



**Blue Thumb Neighbors
Frequently Asked Questions
July 9, 2012**

What is Blue Thumb Neighbors?

- Blue Thumb Neighbors is a free program designed to help residents create beautiful, River-Friendly Landscapes.

What is River-Friendly Landscaping?

- River-Friendly landscaping is a holistic approach to sustainable landscaping that uses resources, like water, efficiently and incorporates practices that foster soil health, reduce waste and prevent pollution of our air and waterways. It provides easy steps for creating healthy, beautiful landscapes while protecting and caring for our environment.

What are the benefits of River-Friendly Landscaping?

- Improves your lawn and garden with fewer chemicals
- Uses resources, like water, efficiently
- Requires less maintenance such as mowing and trimming
- Can save you money on fertilizers and pesticides
- Reduces green waste in your landscape
- Attracts birds, butterflies and other beneficial insects, like ladybugs to your garden
- Conserves landfill space because of the reduced green waste
- Reduces air pollution by reducing the amount of green waste that needs to be transported
- Improves water quality by reducing the amount of polluted water that goes into the storm drain then into our creeks and rivers

Where can I see examples of sustainable landscapes?

- **River Friendly Landscaping** Web site at:
<http://www.msa.saccounty.net/sactostormwater/RFL/Examples/default.asp>
- **Be Water Smart** Web site at:
<http://www.bewatersmart.info/water-smart-gardening/water-wise-gardening/>

What will participating households receive?

- Free at-home consultation on efficient watering.
- Free training and advice from professional landscapers, garden and irrigation experts at fun, educational workshops
- Free landscaping kits loaded with educational literature, tips and techniques to make your yard a healthier place for plants, kids and pets
- One participating household will receive free, hands-on assistance with improving two areas in their landscape
- Two participants will win weather-based “smart” irrigation controllers donated by Rain Bird and Hunter

Does it cost anything to participate in Blue Thumb Neighbors?

- This program is **offered at NO CHARGE** to residents.



What are some of the topics participants will learn?

- Ideas for creating your ideal outdoor living space that looks great and is also sustainable
- How to create a healthy, beautiful, low-maintenance landscape that compliments your home and neighborhood
- Proper irrigation scheduling—when and how much to water for healthy plants
- Ways to improve irrigation to reduce waste
- How to select high-impact, low-fuss plants appropriate for your specific growing conditions
- Methods for maintaining your landscape with fewer fertilizers and pesticides for a healthier environment for you and your family

How does the program work?

Each neighbor agrees to:

1) Participate in one at-home consultation on efficient watering (sponsored by the Carmichael Water District). During this one-hour consultation, participants will receive assistance with checking their irrigation system for water leaks and advice on scheduling. (August-September)

2) Participate in three educational workshops to be held at Deterding Elementary School, Multipurpose Room at 6000 Stanley Ave. from **6:30-8:30 p.m.** on the following dates:

- **Tuesday, September 11: Sustainable Landscape Design**--taught by Landscape Designer [Cheryl Buckwalter](#) of Landscape Liaisons
- **Tuesday, September 18: Efficient Watering**--taught by licensed Landscape Contractor and Irrigation Specialist [Don Smith](#)
- **Tuesday, September 25: Right Plant, Right Place**--taught by [Ellen Zagory](#), Director of Horticulture for the UC Davis Arboretum

3) **Saturday, October 13, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.:** Participate in one workshop at a participant's home during which attendees transform two areas while receiving hands-on training.

4) Fill out simple (five minutes or less) surveys on your own landscape care before and after the program.

What is included in the at-home consultation on efficient watering?

The at-home consultation on efficient watering, performed by trained irrigation professionals, identifies potential water savings at your property. The visit typically takes about an hour and consists of the following:

- Review the irrigation/watering system for broken sprinklers, inefficiencies such as tilt heads and overspray.
- Determine the homeowner's current water use, provide a suggested watering schedule.
- Provide training, if applicable, on how to use the irrigation controller.

Does Blue Thumb Neighbors advocate complete removal of turf and lawn?

- Blue Thumb Neighbors focuses on helping participants make informed decisions about using turf and lawn in landscaping, including proper irrigation scheduling and turf alternatives.



One participant will be selected to host a hands-on workshop (Blue Thumb Garden Party) during which attendees will transform two areas of the front yard. What will the Garden Party host receive?

- Personal consultation with professional landscape and irrigation experts.
- Sketch of the front yard's hydrozones.
- Landscape plan, plant list, materials and labor to transform one ornamental planting area.
- Materials and labor to replace older sprinkler heads with more efficient rotary nozzles in one turf area/watering zone.
- Services such as soil analysis, irrigation system evaluation and custom scheduling.
- Materials such as compost, mulch, low water-use plants and irrigation supplies needed for the workshop.

How will the Garden Party host be selected?

- A host will be selected from participants who fully participate in the program by completing the pre-program questionnaire, at-home consultation on efficient watering, three workshops and post-program survey.

Two participants will win weather-based "smart" irrigation controllers donated by Rain Bird and Hunter. How will those be given away?

- One controller will be provided to the participant selected to host the Blue Thumb Garden Party.
- Another controller will be awarded to a participant that fully participates in the program by completing the pre-program questionnaire, at-home consultation on efficient watering, all three workshops, post-program survey and Blue Thumb Garden Party. A name will be drawn from those eligible at the conclusion of the Blue Thumb Garden Party on Saturday, October 13.

Who sponsors Blue Thumb Neighbors?

- Blue Thumb Neighbors is sponsored by the [Regional Water Authority](http://BeWaterSmart.info) (BeWaterSmart.info) and the [Carmichael Water District](http://carmichaelwd.org) (carmichaelwd.org). The program is offered in partnership with the [Carmichael Creek Neighborhood Association](http://carmichaelcreek.org) (carmichaelcreek.org).

What is the Regional Water Authority (RWA)?

- RWA represents 24 water providers and affiliates in Sacramento, Placer and El Dorado counties, plus the city of West Sacramento. You can learn more about RWA and its Water Efficiency Program at BeWaterSmart.info.

What is the River-Friendly Landscaping Coalition (RFL)?

- RFL is a collaboration between public agencies, non-profit organizations, designers, private landscape architects and contractors in the greater Sacramento region. You can learn more about River-Friendly Landscaping at RiverFriendly.org.

How do I find out more and sign up?

- Contact Christine Kohn, Blue Thumb Neighbors Program Coordinator, by phone: 916-944-1631 or via e-mail: ckohn@INCommunications.biz.

###