

the dirt



WINTER 2025 GARDENING NEWSLETTER

Create a yard you want to live in.



Get tips and ideas from IRWD's new Shed Show episode.

Turning your backyard into the space you've always dreamed of is easier than you think.

In our latest episode of The Shed Show, IRWD's Juan Garcia will guide you through some simple steps to transform your landscape into a wonderful water-friendly retreat that you'll love spending time in.

Go to [IRWD.com/shedshow](https://www.irwd.com/shedshow) to watch the full 7-minute show, or click on short segments by topic:

Tip 1: Imagine life outside. Get quick design tips to transform your backyard into a personal paradise with features that fit your lifestyle.

Tip 2: Expand your living space. Create your home's best-looking room, on any budget. You can start small and level up later.

Tip 3: More time in your yard. If your backyard were just your style, wouldn't you want to spend more time in it? Discover family-friendly features for kids, pets and adults.




Tip 4: The pathway to success. Pull it all together with a few stepping stones or a walkway to create visual cohesion. Explore pavers, gravel, decks and other options.

Tip 5: Grow your own outdoor kitchen. Adding an

herb garden, veggies, or fruit tree is easier than you think. Consider raised beds, container gardening, and more.

Remember, even small changes can make a big difference.

Check out the videos, and get started on your own yardtopia today!



Harvest at home.

Start off small in a spot with ample sunlight.



Samantha Thomas | Owner, Harvest To Home

Her earliest memories are of working beside her father in his fruit orchard. Today, Samantha Thomas helps others create edible gardens of their own. "I love the idea of people growing their own food," she says, "not only for the health benefits, but to foster respect for the effort it takes to get organic produce to the store."

Do you need a big yard to plant an organic garden?

Thomas: It all depends on your expectations. If you want to stop going to the supermarket, yes. But if you want to supplement your meals, a 2-by-4-foot bed is enough to get started. Put it in an area with a minimum of six hours of sunlight a day.

What's a good way to get started?

Thomas: Start with an organic, porous soil, and pick maybe one herb and one vegetable you'd like to grow. If you pick too many, their unique growing conditions may become overwhelming as you learn. Always use non-GMO plants and organic fertilizers.

Any tips for a better yield?

Thomas: Try companion planting. There's a symbiosis between some plants where they help each other grow (like carrots and chives), or fight off pests (like broccoli and oregano). I recommend installing an irrigation system to make sure watering is consistent and frequent.



Harvest To Home promotes organic edible gardening with design, installation and maintenance services, and tips on preserving harvests to last through the year. They welcome questions from people interested in doing the work on their own. Call 949-

873-5400, email samantha@harvesttohome.com or go to harvesttohome.com.



Toyon, *Heteromeles arbutifolia*

Get half off irrigation repairs.

IRWD's 50% incentive will save you water and money.

A single household watering lawns with faulty sprinklers can waste up to 25,000 gallons of water a year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. That's 208,500 pounds of water—equivalent to about 17 elephants, 9 large school buses, or one blue whale!

Sprinklers are used less in the winter, making this an ideal time to apply for Irvine Ranch Water District's Sprinkler Repair Program. Once you're approved, we'll pay half the cost of your irrigation overhauls.

Here's how it works:

- Apply at IRWD.com/sprinklerrepair.
- Once, approved, schedule a site evaluation.
- Get your repairs done, and you'll pay for only 50% of the cost—we'll cover the rest.



FIX AND SAVE:
As much as 50% of water used for outdoor irrigation is wasted due to inefficient sprinklers.

This program is offered in partnership with Conserv Inc. to IRWD customers with no delinquencies on their water bill in the past 12 months. Repairs must be made on an existing, functional in-ground irrigation system, and customers must cover the \$137.50 cost of the evaluation.

Make the most of the rain. Landscape features store it in the soil.

With winter storms ahead, consider creating a stormwater feature in your yard to capture the rain before it flows into the gutter, stormdrains and out to the ocean.

Bioswales and dry creeks are both beautiful and functional, collecting runoff from your roof that can be used for your landscape.

IRWD also offers rebates on rain barrels, which store the water for potted plants and other hand-watering needs.

Go to IRWD.com/rebates and don't let this precious water go to waste!





Juan's tip of the season.

Prune your fruit trees.

Winter is a perfect time to prune fruit trees. Because they are dormant and have shed their leaves, it's easier to see their structure.

Apple and pear trees do well if pruned between November and March. Stone fruit trees such as peaches and plums bear fruit on the previous year's growth. Cut back that growth by one-third for a better harvest. Make sure your tools are clean and sharp, and be sure to remove the three D's—dead, damaged and diseased branches.



Looking ahead.

Your garden to-do list.

- **Turn off sprinklers:** Shut off your irrigation timer before and after rains, and dial it down to water no more than twice a week in winter.
- **Pull weeds:** Give your garden some TLC and pull those pesky weeds. It's not a thankless chore: Weeds rob your plants of nutrients.
- **Plant bulbs:** Bulbs planted now will sprout in early spring. Consider colorful daffodils, ranunculus, Spanish bluebells, grape hyacinth and lilies.



Stock up on mulch and save!

Go crazy with mulch this season and get 50% off your purchase, thanks to IRWD's Mulch Madness incentive program. Visit IRWD.com/mulchmadness for details.

Tap our online resources.

Visit 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.

Need to contact IRWD?

Customer Service: 949-453-5300

Email: CustomerService@IRWD.com

Website: IRWD.com

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