Se anuncia ganador del “Mejor Jardín del Distrito” del concurso WaterSmart

El uso de agua se redujo un 33 por ciento aproximadamente

Bob y Shan Cissell, residentes de La Mesa, ganaron el título del “Mejor Jardín del Distrito” del concurso WaterSmart 2018 de Otay. Por medio de esta competencia anual se reconoce a los clientes residenciales de las 13 agencias participantes del condado de San Diego en función del atractivo en general de su jardín, diseño, selección de plantas, sistemas de riego eficientes y mantenimiento adecuado.

Después de participar en el Programa de Transformación de Jardines WaterSmart que presenta la San Diego County Water Authority y Otay, e inspirándose en el Jardín de Conservación de Agua del Cajón, los Cissell decidieron convertir su jardín de 2,500 pies cuadrados con pasto en su propio jardín de conservación logrando reducir su consumo de agua un 33 por ciento aproximadamente. Ellos comenzaron desde cero, es decir, con la eliminación del césped.

“Lo mejor es que fue una transformación radical del césped que consumía grandes cantidades de agua para mantenerlo verde, y ni siquiera era verde,” mencionó Shan. “Lo que tomamos muy en serio fue el diseño, la parte creativa, el trabajo, la creatividad, y la meta de no desperdiciar ni una sola gota de agua.”

Luego colocaron capas de cartón, abono y mantillo para mantener el suelo húmedo. Como parte del diseño, incorporaron un componente de reciclaje y elementos creativos, incluyendo una cascada hecha a mano construida del viejo arriamiento de una escalera para caminar y otras materiales sólidos que de otro modo no servirían para nada, agua salta de una caja para alimentar a una cascada y luego viaja a través de tubos diminutos hasta un árbol bonsái artificial (hecho de concreto y materiales que no tienen uso) para regar las canastas de flores que descansan al final de cada rama del árbol. Las grandes raíces de árboles que alguna vez pasaron por su patio entre las tuberías subterráneas ahora decoran otras áreas de su jardín.

Los Cissell instalaron un sistema de riego por goteo sobre el terreno y tuberías de drenaje corrugadas en la parte de abajo. La tubería se utiliza para que el exceso de agua pase a las desvencillas que rodean la casa. Para asegurarse de que su sistema de goteo funcionara correctamente, los Cissell inventaron un sistema utilizando un baño para pajaros hecho con un fregadero viejo. Cuando su sistema de goteo está prendido, alimenta el bebedero para pájaros.

El informe sobre la calidad del agua está disponible

En 2018, el agua suministrada por el Distrito cumplió o superó todos los requisitos y estándares de agua potable establecidos por la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos y la División de Agua Potable de la Junta Estatal de Control de Recursos Hídricos. El informe anual sobre la calidad del agua está disponible en Otaywater.gov/ConsumerConfidenceReport. Para solicitar una copia, envíe un correo electrónico a info@otaywater.gov, lámene al 619-670-2222, o visite nuestras oficinas ubicadas en 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd., Spring Valley, CA 91978.

WaterSmart Landscape Contest “Best in District” Winner Announced

La Mesa residents Bob and Shan Cissell have been designated the title of “Best in District” in Otay’s 2018 WaterSmart Landscape Contest. The annual competition rewards residential customers for their water-efficient landscapes from 13 participating San Diego county agencies based on overall attractiveness, design, plant selection, and efficient irrigation and maintenance.

After participating in the WaterSmart Landscape Makeover Program – presented by the San Diego County Water Authority and Otay – and drawing inspiration from the Water Conservation Garden in El Cajon, the Cissells decided to turn their 2,500 square feet of irrigated grass into their own conservation garden, decreasing their water use by an average of roughly 33 percent.

They started from scratch, which began with removing the sod.

“The coolest thing is that it was a 100 percent makeover from irrigated lawn that took a pathetic amount of water to keep it green, and it wasn’t even green,” said Shan. “It’s the design, the technical, the labor, the creativity, and the focus on not a single drop of water being wasted that we took seriously.”

They then layered cardboard, compost, and mulch, which now keeps the soil moist. As part of the design, they incorporated a recycling component and creative elements including a hand-built waterfall made from an old truck ladder rack and other solid materials that would otherwise serve no purpose. Water from a swale feeds the waterfall, then travels through microstupas using a faux bonsai tree — made of concrete and unused materials — to irrigate the flower baskets that rest at the end of each tree branch. Large tree roots that once ran through their yard under underground piping, decorate other areas of their yard.

