

THE GARDEN SPRINKLER

Spring 2010

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION BY THE WATER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY



Get water wise at the Water Smart Plant Fair!

5th Annual Water Smart Plant Fair, 17th Annual Spring Garden Festival Help Quench San Diego's Thirst

By Elizabeth Ramos

East County's most popular spring gardening events are at it again, quenching San Diego's thirst for drought tolerant gardening advice, beautiful plants, and family-oriented fun. Water smart landscaping practices demonstrated at both of these events aim to keep southern California hydrated by lowering the amount of water used in the landscape by up to 50%. Conservation education has never been so much fun, and although both events have a lot in common—plant sales, gardening advice, children's activities, and free parking—each event's unique offerings make coming to both worthwhile.

At the Water Smart Plant Fair on March 20, 9am-3pm, the Garden and many vendors will sell a diverse selection of beautiful, drought tolerant species; at the Spring Garden Festival on April 24, 9am-4pm, the Cuyamaca College Nursery will present its biggest plant sale of the year. At both events, water agencies will give updates on the water situation and provide information about financial incentive programs to support your water smart lifestyle. You'll also find the delightful Ms. Smarty Plants with her Magic of Water show, and Air Superiority's beautiful birds of prey.

Visit the Plant Fair for information about entering the California Friendly Landscape Contest, and for informative talks, including "The Protea Species: Exotic Options for Drought Tolerant Gardens", by Walter Parkola, and "Greywater to Garden: How to Install a Washing Machine Greywater System", by Candace Vanderhoff. The Solana Center for Environmental Innovation will sell compost bins, and landscape design professionals will offer personalized, 20-minute consultations for just \$20. Admission to the Plant Fair is \$3. Garden members and children under 12 receive free admission.

"Conservation in Bloom" is the theme for this year's Spring Garden Festival. With our partners, Cuyamaca College and the Heritage of the Americas Museum, we'll feature a Conservation Courtyard with information on green living from experts across the County. Visit the Garden's Water Smart Plaza to see the latest in water smart gardening technology.
(cont. on Page 2)



Saturday, April 24, 2010
9am-4pm
Cuyamaca College
www.cuyamaca.edu/springfest



The Water Smart Pipeline

Free gardening advice from renowned gardening author Nan Sterman
Tuesdays 8:30 am-12 noon and Thursdays 1-4 pm
Call 1-866-962-7021 or email pipeline@thegarden.org



Executive Director's Report

by Marty Eberhardt

Here at the Garden, 2010 has dawned as the Year of Transition. In January 2011, a new nonprofit board, the Friends of the Water Conservation Garden, will begin to govern the Garden. Our current governing board, the Joint Powers Authority (JPA), composed of the San Diego County Water Authority, the Helix Water District, the Otay Water District, the City of San Diego, the Sweetwater Authority, and the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, will contract with this new nonprofit board to operate our organization.

This is all part of a new governance model for the Garden which grew out of a strategic planning process last summer. All parties in the planning process recognized the need to streamline the Garden's current governance structure. Currently, as a public agency, we must abide by all of the rules and regulations necessary for a much larger public organization, such as a water district. The JPA Board is composed of public officials who make policy, but do not raise significant funds for the Garden from non-JPA sources. However, in order to operate successfully, the Garden must and does raise significant funds outside of JPA contributions; last fiscal year, these funds accounted for 41% of the Garden's operating budget.

The Garden's approved new governance model combines strong, continuing financial support of the JPA agencies with a new management and fundraising structure that will allow us to meet the growing needs of those who are seeking education about water conservation. As I write this, we have just hired our first development director, with funds generously provided by the San Diego County Water Authority. (See the article in this newsletter about May Harris). In addition, Friends Board president Michael Grisdale is actively interviewing potential board members to assume responsibility for nonprofit board governance of the Garden starting in 2011. If you are interested in joining the Friends Board, or you have a candidate to suggest, please contact him at mgrisdale@sbcglobal.net.

Transitions are sticky and full of details, and it's not easy to make fundamental changes to an organization with such well-developed operations, programs and facilities. However, all parties intimately involved in this process – the JPA Board, the incoming Friends Board, and the staff – are committed to making this process work, and work well. With so much good will and brain power behind this transition, we are confident we will be able to continue to grow far into the future.

Water Smart Plant Fair and Spring Garden Festival (continued from Page 1)

The Spring Garden Festival will feature our popular "Ask the Experts" areas with information on tree care, compost, veggie gardening, and landscape design. Reserve your personal landscape consultation at either the Plant Fair or Spring Garden Festival by calling 619-660-0614 x10 before each event (\$20 Non-Members, \$15 Members), and bring a photo of your yard for feedback. The Spring Garden Festival will also include live flamenco music by Novamenco, delicious food, artisans, and the grand opening of the Garden's amphitheater shade structure. For details on the exciting program at the Heritage of the Americas Museum, including the contest rules for Artifacts Alive!, visit www.cuyamaca.edu/museum. Visit www.cuyamaca.edu/springfest to view the variety of activities offered by the college's Ornamental Horticulture program, and www.thegarden.org to view the Garden's complete program. Admission to the Spring Garden Festival is free to everyone.

