

the dirt



FALL 2020 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

When fall winds blow.

Prune those trees and check that battery, because autumn Santa Anas are coming.



Fall in Southern California brings hot, dry Santa Ana winds. In addition to stoking wildfires, these winds can cause property damage. So get ready for fall—before something falls on you.

Start by correctly pruning trees to reduce the risk of broken limbs or toppling trees. Only prune critical branches, including those that are broken or dead.

Trees can be trimmed for safety, tree health or aesthetics. Wind should easily flow through the branches.

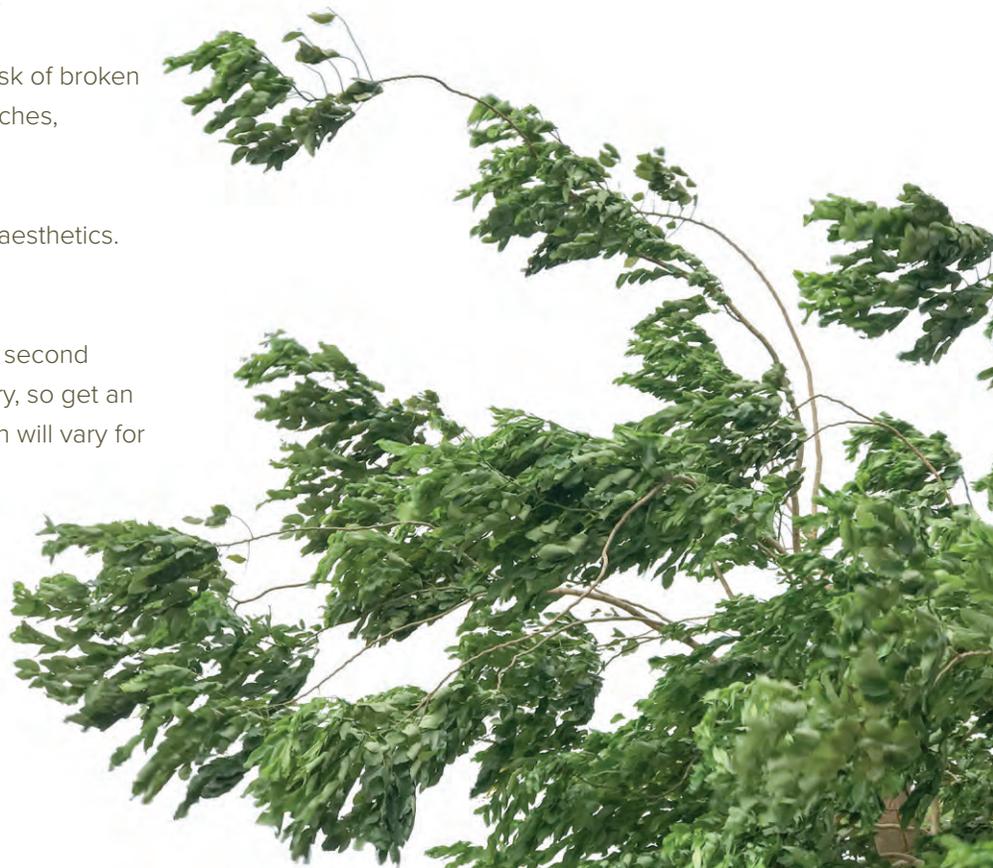
Generally, trees should be pruned lightly in the second and third year after planting. After that trees vary, so get an arborist's advice on major pruning. The regimen will vary for fruit trees, broad-leaved trees and conifers.

Looking for the right devices to help with your landscape maintenance? You might be eligible for a money-saving IRWD rebate. See RightScapeNow.com/rebates.

And take some advice from the U.S Department of Agriculture Tree Owner's Manual: If you can't prune your tree with both feet on the ground, hire a professional.

To find a Certified Arborist, visit treesaregood.org, which includes a database searchable by geographic location. Learn more about pruning at ceventura.ucanr.edu.

Apart from tree maintenance, check your sprinkler timer backup battery. Otherwise, if wind knocks out power, your timer might not operate as expected and your landscape might suffer.



Thrifty sprinklers make lovely neighborhoods.

Kelly Rodgers | Acacia HOA Board of Directors

Kelly Rodgers is a member of the Board of Directors for the Acacia Homeowners Association, within the Oak Creek community in Irvine. Last year she contacted IRWD to get to the root of the “not thriving” appearance of the community landscaping.

IRWD: How did you initiate the transformation?

