



Monarch Environmental
Propagating Plant Propaganda
Since 2008

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The Pollen Press

HELLO, SUMMER!

The California landscaper is privileged with a relatively mild climate suited for year-round planting and maintenance and an outrageous array of plant selections both local and exotic. With a wild and stunning landscape, we are endlessly proud to grow here. While our home soil is seemingly idyllic, the monsters under our bed are two major risk factors: drought and fire.

Our challenge as horticulturists is not just to preserve what has been planted before us but to shepherd our landscapes into the future. The success of our communities depends on choices we make now, responding to current events and preparing for changes to come. In this issue of *The Pollen Press*, we will discuss what we as consultants and caretakers can do to prepare, cope, and recover from traumatic events and defend our beloved terrain.

Jen Wilson
Director of Horticulture
Editor in Chief



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Planting for fire safety and drought tolerance
- Monarch’s core values
- Drought-ready irrigation tips
- Tree technology in the field
- Meet Monarch’s Lead Arborist, Arbor Pup, and Senior Consultant!



MEET EVIN LAMBERT

As our lead arborist, Evin focuses solely on arboricultural consulting and helps our clients protect their most valuable assets. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Horticulture Science and a minor in Plant Protection Science from California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo.

Prior to joining Monarch in 2018, she worked in the tree care industry for eight years. Her background in the roles of both contractor and third-party consultant has given her the opportunity to perform thousands of tree risk assessments, develop tree protec-

tion plans for development projects, develop tree policies and multiyear tree care plans for homeowners' associations, appraise the value of specimen trees, and conduct year-round monitoring of the health and structure of some of our clients' native oak and sycamore trees.

Evin is Monarch's go-to for all things trees, insider tips on experiencing Hawaii like a local, and finding the absolute best lunch spots. She's also a true pillar of our Monarch culture in professionalism and utter coolness.

Field work can be lonely! Not every work day can accommodate a rambunctious coworker with a propensity to chase most things in the landscape. But occasionally, Luna Lambert joins Evin as our junior arborist, providing valuable feedback on park quality and much-needed company.



TECH SAVVY TREE CARE

When was the last time you peeked inside a tree? Evin Lambert performs tomographic imaging on a California pepper in Rancho Mission Viejo. Tomography is a non-invasive way to assess and monitor tree decay using sound waves, giving the arborist insight into the thickness of the tree wall where internal decay is suspected.

Schinus (pepper trees) are prone to decay while often appearing as solid as ever. This specimen is a good candidate for evaluation and presents obvious signs of stress like mushroom conks near its base. Fungus causes internal rot we can't see but one good clue is fruiting bodies. This is often the external indication of decay and it is helpful to arborists to leave these mushrooms in place so this information is not overlooked. The data from the tomographic reading will need to be uploaded and interpreted before any conclusions can be made. Evin also performs a resistograph test to compare findings. Resistographing is a mechanical testing method, drilling into the tree and measuring wood density to assess decay.



Monarch uses sophisticated industry technology to inform our recommendations.



The Monarch team takes our values seriously! We water the roots of our relationships at Cook's Corner in Orange.

MONARCH'S CORE VALUES

Business classes, magazines and experts preach the importance of having core values for your company. What I find odd about that approach is the simple fact that nobody says you should have core values for your personal life. The values that we hold dear come over time, study, observation, and practice until one day we realize we have some core values that are non-negotiable.

At Monarch, we decided to apply that line of thinking to our core values. Instead of identifying where we want to be we clearly documented who we currently are. Growing up, my parents instilled the importance and necessity of having authentic relationships. Key word being authentic. Learning to value the person more than the project produces fruit whose seeds outlive you. For that reason, our first core value is ***Rooted in Relationships***. Remember, anything worth doing is born out of real relationships.

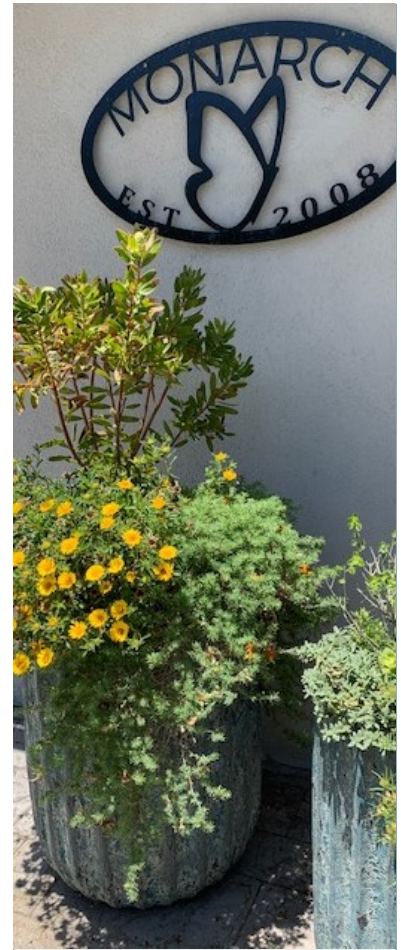
Once a relationship is well-rooted, collaboration begins. Harry Truman famously stated, "It's amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." This quote is a perfect segue to our second core value, ***Cultivating Collaboration***. Collaboration means to co-labor and/or work together. When we move from a single file line to a shoulder-to-shoulder approach, we begin to witness an exponential output by the newly formed team.

