

River-Friendly Landscaping Core Practices & Principles

The River-Friendly Landscaping (RFL) Core Principles and Practices serve as demonstrations of the holistic approach to sustainable, watershed-based, drought-resilient and regenerative landscaping. Fundamental principles and practices include:

- **Create and Maintain Healthy, Living Soil** - Provide plant nutrients and resists pests; protect soil from compaction and erosion; increase organic matter, and use mulch; nurture the soil food web.
- **Increase Soil Organic Carbon** - Mitigate greenhouse gases and increase climate change resiliency, and increase water-holding capacity.
- **Landscape Locally** - Choose plant communities appropriate for site conditions, including rain gardens, swales, etc.; use local sources for products and materials. Select local California native plants; plants for dry summer climates; drought-tolerant, fire-resistant plants. Use plant palettes appropriate for the amount of rain locally received.
- **Create and Protect Wildlife Habitat** - Use local, native and a diversity of plants; provide shelter and water; reduce light pollution for birds, bees, butterflies, beneficial insects, and others.
- **Manage Water on Site** – Understand the soil, plant, water relationship; soil filters polluted water; eliminate water runoff, soil erosion, and movement of mulch into storm drain systems.
- **Capture and Re-use of Water** – Use resources such as rainwater, and recycled water to reduce use of potable water in landscaping.
- **Use Water Efficiently** - Use highly efficient irrigation equipment and strategies, when irrigation is necessary.
- **Create Irrigation and Plant Hydrozones** – Group plants according to water and solar requirements for water efficiency and plant health; use separate irrigation valves for different water-use groups of plants; do not mix plants with different water-use classifications in the same zone; use WUCOLS (Water Use Classification of Landscape Species) to determine plant water-use classifications.
- **Reduce Waste** – Do not use invasive plant species; use the right plant in the right place for the right function; choose and place plants so they can grow to natural size in space allotted to avoid excessive pruning and maintenance; use recycled and salvaged products; compost on site; use mulch, including grass clippings and leaving them to decompose and release nutrients back into the soil.
- **Conserve Energy** – Reduce need for mowing and excessive pruning; shade buildings and hardscape and to reduce the heat-island effect; use products that can be obtained locally; use exterior lighting that serves a function, when needed and controlled by a timer or other method to turn off lights to reduce light pollution and avoid impacts to ecosystems, plants and many creatures, such as birds, mammals, insects, and amphibians.
- **Protect Water and Air Quality** – Use permeable surfaces to minimize runoff of materials and polluted water; use integrated pest management; minimize use of pesticides; reduce use of synthetic, quick release fertilizers; reduce use of fuel-consuming equipment; plant trees to aid in absorption of air pollutants and water; maintain and manage irrigation system.