



CALIFORNIA  
NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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**NEW PILOT PROGRAM HELPS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GROW NATIVE  
Water agencies help increase availability of information on California native plants**

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and local water agencies have teamed up with the California Native Plant Society to bring more native plants to the region’s homes and gardens.

A new [pilot program](#) launched by the organizations this fall will boost the number and variety of native plants offered at local nurseries and ensure consumers have the information they need to plant and maintain the water-efficient flowers, trees, shrubs and succulents.



“Southern California residents have made tremendous strides to increase their long-term water efficiency to respond to our changing climate, including choosing sustainable gardens over thirsty grass,” said Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger. “But they sometimes face hurdles finding native plants in their local nurseries and knowing about how to take care of them, including how much less water they need. This program will help remove those hurdles.”

Through the pilot, staff at participating nurseries will receive training on the proper care, maintenance, watering and planting of California native plants. In addition, native plants at the nurseries will be clearly identified and educational materials will be available for consumers to take home.

“We want to make it as simple as possible for Californians who are committed to sustainability to grow a beautiful garden of native plants. Having native plants with plant-specific information when they need it, where they need it – at the nursery – will be a big help,” said Joone Lopez, general manager of Moulton Niguel Water District, which helped initiate the program with support from WaterNow Alliance.

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Native plants typically use about 83 percent less water, produce about 56 percent less green waste and require nearly 70 percent less maintenance, according to a nine-year case study conducted by the City of Santa Monica.

“Beyond these sustainability benefits, native gardens are just beautiful,” said Dan Gluesenkamp, executive director of the California Native Plant Society. “Through this program we’ve curated a really special list of plants that you’ll be able to find at local nurseries. The variety of colors, textures, smells and shapes will bring the beauty of California to your own front yard.”

So far, the pilot program is available to 60 nurseries in Orange County and Long Beach, and continues to gain interest from surrounding communities. In addition to free staff training – which qualifies for continuing education and professional certification credits – the nurseries will be part of a [native plant directory](#) at [Calscape.org](#) marketed to millions of people.

Program partners, which includes the Municipal Water District of Orange County, will monitor its success to determine whether to expand it to other communities.

Interest in native plants has grown significantly over the past few years. Since 2016, traffic to the Native Plant Society’s website, [Calscape.org](#), has increased by more than 250 percent, and a 2018 survey of the American Society of Landscape Architects expects native plants to be the most requested type of outdoor project this year.

This interest has been driven, in part, by Metropolitan’s [turf replacement program](#), which provides consumers up to \$10,000 in rebate funding for replacing their grass with native plants.

People also increasingly understand the essential role native plants play in the ecosystem, attracting and helping sustain wildlife and pollinators such as bees and butterflies, whose populations are diminishing, according to the California Native Plant Society.

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#### **About the Metropolitan Water District**

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative that delivers water to 26 member agencies serving 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.

#### **About the California Native Plant Society**

The California Native Plant Society is a statewide organization that advances the understanding, appreciation, and protection of California’s native plants and habitats through science, education, horticulture, and conservation. CNPS has more than 70,000 fans and supporters, and 35 chapters promoting its mission throughout California and Baja California.