Monarch's third core value is ***Growth with Purpose***. Building healthy relationships and collaborating towards a common goal has only one possible outcome: growth. Growth with purpose implies pruning, care, intention, observation, risk, fun, and maintenance. Purposeful growth is not restricted to just top line sales. In fact, we are pursuing sustainable growth that has a positive impact on each other and the communities we serve.

On a personal note, I started Monarch because I love people and plants. I am truly blessed to continue a journey with an amazing team that has the amazing opportunity to accomplish both!

Matt Davenport

Chief Encouragement Officer



Growing towards a sustainable future.



Horticulture nerds have found a home at Monarch Environmental. Collaboration is key in all our efforts.

DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANT PALETTE

Our Mediterranean dry climate means that those tropical and water-thirsty plants and turf areas we love so much require more water to stay green and healthy. There are many colorful and vibrant options that can be installed in our communities that have a wide variety of interest throughout the year. Proper planning allows for the transition of plant materials to be a successful and enjoyable one!

Some Monarch favorites:



Chilopsis linearis (desert willow)



Phlomis fruticosa
(Jerusalem sage)



Russelia equisetiformis
(firecracker plant)

DROUGHT STRATEGY

Did you know that 100% of California is experiencing at least moderate drought?

Californians and much of the Western United States suffered a significant blow to our precious water supplies when drought conditions returned and took over this past fall. Our warm and cozy Mediterranean climate is the benefit of living in an area that has, and will continue to, experience frequent cycles of drought. Our current drought is rooted with our previous drought from 2011-2017 as our groundwater supplies never fully recovered, even though our reservoirs were brimming to the top. Our state's groundwater thirst can be seen as this year's snowpack that we count on as a "water bank" never flowed into rivers and streams as runoff, which would refill our reservoirs.

How can we mitigate the short-term and long-term effects of drought when it comes to our landscapes? Here are our practical strategies keep the landscapes we love while reducing the amount of precious water we are allowed to use.

Maintenance: Just like the homes we live in, the vehicles we drive and our own human body, irrigation systems need routine check-ups and maintenance. Even the most water efficient systems will break down and create large amounts of wasteful runoff without necessary repairs and proper irrigation programming maintenance. Now is the time to make those repairs that have been put off and to invest in an irrigation assessment to find out how all those small repairs equal big savings in water consumption and water cost!

Recycled Water Conversion: If recycled water is available in your area but your community is still using potable water, now may be the time to consider investing in a con-

version. The conversion process may be costly but the ability to use more water for your landscapes when calculated for a landscape-use irrigation budget will be advantageous in keeping your existing plants healthier and longer-lived than with potable water restrictions.

Irrigation Water Management: Investing in trained and certified professionals to proactively manage your irrigation systems and horticultural concerns help communities ensure that their specific landscape is watered for its exact needs given the weather conditions it experiences. You cannot manage what you cannot see, so irrigation flow meters are ideally installed to monitor the flow of irrigation water while in operation or while sitting idle. A flow sensor connected to a smart controller that is online can alert an operator to a minor broken sprinkler head as well as a catastrophic mainline failure. Certified Water Managers ensure that the landscape is watered appropriately, the irrigation equipment installed is operating properly, and every drop of water is used wisely, reducing consumption while maximizing irrigation operation and maintenance.

Smart Irrigation Technologies: Did you know that July has been known as Smart Irrigation Month in the landscape industry since 2010? Smart irrigation equipment includes the use of the latest technologies that have been designed for the efficient application of water to our landscapes. Rotary nozzles and drip irrigation was developed for agriculture where every square inch of fertile land is a commodity. As did our weather-based irrigation controllers. By treating our landscapes like "crops", we can maximize every drop of water is applied to watering our landscapes. No more, no less.

Cont'd

Hydrozones: Many communities invest in drought tolerant plants that will, or still do, share the same irrigation zone as turf or high-water-use shrubs that were removed. Not only do the plants sharing the same irrigation zone suffer from under- or over-watering, but this practice also saves very little to no water than before if watered to the original plant palette. By ensuring that your turf, shrubs, groundcovers, drought tolerant plants and trees are all on separate irrigation zones, all of these plants can be watered for their ideal watering amounts and frequencies which allow them stay healthy and thrive without the stress of over or under watering!

