

PART I

# Introduction



# 1

## Your Water and Energy— let's get this right!

California Friendly® landscaping isn't about plant lists, although it includes them. It isn't about irrigation guidelines, although those are provided as well. What California Friendly® landscaping is about is long-term sustainability, resiliency, and livability. It *is* about landscaping that is friendly to all Californians, both now and well into the future.

The California Friendly® Landscaping program was designed to inspire a style appropriate for our semi-arid climate and this more sustainable style is catching on. Between the years 2008 and 2016 Southern Californians ripped out over 167 million square feet of turf and replaced it with plants that are well adapted to our climate. Our region has made a big investment in California Friendly® landscapes. Now our challenge is to maintain them.

Regrettably, many people struggle to maintain resource-conserving landscapes. They believe that resource-conserving means zero-maintenance which, of course, is not true. The consequences have been as bad for property managers as they have been for the conservation movement. Poor maintenance has created visually unappealing and ecologically ineffective landscapes—and all of this creates a reason for people to migrate back to their water wasting ways.

California Friendly® landscapes call for a new attitude towards maintenance. It is one that requires more engagement, examination and acceptance.

**Engage** with your soil. Bend down and get personally acquainted. Nothing improves irrigation efficiency and plant health more than someone willing to dig in and become familiar with the soil. Smelling earth provides cues to its levels of organic matter and oxygen. Letting it crumble and fall through your fingers tells you about the amount of biological activity it contains. And digging down several inches teaches you there is often more moisture in the soil than is evident on the surface. All of this information is important, and all of it is gained by getting closer to the soil.

**Examine** the rest of the landscape. Getting to know weeds helps you identify soil conditions. Looking at leaves to identify potential problems helps you fine tune irrigation and fertilization schedules. And becoming familiar with bugs, funguses, and other pests provides cues for pruning and planting. Signs are everywhere. We just need to take the time to look for them.

**Accept** that a more natural landscape is going to be a little wilder. It may have a few more weeds and bugs, but with them come more connections to nature and more long-term security. We also need to accept that plants and soil dictate irrigation, pruning, and planting schedules, not a calendar.

The purpose of this book is to help you maintain a California Friendly® Landscape. With it you can:

- Maintain irrigation efficiency through time and change.
- Maintain aesthetic qualities through time and change.
- Maintain a landscape's ability to slow, stop and clean stormwater runoff.

Take this book into the field with you and dig in. It will absolutely help. From irrigation and fertilization, to mulches and infiltration areas, this book provides a solid foundation. But no matter how good a manual is, it is only a book. California Friendly® landscapes are maintained by people. Designers and gardeners, budget directors and advocates, we all have a hand in a landscape's success. We all have a hand in Southern California's health. Let's get dirty.

See you in the garden,

Doug

### It's Just Not Water

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Landscapes are essential to the long-term survivability of Southern California. They provide incredible benefits. Landscapes positively impact economic welfare, public health, and ecological wellbeing. They protect aquatic environments, clean the air, and provide a wealth of recreational opportunities. We need them.

But landscaping has costs, too. Some of these costs are enormous. We use pesticides that kill not just the targeted pest but all insects, including the beneficial ones. We spread chemical fertilizers across great expanses, allowing the nutrients to slowly seep or run off, diminishing watery ecosystems. And we lavish our landscapes with water, and all of its embodied energy.

Energy is embedded into every drop of water we use. From extraction, transportation and treatment, to distribution and the handling of wastewater, every step is energy-drenched. A majority of the water in California is moved with either natural gas pumps or electrical pumps. About 30% of that total pump power comes from natural gas.

While the use of renewable gas and electric energies will continue to grow, they are currently variable in supply. Solar only works in the day and wind turbines only when it is windy. To get through these periods of low or no generation we'll need efficient energy storage and reduced energy use during off-generation hours.

California Friendly® Landscaping can meet, if not exceed, the state's goals for carbon reduction and water and energy conservation, and still provide immense benefit. These landscapes can sequester up to 300% more carbon than is released through irrigation; they can reduce residential cooling costs by as much as 50%, and they can infiltrate 80% of a rain event onsite—all for minimal water and energy costs.



California Friendly® landscapes are a good investment, for all of us.