

## California Friendly Garden Contest Under Way

Organizers of the California Friendly Garden Contest are hoping to raise awareness about water conservation by showcasing the most colorful and water efficient home gardens in Orange County in what is coming to be called the driest year on record.

As we reported last month, the contest kicked off in April. Information about the contest and entry forms are available at [www.rogersgardens.com/gardencontest/](http://www.rogersgardens.com/gardencontest/). The deadline to enter is June 17. Irvine Ranch Water District (IRWD) is one of the sponsors of the contest organized by Roger's Gardens of Newport Beach.

*continued on page two...*



*Nick Mrvos (right) and Fiona Sanchez of IRWD's Conservation Dept. at Roger's Gardens.*

## IRWD Conservation Specialist is Garden Contest Judge

The nine judges for the Roger's Gardens California Friendly Garden Contest represent a mix of landscaping industry professionals, watershed environmentalists and a garden writer.

Among the judges is Nick Mrvos, landscape water conservation specialist for IRWD. Mrvos has more than 20 years of experience in water efficient landscape management practices. He

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## Be Water Aware in May

So far in 2007, this area has received about two inches of rain – far below our average. This could officially become our driest year since records have been kept. In California May is designated as Water Awareness Month.

In Southern California, where a normal rainfall year like 2006 could be followed by several drought years, it's important for residents to know where their water comes from and that it needs to be used wisely in both wet years and dry.

Approximately 65 percent of Irvine Ranch Water District's (IRWD) drinking water supply comes from local groundwater wells. These wells range in depth from 400 to 2,000 feet and extract high quality water from the Orange County Groundwater Basin. This basin is a resource shared by all of the cities and water districts in north and central Orange County. Because Lake Forest is outside the groundwater basin boundaries, only about five percent of that area's overall water supply comes from underground through three wells within the city of Lake Forest.

Approximately 35 percent of IRWD's drinking water is purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). This imported water comes from the Colorado River and Northern California. Colorado River water must travel 250 miles to reach Orange

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## Streaming Video of Water Conservation Tips

Irvine Ranch Water District is pleased to provide a streaming video of outdoor conservation tips from IRWD's Conservation Supervisor Fiona Sanchez.

Sanchez provided water conservation tips at a recent residential gardening workshop. The workshop featured both fact-filled talks and plant displays by local irrigation, gardening and landscape specialists. Irvine's local cable TV news program taped a story which aired on ICTV Channel 30 and can be viewed at IRWD's Web site, [www.irwd.com](http://www.irwd.com). Select "IRWD videos" from the side-bar in the "Media Information" area.

*continued from page one...*

## Be Water Aware in May

County, while water from Northern California must travel more than 400 miles.

Water Awareness Month is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year. IRWD offers many events and activities for customers to highlight the statewide program. We offer free conservation devices on a one-time basis for customers. Stop by the headquarters office at 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue during business hours to pick up these devices. Information is available about water-saving toilets and rebate programs for toilets and water-saving clothes washers.

If you want to landscape your yard while saving water and lowering your water bill, we have videos from Sunset Magazine available for loan to our customers. Rebates for SmarTimer irrigation controllers are also available.

### Water Saving Tips

Here are a few hand tips to help you save water:

- Turn off water while brushing teeth or shaving.
- Use a brush and bowl of water instead of running water over fruits and vegetables.
- Use a broom or rake rather than a hose to remove leaves and debris from the driveway, walk, patio and pool deck. This saves water and prevents urban runoff.
- Cover your swimming pool to slow down evaporation.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running it at the tap until it cools.

## Watch Your Mail

Public agencies are now required to notify customers regarding upcoming changes in our rates and charges. While IRWD is anticipating the need for modest increases in water and sewer rates, the specifics vary according to the area where you receive service. Therefore, we are sending customized notifications to our customers by mail. You should receive this notification during the month of May. If, after receiving this notice, you have further questions, please contact our Customer Service Department at (949) 453-5300.

