Water-efficient Plants for the Willamette Valley
This Plant Guide has been made available through a partnership between Clackamas Community College Horticulture Department, South Fork Water Board, Regional Water Providers Consortium, OSU Extension Service, City of Corvallis, and Eugene Water and Electric Board, with the goal of moving towards a more water-efficient community through water-efficient landscaping. We recognize that there are many more well deserving water-efficient plants than we were able to include in this guide.

For more information about the following partners, go to their websites listed below.

Clackamas Community College
http://depts.clackamas.edu/hort/

The City of Corvallis
www.ci.corvallis.or.us

Eugene Water and Electric Board
http://www.eweb.org/

Oregon State University Extension Service
http://extension.oregonstate.edu

Regional Water Providers Consortium
www.conserveh2o.org

South Fork Water Board
www.sfwb.org

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Other Credits

Dr. Amadej Trnkoczy: Pinus nigra, Daphne cneorum, Crocus vernus ssp. albilorius, Malva alcea, Geranium sanguineum, Origamion vulgar

Brousseau Collection: Abies grandis, Oemleria cerasiformis, Solidago sp., Artemisia suksdorffii, Fragaria chiloensis

Charles Webber © California Academy of Sciences: Juniperus scopulorum; Ceanothus impressus; Hypericum calycinum

Gerald and Buff Corsi © California Academy of Sciences: Pinus ponderosa; Gaillardia aristata

Dr. G. Dallas and Margaret Hanna © California Academy of Sciences: Acer circinatum

Robert Potts © California Academy of Sciences: Aster subspicatus; Oxalis oregana

Christopher Christie © 2003 Dicentra formosa

Dr. Nick V. Kurzenko ©2004 Phellodendron amurense; Pinus densiflora

Timonthy D. Ives © 2002 Abies procera

Jeff Abbas © 2001 Ratibida columnifera

George Jackson © 2002 Calycanthus occidentalis

JoAnn Ordano © California Academy of Sciences: Papaver somniferum

Joseph Dougherty/ecology.org © Cercis occidentalis, Liatris spicata

Robert Sivinski © 2004 Penstemon barbatus ssp. torreyi

Virginia Moore © California Academy of Sciences: Briza maxima
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Western Oregon has a Mediterranean-type climate, which is characterized by mild, wet winters and dry, warm summers. Our dry period typically lasts 3 months (July through September), and daytime temperatures may exceed 90°F. This combination of dry days and summer heat will cause stress to many landscape plants if they are not irrigated regularly. As a result, municipal water use in the Willamette Valley frequently doubles or triples during the summer months due to outdoor watering. See the graph below. As the population in our region grows, meeting our summer watering needs is becoming more challenging.

When we draw water from our reservoirs faster than we can keep them filled, we threaten the supply of water needed for drinking, irrigation, manufacturing, fish habitat, and emergencies such as firefighting. In addition to seasonal peaks, daily water use patterns can add stress to already stressed water distribution systems. Most automatic irrigation timers are set to go off in the early mornings (5 a.m.-7 a.m.) certain days of the week; therefore utilities must often super-size their facilities to meet early morning demands that may or may not occur in any given year based on weather conditions. If customers set irrigation timers at other times of the morning or night (11 p.m.-5 a.m.), water utilities would be assured of making the most of existing facilities before building new expensive structures.

Water conservation measures can enable water providers to delay building costly new facilities or seeking new water sources, thus helping keep water rates down. While conservation alone will not eliminate the need to increase our water supply, it can make a substantial impact and balance the effect of population growth.

This guide was created by horticulture and conservation experts as a tool to assist the general gardener in making decisions about how to use water more efficiently in their landscapes. In addition to the water savings you will see, there are a number of other benefits that come with water-efficient landscaping. They include reduced fertilizer and chemical use, less weed growth, less energy use, less water runoff, and reduced maintenance.

Landscapes add value, beauty and livability to our homes, and keeping them water-efficient is a critical part of being a good steward. Whether you are redoing an existing landscape or landscaping a new home or business, consider this guide as a place to begin your efforts.

By following the seven basic steps of water-efficient landscaping, and by using this Water-efficient Plants for the Willamette Valley guide, you will discover trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials, ground covers, and ornamental grasses that were chosen because they are suited to our Mediterranean-type climate and require less water, fertilizer, maintenance or other special care once they are established. These plants will also allow you to continue to achieve color, diversity, texture, and beauty in your landscape.