

Garden Wise TV Episode 17: I'll Take Plants for \$400 Alex (53:13)

In this Garden Wise Episode, landscape experts share their wise methodologies to help us construct magnificent fire-safe and water efficient gardens to protect our homes and lower our water bills, while still maintaining the aesthetics of the open spaces we all strive for.

Ann Marx, wildland specialist for the Santa Barbara Fire Department, begins with a standardized four zone format to build a proper defensible space for your home. The first of which extends 30 feet from your home perimeter, receives the most water and exhibits the most open space covered by nonflammable material. Here, hardscaping is a useful tool. The second zone occupies the 30-50 feet range and



exhibits slightly more plant material, with a focus on spacing small shrubs and succulents surrounded by mulch to increase water retention of the soil. Succulents on their own also hold a high volume of water and prevent the spread of fire. The third and fourth zones, the next 40-50 feet, provide a continuum into dryer areas and larger native plant material such as Oak trees. Maintenance is key in all aspects of a firescape zone and “fire ladders” where fire can spread from shrub to canopy must be eliminated.



Next, Arianna Jansma, local landscape designer, leads us through her favorite climate-smart plant species to decorate your garden. Chalk Sticks (pictured left), also known as *Senecio mandraliscae* are some of her favorite succulents to use as fire buffers and are additionally extremely heat and sun resistant while requiring little maintenance. Foxtail Agave and Frosty Blue are well recognized larger plants with extensive root systems that provide valuable hillslope stability, are high in water

content, and are largely inedible by local wildlife. To learn of more climate-smart plants, visit WaterWiseGardeningSB.org.

Next up, Billy Goodnick, local landscape architect, outlines his step-by-step process to creating the garden of your dreams. He emphasizes the utility in developing a vision for your own garden plan and design style before purchasing your plants. A focus on plant function is just as important as the aesthetics of the plant itself and ensures the integrity and longevity of the area you are seeking to build. He recommends an emphasis on symmetry and contrast to bring about the most striking visual possible for your garden area.

When choosing your plants, it is important to avoid overgrown plants with aggressively wrapped root systems. Freeing up roots before planting is a must in order to allow the plant to grow properly. Furthermore, flowers take up a large amount of energy for a plant to produce and a priority should be given to plants that have yet to flower so as to focus their energy on developing an extensive and reliable root system.



Following Billy's helpful advice, Oscar Carmona, instructor of the Green Gardener class series, walks us through Lotusland with Plant Healthcare Coordinator Corey Welles. Located in Montecito, this 37-acre botanical garden is open to the public and home to an extraordinary plethora of flora. Welles describes their evolving Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to attract beneficial insects to the area. As he mentions, "It's all about the pollen and nectar." Gardeners often overly prune their landscapes, preventing any opportunities for a thriving bloom. Through his work in Montecito, he aims to prove to the community and world at large that compost, organic fertilizers and the removal of pesticides are key to a truly successful garden space. Beneficial insects go beyond the well-known bees and butterflies. A consistent source of pollen and nectar through the utilization of small bunches of smaller flowers to attract more helpful insects is extremely important.

Following the helpful advice of our local experts, this episode of Garden Wise features the first ever Water Wise Jeopardy show, where Cathie Pare, water conservation expert for the City of Santa Barbara, trumps her competitors and dazzles the audience with her extensive knowledge of water-smart tools and practices. Stay tuned for more!

In the wise words of host Becky Davis, "remember you are the agent of change, and together we can conserve water and create beautiful climate appropriate gardens." Now, you have the tools to create a healthy, water wise garden. Learn more about designing water wise landscapes by visiting our website WaterWiseSB.org.

