

Install It Yourself California Native Garden

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My goal in this presentation is to help DIY homeowners who want to replace their imported landscapes and lawns with California native plants, birds and butterflies. I want to stress that this is NOT the same as hiring a professional landscape contractor who has spent decades honing his or her craft. They earn their money and provide a guaranteed product. Also, please don't hire unlicensed operators who aren't insured, bonded or properly trained. They don't pay worker's compensation or disability, and if an accident occurs on your property, you are completely liable for all costs and can even lose your home. 'Nuf said.

What do I need? Necessary

- Plan (see previous DIY Design presentation)
- Gloves (my favorite is Atlas Nitrile Grip)
- Shovel
- Rake/pitchfork
- Wheelbarrow
- Pruners (for drip tubing)
- Garden hose

Optional

- Pick to remove shrub roots
- Lawnmower or string trimmer
- Truck is handy for compost, but it's also deliverable
- Plumbing tools, if you are changing your system to drip (pipe wrench, PVC pipe cutter, etc.)
- Good friends!

What tools do I need? Necessary

- Newspaper or builder's paper
- Free mulch
- Compost
- Plants
- Drip irrigation parts, including a pressure reducer & filter (or a willingness to hand water)

Optional

- Mycorrhizae
- Compost Tea
- Purchased mulch
- Boulders
- Focal elements like bird bath, bench, pots

Special instructions if you are landscaping on a slope

- If steep, you may wish to terrace
- Mulch on newspaper just slides off so instead, use a sandwich of shredded redwood bark, jute with 6" sod staples, topped with more bark ("gorilla hair")
- Valves need to be 12" above the highest irrigation lines or have backflow device between water source and valves
- Place emitters above the plant
- Separate zones on the contour, not up and down
- Water the top of hill more than the bottom

Soil testing

- Soil testing is best done as part of the design process.
- Refer to the handout DIY Design Handout for a list of resources for soil testing

What does professional landscaping cost, in the Bay Area?

- Demo, planting, lawn, irrigation only \$10-12/sft
- Typical yard, softscape & average amount of hardscape \$16 to \$21/sft
- More complex with more hardscape \$32 to \$43/sft & up
- Professional Costs: <http://www.earthcareland.com/what-we-do/installation.html>

Costs, if you do all the work yourself (If you already own or can borrow the tools)

- Plants: \$5-12 each for small plants (4"-1 gallon)
- Mulch: \$33/yd woodchips, \$72/yd bark, \$32/yd arbor chips at Lyngso
- Irrigation: \$250-\$300 includes 2 new valves and timer
- Compost: \$40+/yd, municipal compost is less
- Compost Tea: \$8/gallon, get 3-4 gals. which can be diluted
- Builders paper: \$15 for a 3'x140' roll (doubled covers 200sft)
- Staples \$60/1000, but can get smaller amount
- Sod Cutter rental: \$100 for 2 hours (This is only if you have Bermuda Grass. Rented sod cutters can be temperamental; it's helpful to have two people.)

Sources for materials

Plants

- Capitol Wholesale Nursery – good selection of natives, will sell retail
2938 Everdale Drive, San Jose www.capitolwholesalenursery.com
- Yerba Buena Nursery, now in Half Moon Bay
- Native Revival Nursery – great plants, and other retail items, demo garden
2600 Mar Vista Dr. Aptos, CA 95003 www.nativerivival.com
- California Native Plant Society an annual plant sale, in October, at Hidden Villa

Mycorrhizae

- Capitol Wholesale Nursery, see above
- Most retail nurseries

Compost, Mulch, Boulders & Flagstone for stepping stones

- Lyngso Garden Materials 345 Shoreway Rd, San Carlos, 94070
www.lyngsogarden.com (650) 364-1730
- South Bay Materials 1781 Angela St, San Jose, CA 95125 (408) 977-1855
- U-Save Rockery 589 E Gish Road, San Jose CA 95112
www.usaverockerysanjose.com

