

Low Water, High Beauty

YOUR GUIDE TO DROUGHT-TOLERANT
GARDENING IN THE DRY WEST



MONROVIA®

Grow Beautifully

Welcome

PHOTO BY RACHEL WEILL

GARDENERS ACROSS THE WEST are experiencing the hottest, driest growing conditions they've seen in decades. More than 55% of the West is currently under extreme or exceptional drought conditions. To help you through these dry times, we curated a list of drought-tolerant plants and water-saving tips for a beautiful low-water garden.

At Monrovia, we recycle 95% of our irrigation runoff at each of our four growing locations, which saves 2.5 billion gallons of water per year. At home, you can save water on a smaller scale by using the water-smart tips you find throughout the guide. Use the "True or False" boxes to test your waterwise gardening knowledge.

As Western gardeners, we face our fair share of challenges. With thoughtful plant choices and smart water usage, our gardens will reward us with resilient beauty for years to come.



ON THE COVERS

FRONT COVER: Gray Stonecrop (*Sedum pachyclados*), Wheels of Wonder® Fire Wonder Ice Plant (*Delosperma cooperi*), and Fire Spinner® Ice Plant (*Delosperma cooperi*) create a bright, low-water groundcover display.

BACK COVER: Blue Glow Agave

PHOTOGRAPHY

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Our Top 10 Plants

CALIFORNIA AND THE DRY WEST (ZONES 7-11)



PURPLE QUEEN® BOUGAINVILLEA

PURPLE QUEEN® BOUGAINVILLEA (*Bougainvillea* 'Moneth') EVERGREEN FLOWERING VINE

In a planter box, along a fence or arbor, or even rambling as a blooming groundcover, it doesn't get better than a bougainvillea in the landscape. Purple Queen covers itself in deep purple, petal-like bracts against deep-green foliage. Plant on banks and slopes for an avalanche of color or allow to drape over the edge of a retaining wall. Purple Queen tolerates poor soils and coastal conditions, and is nearly maintenance free.

FULL SUN | UP TO 15' WITH SUPPORT; 18" TALL AND 8' WIDE AS A
GROUNDCOVER | ZONES 10-11

WATER-SAVING TIP

MULCH, MULCH, MULCH.

A three-inch layer of mulch – ground bark is a great all-purpose choice – is a simple but effective way to retain soil moisture. As a bonus, mulch also help to reduce weeds and moderate soil temperature. Gravel mulch is a great option for xeric plants, as well. Plus, fresh mulch looks great.

TRUE OR FALSE?

I SHOULD ONLY PLANT NATIVE PLANTS.

False! Just because a plant is native to your region doesn't necessarily mean it's a good fit for your garden. There are native plants that live adjacent to – and need – plenty of water. Many new and non-native introductions are drought-tolerant and non-invasive.



BLUE CHALKSTICKS

BLUE CHALKSTICKS (*Senecio serpens*) EVERGREEN SUCCULENT GROUNDCOVER

2 This low-growing, branching succulent creates a carpet of foliage consisting of upright, powdery blue-green leaves. Rooting itself as it grows, blue chalksticks is perfect for preventing erosion on sunny, dry hillsides. It's also a great choice for covering any bare spots in a landscape filled with other succulents, grasses, and waterwise perennials. Tuck it anywhere you'd like – in a border, a container, or rock garden – and enjoy its cool tone and unique habit. It takes very little care, tolerating poor soil and coastal conditions.

FULL SUN | UP TO 1' TALL AND 3' WIDE | ZONES 10-11



MARINA STRAWBERRY TREE

WATER-SAVING TIP

GROW PLANTS THAT THRIVE IN YOUR CLIMATE.

Choose plants that are adapted to your climate – or those from similar regions around the world. Plants from areas with dry summers, such as Central Chile, South Africa, the Mediterranean, and regions of Australia do well in California, for instance.

TRUE OR FALSE?

WATERWISE PLANTS DON'T EVER NEED WATERING.

False! Even drought-tolerant plants need some irrigation to survive, particularly as they get established during their first season of growth. Shallow root systems may need a bit of additional water until they expand into the soil.

MARINA STRAWBERRY TREE (*Arbutus* x 'Marina')

COMPACT EVERGREEN, EDIBLE TREE

3 This small garden tree has it all: attractive bark, rosy pink flowers, strawberry-like edible fruit, habitat for birds, and a low canopy of deep green leaves. It's tough, too, tolerating poor or acidic soil and needing very little water. Marina Strawberry Tree is a winner for mass planting or as a specimen in a woodland or wildlife garden (your local birds will love this tree).

