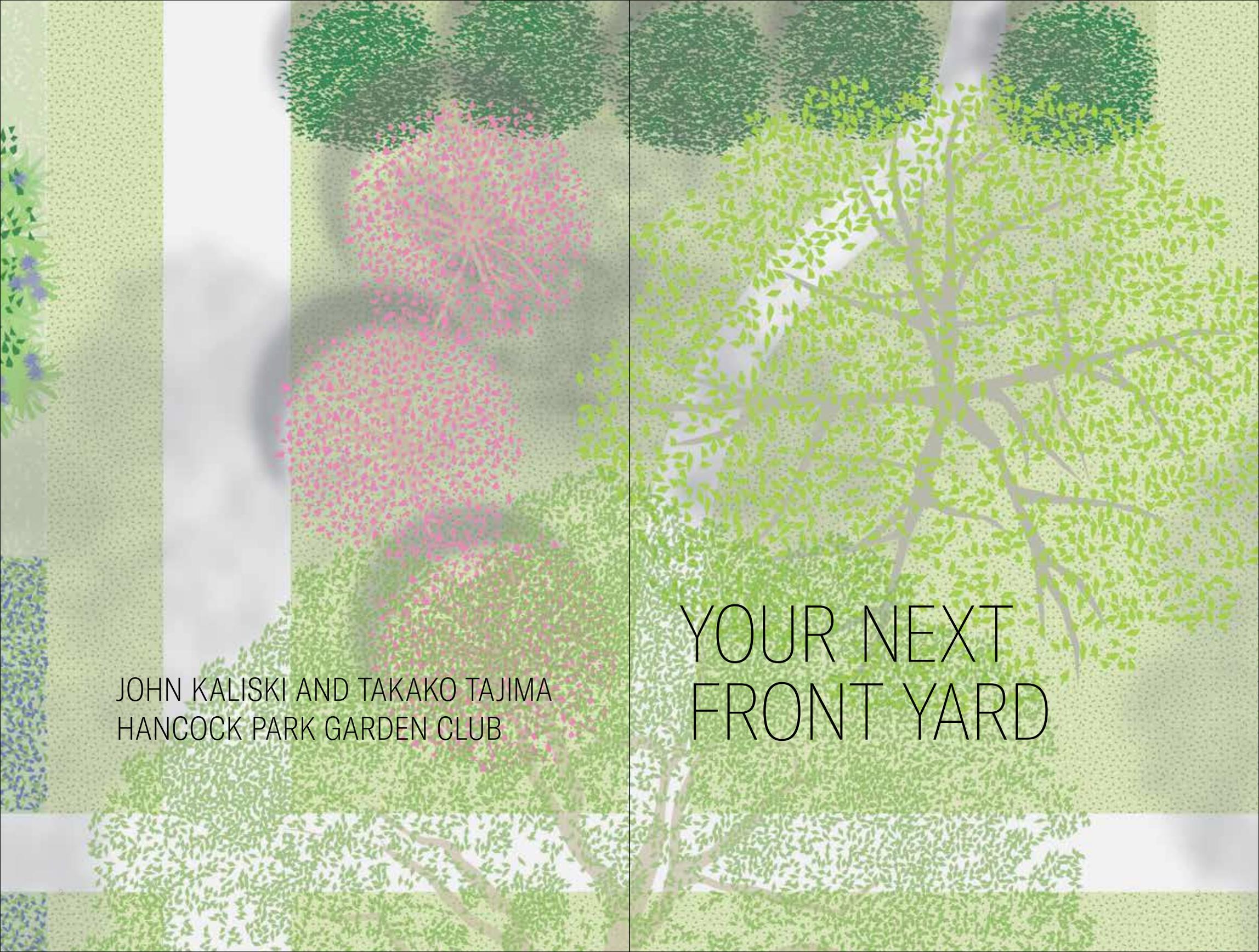


YOUR NEXT FRONT YARD

John Kaliski and Takako Tajima



YOUR NEXT
FRONT YARD



JOHN KALISKI AND TAKAKO TAJIMA
HANCOCK PARK GARDEN CLUB

YOUR NEXT
FRONT YARD

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First Thoughts Regarding Front Yards

John Kaliski



Mount Vernon's east-facing grass lawn inspired the design of suburban landscapes in the 19th Century.

If you are picking up this pamphlet, you are probably already thinking about your home in relationship to a garden. You probably already appreciate that one of the character-defining features of many Los Angeles single-family neighborhoods is the front lawns and their landscape surrounds. These first thoughts regarding streetside gardening, specifically regard the appropriate design of single-family residential neighborhood front yards in Los Angeles in the early 21st Century.

Perhaps you are wondering about the appearance and appropriateness of your existing plantings. Should they remain... or should they be more water conserving? Do you have the inclination or the time to care for a lawn? Is that even the right thing to do?

While each front yard and the interests and aspirations of each homeowner and neighborhood are unique, the context and ideas described in this essay suggest a beginning point to address these typical questions. The illustrated guidelines that follow provide principles for the design of front yard landscapes in non-hillside single-family neighborhoods in Los Angeles, yards that are at once individual, and which also contribute to the surrounding block, street, and neighborhood.

The front yard and its accompanying lawn has been idealized as a symbol of individual achievement and neighborhood identity that reflects both a personal and collective American dream. Therese O'Malley makes exactly this point in *The Lawn in Early American Landscape and Garden Design* when she states, "...the lawn developed out of an individualistic yet communitarian ethic. Although it was used in domestic design to separate one house from the next... it was also used to open the street to neighboring properties and to enhance public and private institutions."¹

Today, the Los Angeles single-family landscape that both separates homes while unifying neighborhoods constitutes about 31% of Los Angeles' total land area, by far the City's' most prevalent land use.² However, most commentators, when considering the design and history of Los Angeles' single-family neighborhoods, choose to focus not on the landscape but on the architectural innovations of the individual residences. They too often ignore the function and delight of its accompanying landscape. As important as the City's well-documented architecture is, it is the landscape that is the common introduction to Los Angeles'

¹ Therese O'Malley, "The Lawn in Early American Landscape and Garden Design", in Georges Teyssot, ed., *The American Lawn* (New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 84.

² Envicom Corporation, *Los Angeles Citywide General Plan Framework EIR* (Los Angeles:1995, Los Angeles City Planning Department), Table LU-1, 2.1-5.



