



If the idea of a low-water use landscape brings to mind visions of gravel and cactus planting, reconsider, because a garden most certainly can be beautiful without being thirsty.



Before

This yard began its life as a part sun, part shade garden of weeds and grasses. An existing concrete patio was connected to a second patio and to the house by a gravel path. Automatic drip irrigation was installed to an existing faucet and broken into two different zones. Plants, not lawn, were planted and the exposed ground was covered with wood chips .



After

A little hard work and a year later the garden is well established and thriving. The key to its success was the choice of plants in their relationship to the sun and shade areas of the yard. Shade tolerant shrubs and perennials create a lush, cool, green hideaway near the house while annuals, vegetables, herbs, and sun loving perennials occupy the sunny areas.

A successful waterwise landscape uses limited water not because it skimps on plantings but because it makes wise use of native and drought tolerant plants. Equal consideration should be given to the creation of an efficient irrigation system. Proper irrigation design will help you use water more efficiently in your landscape.

If you're not ready to start over, an old landscape can easily be renovated in stages to make it less thirsty. If you have an in-ground irrigation system already, it can usually be adjusted to water your plantings less frequently. Take a careful look at your existing plants; identify

which ones are low-water consumers. You may have a number of them but you may be watering them as if they were heavy users or they may be planted among thirsty ones. Isolate the features and plants you want to keep and work a new design around them.

Target Areas For Improvement

Depending on the extent of the changes you want to make in your landscape, you may need to devise a long-range plan. Try to put your money and time where you'll see the water-saving results first. One way to do this is to remove the thirsty plants, or reduce or eliminate your lawn.

quick tips....

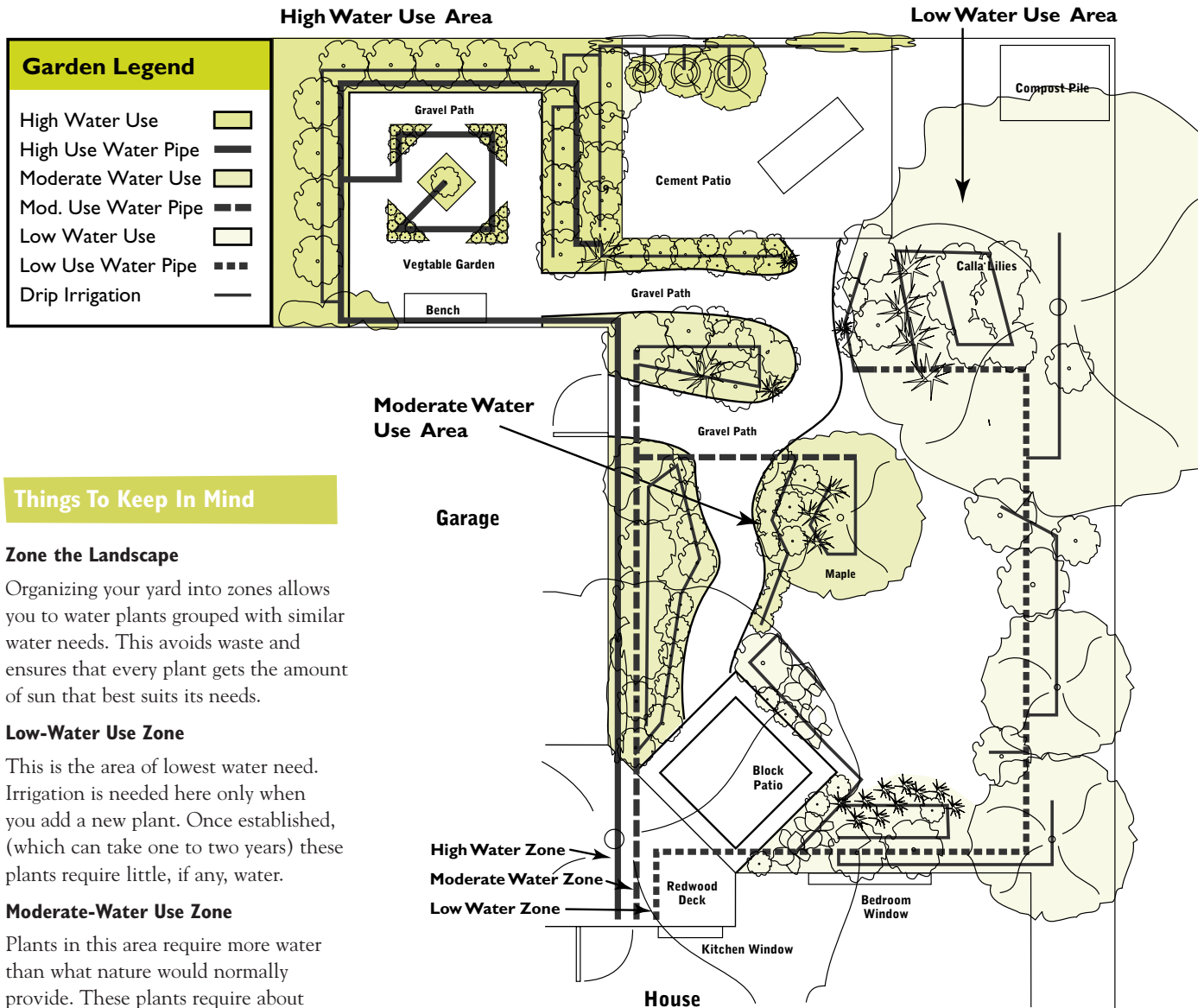
WATERWISE PLANNING

All waterwise gardens begin with careful planning. As you plan your landscape consider the following:

Principles for a Water-Wise Landscape

- Determine Sun and Shade Areas
- Improve your Soil
- Group Plants Wisely
- Limit Lawn Areas
- Use Mulch
- Use Water-Conserving Plants
- Irrigate Efficiently

Steps To A Water-Smart Landscape



Things To Keep In Mind

Zone the Landscape

Organizing your yard into zones allows you to water plants grouped with similar water needs. This avoids waste and ensures that every plant gets the amount of sun that best suits its needs.

Low-Water Use Zone

This is the area of lowest water need. Irrigation is needed here only when you add a new plant. Once established, (which can take one to two years) these plants require little, if any, water.

Moderate-Water Use Zone

Plants in this area require more water than what nature would normally provide. These plants require about half the water that lawns need.

High-Water Use Zone.

This is the place for your thirstiest plants. Generally, plants in the high-water zone are lawns, annuals, vegetable gardens, and other water-loving plants. They are usually grouped close to the house. Cutting back on the size of this zone does the most to reduce water use.

Limit Lawn Areas

No matter where you live, lawns require constant upkeep; mowing, weeding, fertilizing, and a great deal of water.

In places where rainfall is plentiful throughout the warm-weather season, a lawn is easy to grow, but in arid summer climates such as ours, a small lawn or no lawn makes really good sense!

When evaluating how much lawn you want in your garden, look to function first. Hardscape such as pavers, wood, stone, and gravel provide attractive

contrasts in planted areas and at the same time perform a real function in the landscape.

Low water use ground covers, low shrubs, and hedges provide cooling textures and colors, adding more interest to your landscape and garden.

Photographs and Plans Courtesy of: Carrie Landry gd² - Garden Design, Oakland CA