FULL SUN | UP TO 20' TALL AND 30' WIDE | ZONES 7-9



BAUER'S DRACAENA PALM (*Cordyline 'Baueri'*)
SUPERB EVERGREEN SPECIMEN

4 With a 3- to 5-foot crown of burgundy-red, sword-like leaves perched atop a slender trunk, Bauer's Dracaena Palm is a ready-made focal point. The rich, dark foliage of this palm-like dracaena pops against any light-colored surface such as stucco or concrete. It also looks magical under night lighting or beside a pool. With a tight, upright habit, it fits nicely into narrow spaces, though it's bold enough to deserve center stage. It does great in containers, too. Easy care and great on the coast.

FULL TO PARTIAL SUN | UP TO 5' TRUNK WITH A 3' TO 5' WIDE CROWN OF FOLIAGE | ZONES 9-11



WHITE CAPE® PLUMBAGO (*Plumbago auriculata 'Monite'*)
MULTI-USE INFORMAL HEDGE

5 A profusion of large, pure-white flower clusters covers White Cape most of the year. This unfussy, shrubby climber is a workhorse in the back of mixed borders, particularly along fence lines where it may be trained up and over. Perhaps one of the best plants to sprawl on banks and slopes in need of soil coverage and evergreen foliage year around. With slight trimming, this makes an elegant foundation plant that hides any unsightly utilities. Adaptation to partial shade allows for planting under spreading tree canopies. Superior filler for tropical gardens and around pool areas, where the green foliage looks bright and lush. This is also one of the best warm-climate white flowers to reflect moonlight in night gardens.

FULL SUN | UP TO 4' TALL AND 6' WIDE | ZONES 9-11

WATER-SAVING TIP

HOOK UP A DRIP SYSTEM.

Simple to set up, drip systems are efficient, targeting water where it's needed: directly over the root zone. Consider pairing your drip system with a smart timer that monitors weather and soil conditions, tweaking the schedule according to real-time conditions.

TRUE OR FALSE?

EDIBLE GARDENING IS OKAY TO DO DURING A DROUGHT.

True! Even during dry times, you can grow edibles using well-planned drip irrigation. Consider growing perennial edibles, like fruit trees, berries, rhubarb, or Mediterranean herbs, which require less water than annuals and are tolerant of dry summers.

LITTLE JOHN DWARF BOTTLEBRUSH



WATER-SAVING TIP
CAPTURE WATER IN A RAIN BARREL.

Catch rainwater from your roof and keep it for later use by installing a rain barrel under a downspout. Naturally soft and free of chlorine, rainwater is great for all the plants in your garden. You can find barrels at local garden centers and online.

TRUE OR FALSE?

I SHOULD FOLLOW AN IRRIGATION SCHEDULE.

False! Especially during a drought, it's better to water based on the plant, soil type, temperature, humidity, wind, and presence of mulch. Check soil moisture often to assess need for watering. Tweak your irrigation schedule accordingly.

LITTLE JOHN DWARF BOTTLEBRUSH

(*Callistemon* 'Little John')

SHOWY, EVERGREEN COMPACT SHRUB

6 Count on the blood red, bottlebrush-like flowers to cover this small, mounding shrub from spring into summer. In the warmest regions, it will bloom intermittently all year, which is great news for hummingbirds, which find the flowers irresistible. With blue-green leaves and dense branching, Little John is handsome and versatile in the garden. Line up several for a hedge or mass them like groundcover in hot, dry planting areas where other plants tend to wilt. Other ideas include accenting a border or even as part of a cutting garden.

FULL SUN | GROWS SLOWLY TO 3' BY 5' WIDE | ZONES 8-11

SANTA BARBARA MEXICAN BUSH SAGE

(*Salvia leucantha*)

LONG-BLOOMING EVERGREEN PERENNIAL

7 This compact selection of the beloved Mexican bush sage is a no-brainer in a warm-climate waterwise garden. Rich purple flower spires top soft, gray-green foliage. Tough as nails, it's suitable for the driest climates in the West and fits in to almost any landscape, from formal to casual. Tuck it into borders, mix it in with other flowering shrubs, let it naturalize along a dry slope, or even show it off in a container.

FULL SUN | UP TO 3' TALL AND WIDE | ZONES 9-11



ARTICHOKE AGAVE (*Agave parryi* var. *truncata*)

SHOWSTOPPING EVERGREEN SUCCULENT

8 This stunning agave creates dense, symmetrical rosettes from dramatic, blue-gray leaves that form large clumps. Each leaf tip bears a short – but sharp – midnight-blue spine. Absolutely brilliant as a specimen, in a container, or in a rock garden, and especially captivating as an unexpected groundcover in mass plantings. Bloom spikes emerge from mature 10- to 15-year-old rosettes, which die after flowering. "Pups," or offshoots, perpetuate the plant. Artichoke Agave is fire wise, easy care, tolerates poor soil, and can handle coastal exposure.

