

# LESS LAWN MORE APPEAL

## The New State Law On Irrigating Nonfunctional Lawn

Starting on **January 1, 2029**, California law (AB 1572) will prohibit the use of potable (drinking) water to irrigate nonfunctional lawns in Homeowner Association (HOA) common areas that are purely decorative. HOAs are not required to transform these areas into water-wise landscapes by that date, but lawns can no longer be irrigated using potable water.

Failure to comply with the law can result in civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per day (California Water Code §1846).

The new law provides an opportunity to create attractive, vibrant spaces that showcase the beauty of low-water and native plants, increase curb appeal, and provide a vision for others to follow.

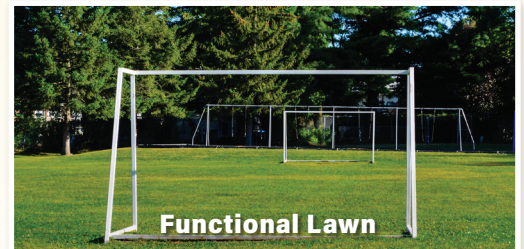


California Flannel Bush *Fremontodendron* spp., California native

## Steps for Getting Started

### 1. Identify areas with Nonfunctional Lawn

- Walk through your common areas and make an inventory of the areas that are impacted, such as:
  - Entryway lawns
  - Lawns alongside curbs, fences, or walls
  - Lawns between buildings, near sidewalks, or parking lot medians
- Identify those areas of nonfunctional lawn that have trees.
- Determine if any of the common areas use nonpotable recycled or graywater.
- If you need help, check with your local water provider to see if they offer site assessments or consider hiring a landscape professional to conduct the walkthrough.
- If available, review the existing landscape and irrigation system plans for your common areas.



### 2. Develop plans for Water-Wise Landscapes

- Work with a Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper or WaterSense Certified Professional on the installation of the irrigation system. <https://lookforwatersense.epa.gov/find-a-pro.html>
- Hire a landscape architect who specializes in water-wise and native plant landscape design.
- Phase the project to focus first on areas with high water use, those with irregular dimensions (inefficient to irrigate), or areas in high-visibility but nonfunctional locations, such as entrances and exits.
- Develop strategies to protect and water existing trees during work. *See Best Practices for Trees During Lawn Conversion for details.*
- Hold meetings with residents to share information about the new law and to create a communal vision for the transformed landscapes, including shaded areas, native plant gardens, and increased curb appeal.

### 3. Explore different avenues for funding

- Check with your local water provider on the availability of rebates for lawn conversion and irrigation system upgrades. Determine the qualification requirements. *Rebate funding can be limited and is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more about rebates in your area by visiting [NonFunctionalTurfCA.org](https://NonFunctionalTurfCA.org).*
- Consider using reserve funds if available or leveraging a special assessment on homeowners.
- Develop a phased plan for lawn removal and conversion projects that are conducted over several years to spread out the costs.
- Explore state grants and low-interest loans for initiatives like native habitat, watershed resilience programs, drought relief, and climate resilience.

### 4. Upgrade and Adjust the Irrigation Systems

- Work with a Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper or WaterSense Certified Professional on the installation and conversion of the irrigation system. <https://lookforwatersense.epa.gov/find-a-pro.html>.
- Convert sprinklers to efficient irrigation systems to ensure that trees are watered during the landscape makeover.
- See if new stations or valves should be added to the irrigation system. *Drip irrigation and overhead should not be on the same zone or valve.*
- Install a WaterSense-labeled, weather-based sprinkler timer to enhance the efficiency of your irrigation system.

### 5. Plant the New Water-Wise Landscapes

- Begin with the high-priority areas.
- Fall is the ideal time to begin planting. The soil is still warm, which encourages root growth, but the days are shorter and cooler, reducing the amount of water the new plants need.



### 6. Document the Changes Made to the Nonfunctional Lawn Areas

Check [NonFunctionalTurfCA.org](https://NonFunctionalTurfCA.org) to determine how to certify your HOA's adherence to the law. Documentation could include the reduction in water used, the square footage of nonfunctional lawn transformed, and types of irrigation system upgrades.

### 7. Educate Groundskeepers on How to Maintain the Landscape

- Identify training needs for maintaining the new landscape.
- Discuss with the landscape contractor the possibility of holding training sessions for maintenance staff and groundskeepers.
- Develop an appropriate watering schedule for newly planted areas.
- Establish a routine for inspecting the irrigation system for leaks and needed repairs, and for changes to watering scheduling if a self-adjusting weather-based sprinkler timer is not installed.