



APRIL is...
**National
Lawn Care
Month**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California's Water Crisis Precipitates Restrictions But eliminating lawns shouldn't be one of them

By Jim Novak
Turfgrass Producers International

The water crisis in California could hardly be more severe than it already is.

Due to the extreme seriousness of the circumstances Gov. Jerry Brown issued an executive order on April 6 mandating a 25 percent reduction in water compared with 2013 levels.

In his executive order, Brown called on the state's 411 urban water agencies to replace 50 million square feet of lawns and cash incentives are being used in some areas to get homeowners to voluntarily give up their lawns. Some California communities, such as American Canyon, are taking measures as extreme as banning front lawns from new homes altogether. Are such turfgrass replacement and elimination programs really the answer? Might this trade-off have consequences down the road?

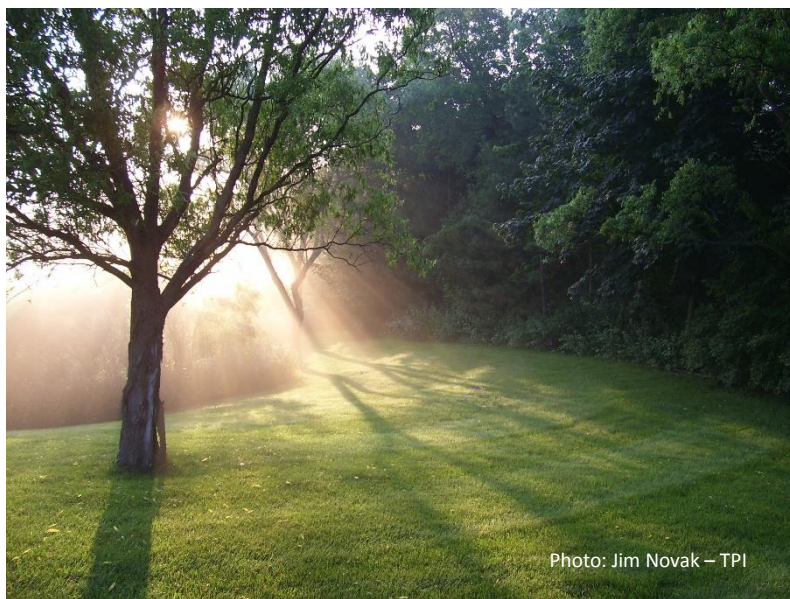


Photo: Jim Novak – TPI

April is . . . National Lawn Care Month and it presents an opportunity to address the many environmental benefits that lawns and turfgrass have to offer that are often overlooked or of which the public is unaware. . Among these benefits are those that could help to mitigate the negative impacts of droughts, including turfgrass reducing storm water runoff (thus protecting the potable water supply) and capturing and filtering precipitation so it can be reintroduced into the water supply. Turfgrass offers additional benefits that can help to prevent or lessen the

severity of future droughts, such as cooling the air, producing oxygen, reducing pollution, capturing and suppressing dust, controlling soil erosion, retaining and sequestering carbon, assisting in the decomposition of pollutants, restoring soil quality, dissipating heat, lowering allergy related problems, reducing home cooling costs, serving as a fire barrier, etc.

The problem isn't that we have lawns, the problem is how we care for our lawns. In general people over-water their lawns thinking if their lawn isn't green it may be dying when in fact grass goes into a dormant state during a drought and needs a minimal amount of water to survive. Grass is able to sustain itself even though it goes dormant, as long as the crowns and the root system are preserved and have adequate moisture to sustain themselves. A healthy established lawn can do surprisingly well during the hot summer season and during lengthy dry periods. In fact, grass shuts down when the temperature reaches 95 to 98 °F. (35 to 37 °C), allowing the plant to go into a cooling-down process. During the hotter months of the year, an established lawn can do fine with as little as one-half inch of water per week and, depending on the species, even less.

Can water conservation and lawns co-exist? They must, if California and other regions of the country impacted by the drought want to prevent potential heat islands, serious erosion concerns, storm water runoff problems and other consequences in the foreseeable future.

Encouraging the removal of lawns from the landscape in an effort to accomplish a quick fix will have consequences down the road. Everyone should consider the long term consequences of such measures before things really begin to heat up.

For more information about caring for your lawn and the environment, visit The Lawn Institute at <http://www.thelawninstitute.org/>

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