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Planning, Building & Environmental Services

1195 Third Street, Suite 210
Napa, CA 94559
www.countyofnapa.org

David Morrison
Director

Disposal Field Landscaping Guidelines

Although the question of ‘what do I plant over my disposal field?’ arises often, there are few hard and fast answers as to what can be planted, because every drain field is unique. Plants can help your disposal field to function at its best by removing moisture and nutrients from the soil. Plant cover is also important to reduce soil erosion. At a minimum the disposal field should be planted with a dense cover of grass to provide these important benefits.

The best choices for planting over disposal fields include shallow-rooted herbaceous plants, such as flowering perennials and annuals, turfgrass and many ground covers that are not excessively water loving.

Trees and shrubs are much riskier choices for planting on disposal fields. The woody roots of these plants are more likely to clog and damage drain lines. Be especially careful of water loving trees like willows, poplars and redwoods. Some smaller and less-aggressive woody species may be suitable for planting over the disposal field. Some possibilities include fibrous rooted shrubs such as boxwood or holly or small trees such as dogwoods. Be sure not to plant small trees and shrubs directly over a leach line.

Irrigation is one of the most important things to consider when landscaping your disposal field. Do not install subsurface drip or sprinklers on the disposal field. Water any vegetation minimally by hand or with a surface drip system.

The following plant list has been provided for guidance only. Please consult with a landscaper or local nursery for drought tolerant plants with non-invasive root systems.

Plant List

	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Color</i>	<i>Height</i>
Herbaceous Plants			
Achillea species	Yarrow	Y, W, R	12"
Arctotheca calendula	Cape Weed	Y	6"
Artemisia schmidtiana	Silver Mound	X	2'
Centaurea cyanus	Bachelor's Button	B, P, R, W	1' - 2'
Cosmos bipinnatus	Cosmos: Dazzler	R	3' - 6'
Cosmos bipinnatus	Cosmos: Radiance	Y	3' - 6'
Cosmos sulphureus	Yellow cosmos	Y	3' - 4'
Diplacus species	Monkey Flower	Many	1' - 3'
Dietes iridioides	Fortnight Lily	W	4'
Erigeron karvinskianus	Fleabane	W, P	1' - 2'
Eschscholtzia californica	California Poppy	O, R	1' - 2'
Festuca ovina glauca	Blue fescue	X	12"
Hemerocallis species	Daylillies	Many	1' - 6'
Lantana montevidensis	Trailing Lantana	R	1' - 2'
Lobularia maritima	Sweet Alyssum	W	6" - 12"
Myosotis sylvatica	Forget-Me-Not	B	6" - 12"
Oenothera species	Mexican Evening Primrose	R, W, Y	1' - 2'
Santolina species	Santolina	Y, W	1' - 3'
Stachys byzantina	Lamb's Ears	Pur	12"
Tropaeolum majus	Nasturtium	O, R, Y, W	12"
Verbena species	Verbena	Varies	1' - 3'
Zauschneria californica	California Fuchsia	R	1' - 2'
Bulbs			
Amaryllis belladonna	Naked Lady	P	3'
Crocasmia crocosmiiflora	Montbretia	R	2'
Iris species	Iris	Many	1' - 2'
Narcissus species	Daffodil	Y, W	1' - 2'
Tulip species	Tulip	Many	1' - 2'
Succulents and Herbs			
Many varieties to choose from; very drought tolerant			
Woody Ground Covers			
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi	Ground cover manzanita	W	1' - 2'
Baccharis pilularis	Coyote Bush	W	1' - 2'
Ceanothus species	Various prostrate forms	B	1' - 2'
Cotoneaster species	Various prostrate forms	R	6" - 12"
Juniperus species	Various prostrate forms	X	1' - 2'
Rosmarinus officinalis	Prostrate Rosemary	B	1' - 2'

Colors Key: B = Blue; O = Orange; P = Pink; Pur = Purple; W = White; Y = Yellow; X = Non-flowering