In this postcard view of the Windsor Square neighborhood in the 1920s, the eclectic and now historic architecture is framed by a common and generally consistent front yard landscape of uniform trees, turf, and plant materials.



A view across Mid-Wilshire front yards with consistent house-by-house landscape patterns—first a street curb and parkway with uniform and large street trees, then a sidewalk, a turf lawn, and finally ornamental trees, shrubs, and base plantings adjoining building frontages. These elements combine to exemplify the traditional landscape of this community.

eclectic architectural heritage; indeed before one experiences the homes, one experiences a shared landscape realm.

Block-by-block, Los Angeles neighborhood landscapes inscribe a powerful pattern of regularly-spaced tree plantings marking street edges and sidewalk borders. Behind the public walks, front yards with turf and low groundcovers bestow park-like vistas framing a wide variety of home styles. Vines, flowering shrubs, and planting beds establish a transition between the lawns and the house facades. Whether the dwellings are small or large, or the block faces grand or modest, the prevalence of this landscape is ubiquitous throughout the flats and tracts of the city.

Historically, the pervasiveness and endurance of the single-family front yard in Los Angeles is a consequence of available land and the spread of first the streetcar and then the automobile into an inexpensive land expanse, made attainable through relatively affordable home financing, especially in the form of federally insured and tax-deductible home mortgages, and, of course, the labor-saving lawn mower. From a cultural perspective, the house and front yard exemplify the continuity of small town, if not quite rural, values that dominated the culture of Los Angeles, even as it grew into a dense and diverse metropolis. But while in the past the front yards, with their unifying green turf lawns, endowed an individual and citywide Los Angeles “common”, this type of residential landscape is now challenged and inexorably evolving.

In some neighborhoods front yard change is a reflection of demographic shifts and the introduction of daily life patterns derived from increasingly diverse cultural precedents. These communities may choose different uses for their front yards and change older urban form patterns. For many, maintaining a lush green landscape and lawn takes too much time and is too costly. And every Los Angeles community and every single-family residential yard is affected by climate change, drought, consequential water conservation, and the loss of bird, butterfly, and bee populations. These latter factors especially demand that the landscape of front yards be re-examined by each homeowner. As Doug Tallamy states in his book, *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens*, “we can each make a measurable difference almost immediately by planting a native nearby. As gardeners and stewards of our



This Mid-Wilshire front yard substituted the traditional green lawn with water-conserving California Meadow Sage, established a sidewalk border of Rosemary, and utilized a California native, drought-tolerant, and spreading Lilac ground cover, or Ceanothus, at side yard property boundaries. A new native Coast Live Oak graces the front lawn and will provide shade for generations to come. The design maintains the character-defining historic and open-to-view streetscape using contemporary landscape methods.

land, we have never been so empowered—and the ecological stakes have never been so high.”³

For each steward of a single-family home, the experience, design, and meaning of the front lawn and yard is now open to question and change. But as yards change, and as they evolve to address today’s social, cultural, and environmental issues, as well as individual tastes, all homeowners need to ask not only what is gained, but what is lost with traditional landscape designs? Should Los Angeles’ single-family neighborhoods, particularly its historic single-family communities, become a landscape of individual garden expressions, often fenced off, walled off, or hidden behind hedges from a diminished public street realm? Should our once common neighborhood landscape become hidden or as eclectic as the residential architecture? Or does there remain a place for a respectful evolution of the single-family front yard commons and garden that for decades shaped Los Angeles’ residential communities?

Your Next Front Yard seeks to answer this last question affirmatively by suggesting design principles that allow for both continuity of neighborhood landscape settings and garden design for respectful, even needed change. Water conservation, understanding the role of native plants, and acknowledgement of diverse approaches to front yard design shape the included principles. The considerations also acknowledge individual garden creativity while highlighting opportunities that implement neighborhood-unifying landscape values, especially along the parkways and sidewalks of historic neighborhoods. First and foremost, the considerations presented here are *not* rigid design rules, but are reminders that neighborhood-defining landscape principles, when followed, allow each front yard to contribute to both individual as well as common prospects.

When the individual gardener, homeowner, or landscape designer thoughtfully considers each front yard, he or she can implement contemporary values of conservation, use of native plant materials, and the flair of individuality to further the evolution of unifying neighborhood streetscapes. The design guidelines that follow are best thought of as a beginning framework for the design of contemporary front yard landscapes, either simple or complex, easy or intensive to maintain, that allows for both individual expression and a contribution to the common city parkscape that so richly defines the essence of Los Angeles’ single-family communities.

³ Douglas W. Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants* (Portland: 2007, Timber Press), 287.

TEN
GUIDELINES:

YOUR
NEXT
FRONT YARD

1

Your front yard should contribute to the common street landscape.



Each front yard should contribute to the traditional and common single-family character of the street, parkway, and sidewalk. Conservation of common street character encompasses planting the preferred and regularly spaced street trees, maintaining low plantings, and introducing drought-resistant turf and/or natural turf equivalents between the curb and the sidewalk.

2

Utilize native plants to restore biodiversity, and drought-tolerant and water conserving plants and hybrids at front yards.



Use of water-conserving native plants renews the natural habitat, attracts local and regional pollinators such as butterflies and birds, and restores ecological balance in urban areas. At a minimum, 40–60% of a front yard should incorporate drought-tolerant native plants. Water-saving plant material and drought-resistant natural turf substitutes and ground covers should always be used.

- | | |
|--|---|
| A <i>Lagerstroemia 'Natchez,'</i> Natchez Crape Myrtle | F <i>Cercis occidentalis,</i> Western Redbud* |
| B <i>Erigeron karvinskianus,</i> Santa Barbara Daisy | G <i>Arbutus 'Marina,'</i> Marina Strawberry Tree |
| C <i>Ceanothus griseus 'Yankee Point,'</i> Yankee Point Ceanothus* | H <i>Platanus racemosa,</i> California Sycamore* |
| D <i>Pittosporum tobira 'Wheeler's Dwarf,'</i> Mock Orange 'Wheeler's Dwarf' | I <i>Agapanthus praecox ssp. orientalis,</i> Agapanthus |
| E <i>Carex pansa,</i> California Meadow Sedge* | J <i>Myrtus communis 'Compacta,'</i> Dwarf Myrtle |
| | K <i>Rosmarinus officinalis 'Boule,'</i> Rosemary Boule |

3

Conserve views across front yards.



