Surfrider Foundation has launched an Ocean Friendly Gardens program. Surfrider and landscape design? Goofy-footed Greenthumbs? Why? Because our gardens are contributing to polluted urban runoff. It’s time to quit complaining and take some personal steps to resolve ocean pollution.

Runoff from residential landscapes affects the health of our oceans and the quality of our lives. The sediment in water reduces clarity; nutrients increase algae populations and red tides; bacteria closes beaches; debris can choke aquatic species; and pesticides from our garden can poison fish consumed by humans—all of which degrade the natural beauty, and our enjoyment, of the ocean.

No, we’re not landscape design experts, but our partners who are have provided us with many good ideas and resources on how to re-landscape to save money, conserve water and reduce urban runoff. Plus, you end up with a beautiful home for yourself and wildlife!

We’re piloting the Ocean Friendly Gardens program in Southern California, but these principles apply in any climate. Using native or climate-adapted plants that don’t require supplemental water or chemicals is a universal principle. Conservation, Permeability and Retention, CPR© is applicable anywhere. It’s a way to design and maintain our gardens so that we reduce urban runoff—and the pollutants that go with it.

Even in wet climates we can create rain gardens—a planted depression that is designed to capture excess rainwater run-off from your property. Rain garden plants are typically a selection of wetland edge vegetation: sedges, rushes, ferns, shrubs and trees that absorb the excess water and return vapor into the atmosphere. Rain gardens are one of the fastest growing ideas for home landscapes.

For more information visit our Ocean Friendly Gardens Web site at: www.surfrider.org/ofg

Chapter involvement in this program ranges from simply handing out brochures at tabling events, adding a webpage or link to Chapter web sites, and providing landscape training workshops, to advocating city ordinances on landscaping and water use/runoff controls. Chapters can choose from any of these components of the program.

Start participating in your local Chapter or at home and share your ideas on how to make the program blossom. Have a little fun, get creative, and become a part of the solution—not the pollution.

CPR

CPR stands for Conservation, Permeability, and Retention, and when fully employed, either cleans and/or eliminates run-off. Gardeners can greatly affect our ocean’s health. First, much of our paths and driveways can be changed to permeable surfaces and we can add simple retention practices—reducing polluted runoff. Second, we can dramatically reduce the use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other pollutants that degrade healthy oceans and create human health risks when they run off our landscapes during rain or because of over-watering. For tips on CPR and helpful hints on using ocean-friendly alternatives to fertilizers, pesticides and other harmful and unnecessary chemicals, visit www.surfrider.org/ofg. Proper native plant selection eliminates much of the need for those things!
Since its passage in 2000, the BEACH Act has been funding beach water-quality monitoring programs in coastal states across the nation. Congress is now considering much-needed amendments to increase the amount of money spent on monitoring and to modernize the technology we rely on to protect the health of the beach-going public. The Beach Protection Act of 2007 requires the Environmental Protection Agency to adopt rapid testing methods that will provide water-quality data within hours of sampling. It also proposes to fund bacterial-source-tracking studies so that we can find the sources of beach pollution and do something about it.

Please send a letter asking your Congressional Representatives to support the Beach Protection Act by visiting the Surfrider Foundation Action Network at: www.surfrider.org/beachact

**CONSERVATION**

Irrigation reduction through conservation has many benefits:
- It eliminates dry season run-off and reduces certain pest populations.
- A drier landscape allows the soil to retain more rain water.
- Use of efficient irrigation systems with a “Smart-Timer” and low-flow components (like soaker tubing) significantly reduces water usage while effectively irrigating your plants.
- Adjusting sprinkler heads to minimize overspray, and regularly checking the system for leaks or improper flow patterns will reduce runoff and wasted water.

**Alternatives to Lawns:** Lawns are notoriously bad for the ocean—not only do they require a lot of water, but the run-off they produce is loaded with fertilizers and herbicides. Instead of a lawn, there are many attractive alternatives that naturally belong in your climate region.

**PERMEABILITY**

Increasing permeability means reducing the amount of impervious surfaces (pavement, concrete) or replacing them with materials that allow water to infiltrate into the ground. Increasing permeable surfaces tends to slow “water sheeting” and makes use of the infiltration capacity of soil. Some techniques used to increase permeability are redesigning driveways, rethinking the paths that lead around a house, and getting creative with patios. Some alternatives to concrete in high-use areas include brick, decking, pavers, porous asphalt and stone. For medium-use areas, consider crushed aggregate, decomposed granite, or turf block. Low-use areas can employ hearty groundcover and mulches.

**RETENTION**

Retaining water on site is essential to an ocean friendly garden. Retention gives the water an opportunity to infiltrate to the water table below. Infiltration can directly contribute to a community’s water supply by re-charging groundwater, while simultaneously reducing polluted run-off. Retention devices include retention basins, dry wells, and swales. For landscapes that can’t afford to load up the land with water due to shallow clay soils, the goal becomes “screening” the exiting water. Screening slows the water to allow partial percolation and makes use of soil or vegetation to absorb or filter out pollutants.

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