Irrigation Parts

- Home Depot & Orchard Supply (be careful of the ½" tubing size!)
- Ewing Irrigation (wholesale/will sell retail) 1735 Rogers Ave, San Jose
www.ewing1.com
- Horizon Irrigation (will sell retail) 1990 Stone Ave, San Jose, CA 95125
www.horizononline.com

Free Arbor Chips

- Use the phone book and start politely calling tree trimming companies
- Lyngso sells (and delivers) cleaned arbor chips, for \$32/yd

Live Compost Tea

- Lyngso Garden Materials (usually on Wednesdays, call ahead)
- Mauby All Natural Brian Debasitis www.mauby.com

Builder's Paper (Don't get the one with waterproofing!!!)

- Lyngso Garden Materials 345 Shoreway Rd, San Carlos, 94070
www.lyngsogarden.com
- Home Depot

Lessons from EarthCare's *Natural Front Yards* program

- Sustainable landscaping ideals of material re-use and minimal disruption
- Affordable lawn replacement using natives in sheet mulch
- www.naturalfrontyards.com
- Not for Bermuda or Oxalis (different treatments)

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

1. Remove unwanted shrubs
2. Cap off sprinkler system underground
3. Scalp lawn (optional)
4. Cut back edges near hardscape, 4" deep, 18" strip, tapered up to lawn
5. Mound the extra soil in a natural shape
6. Cover everything with 5 layers of newspaper (or 2 layers builder's paper and arbor chips)
7. Plant small plants in planting pockets with mycorrhizae & compost
8. Install drip lines
9. Cover with attractive mulch
10. Spray with compost tea (AACT)

Organic Bermuda Grass control:

1. Water the soil 3 days before removal.
2. Rent a sod-cutter, make two passes (about 1 ½" each) to remove most rhizomes.
3. Remove to the landfill or other location to dry out thoroughly (then reuse the soil)
4. Rototill lightly, and rake out Bermuda
5. Follow up by spot hand weeding anything that re-sprouts

Organic Oxalis (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) control:

I haven't really found any (sigh). Persistent hand pulling before it flowers, for three years. Weeding can be combined with lots of smothering, but will need to replenish paper/cardboard annually. Chickens do eat oxalis.

CALCULATOR: How to calculate how much compost and mulch you need

Bulk materials like compost and mulch are measured in cubic yards.

To figure how many yards you need: Multiply the width by the length to get your square footage. Then multiply that by the number of inches of depth you want.

Then divide by 324. **Example:** to put 4" of mulch on a 20' x 30' area = 600sft
 $4 \times 600 = 2400 / 324 = 7.4 = 7 \frac{1}{2}$ yards.

MAINTENANCE OF A CALIFORNIA NATIVE GARDEN

- Without a lawn, you will no longer need weekly maintenance
- Periodic additions of mulch when needed
- It is best to keep blowers to a minimum (rake the autumn leaves, or add to mulch)
- No pesticides (kills the good bugs and the soil biology)
- Selective shaping; no pruning with a electric hedge shears

Quarterly Maintenance Schedule

Spring

- Turn on irrigation system
- Check irrigation system for leaks, broken lines
- Apply compost tea

Summer

- Keep an eye on irrigation, adjust as necessary
- Watch for pests (Integrated Pest Management)
- Replenish mulch if needed
- Some deadheading (remove dead flowers to encourage bloom)

Fall

- Turn down irrigation timer
- Rake leaves (put in compost pile)
- Cut back perennials after bloom
- Groom grasses
- Hand weeding
- Apply compost tea

Winter

- Turn off irrigation system
- Continue hand weeding where needed
- Pruning of woody trees and shrubs

Resources

Best book for maintenance (Spanish and English)

Care & Maintenance of Southern California Native Plant Gardens
by Bart O'Brian. Out of print, see if you can find an old one
originally printed by Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens

To find a certified Green Gardener:

<http://www.mywatershedwatch.org/findgardener.html>

To find a landscape professional who specializes in California Natives,
for design, installation or maintenance:

http://landscapestandards.com./index.php?title=California_Native_Plant_Professionals_List