Front yards along a street and block should contribute to park-like vistas across adjoining yards through minimal use of side boundary hedges, use of low-growing shrubs and plant materials, and minimization of planting clusters that block cross-property views, create hiding places, or obscure vistas to and from the street and the individual architecture of residences.

4

Provide street trees at parkways and shade trees at front yards.



Each residential curbside should incorporate neighborhood and street-specific parkway trees. Consult city-provided tree lists for acceptable street trees. In addition, at least one shade tree should be planted in each front yard. Enhancing the neighborhood's urban forest decreases warm-weather temperatures, reduces home energy consumption, filters pollutants from the air, and increases habitat for birds and other fauna.

5

Plant low green ground covers at parkways.



Maintain the continuity, natural character, and walkability of parkways (the area between the sidewalk and the curb), through use of water-conserving turf, natural turf-substitutes, along with native, low-growing, drought-resistant groundcovers. Within parkways, use of continuous hardscape, pavers, and decomposed granite is discouraged.

- A *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, St. Augustine Grass
- B *Agrostis pallens*, Native California Bentgrass
- C *Lippia nodiflora* 'Kurapia,' Frog Fruit or Kurapia
- D *Buchloe dactyloides*, UC Verde Buffalograss

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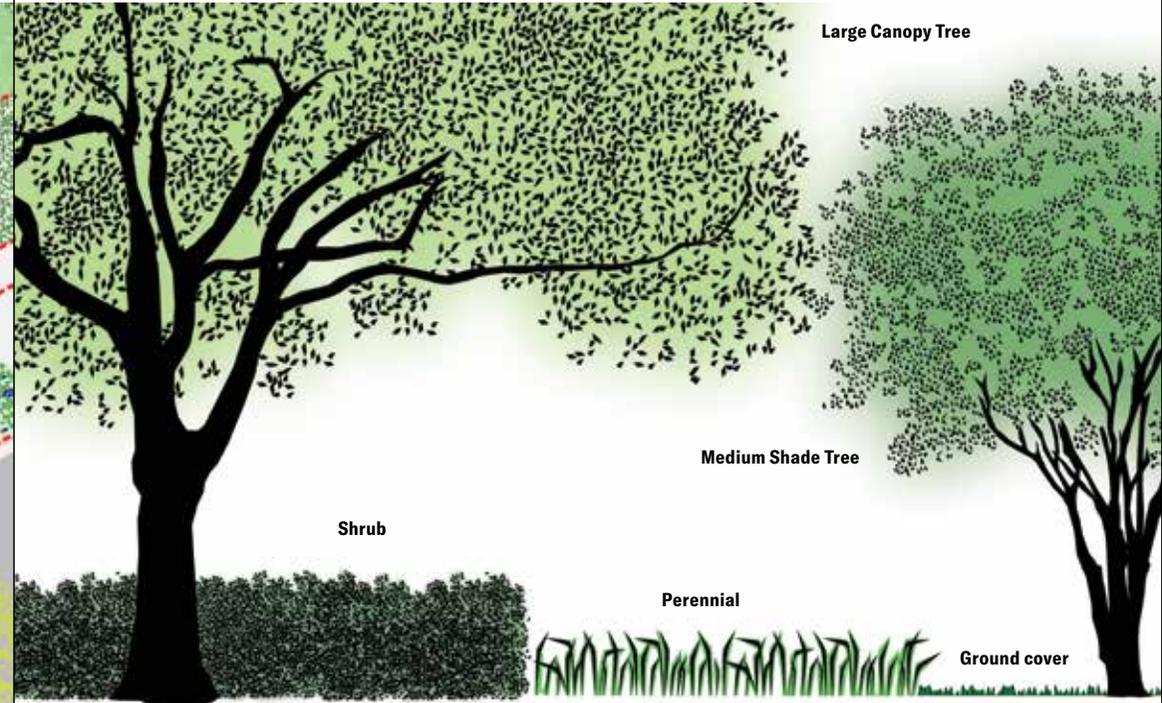
Mirror the depth and low plantings of parkways with similar low plantings to the back of the sidewalk and toward the front of the residence.



Traditionally, turf expanses on both sides of the sidewalk defined the character of the streetside common realm of single-family neighborhoods. Establishing equivalent plantings on both sides of the sidewalk, using low-growing natives or drought-tolerant grasses, maintains this historic streetscape sensibility.

7

Use three scales of planting; low ground covers, medium-sized shrubs, and taller trees.



A typical front yard incorporates three landscape compositional elements to realize a sense of scale, variety, and visual interest. Tall parkway trees relate the yard to the street. Front yard trees screen larger building masses. Medium-size shrubs create a visual transition between the ground plane and the house front. Ground covers and planting beds featuring low plant massing create a continuous front yard carpet that connects front entries to the sidewalk, adjoining yards, and the streetscape.

8

Minimize “carscape” and parking in front yards, and avoid front-facing garages and carports*



Most pre-World War II Los Angeles neighborhoods tuck the car and parking behind the home. This neighborhood building and landscape pattern that maximizes the front yard planting area should be maintained. Except in those community tracts where the majority of homes are more auto-oriented, entry walks and driveways should be minimized, parking between the front of the house and the sidewalk avoided, and garages, carports and parking areas placed to the rear of the residence.

*unless these architectural components are typical of the era when the majority of neighborhood homes were built, or unless they prevail along the block face.

9

Avoid fencing, gates, and hedges at front yards.



Fences and hedges in required front yards, particularly those above hip height or 42” are typically illegal per the City of Los Angeles Zoning Code. Historically, these components were not used in Los Angeles’ residential front yards. They diminish the common character of the streetscape, do not enhance safety (because they increase hiding spots), and should not be a feature of front yard design.

10

Consider alternatives to these front yard design guidelines, but only in exceptional cases.

Every community, street, block face, front yard, and home is unique and there are circumstances that require special design consideration. When a design cannot meet the guidelines, work with neighbors, neighborhood associations, Neighborhood Councils, Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Advisory Boards, City Council Offices, and the City's Planning, Public Works, Street Tree, Urban Forestry and other departments, as appropriate, to develop front yard designs that reflect and fit into their context.

