

BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT



This exhibit demonstrates how making over your backyard space can save water, maintenance and money. Both comparison yards are identical in size, yet one is more inviting, far less work and uses a fraction of the water: 6,000 gallons vs 28,000 gallons per year. That's more than 75% savings on your water bill and use of our most precious resource! The landscaping on the right side of this exhibit was originally installed using a higher percentage of hardscape, correct use of mulch, irrigation, and low water-use plants. It was updated and funded in 2017 by long-time Garden Docents Vince & Kay McGrath, who appreciated the ideas of saving water and freedom from mowing.

During the update, slopes, rocks, garden art, and a stepped path were added to provide a more interesting garden design while sticking to a water-wise approach to landscaping. Total cost of the 2017 makeover was about \$1,500 for plants and materials.

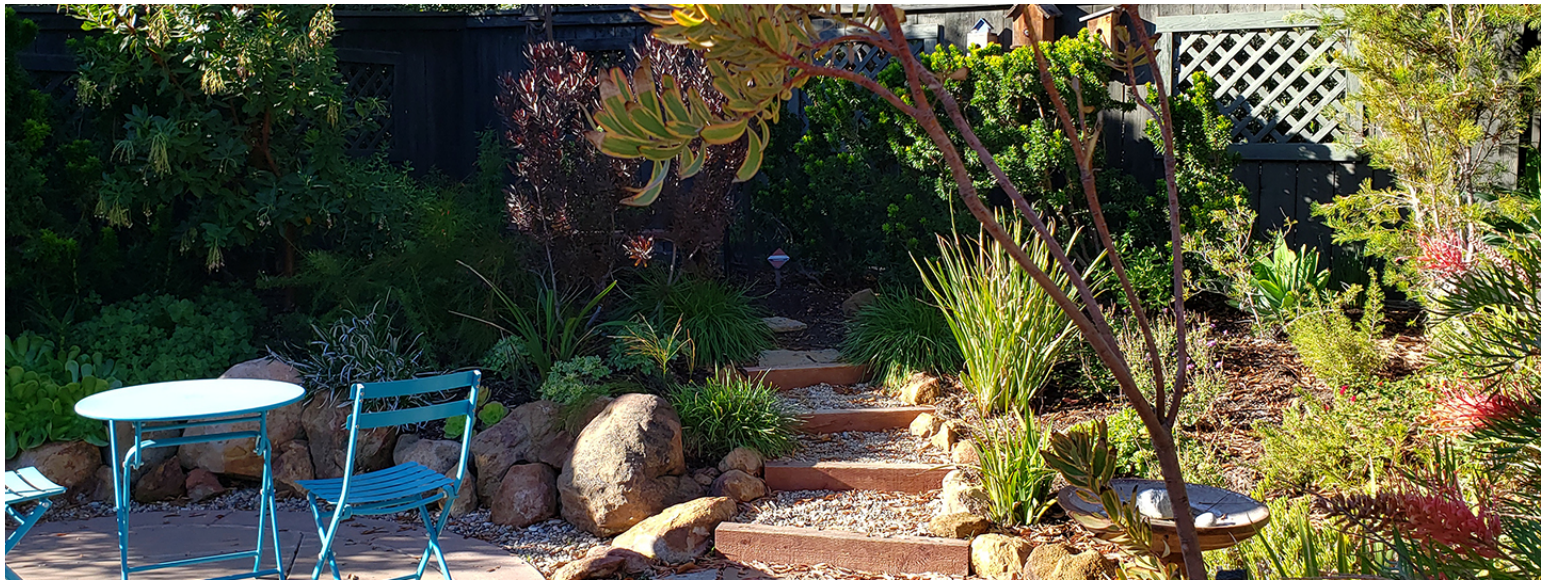
Using these water-wise strategies results in a beautiful, usable space suitable for enjoying a relaxing yard with less maintenance required.

Turf Troubles?



