



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## 2 Water Department

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### *California Native Plants: A Smart Alternative*

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**SAN DIEGO** – Summer is the season when most plants are in full bloom – perfect for taking a stroll through your neighborhood park, or any local garden, to admire nature at its best. Summer is also a great time to start collecting ideas for how to create, or improve upon, your own personal outdoor wonderland. For those of you seeking to do something unique, and practical, in the garden, why not go native? California native plants can be a smart alternative if you want to have a beautiful garden and save water and money while you're at it.

From the root system to the leaves and blooms, many native plants are designed to thrive on semi-arid climate conditions, like San Diego's. Because of this, there are benefits to incorporating them into your garden or landscape. On many levels, the costs involved with maintaining native plants are much lower. Natives have adapted defense mechanisms that allow them to resist garden pests, which could help reduce costs for pesticides. In addition, the reduced use of pesticides can promote biodiversity and prevent damage to the ecosystem. Natives also require less fertilizing, cultivating and irrigation.

Whether plants are native or not, they need to be watered efficiently. The difference with native plants is that they use less water than traditional garden landscapes. This is because they are already growing in their natural habitat and are already used to the drier conditions. Lower water usage can equate to lower utility bills. Additionally, native plants help attract many species, such as birds and insects, which are dependent on the native vegetation in that habitat. The end result is a restoration of the natural biodiversity of an area.

There is a wide range of native plants, so choosing the right plants for your garden will depend on location, climate, and soil. It's well worth spending some time this summer learning more about native plants. Then in November, which is the best month to plant natives, you will be ready to add some local interest to your garden. Here are some ways to research, explore and experience the beauty of native plants in San Diego:

- ◆ Visit the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College, for examples of California native plants and free garden seminars. For more information on events and directions, log on to [www.sandiego.gov/water](http://www.sandiego.gov/water) and click on the "Water Conservation" link.
- ◆ An online resource guide about native and drought tolerant plants is available through the Southern California Metropolitan Water District's website. Log on to <http://www.mwd.dst.ca.us/> and click on "Conservation" link to access the Southern California Heritage Landscape page.
- ◆ The California Native Plant Society promotes the understanding of California's native flora and the importance its preservation. Visit <http://www.cnps.org/> find out about the San Diego Chapter's field trips, meetings, plant sales, and other fun activities.
- ◆ Experience and appreciate plants and animals in Southern California by participating in a free San Diego Natural History Museum "Canyoneer" nature walk. Check the calendar of walks by visiting the San Diego Natural History Museum website at <http://www.sdnhm.org/canyoneers/history.html>.

*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.*