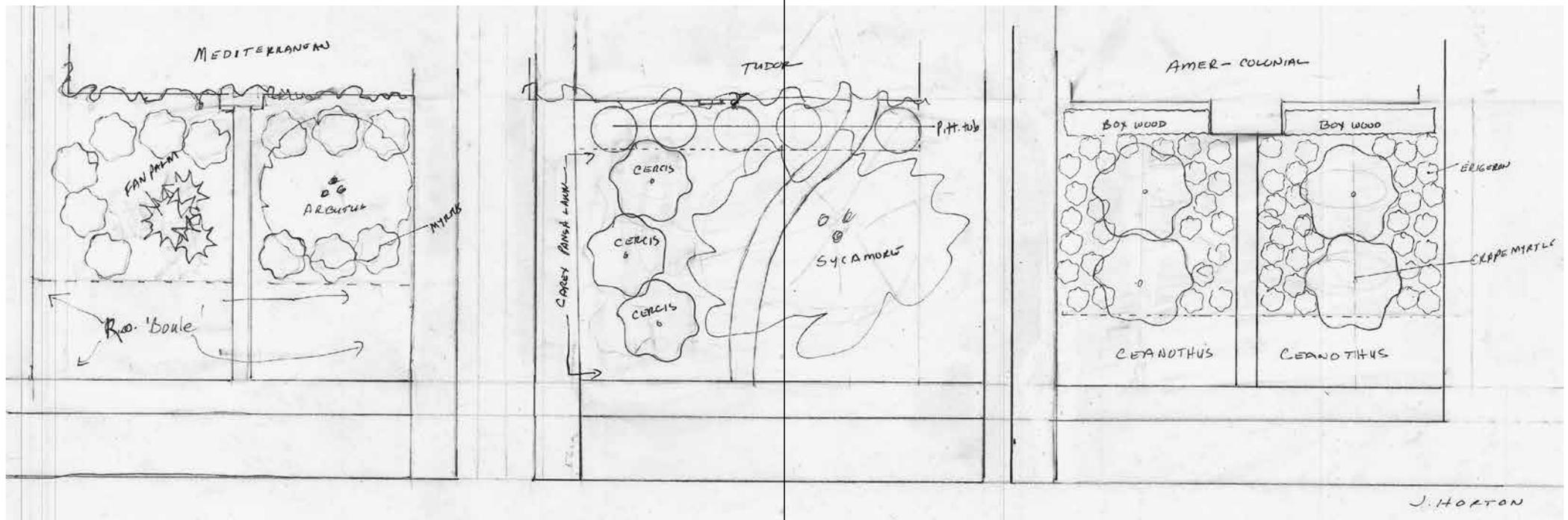
THREE FRONT YARDS

garden concepts by Judy M. Horton
illustrations by Takako Tajima

The landscape guidelines outlined in this booklet provide for the design of front yards that complement the typical streetscapes seen in many Los Angeles single-family residential neighborhoods. The following three designs illustrate simple configurations that use water conserving plants at parkways and yards, trees and canopy to complement the common streetscape, cross-yard views with minimal hedging and fencing, yard-to-yard individuality in three distinct landscape styles, and minimal maintenance requirements.

Each of the following front yard designs, inspired by one of the often-seen eclectic architectural styles of Mid-Wilshire Los Angeles, i.e. Mediterranean/Spanish-Revival, Tudor, and American Colonial, may

accommodate more planting materials, additional design variety, and individual garden design creativity. There are also many more designs and characters that could be illustrated and implemented. But that is up to the individual homeowner, the planting enthusiast, the garden designer, and the landscape professionals. Ideally, for every yard, a plant and nursery expert, garden designer, or landscape architect should be consulted to ensure that plant selections appropriate to the soil and solar orientation of the yard are considered. However, the overarching goal of the Ten Guidelines described in this book, and the three conceptual designs illustrated here, is to encourage all to contribute to the common landscape of Los Angeles.