*continued from page one...*

## California Friendly Garden Contest Under Way

The grand prize is a \$2,500 weather-based irrigation controller, a certificate and garden plaque.

The contest divisions are:

- Best Aesthetics, which includes curb appeal, color, form, texture and plant health.
- Best Use of Plants, which includes plants appropriate for Orange County's Mediterranean climate, appropriate plant combinations, innovative plants and creative use of plants.
- Best Water Efficiency, which includes a well-designed irrigation system, minimum water runoff and water conservation.
- Do-it-Yourself, which includes a garden designed, installed and maintained primarily by the homeowner with less than 20 percent professional assistance.

Winners in each of the division will receive \$500 and a certificate. Criteria for entry include:

- Residential properties only
- Must be within the boundaries of Orange County
- The garden must be at least one month old
- No employees or family members of Roger's Gardens or the sponsors may enter

According to Roger's Gardens, California Friendly is described this way: "Smart and sustainable landscaping is the most visible feature of the California Friendly home, with outdoor spaces designed in harmony with the surrounding environment using beautiful and less-than-thirsty plants, state-of-the-art irrigation controllers and precision sprinkler heads."

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## IRWD Conservation Specialist is Garden Contest Judge

studied horticulture and landscape irrigation science at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

He is a member of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants, the California Landscape Contractor's Association, the Irrigation Association (I.A.) and is an I.A. Certified Landscape Auditor. He is also a Certified Master Gardener through the Orange County Chapter of the University of California Cooperative Extension.

An IRWD employee since 1995, Mrvos currently manages IRWD's successful landscape water conservation program.



- **This is the growing season for most plants, making it the optimal time to fertilize.** For this growth stage, look for a balanced, organic fertilizer.
- **Water deeply to encourage deep root growth.** Aerating your lawn can improve root growth. Orange County has predominantly heavy clay soils, which absorbs water at a slower rate. To get the deep water penetration, try watering for short periods twice or even three times in one day at least an hour apart. This watering pattern produces better root growth than watering a little every day.
- **Water your lawn when it needs it.** Check by stepping on the grass. If it springs back up when you move, it doesn't need water. If it stays flat, turn on the sprinkler. Trees and shrubs generally require about half (some shrubs even less) of what the lawn needs. If you're watering every day or every other day, you're providing more than most plants need. Check the moisture of the soil 3-6" below the surface. With our heavy clay soils, the surface may look dry, but the clay remains moist beneath the surface.
- **Prevent runoff:** Landscapers may turn sprinkler controllers up too high. Watch for runoff and check for broken sprinkler heads. Runoff will carry fertilizers into the storm drain and contribute to pollution in our waterways.

## Suggested Weekly Watering Schedule

*Weekly Watering Schedule for SPRAY HEAD IRRIGATION SYSTEMS*

### MAY

Turf grass: 3 days, 3 cycles\* of 3 minutes  
Trees, shrubs, groundcover: 2 days, 3 cycles\* of 3 minutes  
Percent option: 80% \*\*

### JUNE

Turf grass: 2-4 days, 2-3 cycles\* of 3-4 minutes  
Trees, shrubs, groundcover: 2 days, 3 cycles\* of 3 minutes  
Percent option: 100% \*\*

*\*By "cycling" your irrigation timer to turn on for the suggested number of minutes an hour apart, you reduce runoff and gain deeper watering and healthier root growth. Start with this weekly schedule and increase the times only if your plants show signs of stress. If stress occurs only in isolated areas, check your irrigation system before increasing the time.*

*\*\*Some irrigation controllers have a feature by which the watering time can be set by changing the percentage instead of specifically entering the days, cycles and minutes. If you don't have the instructions for your controller, check the manufacturer's website. Many controller manufacturers provide online access to the owner's manual.*

**IRWD OFFICES CLOSED ON THE FOLLOWING HOLIDAY:**

- Monday, May 28, 2007

**SHADETREE PARTNERSHIP EVENTS**

- Community service hours are available for all volunteer tree planting activities. For more information call (949) 453-5670 or visit their Web site at [www.shadetreepartnership.org](http://www.shadetreepartnership.org).

