

## **My Water Wise Wonderland Makeover Story**

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When I moved to Southern California from Northern California five years ago I was concerned by the amount of grass surrounding almost every residential property. Being an environmental advocate, I knew this was not right, especially in an area where water is at a premium. I decided the best way to make a difference was to remove my lawn and replace it with water wise plants. In order to do so, I became a master gardener in an effort to learn how to do this myself. In addition, I went to any and every California Friendly gardening class, workshop or lecture I could find.

I ended up designing my front yard and hired some guys to do the heavy digging and planting. I was one of the lucky residents who applied for IEUA's cash for grass rebate (\$2.00 for every square foot of lawn removed – up to 1,000 square feet) and also I applied for MWD's rotating sprinkler head rebate (\$4.00 per head)! These rebates paid for almost sixty-percent of my remodeling costs.

It took about eighteen months for the plants to fill in and two years later they are still maturing. I have had to add a few plants (due to them dying or to fill in bare spaces) as well as move a few plants (I found out that coral bells are low water only when planted in partial shade).

My husband and I are pleased with the final look of the yard. The plants are low (nothing big and wild) and slow growing. The best part is how easy it is to maintain. We "fired" our mow and blow gardener and now go out there every couple of months to pick some weeds (we have very few because we keep a 2" - 3" layer of mulch over the soil), trim back an ornamental grass or two and dead head some flowers. Plus, the money we've saved by doing our own gardening paid off the balance of the remodel in a little over a year!

I just redid the backyard which is rather large, has a slope and seems to be a magnet to weeds, gophers and ground squirrels. I keep learning as I go, but I think even the experts learn as they go. One of the main things I learned is to be flexible and open to change because we can't always control Mother Nature.

If you are going to remove your water guzzling grass and redesign it into a water wise wonderland, I suggest you visit various water wise gardens such as Chino Basin Water Conservation District. In addition, attend local water wise gardening classes offered by most water agencies, visit websites, read books promoting water wise or California Friendly landscapes, and talk to as many experts as possible. Also, remember where you live and that the Inland Empire is much drier and warmer than the Southern California coastal cities.

I presently work for Chino Basin Water Conservation District where we have the most beautiful water wise demonstration garden (open to the public seven days a week). I'm not saying that our garden is amazing because I work there - I work there because I wanted to be a part of this amazing garden so I could help educate others on the importance of reducing outdoor water usage by installing a water wise wonderland!

# From Thirsty Grass to Water Wise Wonderland

**Original Water Guzzling Landscape - Oct. 2005**



**Quit Watering Landscape - Sept. 2007**



**New Drought Tolerant Landscape - April 2009**



# From Thirsty Grass to Water Wise Wonderland

Drought Tolerant Landscape - May 2009



Ever Changing Landscape - May 2010



April 26, 2010



June 24, 2010

The cycle of the blooms . . . The same location two months apart