



Santa Clara County Sustainable Landscape Ordinance

Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is the purpose of the Santa Clara County Sustainable Landscape Ordinance?

- Requires landscaping to be more water-efficient;
- Limits the amount of water used for landscaping;
- Encourages efficient landscape design, efficient irrigation design, and use of plants suitable to local climates;
- Encourages the use of compost; and
- Limits turf/lawn areas.

2) Why is the County of Santa Clara proposing new water-efficient landscaping regulation?

The County already has existing regulation from the year 2010, limiting the amount of water which can be used for landscaping. In 2015, Governor Jerry Brown directed all cities, towns, and counties in California to update their landscape regulations to allow for more water savings. The County's proposed Sustainable Landscape Ordinance meets the State requirements, but provides flexibility to better suit the needs of county residents.

3) Will a permit be required for existing landscaping? Will existing landscaping need to be modified?

A permit is not needed for existing landscaping. Consistency with the new regulations will be required if the landscape area:

- is new, and
- is greater than 500 sq. ft., and
- is part of a development project which requires a Building or Planning permit.

4) What if I have a vegetable garden or want to plant a new vegetable garden?

1. Existing vegetable garden – does not require a permit
2. New vegetable garden, less than 500 square feet – does not require a permit
3. New vegetable garden, greater than 500 square feet associated with a Planning, Grading, or Building Permit – required to be consistent with the new regulations and has limitations on water use (but allows more water use than for ornamental landscaping)

5) There is a lot of documentation required in order to apply for a landscaping permit. Will I have to hire a landscape architect?

1. Landscaping between 500 square feet-2,500 square feet – does not require a certified landscape architect. The County is developing web tools that will allow property owners to research, design, and create the landscape documentation required under the new rules.
2. Landscaping is more than 2,500 square feet - landscaping needs to be designed by a licensed landscape architect or contractor.