



Non-Functional Turf Conversion Options

Learning Resources

The removal of non-functional turf can present significant challenges, particularly when a compliance deadline is involved. The objective of CVWD is to assist customers in achieving a seamless transition while ensuring regulatory compliance. The goal is to eliminate non-functional turf while preserving an appealing, safe, and low-maintenance landscape. Notably, many conversion projects can reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Budget-Friendly Turf Conversion Options

- ✓ **Option 1 – Mulch + Native Plant Islands (Lowest Cost)**
- ✓ **Option 2 – Decomposed Granite (DG) with Accent Plants**
- ✓ **Option 3 – Native Meadow**
- ✓ **Option 4 – Groundcover Replacement**
- ✓ **Option 5 – Dry Creek / Rain Garden**
- ✓ **Option 6 – Pollinator Garden**
- ✓ **Option 7 – Edible or Demonstration Garden**



✓ Option 1 – Mulch + Native Plant Islands (Lowest Cost)



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Schools ✓ Office buildings ✓ Municipal buildings ✓ HOAs	Existing turf is removed and replaced with 3–4 inches of organic mulch. Native shrubs and accent plants are installed in clusters throughout the landscape. Spray irrigation is converted to a drip irrigation system.	✓ \$3–7/sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Very Low	✓ California Lilac (Ceanothus) ✓ Toyon ✓ Cleveland Sage ✓ California Buckwheat ✓ Coffeeberry ✓ Manzanita	✓ Lowest installation cost ✓ Excellent rebate potential ✓ Lowest water use ✓ Easy maintenance ✓ Improves soil health ✓ Helps suppress weeds

Option 2 – Decomposed Granite (DG) with Accent Plants

Very popular throughout Southern California.



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Schools ✓ Office buildings ✓ Municipal buildings ✓ Commercial properties ✓ Entryways ✓ Side yards	Turf is replaced with compacted decomposed granite. Accent boulders, native shrubs, and trees are incorporated into the design, along with drip irrigation.	✓ \$4–8/sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Very Low	✓ California Sagebrush ✓ Toyon ✓ Manzanita ✓ Deer Grass ✓ California Fuchsia ✓ Lavender ✓ Red Yucca	✓ Professional appearance ✓ Excellent drainage ✓ ADA-compatible walkways ✓ Very low maintenance ✓ Long-lasting surface ✓ Significant water savings

Option 3 – Native Meadow



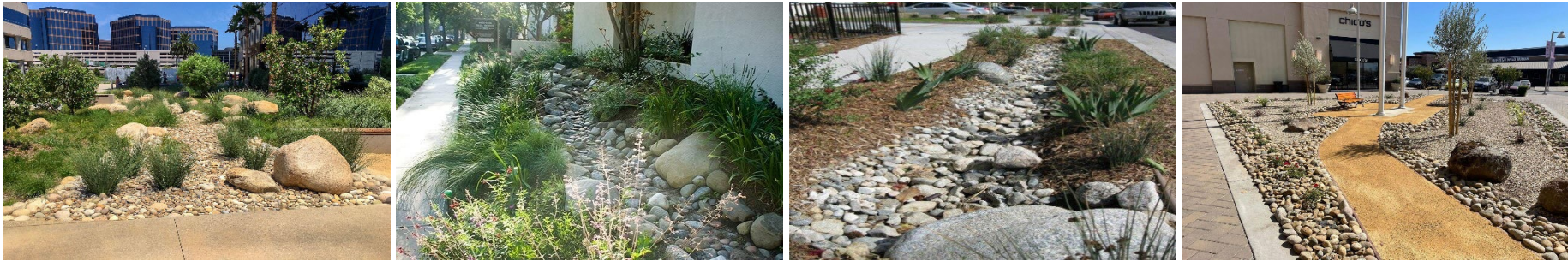
Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Schools ✓ Parks ✓ Open space ✓ Community centers ✓ Municipal campuses	Traditional turf is replaced with native grasses and seasonal wildflowers that require substantially less water while supporting pollinators and wildlife.	✓ \$5–9/sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Low	✓ Purple Needlegrass ✓ Deer Grass ✓ California Fescue ✓ Blue-Eyed Grass ✓ California Poppy ✓ Yarrow ✓ Lupine	✓ Natural California appearance ✓ Excellent wildlife habitat ✓ Reduces irrigation by 60–80% ✓ Seasonal color ✓ Low mowing requirements ✓ Supports biodiversity

