



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: June 30, 2015
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: Donielle Kahikina, Deputy Director of Public Works Services, Operational Support 
Michelle Tse, Senior Management Analyst 
Subject: Beverly Hills Garden Handbook Update
Attachments: 1. Beverly Hills Garden Handbook Sample Sections

INTRODUCTION

During the May 18, 2015 Study Session discussion on artificial turf and live plant alternatives, the City Council inquired about developing a landscape handbook that would be made available to the community which outlines recommended live plant alternatives that are both aesthetically pleasant and drought tolerant to further the City's conservation efforts. This report provides information on the progress made to date on the development of a Beverly Hills garden handbook and transmits several sample sections, in draft form, that will be further developed and incorporated into the final handbook.

DISCUSSION

An agreement with Green Gardens Group ("G3") in the amount of \$40,250 was initially executed under the City Manager's authority for outdoor water conservation program support. The agreement included \$20,000 which was allocated for the development of a draft landscape handbook that will reflect Beverly Hills' standards for water-wise gardens.

The Beverly Hills garden handbook will include plant recommendations for front yards, side yards and rear yards categorized by residential design styles. For example, the handbook lists plant options that are most suitable for a Mediterranean or Spanish style home. It will also include parkway plant options that comply with existing guidelines outlined in the Beverly Hills Municipal Code. A complete mockup of the handbook will be fully developed over the next few weeks. The Table of Contents, as seen in Attachment 1, outlines all sections to be included in the final document. Handbook sections that have been developed to date (Attachment 1) include segments that address grading and detaining rainwater, and a "Beverly Hills" water-wise lawn alternative.

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Staff will work with the Public Works Commission Conservation Subcommittee to finalize the document which is expected to be approximately 50 full color pages. It is anticipated that the handbook will be completed by mid-July. This document will then be available to Beverly Hills water customers and distributed through multiple outlets such as the City website, and printed copies made available at the Library. Since the City owns the material and content, the book is available for reproduction as needed.

The garden handbook complements the City's conservation programs, which includes the Metropolitan Water District ("MWD") rebate and landscape coaching programs that were approved by the City Council during its June 8, 2015 meeting. The handbook was designed by G3, the same group that presented plant options during the May 18, 2015 Study Session. G3 is a partner with Metropolitan Water District with its conservation programs and has developed similar outreach programs for the City of Los Angeles.

It is estimated that outdoor water use makes up 60%-70% of overall water use. The garden handbook, coupled with the MWD rebate and landscape coaching programs will help the City move closer to achieving the mandatory 32% reduction target imposed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

FISCAL IMPACT

To date, \$20,000 of an existing agreement has been allocated to develop the draft handbook which includes the development of "Beverly Hills" specific content. A separate agreement will be executed with G3 in the amount of \$14,500 to finalize the garden handbook.

The recently approved FY15-16 budget includes funds earmarked in the Capital Improvement Program ("CIP") for conservation programs. The FY15-16 budgeted amount is \$348,550 to cover costs related to conservation-related programs.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes only.



Approved By
George Chavez

Attachment 1

Made possible by
the City of Beverly Hills 2015



This handbook provides more than 500 water-wise plants, sample landscape designs, gardening how-to, nurseries and other resources for the City of Beverly Hills gardeners.

This Book Designed By
 green
gardens
group
www.greengardensgroup.com

Introduction



Landscape Elements



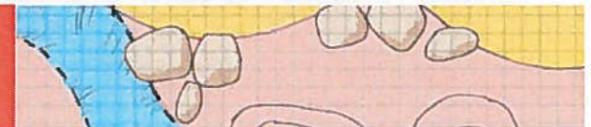
Planting Style Guide



How-To Section



Project Checklist



Introduction

- How To Use This Book
- A Brief Garden History
- Our Climate
- Ballona Creek Watershed

Landscape Elements

- Beverly Hills Lawn
- Rain Garden
- Border Plants
- Hedges
- Shade Trees
- Parkways
- Hillsides / Erosion
- High Fire Hazard Zones
- Edible Gardens

Planting Style Guide

- Mediterranean
- Woodland

Contemporary

- Chaparral
- Groundcover Alternatives

How To Garden

- Get To Know Your Garden
- Grade For Rain
- Build Healthy Soil
- Select Plants
- Group Plants By Hydrozones
- Water Wisely
- Tend Your Garden

Project Checklist

Nursery List

Resources & Index

Shopping List



Beverly Hills Lawn

The Beverly Hills Lawn looks more like a European country estate lawn than the uniform green carpet look common today. Prior to the introduction and widespread acceptance of chemical fertilizers and dedicated lawn maintenance services in the 1950's, lawns were low fuss, low water, evergreen open spaces filled with clusters of tiny flowers including clover and English daisies. Butterflies and birds were welcomed in these lawns, and without additional inputs of fertilizers and other chemicals, they stood up to heavy foot traffic and animal urine. By making some changes to our existing lawns, we can recreate the beauty, diversity and toughness of the lawns of yesteryear.