Any or all of the above recommendations will help your community keep your landscape looking good and thriving, even during drought conditions. Working with your landscape professional to plan for your community should be your first step in managing drought conditions.

Andrew Chase
Resource Management Consultant

REBATES

One benefit of our previous drought has been all of the rebates and services made available by our local water purveyors and municipal agencies.

From simple rotary nozzle rebates to complex weather-based irrigation controllers, spray-to-drip conversions and turf removals, there is a fit for every landscape situation.

There are millions of dollars available every year for conversion to more efficient irrigation equipment. Your community may be an ideal candidate for conversion! Monarch can help get you started or even oversee your rebate project.

There are millions of dollars available every year for conversion to more efficient irrigation equipment.

OBITUARIES

Drought and heat stress have more serious consequences than wilting flowers and brown lawns. Even plant species adapted for low water have a hard time coping with relentless dry periods that sap them of resources.



California peppers are NOT native to California! These Peruvian trees were planted by missionaries in the 1800's. We'll miss this imported beauty.

California pepper trees (*Schinus molle*) are a ubiquitous sight in our area. Unfortunately, drought stressed and dead *Schinus* are becoming ubiquitous as well!

Specimens at Hidden Hills in Los Angeles are suffering from extended drought, like this one at their iconic school house bus stop. This community is planning to increase species diversity along their parkways, a good strategy to avoid mass die-out in tough times.

We're excited to help choose species that are water-wise, sustainable, and majestic enough to do this landscape justice. Rest in peace, beloved peppers.

IRRIGATION FOR THE URBAN FOREST

- ◇ Perform regular irrigation audits! Don't wait for plant stress to let you know there's a problem.
- ◇ Be mindful of dry spells; hand-watering specimen trees may help if adjusting irrigation is insufficient
- ◇ Reduce turf around tree wells to prevent over-watering that may lead to root rot
- ◇ Trees do not enjoy direct water on their trunks. Bubblers will irrigate directly at the roots, saving water and promoting healthy trees.

WHAT TO PLANT?

The Orange County Fire Authority has a comprehensive list of plants approved for Fuel Modification zones in our area.

Monarch's top picks:

TREES

Arbutus unedo
(strawberry tree)

Cercis occidentalis
(Western redbud)

Lagerstroemia indica
(crape myrtle)

Quercus agrifolia (coast live oak)

SHRUBS

Aloe arborescens

Alogyne heugedii (blue hibiscus)

Cistus (rockrose)

Elaeagnus pungens
(silverberry)

Heteromeles arbutifolia
(toyon)

Rhus integrifolia
(lemonade berry)

Westringia (coast rosemary)

GROUNDCOVERS

Acacia redolens 'Desert Carpet'

Achillea (yarrow)

Arctostaphylos 'Pacific Mist' (manzanita)

Coprosma kirkii

Cotoneaster

Myoporum

Pyracantha (firethorn)

FIGHTING FIRE

Did you know over 4.2 million acres burned in California fires in 2020? This was our largest wildfire season on record!

- ◇ **Defensible space** is the area between homes (or other buildings) and naturalized landscape that is designed to slow the spread of fire by reducing the amount of fuel. This is "safe space" where firefighters can defend structures from encroaching fire.
- ◇ **Fuel Modification Zone** is an area that has been specifically modified to reduce fuel loads and fuel ladders. Orange County Fire Authority dictates guidelines on appropriate plant choices, spacing, and maintenance practices.

Prolonged, intense drought has made fire risk a top concern for the California landscaper. Temperatures are on the rise; trees and plants are drying out, leaving plenty of fuel for wildfires to consume, and our dry winds are perfect for fanning flames. Proactive communities are determined to meet these threats directly, taking control of their landscape and implementing practical mitigation techniques.

One such community that Monarch partners with is Foothill Ranch, a 2700-acre community located in Lake Forest, CA. This community is surrounded by miles of wilderness and naturalized landscape, beautiful and idyllic and acutely susceptible to wildfire. The efforts of dedicated community leaders, Monarch Environmental along with the onsite contractor O'Connell Landscape Maintenance, and the Orange County Fire Authority prepared the community to face the oncoming fire season.

Foothill Ranch has implemented an aggressive reforestation program over the past few years to minimize their fire risk. By removing old, combustible material and replacing it with fire-resistant selections, there is less chance of enabling fires to spread by eating through the landscape. The community also maintains a

full-time crew of defensible space workers, committed to keeping brush cut down around the perimeter of the community per Fire Authority recommendations. There are strict guidelines that landscapers adhere to in Fuel Mod zones, maintaining groundcovers and shrubs to specific heights, providing vertical pruning to prevent upward spread into tree canopies, and even spacing out groupings of larger plants depending on the angle of slopes. Incorporating a proper tree program of pruning and removals is key in main-



tained a healthy urban forest. A healthy tree population is one that has its best chance to resist fire.