Depending on the type of turf used, lawns require different amounts of regular mowing and watering. All grass lawns will require water, some more than others. To keep lawns looking maintained and usable, more of your time is required. The left side of this exhibit demonstrates how weeds can take over if the homeowner does not stay on track with mowing and upkeep. Treating yards for weeds and patchy growth causes frustration, and requires time and money. Notice the inappropriate irrigation installed here waters the fence more than the turf? Weed control and water savings are both minimized by converting a lawn yard to the peaceful, respite yard on the right side of the exhibit. Read on for some ideas you can use in your own yard.

RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued)



SUBTLE SLOPES

Planting on slopes adds depth to yards by allowing natural height to spotlight specific plants. If your yard is completely flat, try adding some fill dirt to certain areas to create slopes. Layering your planting also adds depth. Plant taller plants mostly toward the top and smaller ones near the bottom of a slope. In between fill with plants that tend to grow wider than tall. This is a great spot for colorful, pollinator attracting plants. Use boulders, decorative stones, or other edging materials that fit your theme, to define the functional area.



MULTI-LEVEL LIVING

Installation of pathways and steps can add a little whimsy and magic, leading to hidden secrets in your yard, like private retreats among the trees. Steps can be a landscape design focal point. They can be in a straight line, angled or even a natural-looking curve for a more interesting look. This exhibit used 4x4 lumber for the front of the steps. Use railroad ties for larger yards, and make sure the lumber is pressure treated so it will last longer. Then fill in the steps with different gravels, river rock, bark, etc. See the Mulch Exhibit for ideas on filling.



RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued)



COLORFUL POLLINATOR PARTY

Changing your yard to have a defined functional area and dedicating the rest to design opens the door to invite pollinators into your garden. Your eyes will enjoy the ever-changing color palette and you will be entertained by your “visitors.” Not only that, you will be supporting nature by providing your own personal ecosystem for birds, bees and butterflies to survive and thrive. They, in turn, support the plants in your yard that need pollination. Make sure to provide a water source for pollinators, too.

TREES, SHRUBS & LOW-GROWING PLANTS

Plant selection adds dimension to yards with height, textures, shapes and color. Colors are found on bark, branches, changing leaves, blossoms and fruit. A garden is like an artist’s palette. Get Creative!

Trees are a visual anchor in yards. Many have bold and beautiful blossoms adding drama to a garden. They provide shade that protects smaller plants from the heat and cools the temperature of your yard. They also make a handy resting place for visiting birds. Many attract an array of pollinators, including bees, birds and butterflies. Examples in exhibit: Marina Strawberry (left); Native Red Poker (center); Chinese Pistache (right). See below for tree details.



Examples in exhibit: Marina Strawberry (left); Native Red Poker (center); Chinese Pistache (right). See below for tree details.

Shrubs can define a garden’s design theme in dramatic ways. Bright or deep greens, and rust or redish leaves add unique looks. Growth patterns can be tall and round, wide and flat, or any combination of the two, and can have sprawling or shooting branches. Examples in exhibit: Twisted Myrtle (left and center); Leucadendron (center); Grevelia (right). See below for shrub details.

Low-growing plants can have long blades or short leaves in clusters or stems. They come in colors from almost pure white to nearly black. Leaves are solid, stripped, dotted or variegated. Some grow close to the ground or cascade over rocks and planters. Others grow up like a fountain spray or bush out in dense clusters—an endless selection! Some can even grow into medium heights and widths. Examples in exhibit: Rosemary (left); Aeonium (left in stones); Flapjack (right).

RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued) - TREES



“Marina” Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus* “Marina”)

Characteristics: Evergreen with dark green foliage; blooms (pink) in spring/summer; small red-orange strawberry-like fruit in fall.

Care: Grows best in drier, warmer conditions; well-drained soil, clay; sun to partial shade.

Growth: Moderate rate; 20'-30' H x 15'-20' W.

Water: Moderate, supplement rain in winter months, tolerates occasional drought shock.



Native Red Poker (*Hakea bucculenta*)

Characteristics: Evergreen tree/shrub; bright orange-red blooms in winter and spring; attracts birds.

Care: Full sun; will tolerate some shade; extremely well-drained soil; plant in open area.

Growth: Upright growth, prune to shrub or tree shape; perfect for screen hedge; 10'-12' tall.

Water: Very little once established.



