



## Planning a Simple California Native Garden

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### Planning – gather this info

- Evaluate your **location** – it won't change (much)
  - Exposure/hrs of light/shade
  - Location – what part of the city (hills, suburbs)
  - Soil – dig a hole test
  - Water resources nearby (neighbors, too)
  - Slopes
  - Views – keep it or block it?
  - Walls/trees/existing plants
- Determine your **style**
  - Modern, formal, cottage, collector, dramatic
  - Consider the style of your home
  - Visit gardens, take pictures/notes of likes & dislikes
- Consider the **utility** of your site:
  - How will it be used?
  - Pets, kids, dining/relaxation
  - Curb appeal
  - Habitat
  - Screening
  - Pathway (entryway, to side gate, along side of house)
  - Reducing water bill
  - Low maintenance

### Design

- Draw** ground plan – using an architectural ruler or graph paper/ Make a few copies

#### Indicate:

- Hardscape – (Bones)
- existing plants that will remain
- Micro-climates – shade, overwatering, reflective heat
- Existing irrigation

### Elements to consider –

- Line – straight/curves; paths, rows, sections, odd #'s
- Texture – leaf, bark
- Color – greys to greens - blossoms
- Contrast – shrub/leaf shapes
- Depth – low to high, mounds
- Harmony/Balance – large groups, repetition
- Focus – “star” plant/tree, groups by “weight” – draws the eye – Piece of jewelry

## ❑ Choosing Plants – guts (perennial shrubs) & skin (ground cover to pull hold it together)

Key questions:

- Size at maturity (height/width) – how long to get there....
- Exposure/hardiness
- Bloom/dormancy period – year-round interest (flowering is just a fraction of the year)
- Water use (or lack thereof) – don't mix – see companion planting
- To what area is it native (coastal, desert, high altitude, canyons, valley)
- Maintenance – do you want to do it? How much? Perennials vs annuals

## ❑ Optional design element -

Detain the Rain – *Valley Water Sustainable Landscape Guidelines* - (keeping as much water on your property as possible, with as little as possible in the gutter)

- Slow (rain chains, gravel below eaves),
- spread (permeable materials),
- sink (swales/berms)
- store – (rain barrels, cisterns)

<https://s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/valleywater.org.if-us-west-2/f2-live/Sustainable%20Landscape%20Guidelines%20PDF.pdf>

## ❑ Start here:

- [www.calscape.org](http://www.calscape.org) – city, export the list – tells you which nurseries carry the plants
- Plants that qualify for the rebate:  
<https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/> - (Arboretum All-star vs California Native)
- **Modern Drip Irrigation (How to)** – UC Master Gardeners of SCC YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7xjK8QLo6I>
- **Valley Water Rebate Program** - <https://valleywater.dropletportal.com/>
- **Sheetmulching 101:** How to get rid of your lawn & get paid for it!  
Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0oCY59NsBc>
- **Native Plant Professionals:**  
**California Native Plant Society – Santa Clara Valley Chapter** - <https://www.cnps-scv.org/gardening/gardening-with-natives/68-native-plant-professionals-68>

## Design Ideas (shortcuts):

**Bloom! California** - <https://bloomcalifornia.org/>

**Waterwise Garden Designs:** <https://www.southbaygreengardens.org/landscape-designs/>

**Books:**

*California Native Plants for the Garden* Carol Bornstein, David Fross, Bart O'brien

*Designing California Native Gardens* (The Plant Community Approach to Artful, Ecological Gardens)

Glenn Keator & Alrie Middlebrook