



BAY-FRIENDLY GARDENING

By Nanette Londeree, UC Marin Master Gardener

You've probably heard the name Bay-Friendly being bandied about, especially in relation to the amazingly successful Marin Master Gardener Water-Walks program. It's a colorful name, and rapidly developing into a recognizable brand. But just what is it? And what does it mean to a home gardener?

Bay-Friendly is the brainchild of *StopWaste.org*, the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board operating as one public agency. It is an outgrowth of conservation programs initiated in the 1990's to address Alameda County's ambitious goal to reduce waste by a total of 75% by the year 2010. It is described as "a holistic approach to gardening and landscaping that works in harmony with the natural conditions of the San Francisco Bay Watershed. Bay-Friendly practices foster soil health, conserve water and other valuable resources while reducing waste and preventing pollution."

The Bay-Friendly Gardening Program expands on these general concepts and encourages residents to make environmentally friendly gardening choices and to work with nature to reduce waste, protect local creeks, waterways and watersheds of the San Francisco Bay. It's not a particular style of gardening, but rather simplifies garden care by mimicking natural systems that recycle everything - water, debris, and nutrients. It focuses on climate and local conditions, uses appropriate plants adapted to the local conditions, and follows maintenance practices that support the goals of conserving resources and reducing waste.

The basic principles of Bay-Friendly gardening emphasize building healthy soil, reducing waste in the garden, conserving water, creating wildlife habitat, protecting local watersheds and the Bay, contributing to a healthy community and saving energy. All are pretty straightforward concepts that are fairly easy to implement; a few examples include:



BUILD HEALTHY SOIL

- Amend soil with compost
- Maintain garden beds with little or no tilling
- Sheet mulch to establish planting areas or pathways, or to control weeds while improving soil

REDUCE WASTE IN THE GARDEN

- Create and maintain an active compost or worm bin for garden and/or food waste
- Minimize plant waste by not overplanting, overwatering, or over-fertilizing
- Leave clippings on the lawn after mowing

CONSERVE WATER

- Group plants in the landscape by water needs
- Minimize or eliminate lawn area
- Install efficient irrigation (drip, timers, soaker hoses, etc.)
- Water according to plants' needs, not just on a fixed schedule

CREATE WILDLIFE HABITAT

- Provide food for wildlife with a variety of plants that flower and set fruit at different times of year
- Provide water with a small pond, bird bath, or water dish
- Feature native plants (plant more than 50% of your garden with California natives)

PROTECT LOCAL WATERSHEDS AND THE BAY

- Terrace steep slopes to reduce rainwater run-off and prevent erosion
- Cover nearly all soil with mulch or plants
- Avoid the use of synthetic fertilizers

CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

- Tolerate pests as much as possible
- Select disease resistant varieties of plants
- Include plants that attract beneficial insects in the landscape

SAVE ENERGY

- Select local garden products and suppliers
- Choose outdoor lights that are energy efficient or solar
- Select pumps for water features that are solar powered or energy efficient



The Bay-Friendly Gardening Program offers the home gardener an array of tools and resources, from the free 70+ page *Bay-Friendly Gardening* handbook, to classes, seminars, locations of public Bay-Friendly gardens, even instructions on how to have your own garden certified as Bay-Friendly. If you're interested in composting, you can go through their training to become a Master Composter. And if you're looking to hire a landscape designer or contractor, you can find ones that have gone through the program to obtain Bay-Friendly certification. Take a tour of their information-packed website at <http://www.stopwaste.org/home/index.asp?page=8> and you'll find lots of opportunities for learning more about this program.

An associated organization, The Bay-Friendly Coalition, is an alliance of public agencies, utilities, non-profits, landscape professionals, associations, and businesses from all nine San Francisco Bay Area counties with the mission (in part) to encourage Bay-Friendly landscape practices in the San Francisco Bay Area – to create a healthy urban environment that enhances the quality of life. Our Water-Walks partner, Marin Municipal Water District, is one of the key sponsors of this organization. At the calendar on the coalition's website, <http://www.bayfriendlycoalition.com/Calendar.shtml>, you can find information on all the Bay-Friendly classes available in the Bay Area, most beginning in September or October. Their website also features helpful plant lists provided by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC).

So, whether you tend a tiny patio garden filled with flowers, an enormous food garden, or anything in between, growing a Bay-Friendly garden is environmentally friendly and can help make the garden, the gardener and the community a healthier place.