

the dirt



SUMMER 2023 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Beat the heat.

California native plants that thrive in summer sun.

Southern California summers are known to punish landscapes with unforgiving heat and laser-sharp sunlight. Under these conditions, spring blooms wither, leaves shrivel, and many plants hunker down—surrendering to a state of submissive dormancy until fall.

Many native plants have evolved to withstand, and even flourish, under these conditions. Building vast root systems when watered adequately in the cooler months, these head-turners come to life when it's hot because they can draw moisture from surrounding underground areas.



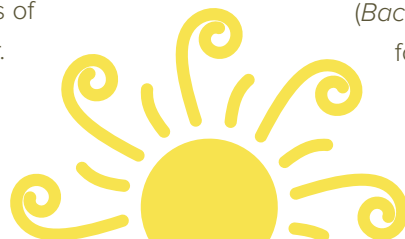
Summer-loving plants (clockwise from top): white sage, pigeon point coyote bush, desert willow, Conejo buckwheat and Cleveland sage.

The desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) explodes in the spring with hummingbird-loving, trumpet-shaped flowers that bloom through summer and into fall. It makes an excellent medium-sized tree for any garden and provides plenty of love to pollinators seeking scarce nectar this time of year.

California buckwheat parades showy puffs of cloud-shaped blooms throughout summer. Flowers vary from white to creamy pinks and yellows, like the Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*). The lighter hues contrast nicely against the spectacular

dark pink clusters of the Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*).

A mix of salvias, like the deep blue Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*) and sacred white sage (*Salvia apiana*), tower over lower-lying shrubs like the pigeon point coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis ssp. pilularis*)—which is known for flowers that bloom in every season.



Visit [calscape.org](https://www.calscape.org) to search nearly 1,000 indigenous plants that flower in summer.

Plant for the planet.



Farah Saquib | Partner, Urban Ecology Studio

Originally drawn to interior design in college, landscape designer Farah Saquib gradually shifted her focus from the inside out—turning to nature to express the sustainability of life in her artistic designs. “When you create a landscape,” she explains, “it needs to give back.”

How can a landscape ‘give back?’

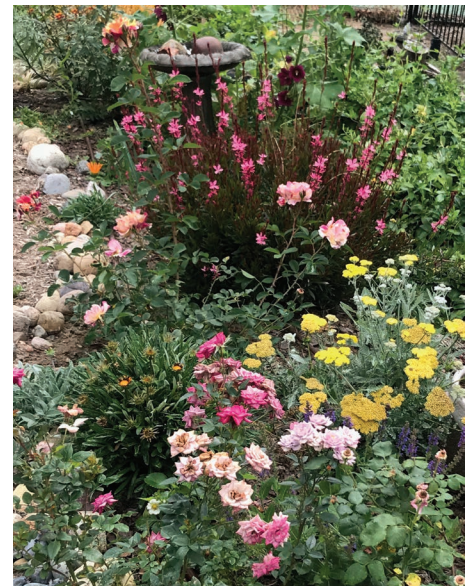
Saquib: Regeneration is at the heart of sustainability. This concept, of restoring ecosystems through landscaping, reflects my passion for beautiful natural spaces and concern for ecology. Every landscape needs to be a habitat for native fauna and flora. Birds, bees, butterflies... You build up the soil and create a dynamic setting for life that keeps giving.



Is this something that anyone could do?

Saquib: Of course! My recommendation is to start by establishing an overall concept of what you want your landscape to be. A landscape designer can help you avoid mistakes, but there are also a lot of tools available online to help guide the way. Start by figuring out how you are going to use the space. Then consider how the elements work together in your landscape. Where does the sunlight fall during the day? What water sources do you have, and how do these elements position themselves to the orientation of your home?

A lack of a big-picture planning can disrupt the possibility for design. Sometimes, people end up making costly mistakes where the end result would not be immediately evident, and things have to be ripped out.



What are some of your biggest challenges as a landscape designer?

Saquib: A lot of clients don't realize how important irrigation is. If you're putting in plants, it's critical to have a good irrigation system to deliver the appropriate amount of water for the survival of the plants.

Heart-leaved penstemon,
Keckiella cordifolia

Get your sprinklers in sync.

IRWD's Landscape Tuneup Program offers expert irrigation repairs at half the cost.

Irrigation leaks are common causes of plant damage in a landscape. Too little or too much soil moisture will affect the health and appearance of flowers, shrubs, grasses and trees—and waste water in the process.

If your sprinkler system has seen better days, we can help! IRWD's Landscape Tuneup Program provides expert help to get your irrigation system in shape, and it covers half the cost of qualified repairs: saving you time, water and money.

Need a line repaired? A valve replaced? Sprinklers raised or adjusted? We'll cover half the cost! We'll also split the bill for qualified components including high-efficiency nozzles, drip irrigation and more.



Both residential and commercial customers can apply. To be eligible, you must be an IRWD customer with no delinquencies on IRWD bills in the past 12 months and have a functional in-ground irrigation system already in place.

A beautiful garden depends on a well-tuned irrigation system to deliver just the right amount of water to keep it thriving. With this kind of help, why wait? Sign up today! Visit IRWD.com/landscapetuneup.

Plants

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Are there sociological benefits to natural landscapes as well?

Saquib: My generation was more attuned to nature, but I feel like my kids don't care as much. At Urban Ecology Studios, my partners Dana Martin, Suzee Ramirez and I work a lot with local schools on garden projects, including a monarch waystation at Heritage Elementary in Tustin, and



several water harvesting features at Community Roots Academy in Laguna Niguel. With these habitat gardens, the kids are out in nature, exploring the plants, marveling at pollinators, climbing on rocks... It's great!

For more information, visit IRWD.com/demogarden, or check out the California Native Plant Society website at calscape.org.



Juan's tip of the season.

Inspect your irrigation system.

Did you know that one missing sprinkler nozzle can waste up to 20 gallons of water a minute? With summer here and our sprinklers working full-force, take some time to walk around your landscape and inspect your sprinkler system station by station for leaks. Give yourself at least 5 minutes per station to look for missing nozzles, broken bodies, or any other issues that can cause water waste. Keeping your system in tip-top shape can save you hundreds if not thousands of gallons of water per month.



Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list.

- **Adjust your timer:** Make adjustments from month to month following our schedule at wateringguide.com. Be sure shrubs and planters are on a separate program or schedule from grass areas as they require less water.
- **Mulch:** Apply a 3-inch layer around your plantings to reduce weed growth, retain moisture, and lower soil temperature.
- **Planting plan:** This is the perfect time to plan for the fall planting season. Go to IRWD.com/plantlist to search your top choices for trees, shrubs and ground covers. Consider adding California native plants to your garden.

Log-a-Leak: Help IRWD help your neighbors save water.

Most irrigation leaks go unnoticed, but IRWD's new online tool makes it easy for people to help identify problems so we can work on getting them fixed. With more eyes out in the community, we can notify customers to make repairs. Just go to IRWD.com/logaleak and pin the location. We'll take care of the rest.



Tap our online resources.

Visit IRWD.com/rebates 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 IRWD.com/plantlist.

Need to contact IRWD?

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