Rodgers: We reached out to Irvine Ranch Water District, who analyzed our billing account, showing years of costly overages. They came out and helped perform a free evaluation of our dilapidated irrigation system. Leaking water was pooling up near our main roadways. Broken pipelines, valves, couplers and sprinkler heads meant there was literally no water getting



Before. Wasted water, sad plants.



After. An efficient irrigation system can revitalize landscape while saving water and money.

to common-area yards and planters down every street. Discovering this, we contracted with a landscaping company.

IRWD: What happened then?

Rodgers: We have 3,000 sprinklers. Most were nearly 20 years old. It took the crews weeks—digging trenches to diagnose, repair, and overhaul. We went after the worst of it, area by area. Once proper water pressure was restored, we discovered even more leaks and repaired those, too.

IRWD: What was the result?

Rodgers: Aside from the pride of knowing we wiped out our water-wasting costs, words can't say what this repair work has done to the aesthetics of our community. The landscapers infused our soil with high-quality organic mulch, and then we gave our trees and plants a chance to bounce back. Boy, did they ever! In eight short months, we saw 10 years taken off the “age” of our grounds.

IRWD: What's your takeaway on this?

Rodgers: Don't put off funding irrigation repairs, because you will likely pay more—a lot more—in overages and byproduct losses to landscaping, grass, trees, and structures. For any neighboring communities wondering how they can spruce up their landscaping, my answer is easy: Start by looking at your water bill.

Need help?

For your HOA: Contact Water Efficiency Specialist Juan Garcia at garciaj@IRWD.com.

For your home: Visit RightScopeNow.com for gardening tips and links to contractors and designers.

Cheap-scape.

Want a water-stingy yard that looks like a million bucks? Try these money-saving tips.

Establishing a new water-efficient landscape area doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. Here are some simple ways to cut expenses without compromising.

- Shop at a Southern California wholesale nursery that's open to the public. Buying the plants online and then picking them up will save you delivery costs. Find a nearby wholesale nursery at CalScape.org/nurseries.php.
- Buy small plants. Not only are they less expensive, but they acclimate better as they grow. Don't forget to provide ample space between new plants, so when they achieve full size they won't be overcrowded.
- Recycle leaf litter by using it as mulch, either ground up or left whole.
- Lay down newspaper (use black ink newsprint only) as a weed barrier before applying mulch to the soil.
- Save water. Convert existing spray heads to either drip or microspray irrigation. But don't mix drip and microspray emitters on the same valve.



BEAUTY SECRET No. 8

Ditch the same old, same old.

Change it up. Add a little biodiversity to your yard by removing some tired grass and planting beautiful California native vegetation. It might be the spark your yard is looking for.

Know what's even more beautiful?

Incentives for turf removal are available up to \$10,000.

Visit RightScapeNow.com.

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Juan's tip of the season.

Reduce your watering

As the days get shorter, most plants naturally enter their dormant phase. So your landscape needs less and less water, even if it's still hot outside. The shorter days also mean less water is lost through evaporation. So dial back your watering 30% in September, 50% in October, and 60% in November. Follow the schedule RightScapeNow.com/watering-guide. You'll have a beautiful landscape and save a boatload of water.



Looking ahead.

Fall garden to-do list (tool edition)

- **Shake off the rust:** If you see a little rust on your garden tools, get scrubbing! Keep a small brush and vinegar on hand. Once clean, oil them with linseed oil or any other lubricant.
- **Prune hygienically:** Before pruning, mix an ecofriendly bleach solution. Use one part bleach to nine parts water. Dip your tools and wipe them clean to make sure you don't transfer any unwanted disease or bacteria—especially if you're removing a diseased plant. Repeat before moving to other parts of the landscape.
- **Stay sharp:** Keeping a tool clean prolongs its life, keeps it sharp, prevents rust, and eliminates disease, bacteria, fungi, and pests. Store your tools in a dry place.

Learn at our webinars

Oct. 14 | Noon | Ocean-minded Landscaping Workshop. Create a watershed-conscious garden. We'll discuss healthy soils, rainwater capture, native plants, and irrigation.

Nov. 18 | Noon | Plant Like a Local Workshop. Learn how to select climate appropriate plants, when and how to plant them, and how to care for your landscape.

Sign up at RightScapeNow.com/events.



Tap RightScape resources

Visit RightScapeNow.com for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at RightScapeResources.com.

About *The Dirt*

The Dirt is a new, quarterly gardening resource from Irvine Ranch Water District, created to help you grow a more beautiful, water-efficient garden. Each newsletter will bring you seasonal tips to keep plants thriving all year long.

Need to contact IRWD?

Customer Service: 949-453-5300

Email: CustomerService@IRWD.com

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