

Zazueta Landscape Outlines Landscaping and Hardscaping Choices as Nonfunctional Turf Rules Phase In

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LOS ALTOS, CA - October 30, 2026 -
Zazueta Landscape is outlining how owners balance plantings and paving as California phases in limits on watering decorative lawns. The first phase of Assembly Bill 1572 starts January 1, 2027. The company?s resource on landscape grading notes that planted and paved areas both perform better on prepared ground.

According to the City of San Jose, the law restricts using drinking water to irrigate nonfunctional turf, meaning grass that serves no practical purpose for human activity or recreation. The statute does not require turf removal or specify replacement materials. Owners considering landscaping versus hardscaping can combine low-water plantings with paved areas.

The statewide ban generally applies to covered public properties on January 1, 2027; commercial, industrial, and institutional properties on January 1, 2028; and homeowners association common areas on January 1, 2029. The law does not cover individual residential yards, including those within homeowners? associations.

Artificial turf falls outside the law?s definition.

For properties receiving water supplied or managed by Valley Water, a separate ordinance already prohibits drinking-water irrigation of nonfunctional turf at covered commercial, industrial, and institutional sites, including HOA common areas. Drinking water may still be used where necessary to protect trees and other perennial nonturf plantings or address immediate health and safety needs.

Functional turf, such as lawns used for recreation or community gatherings, may still be watered with drinking water. Examples of nonfunctional turf include decorative lawns at commercial buildings and grass in medians or parking lots. Recycled water can still irrigate nonfunctional turf.

Valley Water runs a landscape rebate program that encourages Santa Clara County residents and businesses to convert lawns and pools to low-water-use landscapes. As of October 2026, the conversion rebate pays a base rate of $2 per square foot. Single-family sites face a default rebate cap of $3,000.

Under the program?s current requirements, permeable hardscape, such as pavers and flagstone, may cover no more than 50% of a converted area. That limit took effect on July 1, 2025. Artificial turf is not eligible for the rebate. To qualify for the landscape conversion rebate, plants from Valley Water?s approved list must cover at least 50% of the converted area at maturity.

Applicants must complete a pre-inspection and receive a written Notice to Proceed before removing any lawn or buying materials. Approved projects then have 90 days to finish the work. Valley Water lists program funding through June 30, 2027, or until it is depleted.

Zazueta Landscape describes hardscape as durable, weather-resistant elements such as concrete pavers and natural stone. According to the company?s service information, it also selects these materials to complement a home?s outdoor style. Typical projects include patios and driveways.

Softscape, in the company?s description, is the planted side of a yard, supported by irrigation and soil amendments. According to the same service information, maintenance for planted areas typically follows a recurring schedule after installation.

Retaining walls and paver paths are often integrated with planted areas in a single landscape design. The company notes that one retaining wall can combine several materials.

The City of San Jose?s guidance for businesses advises sorting turf into functional and nonfunctional areas before planning conversions. Zazueta Landscape also serves commercial clients, with work that spans maintenance and hardscaping.

For owners weighing landscaping versus hardscaping, the rebate rules and the turf law share a goal of reducing drinking water use. Only the rebate program, however, sets a ceiling on permeable paving. The company?s published materials say sound design accounts for climate and how a space will be used.

Zazueta Landscape is a family-owned company serving residential and commercial properties across the San Jose area and the wider Bay Area. Its hardscape and softscape work includes retaining walls and landscape lighting. In addition to ongoing maintenance, the company offers water feature and residential vineyard installations.

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Zazueta Landscape

Our team?s expertise, creativity, and dedication ensure each project reflects the client?s vision, while our integrity and personal approach build lasting relationships that extend far beyond the job itself.

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