Chinese Pistache Tree (*Pistacia chinensis*)

Characteristics: Ornamental tree; dark green through spring and summer; red and orange leaves in fall. Attracts/feeds birds and insects.

Care: Full sun (unfiltered 6 hrs+); well-drained, fertile soil; heat tolerant; any soil type.

Growth: Medium growth rate; symmetrical, round top in full sun; to 25'-35' tall and wide.

Water: Low; drought tolerant.

RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued) SHRUBS



Twisted Myrtle (*Myrtus communis* 'Boetica')

Characteristics: Evergreen foliage; twisted stems; aromatic; white blooms in summer; fruit is blueberry-like seed with a hard center.

Care: Full or part sun; amended, well-drained soil; minimal maintenance.

Growth: Upright, dense habit; 7' H x 6' W.

Water: Low; deep, infrequent water once established.



Ebony Conebush (*Leucadendron* 'Ebony')

Characteristics: Dark, blackish-purple foliage; long, butterknife-shaped leaves; winter blooms at tips of branches with small yellow cones embedded in leaves which become fiery red when in bloom.

Care: Full sun; well-drained soil; good air flow.

Growth: Long, upright branches; 6' H x 4-6' W.

Water: Low; drought tolerant once established.



Grevillea 'Superb' (Hybrid)

Characteristics: Compact, evergreen; deeply divided light green leaves; pink/coral/yellow cylindrical blooms, up to 5" long at branch ends, almost year-round; abundant nectar.

Care: Full or part sun; acidic, well-drained soil.

Growth: Dense branching habit; 3-5' tall and wide.

Water: Low; drought tolerant once established.

RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued) - Low-Growing Plants



Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Characteristics: Evergreen; low-grow/spread shrub; strongly aromatic; needle-like leaves; pale blue to white blooms winter/spring; attracts birds, bees and butterflies.

Care: Full sun; tolerates light shade; moist, but well-drained soil; easy care; low maintenance.

Growth: 2-6' H x 2-5' W, can be kept smaller.

Water: Drought tolerant once established.



Giant Velvet Rose (*Aeonium canariense*)

Characteristics: Evergreen succulent; velvety leaf rosettes, 6"-10" wide; green in shade, leaf edges get reddish tinge when exposed to sun.

Care: Full sun/part shade; well-drained soil.

Growth: 24"-48"; low branching.

Water: Drought tolerant, but has shallow root system and requires more water than other succulents.



Flapjack (*Kalanchoe thyrsiflora*)

Characteristics: Fast-growing succulent: paddle-shaped leaves stacked up, looks like pancakes; grey-green leaves if grown in shade; green to red from center to edges of leaves if grown in sun.

Care: Full sun; well-drained soil.

Growth: Up to 2' H; grows in stacked pattern.

Water: Drought tolerant; water deeply, let soil dry between watering; can rot in muddy soil.

RETROFIT BACKYARD MAKEOVER EXHIBIT (continued)



COLORS & SHAPES

Plants have a variety of colors on stems and leaves, even when not in bloom. Consider adding contrasting plants for a year-round color palette. You can also add color add shape with structural pieces, like arbors, porticoes, lattice, and trellises. This exhibit displays an arbor with lanterns hanging from each side as well as framed lattice squares on the side and back fencing. Vining plants can take advantage of lattice, trellises and arbors for additional growth heights and add a sense of seclusion.



GARDEN DECOR

Many decor pieces available on the market today are specifically designed to add charm to home gardens. This exhibit features a brightly colored bistro table and chairs, a bird house mail box, and the three bird houses on the back fence. Rustic, hand-crafted garden decor adds charm and whimsy to any yard. The Garden's Gift Shop frequently offers similar hand-crafted bird houses for sale, as well as many other items to give your yard a personality all its own.



SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

This is how the makeover looked in 2017 as it neared completion. TIP: The best way to design a garden is to envision what it *can* be, plant it, then enjoy the journey of it becoming your dream garden. And remember, the time you gain by not mowing can be spent sitting in your garden makeover, watching it change while it matures. You can only imagine what it will look like in a few years. Don't be surprised when nature improves on your masterpiece!