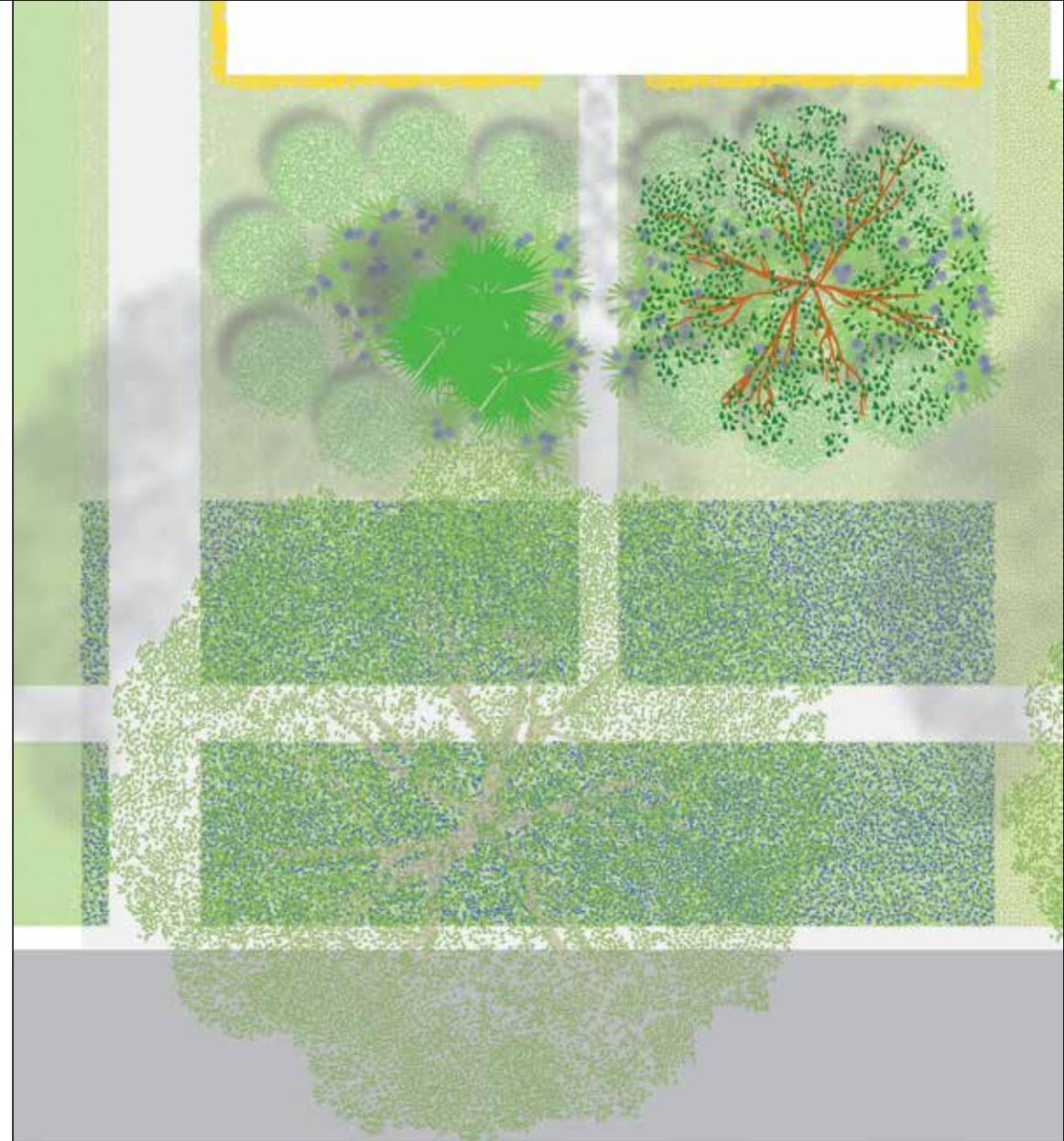
Mediterranean-Inspired Garden

Southern California's weather and flora have been identified with Mediterranean climates, but Los Angeles' aridity is similar to dry and desert climates on many continents and is often favorable to the plants of these varied topographies. Understanding this climate influences this low-water front yard design.

An orthogonal geometry splits the yard into three distinct areas—the parkway, a back-of-sidewalk zone, and a garden zone adjoining the house. Defining either side of the sidewalk, rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Boule') creates a two-foot-high carpet adjacent to the public right-of-way.

Two circular clusters of smaller Dwarf Myrtles (*Myrtus communis* "Compacta") are placed on opposite sides of the entry walk and add summer color, one surrounding a medium-sized *Arbutus* 'Marina' (Strawberry Tree) that blooms in fall and winter. The other is complemented by a clump of Mediterranean Fan Palms (*Chamaerops humilis*).

Drought resistant Lily of the Nile (*Agapanthus Praecox orientalis*) can be planted in beds adjoining these groupings to visually extend the neighboring lawns—and *Bougainvillea* "California Gold" forms a colorful perimeter of warm season vines climbing the house walls.



Tudor-Inspired Garden

Tudor architectural influences, and the English landscape with its groomed turf lawns, inspired decades of period-style architecture and gardens. This planting concept demonstrates that these traditional front yard landscapes can be achieved, even with a less water-intensive approach.

In this case, California Meadow Sedge (*Carex pansa*) is used in place of traditional turf, establishing a green carpet throughout the width and depth of the front yard.

A deciduous California Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) provides cooling shade in the summer, while in winter months filtering light and solar energy through bared branches. Three Western Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) trees provide early-spring red-purple blooms and a row of Dwarf Mock Orange (*Pittosporum tobira* 'Wheeler's Dwarf') provides an approximate three-foot-high transition between the green ground plane and the building front.

A decorative border of Buff Beauty roses (*Rosa Buff Beauty*) creates a climbing transition along this same building wall, adding vertical accents of apricot to white blooms.



