



Going Native:

The Outstanding San Diego Scenery is Ideal for Planting Plants

By: Ronnie Das

September 28th, 2011
SAN DIEGO, California

Imagine the scorched earth of a rugged terrain. As the sun beats down upon the cracked ground, you begin to notice the cacti, lizards, shrubs, and sparse landscape features that are typical of a desert ecosystem.

Moving through the wide open wilderness we find ourselves coming upon a lone rider on a plodding, half-dead horse. The immediate dangers are snakes and exhaustion; however, the even greater threats to the weathered cowboy are outlaws lurking in the area, waiting to drop in like the vultures idly circling above him. Regardless of potential dangers he rides on: as we take a closer look at the weathered cowboy, with his low-hanging head, his body appears to tell the defeated story of a warrior at the end of his battle. Our eyes travel up his rusty spurs, past his faithful six-shooter, to discover a dirty bandage adhered to his cracked skin with dried blood and sweat. You begin to wonder - was this an injury he received from a tough battle against a local warring tribe, or the result of a recent shoot-out with lawless bandits? As he continues to make his way across the barren landscape he has only one goal, one focus - to get through...Southern California.

Palm trees and verdant grassy landscapes are as natural to the semi-desert arid climate of San Diego as a cactus in Moscow. Although we expect a few luxurious amenities in the world's 37th largest economy, many typical or traditional choices are completely unsustainable.

As we indulge in modern convenience that requires the exploitation of a finite resource such as water, we have no choice but to make sacrifices by either compensation or conservation.

When considering compensation to pay away the problems with a depleting water supply, also include in that budget the energy expended to import water (maintaining waterways, filtration, distribution, and infra-structure upkeep), the cost of water dependence on the local economy (money leaves the city and county), and the effort our politicians extend towards water policy to ensure our way of life (as opposed to other crucial issues we face). Also consider the fact that after supplementing the earth with fertilizers and pesticides (which each hold their own sets of problems), a lawn will likely be mowed using carbon-producing gas-consuming tools.

In many ways the solutions to water issues are literally in our backyard - our landscape. A luxury in Europe, where Napoleon used landscaping to show power by defying common practice of clearing the land for productive agriculture, the grass lawn is a constant maintenance nightmare in San Diego, where it accounts for 66% of the average Southern Californian's water use.

Water conservation considerations with landscaping are generally cost-effective and simple: use less water. Reducing your water use is much less difficult than the average person would think; consider simply using mulch to retain water and watering earlier in the morning or later in the evening. Take water conservation up a notch with residential "greywater" (wastewater generated from domestic

processes such as washing dishes, laundry, and bathing) which is a valuable water resource that can be recycled to irrigate plants on-site (e.g. your house). Be sure your greywater does not contain harsh chemicals like bleach and soaps by using green cleaning supplies.

If you want to go the extra mile on your established landscape, consider the “MP Rotator” from Hunter Irrigation (a local business in San Marcos and an irrigation solutions giant in the industry), which can reduce irrigation needs by up to 40% by reducing the application rate of water towards the grounds actual absorption rate (aka less wet sidewalks for everyone).

If you are just tired of paying for pesticides, fertilizers, mowing, water, and the other costs that go along with a well-manicured lawn, then consider the very affordable native landscaping concepts created by Susan Krzywicki from Krzywicki Consulting (San Diego, CA), which will optimize your backyard to look beautiful and be beneficial for the entire San Diego environment. To get some tips on turning a green carpet into an SD experience feel free to stop by the California Native Plant Society's monthly meetings (Every 3rd Tuesday, Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park) to help maintain San Diego as the picture perfect postcard by Planting Plants.

Final Breakdown:

Less than 1% of the world's water is freshwater (vital resource everything alive on Earth needs and shares).

More than 80% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated: polluting rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Conserving water preserves an irreplaceable natural resource, while reducing the strain on urban wastewater management systems. In developed nations wastewater treatment is costly and requires continuous investment to ensure quality as demand rises.

Households, not public agencies, often make the largest investment in basic sanitation, with the ratio of household to government investment typically **10 to 1**. In just one day, more than **200 million hours** of women’s time is **consumed** for the most basic of human needs — collecting water for domestic use.

At **40 hours a week** it would take **961 years** for a single person to accomplish this this task. At home the **average American** uses between **100 and 175 gallons of water a day**. In the world **884 million** people lack access to safe water supplies; approximately **one in eight people**. Every 20 seconds, a child dies from a water-related disease.