



Drought Tolerant Landscaping *Part Two of a Four Part Series*



Here are more tips for landscaping during the drought:

Tune up your irrigation. You need to examine your irrigation system closely. Make sure you aren't losing water due to any broken or leaking pipes. Turn on your system and make sure water is going on the plants or lawn, not on the sidewalks, driveway, or roads. An efficient, well-tuned irrigation system will use less water if properly managed and maintained.

Drip irrigation can be especially prone to problems after five or six years. Mineral deposits can start build up and limit the system's performance. Salt/mineral deposits can be removed from emitters by soaking them in vinegar and/or using forced air to blow them out. Check for emitters that have popped off tubing. High pressure could be a reason for them popping off; install a pressure regulator if needed. Check to see if your system has a filter. If so, clean it. Filters will need to be cleaned more often if you are using well or ditch water and less often if using municipal water.

Assess your plant's needs; some plants' needs may have changed by this time. Native and drought-adapted plants are often established after two years of irrigation and may do fine without irrigation. When emitters are removed, install plugs designed for this purpose. Some large trees and shrubs may need more than one emitter and emitters should be moved further away from the base of the plant as the plant gets bigger.

Reduce your watering. If your irrigation system is set to water for 15 minutes, change it to less; if you water four days a week, change it to two or three. Make sure to do your watering in the early morning or late evening - this gives the water time to soak into the ground and you lose less to evaporation.

Replace your plants with California natives. Native plants are becoming more popular as people are realizing the savings in water and cost. With the right mix, you'll have an easy-care garden with year-round color and interest. Check out local nurseries for native plants. We'll give more recommendations for California natives in next week's article.

Remove your lawn. It's not as scary as it sounds. There are a lot of great alternatives. You can landscape with succulents, use grasses such as fine fescue and hair grass (deschampsia) that need mowed only once or twice a year to keep tidy and can live on very little rainfall. You can also add a lot of color with drought tolerant plants.