FULL SUN | ROSETTES UP TO 4' WIDE ON 5' WIDE CLUMPS; FLOWER SPIKES UP TO 20' TALL. BLOOMS AT FULL MATURITY | ZONES 6-9

WATER-SAVING TIP

GROUP PLANTS BY WATER SPECIFICATIONS.

Known as "hydrozoning," keeping plants of similar water needs grouped together allows you to water each area just the right amount, reducing the chances of overwatering. Separate planting areas in zones of no irrigation and reduced or limited irrigation.

TRUE OR FALSE?

TREES NEED WATER DURING A DROUGHT.

True! Often the most valuable part of your landscape, young trees especially shouldn't be neglected. Be sure to water them once a month during dry spells. Use a soaker hose to water slowly to a depth of 8 to 12 inches.



CLAREMONT WESTERN REDBUD

(*Cercis occidentalis* 'Claremont')

FOUR-SEASON, DECIDUOUS SMALL-SPACE TREE

9 It's hard to choose a favorite season for this Southwestern native. From late winter to early spring, it explodes in a profusion of rich, dark flowers. Thick, blue-green leaves persist all summer until fall, when they turn a glowing yellow, accented by maroon seedpods that persist through winter. Extremely low-maintenance and tolerant of poor soils, this redbud is a great choice as a specimen or for privacy, and does as well in an urban setting as it does in a wildlife garden.

FULL TO PARTIAL SUN | UP TO 15' TALL AND 20' WIDE | ZONES 6-9



BABY PETE™ AGAPANTHUS

(*Agapanthus praecox* ssp. *orientalis* 'Benfran')

LONG-BLOOMING CLUMPING PERENNIAL

10 This uniquely compact Lily of the Nile blooms weeks earlier than other cultivars. Masses of blue, firework-like flower clusters on upright stems rise just above clumps of short, wide, strap-like, green leaves. Baby Pete rarely sets seed pods, resulting in a longer bloom period. Splendid along pathways, in groupings, in mixed containers, or even as a cut flower.

FULL TO PARTIAL SUN | FOLIAGE UP TO 15" TALL AND 24" WIDE; BLOOMS TO 24" TALL | ZONES 8-11

WATER-SAVING TIP

CHECK FOR LEAKS IN IRRIGATION.

A spike in your water bill is a tell-tale sign of a leak. Even without this clear warning sign, consider doing a once-over of your system to make sure there's no seepage. Make sure emitters water only soil, not any hardscape, and replace hose washers every 3 to 5 years.

TRUE OR FALSE?

MY PLANTS ARE WILTING, I SHOULD WATER ASAP.

False! Many plants wilt by the end of a hot day and are perky by morning. If you see wilting at day's start, dig down 6 inches to confirm that a lack of moisture is the culprit. Wilting can also be caused by overwatering, pests, and damaged roots.

Top 5 in the Wider West

DRY NORTHWEST AND INTERMOUNTAIN WEST (ZONES 4-9)



WATER-SAVING TIP

USE SUB-IRRIGATING METHODS.

Self-watering containers and unglazed terra cotta ollas deliver water directly to the roots of plants via sub-irrigation. Soil remains consistently moist, which decreases the amount of water needed. Converting to sub-irrigation can lower water usage dramatically.

TRUE OR FALSE?

WATER DEEPLY AND INFREQUENTLY.

True! While a quick shower sounds great and is an easy way to perk up a wilting plant, it's actually more wasteful. Plants appreciate an infrequent but deeper watering of their root zones, which encourages a healthier root system.

JEWEL OF DESERT RUBY ICE PLANT (*Delosperma cooperii*) LOW-GROWING, SUCCULENT GROUNDCOVER

I Stunning multi-colored flowers cover a tight mat of dense, succulent, weed-smothering foliage that maintains its sheen through winter. Expect prolific blooms from summer to fall. This is a hardy, heat-loving groundcover that shines in borders, containers, mass plantings, and rock gardens. Attracting both butterflies and hummingbirds, it's also perfect for pollinator gardens. Unlike other varieties of ice plants, Jewel of Desert is a beautiful, non-invasive groundcover. It will tolerate poor soils and is extremely easy care.

