

**Asking the right questions** can help you find the right landscape professional to create or maintain your Bay-Friendly garden. The following questions identify practices integral to Bay-Friendly Landscaping.

### Landscaping Locally

#### Does the company...



- Test the soil?  
Knowing the soil's fertility, texture, and structure helps determine soil quality, types of plants it can best support and any need for supplements.
- Use local, natural plant communities as models?

A plant community is a relatively distinct pattern of vegetation found in different regions of the county. Using local plant communities as a model is a way to work with nature to create spectacular landscapes.

- Practice firescaping in high-risk fire areas?  
Understanding the topography, fuel and local weather are critical to designing and maintaining a landscape that reduces the potential for loss to fire. Plant selection is also very important to reducing the fuel load and avoiding fire ladders.

### Landscaping for Less to the Landfill

#### Does the company...

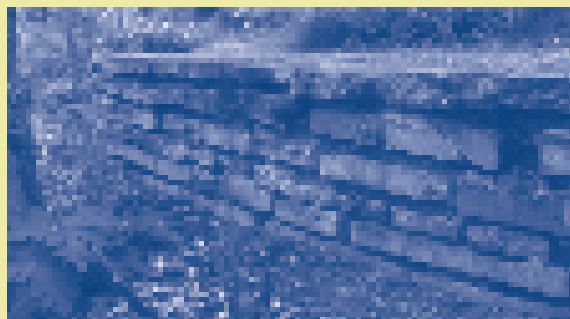


- Select appropriate plants?  
Choosing the right plants for the right space is an important way to reduce the amount of plant debris land filled every year. Selecting plants that can grow to their mature size in the space allotted, replacing sheared hedges with natural shapes, and avoiding invasive species are sound practices.

- Grasscycle?  
Grasscycling means leaving the clippings on the lawn after mowing, so they decompose and release their nutrients into the soil.

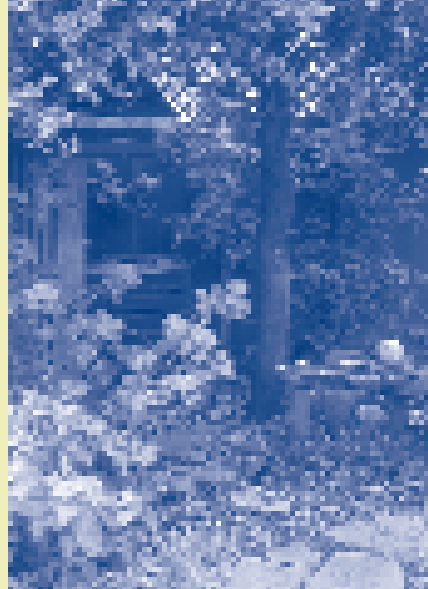
- Compost plant debris? Or keep plant debris separated from trash for composting at a regional compost facility?  
Composting is the controlled decomposition of organic matter. It turns plant debris into a beneficial soil amendment.

- Prune selectively and properly?  
Pruning should complement the natural form and strengthen the structural integrity of the plant. It should not be used to severely restrict plant growth — improper pruning weakens the plant and generates unnecessary waste.



*Broken concrete is used to create a retaining wall.*

*Using compost conserves water and adds nutrients to your soil.*



### Nurturing the Soil

#### Does the company...



- Protect soil from erosion and compaction during construction?  
Conserving topsoil protects soil structure and the soil's ability to support the microbes that cycle nutrients and filter pollutants. Local waterways and aquatic habitat are also protected.

- Amend the soil with compost before planting?  
Compost fosters a diverse, fertile, and disease suppressive soil. It can improve structure, aeration and water holding capacity of the soil.

- Mulch regularly?  
Mulch conserves water, improves soil life, enhances the growth of plants and the appearance of the landscape.

- Feed soils naturally?  
Using natural amendments, adding compost to the soil, or drenching the soil with compost tea, nurtures a strong soil foodweb. This makes nutrients available to the plants and protects water quality.

# CHOOSE

### Conserving Water

#### Does the company...



- Recommend California natives or Mediterranean plants?  
Appropriately sited native or Mediterranean plants are well adapted to California's summer-dry climate. Many species tolerate dry summers without watering once they are established.
- Install and regularly maintain efficient irrigation systems?

High efficiency systems limit evaporation and runoff. Well-maintained systems that do not leak, over-spray or gush water are critical to conserving water.

- Water according to need?

Water needs vary by season and site. Appropriate watering rates moderate plant growth, which promotes plant health. Water that runs off landscaped areas does not help the plants — and it can hurt aquatic life. As water runs off your property, it captures any pollution in its way - e.g. pesticides, trash, fertilizers. This “polluted water” can find its way to the nearest storm drain. All storm drains lead to local creeks, the Bay or Ocean.



*Native and Mediterranean plants offer diverse and dynamic choices.*

### Conserving Energy

#### Does the company...



- Specify local products and suppliers?  
Buying local reduces the hidden environmental costs, such as pollution and energy consumption, of transporting materials.
- Protect trees that help moderate building temperatures?  
Trees help conserve energy by shading, cooling the air through evapotranspiration, and providing wind breaks.
- Use hand-powered equipment while minimizing the use of gas-powered equipment?  
Reducing fossil fuel consumption protects the health of the operator and local air and water quality.

