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NEWS RELEASE

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New Blue Thumb Blog Helps Residents Create Beautiful, Water-Efficient Landscapes

SACRAMENTO--We've all heard the term "Green Thumb" used to describe someone with a natural skill for gardening. Now there's a new resource for gardeners to help them develop a "Blue Thumb"--a talent for creating a beautiful, water-efficient landscape.

In the Blue Thumb blog, local landscape and irrigation experts Cheryl Buckwalter of Landscape Liaisons and Vicky Bartish of EcoLandscape California share their personal and professional insights on topics such as:

- Selecting and maintaining high-impact, low-fuss plants appropriate for the Sacramento region
- Reading your landscape and making practical design decisions
- Matching your irrigation to your soil and plant type



Blue Thumb bloggers Vicky Bartish and Cheryl Buckwalter

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Cheryl and Vicky also answer vexing questions on landscaping and watering submitted by readers.

The Blue Thumb blog is hosted by the Regional Water Authority in partnership with and local water providers.

Join the conversation today at **BeWaterSmart.info**.

ABOUT BLUE THUMB BLOGGERS CHERYL AND VICKY

Cheryl Buckwalter

People in the world of landscape design usually start by saying, “I’ve always loved plants,” but as a child, I loved architecture. I liked sharp angles and clean lines, rectangles and squares, forms that made sense to my very practical and analytical mind. I used to visit the city dump and pick through the trash before it was fashionable to do so, finding treasures like tiny blue glazed tiles, or the end of a 50s style bookcase with just the right shape, or the marble base of a beautiful old lamp. I built forts, doll furniture and tiny buildings to fill the time when homework was done. I was into recycling and re-using early on.



I found myself in a series of desk jobs, all with lots of responsibility, details and organization, always keeping everything in the right place, running smoothly. Then I noticed that my spare time was filling with friends and neighbors asking me about their gardens and what they should plant “over there,” or how to revive an ailing plant. I seemed to know the answers or would research and learn what to do, and loved helping them make their gardens special—invoking the “spirit of the place.” I was hooked. I took jobs to learn more about design, and that’s when I met my husband, a soil scientist and biochemist. I knew we would make a good team.

I’ve always been independent, done my own thing, rather than following the crowd. While enrolled in Environmental Horticulture at Sierra College, I became extremely interested in water

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conservation and low water-use garden design in particular. These gardens were beautiful, practical and completely logical. That day I saw “The Big Picture” and knew this would be my life’s focus. It didn’t occur to me that I was leaping into the exploding field of precise, science-based water management in the landscape. Even now, years after graduation, I thrive on all there is to know about the world of landscaping and jump at opportunities to share my passion through workshops for families of all ages.

In the past two years, I have contracted with the Regional Water Authority on several special projects, including the River-Friendly Green Gardener Program. I recently became a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor and an EPA WaterSense Partner. I love being deeply entrenched in this business of wise water-use and management, not only for the landscapes I design, but all landscapes. Its importance to the continuing quality of our lives is just starting to be recognized. Frank Lloyd Wright said it well, “The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen.”

Vicky Bartish

In what seemed to others quite a radical shift, I gave up nursing after 27 years and found myself working in a local hardware store’s garden department. I asked them not to put me into the pesticides aisle, but that’s what they did and that’s why I am a 100 percent organic arborist and horticulturist. I learned the hard way about the bone-chilling toxicity of these products and vowed never to use them.



I gained great experience over time in wholesale and retail nurseries, specializing in the sustainable establishment, care and growing of trees and landscape plants.

Moving from Sacramento to the foothills in 1999 I found myself working at a Japanese maple nursery in Newcastle. My employer urged me to become a California Certified Nursery Professional and also to seek the Advanced Certification. Doing this eventually led me to serving two terms as President of the Superior Chapter of the California Association of

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Nurseries and Garden Centers. It also made me love Japanese maples and all trees even more. This practical experience, along with hundreds of hours of independent study, qualified me to sit for the Certified Arborist examination in 2006, and I am proud to be a member of the International Society of Arboriculture as well as the Western Chapter of the ISA.

In 2007, I joined EcoLandscape California, a non-profit organization committed to educating landscape professionals and the general public about the benefits of ecologically sound landscape and gardening methods, and serve as the organization's Interim Executive Director.

In the summer of 2009, I woke up dreaming of the "perfect irrigation company" The idea struck me as I thought of how closely all the sustainable landscape practices tie directly into water efficiency and how this concept seemed to be grossly overlooked on nearly every corner, in every yard and commercial business site. More forward thinking ways to irrigate the landscape seemed logical, given the less than ideal systems I was encountering on a daily basis. I called my friend Cheryl Buckwalter and posed the question to her..."what if?" The rest is history. She guided me into the world of water, where she had been working happily, and designing water-efficient landscapes for some time. It was the right place to be and the right time for me to dive in as well.

We became Certified Landscape Water Auditors in 2010 and maintain our focus, our dream, on a perfect world where everyone realizes the immense importance of water efficiency, and all landscapes are beautiful water-wise landscapes, maintained to preserve every precious drop of this finite resource with a perfect irrigation system.

I live in a three-acre arboretum in Newcastle, CA– all managed without chemicals, fertilizers or herbicides, with a spectacular bird and wildlife population–the ultimate sustainable environment.

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