

Harvest Landscape Renovation Saves Niguel Shores Water and Money



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DANA POINT, Calif. – Niguel Shores of Dana Point has a history of caring for and appreciating the environment. Some 30 years ago, this beachfront community switched to a reclaimed water system for its irrigation. But time took its toll on the landscape, which eventually required a "flooding" technique of irrigation that wasted water and caused recurring damage to streets, lampposts and other hardscape.

To correct the problem, the community hired Harvest Landscape Enterprises, Inc. – a leader in Orange County, Calif., for achieving water savings and establishing sustainable landscape practices for its clients – to analyze the aging system and fix it.

Today, a landscape renovation project is conserving water, saving money in maintenance and irrigation costs and protecting not only hardscapes but also the ocean from tertiary runoff.

The improvements led the South Coast Water District to commend the Niguel Shores Beach Community Association Management Team and Harvest Landscape Enterprises for all the improvements that have been and are being implemented throughout the community. "(The project) will result in a reduction of recycled water demand and a reduction of irrigation runoff that ultimately goes into the adjacent ocean waters," said Larry Fregin, water-use efficiency supervisor for the water district.

Harvest replaced more than 100,000 square feet of passive turf area with drought-tolerant shrubs and native plants. Overhead irrigation systems were replaced with drip irrigation to save water and prevent runoff.

The project is expected to save the community \$17,000 a year. It was subsidized by rebates, and will pay for itself in just seven years, said

Harvest President Steven Schinhofen.

Steve Stewart, a Niguel Shores Community Association Board member, who was Association president the year Harvest was hired, explained why they selected the family-owned business to do the job.

"We recognized in mid-2011 that the landscape company we had been using for decades was not delivering what we needed," said Stewart. "Harvest's emphasis on water savings utilizing technology and extensive upgrading of our irrigation infrastructure made sense to us. Also attractive was the opportunity to use their design and operational expertise to reduce the installation cost of our Master Landscape Project, avoiding the huge costs that our previous landscape architect had projected."

Community residents at first were apprehensive about the idea of replacing passive turf areas with drought-tolerant plants. But in the end, they not only supported the project, they embraced it.

"We are already using less water, making faster progress on the implementation of the Master Landscape Project, and at a sharply reduced cost versus initial projections," Stewart said. "Also, we are seeing higher homeowner satisfaction with the current condition of our landscape."

Harvest President Steven Schinhofen said communities like Niguel Shores do a great job of modeling how good stewardship can be as attractive as it is good for the environment.

"We used flax, native plants and shrubs to add color and texture to the landscape," he said. "People are always surprised to see how beautiful some low-water plants can be."

The Niguel Shores projects comes on the heels of a long list of sustainable landscape projects for Harvest, including Ocean Ranch at Bear Brand, which received recognition from the California State Assembly for its water-savings.

Harvest was also featured in local and trade media for saving Oso Valley Greenbelt Association 108 million gallons of water that resulted in a two-year cost savings of more than \$251,000 to the community.

The rapidly growing family-owned business saved Southern California Edison about 70 percent of its water use at the Villa Park Substation in the City of Orange, and it is a key partner in Coastkeeper Gardens, a project of Orange County Coastkeeper which celebrated its grand opening May 4 at Santiago Canyon College.

Harvest Landscape Enterprises, Inc. services more than 10,000 acres in and around Orange County. The company specializes in resource efficiency, sustainable landscape practices and systematic maintenance for long-term savings.