

the most desirable fescue on the market. This is the most revolutionary turf we'd had in 30 years."

#### When In France

Like a lot of contractors, when Greg Vasilieff of Western Gardening in San Diego takes a vacation, he mixes a little business with pleasure. His design/maintenance company, with 50 properties throughout San Diego County, specializes in maintenance of very large properties, commercial and residential. Its flagship account is the Del Mar Hilton. "We maintain about 30 very large apartment communities in San Diego — all with extremely different wants and needs," he says.

Before he names his number one example of a sustainable landscape, he says, "Put on your seatbelt." He means that figuratively and because that's what he actually does when he goes to his favorite resort in the south of France: Santa Giulia. "I lived in France and studied French and went to University of Marseilles and I learned about the arid region and French landscaping," he says. "They study how to save and conserve water and fertilizer."

In Santa Giulia, the soil is rock hard, yet it's a beautiful landscape. They use plants that we see here: lantana, plum-bago, dwarf pink oleander and citronella geranium. And the result is a planned resort that looks completely natural. All the plants are drought tolerant, and the citronella geranium is the number one plant they use to deter mosquitoes, flies and even ants. The French have been using (that plant) for hundreds of years.

So, is there any turf at Santa Giulia? Yes, Vasilieff says. "The principal grass is St. Augustine, a very thick, dense, bladed grass. It does not require a lot of water. They use zero fertilizers, extremely small amounts of water. They are on a tiered hillside a couple hundred feet off the Mediterranean, some of the clearest, blue water in the world."

One of Western Gardening's largest clients is Wildflower Estates in Rancho Santa Fe. It's his number two example of a sustainable landscape. "It's a massive, 100-acre multihome community.

"The reason is simple, when we look for sustainable landscape, we look for plants that are easily maintained in the

environment. We didn't design it, but we helped with the installation, and they're still in the installation phase. We've been there for about three years. Escondido Creek runs through the community, and along the creek, the association has a one-acre lawn of St. Augustine grass. We water this lawn very little. Maybe in the summer, two days a week, five or 10 minutes. In the winter, we don't water at all."

Because Vasilieff is one of those landscapers who "lives to please his clients," so he puts in his share of turf. To compensate for water use, he is adamant

about aeration. "That's what I see as the number one problem. People don't aerate enough. We do some properties three times a year, where we can't water a lot. Achieving a sustainable landscape can be done, and because most clients demand a lush, green, lawn, it's up to contractor to change the irrigation to make it more user-friendly with less runoff. The bottom line is design and to create landscape for the climate and the region. If you do that you'll be on your way to a sustainable landscape."

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