



A1: VTA SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING POLICY



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POLICY Sustainable Landscaping	Document Number:	340.003
	Version Number:	2
	Date:	09/26/2018

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to conserve water resources, reduce or prevent pollution, and improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity through the use of sustainable landscaping practices.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of landscaping for all VTA capital projects and for all VTA facilities located on VTA-owned property.

3. Responsibilities:

This policy applies to all VTA employees and contractors responsible for planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining landscaping for VTA projects and facilities.

4. Policy:

VTA commits to implement the following sustainable landscaping practices to the maximum extent possible in accordance with the purpose of this policy.

4.1 Conserve Water Resources

- Plant low maintenance, drought tolerant, and native plant species;
- Refer to the Santa Clara Valley Water District’s *Approved Plant List*, which identifies water needs for plants using Water Use Classifications of Landscape Species in Region #1 for the North Central Coast of California, and/or the East Bay Municipal Utility District’s *Landscapes for Summer-Dry Climates of the San Francisco Bay Region* for low water use plants;
- Preserve and protect established vegetation;
- Incorporate compost, mulch, and other appropriate organic materials to reduce runoff, conserve soil moisture, and increase carbon sequestration;
- Limit or eliminate the use of turf area by using plantings, mulch, decomposed granite, rock, or pervious hardscape;
- Group plants with similar water needs into climate and water zones (“hydrozones”) to maximize water efficiency;
- Choose irrigation equipment that uses the least amount of water for the design, layout, and type of landscape;



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- Install rain shut-off devices, flow sensors, weather-based irrigation controllers, pressure compensating spray heads, and vandal resistant sprinkler heads and adjust irrigation times and durations with the seasons and for proper coverage and even distribution;
- Use reclaimed water for irrigation where available;
- Respond promptly to leaks and perform regular inspections of irrigation equipment to ensure good working order;
- In areas of heavy public use, select and place landscaping and irrigation equipment appropriately to avoid damage and follow city specifications for irrigation equipment placement.

4.2 Reduce or Prevent Pollution

- Refer to the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program’s *Plant List and Planting Guidance for Landscape-Based Stormwater Measures*, C.3 Stormwater Handbook, Appendix D, for guidance in selecting plants and designing landscape to reduce or prevent pollution;
- Ensure that projects are designed to minimize the use of non-organic herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers;
- Limit or avoid the use of non-organic chemicals to control weeds and pests at existing facilities;
- Avoid use of overhead spray irrigation adjacent to storm drain inlets and pedestrian walkways to prevent water from directly discharging to the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) and misting into public paths;
- Use vegetation, mulching, low impact development treatment, and other green infrastructure elements to reduce runoff and treat storm water runoff from facilities and hardscape;
- Use VTA’s *Storm Water and Landscaping Design Criteria Manual* as guidance to control storm water runoff on all VTA properties and project sites in compliance with the requirements of the Phase II Small MS4 General Permit Program.

4.3 Improve Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity

- Select plants native to California that provide habitat and food for birds, insects, and other wildlife;



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- Under no circumstances shall any plants listed as invasive by the California Invasive Plant Council’s Invasive Plant Inventory be used for landscaping.

5. Definitions:

- 5.1 **Sustainable landscaping** refers to the use of design and maintenance practices that work harmoniously with local climate and soils. A sustainable landscape is adapted to an area’s rainfall patterns and can thrive with minimal watering, maintenance, and chemical use. In contrast, conventional landscapes may feature plants that require lots of water, frequent gas-powered mowing to maintain, and pesticides and fertilizers to promote healthy growth. Rain or excess irrigation water can transport these chemicals into storm drains and are harmful to fish and other wildlife.
- 5.2 **Invasive plant** means species of plants identified by the California Invasive Plant Council (IPC) as invasive to areas within the IPC-delineated Central West region, and that are rated by the IPC as being either moderately invasive or highly invasive. It also includes plants in the United States Department of Agriculture invasive and noxious weeds database.
- 5.3 **Native plant** means a plant indigenous to a specific area of consideration. For the purpose of this Policy, the term shall refer to plants indigenous to the coastal ranges of Central and Northern California, and more specifically to such plants that are suited to the ecology of the present or historic natural community of the project’s vicinity.

6. Summary of Changes:

The Purpose was revised to increase clarity of the three main objectives of the policy. Responsibilities were moved to the Policy section and grouped into the objectives referred to in the Purpose. The Scope was revised to increase clarity for the reader. Terminology, definitions, and references were updated throughout the document to be consistent and current given the passage of time since the initial release of the policy. Approval Information was updated as needed.



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7. Approval Information:

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9/28/2018

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