SITE-TO-SOURCE / SAMPLE CONSULTATION

A beautiful native garden through summer drought

Sacramento, California

$179 Home Landscape Plant Palette • Three coordinated yard environments

Illustrative report for a fictional client and site; no real property inspection or purchase. Sample edition: 7 Nov 2026 | PHY-SAMPLE-010_Sacramento_Dry_Season

Your recommended direction

Reduce lawn in phases, hydrozone dry-loving plants away from routinely watered areas, and use evergreen forms, bunchgrasses, summer perennials and spring annuals for different seasons. Verify any rebate before removing turf.

The client behind the question

Fictional client: Christine McPherson

"Watering the front lawn all summer feels like a waste, but I don't want to trade it for a yard that's completely brown by August. I like the idea of California poppies and hummingbird plants, and I could use some evergreen structure along the west fence. I have heard the City may help pay for grass removal, though I don't know whether my water bill qualifies. Please help me choose plants that look planned together and tell me what to check before I pull out the sprinklers."

Illustrative mock submission, not an actual customer testimonial. Adapted from the fictional intake originally prepared for this example.

Selected answers from the client intake

Intake question	Client's answer
Primary project	Part of a roughly 620-square-foot front lawn conversion, a hot 40-foot west-fence strip and a shaded side yard on a fictional 0.38-acre lot.
Existing conditions	Approximately seven sun hours at the front; hot fence; heavier soil; lawn irrigation still in use.
Client goals	California natives, spring flowers, hummingbirds, bees and visible evergreen structure in summer.
What I want to avoid	Thorns by paths, risky ingestible plants around visiting pets, frequent pruning and unplanned irrigation demands.
Practical constraints	Irrigation zones may be linked; the fence strip narrows near a gate; rebate eligibility is unverified.
Budget and timing	Phased $1,500-$2,500 plants/mulch/irrigation materials; plan before turf removal and plant in appropriate cool season.

How we answered the client's questions

Client asked	How this report responds
Will the bed look bare after spring flowers finish?	Use deergrass, California coffeeberry and other structural plants with later-blooming California fuchsia and buckwheat.
Which plants should go by the hot fence?	Toyon and coffeeberry are options only where measured mature width permits; the narrow gate should not be blocked.
Can I get the City rebate just by planting natives?	No. Confirm water-provider eligibility, program terms and pre-approval before removing turf; the report cannot certify eligibility.
Can all these plants use the old lawn sprinklers?	Not by assumption. Separate summer-dry plant zones from plants needing occasional supplemental water; have the irrigation layout checked.

What we clarified in the simulated written intake

Follow-up question	Client reply and resulting decision
Are you certain your utility account is with the City and eligible for grass conversion?	Client: Not yet; I just know I receive a water bill. Report decision: No rebate promise; verify approval before turf removal.
Can the front sprinklers be adjusted separately?	Client: I think two heads are tied to the side lawn. Report decision: Flag hydrozoning and a qualified irrigation review before installation.

The plant recommendations and next steps that follow show the result of these client-specific choices. Site observations remain fictional, and conditions must be confirmed before real installation.

How we interpreted this project

An adult homeowner wants to convert some turf, cool a west-side boundary and soften a shaded side yard while retaining seasonal color and reducing routine summer watering.

The $179 Home Landscape Plant Palette coordinates several related spaces on one residential property, with planting priorities and phases; a formal consultation call and revision are not included.

Three decisions that matter most

01 Check irrigation lines and map zones by actual summer-water needs.

02 Begin with five to eight core species rather than 27 unrelated purchases.

03 Keep gate clearance and visitor access in mind; check planting eligibility before a proposed rebate-funded conversion.

Plant recommendations

27 screened plant choices are presented below. They are alternatives organized by planting environment and use—not a shopping list you must buy in full. Mature dimensions and growing conditions remain approximate; confirm the supplied plant form, actual site light and water before purchase.

