

Vegetated Swale, Bioswale and Bioretention Supplemental Watering and Maintenance Guide

GENERAL MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

Plants identified in the supplemental plant list are either native to California or from similar mediterranean climate locations. These plants are adapted to our local soils and climate, meaning they should require minimal care once established. Hand watering and pruning during the summer months will keep plants greener and healthier for longer periods of time and is recommended.

WATERING

Understanding your soil type first (clay or sand) is important when determining how much water your plants will need. Clay soil typically retains more water compared to sandy soil. If you have clay soil, you may need to apply water slowly to allow it to sink in and infiltrate the ground. Clay soil can look dry on the surface, but may be wet underneath. Sandy soil drains more rapidly and typically requires more frequent watering. Sandy soil also retains less nutrition compared to clay soil. A simple soil test will help determine your soil type and can be found at your local gardening center. Watering in the morning is best as the air is usually cool enough to cut down on evaporation, but warm enough to avoid fungal problems associated with wet plants.

Plants adapted to our local climate should receive heavy soakings through the winter naturally. If seasonal rainfall in the winter is sparse, heavy watering a few times in the early spring (February through April) should be considered. Through the summer and fall months (until the winter rains arrive), plants should be watered once or twice a month. Allow the soil to mostly dry out between waterings. Plants can recover from dry soils much easier than oversaturated wet soils.

PRUNING AND MAINTENANCE

Pruning or cutting away dead or overgrown branches increases air circulation in the interior of plants, reduces branch weight load and removes dead material that can harbor diseases. In addition, pruning encourages flowering, enhances plant's shape and promotes new growth. Always use clean, sharp tools when pruning. Make cuts just above leaf nodes and breaking buds along a stem. Don't cut across large, woody branches, as some mature plants may not be able to regrow from wood more than two years old.

Most plants grow quickly and flower during spring and early summer months. Flowering perennials can be "deadheaded" or lightly pruned after the flowering cycle, usually around May or early June each year. "Deadheading" helps to remove unsightly old flowers as well as reduces the weight and amount of leaves that plants have to maintain over the summer months. In fall (October or November), cutting back old summer growth helps prepare plants for a new growth cycle supported by winter rains. For most plants, the general rule of thumb is not to remove more than 30% of branches and leaves during pruning. Some plants recommended for basins can form a thick carpet, similar to a lawn, that can be mowed or cut down with a string-trimmer once or twice a year.

In general, identified plants do not need supplemental fertilizer. A 1"-2" layer of organic mulch will slowly add nutrition to the soil, while also keeping roots insulated preventing excessive soil drying. Weeds are not only unsightly, but they also compete with other plants for precious water and nutrients. Pulling weeds by hand in early spring BEFORE they have a chance to set seeds is recommended as best practice.