Option 4 – Drought-Tolerant Groundcover



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ HOA common areas ✓ Churches ✓ Schools ✓ Residential front yards ✓ Courtyards	Instead of turf, drought-tolerant groundcovers create a green appearance while requiring significantly less irrigation than conventional grass.	✓ \$4–8/sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Low	✓ Dymondia ✓ Kurapia ✓ Creeping Rosemary ✓ Woolly Yarrow ✓ Myoporum (where appropriate) ✓ Lippia	✓ Maintains a green appearance ✓ Less mowing ✓ Lower irrigation demand ✓ Soft visual texture ✓ Good erosion control ✓ Attractive year-round

Option 5 – Dry Creek / Rain Garden



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Parking lot landscaping ✓ Government buildings ✓ Schools ✓ Churches ✓ Commercial developments	Dry creek beds, bioswales, decorative river rock, and native plantings capture stormwater while creating attractive landscape features.	✓ \$6–12 sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Very Low	✓ California Rush ✓ Deer Grass ✓ Juncus ✓ Sedges ✓ California Fuchsia ✓ California Aster ✓ Coffeeberry	✓ Captures stormwater runoff ✓ Attractive focal point ✓ Reduces erosion ✓ Supports groundwater recharge ✓ Minimal irrigation needs ✓ Very low maintenance

Option 6 – Pollinator Garden



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Schools ✓ Public buildings ✓ Libraries ✓ Community centers ✓ Churches ✓ Office buildings	A landscaped garden designed with California native flowering plants that provide habitat and food for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other beneficial wildlife while using minimal water.	✓ \$5–10 sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Low	✓ California Buckwheat ✓ California Fuchsia ✓ Cleveland Sage ✓ Penstemon ✓ Milkweed ✓ California Poppy ✓ Yarrow	✓ Supports native pollinators ✓ Seasonal blooms throughout the year ✓ Educational opportunities for schools ✓ Reduces water use by up to 80% ✓ Enhances biodiversity ✓ Visually attractive with vibrant color

Option 7 – Edible or Demonstration Garden



Best for	Description	Estimated Cost	Recommended Plants	Pros
✓ Schools ✓ Community centers ✓ Churches ✓ Municipal facilities ✓ Educational campuses	Former turf areas are transformed into raised planting beds, fruit trees, herbs, and drought-tolerant educational gardens that promote sustainability and community engagement.	✓ \$6–15 sq ft installed ✓ Maintenance: Moderate	✓ Citrus trees ✓ Pomegranate ✓ Rosemary ✓ Lavender ✓ Sage ✓ Thyme ✓ Seasonal vegetables (where appropriate)	✓ Creates functional educational space ✓ Encourages community involvement ✓ Provides opportunities for outdoor learning ✓ Uses efficient drip irrigation ✓ Can support local food education ✓ Attractive and sustainable landscape

Comparison Summary

Option	Estimated Cost	Water Savings	Maintenance	Best Value
Mulch + Native Plants	\$3–7/sq ft	★★★★★	Very Low	★★★★★
Decomposed Granite	\$4–8/sq ft	★★★★★	Very Low	★★★★★
Native Meadow	\$5–9/sq ft	★★★★☆	Low	★★★★
Groundcover	\$4–8/sq ft	★★★★☆	Low	★★★★
Dry Creek/Rain Garden	\$6–12/sq ft	★★★★★	Very Low	★★★★
Pollinator Garden	\$5–10/sq ft	★★★★★	Low	★★★★
Edible/Demonstration Garden	\$6–15/sq ft	★★★★☆	Moderate	★★★★

