

Eye on the Environment for 2/8/15

Turf Replacement

By Kay Allen, Environmental Compliance Program Coordinator, City of Simi Valley

Several years ago when I bought my house, prior to our current drought, my front yard had beautiful lush green grass. I was so busy moving I didn't even think about the yard until a few weeks later when I accidentally stepped onto the grass in high heels and began to sink. Upon checking the sprinkler system, I found the grass was being watered daily. That had to stop, so I made adjustments to the timer. As the years went by and we entered into the worst drought in decades, I watered less and less until, by the summer of 2014, my once lush green grass was all but dead.

Then I started paying attention to all those turf removal rebate ads I was seeing. When I calculated what I could get for removing my entire front yard, over 1700 square feet, I quickly applied for the rebate. Several local water agencies, both private and public, are offering the rebates, including areas of Oxnard, Ventura, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, and Port Hueneme. Call your water purveyor to check their participation in a rebate program. To complete the application, I went to www.bewaterwise.com and clicked on SoCalWaterSmart Rebates. I clicked the Residential box, but there is also a section allowing businesses to take advantage of this amazing opportunity. The application process was pretty simple; you will need to measure the portion of your yard where you intend to remove the grass in order to calculate your potential rebate. You will also need to take photos of your yard to submit with your application. Carefully read and follow the directions given on the website. Soon I received the e-mail telling me I was approved.

The first step was to hire someone to rip out the existing grass. Dead though it was, it still needed to be removed, or roots could re-sprout. After the turf was dug up, it needed to be gathered and hauled away. I rented a dumpster through my local waste hauler, but sometimes the company people hire to do the digging will also remove the turf.

For my landscape, I designed some dry creek beds with small rolling hills. I drew an outline on the now bare ground and began digging out the creek beds. Depending on your design, additional dirt may be needed, especially if you are creating rolling hills or raising the level of the yard. Be sure to keep the dirt mound covered with a tarp anytime you're not working on it to keep the wind and any possible rain storms from moving the dirt off your property.

Converting the existing sprinklers to a drip system is another good way to save water as you will be watering only the areas that need it. Plant California-Friendly or native shrubs and plants as much as possible, this helps ensure the plants will flourish and benefit the ecosystem.

Adding some large rocks enhances the scene of the dry creeks. Filling in the rest of the creek beds with medium and small rocks gives it a more natural look. After planting some

medium to large bushes around the yard, I covered the rolling hills with small and medium rocks to deter weeds and make it aesthetically pleasing.

There are many benefits to removing those lush green lawns and opting for more natural landscape designs. In addition to saving water and money, there is no more lawn mowing, and less maintenance. California-friendly, native, and ocean-friendly gardens are very attractive, attract birds and beneficial insects, add diversity, and create interesting alternatives to turf. Ocean friendly gardens revolve around conservation, permeability, and retention of water.

Droughts are nothing new to Southern California, and it is time our landscape designs reflect that fact. Keep your eye on the environment by conserving one of our most precious resources, water.

On the net:

<http://socialwatersmart.com/qualifyingproducts/turfremoval>
www.bewaterwise.com

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