### Protecting Water & Air Quality

#### Does the company



- Use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach?  
IPM is a holistic approach to managing insects, plant diseases, weeds, and other pests. First and foremost, IPM seeks to prevent pests by fostering a healthy, diverse landscape in which plants have the strength to resist disease and insect pests, and to out-compete weeds.
- Try alternative approaches before turning to pesticides?  
Least toxic pesticides should be used as a last resort when preventative and non-chemical methods are not keeping pests below acceptable levels.

### Creating Wildlife Habitat

#### Does the company...



- Consider habitat needs for birds and pollinators?  
With thoughtful plant selection and design, home landscapes can provide food, water, shelter and nesting sites for birds, butterflies, beneficial insects and other creatures.
- Foster biodiversity?  
A diverse landscape includes annuals, biennials and perennials of many different sizes, shapes, colors and textures. It includes evergreens and deciduous plants, species that bloom at different times of the year and those that bear fruit or berries. Diversity provides habitat for wildlife and beneficial organisms that help control plant pests.



*Protect Kids and Pets: if a pesticide is needed at all, use the least toxic available. Learn more at [www.OurWaterOurWorld.org](http://www.OurWaterOurWorld.org)*

# PROTECT

# Why should you care about the practices of your landscape company?



*“Bay-Friendly” offers a holistic approach to landscaping that works with nature to reduce waste, prevent pollution and support the integrity of the San Francisco Bay watershed, one of California’s most magnificent ecosystems.*

## Our gardens

can be a haven for migratory birds, wildlife and our families or they can be a significant source of pollution and waste.

How a landscape professional manages your yard and garden – from using pesticides to choosing plants – has an impact on your garden, our natural resources and the San Francisco Bay watershed. Urban runoff carries pesticides, sediment, fertilizer into storm drains which lead to our creeks, waterways and eventually the Bay.

Landscape professionals who use Bay-Friendly practices can eliminate or minimize these hazards. Building healthy soil by using compost and mulch is one such practice. Adding compost and mulch to the soil helps conserve water, reduces weeds and the need for pesticides - while also turning the soil into a living filter which removes pollutants from water. Using compost and mulch becomes the link between protecting our watersheds, conserving landfill space and cultivating living soil – the foundation of a healthy, thriving garden.

Nurturing healthy soil is just the beginning. Bay-Friendly landscapes mimic natural systems

which recycle everything – water, debris, and nutrients – endlessly. It pays attention to climate and local conditions and uses plants that are adapted to those conditions. It follows maintenance practices that support the goals of conserving resources and reducing waste.

### A Bay-Friendly approach to gardening:

- Landscapes locally
- Landscapes for less to the landfill
- Nurtures the soil
- Conserves water
- Conserves energy
- Protects water & quality
- Creates wildlife habitat



All Bay-Friendly gardens are not alike -a Bay-Friendly landscape can be your Mediterranean retreat, a shaded woodland or a wildlife habitat. It can include edible gardens, fruiting trees, beds of cutting flowers or play areas for your children. It does not limit you and your landscaper but offers a wide array of choices for creating and caring for your yard and garden. Selecting a Bay-Friendly landscape professional ensures you will have a beautiful garden that also protects our Bay Area communities and environment.

## Checking Credentials

Don't be afraid to ask about past projects and professional experience.

A few questions to help glean more information:

1. Does the business have references — especially for comparably scaled designs or sites?
2. How many years experience do they have?
3. How long has their staff been working for them?
4. Are they licensed to do the job?
5. Have any of their staff gone through the Bay-Friendly Training and Qualification Program offered by several bay area counties? Find out at [www.BayFriendly.org](http://www.BayFriendly.org).
6. Are they affiliated with any professional associations such as:
  - American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
  - California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA)
  - Ecological Landscape Association (ELA)
  - California Certified Nursery Professional (CCNPRO)

## Tools for the Home Gardener

Learn more with these free publications from Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (499-6528):

- *Go Native! Using Native Plants for Your Yard, Patio and Creek*
- *Growing Gardens from Garbage: A Guide to Composting, Mulching & Grasscycling*
- *The Healthy Home & Garden for You, Your Family, and Pets*
- *Creek Care: A Guide for Marin Residents*

Or these free publications from Marin Municipal Water District (945-1520):

- *Water-Wise Gardening for California*
- *How to Water your Garden*
- *Smart Water and Energy Use in the West*



For more information in Marin, call Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP) at (415) 499-6528 or visit [www.mcstoppp.org](http://www.mcstoppp.org)

For more information, visit [www.BayFriendly.org](http://www.BayFriendly.org) Bay-Friendly Landscaping is a trademark and servicemark owned by StopWaste.Org.

## Digging Deeper

Learn more about creating a bay-friendly garden by visiting one of the websites below:

### Birds

[www.prbo.org/cms/183](http://www.prbo.org/cms/183)

### Beneficial Insects

[www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/NE/index.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/NE/index.html)

### Native Plants

[www.mostlynatives.com/guide.htm](http://www.mostlynatives.com/guide.htm) or [www.cnps.org](http://www.cnps.org)

### Owls

[www.hungryowl.org](http://www.hungryowl.org)

### Pesticide Hazards

[www.beyondpesticides.org/gateway/index.htm](http://www.beyondpesticides.org/gateway/index.htm)



Choosing a Bay-Friendly landscape begins with you – and we're here to help!

## CHOOSING A LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL FOR YOUR BAY-FRIENDLY GARDEN

