

## News Release



### **The Water Conservation Garden**

12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West  
El Cajon, CA 92019  
619.660.0614 x10

<http://www.thegarden.org>

"Promoting water conservation in the southern California landscape through excellent exhibits

Contact: Marty Eberhardt 619.660.1684  
[marty@thegarden.org](mailto:marty@thegarden.org)

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### **Water Conservation Garden to Change Governance in January, 2011**

#### ***JPA Members Approve Change to Improve Garden's Operations and Fund-Raising Potential***

In order to meet the growing demand for programs at the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College, the Garden's Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Board has agreed to convert governance of the Garden, including responsibility for Garden operations and budget, to the Garden's current nonprofit 501c(3) partner, the Friends of the Water Conservation Garden. The conversion will be complete by January 2011.

The Garden will transition to the new governance structure to give it more operational flexibility and fund-raising potential. This new structure stems from a Garden JPA Board strategic planning process earlier this year.

"Our mission is 'promoting water conservation in the Southern California landscape through excellent exhibits and programs that educate and inspire the public.' This move will enhance that mission," stated JPA Board President Chuck Muse. "The new board will consist of more community leaders who care deeply about our mission and who will be able to find new and creative ways to support the Garden beyond what government agencies alone can provide."

The Garden will add several members to the nonprofit board throughout 2010. Three JPA representatives will be included when the new board is constituted in January 2011.

The JPA's water district members – Helix Water District, Otay Water District, Sweetwater Authority, the City of San Diego, and the San Diego County Water Authority – will contribute special funding to assist with the transition process. This includes funding for a development director to manage strategic and tactical efforts to increase donor support.

The Garden was created in response to the drought of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Helix and Otay water districts saw the need to model water-wise gardening to homeowners through inspiring garden exhibits.

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They teamed up with the Grossmont-Cuyamaca College District, which had (and has) an excellent horticulture program at Cuyamaca College, and an appropriate physical site. The three formed the original Joint Powers Authority to govern the Garden. The Garden is now celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

“We are delighted to have the Garden at Cuyamaca College,” said Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Chancellor Cindy L. Miles, a member of the JPA. “It is an absolute jewel, but it’s a hidden jewel. This new structure and fundraising capability will raise the visibility of the Garden and will stimulate support for its presence and vital role in our region.”

More than 52,000 people visited the Garden last year, and the Garden reached more than 100,000 people with its outreach programs. The Garden received the Rain Bird Corporation’s prestigious international award for leadership in water conservation in 2007. In 2009, *Sunset Magazine* listed it as one of the “Top Ten Western Public Gardens.”

Garden hours and operation will continue normally during the transition process. The Garden has 16 different garden exhibits showcasing different aspects of water-smart gardening, from a bird-and-butterfly attracting garden, to a “meadow” (using low-water grasses), to a fire-wise landscaping exhibit. Classes for all ages include the popular “Toss the Turf” and “Ask the Designer,” and are offered on a regular basis. Highly acclaimed tours and assemblies for schoolchildren with Ms. Smarty Plants are available upon request for a modest fee.

Three times a year, the Garden hosts festivals that present all aspects of water smart gardening, including drought-tolerant plants for sale. The Water Smart Gardening Festival will be held on November 14, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Garden’s Executive Director, Marty Eberhardt, indicated, “The need for water-smart landscaping help will only increase as the area’s water supplies tighten and rates rise. The Garden expects to serve increasing numbers of San Diego County residents each year.

“We are excited about our important role in helping to change San Diego County’s landscaping to fit its arid climate. The Garden is testament to the fact that water-smart landscaping can be beautiful landscaping,” Eberhardt stated.

Michael Grisdale, president of the Friends of the Garden board of directors, added, “A great Garden and teaching tool deserves the best possible structure and partners to ensure its continued growth and success. We’re delighted to be taking this important step forward in Garden structure and governance, together with both our current JPA supporters and anticipated additional new partners, to help sustain that continued growth and success.”

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*Directions to the Garden: The Water Conservation Garden is located at 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West in El Cajon, where Jamacha Rd. (not Jamacha Blvd.) and Hwy 94 meet. From Hwy 15 or Hwy 805, merge onto Hwy 94 East to Cuyamaca College Drive West. From Hwy 8 take the 2<sup>nd</sup> St. off ramp in El Cajon, which turns into Jamacha Rd and then turn onto Cuyamaca College Drive West. Information about the garden, including detailed directions and a map, can be found at [www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org).*