

Rancho Santa Margarita Landscape Maintenance Corporation

SAMLARC

Landscape Maintenance Best Management Practices

The Rancho Santa Margarita Landscape and Recreation Corporation, otherwise known as SAMLARC is a master planned community located in Southern Orange County at the base of the Santa Ana Mountains. The community has over 14,000 members living in three connected neighborhoods. The first of which is the Lake / Town Center Neighborhood which is named for the community's center piece, a 11 acre lake that contains a one mile walking path and its own swim lagoon. The Heights Neighborhood is named for its prominent elevation with home nestled in rolling hill side alcoves. The Golf Neighborhood is named due to its proximity to a 18-hole golf course and sits between two creek beds. The community maintains 11 parks, 3 Olympic size swimming pools and is interconnected by pedestrian friendly walkways and an internal trail system. Throughout the community over 350 acres of Mediterranean landscape are located along roadways, medians as well as slope areas. Since inception, SAMLARC has been leader in efficient landscape operations, being the first in the country to successfully implement performance based grant funding for a centrally controller irrigation system. Over the years, additional steps were taken to reduce green waste production by utilizing lawn mowing equipment that mulches clipping and through the use of landscape mulch. This regular installation of mulch has resulted in SAMLARC having a net zero impact at the landfill. These practices have helped reduce the need for fertilizers and herbicides in the community as well as helped enhance the areas soil fertility.

In an effort to continue the success of the various programs, the following Best Management Practices (BMP) below focus on utilizing the proper materials and their respective usage in the most efficient and safest method possible. The basic landscape components as listed below:

- Pollution Prevention
- Mowing, Trimming/Weeding, and Planting
- Irrigation
- Fertilizer and Pesticide Management
- Managing Landscape Waste
- Erosion Control

Pollution Prevention

Pollution prevention measures have been considered and incorporated in the BMP's. Implementation of these measures may be more effective and reduce or eliminate the need to implement other more complicated or costly procedures. Possible pollution prevention measures for landscape maintenance include:

- Choose low water using flowers, trees, shrubs, and groundcover.
- Appropriate maintenance (i.e. properly timed fertilizing, weeding, pest control, and pruning) will preserve the landscapes water efficiency.
- Continue to educate landscape staff on pollution prevention measures.

Mowing, Trimming/Weeding, and Planting

- Mowing, whenever possible, use mechanical methods of vegetation removal rather than using herbicides.
- Use hand weeding where practical.

- When conducting mechanical or manual weed control, avoid loosening the soil, which could erode into streams or storm drains.
- Use coarse textured mulches or geotextiles to suppress weed growth and reduce the use of herbicides.
- Do not blow or rake leaves, etc. into the street or place yard waste in gutters or on dirt shoulders. Sweep up any leaves, litter or residue in gutters or on street.
- Collect lawn and garden clippings, pruning waste, tree trimmings, and weeds. Chip if necessary, and compost or dispose of at a landfill (see waste management section of this procedure sheet).
- Place temporarily stockpiled material away from watercourses, and berm or cover stockpiles to prevent material releases to storm drains.
- Where feasible, retain and/or plant selected native vegetation whose features are determined to be beneficial. Native vegetation usually requires less maintenance (e.g., irrigation, fertilizer) than planting ornamental vegetation.
- When planting or replanting consider using low water use groundcovers.

Irrigation

- Utilize water delivery rates that do not exceed the infiltration rate of the soil.
- Use timers appropriately or a drip system to prevent runoff and then only irrigate as much as is needed.
- Inspect irrigation system periodically to ensure that the right amount of water is being applied and that excessive runoff is not occurring.
- Minimize excess watering, and repair leaks in the irrigation system as soon as they are observed.
- Where practical, use automatic timers to minimize runoff.
- Use popup sprinkler heads in areas with a lot of activity or where there is a chance the pipes may be broken.
- Consider the use of mechanisms that reduce water flow to sprinkler heads if broken.
- If re-claimed water is used for irrigation, ensure that there is no runoff from the landscaped area(s).
- If bailing of muddy water is required (e.g. when repairing a water line leak), do not put it in the storm drain; pour over landscaped areas.

Fertilizer and Pesticide Management

- Utilize a comprehensive management system that incorporates integrated pest management techniques.
- Removal of unwanted vegetation (weeds) shall occur in the manner determined by the Landscape Consultant and landscape maintenance vendor and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations
- Follow all federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing the use, storage, and disposal of fertilizers and pesticides and training of applicators and pest control advisors.
- Educate and train employees on use of pesticides and in pesticide application techniques to prevent pollution.
- Pesticide application must be under the supervision of a California qualified pesticide applicator.
- When applicable use the least toxic pesticides that will do the job. Avoid use of copper-based pesticides if possible.
- Do not mix or prepare pesticides or fertilizers for application near storm drains.
- Prepare the minimum amount of pesticide needed for the job and use the lowest rate that will effectively control the pest.

- Employ techniques to minimize off-target application (e.g. spray drift) of pesticides, including consideration of alternative application techniques.
- Calibrate fertilizer and pesticide application equipment to avoid excessive application.
- Periodically test soils for determining proper fertilizer use.
- Sweep pavement and sidewalk if fertilizer is spilled on these surfaces before applying irrigation water.
- Inspect pesticide/fertilizer equipment and transportation vehicles daily.

Scheduling

- Do not use pesticides if rain is expected within 24 hours.
- Apply pesticides only when wind speeds are low (less than 5 mph).

Disposal

- Purchase only the amount of pesticide that you can reasonably use in a given time period (month or year depending on the product).
- Triple rinse containers, and use rinse water as product. Dispose of unused pesticide as hazardous waste.
- Dispose of empty pesticide containers according to the instructions on the container label.

Managing Landscape Waste

- Compost leaves, sticks, or other collected vegetation or dispose of at a permitted landfill.
- Do not dispose of collected vegetation into waterways or storm drainage systems.
- Place temporarily stockpiled material away from watercourses and storm drain inlets, and berm or cover stockpiles to prevent material releases to the storm drain system.
- Reduce the use of high nitrogen fertilizers that produce excess growth requiring more frequent mowing or trimming.
- Inspection of drainage facilities should be conducted to detect illegal dumping of clippings/cuttings in or near these facilities.
- Materials found should be picked up and properly disposed of.
- Landscape wastes in and around storm drain inlets should be avoided by either using bagging equipment or by manually picking up the material. Also see Waste Handling and Disposal procedure sheet

Erosion Control

- Maintain vegetative cover on medians and embankments to prevent soil erosion.
- Apply mulch or leave clippings to serve as additional cover for soil stabilization and to reduce the velocity of storm water runoff.
- Minimize the use of disking as a means of vegetation management because the practice may result in erodible barren soil.
- Confine excavated materials to pervious surfaces away from storm drain inlets, sidewalks, pavement, and ditches.
- Materials must be covered if rain is expected.
- Limitations: Alternative pest/weed controls may not be available, suitable, or effective in every case.

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