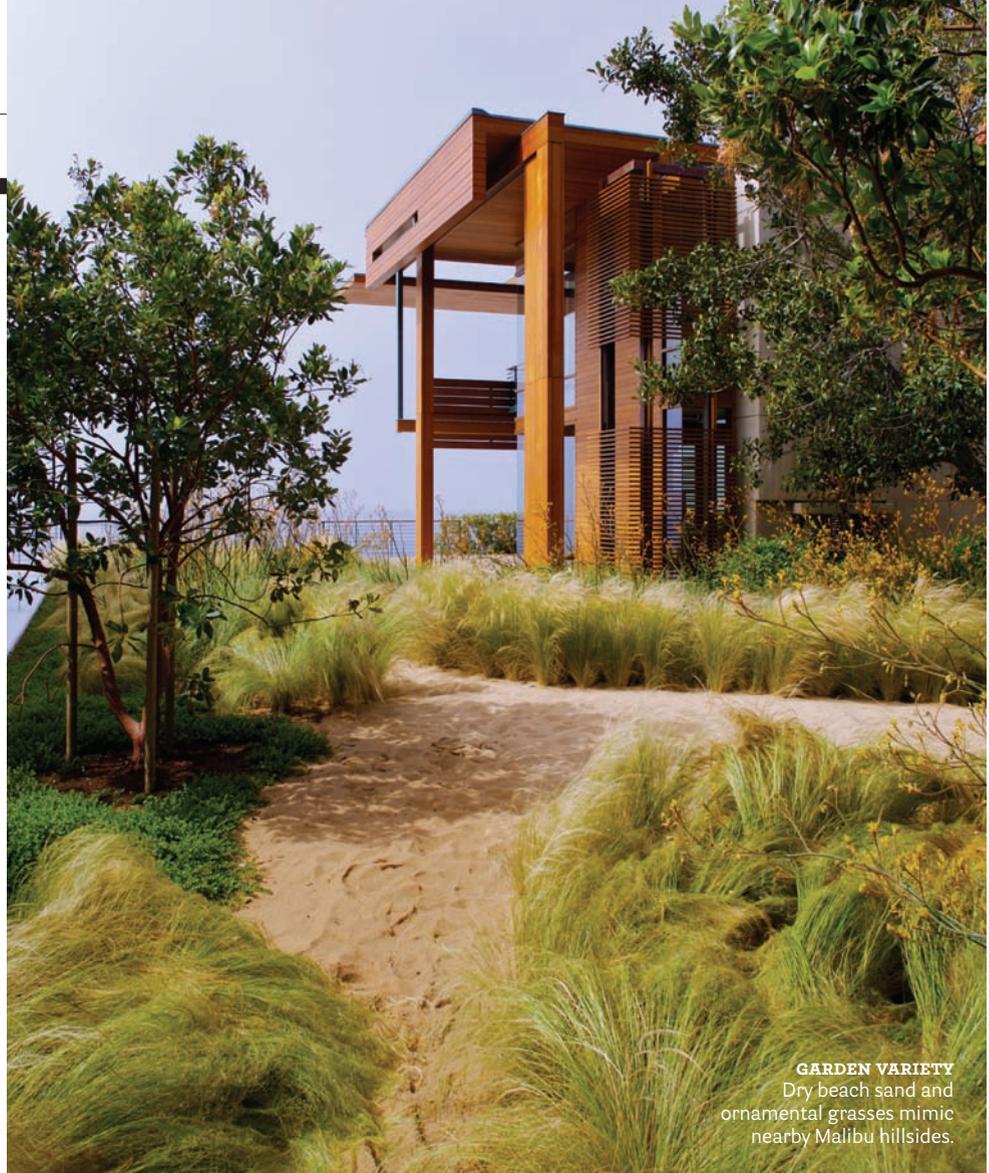


Green Acres

An outdoor design expert dishes on sustainable landscaping practices that leave gardens looking gorgeous.

A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT in Southern California since 1975, Pamela Burton has long integrated sustainability into her design process by creating gorgeous gardens with as little impact on natural resources as possible. In the last decade, she's seen an increase in clients who also espouse eco-conscious landscaping, but sometimes those who are "green" in theory might have a hard time fully embracing the concept for their own homes.

For one Malibu beach house project, Burton's client originally wanted standard green turf lawn installed between the main house and the guest house that face the Pacific Ocean. Burton convinced the client that turf would require too much water to maintain, and that using dry beach sand to anchor ornamental grasses, mimicking the nearby hillsides, would be more environmentally sensitive. The resulting open space (which the client now adores) complements the surrounding chaparral (native shrubland). Yellow salt- and drought-tolerant plants add



GARDEN VARIETY
Dry beach sand and ornamental grasses mimic nearby Malibu hillsides.

plenty of color to the scene, and the property's winding sandy walkways effectively bring the beach to the garden.

Low-irrigation landscaping may be key to best-sustainability practices, but Burton says it's not the whole picture, as even drought-tolerant plants need to be watered. Fortunately, as technology

improves, we'll see more state-of-the-art rainwater and gray-water recycling systems in place at private homes. (Currently, high price points make them feasible mainly on large commercial projects.)

In the meantime, you can still be kind to the planet at your own home. Use plant materials that don't attract pests, and minimize the pesticides you do use. To save energy, avoid gas-powered trimmers and blowers, and compost your own green waste (grass cuttings and hedge trimmings) rather than using municipal bins. While watering your lawn and garden on a clock timer is great, you'll really impress your neighbors by installing a "smart" irrigation control system that releases water according to information gleaned from a weather satellite. 310-828-6373, pamelaburtonco.com. —Kara Williams



THE GET RAIN BIRD ET MANAGER

Over-watering the garden has always been something homeowners want to avoid, but increasing water scarcity has rendered this true now more than ever. The folks at Rain Bird understand that you want to have a beautiful, green landscape without depleting natural resources in the process. Rain Bird ET Manager is an irrigation system that uses hourly (not just daily) local weather updates and evapotranspiration, or ET, to water your yard only when you need it. The system is flexible and works with virtually any irrigation controller. The result is significant water savings and a healthier landscape. \$676, rainbird.com.