Foothill Ranch was bordered by the Silverado Fire in October, 2020, which destroyed over 13,000 acres in the surrounding area. Burn areas are recovering in the perimeter of the community but thanks to diligent preparations the community itself was untouched.

The reduced fuel capacity in conjunction with proper maintenance techniques around the community slowed the fire down considerably as it approached the community, which in turn allowed fire fighters the time to suppress the fires without any property loss.

LIFE AFTER FIRE

Foothill Ranch is recovering from fire in the fall of 2020. In the naturalized exterior of this community, thousands of acres were destroyed and many trees were badly damaged. Oaks have emerged as the heroes of the fire resistant



landscape, many surviving despite serious burns. Wildflowers and native annuals were quick to return, erupting from the scorched landscape with less competition from old material or invasive species.

WHY OAKS?

One of the most beloved and iconic trees in our California landscape is the *Quercus* (oak). While not fire proof, its exemplary fire resistance is thanks to several biological adaptations.

- ◇ Tough, leathery leaves that burn slowly
- ◇ Thick bark helps preserve the vital interior materials that trees need to process nutrients and water. Even damaged trees can survive with a protective bark layer.
- ◇ Oaks with open canopies do not catch fire readily since there is less mass to fuel and spread fire

Foothill Ranch recovering from last year's fire season

MEET BRIAN FARIS

Senior CAPP consultant Brian Faris joined Monarch in 2019. While Brian acts as lead consultant on his portfolio of communities, he also supports all our CAPP consultants in big-picture planning and is our resident expert in fire safe landscaping.

Over the past 30 years, Brian's career has taken him down many avenues of the landscaping industry. He has owned multiple landscaping companies, focusing on residential and commercial installations and maintenance throughout Orange and LA counties. His work centered on prominent estates and homeowners' associations, and he is no

stranger to taking on large-scale projects from conception to completion.

Brian has worked on the Richard Nixon Library & Museum in Yorba Linda, was featured on PBS's *The Victory Garden*, and spent several years as the Operations Manager at Roger's Gardens in Corona del Mar.

When you don't see Brian scrambling up a slope or inspecting a fuel modification zone, he's most likely on a fishing or hunting trip or cruising on his motorcycle.



Bilingual English/Spanish



Residential and commercial landscape design expertise



Fuel Mod and fire safety expert!



PLANT PROFILE

ALYOGYNE HUEGEII

AKA Blue Hibiscus

- ◇ **HEIGHT** Can reach 6-8-feet tall but expect to prune it tighter for a denser growth habit; 6-8-feet wide
- ◇ **WATER** Medium water to establish, then low water. Alyogyne will not tolerate over-watering!
- ◇ **CARE** Leave it alone. Hard prune after flowering if you want to control the habit but otherwise feel free to ignore this one.
- ◇ **BLOOM** Year-round blooms in showy lavender-blue

FEATURES

- ◇ OCFA approved! This beauty is a fire-wise pick for your defensible space and fuel modification zones
- ◇ Evergreen, finely textured foliage. Dramatic in containers with a neutral background.
- ◇ Great in full sun but will also bloom in partial shade
- ◇ Drought and frost tolerant
- ◇ Australian native



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Rooted in Relationships
◇
Cultivating Collaboration
◇
Growth with Purpose
◇



DEAR MONARCH

Mysteries in the landscape? Let us answer those common questions and concerns in your community. Our digital library hosts PDFs on a range of landscaping topics aimed at educating homeowners. We supply simple answers, detailed horticultural facts, and Monarch tips to guide community managers and residents through everyday issues.

Dear Monarch,

Should I fertilize the plants myself? The leaves are yellow and look terrible!

Dear Concerned Resident,

Step away from the fertilizer! Your landscapers will apply fertilizers as needed at the appropriate time. Fertilizers should not be applied without a correct **identification** of the plant species and a **diagnosis** of what **nutrient deficiency** it may be suffering from. Fertilizers have specific temperature ranges at which they are safe and effective. Soil that is **too cold** will not prompt the chemical reactions needed to break down fertilizer so that it is available to plants. If it is **too hot**, plants will be stressed and may defoliate or burn. **This is a waste of time and money.**

Monarch Tip: Too much of a good thing? Excessive fertilizer can permanently damage or kill plants by drawing moisture from roots due to improper salt concentrations in soil, causing “burn.” Only apply as recommended by pro.

Visit our *digital library* monarchu.com/monarchu