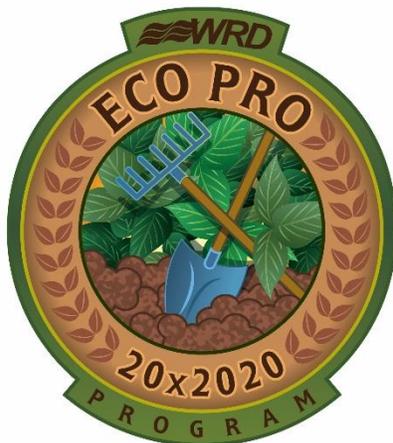




WATER REPLENISHMENT DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Lillian Kawasaki
Eco Gardener Program®



WRD's Lillian Kawasaki **Eco Gardener Program®**

The Water Replenishment District of Southern California (WRD) manages groundwater for 43 cities in south Los Angeles (LA) County. WRD serves approximately 400,000 residents of southern Los Angeles County, or 10% of the State's population. WRD is involved in groundwater monitoring, safe drinking water programs, groundwater replenishment operations and promoting water and energy conservation. In southern California, landscaping irrigation accounts for 60% to 70% of urban water use. As water becomes scarce, it is apparent that water conservation is critical to the future of southern California's water supply.

The State of California has mandated a 20% reduction in per capita water use by 2020. With this State goal combined with a recurring drought in southern California at its highest point in history, WRD has seen the need to educate the public not through mailers but with hands-on conservation training. The Lillian Kawasaki Eco Gardener Training Program enhances the importance of water conservation. Providing customers with one of the best residential green gardening entrepreneurial training programs translates into effective reduction in water demand and usage in the region, and good resources stewardship by WRD. The Program will educate the public about simple ways to save water, reduce usage and waste, and contribute to a more reliable water supply now and in the future. The Lillian Kawasaki Eco Gardener Program will further resonate as water rates increase, driving users to less water intensive landscaping, increasing the demand for knowledgeable landscapers.

WRD's Lillian Kawasaki Eco Gardener Training Programs train residents, gardeners, and landscape maintenance crews to become responsible "green" gardeners by implementing water conservation practices in outdoor landscapes, and professional and municipal crews increase their productivity and business skills. The existing 4-course residential Eco Gardener series is geared towards educating residents on water efficiency irrigation systems, native plant and California-friendly landscape design, landscape design and maintenance. The Eco Professional series is geared towards a target audience consisting of low-skilled laborers who work in the informal landscape maintenance business (commonly known as "mow and blow gardeners") and professional landscapers including municipal Parks & Recreation landscape crews, School groundskeepers, and industrial landscapers. The Eco Professional also educates participants on water efficiency irrigation systems, native plant and California-friendly landscape design, landscape design and maintenance as well as how to start a landscape business and secure city permits to operate in certain LA County cities. There are two components to this Program, each reaching a different audience. Track 1 (ECO LANDSCAPER) involves training low-skilled laborers who work in the informal landscape maintenance business on water saving methods of gardening that also reduce run-off and contamination groundwater basins, rivers and beaches. Track 2 (ECO PRO) involves the training of professional landscapers including municipal Parks & Recreation landscape crews, School groundskeepers, and industrial landscapers. The Program will offer instruction in:

- Garden Design Concepts
- Garden Design Application
- Irrigation Basics
- Drought Tolerant Plants
- Irrigation Scheduling & Maintenance Guidelines
- Effective Communication with Clients on Water Conservation
- ET Controller Concepts
- Smart Gardening
- Horticultural Practices
- Starting a Landscape Business
- Obtaining City Permits

The classes have a specific, tried and true collection of information that is shared with each participant by providing them with a manual outlining methods they can use to reduce water use and the training sessions are hands on to encourage questions and provide a full understanding of the concepts presented. Landscapers work directly with water and if they have the knowledge to reduce water use, they can suggest particular California-native plants to customers and implement water efficient irrigation systems. They have the potential to save a great amount of water; typically, a garden utilizing California-friendly plants uses 30% less water than a common garden using non-native plants and as high as 70% less water during hot dry months. Additionally, California-friendly plants are able to go without water for a long period of time, potentially saving 14,400 gallons of water annually per household during water shortages.

History of program;

A pilot program was initiated in the fall of 2006 with classes being held at a local junior college. Due to its success more classes were added each year. Following the relocation of the WRD administration offices to their current location classes have been held there as well. As part of the remodel of the administration building the site was landscaped by a professional landscape architect to serve as demonstration site for drought tolerant landscaping.

The location for the ECO PRO classes has since been expanded to include a diverse set of locations to reach the largest number of people, both low-skilled laborers and professional business persons. In fact, classes for municipal Parks & Recreation landscape crews and School groundskeepers are conducted in the participant's maintenance yards to make access to the program as easy as possible. Since 2006, over 4000 participants have been trained through the Eco Gardener Program with an additional 1000 participants trained through the ECO PRO program. WRD hopes to reach another 500 participants for ECO PRO and 1200 for ECO Gardener beginning in the immediate future.

Effective outreach and education is needed now more than ever to achieve the State mandated 20% per capita use reductions, in light of the serious drought in southern California. The Eco Gardener Program provides gardeners, landscapers and residents at all levels of experience with hands-on demonstrations and community-specific knowledge and tools to save water. These courses are locally-tailored, free of charge, and effective for reaching the populous, under-served, environmentally-strained communities lacking access to these types of educational opportunities. The knowledge gained by participants can be passed from person to person; the landscaper will pass the knowledge on to their customers who can then inform their families and friends within the community.