



Long Beach Water Department
The Standard in Water Conservation &
Environmental Stewardship

Drought? Fire? There are Plants that can Resist both, and a Web Site is Helping to Point the Way

LONG BEACH, CA - As Southern California emerges from two record dry years and the devastating firestorms of 2003, a new Web page offers homeowners an intriguing option—a landscape that resists fire and drought at the same time.

It turns out that many native and California-friendly plants that thrive in arid landscapes also have the endorsement of firefighters and urban planners who decide what kind of vegetation should be planted in or near Southern fire zones.

Sage, ceanothus, wild strawberry and the coast live oak are among the attractive fire-resistant native plants found on bewaterwise.com, a Web site sponsored by the family of Southern California water agencies. Noted landscape designer Rick Fisher and others have referenced the Web site in publications such as the Los Angeles Times.

Tom Larson, an urban forester who has spent 30 years as a landscape and irrigation specialist, said that those living on the urban-wildlands border need to have well-designed, fire-resistant landscapes that are properly maintained. Using fire resistant plants that retain moisture during the dry fall season are essential for these areas, he said.

"There are plenty of Mediterranean and drought-tolerant plants that can work very well in those landscapes," said Larson, who also emphasized the importance of checking with local fire authorities for their requirements.

The list of fire-resistant native and California-friendly plants is based on information compiled from the Los Angeles County Fire Department, Orange County Fire Authority, San Diego County Planning and Environment Department, the Western Municipal Water District, the state of California and the California Native Plant Society.

The Long Beach Water Department is an urban Southern California water supply agency that serves a population of approximately 500,000 people in California's fifth largest city. The department imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local groundwater supplies, and helps conserve water by promoting increased water conservation awareness, recycled water, and other resource-management programs. Visit our Website at www.lbwater.org.