low water-use and appropriate for the climate in the Sacramento region.

Check out the Plant List for more information about each plant’s characteristics. If substitutions are desired, select plants that suit your site’s conditions, such as sun exposure and soil conditions, and select low water-use plants so that all plants have the same water-use classifications and are appropriate for that hydrozone.

Plant Establishment - When plants and trees are first installed, they need a period of time to become established in their new environment. Proper plant establishment requires careful and proper planting, as well as careful watering and monitoring. Frequency of watering will vary based upon plant type, soil type, season, sun exposure, and root depth. Planting in the fall takes advantage of seasonal rains and cooler temperatures, reducing or eliminating the need to apply supplemental water. When planting in the spring or during an unusually dry fall, plants will require supplemental water.

Plant Watering for Establishment and as Plants Mature - Please note that even drought-tolerant and low-water-use plants require a thorough soaking when first planted, and all newly installed plants need the soil to be kept evenly moist. The root ball of newly installed plants and the surrounding native soil should both receive water, in part, to encourage roots to grow into the native soil. For plants other than trees (for example, shrubs, groundcovers, perennials, etc.), keep the root ball moist, but not soggy, during the first three months after planting.

Then gradually, over a period of approximately 1 to 1-1/2 years, reduce the water frequency (or stated another way, increase the amount of time between watering) based on the water-use classification for that specific species. Keep in mind, that some low, very low, and no water-use California native plants, once established, do not want supplemental irrigation during summer months. Before watering, check soil moisture with a soil probe or moisture meter.

Sheet Mulching – Also known as composting in place or lasagna composting. The process involves layering of compost, cardboard, and mulch on top of your lawn, depriving it of sunlight. It mimics nature by breaking down (decomposing) organic materials that help to improve the structure of the soil, nourish soil organisms, and improve air and water movement. Composting your lawn in place reduces waste to the landfill.

Rain Garden - A rain garden is a planted, shallow depression in the soil designed to collect rainwater from roofs, pavements, and other impermeable areas, and hold it temporarily to let it sink into the soil. Spillways are created for the inflow and outflow of water. The outflow can be directed to other contours in the soil, such as berms and basins, to continue the spread of water in your landscape.

These strategies allow storm water and irrigation runoff to be used for plant growth and soil enrichment rather than allowing it to run directly in the storm drainage system, creeks, and rivers, carrying pollutants such as pesticides, fertilizers, oil, pet waste, and debris. Place rain gardens a minimum of 10 feet away from structures.

Watershed – An area of land that channels snowmelt and rainfall to creeks, streams, rivers, and eventually to outflow points, such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean or to an interior body of water, such as a lake. Large watersheds can also encompass groundwater and aquifers. Your home and its landscape can be considered a mini watershed. During periods of heavy rain, water may run off of impervious surfaces such as your roof, driveway, and sidewalks, carrying pollutants and eroded soil into storm drains. So, using methods to slow, spread, sink, and store water in the soil on your property, as shown in these planting plans, help keep our waterways and the ecology of the watershed healthy.