

# Media Release



## For Immediate Release

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## California-Friendly Landscape Contest Winners Announced

La Mesa, CA – It's official—beautiful landscapes need not use great quantities of water! To emphasize this point, eleven spectacular drought-tolerant yards were designated winners of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual California-Friendly Landscape Contest during the Spring Garden Festival at the Water Conservation Garden in El Cajon this past weekend.

Sponsored by Helix, Otay, Olivenhain, Padre Dam, and Sweetwater water districts and the City of San Diego, the contest was a celebration of beautiful, water-conserving landscapes. Each water district designated a *Best of District* winner and then three regional winners were chosen—one for Best Do-It-Yourself, one for Best Professionally Designed and Installed yard, and a new category this year, the Best California Native Garden. Two districts had such spirited competition that Honorable Mentions were presented as well.

### Best of District Winners were:

Helix Water District – Lee and Nancy Phipps  
Padre Dam Municipal Water District – Lee Shannon  
Olivenhain – Kathleen Van Pelt  
Otay Water District – Mary Jane Olenski  
Sweetwater Authority – Raychael K. Fowler  
City of San Diego – Brad and Patty Snyder  
Honorable Mention Helix – Ed Piffard  
Honorable Mention Padre Dam – Marcella Di Bernardo

### Regional Winners were:

Do-It-Yourself – Dayna Hydrick  
Professional – Richard and Lynn Brown-Reynolds  
Best Native – Callie Mack and Phillip Roullard

### **Judging stiff and winners get big prizes**

Winners were chosen by a team of landscape professionals and noted authors, Nan Sterman and Tom Piergrossi, who looked at: overall attractiveness, appropriate plant selection, efficient methods of irrigation, appropriate maintenance, and increased water efficiency—comparing previous and current water usage. The competition was stiff, with 59 entries in all.

Awards were given at the Water Conservation Garden in a ceremony featuring Bruce and Sharon Asakawa and John Bagnasco from the *Garden Compass*. Regional winners received \$500 gift certificates to local nurseries, district winners received \$250 gift certificates, and honorable mentions received \$100 gift certificates. Winners will have designation signs in their yards through August.

### **Reasons vary for drought –tolerant yards**

Each household had a different reason for wanting a California Friendly yard. Lynn Brown-Reynolds began reworking the yard two and a half years ago. As a professional landscape designer she admits, “It was previously mostly lawn. Now, I use the areas as an experimental garden for my profession.”

Dayna Hydrick has lived in her house for 10 years and began working on it in 1997. “My husband was not a good grass mower. We’re both allergic to lawns. At first it was hard to find drought-tolerant plants, but *now* you can find them *everywhere!*”

Callie Mack hated mowing, too. “We went native because Phillip liked the look. Lawns weren’t very interesting, and they don’t grow well here. You spend your entire life working on them, mowing them, and then you pray to the lawn-god every night to make it beautiful. It just doesn’t work.” Not much water is used here, either. “I just go out once a month in the summer and spray

off the plants to keep the dust down. They love it. That's all they need," Phillip Roullard explained.

Lee Shannon has done most of the landscaping and hardscaping herself. "I hate weeds," she said. "I just wanted something that looked good when you drive up. Something I didn't have to work hard to keep that way."

Nancy Phipps took classes at Cuyamaca College to get started and then fell in love with the plant material, but she commented, "I really did it because of the water use."

Ed Piffard likes to hike and enjoys the native plants, so he decided to make his yard as close to a native meadow as he could. "I let the hose run down the 'dry' riverbed in the front, and when it's filled the 'wetlands' at the bottom of the hill, I know I've given the yard enough water." Mr. Piffard has no irrigation system—nor does Brad Snyder.

"You plant the yard, but it makes its own salad, and you get to interpret it over time," Snyder said. "We live in a desert, and it is amazing what plants can do with such a small amount of water."

Kathleen Van Pelt moved into her house in 2003 and began working on the hardscape six months later. "There is wetlands behind our house, so I decided to go with native and drought tolerant plants to fit the setting," she explained.

Marcella Di Bernardo's daughter, who is a nurse, designed the yard for her parents and did all the work herself. "We did the yard in drought-tolerant plants to avoid high water bills," Di Bernard said. "We save about \$50 on each bill."

### **Two of the homes have been designated as wildlife habitats**

“The scrub jays will come down and eat out of my hand,” Brad Snyder said as he offered a peanut to a passing bird. Callie Mack and Phillip Roullard have a plethora of birds and butterflies that frequent their yard, visiting the huge blooming white California Lilac in their back yard.

### **Reasons to conserve – Demonstration garden to visit**

The San Diego area is, indeed, a semi-arid climate. Area water districts encourage the use of drought-tolerant plant material to lower costs and overall water use, and most importantly to protect the San Diego watersheds.

Drought-tolerant yards need not be drab or simply cactus and rock. Beautiful water-wise plants can be seen every day at The Water Conservation Garden located on the grounds of Cuyamaca College: [www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org). This spectacular garden is open FREE to the public every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day.

### **California-Friendly Landscape Contest to expand next year**

The California-Friendly Landscape Contest will continue next year and is expected to expand throughout the county. Information is available by calling: Otoy Water District Conservation Specialist, Pam Rega, at 619.670.2291 or visit [www.landscapecontest.com](http://www.landscapecontest.com).

***High resolution photos available for publication upon request – Call (619) 667-6202***

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*California Friendly Landscape Contest- Save water outdoors*