

the dirt



FALL 2021 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Fall into planting season.

Jump-start your garden now, when conditions are ideal for healthy root growth.

Autumn provides a respite from the harshness of summer.

The shorter days and cooler temperatures make it the ideal time to plant if you're looking for eye-popping color and vibrancy in spring.

Many plants go dormant this time of year, diverting their energy from leaves, fruits and flowers to focus on root growth through winter.

Soil temperatures in autumn are still warm from summer, providing another boost to new plantings with ideal conditions to establish healthy root systems that give your

fall flora a head start over their spring-planted kin. This supercharges their ability to uptake water and nutrients and makes them more resistant to the threats of pests and heat in summer.

The milder conditions of fall also help retain moisture in plants and soil. And with a little luck, the weeks ahead could bring merciful soaking rains to provide an added advantage to any young trees, shrubs or perennials you introduce to your yard this season.

Plant now to give your landscape a leg up for spring. And while you're at it—

consider adding native plants to your design. Many varieties go dormant in fall, but plant them with the same care you give your showcase annuals and they will reward you with months of beauty next year.



Green incentives.

IRWD offers generous rebates of \$3 per square foot for turf removal, and 70¢ per square foot of converted drip irrigation. Visit [RightScape.com](https://www.irwd.com/RightScape.com) for a full list of rebates and landscaping tips.

Exploring California native plants.



Mike Evans

Mike Evans | Tree of Life Nursery Founder and President

Mike Evans started Tree of Life in 1978 as a specialty nursery/landscape company. He is responsible for nursery design, construction and management, and promotes Tree of Life and native plants wherever he can. Mike speaks and writes extensively on California's natural and cultural histories.

IRWD: How do you integrate California native plants in an existing landscape?

Evans: To plant new native plants in an old non-native landscape, you need to prepare the soil so that it will retain moisture. Then, be sure to hand water the new plant about once a week until it gets established. Consider replacing tired old shrubs with fresh new native plants, such as toyon, lemonade berry, manzanita, ceanothus, sage, or flowering buckwheat.

IRWD: How long does it take for a plant to be considered established?

Evans: Generally, a plant is established in four to six months, or when the roots are spread out well beyond the original planting hole. For trees and shrubs, this can take up to 12 months.

IRWD: Can this be accomplished year-round?

Evans: Yes, but the best time for planting natives is fall through spring.

IRWD: What are some considerations if planting late spring into summer?

Evans: For warm season planting, just remember you are managing the soil moisture in two root zones, the first in the planting hole (actual) and the second in the surrounding soil (future). Don't let the root ball in the planting hole dry out. Hand water approximately once a week. Keep the surrounding soil moist enough to attract new roots by deep watering approximately every three to four weeks.

IRWD: Are there any local demonstration gardens, parks, or botanical gardens you recommend viewing?

Evans: In Southern California, good examples of mature native plants can be seen at California Botanical Garden in Claremont and Reata Park in San Juan Capistrano.

Heart-leaved penstemon,
Keckiella cordifolia

Pollinator gardens.

Creating a space for birds and bees.

Get inspiration for fall planting by visiting the San Joaquin Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary Pollinator Garden, which is a 6,600-square-foot garden celebrating its fifth birthday this year. Sea & Sage Audubon Society volunteers started the garden with more than 100 native plants to attract bees, moths, butterflies, hummingbirds and other species that are essential to the pollination of plants and crops. About one-third of the food we eat is thanks to a pollinator.

Sea & Sage worked with IRWD to develop the demonstration garden so something is in bloom during each season. On the planting palette is manzanita, ceanothus, island bush snapdragon, bladderpod, white sage, black sage, California fuchsia, California goldenrod, coyote mint, desert penstemon, foothill penstemon and apricot mallow.

More information about the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary is located at IRWD.com/san-joaquin-marsh.



Santa Catalina Island Manzanita



Debut of the San Joaquin Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary Pollinator Garden



Juan's tip of the season.

Perennials vs. annuals for your gardens

Consider using California native annuals like poppies, island pink yarrow and desertbells, which require very little water even when it's hot. Perennials provide the benefit of growing and flowering for many years. Create a dynamic display by selecting plants that bloom different times of the year to have a colorful garden year-round. Designing with



perennials will look best when planted in groups of odd numbers. Also, stick to one or two varieties to create better arrangements and avoid busy-looking gardens.

Looking ahead.

Fall garden to-do list

- **Reduce watering:** It's important to maintain your irrigation system to avoid over-watering, maintain plant health and reduce runoff. Set your controller at 100% for the summer and use the watering index adjustment feature to have your controller automatically change run times as needed.
- **Check your irrigation battery:** Be sure your controller has a backup battery in case of a power outage and replace it every time you swap out your smoke alarm batteries.
- **Prepare soils:** To retain soil moisture while discouraging weeds, IRWD encourages generous use of mulch to cover garden and bedding soils.

Participate in our webinars and community events

Oct. 13 | Noon | Ocean-Minded Landscaping. Simple changes to your yard can protect our ocean. In this free, online workshop you'll learn about creating healthy living soil, sustainable water management and rain-catching, selecting California-friendly plants, as well as the irrigation and maintenance skills you'll need to create a stunning, ocean-friendly yard. IRWD customers will have an opportunity to win a water efficiency kit. Sign up at RightScape.com/events.

Tap RightScape resources

Visit RightScape.com for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at RightScapeResources.com.

About The Dirt

The Dirt is a quarterly gardening resource from Irvine Ranch Water District, created to help you grow a more beautiful, water-efficient garden. Each newsletter brings you seasonal tips to keep plants thriving all year long.

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