

THE WATER COOLER

...an environmental conversation

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Calendar of Events Happenings-Celebrate & Learn

January

Benjamin Franklin's Birthday

January 17

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

February

Bird Feeding Month

www.birdfeeding.org

The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13-16, 2009

www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

Engineers Week

February 15-21, 2009

www.eweek.org/home.aspx

March

5th World Water Forum

March 16-22, 2009

www.worldwaterforum5.org

World Water Day

March 22, 2009



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Let it Rain - Let it Rain

Winter rains are here. Rain that runs over roofs, driveways, and sidewalks carry pollutants such as fertilizer, oil, pesticides, and pet waste into storm drains and eventually into the nearest stream or Sacramento River. But you can make a big difference and become the pride of your neighborhood by putting in a Rain Garden. You will help improve the environment and the quality of water for yourself, your neighbors, and the native wildlife.

Rain Gardens are natural or built depressions in the landscape that divert rain water to your landscape. A rain garden is a natural filtration system that filters out pollutants, sediments, and debris, essentially cleaning the runoff and recharging our aquifers. The best rain gardens are those which utilize California native vegetation - a variety of grasses, sedges, ferns, shrubs, or even trees. These plants are chosen for their ability to take in and store water and withstand drought. Rain gardens also clean the water of nutrients and poisons that fill our lawns and gardens.

So how do you get started? Begin this winter by thinking about your landscape and identifying an area that may be suitable to convert into a rain garden. You can easily build one by using or digging a low area in your landscape at least 10' from the house or garage to avoid infiltration into the foundation. Avoid any area above your septic system.

The deepest portion of the rain garden will be at least 12" below the level of the surrounding land. If you have a primarily clay soil you can amend it with compost and topsoil. Place plants with a higher water tolerance at the bottom as this will be where most water collects. Dig a shallow channel from your downspout to your rain garden and line it with river rock to help guide rain where you want it to go, or install a four-inch drain pipe to divert the water. If you take care in choosing plants, your rain garden will attract birds, butterflies, and bees, and will reduce pollution by up to 90%.

To help with plant selection, consider these California natives:

Wildflowers, ferns, grasses and sedges:

Columbine
Elk clover
Pipevine
Umbrella plant
Tower delphinium
Pacific bleeding heart
Stream orchid
Leopard lily
Scarlet monkeyflower
Primrose monkeyflower
Coneflower
California polypody
California black-flowering sedge
California gray rush

Trees and shrubs:

Western spicebush
Hazelnut
Wax myrtle
Ninebark
Freemont cottonwood
Yellow tree willow
Red-flowering currant
Salmonberry
California huckleberry
California fan palm

For more information, visit:

www.rainKC.com , www.native.raingarden.com , www.raingardens.org , or
www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/index.htm

Please Remember!

Flower and Vegetable Gardens
~ Rake winter leaf mulch back onto beds if winds blow it off.
~ Weed beds to prevent weeds going to seed.

Tree and Shrub Beds
~ Prune fruit trees and other woody trees and shrubs while they're dormant - December through February.

Lawns - Winter is the Time to Plan for Spring
~ Tune up yard equipment; sharpen mower blades.
~ Plan drip irrigation or soaker hoses for beds and containers to conserve water.
~ Check storage areas for unwanted chemicals and dispose of safely.
~ Plan to replace plants that have disease or pest problems.
~ Minimize yard waste by composting and "grasscycling."

Watering
~ Let Nature do the work!

Wildlife
~ Don't forget the birds! If you feed birds during the warmer months, remember that they need food during winter as well.

Remember the Four R's:
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rebuy

What in the World?

The idea of rain gardens was conceived in Maryland in 1993 as part of Low Impact Development. Since then, the rain garden movement has garnered support around the world. In 2005, Kansas City, Missouri citizens launched the "10,000 Rain Gardens" initiative. Coca Cola in Kentucky, Ingersoll Rand in North Carolina, and Black & Veatch in Kansas City all designed rain gardens at their facilities for onsite stormwater detention. India recently announced plans to convert 2,000 acres of land at the international airport near Shamshabad into rain gardens. It's all about water and the future is clear - every drop counts!

Did You Know?

A typical city block is comprised of approximately 75% impervious surfaces such as sidewalks, driveways, roofs, and streets. More than 50% of rainfall onto these areas will become runoff - sending pollutants such as oil, metal, and pesticides into storm drains. This runoff is untreated and will enter local waterways and eventually, the ocean. Researchers have found that urban rain gardens can effectively filter significant amounts of nitrates, ammonias, phosphorous, and other pollutants. In addition, rain gardens that allow polluted rainwater to pool at the bottom permitted bacteria in the soil to convert harmful nitrates into nitrogen gas, preventing them from entering the groundwater. Rain gardens can work year-round and be designed as a focal point in your landscape. Beautiful and functional!

Build Your Own Rain Barrel

A great way to recycle rain water is to capture it in a rain barrel and utilize it later. Rainwater is clean, naturally soft, and free! Unfortunately, rain barrels can be expensive, some costing up to \$250.00. Here is an idea for building your own:



Materials:

- 1 - 35-gallon heavy-duty round trash can with lid
- 1 - $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hose bib faucet
- 2 - galvanized steel washers to fit the bib
- 1 - PVC nut to fit the nipple of the bib
- 1 - washing-machine hose
- Piece of window screen or plastic mesh
- 1 - tube silicon rubber sealant
- 1 - wire coat hanger

Total cost:
About \$30.00

Instructions:

- Cut your downspout, leaving enough length to fit through the lid.
- Place barrel under it and mark around it for the tip hole.
- Cut the hole on the lid with tin snips or a knife to fit your downspout.
- With a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch hole saw, drill the drain hole 2 inches above the can bottom.
- Place a washer on the bib nipple, install through the hole and add the second washer inside.
- Screw securely with the nut, placing the spout at a right angle.
- Glue around both washers with silicon and install washer hose.
- Drill three $\frac{3}{4}$ inch holes in the lid.
- Spread silicon around them on the underside and install squares of screening or plastic mesh.
- Allow silicon to dry for 24 hours.
- Form a double hook with coat-hanger wire to fit under the lid and store the hose.
- Attach the lid to the downspout and then to the can.
- Use the washer hose to fill a watering can or attach to a garden hose.

