



LANDSCAPE (SEASONAL MAINTENANCE)

A resilient landscape is fire-wise, water wise and promotes biodiversity by using California native plants. These gardens use sustainable practices, plant selection, and maintenance to reduce the risk of fire in the defensible space zone. Resilient gardens save water, protect us from fire and promote biodiversity.

START HERE!

DESIGN

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE

Fall

Winter

Spring

Summer

Fall is a time of transition in the landscape. The weather continues to be hot and dry in the early fall months, and fire risk is at its highest. Continued fire readiness is critical! Ensure that your landscape is still fire-safe. Regularly clear your roof and gutters of fallen debris to prevent ignition from flying embers in the event of a wildfire. Maintaining your property is a year-round task.

Later in the fall, as the weather cools and fall rains approach, it is a good time to begin new plantings. While air temperatures are cooler, soil temperatures are still warm enough to encourage root growth. Fall and winter rains allow new native plants to expand their root systems, helping them to thrive during the coming summer months.

Fire Readiness

- Maintain your roof and gutters free of leaves and other debris.

- Prevent falling leaves from accumulating along the house foundation and fences. Remove debris regularly!
 - Clean up dead leaves and other plant material from within trees and shrubs.
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Caring for the Fall Garden

- In Zones 1-2, allow leaf litter to enrich the soil after fall rains and throughout winter and spring, but minimize it in Zone 1 in the summer. When removing leaves, use a rake, not a leaf blower ([see below](#)).
 - Prepare for rain and erosion. Keep soil covered with appropriate plants and mulch, depending on the zone. Clean debris from gutters and drains.
 - Reduce watering with the approach of the rainy season (usually November to March/April in Northern California).
 - Monitor water needs of newly installed plants. This establishment phase is critical and will ensure long-term health of your landscape.
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Pruning for Healthy Plants

- Most of the herbaceous perennials can be cut back to about 6" from the ground every 2-3 years in late fall to discourage woody growth. Alternating years for maintenance between groups of plants conserves cover for wildlife. Some popular plants that respond well to cutting back are California fuchsia, coyote mint, and many sages and buckwheats.
- Cut back cool season grasses just before they start to grow with fall rains. Native grasses that respond well to this practice are needlegrass, California fescue, red fescue, tufted hairgrass, and California melic grass.



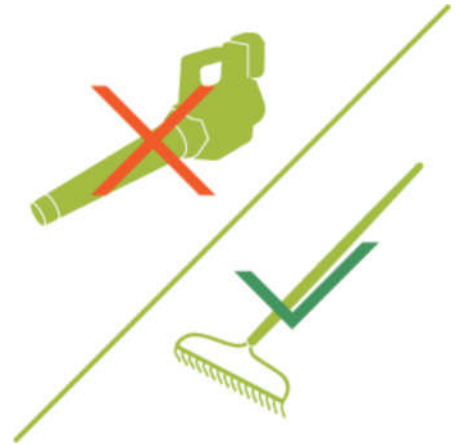
Irrigation

Fall is an important time to water new plants to get them properly established. Existing, older vegetation should also be deeply irrigated during prolonged dry spells, as this is the time of year that they depend upon moisture to stimulate growth and insure overall vigor. For more information about irrigation systems, [check our Irrigation section here](#). If we don't receive fall rains, it's important to provide supplemental water to native plants.



About Leaf Blowers

Avoid use of leaf blowers in the garden. Leaf blowers blow away mulch and topsoil, decreasing your plants' ability to regulate temperature and retain moisture. Leaf blowers are also a fire hazard due to the engine heat and the sparks they can generate. Use a rake instead.



Sources

California Native Plants for The Garden (2006) by C. Bornstein, D. Fross, and B. O'Brien. Cachuma Press.
[Adding California Native Bunchgrasses to Your Garden](#) (East Bay CNPS, 2021)
[California Watershed Approach to Landscaping](#) (G3, 2018)
[Reducing the Vulnerability of Buildings to Wildfire: Vegetation & Landscaping](#) (UC ANR Publication 8695)
[Compost in a Hurry](#) (UC ANR, 2007)
[Fire Preparation Through the Year](#) (UC ANR, 2020)
[Fire Recovery Guide](#) (California Native Plant Society, 2019)
[Getting Started with Native Plants](#) (Theodore Payne Foundation, 2015)
[Native Planting Guides](#) (California Native Plant Society)
[Pruning Tips and Techniques](#) (California Native Plant Society)
[Starting a Native Plant Garden](#) (California Native Plant Society, 2017)



Sonoma Ecology Center works to address challenges related to water supply and quality, open space, rural character, biodiversity, energy, climate change, and a better quality of life for all residents.

<https://sonomaecologycenter.org/>



The UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County has been extending educational outreach and providing technical assistance to home gardeners since 1981.

<https://sonomamg.ucanr.edu/>



The mission of the Habitat Corridor Project is to create and promote California native plant restoration gardens in the urban environment.

<http://habitatcorridorproject.org/>



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