

Saying Goodbye to a 50 Year Old Lawn

As in most cases, undertaking a project like this wasn't a simple decision. Erica's Mission Canyon home was her husband's childhood home, filled with family history, memories and, until 2014, a large front lawn. With inspiration from her boss' own adoption of a water wise landscape, Erica decided it was time for her family to make the leap as well. She received assistance by participating in the City's Smart Landscape Rebate Program and a rain garden workshop with Sweetwater Collaborative. After nearly a year since replacing the lawn, her household has reduced its water use by 57%!



Erica wanted to install drought tolerant plants but also wanted to 'step up her game' and capture rooftop runoff in her garden. "I'm into sustainable living," she said. "As long as the yard looks good, I didn't just want a pile of mulch in my front yard." The 50 year old lawn has been replaced by small boulders that flank mulched water basins. Insect and bird-friendly native plants add color and dimension. In discussing the major challenges with this project, she pointed to a couple remaining shoots of grass, "...you have to get all the rhizomes - this grass is tough."

Reflecting on the most enjoyable things related to her new landscape, Erica explained, "We have amazing wildlife in our yard now. Before with the grass, there was nothing going on. Now we have butterflies hatching in the yard, baby lizards, more birds... it's a lot of fun. Our yard has come alive."

Through it all, the experience has been a great learning process for Erica and her husband. Erica noted, "I learned a lot about plants and about locating plants relative to their mature size. I learned about taking care of soil - compost tea is a miracle worker. Lots of worms and happy soil."

She pointed to the new gutters along the roofline neatly guiding runoff into newly designed earthen drainage basins weaving around the front yard. These gutters and basins have already been put into service with the winter storms, and she found the basins were even collecting stormwater runoff from an adjacent property.

To those who may be sitting on the fence about whether or not to install a water wise landscape, Erica advised, "Don't be afraid to make the change. It doesn't have to look like a desert. It can be beautiful, you can save money and water, and there are people there to help."



If you are interested in learning more about these stories or how you can earn rebates to install your own water wise landscape, please visit www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/WaterWise or call (805) 564-5460.

