

The Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program (SCVURPPP or Program) has partnered with the Metropolitan Adult Education Program (MAEP) and the Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County to implement the *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener Program*.

This training program is an educational initiative that brings quality instruction to professional landscapers, gardeners and landscape maintenance workers on how to “garden green” and use techniques that support sustainable landscaping practices.

The first *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener* training session was held from February 7 to April 17, 2008 at the MAEP campus in San Jose. Each 2-hour class consisted of a presentation on the *Green Gardener* standardized curriculum adapted for our local area, hands-on activities to demonstrate concepts and additional information by experts on the topic. Volunteers from the Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County assisted with class implementation. Twenty-seven individuals successfully completed the first training. Two additional *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener* introductory level classes were offered in September 2008, one with a Spanish-speaking instructor. Twenty individuals registered for the training in Spanish and seventeen for the training in English. The cost of the courses was subsidized by the Program and MAEP. Ecology Action of Santa Cruz provided financial support for implementing the Spanish language classes in September 2008.



## Background and Curriculum



The *Green Gardener Program* began in Santa Barbara County in March 2000, and is now being implemented in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. The Monterey Bay and Santa Barbara programs, with the help of Ecology Action of Santa Cruz, collaborated to standardize and extend the bilingual curriculum. In 2007, the *Green Gardener Program* was successfully adapted and implemented in Santa Clara Valley communities, with the first introductory class completed in April 2008.

The standard *Green Gardener* training curriculum covers topics related to maintaining soil health, use of fertilizers and grass-cycling, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, irrigation (design, scheduling, and troubleshooting), pruning, use of mulches and compost, selection of the right plant for the right place (including the use of native species) and air quality issues. The training modules are chosen to revisit all common garden horticulture topics and promote sustainable landscape management practices. As a result, training materials emphasize the connection between maintaining healthy plants and landscapes through the use of effective alternative pest control strategies rather than continued pesticide

usage. Techniques learned help individuals employ practices which promote effective irrigation to prevent runoff, minimize waste, and prevent stormwater pollution from fertilizer and pesticide use.

The *Green Gardener Program* is offered at two levels, Standard and Advanced. Each training level consists of ten, 2-hour sessions on the core curriculum topics. Students must attend at least 80 percent of the classes and pass a final examination on the core subjects to be placed on *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener* lists promoted to the public. To maintain their status as *Green Gardeners*, individuals must meet annual continuing education requirements or demonstrate that they are implementing the practices learned.

## Outreach Efforts



To inform landscape maintenance workers about the trainings and to encourage homeowners and businesses to hire trained *Green Gardeners* for their landscape maintenance needs, two sets of advertisements were placed on English and Spanish radio stations. In addition, news releases about the trainings were developed and submitted pitched to various media outlets. Media coverage was received in a number of newspapers and radio stations including the *San Jose Mercury News*, *Almaden Times Weekly*, *Milpitas Post*, *Santa Cruz Sentinal*, *Urban Agriculture News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *El Observador*, CBS5, KTVU 2, and KLIV.

Information about the *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener Program* has been added to the Program's Watershed Watch website ([www.myWatershedWatch.org](http://www.myWatershedWatch.org)). The website also includes a list of *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardeners* who have successfully completed the training classes, their company name and contact information.

## Evaluation of Effectiveness

The *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener Program* has proven uniquely successful in helping the Program reach new audiences. While other existing programs educate residents, pest control operators and landscape designers about urban runoff, the selection of less-toxic pest control methods, and resource conservation, training opportunities for small, independent landscaping businesses are not available. Employees at these businesses often do not receive any formal training. However, they are responsible for maintaining a large number of residential and commercial landscapes. The *Green Gardener Program* offers participants the opportunity to learn new techniques and enhance their skills while meeting the growing customer demand for "green" practices. The *Green Gardener Program* is the only training available that includes a fully-developed curriculum in Spanish. As a result, stormwater agencies are able to reach an underserved audience with this training.

The following mechanisms have been developed to evaluate effectiveness and improve future trainings:

- **Post training evaluations** – Participants are requested to fill out a short evaluation form after each class to determine the effectiveness and usefulness of the presentation and guest expert presenters. In addition, a more detailed survey is conducted after the training sessions are complete. Post-training evaluations conducted after the first *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener* training classes indicate an increased awareness of sustainable landscaping practices (e.g., urban runoff, IPM and water conservation). In the fall 2008 classes, a brief pre-test on specific landscape maintenance practices was given. Individuals will be re-tested on these same questions at the completion of the class to determine if there was an increase in awareness of good landscape management practices.
- **Final test** – To obtain a Certificate of Completion and be included on *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener* lists, all participants must attend at least 80 percent of the class sessions and pass a final examination on the core subjects. This ensures that they understand the topics being taught and will be able to implement practices learned at their client locations.
- **Follow-up survey** – During FY 2008-2009, the Program will interview *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardeners* from the spring 2008 classes to determine the level of practices implemented during landscape maintenance.

## California Stormwater Quality Association (CASQA) Award

In July 2008, the Program and Co-permittees were selected to receive the CASQA Outstanding Regional Stormwater News, Information, Outreach and Media Project Award for implementing the *Santa Clara Valley Green Gardener Program*. Program staff accepted the award on behalf of the Program at the Annual CASQA Conference in Oakland on September 23, 2008.



SCVURPPP is an association of the thirteen cities and towns (Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Monte Sereno, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, Sunnyvale) in the Santa Clara Valley, together with Santa Clara County and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Program participants share a common permit to discharge stormwater to South San Francisco Bay.