

# LESS LAWN MORE LEARNING

## Lawn Alternative Quick Reference Guide

California law (AB 1572) will soon prohibit the use of potable (drinking) water to irrigate nonfunctional lawn on most commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) properties—including educational institutions.

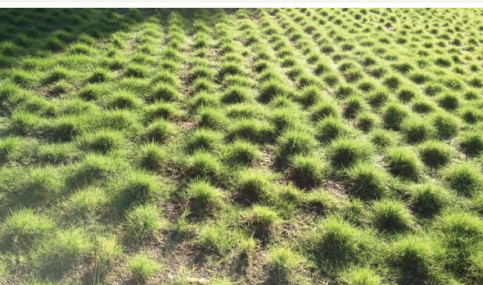


Yarrow *Achillea* spp, California native

## Lawn Alternatives

### Water-Wise Landscapes for Schools and Campuses

New regulations require schools, colleges, and universities to replace nonfunctional lawns or risk fines and enforcement actions. By transforming turf into water-wise landscapes, campuses can stay in compliance while also creating welcoming outdoor spaces that support learning, boost school pride, and provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife. This guide helps education institutions reimagine their landscapes with vibrant plants that thrive in local climates.



UC Verde Buffalograss

#### LAWN LOOKALIKE

For schools that want to maintain the look of a lawn while complying with water-use regulations, groundcover plants offer an effective solution. These plantings can mimic the appearance and feel of lawn while using significantly less water and requiring less upkeep. They are especially well-suited for open campus areas, courtyards, or entryways where a traditional look is important.

**Plant species include:** *Myoporum*, *Kurapia*, *Silver Carpet*



Photo by Calscape

Douglas Iris

#### WATER-WISE RETREAT

Shaded areas on campus can be transformed into cool, inviting spaces by using low-light, drought-tolerant plants. These water-wise landscapes create comfortable gathering spots and are ideal for courtyards, building entryways, or quiet study nooks around campus.

**Plant species include:** *Coyote Mint*, *Douglas Iris*, *Red Flowering Currant*



California Lilac

#### NECTAR NOOK

Sunny parts of campus are perfect for drought-tolerant native flowers that thrive with little water while supporting pollinators and birds. These vibrant landscapes reduce irrigation needs, showcase California's natural beauty, and create hands-on learning opportunities about native ecosystems right on school grounds.

**Plant species include:** *Blue Grama*, *California Lilac*, *Deer Grass*, *Desertbells*, *Hummingbird Sage*, *Purple Clarkia*, *Toyon*, *White Sage*



Photo by R. H. Dana Elementary School

## TEACHING GARDEN:

A vibrant outdoor classroom where students can grow vegetables, herbs, and pollinator-friendly plants. Beyond saving water, it cultivates hands-on learning, healthy habits, and a deeper connection to nature.

**Plant species include:** *Green Beans, Cucumbers, Lettuce, Tomatoes, Zucchini*



## SLIM SPACES

Even the smallest spaces —such as curbsides, medians, or narrow strips—can be transformed with hardy native grasses and seasonal blooms. These plantings turn overlooked areas into vibrant, water-wise landscapes that brighten campus pathways and entry points while conserving water.

**Plant species include:** *Blue Grama, California Poppy, Purple Clarkia*

## Your Water Provider Is Here to Help

Many water providers offer lawn transformation rebates with specific plant requirements. Be sure to check with your local water provider for information before starting your project.

## Water-Wise Plant Resources

These resources offer databases of water-wise plants that are best for your project, care instructions, and inspiration for your next lawn transformation.

- Bloom! California  
[bloomcalifornia.org](http://bloomcalifornia.org)
- California Native Plant Society  
[cnps.org/gardening](http://cnps.org/gardening)
- Calscape  
[calscape.org](http://calscape.org)
- Future Favorites: Climate-Ready Plants from UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden  
[arboretum.ucdavis.edu/future-favorites-climate-ready-plants](http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/future-favorites-climate-ready-plants)
- Southern California Native Plant Guide:  
[bewaterwise.com/california-native-plants.html](http://bewaterwise.com/california-native-plants.html)