

SECTION 9: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS & SOCIAL NORMS

RECOMMENDATION #1: Defining Professionals: Recognition of Examples of Low Water Use Landscapes and a Sustainable Statewide Approach to Outreach and Information.

Background

During its investigative process and discussions with horticulture industry professionals and public officials, the Independent Technical Panel found a significant lack of information into the process and procedures to locate and hire the appropriate correct level of professional for residential landscaping. The differences between ~~landscape~~ Landscape designers Designers, Landscape Architects, Landscape Contractors, garden centers ~~and~~, irrigation professionals, landscape maintenance companies and gardeners -is typically not known or clear to homeowners_ residential property owners in need of landscape services. ~~Often and unknowingly, homeowners turn to unlicensed operators using cost to determine who to hire. The end result is often a landscape that is not designed and installed to industry standards, and therefore, not as water efficient or aesthetically pleasing as desired. Property owners will often require the education, advice and guidance of~~ from qualified landscape professionals at a price they can afford and should know who to turn to for that. While information about landscape professionals exists and is typically produced and disseminated by each specific professional service, it seems difficult to get it into the hands of consumers when they are ready to hire such services. Examples of the difficulty to find information about the correct landscape professional to contact and utilize was presented during ITP discussions surrounding this topic. Therefore, while this information is available, it is difficult for there is apparently a disconnect for the consumer to locate it.

~~In the end, it~~ It is every homeowner's responsibility to be a water manager, both inside and outside of their home. When asked, nearly all homeowners say they conserve water. Unfortunately, when pressed further about their water conservation activities, it becomes apparent that most homeowners lack even basic information on outdoor water use efficiency. In addition, most do not measure or track their actual water use nor are they knowledgeable about their irrigation systems or the type of plant material in their yards. The Save Our Water website provides examples of low water using landscapes from throughout the State and includes dialogue from the owners of the properties. However, additional information would increase the website's usefulness. ~~That~~ Such information might includes details about the landscape, including before and after photos, how the landscape was designed and by whom, a list of the plants used, irrigation system information, type of hardscape features and material used, type of mulch, and whether the installation was done by the homeowner or a professional. In addition, a methodology for a sustainable (long-term) approach to educate and communicate to homeowners with respect to the items discussed above, including information on how to identify the appropriate landscape professional for each type of project, should be developed as well as a process to outreach disseminate these examples to consumers.

Purpose Statement

The definitions, roles and requirements of and for landscape professionals should be made easily available to homeowners in order to provide them with informed choices when considering landscape services. Examples of well-designed and correctly installed low water using -and sustainable landscapes should be readily available and recognized on a local level. The Water Use Classification of Ornamental Species (WUCOLS) website and plant list should also be readily available and easy to use.

The Independent Technical Panel Recommends That:

1. The Department of Water Resources, in partnership with the Association of California Water Agencies (Save Our Water), convene a work group with representatives from academia, the California Urban Water Conservation Council, industry and others to develop an educational campaign for homeowners that identifies the variety of professional horticulture services and irrigation systems available in the marketplace. The campaign will also identify and make available to homeowners, examples of properly designed and installed low-water use landscapes for each of the state's climate zones. The campaign will provide information on how homeowners can access and utilize the WUCOLS plant list.
2. The Department of Water Resources request funding to complete the following:
 - a. Convene representatives from horticulture groups (landscape designers, architects, and contractors), academia, irrigation professionals, manufacturers and distributors, nurseries (wholesale and retail), water agencies, industry trade organizations ~~and~~ , consultants, arboretums and botanical gardens.
 - b. Review of and search for existing definitions and campaigns and current levels of funding.
 - c. Identify services performed by each type of landscape professional.
 - d. Identify a process to obtain examples of low water use /sustainable oriented landscapes.
 - e. Consider the role of invasive plants.
 - f. Consider the role of and how to address concerns related to unlicensed operators (e.g. lack of insurance, business licenses, contractor license, etc.).
 - g. Develop metrics to evaluate residential type of work for current professionals. Identify who typically does what and what is working, what is not working and where the gaps are in the different roles.
 - h. Develop marketing campaign to promote WUCOLS plant list and other DWR approved sources for plants and plant lists and ~~its~~ their use (reference Section 10.2).

- i. Select the criteria for creating the information and identify how to best disseminate (e.g. through the realtor community, water agencies, cities, retail garden stores, etc.).
- j. Develop an implementation plan that includes a timeline for program roll-out, a list of deliverables, roles and responsibilities, and impact evaluation to measure effectiveness.
- k. Continue operating the Save Our Water campaign, or similar statewide program.

