

Features of a Sustainable Landscape

By Partners in Water Conservation

Sustainable Landscaping incorporates eight basic principles which lead to **saving resources and a better environment**:

Features of a Sustainable Landscape



Landscape Planning & Design



Plant Selection



Hardscapes



Soils



Mulching



Turf or Grass



Irrigation



What is Sustainable Landscaping?

Sustainable landscapes are **resource efficient**, minimally polluting, in harmony with the local environment, with all aspects helping to reduce resource inputs and outputs. Applying the elements of a sustainable landscape, you can save time and money, create a beautiful landscape that is environmentally responsible and provide a space for you and your entire family to enjoy.

Who are the Partners In Water Conservation?

Partners In Water Conservation is a group comprised of representatives from Atascadero Mutual Water Company, Templeton Community Services District, the City of Paso Robles, the City of San Luis Obispo and the County of San Luis Obispo. The purpose of the group is to provide the community with valuable information and educational opportunities on how to use water more efficiently, both indoors and outdoors.

1. LANDSCAPE PLANNING & DESIGN

Creating a Sustainable Landscape begins with a well-thought-out landscape design. Design elements to consider include: User needs, users budget, final landscape appearance, and the functionality of the landscape, long-term maintenance considerations and irrigation requirements.

2. PLANT SELECTION

This single activity probably impacts the sustainability of a given landscape more than any other. Choosing the wrong plant can obligate you to ongoing treatments of fertilizer, pesticides and plant maintenance and reward you with the ultimate bad experience, a dead plant. Insure that the chosen plant is suitable for your particular site conditions and location. Factors to consider include: ultimate plant size, soil type, exposure, topography, special circumstances (i.e. deer resistance, wildfire threat and disease and insect resistance).



3. HARDSCAPES



Hardscapes refer to **areas that are not plants**. They include walks, patios, decks, garden walls, driveways, etc. Materials used for these features range from imported concrete and timber products to materials found on site or recycled; such as broken concrete pavers, natural rock walls or used railroad ties. Once constructed, hardscapes require little additional maintenance.

4. SOILS



Knowing your soil type is essential to making good plant choices and managing your water applications. Your soil pH and drainage characteristics greatly influence the plants that will grow successfully on your site. Make the effort to determine soil pH and texture. A test kit available from your local nursery will measure pH. If you need help determining soil texture, consult your local nursery or the University of California Cooperative Extension Service. Amending your soil may be necessary in some instances. Using "homegrown" compost and/or organic fertilizers may be helpful, depending on your soil conditions.

5. MULCHING

Mulching brings many benefits to the garden. Organic mulches recycle nutrients the way nature does. They also **reduce weed growth, reduce erosion, moderate soil temperature, increase plant growth, conserve moisture, reduce fertilizer cost** and reduce the amount of material that would typically go to the landfill. For more information on mulch, visit the website www.about.com. Go to organic gardening: mulch.



6. TURF or GRASS

Turf, in excess or poorly designed, is often the most consumptive feature in the landscape. It's thirsty, hungry and demands attention; the antithesis of sustainability. Done properly however, turf can be a valuable asset to the landscape. **To improve sustainability, limit turf to a functional size** (no more than 20% of the landscaped area) **and shape** (for irrigation efficiency). Also consider turf substitutes and/or alternatives.

7. IRRIGATION



Often, water is key to establishing a healthy and attractive landscape. **Applying irrigation water efficiently is critical to a particular landscape's sustainability.** Use drip irrigation systems whenever possible. Seek professional help in designing sprinkler systems and install them accordingly. Regular maintenance is also important in maintaining a system's efficiency.

8. MAINTENANCE

When all of the features of sustainability are employed, maintenance is often transformed from a grueling chore to a relaxing and enjoyable experience. Regardless of your interpretation, there is usually **less maintenance required in a sustainable landscape.**

Relax and enjoy your sustainable landscape!