We hope to see you at both of these exciting spring events full of popular programs and interesting new activities to inspire your water smart lifestyle!

WATER SMART PLANT FAIR

More Beauty with Less Water



Cistus 'Sunset' (Rockrose)
Photo courtesy of PlantSafari.com

The Garden Sprinkler is a quarterly publication of The Joint Powers Authority (the City of San Diego, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, Helix Water District, Otay Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, Sweetwater Authority, and Conservation Champions) for **The Water Conservation Garden**, 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, CA 92019 (619) 660-0614, www.thegarden.org



Garden Staff

- Marty Eberhardt, Executive Director
- Paul Redeker, Horticulture Manager
- Daniel Mayorga, Landscape Technician
- David Yetz, Landscape Technician
- Laurie Furry, Education Director
- May Harris, Development Director
- Elizabeth Ramos, Events & Marketing
- Heather Carlton, Office Assistant
- Pam Meisner, Programs Assistant
- Kay McGrath, Bookkeeper



Brachychiton acerifolius

Focus on a Species: Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) by Paul Redeker

The brilliant crimson red flowers of the Illawarra flame tree make it one of Australia's most spectacular flowering trees. Here at the Garden we showcase this tree on the hillside to the right of the mulch exhibit. From late spring to summer, this towering tree exhibits hundreds of small red bell-shaped flowers occurring in clusters at the ends of its branches. The flowers are followed by leathery seed capsules that can remain on the tree for some time.

This semi-deciduous tree can grow to 90 feet tall or more on the east coast of Australia, from New South Wales to Queensland. Here in the western United States it can reach about half that height. It prefers full sun and a soil with good drainage, but will adapt to many soil types and will tolerate periods of drought once established. Our tree seems to retain its large, lush green variable maple-like leaves almost throughout the year. Typically the leaves drop during the flowering period.

Trees of the *Brachychiton* genus are sometimes referred to as Kurrajong, an Aboriginal word for "fiber-yielding-plant." This refers to the use of the tree's bark for weaving nets, ropes, and baskets. The species *Brachychiton acerifolius* was introduced to the Mediterranean, South Africa, and the western United States as a popular ornamental tree.

Be sure to bring your camera early this summer and get a shot of this beautiful specimen. But save some of that film, or digital space these days, so you can also get a shot of our newly added *Brachychiton discolor*, the Queensland Lacebark, just a few steps away.

A Good Harvest

The Water Conservation Garden has a new Rain Harvesting exhibit, showcasing two barrels that can store up to 1,305 gallons of rainwater.

Why should rainwater be captured? Can it save money? Is it good for the environment? In some cases, rain harvesting can be a money-saver. It depends on installation costs, barrel size, annual rainfall, the complexity of the system, and the length of time the system is used. Where the environment is concerned, rain harvesting can provide fresh water for our flowers and trees, reduce water-flow that spreads chemicals into the ocean, and help improve groundwater quality that will develop healthier soils and nourish the landscape.

Depending on a person's budget or preference, the options for harvesting rainwater range from a simple system, such as a small screened container positioned under a downspout, to a more involved system that may include monitors, pumps, regulators, and diverters.

Come visit this new exhibit and consider the options for harvesting rainwater. There are many ways to go about putting a system together, and the Garden is a great place to start learning.

The Garden would like to thank the Ecolife Foundation and Ace Rain Systems for their help in funding this exhibit.



Ms. Smarty Plants waits for rain in the new Rainwater Harvesting exhibit

Ms Smarty-Plants Takes the Show on the Road!

Anyone who has visited the Garden during a school tour has heard about mulch, fixing the sprinklers, and the power of children to change the future from our own zany and exuberant Ms. Smarty-Plants. She has educated children from all parts of San Diego County on our popular school tours. Letters we receive from these children make it clear that our education program is working:

"Thank you for teaching us how to save water! I will not water my sidewalk. I will always remember."

"Now I will take a shower for only 5 minutes!"

"I will never forget to put mulch around my plants!"

Beginning this fall, Ms. Smarty-Plants began presenting assembly programs at schools all over the county. With the current economic situation, schools are less able to budget bus transportation for field trips, so our solution is to take the program to the children.

The assemblies are filled with entertaining water conservation information and are aligned with the State Standards (as are our tours). They are also enriched by a large dose of magic. Ms Smarty-Plants is fluent in American Sign Language, and at the end of the assembly the children learn a song in sign about how they can change the world.

Assembly programs are 45 minutes in length, and cost \$350.00 for the first assembly, and \$75.00 for each subsequent presentation on the same day. Ms Smarty-Plants assembly programs are available to schools, libraries, community centers and other organizations. A limited number of Ms. Smarty-Plants' assemblies are available to local libraries and underserved children's programs thanks to the generous support of the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust. Funding is limited, so please reserve your programs as soon as possible. To reserve, or for more information, contact Pam Meisner (the alter-ego) at 619-660-0614 ext. 16.



