

For Eye on the Environment 8-16-15

Capturing That Free Stuff Falling From the Sky

By David Laak, Water Quality Planner

Around Ventura County, we've almost forgotten what it looks or even feels like, but the wet stuff that falls from the clouds (most recently in very limited amounts) is called rain. As we've all learned, this free water is extremely valuable during these dry times and it's up to each of us to maximize its use to benefit our yards, natural habitats and watersheds. Everyone likes free stuff, right?

With the ongoing drought now in its fourth year and with restrictions on water usage being enforced around the County plus the possibility to receive cash rebates for lawn removal, the news is everywhere... now is the time to take that next step and transform your traditional thirsty turf grass yard to an Ocean Friendly Garden. In addition to lowering your water bill, an Ocean Friendly Garden helps to reduce urban stormwater runoff, which is the major source of ocean pollution. The garden also makes a beautiful habitat for hummingbirds, butterflies and other critters to visit and even hang out for a while.

What is an Ocean Friendly Garden? The Surfrider Foundation outlines the principles of an Ocean Friendly Garden as C P R, Conservation, Permeability and Retention. Conservation refers to saving water and wildlife habitat by planting native or climate appropriate plants. Permeability refers ways water can be directed into the soil, and through the ground into aquifers, rather than ending up as runoff in storm drains. Retention means using rain on site as a source of irrigation.

There are many examples around the County where these gardening principles and methods have been implemented, and soon, at the Ventura County Government Center, outside of the Hall of Justice, the public will have an opportunity to learn more.

The County of Ventura and the Green Gardens Group, Inc. (G3) are holding five free Ocean Friendly Garden Seminars/Hands-on-Workshops at the Ventura County Government Center, starting with the first Watershed Basics Class on Saturday, September 12th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Pacific Conference Room (adjacent to the cafeteria). The workshops focus on the following: watershed basics, site evaluation, site design, turf removal, grading for rainwater capture, planting and irrigation.

Split between two in-classroom seminars and three hands-on-workshops, these five workshops will give you all the information you need to successfully implement the ocean friendly approach on your own property. The site-design class on October 10 allows you to bring your own site plan and design to a professional for review and guidance on plant selection and strategies for overcoming common obstacles. The hands-on-workshops give you an opportunity to get your hands dirty and learn the secrets of how to properly prepare your soil to maximize infiltration and ensure healthy, happy plants.

The culmination of these classes and workshops will be valuable principles that can be applied to your own yards, no matter how big or small. With the forecast for above normal rainfall this upcoming winter, make it a goal to retain as much of this free precious resource as possible on your property to keep those native plants watered during dry times while allowing it to naturally infiltrate back into the ground.

Space is limited for these free workshops so please visit <http://www.watershedwisetraining.com/class-calendar/> to register and for more information.

Keeping an eye on the environment and also toward the sky to look for ways to maximize the use of that free water dropping from the clouds will not only lower your water bill and conserve one of our most precious resources, but also reduces harmful pollutants from running off your property and ending up in our creeks, streams, rivers and ocean. The visiting butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees will all thank you.

On The Net:

<http://www.watershedwisetraining.com/class-calendar/>

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