Sustainable demonstration garden now open for viewing

Most landscapes are planted and cultivated for vibrant plants. Sustainable landscapes are planted and cultivated for a vibrant future.

In a span of approximately six months, initiated with volunteered design plans from Palomar College students and continued with assistance from various businesses and organizations in the community, Vallecitos Water District (Vallecitos) now has a beautiful, sustainable demonstration garden that uses minimal resources as a benefit to all.

One important sustainable feature is the garden’s rain water harvesting system. Lowering reliance on potable water, the system collects rain from the roof that would otherwise be wasted and stores it in three tanks with a combined 2,500 gallons of capacity.

The captured water from the system supplies water to prominent water features located throughout the garden. Similarly, the units run on solar power, easing reliance on electricity from the California grid.

Further resource savings are demonstrated through the use of California-friendly plants. When combined with mulch and compost, the plants are bolstered with moisture and nutrients, eliminating or reducing the need for fertilizers, which can be harmful to the environment if they flow into the storm drain system.

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Bill payment options

Did you know that Vallecitos offers multiple ways to pay your water bill? In addition to mailing or dropping off your payment at the drop box located at our Administrative office, you can also make your payment electronically via the following options:

- **Automatic payment option / Automated Clearing House (ACH)**
  This free service allows your payment to be automatically withdrawn from your checking account each month. Download the form at www.vwd.org.

- **Bill payment service**
  Many financial institutions allow you to pay your bills online free of charge. Please check with your bank to see if they offer this service.

- **E-check (online payment option)**
  Payments can be made online or over the phone from your checking account. (Note: This service is offered through Official Payments Corp., which assesses a small fee.)

- **Credit card payment**
  Make a payment quickly over the phone or internet from your credit card. (Note: This service is also offered through Official Payments Corp., which assesses a small fee.)

We have been actively working on providing customers access to view their water account information and then make their payment online. We expect this service to be offered by the end of 2011.

If you would like more information on payment options, go to the Customer Service icon on our website at www.vwd.org or contact our Customer Service Department at (760) 744-0460.
Every day, the Vallecitos Water District takes millions of gallons of water into its sewer system. But for us, what goes in the sewer system isn’t as important as what won’t come out.

It’s easy to assume that foreign objects, such as tree roots, are the culprit for most sewer overflows. However, some would be surprised to learn of the havoc caused by regular, everyday household objects that accumulate over time to create massive blockages that can lead to expensive spills and harm to the environment.

For example, it is common knowledge that grease is bad for your arteries. The same can be said for the sewer system. When poured down the drain, leftover household cooking grease swells into a ball that blocks sewer pipes – an occurrence responsible for many of the sewer spills in our region.

The easiest way to protect your home and the environment is a simple change in habit. Instead of pouring grease down the drain, throw it in the garbage.

For disposal ease, Vallecitos, for a limited time, is giving away free Fat Trapper grease collection bins, specifically designed to store cooking grease until it is time to throw it away. The airtight unit contains foil-lined bags to contain your cooking grease. Once full, simply throw the bag away.

Also, although dental floss may lead to a healthy gum line, it does not lead to a healthy sewer pipe. After being flushed down the toilet, similar to grease, it meets up with other foreign objects to create a massive ball that serves as a blockage that can eventually lead to an overflow.

Even if it does manage to get through the sewer, floss doesn’t grind up at treatment facilities, which can lead to equipment failure and, ultimately, more sewer overflows. Alleviate the possibility of this happening by disposing of floss in the trash.

Similar to the problems caused by dental floss, disposable diapers, feminine sanitary products, cotton balls, cigarette butts, rags, Q-tips, and baby wipes can also clog pipes and sewer systems. Even if labeled “flushable,” it’s still best to place these items in the trash.

By everybody doing his or her part, these enemies to the sewer system can be kept at bay to minimize the potential for environmental problems, traffic-tie-ups due to crews needing to repair sewer lines, or even flooded homes and businesses.

For more sewer care advice, including requesting a free Fat Trapper for your residence, please contact Vallecitos’ Conservation Department at (760) 744-0460.

Interested customers can obtain a FREE Fat Trapper grease collection bin by contacting Vallecitos’ Conservation Department at (760) 744-0460. (Note: Limited supplies available.)

Dental floss... Great for your teeth, not so great for the sewer lines.
As you may recall, Vallecitos, as well as nine other agencies in the county, previously negotiated an agreement with Poseidon Resources to receive desalinated water that would be produced in Carlsbad. Desalinated water per unit is more expensive than the imported water currently received from Vallecitos' wholesalers. As an incentive to increase imported water availability and to assist with locally developed water supplies, one of Vallecitos' wholesalers, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), agreed to subsidize a portion of the cost to increase affordability for critical projects.

However, Vallecitos' other wholesaler, the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), recently decided to take legal action against MWD regarding its rate structure. An unfortunate casualty of the lawsuit is MWD discontinuing its subsidy to ensure affordability.

As a result, Vallecitos and the other agencies have set aside their individual interests to allow SDCWA to represent them and enter into an agreement with Poseidon Resources.

Negotiations between the two are ongoing and will hopefully end with this much-needed water source available at a price that all can afford.