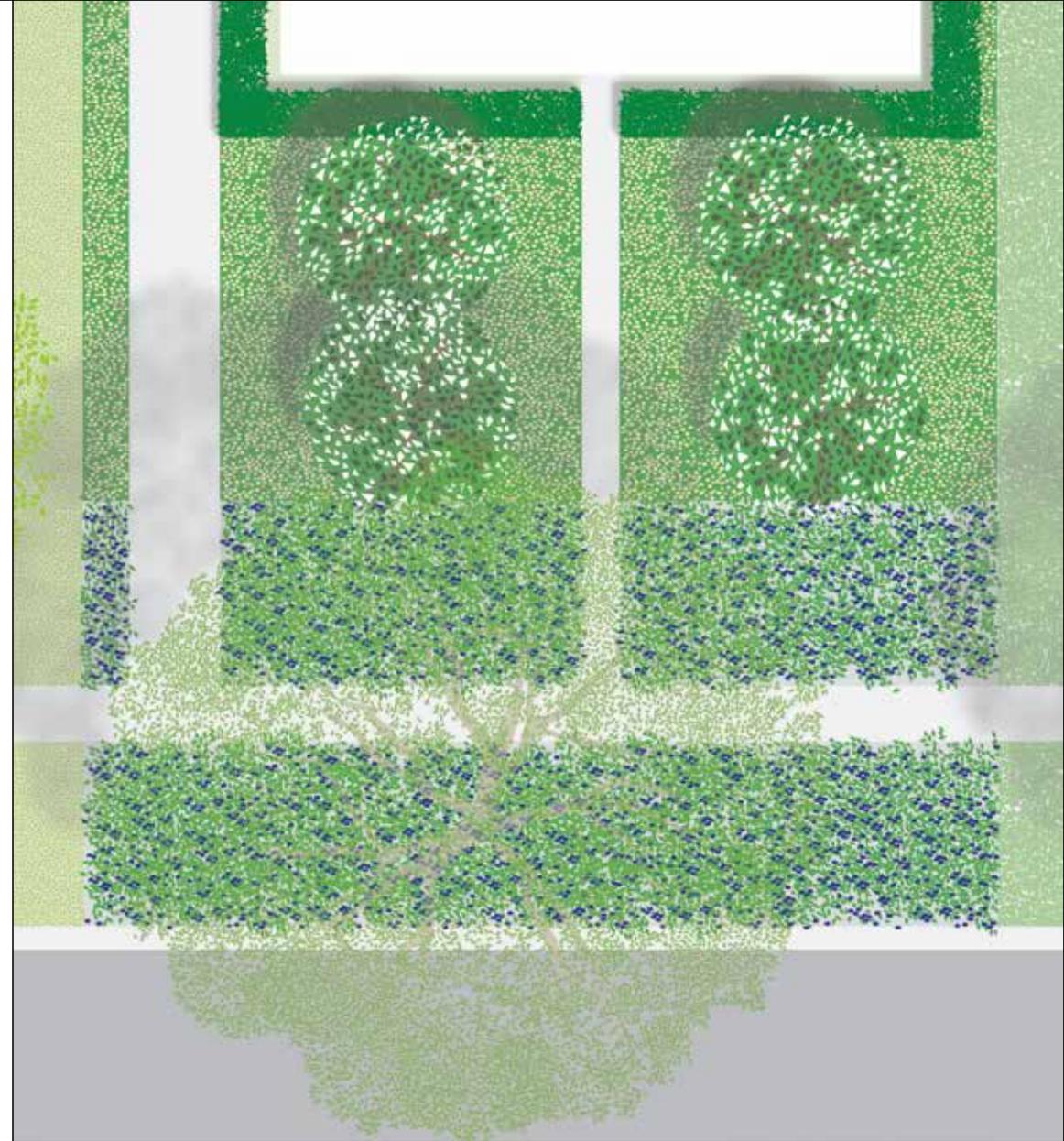
American Colonial-Inspired Garden

While the American lawn can be traced to George Washington's Mount Vernon, this tradition can also be updated to suit the climate and consequent best planting practices of Southern California.

This design replaces parkway and yard turf to either side of the sidewalk with spreading California Lilac or Ceanothus (*Ceanothus griseus horizontalis* 'Yankee Point').

Four White Crape Myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica* × *fauriei* 'Natchez'), two each to either side of the entry walk, shade an underlay of Santa Barbara Daisy (*Erigeron karvinskianus*).

A clipped 'Green Beauty' Boxwood hedge (*Buxus microphylla japonica*) establishes a foundation transition at the building front and provides a formal rear edge to this front yard garden design.



A Brief Guide to Plant Materials and Gardening Resources

Julie Grist

GARDEN	LOW	Ground Cover
	MEDIUM	Base Planting
	TALL	Trees
COMMON	LOW	Ground Cover
PARKWAY	LOW	Ground Cover
	TALL	Trees



Three zones organize the typical Los Angeles front yard, the “parkway” along the curb and street, the “common” adjoining the sidewalk, and the “garden” zone, where more plant variety is often seen. The predominance of low ground covers in commons and parkways maintains views across front yards and the traditional character of single-family neighborhood streetscapes.

The plants listed in this section are organized by use (groundcovers, grasses, small shrubs, medium trees, large trees, etc.), and garden location (parkway, common, or garden zones).

This list is also very abbreviated, noting just a few of the thousands of species and varieties that may be planted in Southern California front yards. It includes native plants that support the pollinators, insects, and animals that require local habitat for their nutrition. These latter plants typically require less water and maintenance than most of the ornamental non-native plants one finds at the typical big box nurseries. However, mixing natives into a garden can be tricky as their watering and pruning requirements vary greatly from non-natives. Before you start, consult a horticulturist at a local nursery, or a landscape design professional who can help you determine which plants work best in the sun, shade, soil, and water conditions of your yard.

Typically, front yard makeovers should start with the trees. Most importantly, keep well established trees happy by using plants with similar water requirements around their bases and under their canopies. If you are adding new trees, consider planting drought-tolerant native trees and use native plants in their surrounds. Trees are the most critical element defining the character of front yards and street commons; conserve and enhance your neighborhood’s green canopy.

To learn more about plants, their potential sizes and the best sun, soil and watering conditions for each type, look at the books or visit the various resources suggested below. Not every plant thrives where you hope it might. You can expect some trial and error. But the more you know about the plants and their requirements, the more successful, beneficial, and beautiful your parkway, common, and garden.

Groundcovers and Grasses for Parkway and Common Zones

Achillea millefolium, Yarrow*
Agrostis pallens, Native California Bentgrass*
Arctostaphylos edmundsii 'Carmel Sur,' Carmel Sur Manzanita*
Arctostaphylos 'Emerald Carpet,' Emerald Carpet Manzanita*
Baccharis pilularis 'Pigeon Point,' Pigeon Point Coyote Brush*
Buchloe dactyloides, UC Verde Buffalograss*
Carex Pansa, California Meadow Sedge*
Ceanothus gloriosus 'Anchor Bay,' Anchor Bay Ceanothus*
Ceanothus thyrsiflorus var. *griseus* 'Yankee Point,' Yankee Point Ceanothus*
Lessingia filaginifolia 'Silver Carpet,' Silver Carpet Aster*
Lippia nodiflora 'Kurapia,' Frog Fruit or Kurapia
Myoporum parvifolium 'White' Prostratum, Creeping Myoporum
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Boule,' Rosemary Boule
Salvia mellifera 'Terra Seca,' Terra Seca Black Sage*
Stenotaphrum secundatum, St. Augustine Grass
Trachelospermum asiaticum, Asian Jasmine
Trachelospermum jasminoides, Star Jasmine

Small and Medium Perennials for Garden Zones

Epilobium canum, California Fuschia*
Eriogonum grande rubescens, San Miguel Island Buckwheat*
Erigeron karvinskianus, Santa Barbara Daisy
Heuchera maxima, Island Alumroot*
Lavandula intermedia 'Provence,' French Lavender
Lavandula stoechas, Spanish Lavender
Penstemon heterophyllus 'Margarita BOP,' Margarita BOP Foothill Penstemon*
Phlomis fruticosa, Jerusalem Sage
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Prostratus,' Prostrate Rosemary
Salvia leucophylla 'Amethyst Bluff,' Amethyst Bluff Purple Sage*

Small Shrubs for Garden Zones

Abutilon palmeri, Palmer's Indian Mallow*
Arctostaphylos densiflora 'Ian Bush,' Ian Bush Manzanita*
Buxus microphylla japonica, Green Beauty Boxwood
Ceanothus thyrsiflorus 'Skylark,' Skylark California Lilac*
Cistus skanbergii, Pink Rockrose
Eriogonum arborescens, Santa Cruz Island Buckwheat*
Gambelia speciosa, Island Snapdragon*
Myrtus communis 'Compacta,' Dwarf Myrtle
Olea europaea 'Montra,' Little Ollie Olive
Pittosporum tobira 'Wheeler's Dwarf,' Mock Orange 'Wheeler's Dwarf'
Westringia fruticosa, Westringia

