



Helix
WATER DISTRICT

Setting Standards of
Excellence in Public Service

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FOR RELEASE

Helix Water District Wins Orchid Award for Demonstration Garden

The San Diego Architectural Foundation honored Helix Water District with an Orchid Award for 'Landscape Architecture' for its WaterSmart Demonstration Garden. The award was presented at the annual Orchids and Onions architecture and design awards gala last night.

"We are honored to be recognized for our WaterSmart Demonstration Garden," said Helix Water District Board President Kathleen Coates Hedberg. "This award is a testament to the fact that you can create thriving, sustainable gardens here in East San Diego County that are both beautiful and water efficient."

Helix installed its WaterSmart Demonstration Garden, located at its administration office in La Mesa, to beautify the neighborhood and inspire others to install water efficient landscapes. Outdoor water use typically accounts for half of a home's water use. Through planning and a vision for the community, the district was able to transform its tired and overgrown landscape into the thriving, lush and colorful gardens there today.

McCullough Landscape Architecture designed the garden to showcase three styles of landscapes that are adapted to the local climate and need half to a fifth of the water that a traditional lawn needs. The Mediterranean, desert and California-native gardens include plant markers with QR codes. Scan the code with your smartphone to see each plant's name, sun and water needs and mature size.

"Our demonstration landscape shows customers that water-efficient landscaping is not just one style," said Helix Water District Director Mark Gracyk. "You can choose plants that compliment your home and personal taste – there is an option for everyone."

A key requirement for the design of the gardens was that all of the plants selected had to be accessible to the public at local nurseries. The plants are grouped in hydrozones based on the

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amount of water they need and a drip irrigation system provides automatic watering based on daily weather conditions.

The architecture projects recognized as Orchids and Onions at last night's gala were nominated by the public, then reviewed and selected for awards by an esteemed jury of architecture and design professionals. Orchid award winners must exemplify good placemaking, add to the surrounding community's character, be skillfully and thoughtfully crafted, environmentally innovative and elicit a sense of civic pride.

The San Diego Architectural Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education and promotion of outstanding architecture, planning and urban design throughout the San Diego region.

Helix Water District is a local government agency responsible for tap water in San Diego's East County suburbs. The district provides water treatment for a population of 500,000 and distributes water to 277,000 people in La Mesa, El Cajon, Lemon Grove, Spring Valley and other unincorporated areas of the county. Helix is also a founding member of The Water Conservation Garden, a nearly six-acre water-wise demonstration garden located in El Cajon.

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High resolution photos available upon request.



