

Create an ocean-friendly landscape

You remember Douglas Kent, the environmental horticulturist and fabulous garden designer from Orange who wrote the book "Firescaping," which changed how we thought about living in fire country? He is teaching us how to garden again, this time in an oceanfriendly manner.

You might think that what you do in your Yorba Linda landscape has little to do with beach closures and pollution levels, but you would be wrong. Whether you use a garden hose, sprinklers, or rely on rain to irrigate your landscape, it all drains somewhere, and that somewhere is our local beaches.

"Hose down the driveway today on Balboa Island," said Kent, "and you dive into the muck in 10 minutes at the beach. If you live in Fullerton, you could swim in your runoff in two hours."

In fact, Kent says 80 percent of ocean and watershed pollution comes from landscapes, especially after a storm.

Kent partnered with Surfrider's environmental director, Chad Nelson, to come up with a few new garden practices that significantly reduce water pollution.

RETHINK HARD SURFACES

To prevent runoff and invite water to percolate into the water table, install permeable hardscape products such as pavers, gravel, decking or decomposed granite. If that's not possible, Kent suggests cutting ribbons in your solid concrete driveway and installing gravel in the openings to invite water to drain into the soil, instead run down the gutter and out to sea.

"For people in central Orange County, the water you percolate into the ground is the water you drink," Kent said.

MORE TREES, SHRUBS

Kent says trees and shrubs can absorb 30 percent to 50 percent more water than lawn grass. And trees and shrubs don't need the fertilizers and pesticides that turf relies on.

LAY OFF THE RAKE

Kent says to never leave your soil exposed. Leaf litter is good for plants and earthworms, and it protects your soil from degradation and erosion.

SAY NO TO BLOWING

Landscape blowers also pollute the ocean by blowing dirt into the atmosphere that ultimately settles into the sea.

AERATE

Lawns and gardens love to be aerated (punched with holes) because it provides oxygen to plant roots. What's more, it also helps your soils absorb more water and prevent runoff.

CAPTURE RAIN WATER

You can easily capture rain from your rain gutters with rain barrels. You can also dig and design a rain garden – a depression in your landscape where you can collect extra water so it can percolate into the watershed, not run off into the sea. These moist pockets are also planting opportunities for certain moisture-loving plants.

“Not everybody can hold water on their property,” Kent said. Read the book to learn how to do it safely.

“Ocean Friendly Gardens” teaches you how to start from scratch, talks about permeability, shows you how to deal with slopes and terraces, and includes chapters on environmentally friendly fertilizers and pest- and weed-control practices.

Resources: Douglas Kent & Associates Landscape design (Anfractus.com) “Ocean Friendly Gardens” by Douglas Kent (\$19.95, Surfrider Foundation) Surfrider Foundation (Surfrider.com)

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PHOTOS: DOUGLAS KENT Less lawn and more plants mean more water can be absorbed in the landscape.





This depression in a side garden captures rainwater during the wet season so it can percolate into the water table.

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