Large Shrubs for Garden Zones

Arctostaphylos densiflora 'Howard McMinn,' Howard McMinn Manzanita*
Arctostaphylos 'Sunset,' Sunset Manzanita*
Ceanothus papillosus var. *roweanus* 'Wheeler Canyon,' Wheeler Canyon California Lilac*
Ceanothus thyrsiflorus 'Snow Flurry,' Snow Flurry California Lilac*
Heteromeles arbutifolia, Toyon*
Rhamnus californica 'Eve Case,' Eve Case Coffeeberry*

Tall Decorative Grasses for Garden Zones

Elymus 'Canyon Prince,' Canyon Prince Giant Rye Grass*
Elymus condensatus, Giant Wild Rye*
Muhlenbergia rigens, Deergrass*

Small and Medium Trees for Parkway and Garden Zones †

Arbutus 'Marina,' Strawberry Tree
Cercidium (Parkinsonia) floridum, Blue Palo Verde*
Cercis occidentalis, Western Redbud*
Chilopsis linearis, Desert Willow*
Chitalpa tashkentensis, Chitalpa
Lagerstroemia 'Natchez,' White Crape Myrtle
Laurus 'Saratoga,' Saratoga Sweet Bay Laurel
Pistacia chinensis, Chinese Pistachio
Prunus ilicifolia ssp. Lyonii, Catalina Cherry*
Quercus ilex, Holly Oak
Rhus lancea, African Sumac

Large Trees for Parkway and Garden Zones †

Calocedrus decurrens, Incense Cedar*
Cinnamomum camphora, Camphor Tree
Fraxinus velutina, Velvet Ash*
Lyonothamnus floribundus ssp. aspleniifolius, Santa Cruz Island
Ironwood*
Platanus racemosa, California Sycamore*
Pinus sabiniana, California Foothill Pine*
Quercus agrifolia, Coast Live Oak*
Ulmus parvifolia, Chinese Elm

* California Native Plant

† Planting or removal of trees in parkways requires a City of Los Angeles permit issued by the Bureau of Street Services. Residents of Windsor Square should refer to the *Windsor Square Master Plan of Parkway Trees* which guides street tree choices block by block. Recently, the Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer has infested a variety of trees in Los Angeles including two native trees, Coast Live Oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and California Sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*). Consult an arborist, landscape design specialist, and/or the City of Los Angeles Urban Forestry Division when considering the selection of new tree types.

A Very Few Best Gardening Practices

Consult with a landscape design professional who reviews and understands the sun, water, and soils conditions of your yard.

Look up the watering needs of trees. Typically, give them a deep watering monthly, especially in dry months.

Typically, don't plant underneath trees and review for suitability the compatibility of under-canopy plants. Don't allow mulch to come in contact with tree trunks.

Plant in the fall or early winter. Water new plantings deeply for the first 6 months or as instructed by a nursery or landscape design professional.

Trim trees and shrubbery in the fall, not in the spring when birds are nesting and new growth is occurring.

To feed plantings, apply one inch of organic compost on topsoil around plantings, then cover with one to two inches of mulch and water deeply.

Don't necessarily remove well-established plantings, even if they're not considered "water-wise"; they often have adapted to yard conditions and probably use less water than you think.

Limit or eliminate use of pesticides and insecticides. A spray of water infused with dish soap and botanical oils takes care of most insect problems.

Do not use gas leaf blowers. They contribute to air and noise pollution and their use in the City of Los Angeles is not allowed and illegal.

Reference Books

Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien, *California Native Plants for the Garden* (Los Olivos, 2005, Cachuma Press)
Carol Bornstein, David Fross, and Bart O'Brien, *Reimagining the California Lawn* (Los Olivos, 2011, Cachuma Press)
Barbara Eisenstein, *Wild Suburbia: Learning To Garden with Native Plants* (Berkeley, 2016, Heyday)
Glenn Keator and Alrie Middlebrook, *Designing California Native Gardens: The Plant Community Approach to Artful, Ecological Gardens* (Berkeley, 2007, University of California Press)
Bob Perry, *Landscape Plants for California Gardens* (Claremont, 2010)
Sunset Magazine, *The New Sunset Western Garden Book: The Ultimate Gardening Guide* (Oakland, 2012, Sunset Magazine)

Visit Online or On Foot

CalFlora, calflora.org
The Huntington Botanical Gardens, huntington.org
Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, arboretum.org
Natural History Museum Los Angeles County Nature Gardens, nhm.org
Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, rsabg.org
Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants, theodorepayne.org
Tree People, treepeople.org

Afterword: Your Next Front Yard

Lisa Novick



In our neighborhoods, we are becoming accustomed to seeing few, if any, of the butterflies and birds that once inhabited our region. We are too used to green, virtually sterile landscapes. This is wrong. For all the water, energy to move that water, labor and fossil fuels expended to install and maintain our gardens, we should be supporting the pollinators and other insects and animals for whom this once was home. Importantly, the ecosystem services they deliver (natural pest control and reforestation among others), are essential for our own survival. Thus, our gardens must do more than simply be green and provide color. They must also support the food web and ecosystem. The environmental stresses of the 21st century demand nothing less. We need to marry individual aesthetics and neighborhood character with ecosystem support for our collective well-being. Landscaping with native plants is vital to this task.

When the majority of our indigenous lands were everywhere around us, supporting the ecosystem in one's own yard wasn't necessary. Today in the United States, however, only 4% of our wild lands are left, agriculture accounts for 41% of our land use, and urban and suburban areas make up 55% of our landscape.¹ How we landscape this 55% matters. Consider that once established, native landscaping uses approximately 80% less water than ornamental non-native landscaping.² In addition, native gardens require no fertilizers, soil amendments, or pesticides that can harm watershed health. And native gardens support the ecosystem. So much to love!

Just as we treasure Los Angeles' rich architectural heritage, we must treasure our rich natural heritage. California is one of the most biodiverse

¹ see, Douglas W. Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens* (Portland: 2007, Timber Press); see also <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/>.

² see *Sustainable Landscape: The Numbers Speak for Themselves*, City of Santa Monica, <https://www.smgov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/OSE/Categories/Landscape/garden-garden-2013.pdf>.

places in the world. Our native plant palette consists of more than 6,000 species, subspecies and varieties, of which only 1-2% are cacti.

