



A Community Newsletter from the Contra Costa Water District | Volume 16, Number 3, Fall 02



PHOTO BY STEPHEN JOSEPH

CCWD Teaches Students about Water Quality, Conservation and the Environment

The Contra Costa Water District offers schools in its service area an array of educational opportunities focused on water, the environment and how conservation and environmental stewardship can improve everyone's quality of life.

The programs are free and include transportation when needed. School principals and teachers who want to sign up for the programs or receive more information can visit our web site at ccwater.com, call Marianne Hook at (925) 688-8307 or e-mail mhook@ccwater.com.

Here's more information about CCWD's educational programs:

The Watershed Connection

Field trips to the 18,500-acre Los Vaqueros Watershed just south of Brentwood are offered to teach students about the relationship between a healthy environment and clean, safe drinking water. Hands-on programs are available for students grades 3 through 6.



Delta Dawn! An Assembly Theater Presentation

This fun and engaging assembly theater program explores the role of water in our lives. Students and teachers interact with the performers as they gain a better understanding of their local water resources: the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the Los Vaqueros Watershed. This assembly program always gets students and teachers laughing and learning. To schedule, call Earthcapades at (415) 273-1091. For grades K through 6.

Water, Water, Everywhere! A Classroom Presentation

Each year, CCWD teachers visit dozens of elementary school classrooms with a one-hour presentation covering the water

cycle, the properties of water and the importance of water conservation. The presentation is interactive and includes the use of a miniature filter that shows how water is filtered at our treatment plants. Adaptable for grades 2-5.

Canal Safety Assembly Program

Each Spring, CCWD Canal Safety Officers visit schools that serve areas near the Contra Costa Canal to remind students to stay safe and stay out of the canal. This program reaches thousands of students of all ages with this important safety message each year. For grades K through 6.

Discover Your Water Treatment Plant

Students learn how water is made safe to drink by visiting one of our state-of-the-art water treatment plants. Tours cover the filter and treatment process, water cycle and the properties of water. Field trips are offered to students in grades 4 through 6.

The Research Vessel Brownlee

Classroom science lessons come alive for fifth graders on the RV Robert G. Brownlee. This 90-foot-long research vessel was custom built in 1998 to provide a safe and stable floating laboratory for students. The ship is owned and operated by the Marine Science Institute in Redwood City, and the program is sponsored by the Mount Diablo Unified School District and CCWD.

To schedule a class of fifth-graders from the CCWD service area, teachers or principals can call Kathy Sanders at the Mt. Diablo School District at 682-8000, ext. 4042. Or e-mail sandersk@mdusd.k12.ca.us.

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The Contra Costa Water District provides water to 430,000 Contra Costa County residents. Approximately 220,000 residents in Clayton, Clyde, Concord, Martinez, Pacheco, Pleasant Hill, Port Costa, and Walnut Creek receive water that has been treated by a District water treatment plant.

The other 210,000 are served by local water agencies that receive raw water from CCWD, then treat, distribute and bill for it themselves. These agencies are City of Antioch, City of Martinez, City of Pittsburg and the California Cities Water Company (Bay Point). Oakley residents are served by a jointly owned CCWD/Diablo Water District treatment plant.

Plan Now for a Waterwise Landscape



Cooler temperatures and shorter days make fall an excellent time of year for planting shrubs and trees in your garden. When planted in the fall, your plants have plenty of time to develop an extensive root system over the winter and early spring, when rain is abundant and the upper portion of the plants are dormant.

Before you run to the nursery and spend lots of money on new plants this fall, spend some time planning your garden to ensure that it saves water by making wise use of native and drought-tolerant plants, as well as an efficient irrigation system.

If you are not starting from scratch, an old landscape can be easily renovated to make it less thirsty. Take a careful look at your existing landscape and identify which plants are drought-tolerant. If you have drought-tolerant plants mixed with thirsty plants, you can replace the thirsty ones with drought-tolerant ones so that the entire area can be watered less frequently. This practice – grouping plants with like water and sun needs – is called hydrozoning. Not only does it conserve water, it reduces the possibility of over-watering and ensures that all plants in your landscape get the right amount of water and stay healthy.

