

AUTOS & CLASSIFIEDS INSIDE HOME & GARDEN

HOME & GARDEN EDITOR: SANDRA DUERR | SDUERR@THETRIBUNE.COM | PHONE: 781-7901 | FAX: 781-7905

SANLUISOBISPO.COM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2013

THE TRIBUNE **F**

8TH ANNUAL AUTUMN GARDEN FESTIVAL & SYMPOSIUM, ATASCADERO



Above, at the Portola Inn, a rainwater system starts from the roof of the house and flows through under-ground pipes along meandering paths to irrigate deeply mulched flower gardens. In the background is an original area buggy. At left, an old pump serves as one of many recirculating water features on the property.

TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY DAVID MIDDLECAMP

BECOME WATER WISE AT GARDEN FESTIVAL

Learn water-saving techniques at the 8th Annual Autumn Garden Festival and Symposium put on by the Atascadero Mutual Water Company

By CONNIE PILLSBURY
Special to The Tribune

In keeping with Atascadero's Centennial Celebration, this year's Autumn Garden Festival on Oct. 12 will be held at the historic five-acre Portola Inn, where apricot trees planted by E.G. Lewis, founder of Atascadero, still yield a plentiful harvest.

The inn is the perfect outdoor classroom for the Atascadero Mutual Water Company's festival to celebrate sustainable, low-water landscaping.

Beginning with a continental breakfast at 9 a.m., registered attendees will hear seven 30-minute presentations during the day, with breaks for exhibits, walks and picnics throughout the spacious oak-canopy grounds of the inn.

Topics include a history of urban farming, rainwater harvest, backyard beekeeping and vermicomposting (worm composting), to name a few. The presentations come alive on the grounds,

where owner Tom O'Malley has already incorporated many of the day's topics on his expansive property.

O'Malley has created rainwater and graywater collection areas on his slightly

sloping grounds, allowing for plenty of water for thirsty plants such as kiwis. Handicap-accessible paths in switchback designs slow

Please see FESTIVAL, F3

IF YOU GO

What: Autumn Garden Festival & Symposium

When: Oct. 12

Tickets: \$10, free for children under age 8. Available at Bay Laurel Nursery, 2500 El Camino, Atascadero, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., cash or check; and Atascadero Mutual Water Co., 5005 El Camino Real, cash or check. Tickets may be available on day of event at \$15 if not already sold out.

For more information:

www.amwc.us, www.facebook.com/autumngardentour

Call 461-7217, ext. 22; or email conservation@amwc.us

Wear comfortable walking shoes, bring a picnic lunch if desired; no pets please.

For information on the history and grounds of the Portola Inn: www.portolainn.com

UC MASTER GARDENERS

Consider installing a rainwater catchment system



Andrea Peck is a UC Master Gardener.

Q: What is a rainwater catchment system?

A: We all talk about it. We all wait for it. Maybe your crazy neighbors do a dance for it. One thing we don't do is conserve it. We're talking about rainwater, and considering that only 1 percent of the world's water is drinkable, it's pretty amazing that we want to turn on our spigot to water our prized roses while allowing "runoff" to pollute waterways.

A water catchment system works with our natural infrastructure by collecting rainwater from a large, hard surface, such as a roof. Water travels down the roof and into the downspouts, which are connected to some type of container, such as an enclosed barrel or cistern. The water is then saved for future use. It is important to remember that the collected water is considered non-potable and should only be

GOT A GARDENING QUESTION?

Contact the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners: at 781-5939 from 1 to 5 p.m. on Monday and Thursday; at 473-7190 from 10 a.m. to noon on Wednesday in Arroyo Grande; and at 434-4105 from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesday in Templeton. Visit the UCCE Master Gardeners website at <http://ucanr.org/sites/mgslo> or email mgsanluisobispo@ucdavis.edu.

used for purposes that do not require potable water, such as watering inedible plants or washing your vehicle.

Rainwater catchment systems range from simple to complex. A plain barrel or container serves a small area. More complicated versions incorporate filters that clean the water, connections to irrigation equipment and even pumps. Most barrel-type systems incorporate a hose connection to allow for easy watering.

Over time, water catch-

ment systems make an impact. The average 1,000-square-foot roof collects approximately 600 gallons of water during a 1-inch rain.

Building your own system need not be complicated. A motivated do-it-yourselfer can create a system that will collect significant amounts of water, save money and prevent runoff pollution.