Here in Los Angeles, we have a wealth of native plant species with which to landscape: oak, lilac, buckwheat, manzanita and sage, just to name a few.³ Why my emphasis on the native? Because due to long periods of co-evolutionary time, specialized relationships in nature are the rule and not the exception. Up to 90% of our leaf-eating insect species, for example caterpillars and butterflies, only eat native plants—buckwheat for blue butterflies, penstemon for checkerspots, and milkweed for monarchs.⁴ Why do butterflies and their caterpillars matter? Caterpillars are the main food of baby birds. Indeed, native plant-insect-animal relationships are what make for the unique nature of each place on Earth. Functioning local ecosystems depend on native plants. Talk of sustainability and resilience is only meaningful if we maintain functioning ecosystems where we live.

Today, in Los Angeles and across the United States, the extinction rate is 1,000 times the normal background rate. We need a landscaping ethic that maintains the character of our neighborhoods while supporting the nature of each place.

"Your Next Front Yard" portrays the landscape aesthetic of Los Angeles' Mid-Wilshire districts and how the landscape and garden aesthetics of this place can be updated to respond positively to the environmental urgencies shaping the present. As you consider ways to modify your garden, I hope you will embrace the nature of California and do your part toward making the Los Angeles landscape 50% native by 2050. Much is at stake for our well-being and that of future generations. In our neighborhoods, would we like more crows and pigeons, or more butterflies and songbirds? This significant choice is ours and the landscape and environmental outcome depends upon how we choose to garden.

³ See Carol Bornstein, David Foss and Bart O'Brien, *California Native Plants for the Garden*. (Los Olivos: 2005, Cachuma Press).

⁴ see Fred Heath, *An Introduction to Southern California Butterflies*, (Missoula: Mountain Press, 2004).

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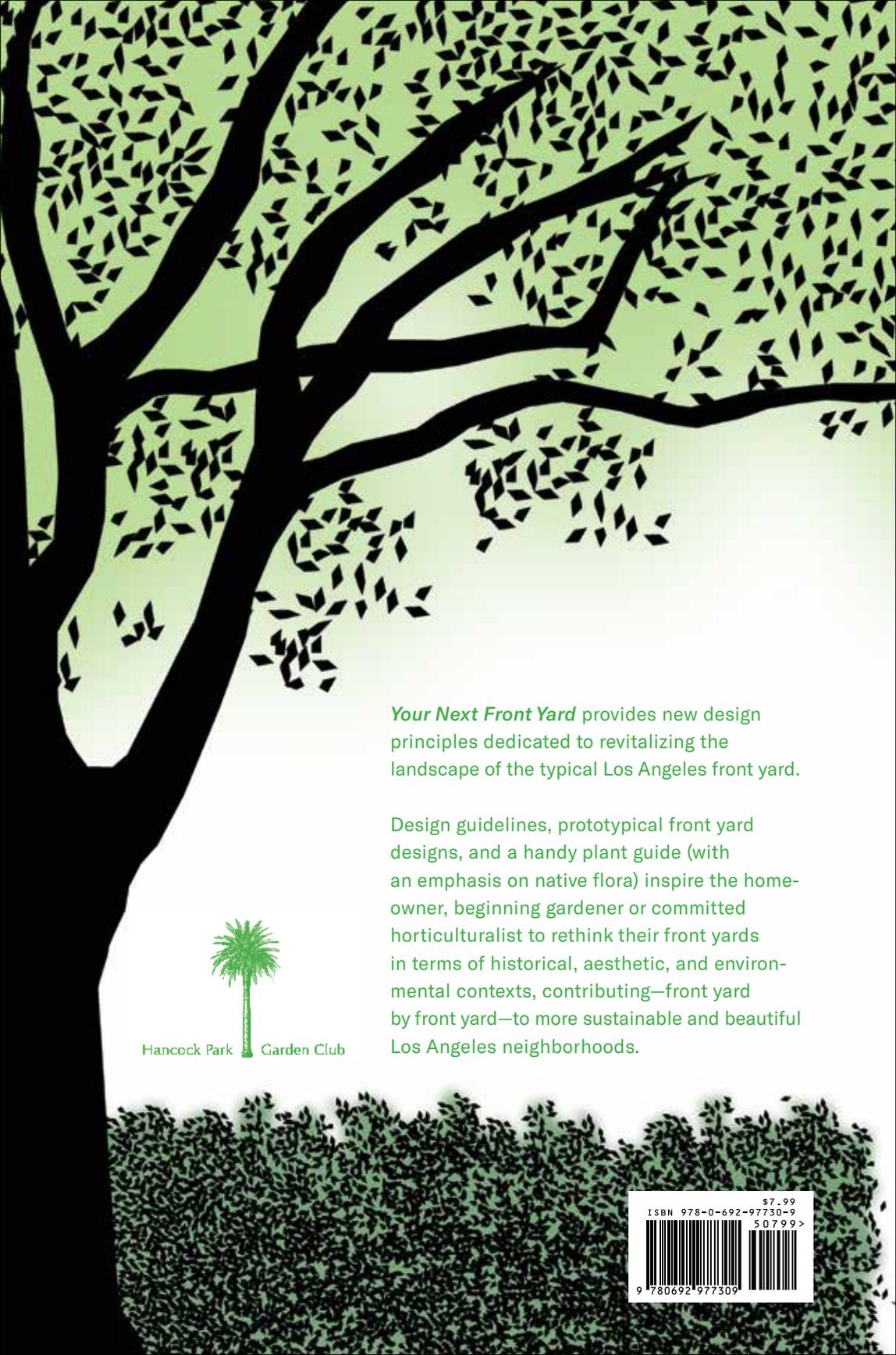
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Your Next Front Yard provides new design principles dedicated to revitalizing the landscape of the typical Los Angeles front yard.

Design guidelines, prototypical front yard designs, and a handy plant guide (with an emphasis on native flora) inspire the homeowner, beginning gardener or committed horticulturalist to rethink their front yards in terms of historical, aesthetic, and environmental contexts, contributing—front yard by front yard—to more sustainable and beautiful Los Angeles neighborhoods.



Hancock Park Garden Club

