



Landscape Design

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## **Landscaping with California Natives**

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I recently attended a fantastic symposium, “Growing Natives: Celebrating California’s Beauty in Dry Times.” It gave me a whole new perspective on taking gardens “native.” I’ve long been a proponent of “water wise” gardens, and with recent water rate increases and the possibility of water rationing, it makes more sense than ever to rethink your landscape with an eye towards conservation. However, in addition to the water savings realized by using native California plants, what this symposium added to the conversation were the other benefits of using native plants:

**Lower maintenance** because natives require less water, fertilizer, pruning and pesticide.

**Increased wildlife** because native plants, birds, butterflies and other beneficial insects are “made for each other.” The variety of native insects and birds that your native garden brings in will also help keep your landscape free of mosquitoes and plant-eating bugs.

**Support of the local ecology** because creating gardens with native landscapes can help provide the habitat being lost with increasing development.

My own (incorrect) bias about native gardens was that they were dry, dusty and boring. With native gardens becoming more and more popular, the variety of native plants available in the nurseries is exploding. These days you can find plants that bloom in all seasons, plants with fantastically colored and aromatic leaves and plants with amazing bark and fruit: Plenty of options to avoid dry and boring!

It’s obvious if you think about it, but I guess I needed to hear it from the experts: like all gardens, even established native gardens require **SOME** maintenance to look their best.

It’s OK to tend a native garden. It’s not a sin if you give it a little water to get it through the hottest weeks, prune once a year to keep the grasses and perennials full, and mulch to keep the weeds and water use down. It is a garden for you to enjoy as well, after all.

The last speaker of the symposium said their company bumper sticker is flying off the shelves: “I Killed My Lawn. Ask Me How.” California native gardens are coming into their own.