

the dirt



SPRING 2025 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Discover your yardtopia™



Find your new beautiful in the backyard of your dreams.

Life often keeps us buried under to-do's, confined indoors and glued to screens. But what if a personalized oasis was just a few steps outside your door?

The Yardtopia™ Initiative is about transforming your backyard into the outdoor retreat you've always imagined—a place where you can unwind, gather with loved ones and embrace life beyond four walls.

Yardtopia is where you can expand your living area and where the joy of life can be celebrated.

At [Yardtopia.com](https://www.yardtopia.com), you'll learn simple yet sophisticated ways to plan and create a yard that reflects who you are. New inspirational images, project resources and step-by-step guidance are continuously being added to help beautify our little corner of the world one backyard at a time.

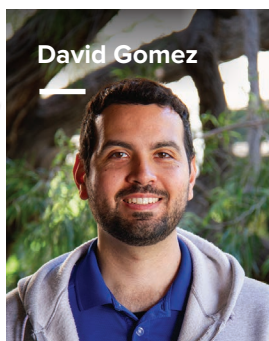
Whether you have a small patio or an expansive space, Yardtopia has ideas for all shapes and sizes, timelines and budgets. Create an outdoor retreat where your vibrant style is on display, personal touches celebrate time with family and friends, and every corner invites peace and revitalization.

Find your way to a new beautiful at [Yardtopia.com](https://www.yardtopia.com). Find yourself outside.



Pathways and pavers.

Create a flow and define spaces with these design ideas.



David Gomez

David Gomez | IRWD Water Efficiency Specialist

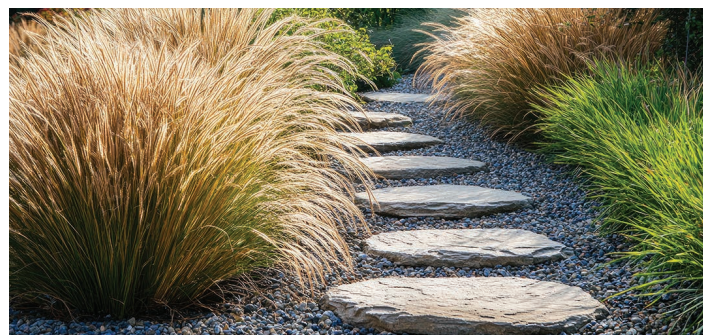
Drawing from his interest in nature and degree in landscape architecture, David Gomez educates customers on all things water efficiency and landscape design. “I’ve had my hand in all types of projects throughout California,” he said. “What inspires me most is the opportunity to create a lasting impact on my community.”

What can pathways add to a landscape design?

Gomez: They’re essential to ensuring accessibility, creating a sense of flow, defining important activity centers and adding visual interest through their shape and materials.

What are some key things to consider when planning a path in your yard?

Gomez: Define those important zones that link the elements of a garden, providing room to get in and out of those spaces, and designing each area as its own unique experience.



What are some of your favorite materials?

Gomez: Choose materials based on the desired aesthetic, traffic level, and maintenance needs. My favorites are natural stone, decomposed granite, permeable pavers and repurposed concrete. They’re durable and last a long time.

Any installation tips?

Gomez: Permeability is important for managing stormwater effectively. Install pavers or stone with 2 inches of space to allow water to penetrate between them, and don’t grout with cement, concrete or other impermeable material.

Bush sunflower,
Encelia californica

Find peace of mind with plants.

Create a zen-filled yard with blooms that inspire mindfulness.

It's well known that time outdoors improves mental health. Bring that sense of calm into your own backyard by incorporating plants that support mindfulness, meditation and healthy living.

