



Landscape Drought Response Program GUIDE FOR RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE WATER USE REDUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to provide information on how to prepare and obtain approval of a landscape plan to reduce water use for the front yards of residences in the City of Agoura Hills, with planting areas less than 2,500 square feet.*

Review Process

Applicants are to submit a completed “Expedited Landscape Plan Review Application” with applicable fees for staff review and approval (see Attachment A). Applicants are to include one printed copy and a digital copy via web link of the application form and proposed landscape plans.

The City Landscape Architect will review plans and provide comments. An on-site visit is required to verify installation. Limited on-site guidance pertaining to the implementation of the plan will be available upon request.

Landscape Plan

The goal of the program is to encourage the community to design their front yard to blend with the natural surroundings of the City of Agoura Hills including incorporating drought tolerant plants to maintain the local ecology and in the process save water.

Typical Front Yard Landscape Plan & Plant List

Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the plant list provided in order to comply with the City design standards and fire safety requirements. These documents are intended to assist your landscape professional in the preparation of the plan submittal that will be reviewed by the City Landscape Consultant.

The Plan is to include at a minimum:

- Property address
- Total landscape area square feet
- North arrow and plan scale
- Existing building location
- Existing oak trees, if applicable
- Property lines
- Primary street names
- Paved areas – location and materials
- Proposed constructed landscape improvements – location and materials
- Driveway
- Utilities

* For landscape renovation projects over 2,500 square feet, refer to the “City of Agoura Hills Guide to the Landscape Approval Process”.

- Planting Plan – identify size, botanical name, and location for each plant
- Mulch material

Landscape Plan Guidelines

- Native Plants – climate appropriate plants shall be used, > 50% native plants to reduce the use of fertilizer, pesticide, and water, and provide food and habitat for beneficial insects and wildlife.
- At least 5 different species of shrubs and ground covers shall be used.
- Other Plants – other adapted plant species may be used, only low and moderate water use plants.
- Hardscape – paved and inorganic mulch areas shall be limited to < 40% of the total area. Pervious paving is encouraged. >60% of front yard area (excluding driveway) to be planting and organic mulch to limit heat gain.
- Turf – is discouraged and limited to active use areas. Alternative drought-tolerant turf substitutes are encouraged, including native grasses and other adapted, low growing plants. For this program, no more than 20% of the landscape area may include plants that are not low water use.
- Artificial Turf is not permitted in any yards abutting a public street frontage.
- Shade Trees – drought tolerant shade trees encouraged to provide 50% shade coverage on hardscape areas, reducing the heat island effect.
- Fire Safety – fire-wise plantings are required and must meet the requirements set forth by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department “Fuel Modification Guidelines”.

Turf Removal

Turf may be removed by physical removal or by sheet mulching. Sheet mulching creates healthy soils by composting weeds in place and encouraging favorable soil microbial activity and worms. (See Attachment C, “Sheet Mulching” EHN 94 by the University of California)

Fall Planting

Fall planting is encouraged which will provide the most amenable conditions (ideal temperatures and potential for rain) for plant establishment. A recommended method is to choose a water-wise irrigation schedule and then select adapted plantings, replacing thirstier plants with low water use substitutes. The goal is to transition to a primarily low-water use landscape.

Irrigation

Residents are encouraged to update irrigation systems to include the latest water saving devices, including smart controllers, flow sensors, master valves, etc. General guidance will be provided. Most front yard renovation plans will not require a formal irrigation plan submission.

An irrigation plan and water use calculations are required for front yard rehabilitation projects with an aggregate landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet. Plans are required to meet the California regulatory code related to landscape water use (Title 23, Division 2, Chapter 2.7, Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance).

Mulch

- Quality mulch (compost or fir bark), 3" depth recommended.
- Free compost is available from Rancho Las Virgenes Community Compost, (818) 251-2312, <https://www.lvmwd.com/our-services/wastewater-services/rancho-las-virgenes-community-compost>
- Note that inorganic mulch, such as decorative gravels, shall be considered part of the hardscape, which is limited to < 40% of the total landscape area.

Landscape Maintenance during the Drought

- Fertilization is not recommended, except for turf and some non-native plants. Fertilize when soil moisture is present. Native plants do not require inputs such as fertilizer.
- Allow turf to go dormant. Water sparingly. Raise mow height.
- Deep water trees once per month if needed. Oaks are adapted to dry summers and require water only during establishment and under extreme stress conditions. Parkway trees are likely to be more stressed due to pavement and limited rooting area.

Attachments

Typical Front Yard Landscape Plan (Attachment B)

- Site Improvement Plan
- Planting Plan – Configuration A, B, or C
- Plant Legend
- Plant Images

California Native Plant Society (Attachment C)

- Native Landscape Planting Guide – North and East Los Angeles County
- Native Landscape Planting Guide – South Los Angeles County
- 7 Steps to A Drought-Tolerant Garden

University of California – Environmental Horticulture Notes (Attachment D)

- Sheet Mulching

Contact Information

- Agoura Hills City Landscape and Oak Tree Consultants (Attachment E)

Plant Sources (Attachment F)

Landscape Professionals in California (Attachment G)

Other attachments/Links

Fire Safety – Los Angeles County Fire Department

- A Guide to Defensible Space, Ornamental Vegetation Maintenance
- Defensible Space – Creating and Maintaining Your Defensible Space (<https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace>)
- Fire Smart Landscaping (<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/fire-smart-landscaping/>)

References

Metropolitan Water District Programs

- SoCal Water Smart – for residential rebate program, includes turf removal (\$2/sq.ft.) and other water wise irrigation materials. <https://www.bewaterwise.com/>

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District Programs

- Discounted controllers with free professional installation for the district's customers. <https://www.lvmwd.com/community-resources/water-use-efficiency/rebates/lvmwd-rachio-program>
- Resource for list of professional services, appropriate plants for this area, and tips on how to remove your lawn. <https://www.lvmwd.com/community-resources/efficient-outdoor-water-use/landscape-transformation-resources>

Planting for Fire Safety

- Home Hardening Program assists residents in protecting their home from fire. One-time grants are available that include landscape improvements. <https://www.agourahillscity.org/department/city-manager/emergency-services/home-hardening-page>

Books

- Fross, D.; O'Brien, B., John Evarts, Marjorie Popper. *Reimagining the California Lawn*. 1st ed. Cachuma Press, 2011.
- Rubin, G., Warren, L. *The California Native Landscape: The Homeowner's Design Guide to Restoring Its Beauty and Balance*. Illustrated edition, Timber Press, 2013.

Other Important Information

- What NOT to plant: California Invasive Plant Council - <https://www.cal-ipc.org/>

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