For efficient irrigation, the Cissells installed drip tubing along the top of the ground and corrugated drain piping below. The piping is used for excess water to irrigate the slopes surrounding the home. To assure that their drip system would continue to work properly, the Cissells came up with a system using a birdbath made from an old sink. When their drip system turns on, it feeds the birdbath. The water flows up into the sink and into the overflow hole and back down to the trees. No water is wasted, and mosquito larvae is prevented. If the birdbath is dry, it means that the drip system is not working properly.

To maximize their viewing area, the Cissells strategically placed curved walking paths throughout their yard.

*After we made the pathway, we thought we’d use brick or pavers, but the Water Authority suggested to use absorbent materials and that’s when we decided to use decomposed granite and embed stones in concrete as a pathway so that there would be a permanent barrier,* said Bob.

To view the full story and more photos of the Cissells’ yard, visit otaywater.gov/landscape-contest-winner-2019.
Otay Receives the Highest Form of Recognition for Its Financial Reporting

The District’s dedicated financial staff, supported by the Board of Directors, are proud to achieve the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting in addition to receiving four awards earlier this year.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) presented the District with the Budget Excellence Award and the Program Budget with a Capital Budget its Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Improvement Program sunsets in 2030.

Its Fiscal Year 2019 Operating and Capital Budget. CSFMO also recognized the District for receiving four awards earlier this year.

GFOA presented the District with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) presented the District with the Budget Excellence Award and the Program Budget with a Capital Budget its Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Improvement Program sunsets in 2030. The District, its staff, and the Board of Directors are proud to achieve the highest form of recognition for its financial reporting.

Increase Water-Use Efficiency During Smart Irrigation Month

July is a peak month for outdoor water use, but a great time to improve your irrigation efficiency!

For tips to help you save during Smart Irrigation Month, visit otaywater.gov/smart-irrigation-2019.

Pipeline

AB 1588: Paving the Way for Veterans and Increasing the Pool of Qualified Applicants in California’s Water Industry

Aging infrastructure and workforce in the water industry, combined with more than 250,000 U.S. military members leaving military service each year, have led the Otay Water District to find, educate, certify, and reintegrate into civilian lifestyle, there continue to be missed opportunities – particularly to implement gravity-fed or pumped systems, to install and manage water and wastewater treatment operators, occupations receive appropriate crediting for experience and education gained during military service.

Despite the availability of military resources to assist service members and veterans to reintegrate into civilian life, there still need be missed opportunities – particularly for military personnel transitioning into civilian water and wastewater treatment operators.

Ongoing Events

Nature Nights with Ms. Smarty Plants – Totally Tortoise Trek

Friday, July 26 & Aug. 23, 6 – 8 p.m.

Opportunities to learn more about the various types of turtles and tortoises that call California home will be available during the forthcoming Nature Night on “Tortoise Trek.” Attendees will also have the opportunity to explore San Diego’s only turtle habitat.

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Legislative Update

Good News: No Water Tax

It is very likely that the District and its water customers will not be impacted by a water tax for the safe and affordable drinking water concern. The original proposed solution through a statewide water tax for this significant issue, was able to be accomplished through a compromise that still achieves the safe drinking water objectives without a water tax.

In early June, the Budget Conference Committee unanimously adopted a compromise for safe drinking water. This compromise is made up of $180 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), $30 million from the General Fund and $3.4 million from the General Fund for the State Water Resources Control Board’s administrative costs. Included also is a deal to continuously appropriate 5 percent of the GDRF revenues starting in the 2020-2021 budget year. The 5 percent is capped at $130 million per year with a General Fund backstop if the 5 percent falls below the $130 million, but not until the 2023-2024 budget year. The entire program sunsets in 2030.

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This is a great outcome on an issue of significant statewide concern over the course of multiple years. To know that the state’s important safe drinking water program will advance without a water tax to the District’s customers is a testament to the efforts and advocacy of the District, other water agencies, and the business community. The District and the regional coalition are proud to know our voices were heard.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Nature Nights with Ms. Smarty Plants - Totally Turfless Trek**

Friday, July 29 & Aug. 2, 7-9 p.m.

