

Spring is here and, seeing our luscious green hills, we may forget that we are actually in a drought. Before you head over to the big box stores to buy those seductive, colorful, and thirsty plants, take a few minutes to review just what you want in your garden.

The cities of Vallejo and Benicia are here to help. They are offering a series of free workshops on Water-Wise Landscaping.

The first class on **Water-Wise Basics** covers the basic principals of water-wise landscaping. Hands-on demonstrations and displays explain the importance of soil type, amendments, mulching, and basic garden design elements. Instructors are Meg Grumio (Benicia Community Garden Coordinator); Sue Alfeld speaking on water conservation and gardening; and this writer who will talk about backyard composting.

The first class will be held on Monday, April 27 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the JFK Library, Joseph Room, 505 Santa Clara, in Vallejo. It will be repeated on Wednesday, April 29, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Heritage Hall, East 2nd at Military East, Benicia.

Reserve your seat for the Vallejo classes by calling Roger Judy at 707 648-5299 (rijudy@ci.vallejo.ca.us) or for the Benicia classes by calling Dave Wenslawski, 707 746-4792 (davidw@ci.benicia.ca.us.).

Irrigation Design is the subject of the second class. Larry Lamoreux will help you solve the mystery of irrigation systems and form strategies for how to use water wisely. He will bring the latest irrigation components and gadgets. There will also be a Master Gardener available to answer questions.

The irrigation class will be held in Vallejo on Monday, May 4, and in Benicia on Wednesday, May 6. (Same information as above.)

The third class is **Water-Wise plant selection**. Sue Wickham, a California Native Plant specialist will give information on how to select the perfect drought-tolerant plants for your yard. Wickham and other gardeners will bring a sampling of trees, shrubs, perennials, and other plants.

The plant class will be held in Vallejo on Monday, May 11, and in Benicia on Wednesday, May 13. (Same information as above.)

You will come away from these classes with a better understanding of our Mediterranean-type climate, and have a chance

to win water-savings tools and books.

The classes are sponsored by the water conservation programs of the Cities of Vallejo and Benicia, UCCE Master Gardeners, and Benicia Community Garden.

More Earth Day events on April 25

Celebrate Earth Day in Fairfield at the lake behind City Hall (1000 Webster) from 11:00 am to 3:00 p.m. There will be information booths, a composting class, and Sierra Club's Mr. Green will be there to sign his new green book and answer the toughest green-living questions. For more information call 707 428-7489.

Come to the Rush Ranch 19th Annual Open House from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on April 25. Rush Ranch is located on the edge of the Suisun Marsh (south on Grizzly Island Road, Suisun).

The celebration includes carriage rides and horse demonstrations provided by Access Adventures. Also scheduled is live music, square dancing demonstrations, weaving, spinning, carving, local Native American culture, horse shoeing, blacksmithing, falconry, farm animals, sheep dog demonstrations, pony rides, and an art show and sale. Information: www.rushranch.net.

May 2

A California Native Plant Sale will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. At the Benicia Community Garden (East Second and Military East). Natives, landscaping, and vegetable plants will be available. Information: 707 747-5815.

Check out www.ecoendure.com (800 992-8262) for environmentally responsible alternatives for everyday products.

VALCORE Recycling Board Member Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

E N D