Why This Matters

New State Law: Assembly Bill 1572

California has passed a new law that will prohibit the use of potable water to irrigate nonfunctional turf on commercial, institutional, and industrial properties – including common areas managed by homeowners associations (HOAs).

Compliance Timeline:

- **Jan 1, 2027:** Public agency and local government sites
- **Jan 1, 2028:** Commercial, institutional and industrial properties
- **Jan 1, 2029:** HOA common areas

What is Nonfunctional Turf?

A lawn area that serves purely decorative purposes, not used for recreation, sports or gatherings.

The Sonoma-Marin Saving Water Partnership represents 13 water utilities in Sonoma and Marin counties

Need Help? Call in the Pros

Hire a QWEL-certified professional for expert advice on irrigation and landscaping. Find a local pro at:

QWEL.net

Check for rebates

Determine if you are eligible for lawn replacement rebates from your local water provider at:

SavingWaterPartnership.org/Rebates

Learn more

Find information on tree care, nonfunctional turf replacement and irrigation best practices at:

SavingWaterPartnership.org/NFT

Caring for Trees During Lawn Replacement

As you replace decorative lawn with more sustainable landscape to meet new state requirements, don't forget about your trees

Tree Care During Lawn Removal

Trees may be stressed when shallow, frequent watering from turf irrigation stops, but with the right steps, they can thrive in a new water-efficient landscape.

BEFORE
turf removal

AFTER
turf removal

Tree care needs will vary depending on:

Age: Younger trees are more vulnerable to stress and may need more support.

Species: Some trees are more tolerant of drought and change than others.

Site conditions: Sun exposure, soil type and current irrigation patterns all impact how a tree adjusts to changes in its watering routine.

Key Tips:

- ✓ **Best timing:** Convert landscape in the spring or fall to reduce heat and water stress
- ✓ **Keep trees mulched:** Apply 4" of mulch, but avoid piling near the trunk
- ✓ **Use compost:** Add 1–2" of compost to improve soil health
- ✓ **Avoid damage:** Don't use sod cutters under trees – roots are shallow!

How to Convert Turf Safely (Sheet Mulching Method)

1. Start with a recently watered site and cut a beveled edge at least 5" deep along hardscapes to create a way to contain mulch
2. Invert the removed lawn edge, leaving it atop the remaining grass
3. Add compost (1-2")
4. Overlap cardboard at least 6" to block light from grass
5. Top with mulch (4" of arbor mulch)

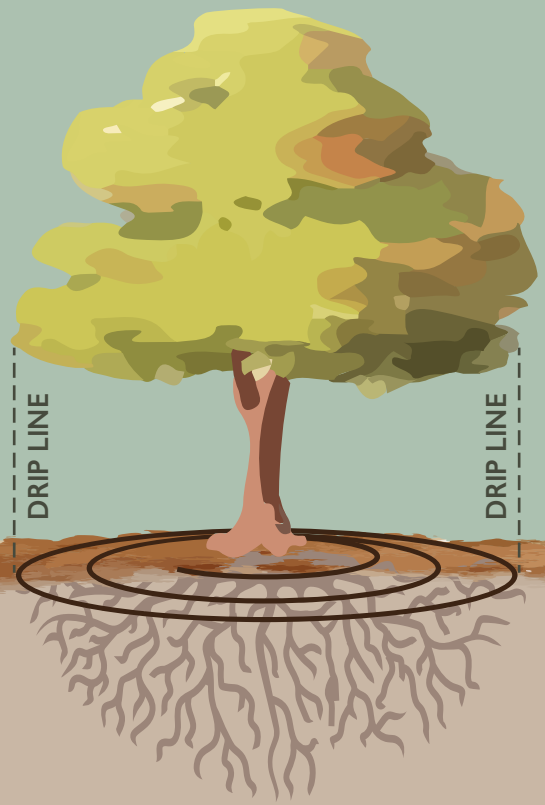
This method smothers the lawn while building soil health and protecting tree roots.

Pro Tip:
Artificial turf is not recommended as a replacement to grass – it traps heat, sheds micro-plastics and restricts water and air flow to tree roots.

Irrigating Trees After Turf Removal

Trees need deep, infrequent watering, not shallow, turf-style irrigation.

- **Water within the dripline** – the area under the tree's canopy
- **Transition watering practices gradually** – trees need time to grow deeper roots
- **Convert to drip** – and use an irrigation spiral around the tree, avoid watering at the trunk
- **Use cycle and soak schedules** – if keeping overhead spray as the watering method



When irrigating, avoid watering directly at the base of the trunk and instead, utilize a spiral drip system to provide a deep, slow soak, which promotes healthier root development than traditional sprinklers.