Sunny lawn conversion

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
California poppy *Eschscholzia californica* Core	Bright spring color in open gaps of meadow conversion. **Best fit:** Full sun; drainage adequate; 0.3-1.5 ft h; variable spread **Check:** Spring display followed by bare/dormant patches; self-sows; do not ingest.
Globe gilia *Gilia capitata* Core	Blue spring flowers add diversity to a winter-rain seed mix. **Best fit:** Full sun; light competition; 1-2 ft h; ~1 ft w **Check:** Annual; needs exposed seedbed; reseeding is not guaranteed.
Elegant clarkia *Clarkia unguiculata* Core	Tall pink flowers carry color after earlier annuals fade. **Best fit:** Sun to light afternoon shade; 2-4 ft h; ~1 ft w **Check:** Put toward back; late-spring annual may fall over in midsummer.
Lacy phacelia *Phacelia tanacetifolia* Conditional	Spring nectar with distinctive lavender curls in a seeded pocket. **Best fit:** Full sun; spring moisture; 1-3 ft h; 1-2 ft w **Check:** Very attractive to bees; rough hairs may irritate sensitive skin; keep away from narrow path. Kew confirms California nativity at state scale but not indigenous occurrence or seed origin for this Sacramento parcel; choose regional ecotype material if local nativity is a priority.
Common madia *Madia elegans* Alternative	Yellow late-spring to summer color where annuals can reseed. **Best fit:** Full sun; seasonally dry; 1-3 ft h; ~1.5 ft w **Check:** Annual can look untidy as it finishes; not a turf replacement.
Naked buckwheat *Eriogonum nudum* Core	Airy summer flowers extend resources into hot months. **Best fit:** Full sun; dry soils after establishment; 2-5 ft flowering stems; basal clump **Check:** Often summer semi-deciduous; not evergreen groundcover.
California fuchsia *Epilobium canum* Core	Late red flowers and hummingbird interest, after spring annuals fade. **Best fit:** Sun to afternoon-shaded edge; 1-3 ft h; 2-4 ft w **Check:** Spreads; trim in winter after flowering; do not overwater mature dry-zone plants.
Foothill penstemon *Penstemon heterophyllus* Core	Blue-violet late spring blooms among grasses and buckwheat. **Best fit:** Sunny, drained planting pockets; 1-3 ft h; 1-3 ft w **Check:** Avoid compacted wet root zones; nursery cultivars differ from straight species.
Deergrass *Muhlenbergia rigens* Core	Permanent structure so the bed still reads as planted in dry months. **Best fit:** Sun or part sun; deep-rooted clump; 4-5 ft h; 5-7 ft w **Check:** Very broad at maturity; keep well back from paths and utilities.
Purple needlegrass *Nassella pulchra* Core	Fine-textured native bunchgrass with seasonal seedheads. **Best fit:** Full sun; seasonally dry soil; 2-3 ft flowering h; 1-2 ft w **Check:** Bunchgrass browns seasonally; remove accumulated dead material as needed.
Woolly sunflower *Eriophyllum lanatum* Core	Low golden flowers and fine gray-green foliage bridge between taller stems. **Best fit:** Sun to part sun; drought adapted; 1-2 ft h; 1-2 ft w **Check:** May be summer semi-deciduous; good drainage matters.

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Common yarrow *Achillea millefolium* Conditional	Long bloom where limited summer water can be provided. **Best fit:** Sun or part sun; some summer moisture; 1-3 ft h and spread **Check:** Rhizomatous spread; looks better with some irrigation, not a no-water guarantee.

Hot western boundary

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Toyon *Heteromeles arbutifolia* Core	Evergreen backbone and winter berries for birds. **Best fit:** Sun to afternoon shade; room to mature; 10-20 ft h and w **Check:** Too large for a narrow 5-ft fence strip; do not treat berries as edible.
California coffeeberry *Frangula californica* Core	Second evergreen layer with berries and pollinator activity. **Best fit:** Sun to part shade; drained clay acceptable; 5-15 ft h; 6-10 ft w **Check:** Fruit draws birds and may drop; allow full spread.
Western redbud *Cercis occidentalis* Conditional	Deciduous spring-flowering small tree at one open boundary corner. **Best fit:** Sun to afternoon shade; open area; 15-20 ft h; 10-15 ft w **Check:** Only one where tree clearance works; winter privacy disappears.
Coyote brush *Baccharis pilularis* Core	Lived-in evergreen mass with late-season insect support. **Best fit:** Sunny boundary; low summer water; 3-10 ft h; 5-8 ft w **Check:** Shrubby forms differ from 1-2 ft prostrate cultivars; do not substitute blindly.
Buckbrush *Ceanothus cuneatus* Conditional	Early spring evergreen flowering and low-water structure. **Best fit:** Sunny, well-drained upper boundary; 5-12 ft h; 5-10 ft w **Check:** Skip if water ponds or the existing sprinklers keep roots wet in summer.
Deerweed *Acmispon glaber* Alternative	Fast flowering interim nurse-like structure while larger shrubs establish. **Best fit:** Full sun; dry open edge; 1.5-3 ft h; 2-4 ft w **Check:** Short lived or somewhat sprawling; replace over time if needed.
Coyote mint *Monardella villosa* Core	Low aromatic flowers at the sunny foot of the shrub planting. **Best fit:** Full sun to light shade; good drainage; 1-2 ft h; 2-3 ft w **Check:** Needs well-drained soil; bees will visit flowers.
Golden currant *Ribes aureum* Conditional	Deciduous spring flowering alternative where an evergreen would be crowded. **Best fit:** Part sun; cooler or irrigated margin; 3-6 ft h and w **Check:** May need supplemental summer water; not reliable winter privacy.