Another way to greatly reduce your water use is to reduce the size of your lawn or eliminate it. A wooden deck or brick patio is an attractive, useful alternative to a lawn. Drought-tolerant groundcovers are another good alternative to lawn.

When planning a new or renovated landscape, here are some things to keep in mind:

Hydrozone the Landscape: Group plants with similar water and sun needs into zones. This avoids water waste and ensures that every plant stays healthy.

Establish a Generously Sized Low Water Use Zone: This is the area of lowest water need. It might take up to two years to establish, but once established, it will require very little water. This is a good zone for most of the yard. Plants that thrive in this zone include manzanita and lavender.

Create a Moderate Water Use Zone: This area should consist of plants that need about half the amount of water needed by lawns. Good plants for this zone include agapanthus and escallonia.

Keep the High Water Use Zone Small: This is the place for your thirstiest plants. It usually includes lawn, annuals and vegetable gardens.

Limit Lawn Area: Lawns use a great deal of water and require lots of attention. In an arid climate such as ours, it makes good sense to keep lawns small or eliminate them. Building a deck or patio is reduces your lawn area and gives you an outdoor living space for lounging and entertaining.

Inform Yourself: Check out the websites listed in the box for more information before you start shopping for plants or digging up your yard.

Recommended Plants for Waterwise Gardens

Here is a list of some of the plants, shrubs and trees CCWD recommends for a waterwise garden. For a complete list, check our website at www.ccwater.com or call (925) 688-8320.

Groundcovers

African daisy (*Osteospermum fruitcosum*)
Aptenia (*Aptenia cordifolia*)
Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.)
Juniper (*Juniperus* sp.)
Lantana (*Lantana* sp.)
Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* sp.)
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
Sedum (*Sedum* sp.)
Verbena (*Verbena* sp.)

Ornamental Grasses

Blue fescue (*Festuca ovina glauca*)
Blue Oat Grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)
Feather Grass (*Stipa* sp.)
Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis acutifolia* "Stricta")
Black Pennisetum (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)

Perennials

Agapanthus (*Agapanthus* sp.)
Aloe (*Aloe* sp.)
Coreopsis (*Coreopsis* sp.)
Gaillardia (*Gaillardia grandiflora*)
Ivy Geranium (*Pelargonium peltatum*)
Lavender (*Lavendula* sp.)
Mexican Daisy (*Erigeron karavinskianus*)
Yarrow (*Achillea* sp.)

Vines

Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)
California Wild Grape (*Vitis Californica*)
Morning Glory Vine (*Merremia aurea*)

Shrubs

Artemisia Powis Castle (*Artemisia Powis Castle*)
Barberry (*Berberis* sp.)

Learn more about waterwise landscaping by checking out these websites:

www.ccwater.com/conservel/:

Contra Costa Water District

www.sunset.com: Sunset Magazine

www.support.net/medit-plants/:

The Mediterranean Garden Society

www.ruthbancroftgarden.org:

The Ruth Bancroft Garden

www.gardenweb.com: Garden Web

<http://ccmg.ucdavis.edu/>:

Contra Costa Master Gardeners

www.happygardener.com:

The Happy Gardener

GARDEN TIP

Adjust Your Timers

If your irrigation system is on an automatic timer, fall is the time of year to adjust the timer so that the system comes on less often. When the winter rains begin, turn the system off completely. Lawns, trees and landscaping require little or no irrigation during the winter.

Volunteer at Los Vaqueros

Would you like to meet new people, learn about water quality and the environment, and have fun? Try volunteering as a docent at the newly built Los Vaqueros Interpretive Center, an educational facility dedicated to teaching the public about the Los Vaqueros Project and Watershed. Activities may include greeting and assisting the public, conducting or assisting with educational programs, and occasional light office work. The Center is located on Walnut Boulevard, about 9 miles south of Brentwood. For more information, call Gina Oltman at (925) 688-8010 or check out the Contra Costa Water District web site at www.ccwater.com.

Need a Speaker?

Need a speaker for a meeting of your service club or other organization? The Contra Costa Water District provides expert speakers on a variety of water-related topics ranging from conservation at your home or business to updates on current CCWD water quality projects. For more information, call Jim Freschi at (925) 688-8175, or sign up on our website at www.ccwater.com.