Editor's note: This is the second in a series of three case studies that took place in San Francisco on urban ecology. Each of the properties needed fresh ideas to revitalize their landscape, while addressing problem areas. To read the first installment, visit www.lawnandlandscape.com and search for "Linda Novy."

CASE STUDY #2:

A NEW LOOK

Adding native plants to a courtyard between high-rises gives the property an ecological story and provides habitat for wildlife. By Linda Novy

The second property consists of two high-rise buildings, interconnected by a courtyard with planters on the ground level and two long balcony planters. The prior structure was a public works administration Post Office, built in 1939-1940 in the Art Modern style.

Now a modern office, retail and residential complex, the courtyard landscape consists of an interesting pattern of planters on structure. This area of San Francisco was originally part of the bay, surrounded by sandy cliffs, rocky bluffs, small estuaries and marshes, attracting a wide range of wildlife.

The property manager requested ideas to replace Camellia hedges in both balcony planters to eliminate vegetative debris, repair waterproofing, and change the spray irrigation to Netafim sub-surface tubing while creating a fresh look. Replacing mature Camellias with a lower planting would present a change for the tenants, but they seemed interested in habitat planting. I worked closely with my nursery consultant to identify plant types and availability. All of the chosen plant species are native in origin with the exception of Flax, used to enhance the architectural elements of the landscape design and to tie into the courtyard planting. The landscape contractor made a sun/shade study (which changes dramatically from summer to winter) that helped develop the plant palette. To boost the sustainability of the project, the plants' ability to spread and regenerate themselves was a selling point to the property management company. We knew, however, that some modifications should be expected over

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Large swaths of grasses, sedges, rushes and iris grew into a cohesive planting just six months after they were installed.

time as the landscape evolved.

While there is diversity in the plant palette, the large swaths of grasses, sedges, rushes, and iris are growing into a cohesive planting just six months after installation. These, plus groupings of native succulents, coral bells, Douglas iris and Yerba Buena, provide habitat, food and nectar for beneficial wildlife. California poppy is being seeded into various areas experimentally for additional pollinator support.

As the landscape matures, the maintenance team uses "adaptive management" in determining which plants need thinning, additional spot watering and infilling.

The landscape has created a new look for this property, one that tells an ecological story, and provides habitat for beneficial wildlife in San Francisco.

Plant palette, using 4 inch and 1 gal. **Plant material:** *Sedum spathulifolium* (Stone Crop), *Dudleya farinosa* (Live forever), *Iris douglasiana* (Douglas Iris), *Juncus patens* 'Elk Blue' (Gray Rush), *Carex praegracilis* (California Dune Sedge), *Festuca California* 'Serpentine Blue' (California Fescue), *Erigeron glaucus* 'Martha Roderick' (Seaside Daisy), *Satureja douglasii* (Yerba Buena), *Polystichum munitum* (Western Sword Fern), Heuchera 'Canyon Delight' (Coral Bells), *Tolmiea menziesii* (Piggy-back plant) and non-native *Phormium tenax* 'Duet' (Flax).

Property Management: CAC Real Estate Management Company
Landscape Design and management: Linda J. Novy & Associates
Landscape maintenance: Interior Plantscape Company
Netafim consultant: Bob Best, Netafim USA
Soil: Roof mix with organic amendment
Nursery Consultant: Jim Dreer, Sweet Lane Nursery
Seed supplier: Pacific Coast Seeds