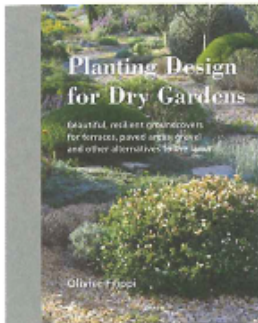




## Planting Design for Dry Gardens,

*\* Beautiful, resilient groundcovers  
for terraces, paved areas, gravel, and  
other alternatives to the lawn*

by OLIVIER FILIPPI, 2016  
FILBERT PRESS, 9.2 X 11.75 INCHES, \$55



FRENCH AUTHOR Olivier Filippi's new work, *Planting Design for Dry Gardens* is a big coffee table-sized volume. Prominently display this book in between serious reads of its vast amount of focused gardening information, observations, and recommendations that go way beyond just planting

design. This knowledge is based on Olivier and his wife, Clara's, 20-plus years of growing nursery plants, planting and maintaining gardens, and traveling the world's mediterranean climates observing gardens and landscapes in an impressive variety of settings.

Clearly, the book's mission is to educate readers to the important and beautiful alternatives to lawns in dry-climate regions. Filippi masterfully guides us to adopt appropriate groundcovers and other plants for a summer-dry, mediterranean-influenced climate.

Even if you garden in a region that could naturally support a lawn with rainfall, Filippi's many alternative garden approaches inspire change. In a summer-dry region, converting a lawn to one of his many captivating examples results in a water-conserving garden filled with visually dynamic plant combinations based on foliage texture, flower color, and height differentiation, and introduces beneficial plants to the landscape.

As Filippi explains, before irrigation technology, lawns were not a feature in early mediterranean gardens. Modernization caused an unnatural change. We learn that in the 14th century the word "launde" meant "untilled land or wasteland." And in the early days of English lawn cultivation, houses were skirted with grasses clipped by grazing livestock; further out,

the "launde" took over. Summer rains in the cool and temperate climate provided water. The first patented lawnmower came from the United States in 1868. By the end of World War II, with the use of 140,000 engine-driven mowers, the lawn movement gained momentum. By the 1970s, with millions of power mowers in use, lawns became a national obsession.

To direct us in the style and implementation of no-lawn or less-lawn garden alternatives, Filippi presents ten chapters, including "Green or flowering carpets," "Flowering meadows," "Flowering steppes," "Gravel gardens," and "Perennial and shrub groundcovers for large areas." The latter was of particular interest to me, as that style comprises much of our large garden at Sierra Azul. It describes appropriate shrubby plants that are not usually recognized as groundcovers, such as *Cistus*, *Euphorbia*, *Lavandula*, *Phlomis*, and *Salvia*. I was also taken by his extensive coverage of gravel gardens and plan to use this effective type of dry garden at the nursery. In "Planting and Maintaining the Groundcover Garden," the author covers soil preparation, planting, water use, and maintenance. The last chapter is devoted to the issue of garden escapees or invasive plants.

*Planting Design for Dry Gardens* proposes adding little or no summer irrigation after the first year of a new garden, which, ideally, was planted in the fall. However, examples are also given for dividing a landscape into zones with variable irrigation schedules. It is clear that Filippi is writing from decades of experience, not theorizing with his suggestions and descriptions. The fact that virtually all of the photographs were taken by him, and many are from his and Clara's garden, attests to this.

In the "Reducing Maintenance" chapter, Filippi details beneficial insects as well as pests, including fungi, harmful insects, and weeds. His intimate knowledge and observation makes you want to incorporate the plants and practices he supports to create a healthier, more efficient, and environmentally friendly garden.

The book concludes with an extensive section entitled "A-Z of Groundcover Plants for Dry Gardens." Several hundred species and varieties are described and rated. *Achillea*, *Artemisia*, *Cistus*, *Euphorbia*, *Lavandula*, *Origanum*, *Phlomis*, *Rosmarinus*, *Salvia*, *Stipa*, *Teucrium*, and *Thymus*

have the most entries, but additional genera and species and interesting varieties are included to attract even the most keen gardener or plantsperson. Before the bibliography and index, a "Useful Addresses" section provides contact information for the Mediterranean Garden Society as well as recommended United Kingdom and United States public gardens, and nurseries and seed suppliers for many of the plants described. Select garden designers in France are also listed.

Olivier Filippi, with the acknowledged support of Clara, has compiled an inspiring work on designing with appropriate and stylish plants to create water-conserving landscapes. He helps us understand the historical influence of the lawn-oriented garden and how it has shaped our landscapes for nearly the last two centuries, especially in summer-dry climates where many of us live. If we take this impressive work to heart and follow its examples, we can create environmentally beneficial gardens filled with foliage and flowers that also conserve increasingly important water resources.

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