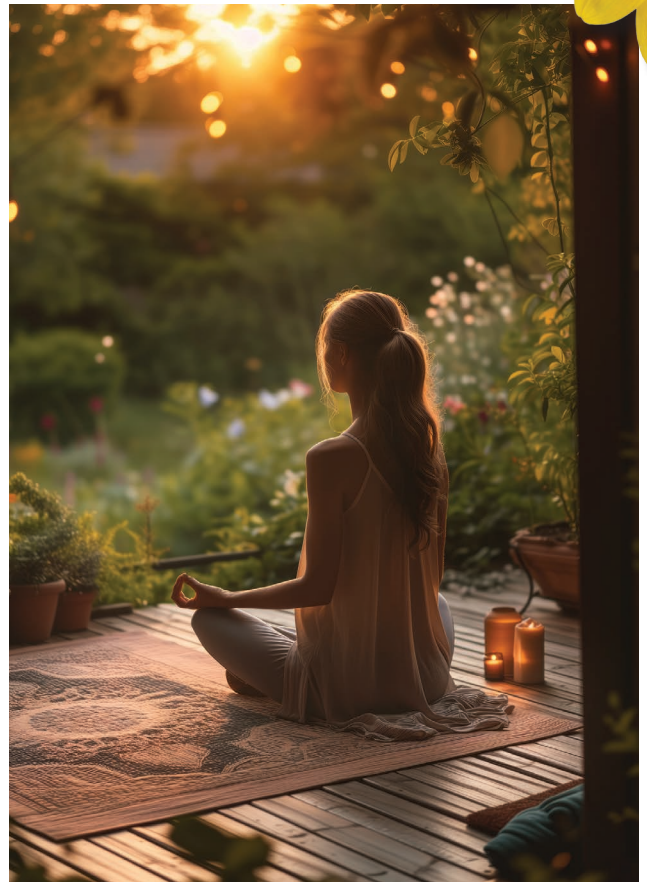
Be inspired by your senses when designing your garden, choosing plants that evoke harmony through smell, sight and sound.

Sense of smell is closely connected to the brain's emotional response center. Aromatic sages add freshness and serenity to your yard with subtle yet poignant scents. These drought-friendly plants improve mood, relieve stress and are easy to care for.

Soft neutral tones help us relax and quiet an anxious mind. Plant flowers that add comforting colors to your space with blooms in pastel blues, light purples, creamy whites and pale pinks.

Natural sounds promote restoration and well-being. Consider evergreen shrubs or trees that attract birds to enjoy the rustle of leaves and birdsong.

Let nature be your guide when seeking solace, and reap the benefits of a perfectly peaceful yard.



Peaceful yard plants.

1. Blue blossom ceanothus (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*)*
2. Black sage (*Salvia mellifera*)*
3. Coastal sage brush (*Artemisia californica*)*
4. Chaparral bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*)*
5. Sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*)*
6. Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)
7. Bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*)* – pictured above

*California native plants





Juan's tip of the season.

Prep clay soil for healthy plants.

Do you have clay soil? No need to worry. Clay is rich in nutrients and great for plants. But sometimes it gets compacted and needs a little help. Soil aeration is going to be key. Consider using a garden fork and trowel to aerate the soil to a depth of 6 to 12 inches to increase air circulation and root penetration. Adding organic matter such as compost and gypsum during this process can improve soil structure and drainage as well. Last, apply mulch to help retain moisture and reduce soil temperature.



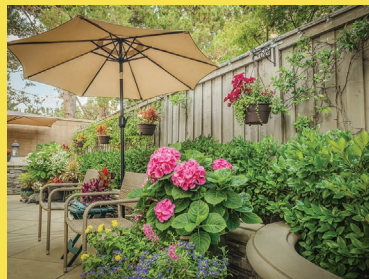
Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list.

- **Inspect:** Check plants for winter damage such as dead stems or branches. Look for any kind of pest issues such as aphids and snails. Mend fences and trellises.
- **Divide:** Divide and transplant perennials that have outgrown their space. This is the ideal time to do that if you want beautiful blooms in summer and fall.
- **Bulbs:** Once spring blooms have faded, remove spent flowers but don't cut back the foliage. Let the bulb dry naturally and then transplant.

Design your backyard oasis.

Imagine the possibilities as you plan a serene outdoor oasis right at your doorstep. Find inspiration and tips at IRWD's Designing Your



Backyard Oasis Workshop from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Saturday, May 17. Learn about the latest innovative trends in outdoor décor, and get started creating the yard you want to live in.

Sign-up required at [IRWD.com/events](https://www.irwd.com/events).

Tap our online resources.

Visit [IRWD.com/rebates](https://www.irwd.com/rebates) for rebates to help offset the cost of turf removal, weather-based irrigation controllers, efficient sprinkler heads, drip kits and more. Plus, check out our plant database at [IRWD.com/plantlist](https://www.irwd.com/plantlist).

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