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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Helix Water District Announces 2022 WaterSmart Landscape Contest Winner

What was once a thirsty lawn is now a peaceful, thriving, water-efficient paradise.

Helix Water District announced Nick Voinov as the winner of its 2022 WaterSmart Landscape Contest. The annual competition recognizes outstanding water-wise residential landscapes based on overall attractiveness, design, efficient irrigation and appropriate plant selection and maintenance.

Nick's natural and welcoming landscape represents over ten years of gardening and planting water-efficient plants. The landscape did not always look as bright and colorful as it does today. The front yard was once covered with a thirsty lawn. "I love plants, and found them more appealing than a lawn" said Voinov. "I thought it was a bit of a waste because I had to water it every day, and then once you mowed it, it was hauled off to the dump. It was like a crop that you grew and then threw away."

Nick started his new landscape by digging up his old lawn and composting it into the soil. He added nutrients to the soil by mixing manure from a local horse ranch. Once he prepared the soil and had an open canvas, he started planting. Now he has layers of succulents, drifts of flowering low water use plants and colorful trees that give the garden theme and consistency. Nick bases his design around maintaining a natural appearance to make the garden softer and more welcoming. Plants grow together and spillover walkways and walls, softening transitions and borderlines. "Succulents were my top choice of plants. People would give me clippings, and I love them because you can clip them off and start new ones. Anyone can do it. It's cheap."

Nick waters the landscape efficiently, too. He deep waters with sprinklers once every two weeks during the summer season. Letting the soil dry out between watering encourages plants to grow deeper roots and helps them access more water, maximizing irrigation. During the cooler months, the plants do not require any irrigation.

The landscape uses rainwater as a resource. The current rainwater catchment system can collect 700 gallons and refills after most storms. During large storms, Nick directs surplus rainwater to his fruit trees

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to maximize the amount of water that reaches his landscape. "I like to make things as efficient as possible. Rainwater is free, and if I can save and collect that water, I will."

With an efficient landscape, a rainwater capture system, and WaterSmart home habits like collecting and reusing shower warm-up water, Nick and his family of five use a maximum of 20 units of water each 60-day billing cycle. That is less than half of what a typical family of five with a similar-sized landscape uses. "I make a great effort with my family to conserve water because it is important to us. We know how precious water is in California, and I really wanted to see if what I do does make a difference."

Nick's landscape and low water use serve as an inspiration for a water-efficient lifestyle and demonstrate the beauty that WaterSmart landscapes offer.

Helix invited Nick to the district's board meeting on Wednesday, June 15, to recognize his work and receive his prizes — a \$250 gift card, a yard sign and an award certificate.

Photos of the Voinov yard will appear in the winner's section at landscapecontest.com, along with Helix's past winners and those of other participating local water agencies, and on the district's website at hwd.com.

The landscape contest runs from January through mid-May each year. Visit Helix's website at hwd.com, [Facebook.com/HelixWater](https://www.facebook.com/HelixWater) or Twitter at [@HelixWater](https://twitter.com/HelixWater) for more information.

Helix Water District treats and delivers water to 277,000 people in La Mesa, El Cajon, Lemon Grove and parts of Spring Valley, Lakeside and unincorporated San Diego County.





