

the dirt



WINTER 2023 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Let our gardens inspire you.

Stop by and see how beautiful a water-efficient landscape can be.

Ready to revamp your landscape? Irvine Ranch Water District headquarters has four demonstration gardens to help you find the perfect style for your home. Stroll under our bougainvillea arbors and enjoy the fragrance of the woolly blue curls. The best part is, by adding the beauty of these plants to your landscape, you'll also save water—and money!

Drought-Tolerant Garden – Planted in 2014 and fully mature, this is a vivid example of how you can convert your ordinary lawn into a stunning and unique water-efficient garden.

Succulent Garden – This garden demonstrates design strategies such as focal points and varied plant heights. Succulents are diverse and nearly indestructible.

Kurapia Garden – Kurapia is a highly versatile, low-water, walkable alternative to turf. It can be mowed to resemble a traditional lawn or left as a billowy groundcover with delicate flowers.

California Native Garden – This is our new baby, planted in late July, featuring only California native plants. They attract butterflies, bees, birds, and other important pollinators.

Signs at all four gardens explain how to pick the right plants, install the right irrigation equipment, and more.

Stop by to see them at 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine. Plant guides and other resources are also available at [IRWD.com/demo-garden](https://www.irwd.com/demo-garden).



Demonstrating design.



Victor Zamora

Victor Zamora | Landscape Contracts Administrator

Irvine Ranch Water District Landscape Contracts Administrator Victor Zamora got his first job at just 5 or 6 years old. A neighbor recognized his wide-eyed fascination with plants and offered to pay him to help out in his yard. Today, Zamora has channeled that passion into an impressive career designing award-winning water-efficient landscapes all over Orange and Riverside counties, including IRWD's own demonstration gardens.

What was the premise behind IRWD's demonstration gardens?

Zamora: We wanted people to see for themselves how beautiful a drought-tolerant garden can be. The gardens at IRWD headquarters represent a variety of plants and styles to choose from. (See Page 1 for details.)

What's the best way to plan a landscape redesign?

Zamora: Start by determining what it is you are looking for. Visit some demonstration gardens, like ours. Photos can also be a great resource. Remember to create focal points in your design to draw the eyes and achieve a look that is going to capture everything. Plant height is another important detail. Shoot for a tiered effect, staging smaller plants along the front, and taller plants farther back.

What is your favorite part of IRWD's demonstration gardens?

Zamora: The dragon tree and the bench. The dragon tree, placed in the center of a whirl of decomposed granite with



aluminum edging, is the focal point of the garden. And the bench—also fashioned after IRWD's swirling logo—provides the ideal spot to sit and soak it all in. To me, it's symbolic of some of the people who helped in the creation of the gardens. It's all about helping others achieve their goals with landscaping and helping our environment.

For more information, visit IRWD.com/demo-garden. To learn how to design, plant and water your landscape, watch The Shed Show at IRWD.com/ShedShow.

Shape up for spring.

Trim now to give plants a boost in the new year.

Native plants are low-maintenance, but like any living species they sometimes need a little TLC.

Winter is the ideal time to give them that healing touch: clipping dead sprigs, removing anything that is damaged or diseased, and establishing some shape and symmetry so plants can grow beautifully in the spring.

Pruning encourages growth and promotes flowers, which translates to nectar, seeds and berries for birds and pollinators. But before you trim back that unruly native bush or tree, here are some tried-and-true guidelines to help keep your plants healthy.

Start with your tools. Make sure they are sharp and sterilized with alcohol or a bleach solution to avoid the spread of disease. Use pruners for branches less than 1 inch in diameter, and a handsaw for larger cuts.

Think first, act later. Get an idea of what you want from your plant before you start trimming. Remove the dead or diseased branches to get a better look at the plant's form—and shape from there, removing branches that break the rhythm of the rest of the structure.



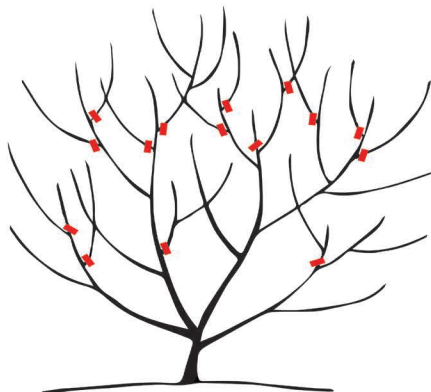
Bring in some sun. Thin the plant to bring in more light and promote a plant's natural "up and out" shape.

Protect the collar. Never trim a branch flush with the trunk. Instead, make your cut just outside the "collar," a bulbous area that discourages decay and helps seal up the wound.

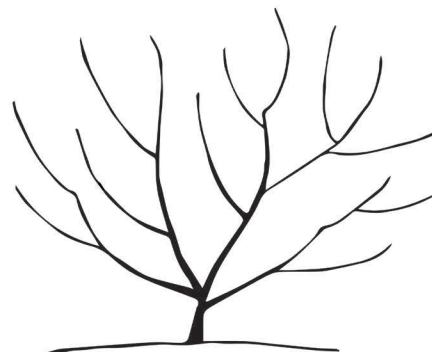
For more tips, go to [CNPS.org/gardening/digging-deeper/pruning-tips-techniques](https://www.cnps.org/gardening/digging-deeper/pruning-tips-techniques).

BEFORE PRUNING

Pruning points marked in red



AFTER PRUNING





Juan's tip of the season.

Harvest rainfall for your garden



Take advantage of seasonal rainfall and capture it for watering. One inch of rainfall on a roof can collect as much as 1,200 gallons of water that can be used in your landscape.

You might also consider decorative rain chains that divert water from your gutters into your rain barrels and landscape. Another simple trick is to divert your rain gutters directly into your landscape and let the water flow, spread, and sink into the ground for plants to use.

Don't let this precious water go to waste!

Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list

- **California natives:** Coastal climates like ours allow us to plant indigenous plants well into winter. Make sure to mulch these newly planted areas well to promote root development.
- **Watering tips:** Keep your sprinklers off and use this time to check for irrigation breaks and leaks. Make repairs and prepare your irrigation system for spring.
- **Smart pruning:** Deciduous plants benefit from pruning, especially fruit trees like apples and peaches. Use sharp tools and clean them before and after use with a mix of water and bleach.

Check out The Shed Show!

Looking for tips to fine-tune your irrigation system? In Episode III, landscape guru Juan Garcia walks you through the process. Visit IRWD.com/ShedShow to learn more!



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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