**SEA AND SAGE AUDUBON EVENTS:**

- **Bat Walks on May 25, June 8 & 22, August 10 & 17 from 7 to 8:45 p.m. at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary.** The Bat Walk is one activity that truly deserves the designation of "unique." Local bat specialist Stephanie Remington dispels many myths about bats with a slide presentation and a walk after dark around the San Joaquin Marsh with sonar detectors tuned to the frequencies of the two most common species of bats living in the area. Cost is \$12 per adult and \$6 for children 7-12.
- **Nature Day Camp Program for children at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary.** Four different camp programs will be offered: **Fledgling Camp** (7-8 years) June 25-29; **Marsh Bird Camp** (9-12 years) July 9-13 or July 16-20; **Advanced Bird Camp** (11 years & older) July 23-27 and July 30-August 4; and **Wildlife Photography Workshop** (12 years-adults) July 23-27 or July 30-August 4. Space is limited.

For information, visit the Sea & Sage Audubon website at: [www.seaandsageaudubon.org](http://www.seaandsageaudubon.org) or call (949) 261-7963.

**CITY OF IRVINE EVENT**

- **Monday, May 28 at 10 a.m. - Memorial Day Flag Service (Honoring all who serve) at the Colonel Bill Barber Marine Corps Memorial Park, 4 Civic Center Plaza in Irvine.** Memorial Day is a time of remembrance; a time for Americans to reconnect with their history by honoring those who have given their lives while defending our nation and the ideals we cherish. The community will pay tribute to our nation's fallen service men and women and pay special homage to local service members, at home, abroad and posthumously. For more information, call (949) 724-6606.

**ASSISTANCE LEAGUE OF IRVINE**

- **Assistance League of Irvine Thrift and Gift Shop,** 17801 Main Street, Suite H (Sky Park South), Irvine, (949) 955-3437. Donations welcome during normal business hours: Wednesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

*Assistance League of Irvine is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to providing programs and services that will enrich and improve the quality of life in Irvine.*

**FAMILIES FORWARD**

- **Supplies are dwindling.** Non-perishable items needed. Donations may be brought to the Families Forward warehouse at 9221 Irvine Blvd., Irvine 92618. Office hours are Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Volunteers needed.** Want a great place to volunteer and feel like you are making a difference? Be a Families Forward volunteer. For more information call (949) 552-272.

*Families Forward exists to help families in need achieve and maintain self-sufficiency through housing, counseling, education and other support services.*

**CASA VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is seeking volunteers to serve as advocates and mentors for abused children. An information session will be held on **Wednesday, June 13 from 6 to 8 p.m.** at the Irvine Heritage Library, 14361 Yale Avenue, Irvine. R.S.V.P. (714) 619-5155.

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TO PRESERVE MILITARY HERITAGE FOR GREAT PARK**

- Voices of former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station veterans will now be preserved through a unique project at California State University – Fullerton's Center for Oral and Public History. The Oral History Project, part of the Great Park History Program, aims to preserve the history of El Toro Marine Corps Air Station and its transition to the Orange County Great Park by conducting and recording a series of oral interviews. Phase one of the Oral History Project will be financed by the Orange County Great Park Corporation. If you were stationed at or have memories of the El Toro Marine Air Station and would like to participate in the Oral History Project please call (714) 278-8415 or send your contact information to [coph-eltono@fullerton.edu](mailto:coph-eltono@fullerton.edu). Information is also available online at <http://coph.fullerton.edu>.

The mission of Irvine Ranch Water District, a public agency, is to provide reliable, high quality water and sewer service in an efficient, cost effective manner and environmentally sensitive way that provides a high level of customer satisfaction.

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**24 Hour Service  
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Should you discover a disruption in your water service or other problems call the IRWD 24-hour emergency line and a representative will assist you.

Visit the IRWD

Web site:

**[www.irwd.com](http://www.irwd.com)**

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