



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Water Department**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***Summer Landscaping with a Purpose***

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**SAN DIEGO** – The heat is on! During the upcoming hot summer months, San Diegans should take note that landscaping can do more than add an aesthetic appeal to your home. It can also protect your home from possible brush fires as well as help you reduce your water consumption outdoors. Several plants in your landscape can perform this triple duty during the upcoming hot season.

Simple steps can help landscapes defend your home from dangers. First, remove excessive foliage, dead, and dry leaves around your home to lessen the amount of impending fuel for fires. Homeowners can then provide their homes additional fire fighting support by choosing the right plants. Trees, shrubs, and plants can vary in flammability depending on leaf moisture content, volatile oils and resin content, salt content on leaves, amount of loose bark and dry twigs. Plants that are less flammable, such as Crocea Ice Plant, and Saltbrush, will slow down or help suppress fires. While it is true that all plants will eventually burn, two categories of plants can mitigate the damage. *Fire-retardant* plants will not easily ignite during moderate intensity brushfires, and can actually turn fires away while *fire-resistant* plants have the ability to survive some exposure to fire and can even readily re-sprout after burning. Be careful to only make changes to plants within your property boundary so that you do not disturb any protected wildlife areas.

Choosing landscaping that can ward off fires can also create new water savings. Some plants such as Coyote Brush and Rockrose, which are low growing, are considered to have low fuel volume for fires and also require minimal watering. By utilizing certain types of plants that can survive drought conditions and need less watering, homeowners can experience a significant decrease in water use and a reduction in utility bills. Selecting appropriate plants is particularly important during the summer months when water consumption rates tend to increase, and studies have shown that landscaping alone accounts for more than 50 percent of the total residential water usage. Creating a defensible space with appropriate water efficient landscaping can contribute to lowered water usage rates during the summer, and all throughout the year.

When selecting plants for your garden, remember that vibrant colors and beautiful flowers do not have to be compromised when it comes to drought tolerant and water-efficient landscaping. Vibrant and colorful landscaping beautifies any home and, according to the American Nursery and Landscape Association, can add 7-15 percent to the property value. In addition, plants prevent erosion. If applicable, consult with the property owner or homeowner association before making any changes to your surrounding landscape. It may also be beneficial to have a knowledgeable licensed professional company perform the landscaping work for you.

For ideas and tips on how to develop and maintain healthy water-wise landscapes that are drought tolerant and beautiful, visit the Water Conservation Garden located at Cuyamaca College. For information on the garden and its special events, call (619) 660-0614 or visit [www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation](http://www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation) and click on the “Water Conservation Garden” link.

For fire safety tips and information on brush management, check out the City of San Diego’s Fire and Life Services website at [www.sandiego.gov/fireandems/](http://www.sandiego.gov/fireandems/) or contact your local fire department for specific recommendations.

*The Water Conservation Program reduces water demand through promoting or providing incentives for the installation of hardware that provides permanent water savings, and by providing services and information to help San Diegans make better decisions about water use. For more information about Water Conservation, visit [www.sandiego.gov/water](http://www.sandiego.gov/water) or call 619.515.3500.*