The overall effect of the Beverly Hills lawn, viewed from the street, is of a restful, pleasing and green open space. It is only when invited into the home that the individuality of the lawn can be appreciated. The plants that establish in the lawn, keeping it evergreen and flowering with tiny flowers, reflect the hills, gullies, shade and sun of each individual property, making no two lawns appear exactly the same. This lawn unifies the neighborhood, but maintains the customized aesthetic for each property owner.

In addition to the estate lawn beauty, the Beverly Hills lawn has several other benefits, including requiring a lot less water than contemporary fescue lawns. Just a 10 minute shower every two

weeks can be enough water to keep it lush, depending on the irrigation system and the specific landscape conditions. It requires zero application of fertilizers or herbicides, actually growing with less vigor and health if they are applied. Since the lawn is maintained 3 to 4 inches tall, less mowing and other maintenance is required – usually just every two or three weeks during the growing season. Weeding is almost completely unnecessary, because you are in fact encouraging some of the little flowers we are used to calling “weeds” like English daisies (*Bellis perennis*), Dutch clover (*Trifolium repens*) and, in low spots, Plantain (*Plantago major*).

The lawn naturally attracts pollinators, including butterflies, honeybees, native bees, and birds that feed on them. The amount of flowering plants in the lawn can be controlled with mowing, so areas that see hard play can be kept bee-free, while areas that are more decorative can support the local pollinator habitat.

Follow the easy steps in the sidebar to change your existing grass into a low-water, Beverly Hills estate lawn without added investment. Adopting the Beverly Hills lawn concept helps Beverly Hills become a leader in landscape water conservation while demonstrating the unique style and beauty that people from around the world have come to appreciate, admire and adopt for their own.

Maintain your Beverly Hills Lawn

Apply 1/4" deep layer of good compost or worm castings every fall (September through November). If the compost smells of manure do not use it! It will kill the lawn. Use only well-composted materials or worm castings. There should be no noticeable foul odor.

Resist cutting the lawn on a fixed schedule. Allowing the clover and other tiny flowers to grow, ripen and set seed will perpetuate the lawn without any additional over-seeding in the spring or fall. This is the way nature keeps the lawn evergreen and maintenance costs down – the lawn does all of the work. If you are mowing frequently, an application of new seed may be required every spring or fall to keep the lawn appearance more uniform.

Using a mulching mower, when the lawn is cut, is also a good way to ensure that the lawn stays green and healthy. Ask your lawn care professional about their equipment and insist on a mulching mower, or purchase one to store and use exclusively on your property, keeping other's chemicals, weeds and pests away from your fabulous smart, healthy, and beautiful Beverly Hills Lawn.

Essential Beverly Hills Lawn Mix



Dutch clover
Trifolium repens

English daisy
Bellis perennis

Plantain
Plantago major

An Ecology Lawn For Pollinators (attracts native pollinators)



California poppies
Eschscholzia californica

California lupine
Lupinus bicolor

Red maids
Callandrina akata

Plants for Lawn Tough Spots (deeper shade, shallow soils, etc.)



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium

Sheep's fescue
Festuca ovina

Hard fescue
Festuca longifolia

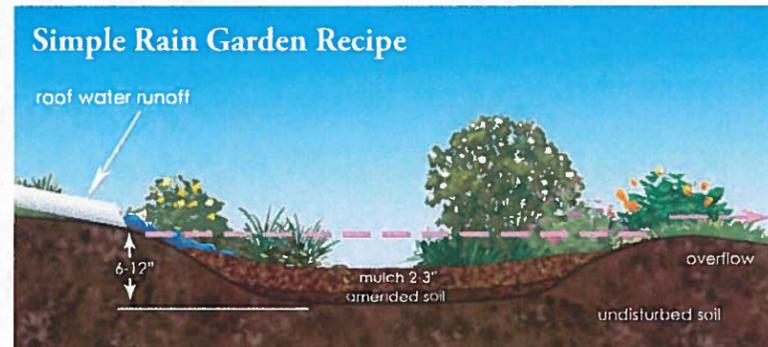
Get A Beverly Hills Lawn In 7 Easy Steps

1. Discontinue using all fertilizer, “weed & feed” and any other herbicides, pesticides and fungicides.
2. Aerate existing lawn and water thoroughly.
3. Mix Beverly Hills Lawn seed, or your own custom blend of seed (see below for suggestions), with a bag (one cubic foot) of either worm castings or very good, dry compost. This is necessary because the seed is extremely fine and will blow away easily if not mixed with something heavier.
4. Cast the seed uniformly over the existing lawn area and water thoroughly.
5. The following week, mow the lawn with a mulching mower, or remove the catch-bag from a regular mower, and leave all grass clippings spread on the lawn as a mulch.
6. Rake the lawn gently, if needed, to spread grass clippings evenly.
7. Water twice weekly, up to 10 minutes per cycle, until the clover begins to appear. Then begin watering only once per week. If the clover is not appearing (see the images below), then cut back on the watering cycle. Clover likes things lean and clean!