*Ms. Smarty Plants educates and entertains at an assembly.
Photo courtesy of Sweetwater Authority*

Water Conservation Garden Launches New Teen Volunteer Corps

Remember looking for your first job? We all heard it: "I'm sorry, you need more experience."

The Water Conservation Garden is launching a teen volunteer program this spring with the generous support of the County Board of Supervisors and the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust. The program will allow teens to gain valuable work experience while learning about the Garden and its educational mission.

The program will begin with a small team of teens. The teens will be selected to assist the new Teen Corps Coordinator, Casey Woodall, with the development of the program. Casey comes to the Garden with a unique background; as a teen, she was a member and trainer for a similar program at the San Diego Zoo. The skills she gained through that program led to a job with the San Diego Zoo's education department. Her interest in the environment and education was further nurtured through the position, and she went on to graduate from the University of California at Davis. She will be developing and coordinating the Teen Corps with the collaboration of the Garden's education team.

The Teen Corps members will develop public speaking skills, interact with the Garden's visitors, assist the Garden by attending community events and sustainability fairs, practice employment skills, and meet other like-minded teens through the program. The teens will be introduced to horticulture as well as other environmental career options. Each teen will receive documentation of their volunteer service hours to meet school community service requirements, or to include in job or college applications.

Teens interested in this program must be between the ages of 13 and 16, and be willing to commit a minimum of eight hours per month to volunteer service. The teens will be selected for the program by a team of Garden staff and volunteers. Please contact the Garden for application information. Not everyone who applies will be accepted due to space and funding limitations.

This is truly a win-win program. The teens gain work experience, and the Garden gains young ambassadors for water conservation!

The Garden Welcomes May Harris



May in the Garden

The Garden is pleased to announce the hiring of our first Director of Development. The San Diego County Water Authority has kindly provided funds for the first 18 months of our new development program. As the Garden transitions to governance by a nonprofit board, it is essential to have a staff member dedicated to fundraising. We have found someone who relishes the challenges ahead, and who, in two just two days on staff, has already become a valued team member.

May Harris began her career as a lawyer with expertise in intellectual property rights. However, it was the nonprofit sector that inspired her, and her volunteer work eventually led her to a job as Executive Director at the Kinder Foundation, a small nonprofit supporting charter schools, where she became a successful fundraiser. She enjoyed development but couldn't devote herself to it the way she would have liked to, given the many duties of a Director (this Executive Director can certainly relate to this!). She honed her skills in the Masters program in Nonprofit Leadership at the University of San Diego.

May has been a lover of our garden for some time. She lives in the neighborhood, and she and her daughter Haley often enjoy the WCG together. With the increase in water rates and the publicizing of California's water woes, she realized that the Garden's mission of educating and inspiring people about water wise gardening was more important than ever...and something to which she could really devote herself.

"I've never felt as welcomed in any job I've ever had. The staff and volunteer corps are as welcoming as the physical environment!" she told us.

May has many challenges ahead of her in this transition year, but the staff, board members, and volunteers are delighted to be working with her to take the Garden to its next level of excellence.

New Members July - December 2009

STUDENT

Janet Gale
Tony Glockler
Michele Jachimiak

BASIC

Joy Adams
Debbie Ames
Trent Biggs
Julie Borunda
Kyle Bridgeman
Tamara Brown
Charlene Butler & Jim Barnett
Suzanne Cox
David & Lynda Marlow
Lindy DeBoer
Tara Ford
Glenn Frey
Colin & Anne Goldman
Colleen Hannon
Barbara Huntington
Russell James
Mary Kay Jenkins
Ursula Jennings
Steven Lessner
Candis Long
Donna Mallen
Cynthia McDaniel
M. Dan McKirman

SAVE THE DATE

Mother's Day Brunch

Sunday, May 9, 10 am and 1 pm

The Garden will host a delicious Mother's Day Brunch amidst the beauty of 5-acres of water smart plants. There will be two seating times, 10 am and 1 pm. Select vendors will be on hand offering lovely gifts for Mom. Please call 619-660-0614 for more details and to make reservations. \$30 Members, \$35 Non-Members. Space is limited, so reserve early.

The Garden classes and events calendar is now printed separately. Become a Member to get a copy in your mailbox, or view it online at www.thegarden.org/calendar. Free copies are also available when you visit the Garden!

BASIC, Cont.

Jean Mills
Jon Nachison
Gaylord Norcross
Elsa Portillo
John & Julie Rader
Glenn Risolo
Janice Roussel
Carol Tohsaku
Sylvia Trumbell

SUPPORTING

Sharon Burkey
Karen Goe
Steve Moser and Kathi Harris
Sandra Sanchez
Marilyn Sanderson

SUSTAINING

Marie Botulensky
Gloria Iagmin
Danene Soares
Donna Thal

GARDEN PARTNERS

City of Poway
Santa Fe Irrigation District