



Fall Cleanup in the Las Flores Learning Garden water wise/low maintenance garden

Installed in November 2020 this is the first garden established by the UC Master Gardeners. The concept was to include plants that provide some kind of color all year round and that have very low water requirements but also require little maintenance. These fourteen plants fit the bill quite nicely and, after over a year, are performing beyond our expectations.

There are three trees in this garden. The Raywood Ash and the four Crape Myrtle trees were on the site when the garden was developed. Saving these trees shows that, when redoing or developing a landscape, you can save some of the established trees. The three Arbutus trees are new additions.

Fall cleanup of the trees:

The Raywood Ash

Requires little fall cleanup other than the raking up of the fallen leaves.

Leaving or removing the leaves is up to the gardener. The leaves provide natural fertilizer and mulch but can be unsightly and blow into walkways etc.

After those leaves have fallen we will check the tree for any dead or broken branches and remove those

Crape Myrtle

Prone to suckers at the base of each tree so our fall cleanup for those will be the removal of those suckers.

They will drop their leaves later in the winter which will need either removal or dispersal into the soil. Once the branches are revealed we can shape the trees.

Arbutus unedo

The bark of these trees exfoliates and there might be some fallen fruit at this time of year to be cleaned up but basically these trees require little fall cleanup. .

They are evergreen so will have constant leaf drop but not excessively so at any one time.

The remaining 11 plants and the fall cleanup we will be doing are as follows:

Little ollie olive

No fall cleanup, just general shaping in the spring to keep the desired size.

Pink muhly grass

No fall cleanup. The flower plumes are a fall feature and as they dry into the winter food for the birds. In late spring we will need to cut back the plants to 4 inches in a mounded shape.

Yellow twig dogwood

Deciduous so will require some leaf debris removal and, once the leaves all fall and the branches are visible, shaping will be done to keep the plant's height and width within our requirements.

Star jasmine

This plant has a vining growth habit and grows well in our designed 'banks'. In the fall the plants will require some shaping and removal of invasive tendrils that have invaded the neighboring plants to keep the plants in their desired locations. This shaping will also be required infrequently throughout the year to curtail that vining habit.

Kaleidoscope Abelia

This plant has a globular growth habit but does send out tall upward and long sideways branches from time to time that will need to be removed in the fall and infrequently throughout the year to keep that globular look in place.

Little Sur and Emerald Carpet Manzanitas

No fall cleanup. In fact these plants probably require the least maintenance in this garden. They are slow growing with a low and spreading growth habit.

Carpet Rose

The carpet roses are still leafed out and in some cases blooming in the fall so we will wait until late winter before pruning or cutting back these plants.

Red Loropetalum

No fall cleanup. We will do some infrequent general shaping to keep the desired size.

Meyeri Fern

Removal of dead branches is all that is required as fall cleanup for this plant. This plant requires little or no maintenance otherwise.

Little John Bottlebrush

No fall cleanup, just general shaping in the spring to keep the desired size

You can see that our selection of plants for the LFLG Low-water/low-maintenance Garden are well thought out and that the plants have provided excellent examples of low-maintenance plants. We would like to note that we are going for a more 'organic' look rather than a formal look. So when we do any pruning we reach into the plants to remove the shoots closer to the interior and or base of the plant. That way the plant doesn't look 'barbered'. The Muhly grass is the only exception as it requires a full 'hair cut' in the spring.

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