

NEWS RELEASE
DATE: November 17, 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Water Suppliers Launch Interactive Gardening Site

New Website from CLWA and Water Retailers Offers Planning Tools, Local Garden Profiles

If you think water-wise landscaping means, “cactus and gravel,” think again — because your local Santa Clarita Valley water suppliers have launched a new interactive online landscape planning tool that can help you improve your water use efficiency and create magazine-beautiful landscaping at the same time.

The new website, www.santaclaritagardens.com, offers virtual garden tours, photo galleries, information on plants that will thrive locally, links to other resources, information on proper irrigation and interactive tools including a “My List” feature that enables users to create customized lists of plants that may work for their landscaping.



screenshot of www.santaclaritagardens.com

“It’s a powerful tool, really,” said Stephanie Anagnoson, Water Conservation Program Coordinator for Castaic Lake Water Agency. “Visitors to this site will find a wealth of information, interactive features and stunningly beautiful photographs of local landscapes that are utilizing plants that thrive locally. The ‘Garden Tours’ featured on the website are local homes — these are your friends and neighbors who have found beautiful ways to use water efficiently.”

— More —

2-2-2-2

The new website is a joint effort of CLWA, the Newhall County Water District, the Santa Clarita Water Division and the Valencia Water Company. The site's features include:

- ◆ Garden Tours: Virtual tours of local gardens featuring plants and landscape designs that are well-suited to the Santa Clarita Valley climate.
- ◆ Garden Gallery: Photos of local gardens. Just as in the Garden Tours, visitors can hover the mouse over a portion of the image to zoom in on a plant and read information about it.
- ◆ Plants: Helpful lists of plants, categorized by type, with listings of trees, shrubs, ground covers, perennials and more.
- ◆ 'My List': A feature that allows a visitor to add plants to his or her own list for future reference. The site 'remembers' the visitor when he or she returns using the same computer, enabling the visitor to come back and view the list later.
- ◆ Watering Guide: User-friendly information and tips on how long to water, how often to water, sample irrigation schedules and more.
- ◆ Resources: Links to other resources, including garden design tips, maintenance advice and water-wise gardening design ideas from GardenSoft, which produced the site in cooperation with the local water suppliers.

"This is a great collaboration among the Santa Clarita Valley Family of Water Suppliers," said Matt Dickens, Resource Conservation Manager for Valencia Water Company. "I think it is a great tool that allows our customers to see how the limitations of 'turfscaping' have affected landscaping for quite some time, and to see really how beautiful drought-tolerant landscaping can make a yard. It can actually make a yard look greener than grass."

Dickens said residents often find new landscaping options "require a lot less mowing and blowing" than landscapes that utilize a large amount of turf. "I'm not saying turf is bad, but turf by itself is kind of limiting our landscapes. You can expand the palette — it doesn't mean you have to rip out all your grass. Take out the grass that doesn't perform well, and put in plants that will do well there."

And, he added, the new site provides compelling visual evidence of how well water-efficient landscaping can work in the SCV: "The pictures are fantastic. When you put pictures to it, it makes a lot more sense and becomes a lot more meaningful to folks."

Janet Keith, Residential Conservation Coordinator for Valencia Water Company, said users will find the "My List" feature especially handy.

"There are dozens and dozens of choices. The plant information is quite useful to show you what type of plants will work in the shade, with what type of irrigation, and so on — you can find something for whatever unique landscaping challenge you're trying to address," she said. "If you click on one that you really like, and add it to your list, the website will keep track of your choices."

— More —

3-3-3-3

Cathy Z. Hollomon, Associate Water Resources Planner for CLWA's Santa Clarita Water Division, said it's important to remember that santaclaritagardens.com offers a locally customized look at water-wise landscaping choices and methods.

"It's not generic. This website is specific to the Santa Clarita Valley, so all the information applies to our valley," Hollomon said. "I think that's huge, because our climate is a little different than the surrounding areas. We're not as wet as the coast, and we're not as dry or hot as the Antelope Valley. We're just different enough, and having it specific to our valley, makes it a tremendous resource."

Robert McLaughlan, Customer Service and Water Efficiency Coordinator for Newhall County Water District, agreed, saying santaclaritagardens.com has already benefited some visitors, including himself.

"I've actually used it myself — I got some ideas and went to a local nursery. It made me a bit more knowledgeable when I showed up at the nursery," he said, adding, "It's about more than just plants. We help you if you don't know what types of sprinklers to use, or if you need information on irrigation timing. Most people have a tendency to over-water just because they don't know."

McLaughlan said all of the water providers hope santaclaritagardens.com will help people rethink how they landscape, in a healthy way. "I think people, when they hear the word 'conservation,' they think that they have to put rock and cactus in their yard, and that's not the idea. We want people to have a beautiful-looking yard," he said. "We don't want to tell people that you can't use water. That's not the goal of the water districts out here. We just want people to be more efficient with what we have."

McLaughlan added: "Water is a precious resource and we want to utilize it that way. We don't want to be wasteful, not just with water but with everything in our lives."



Diane Benjamin, President of the Gardening Club of Santa Clarita, tends to her vegetable garden. Visitors to Santa Clarita Gardening and Landscaping (santaclaritagardens.com) can find helpful hints for all kinds of gardening, including vegetable gardening.

###

About the Castaic Lake Water Agency:

The Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA) is the Santa Clarita Valley's public water wholesaler. CLWA operates two treatment plants, two pump stations, two storage facilities, and over 17 miles of transmission pipelines. Our mission is to provide reliable, quality water at a reasonable cost to the Santa Clarita Valley. www.clwa.org

About Newhall County Water District:

Newhall County Water District, created in 1953, is one of four water purveyors in the Santa Clarita Valley and currently supplies a population of approximately 30,000 with over 9,000 service connections. Governed by a five-member Board of Directors, elected at large by residents of the district, its 34-square mile service area includes four distinct geographical areas in the valley -- Pinetree, Newhall, Tesoro and Castaic. www.ncwd.org

About Santa Clarita Water Division:

Santa Clarita Water is a division of the Castaic Lake Water Agency (SCWD). SCWD is a water retailer that serves portions of the City of Santa Clarita and unincorporated portions of Los Angeles County in the communities of Canyon Country, Newhall and Saugus. SCWD supplies water from local groundwater sources and CLWA imported water. www.scwater.org

About Valencia Water Company:

Valencia Water Company (Valencia) serves approximately 113,000 people in the Santa Clarita Valley, including Valencia, Stevenson Ranch, and portions of Newhall, Saugus and Castaic. Valencia supplies its customers with high-quality water supplied from local wells and from imported supplies. Valencia is a public water utility regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the state agency charged with regulatory oversight of public utilities in California. www.valenciawater.com

For more information, please contact:

Dirk Marks
Water Resources Manager
Castaic Lake Water Agency
dmarks@clwa.org