Tomato Extravaganza and Plant Sale update

The Master Gardeners of San Luis Obispo County held

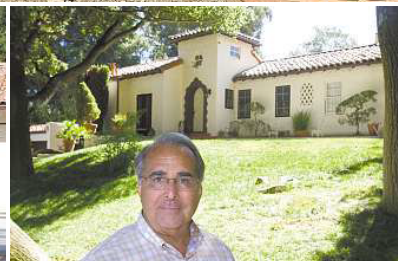


UC REGENTS

Using a rainwater catchment system can save water in the garden. This garden is watered using saved rainwater.

this annual sale Sept. 14. It was a beautiful day in the Garden of the Seven Sisters and everyone had a great time. The favorite varieties of the tomato tasting were: Sungold tomatoes, followed by Pineapple tomatoes and Persimmon

tomatoes. For the basil tasting, there was a tie for the favorite between cinnamon and lime varieties. The third favorite was Italian Genovese. We hope to see you at our next Tomato Extravaganza in September 2014.



TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY DAVID MIDDLECAMP

Top row: An underground graywater system below the rock path waters the year-round vegetable garden and kiwis. One hundred years ago, E.G. Lewis planted four varieties of apricot trees – Blenheim, Moorpark, Royal and Tilton – on this property. Middle row: The 'I'm In Stitches' hybrid Iris, developed by Bonne Scott of Atascadero, is in its second annual bloom. Kiwis don't normally grow in the North County, but thrive here because of the unique microclimate. Years of digging, planting and moving of soil and rocks are symbolized in these shovel heads. Left, once a lawn, this rock and succulent garden bordered by 'Provence' lavender hosts a private picnic table for visitors. Tom O'Malley, mayor of Atascadero, in front of the Portola Inn next door to his original family home.

Festival

From Page F1

down the flow of rainwater and direct it to catch basins.

As guests meander down these paths, they are treated to a variety of mature plantings that have created their own micro-environment under the oaks. "O'Malley knows each plant and system intimately, having purchased this property next door to his childhood home 19 years ago.

"I remember helping my neighbors pick the apricots at age 7," he recalls.

Going back 100 years, in 1913 E.G. Lewis, the founder of Atascadero, had a vision of sustainable landscaping. His idea was that colony residents would have one- to two-acre parcels where they could grow enough food for their family, with room for a small orchard, vegetables and chickens. The lots in Garden

Farms, River Garden and throughout the community reflect this. Lewis' advertisements focused on the advantage of living in the city while having enough property to farm at home. He chose a quote from Abraham Lincoln to adorn the entry of the now-restored City Hall: "The most valuable of all arts will be the art of deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil."

"Lincoln's quote is applicable to the theme of the event, as we want local homeowners to know they can have beautiful and productive gardens with less water use," said Jaime Lien Hendrickson, conservation manager at the water company, who started this event in 2006.

"After the drought of 2003, the Mutual Water Co. realized the need to educate homeowners about how to lower water needs," she said.

This autumn festival has become the vehicle for that message, and along with a

rebate for lawn replacement and focus on drought-tolerant plants, John Neil, general manager of the water company, reports that water use has dropped from a 10-year average of 2 billion gallons per year to 1.8 billion gallons in 2012.

Neil, Hendrickson and O'Malley share a common goal for the educational event: "We want locals to be empowered to incorporate these ideas in their home gardens, and to know that drought-tolerant does not just mean rocks and cactus," Neil said. "With over 150 low-water plants to choose from, they can have a new and beautiful garden with lower water use and a lower water bill as an added bonus."

The event promises to be informative and inspirational for the 100 who register to attend. If this sounds appealing to you, use the information on the sidebar to register right away, as space is limited and the event may sell out.



**Granite
Marble
Soapstone
Quartz Slabs**


Largest slab yard
in SLO County

Complete
Fabrication Available



Valley Tile & Stone INC.
Natural Stone, Solids, Marble & Granite Slabs
FOREFRONT DESIGN
Marble & Granite Fabricators
Co.# 924624

805-434-9454
325 Santa Bella, Paso Robles
VALLEYTILESTONE.COM



Call today for home delivery.
1-800-288-4128.

**Company
Coming?**



**FRESH KITCHENS
& WALLBEDS
OF MORRO BAY**
CL #699343
772-0165
Locally designed and built since 1997