The best time to make this change is in the fall or early spring, when the natural rain and cool days work to your advantage. If it has rained recently, or is predicted to rain within three days, forego the irrigation. The rain will be sufficient, even if it is light (1/2" or greater).



Grade for Rain

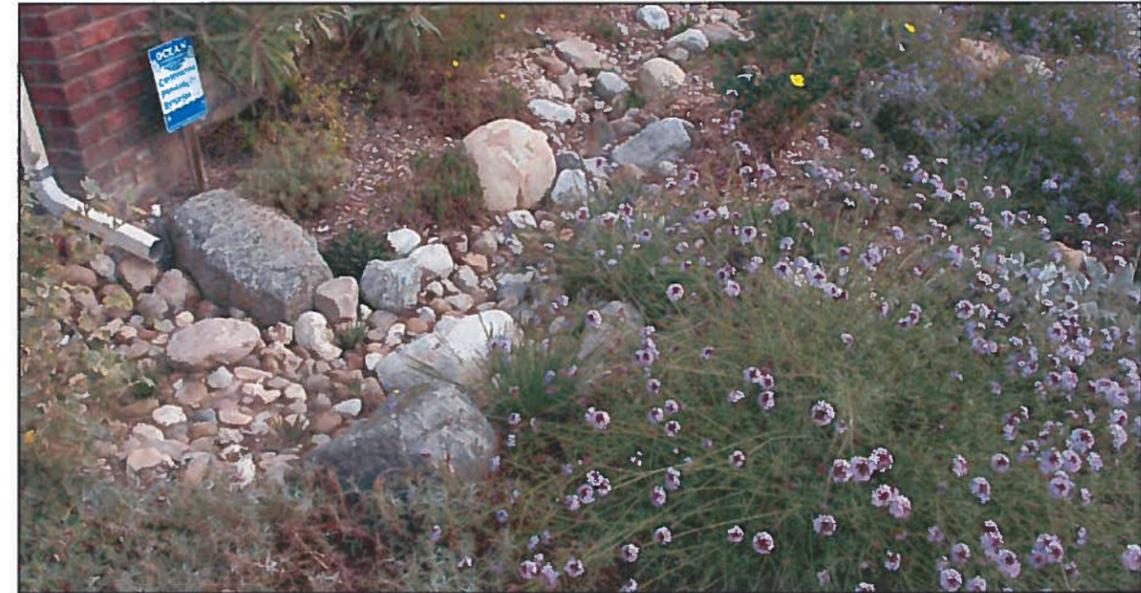


Ingredients:

- YOUR SITE PLAN with Water In Your Garden notes (see p. 27)
- SHOVELS & RAKES
- COMPOST, WORM CASTINGS
- LIVING WOODCHIP MULCH
- HOSE WITH SPRAY NOZZLE
- SWALE PLANTS

Call DIG ALERT (811) at least two days before digging!

1. Get to know your rain. Make your site plan and note where rain falls, and how it flows. Look for an open, mostly flat low spot to direct water towards in the front yard, or anywhere with the center at least 10' away from the foundation of the house and 3' away from the sidewalk. Calculate the best size of your rain garden (see p. 33).
2. Lay out your rain garden. Spread out a garden hose to outline the shape. The area must be basically flat or slightly bowl-like, and not sloping back toward the house. Be careful around trees. Don't put your rain garden under a mature tree or disturb any big roots. Remove all plants (including grass) from the area and start digging.
3. Test how fast your soil drains. If you have compaction, try to break through it with a shovel or a pitchfork (see p. 30).
4. Dig a basin that is between 6" and 12" deep at the center. Slope the sides gently to make a sloping bowl, not a cylinder. Mound extra soil around the bowl to increase capacity. Put down at least an inch of compost or worm castings to activate your soil.
5. Direct downspouts into the basin area, moving the rainwater through gravel lined ditches or above-ground drainage pipes. Also, make an overflow path so extra water has a direct channel to the street and not back towards your house.
6. Plant swale plants in compost on the bottom. On the mounded sides, choose plants that like their feet drier. When it rains, the basin will fill up, creating a temporary pond until the water soaks into your soil. All the water should be gone in 24 hours. Make sure to mulch (2-3" deep) around your plants.
7. Swale plants are special. They can be completely submerged in rain water and still survive our hot dry summers without extra water. They're sort of plant Super Heroes that way!



Detain the Rain



Basins and Swales are shallow depressions, or channels no more than 12" – 24" deep, on gently sloped or nearly flat landscapes that move water around over short distances. The plants in and around the depressions capture and sink small volumes of surface water. Small, shallow depressions are best used in clay soil areas, while sandy soils may accommodate the deeper (up to 24" deep) depressions. Channels can be planted (vegetated swales) and/or lined with rocks and small boulders to resemble natural creek beds.

Berms are mounds of raised soil, usually planted, that can border basins and swales or be used alone. Berms help contain and move water around, increasing the holding capacity of basins and swales.

Boulders may be used to retain small berms or edges of swales and to create interest in the landscape.