FULL SUN | UP TO 6" TALL BY 20" WIDE | ZONES 5-10



ELIJAH BLUE FESCUE (*Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue')
COMPACT, EVERGREEN ORNAMENTAL GRASS

2 With extreme versatility, Elijah Blue could easily earn the title of "Best Ornamental Grass." Its silver-blue color and fine texture work in every style of drought-resistant landscape, from xeric to woodland. It does equally well as a formal edging plant or in a mass for groundcover effect. It tolerates poor soils, is extremely cold hardy, and only needs occasional water after it is established.

FULL SUN | UP TO 8-12" TALL AND WIDE | ZONES 4-11



JUNIOR WALKER™ CATMINT
(*Nepeta x faassenii* 'Novanepjum')
FRAGRANT, FLOWERING HERBACEOUS PERENNIAL

3 Enjoyed by cats, bees, butterflies, and humans alike, Junior Walker is a superb compact selection with finely textured, aromatic, gray-green foliage and soft, lavender flower spikes on a low, spreading habit. Allow it to cascade off walls or container edges or use it as groundcover. It also does great in a mixed border or even as a selection for a green roof.

FULL TO PARTIAL SUN | UP TO 16" TALL AND 36" WIDE | ZONES 5-10

WATER-SAVING TIP
RECYCLE WATER FROM
HOUSEHOLD CHORES.

Whether it's saving clean shower water in buckets while you wait for the water to warm, or while you rinse vegetables at the kitchen sink, make the water you use inside do double duty by using it in the garden. A few buckets of water can go a long way in a drought.

TRUE OR FALSE?
WATERWISE GARDENS ARE
CACTUS GARDENS.

False! Drought-tolerant gardens come in every aesthetic from minimalist to maximalist and can include massive amounts of fragrance and flower. There's a lot of room for creative design. Plus, growers consistently introduce new low-water varieties.



BRAKELIGHTS® RED YUCCA

WATER-SAVING TIP

REDUCE OR REPLACE YOUR LAWN.

There's no two ways about it – a grass lawn is thirsty. Get rid of it by sheet mulching – layering cardboard and mulch and allowing it to decompose into luscious soil. Replant with waterwise perennials or cooling shade trees.

TRUE OR FALSE?

I SHOULD KEEP USING MY IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

True! Dial it down instead of turning it off. You'll maintain a working system free of stagnant water, invading roots and insects, and broken parts, by running your irrigation system at a minimum of a few minutes each month.

BRAKELIGHTS® RED YUCCA (*Hesperaloe parviflora* 'Perpa')
DRAMATIC, EVERGREEN XERISCAPE SPECIMEN

4 Brakelights Yucca forms a clump of upright cylindrical foliage and long-branched flower stalks with tubular flowers that bloom from early spring into late summer. The vibrant, brakelight-red color is irresistible to hummingbirds. Especially compact, this plant rarely sets seedpods, meaning the blooms just keep coming. Use in mass plantings for a dramatic effect in xeriscape and waterwise gardens or put it in a container as a fabulous specimen plant.

FULL SUN | FOLIAGE UP TO 2' TALL AND WIDE; BLOOMS RISE 2' TO 3' TALLER | ZONES 5-10



WATER-SAVING TIP

INSTALL PERMEABLE PAVING.

Think long term about all of your surfaces in the landscape. Porous hardscaping, like gravel, decomposed granite, stepping stones with out grout, and bark mulch, allows any rainwater to percolate right back into the soil, preventing runoff and the wasting of precious irrigation.

TRUE OR FALSE?

FERTILIZING HELPS A PLANT RECOVER FROM DROUGHT.

False! Rarely is a specific nutrient deficiency the fix for an unhappy plant. In fact, applying fertilizer during drought can stress a plant unnecessarily. Better to give a thirsty plant limited but deep watering and avoid fertilizers.

COLORADO GOLD® TREASURE FLOWER (*Gazania linearis* 'Colorado Gold')

LONG-BLOOMING COMPACT PERENNIAL

5 Bright daisy-like blooms with deep russet center flecks dance just above compact mounds of glossy green leaves with silvery undersides. Tough, durable, and tolerant of poor soils, Colorado Gold makes an easy-to-grow ground or slope cover. It will be equally at home in a rock garden, poolside, or at the front of a border.

FULL TO PARTIAL SUN | UP TO 2" TALL BY 18" WIDE; 4" TALL IN BLOOM | ZONES 5-10

Looking for More Ideas?

ADDITIONAL DROUGHT RESOURCES

bewaterwise.com (California especially)

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/bcmg/resources/drought>

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9136/html>

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