Partly shaded side yard

Plant / selection status	How it may work and what to check
Sticky monkeyflower *Diplacus aurantiacus* Core	Orange blooms lift color near the shaded walkway edge. **Best fit:** Bright open shade; good air movement; 2-5 ft h; 2-4 ft w **Check:** Heat/dry stress can produce summer leaf drop; some relief from afternoon sun helpful.
Sonoma sage *Salvia sonomensis* Core	Low summer-dry sage mat where foot traffic is excluded. **Best fit:** Open afternoon shade; drained soil; 0.5-1.5 ft h; 3-6 ft spread **Check:** Spreads beyond planting edge; avoid heavy wet summer irrigation. This is California-native, but a locally indigenous Sacramento County source was not verified; it is a horticultural option, not a local-ecotype guarantee.
California figwort *Scrophularia californica* Conditional	Tall floral resource for bees at back of side-yard border. **Best fit:** Partial shade; drained soil; 3-6 ft h; 2-3 ft w **Check:** Attracts insects; keep away from tight walking route; can look weedy.
Leafy fleabane *Erigeron foliosus* Alternative	Blue to lavender daisies and softer transitional texture. **Best fit:** Light shade or part sun; 0.7-2.5 ft h; 1-2 ft w **Check:** Can become summer-deciduous; not year-round green coverage.
Woodland strawberry *Fragaria vesca* Conditional	Low living carpet in the one irrigated shade pocket. **Best fit:** Part shade, organic soil with summer water; 0.3-0.6 ft h; spreading **Check:** Will not reliably cover hot dry roots; berries not a food-safety certification.
Miner's lettuce *Claytonia perfoliata* Alternative	Green ground-level winter and spring annual between permanent plants. **Best fit:** Part shade; winter-spring moisture; 0.3-1 ft h; self-sown **Check:** Usually disappears when hot/dry; do not promise edible safety or year-round cover.
Blue wildrye *Elymus glaucus* Core	Structural bunchgrass behind lower shade plants. **Best fit:** Part sun/open shade, drainage adequate; 2-4 ft h; 1-2 ft w **Check:** Cool-season grass can tan and lodge in late summer heat; keep off paths.

How to put the recommendations to work

01 Confirm the scope and timing of any active city incentive in writing.

02 Convert one sunny section first, and keep a workable lawn/path edge.

03 Add the fence and shade planting once irrigation and exposure are better understood.

Important site and safety considerations

- California native does not mean entirely summer-irrigation-free during establishment.
- Municipal lawn incentives are date-sensitive and require separate city eligibility and approval.

A few things we would hold back

narrowleaf milkweed: Withheld from open-access purchase palette; monarch host yet poisonous if eaten and latex contact risk. Could be reconsidered in fenced habitat with exposure controls.

California buckeye: High habitat value but large and poisonous seeds; inconsistent with tight visitor-use setting without separate hazard review.

valley oak: Ecologically valuable but mature 60-100-ft form is incompatible with a small retrofit around existing structures; preserve existing trees instead.

Plant sourcing and expectations

Ask growers for the exact scientific name (including any trade synonym), the plant or seed format, the propagation source and whether stock is suitable for the local climate. A nursery listing is a lead for shopping, not proof of current inventory, correct provenance, or guaranteed establishment.

Examples of places to inquire

Mother Natives. vendor / inventory lookup lead, not reserved stock

SacValley CNPS Nursery. grower lead, no item-level stock confirmation

Larner Seeds. catalog listings, quantity/shipping/local provenance not independently confirmed

As checked 7 Nov 2026, the City of Sacramento lists a limited-time grass-conversion rebate for eligible applications submitted 1 Sep 2026 to 28 Feb 2027. Written City approval is required before starting; payment depends on eligible documented costs, program requirements and funds availability. This botanical palette does not constitute a City-approved landscape plan.

Sources consulted

The references below support the regional botanical, gardening, or regulatory decisions in this illustration. Published range, nursery listings and generalized soils information do not prove parcel-scale conditions, county indigeneity or seed-lot origin. Check dated rules and availability before making real purchases.

Sacramento region most important plants - habitat list (2026)

Local Native Plant List - Sacramento horticulture

Sacramento region most important plants list, Jan. 2025

Sacramento Valley native hedgerow plants

Dated nursery inventory, updated 30 Oct 2026

Frangula californica nomenclature

Diplacus aurantiacus nomenclature

Nassella pulchra nomenclature

Toyon - All-Stars

California coffeeberry - All-Stars

Sacramento: current grass conversion rebate terms