

The right landscaping choices can cut your water bill in half.

Approximately 50-70% of residential water is used for watering lawns and gardens. Grass uses the most water. You can reduce your household's water consumption up to 50% by planting drought-tolerant plants, avoiding or minimizing turf, and by landscaping with rocks, bricks, gravel, wood, and other materials. In most cases, a high water bill is directly related to your landscape irrigation practices. Don't over water and don't water too frequently. If you have grass, step on it and if it rebounds, wait another day to water. Group plants with similar watering needs together.

Check out these seven steps before you plant your garden.

1. **Planning and design.** There are seven principles of designing a low-water use garden beginning with the initial planning phase. Organizing a garden for water efficiency while retaining aesthetics and practicality can be complicated and is easier with the help of a professional.
2. **Turf.** Turf is the thirstiest of all landscape components. Alternatives include drought-tolerant trees, shrubs, boulders, mulched areas, pathways and other materials.
3. **Efficient irrigation.** Many recent innovations in irrigation technology enable slow and selected water application. In selecting an irrigation system, look for words like "low gallonage" or "low application rate." Consider drip systems for shrubs and trees and always locate turf (preferably minimal or non-existent in drought-sensitive Cambria) on a separate valve.
4. **Soil analysis.** The addition of organic matter to the soil increases water retention and penetration. Get to know your soil and amend it prior to planting.
5. **Mulching.** Two to three inches of mulch will keep soil cool, enhance water retention and retard weed growth. Mulch can include rocks, wood chips, bark, or shredded wood.
6. **Drought tolerant plants.** There are numerous native and Mediterranean-climate plants available that thrive in the Cambria area. Replace high-water, high maintenance plant/lawn areas with drought-resistant shrubs and groundcovers. Group plants according to their water and sun needs. See the chart of drought-resistant plants below that grow well in this area.
7. **Ongoing Maintenance.** Seasonal irrigation adjustments and efficiency checks are maintenance practices that save water. Organic fertilizers and composting will improve texture and maintain vigorous growth.

(GRAPHICS: COMPARISON PHOTOS OF HIGH (PHOTODISC #131014) AND LOW WATER USE GARDENS)

(SIDEBAR)

Water frugal Plants & Shrubs

SHRUBS

Arbutus unedo (Madrone)
Artemisia (Wormwood)
Callistemon citrinus (Bottlebrush)
Caragana arborescens (Pea Shrub)

Cistus (Rockrose)
Convolvulus cneorum (Bush morning glory)
Cotinus coggygria (Smoke Tree)
Crassula argentea (Jade Plant)
Crassula falcata (No common name)
Cupressus Macrocarpa (Monterey Cypress)
Dendromecon (Bush Poppy)
Escallonia (No common name)
Fremontodendron (Flannelbush)
Hakea (Pincushion Tree)
Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon)
Hypericum calycinum (St. Johnswort)
Lantana (No common name)
Lavatera assurgentiflora (Tree Mallow)
Leucophyllum frutescens (Texas Ranger)
Myoporum debile (No common name)
Plumbago auriculata (Cape Plumbago)
Portulacaria afra Purselane Tree)
Prosopis glandulosa torreyana (Mesquite)
Rhamnus californica (Coffee Berry)
Rosa rugosa (Ramanas Rose)
Rosmarinus (Rosemary)
Salvia clevelandii (Blue Sage)
Salvia leucantha (Mexican Bush Sage)
Santolina (Lavender Cotton)
Sollya heteropylla (Australian Bluebell Creeper)
Spartium junceum (Spanish Broom)
Taxus (Yew)

PERENNIALS, BULBS, ANNUALS

Achillea (Yarrow)
Aloe arborescens (Tree Aloe)
Amaryllis belladonna (Naked Ladies)
Arctotheca calendula (Cape Weed)
Baccharis pilularis (Coyote Brush)
Baptisia australis I(False Indigo)
Carpobrotus (Bluebeard)
Centranthus ruber (Jupiter's Beard)
Cleome spinosa (Spiderflower)
Coreopsis (No Comon Name)
Diets vegeta (Fortnight Lily)
Dudleya brittonii (Large family of succulents)
Euryops (South African Daisy)
Gaillardia (Blanket Flower)
Iris, bearded
Kniphofia uvaria (Red Hot Poker)
Leonotis leonurus (Lion's Tail)
Limonium perezii (Sea Lavender)
Linum (Flax)
Mimulus (Monkey Flower)
Narcissus (Daffodil)

Phormium (New Zealand Flax)
Romneya coulteri Matilla Poppy)
Sisyrinchium bellum (Blue-eyed Grass)
Tithonia rotundifolia (Mexican Sunflower)
Verbena (No common name)
Yucca (No common name)
Zauschneria (California Fuschia)

