HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

LESS LAWN MORE COMMUNITY

Embracing Lawn Transformation While Enhancing Curb Appeal

California Lilac *Ceanothus spp., California native*

Project Snapshot

Martin Farm HOA

LOCATION: Petaluma, Sonoma County

WATER UTILITY: City of Petaluma

LEAD ENTITY: City of Petaluma and Daily Acts Land Resilience Partnership Program

SUPPORT: Conservation Corps North Bay, The Water Folk, Angelia Rossi, Permaculture Artisans, Watershed Progressive

Project Overview

Built in 1908, Martin Farm was the original ranch house of a 17-acre farm and, today, is part of the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and is a Heritage Home of Petaluma.

The residents of Martin Farm HOA connected with the Daily Acts Land Resilience Partnership Program, developed by Watershed Progressive, to bring about a transformation of over 2,700 square feet of nonfunctional lawn into a beautiful native and climate adaptive habitat.

The existing lawn was sheet mulched in summer to prepare it for planting in fall, and two rain gardens were added to help manage stormwater runoff. Several trees were planted to provide shade, evergreen California native shrubs were planted on berms to provide screening and help buffer noise from a busy street, and countless pollinator-loving perennials were added to provide habitat and year-round interest. A permeable walking path meanders through the garden and leads to a seating area, inviting residents to connect.

"We have seen dramatic water savings in 2025, reducing water demand by almost 70%! A dead lawn with hard packed adobe soil is now a healthy, resilient, climate friendly landscape, attracting bees & butterflies, and seasonal blooms throughout the year to enjoy."

Eileen Abajian,
Martin Farm HOA Board Member & Secretary

BEFORE

AFTER: *1.5 YEARS AFTER INSTALLATION*

Garden Features

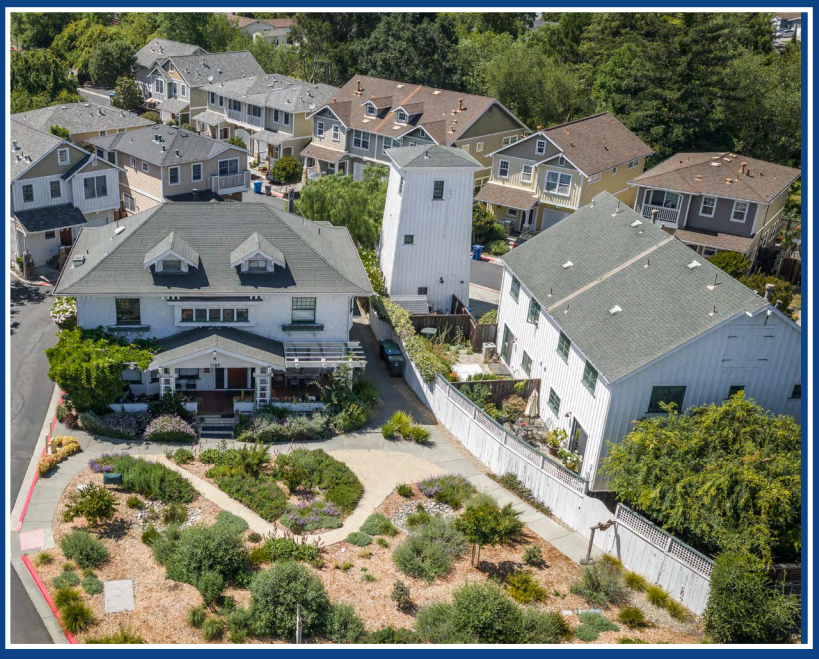
A permeable walkway meanders through colorful water smart shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers such as monkey flower, California fuchsia, California lilac, penstemon and sages. Redbud trees were planted to provide shade, and berms along a busy road were planted with California native coffeeberry shrubs to provide screening and buffer road noise. Organic mulch feeds the soil and maintains moisture. Rock-lined rain gardens manage stormwater runoff and are planted with California rush.

Project Highlights

PROJECT FEATURE	DETAIL
Lawn Removed	2,730 square feet of nonfunctional lawn.
Plant Palette	California native trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers add seasonal color and texture. Over 230 California native plants installed.
Landscape Features	Rock-lined rain gardens for stormwater capture, decomposed granite path, and planted berms to screen road noise. Updated perimeter plantings for year-round interest.
Irrigation System	Converted sprinklers to highly efficient drip irrigation system.
Water Savings	Over 71,000 gallons saved the first year after lawn conversion. Additional savings expected once plants are established.
Project Timeline	Began conversation with City of Petaluma Mulch Madness program in 2023 and applied for Daily Acts Land Resilience Partnership Program in 2024. Site work started in late Sept. 2024 with installation of rain gardens and basic landscape elements. Between Oct. and Nov. 2024 sprinklers were capped and converted to drip irrigation, the site was mulched and plants were installed.
Funding Sources	City of Petaluma Mulch Madness, CA Department of Water Resources Grant, HOA reserves.
Community Benefits	Saving maintenance time and water. Improved community gathering spaces. Increased pollinator habitat. Added screening and reduced noise from busy road.
Return on Investment	Much lower maintenance as well as lower water use.

Get Started in Your Community

1. Create long-term goals for sustainability efforts.
2. Identify lawn areas with no recreational use; consider maintenance costs as well as water use.
3. Explore funding from your water agency, plus county, regional, or state programs.
4. Tackle a large project in stages with available resources.
5. Engage the community through education and events.



SONOMA - MARIN SAVING WATER PARTNERSHIP

SavingWaterPartnership.org

CALIFORNIA WATER EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP

NonFunctionalTurfCA.org