Bring your flashlight and quickly explore to find the Garden at night. The FREE Family event will include animal encounters, a scavenger hunt, campfire and s'mores. All ages welcome. Registration required. To register, email MsSmartyPlants@thegarden.org or call 619-660-0614 ext. 16.

**Nature Therapy**

Sunday, Aug. 1 & 25, Sunday, Aug. 9-11, 9-11 a.m.


**Drinks & Connect: Garden Yoga**

Monday, Aug. 12, 7-10 a.m.

Unwind, unplug, and connect with nature during yoga at the Garden. After the class, tour their 6 acres of gardens. Access to the Garden. Members: $0. Nonmembers: $8.

**Wine & Water**

Wednesday, Aug. 14, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Spend an evening strolling along water-efficient gardens with your furry friend. Bring your wine glass and canine. Members: $0. Nonmembers: $10.

**Greywater Level 2**

Saturday, Aug. 17, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Dive deeper into water systems and learn how to implement gravity-fed or pumped systems, installation, maintenance, irrigation techniques, review best practices, and choose plants that promote greywater. Must have taken an intro class to attend. Members: $15. Nonmembers: $20.

**Ongoing Events**

**Free Docent-Led Tours**

Professional Landscape Design Consultations

Ms. Smarty-Plants School Tours and Assembly Program

**Visit thegarden.org for details**

**Waterwise Plants for Your Garden**

If you’ve visited or lived in the East, Midwest, Pacific Northwest, or any other temperate climate region of the world, you may have noticed how green those regions look. Big trees and shrubs, covered in large, green leaves, thrive on warm summer rains. When winter’s cold arrives, the trees and shrubs drop their leaves and go into dormancy — a kind of suspended animation — while the plants wait for spring’s warmth to return.

Our region is not green. It is bright and sunny, with scrub-covered hills that are olive green from fall through spring, then brown through summer. They respond to our unique Mediterranean climate pattern. Rain falls during mild cool temperatures of autumn, winter, and early spring. There’s no rain during summer’s dry heat, which is nice for people, but challenging for plants. Big green trees and shrubs are rare in deserts, too. Some rain falls in winter, but the biggest rainfall occurs during the summer monsoons. Deserts get extremely hot, with little rainfall overall, and — other than during monsoon season — the dry air literally pulls moisture from plant leaves.

Plants native to these dry regions have evolved similar survival strategies for extreme heat and limited water. Many native plants go dormant in the heat. Their leaves drop, and branches stay bare until the cool temperatures of fall when new leaves sprout, and plants resume growth.

Small leaves and narrow leaves are drought strategies, too. Plants lose moisture by evaporation from the surface of their leaves. Larger leaves, with more surface area, lose the most water. Smaller and narrower leaves have less surface area, so they lose less water to the atmosphere. While we love the feeling of fuzzy leaves, that isn’t why they are covered with fuzz. For plants, that layer of hairs is a vapor barrier that slows down water evaporation from leaf surfaces. The hairs shade the leaf from blistering sunlight, too, and their silver color helps deflects sunlight. All are strategies for surviving heat and drought.

Leaves that don’t contain much water, don’t have much water to lose. Some dry-climate plants evolve leaves that are leathery or high in oils, rather than fleshy and water-filled. Succulence is an obvious drought strategy. In the rainy season, succulent plants absorb water and store it in their stems, roots, and leaves. In the dry season, they use up that moisture to survive.

Next time you see a barrel cactus, notice how beneath the spines, the plant itself is baffled like an accordion. The baffles expand as the plants fill up with water during the rainy season. As the water gets used, the baffles shrink back down.

Even spines have a drought purpose. True, they protect plants from predators, but for some cacti, spines harvest dew from the cooler evening and early morning air, then direct it right into the plant or to the roots.

All plant leaves are covered in a thin layer of wax to keep them hydrated for a longer period. For some hot climate plants, the protective wax layer is so thick that it comes off when you rub the leaf. These adaptations make for gardens that look entirely different from big, broad-leaved temperate gardens, yet are no less attractive. So, next time you are looking for plants that will thrive in your garden with little or no irrigation, look for features such as succulence, spines, and leaves that are silver, fuzzy, waxly, leathery, oily, small or narrow.

These characteristics are rules of thumb since, for example, silver leaved plants are native to many different climates. So, do your homework. Research plants to find those best suited to our waterwise gardens. Then, then come up with a plan before you go shopping. That’s the best kind of planning.
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WaterQualityReportAvailableOnline