



# The City of Santa Cruz Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

## THE PURPOSE

The Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (Santa Cruz Municipal Code 16.16) was adopted to reduce the demand for water in landscapes, especially from April to October when water needs are highest, and to preserve stored water supplies.

## WHAT PROJECTS DOES THIS AFFECT?

- New commercial, industrial, and public development projects requiring a building permit, land use approval or requiring new, expanded, or modified water service
- Existing developments required to relandscape as part of approval
- Developer-installed residential landscaping greater than 2500 sq. ft.
- New single-family and two-unit residences on parcels greater than or equal to 10,000 sq. ft. (Smaller parcels must meet turf limit and sprinkler set back provisions.)
- New recreation areas

## WHAT IS EXEMPT?

- Remodels/additions to existing single or two-unit homes
- Existing landscapes of less than one acre
- Ecological restoration projects without permanent irrigation systems
- Community gardens
- Registered historical sites with historical landscape style
- Enclosed, private yards and patios in multi-family residential developments
- Schoolyards, parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and golf courses are exempt from the turf grass limits only

## WHAT IS REQUIRED?

An approved landscape plan, a final inspection and proper maintenance of the completed landscape are all required by the ordinance.

### 1. The Landscape Plan

An approved landscape plan showing planting and irrigation is required for new/modified water service. A grading plan is also required on all properties with a slope greater than 10%.

## All plans must have:

- Project applicant/contact person
- Address and parcel number
- Total landscape area in sq. ft.
- Source/type of water

## The planting plan should include:

- All new and existing plants
- A planting legend identifying all plants, the plants' water use classification, and container sizes
- Identification and square footage of each hydrozone
- Property lines, streets, and street names,
- Buildings, driveways, sidewalks, walls and other hardscape features
- Appropriate scale and north arrow
- Planting specifications and details

## The irrigation plan should include:

- The irrigation point of connection (POC) to the water system
- Static water pressure at POC
- Location and size of the water meter(s),
- Backflow prevention devices, as required
- Location, size, and all components of the irrigation system
- Pressure regulation equipment, if required,
- Total flow rate (gallons/minute or gallons/hour), and design operating pressure (PSI) for each irrigation circuit
- Irrigation legend with the manufacturer name, model number, and general description for all equipment
- Irrigation system details for assembly and installation
- Recommended irrigation schedule for each month of the year, expressed in gallons/month and gallons/year, for the established landscape
- Calculation of landscape water budget

For more details on planting, irrigation, and grading plan requirements and standards, please refer to Chapter 16.16 of the Santa Cruz Municipal Code.

*(Continued on reverse)*

## **2. Inspection**

Once the plants and irrigation system are in place, an inspection is required. In some cases, an inspection may be made during grading or installation of the irrigation system, prior to completion. A landscape water budget will be assigned to the completed landscape after inspection.

## **3. Maintenance**

The landscape and irrigation system should be maintained in good condition. The Water Department will monitor the annual site water use and may require that corrections be made if water use exceeds water budget.

## **WHAT ARE THE CITY'S WATER CONSERVATION STANDARDS?**

The City's standards limit the size and locations of lawns, require efficient landscape/irrigation design, and prohibit practices that may cause water waste.

### **Landscape areas:**

- Lawns, high water use plants, pools, and water features are limited to no more than 25% of the total landscaped area; other planted areas must use very low to moderate water use plants as determined by the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS)
- Turf may not be used in areas less than eight feet wide, on slopes greater than 5%, or in medians, islands or strips
- Turf grass must be a water-conserving species, such as tall or hard fescue
- Plants with similar water requirements should be grouped in hydrozones
- Water in decorative pools or fountains must be recirculated

### **Irrigation Design:**

- Separate irrigation meters are required on landscapes 5,000 sq. ft. or greater, except single and two-unit residential properties
- Non-residential landscapes not required to have a separate water meter must install a private irrigation submeter
- All irrigation systems shall be designed to avoid runoff and over-spray onto paved areas
- Areas less than 8 ft. wide must have subsurface or low volume irrigation

- Sprinklers must be set back at least 24 inches from non-permeable surfaces and have a precipitation rate of no more than one inch/hour
- Irrigation equipment should include a weather-based or other sensor based, self-adjusting irrigation controller, rain sensing devices, manual shut off valve near the POC, swing joints in high traffic areas, check valves, pressure regulation where PSI exceeds 80, and matched precipitation spray heads on each valve
- Trees and each hydrozone should be irrigated with a separate valve
- Point source irrigation is required where plant height maturity will affect uniformity of an overhead system

### **Soil Preparation and Mulching:**

- Soil conditioning notes should be included. Specify six yards of organic amendment for each 1,000 sq. ft. of top soil
- 3 inches of mulch should be specified for non-turf areas. 1.5 inches of mulch is acceptable for areas of ground cover

### **Alternative Water Sources**

- Irrigation with alternative sources such as recycled water, graywater or rainwater is encouraged where available and permitted.

## **WHEN IS THE LANDSCAPE PLAN SUBMITTED?**

The landscape plan should be submitted at the same time building plans are submitted to the city or county planning department for land use approval. Projects not required to apply for land use approval should submit complete landscape plans at the time of application for a building permit and prior to the time they need water service.

## **IS THERE A FEE FOR THE PLAN REVIEW?**

Yes, the fee varies depending upon landscape size. The fee is due at the time of application for water service. Please consult with the Water Department to determine the fee.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

Please call the City of Santa Cruz Water Conservation Office at (831) 420-5230 for more information on landscape water conservation requirements.