

SPEAKERS

Shelkie Tao, Water Efficient Gardens Valley Water Landscape Committee Chair

Shelkie is the owner and landscape designer of Water Efficient Gardens. After working in high tech for 10 years, she transitioned to landscape design. Her gardens are distinct for their native and pollinator-friendly plants, vibrant colors, and expertly crafted rain gardens.

Richard Santos, Vice Chair Valley Water Board of Directors

Vice Chair Santos is a native of Alviso, California and represents District 3. One could sum up his life and career through his service to both country and community. He served our country in Korea and served his community with the San Jose Fire Department and Valley Water. He was recently elected Vice Chair for 2025 for the Valley Water Board of Directors and has been the Board's liaison to the Landscape Committee since 2001.

Rita Chan, Valley Water Assistant Chief Executive Officer

Rita Chan serves as the Assistant Chief Executive Officer at Valley Water, bringing over two decades of experience in both engineering and law to the role. With a background that spans civil engineering at the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts and extensive legal practice—most recently as Senior Assistant District Counsel—she possesses expertise in capital project implementation and regulatory compliance. Currently, she oversees the Office of Integrated Water Management, where she directs strategic operations for dam safety, water supply, and flood protection. A registered professional engineer and licensed attorney in California, Rita holds a B.S. from UCLA, an M.S. from Stanford University, and a J.D. from Santa Clara University School of Law.

Ashley Shannon, Sr. Water Conservation Specialist, Water Supply Planning & Conservation, Valley Water

Ashley Shannon joined the Water Supply Planning and Conservation Unit over ten years ago and works with the team to provide water conservation rebates, programs, and education to Santa Clara County residents and businesses. She runs Valley Water's Landscape Rebate Program and Agricultural Mobile Irrigation Lab, as well as other programs. She also is an avid gardener and former landscape designer who enjoys sharing her knowledge with others.



Todd Lando
Central Marin Fire Department

Todd Lando, Battalion Chief, Central Marin Fire Department is a nationally recognized leader in wildfire risk reduction and community adaptation. With more than 34 years of experience spanning frontline firefighting, wind-driven wildfire response, vegetation management, and land-use planning, Todd brings a rare blend of operational fireground experience and environmental expertise to wildfire mitigation policy. He has played a central role in shaping modern defensible space and Zone Zero strategies, emphasizing home ignition vulnerability, ember resistance, and ignition-resistant design over landscape-scale suppression alone. Todd previously led Fire Safe Marin and Fire Safe San Mateo—among the nation's first Fire Safe Councils—helping grow Marin County into the most engaged Firewise USA® community in the country. He holds a degree in Environmental Studies and Urban Planning from Sonoma State University, studied Forestry and Wildfire Management at the University of Montana, and has worked extensively in GIS-based wildfire risk assessment and vegetation management. Todd has responded to many of California's most consequential fires, including the 1991 Oakland/Berkeley Hills Fire, the 2017 North Bay fires, and the 2018 Camp and Thomas Fires, experiences that continue to inform his science-based, prevention-first approach to wildfire resilience.



Ann-Marie Benz
California Native Plant Society

Ann-Marie Benz, Horticulture Programs Manager, California Native Plant Society, gets to spend her days supporting native plant communities and their people. She has spent her career serving landscapes and watersheds with nonprofits in California and Arizona. Ann-Marie holds a deep passion for plants and landscapes, having served as the Executive Director of ReScape California (formerly Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening Coalition), a nonprofit educating the large-scale landscape industry throughout Northern California on planning, constructing, and maintaining sustainable landscapes. Prior to that, she was doing watershed planning and riparian restoration for Prescott Creeks in Northern Arizona.



Adrienne Edwards
California State University Chico

Adrienne Edwards, PhD, Author, Faculty Lecturer, Herbarium Curator and Arboretum Chair at California State University, Chico is a botanist, plant ecologist, garden designer, and environmental consultant. She began her horticultural and botanical odyssey in the Southeast, spent time botanizing in the Midwest, and since 2006 has lived and worked in northern California. With over 35 years of experience teaching, researching, encouraging native plant design and consulting, plants continue to be her muse. In 2023, she published *Firescaping Your Home: A Manual for Readiness in Wildfire Country* with Rachel Schleiger, MS, through Timber Press.



2026 LANDSCAPE SUMMIT RESILIENT LANDSCAPES: DEFENSIBLE SPACE MEETS URBAN COOLING

Thursday, February 26, 2026
8:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Valley Water Headquarters, Board Room
5700 Almaden Expressway San Jose, CA 95118

Webinar will be simultaneously interpreted in Spanish.

AGENDA

- 8:30 AM** **Breakfast & Registration**
- 9:00 AM** **Welcome & Opening Remarks**
Shelkie Tao, Water Efficient Gardens
Valley Water Landscape Committee Chair
- Board of Directors Welcome**
Richard Santos, Vice Chair Valley Water
Board of Directors
- Valley Water: Planning for Sustainable Water Supply**
Rita Chan, Valley Water Assistant Chief Executive Officer
- Valley Water Programs: Overview & Updates**
Ashley Shannon, Sr. Water Conservation Specialist, Water
Supply Planning & Conservation, Valley Water
- 9:50 AM** **Break**
- 10:00 AM** **Zone Zero Guidelines and Updates**
Todd Lando
Battalion Chief and Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Specialist, Central
Marin Fire Department
- 10:40 AM** **Building Resilience: Native Plant Landscapes for Fire-Adapting
Communities**
Ann-Marie Benz
Horticulture Programs Manager, California Native Plant Society
- 11:20 AM** **Landscaping Paradigms, Fire Conservation, and Habitat**
Adrienne Edwards
Faculty Lecturer, Botanist, Ecologist, California State University, Chico
- 11:55 AM** **Break**
- 12:00 PM** **Speaker Q & A Panel**
- 12:35 PM** **Lunch for In-Person Attendees**

