

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Drought-tolerant display seeks to save water

By NIYAZ PIRANI
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MISSION VIEJO — At a time when water shortages are rampant, one local homeowner's association is looking to be the inspiration for others to conserve.

The Mission Viejo Environmental Association, a homeowners association nearly 2,900 homes strong in nine areas throughout the city, recently planted its first drought-tolerant display at Antela and Voltana, off of Marguerite Parkway near Alicia Parkway.

Bemus Landscape, Inc., based in San Clemente, worked on the 6,000 square foot plot, removing turf and installing drought-tolerant plants starting two months ago at a cost of about \$6,000.

The idea came about when the water bill for the association reached \$440,000 annually, said Joe Zambito, a board member. Through a water conservation sub-committee, the water bill was reduced to \$287,000 using conservation methods, including timed and reduced watering and the planting of the display.

The goal is to show homeowners citywide that installing drought-tolerant landscape is low-cost and will save money on water bills later.

The installation is expected to save 111,000 gallons of water per year, Colin Bemus, president of landscape management for Bemus, said.