Ocean-friendly Gardening

These two books show how to make your garden beautiful, reduce maintenance, and prevent pollution.

CHARLIE PLYBON

An ocean-friendly garden in South Beach.

STORY BY ROSEMARY HOWE CAMOZZI

"Help! Help! I'm drowning!" You hear the shouts and feel a surge of adrenaline. As soon as the swimmer is pulled from the water, you get to work performing CPR.

Those of us trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation don't hesitate to use our knowledge to save a life. Now we can all learn rescue techniques to save our threatened ocean, with help from two new books that show how changing our landscaping practices can help keep pollutants away from our watersheds. *Ocean Friendly Gardens* (written by Doug Kent and published by the Surfrider Foundation) will help you design, create, and maintain a landscape that doesn't pollute. The book promotes "CPR" techniques, which in this case, stands for Conservation, Permeability, and Retention, three keys to helping preserve and restore our oceans. We can conserve by using less water, more native plants, and fewer fertilizers and pesticides. We can increase permeability by limiting concrete and asphalt and allowing the landscape to absorb and filter more water, so that pollutants and nutrients don't end up in the ocean. We can increase retention by including dry creek beds, swales, and infiltration basins in our designs.

CHARLIE PLYBON

This residence in South Beach incorporates many techniques for ocean-friendly landscaping, including a pervious driveway.

CANDACE STOUGHTON/EMSWCD

An established rain garden in Portland.

GUS GATES

A rain barrel collects water for landscaping at this home south of Florence.

COURTESY EAST MULTNOMAH SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Left: Cross-section of a sunken-bed rain garden.

Here's the deal: Thirty to 80 percent of most homesites are comprised of impermeable surfaces that block the natural absorption of water. On top of that, we tend to plant non-native plants that require a lot of watering. Much of this water runs off and ends up at our local beach, and with it come fertilizers, pesticides, oils, cleaning solutions, and organic debris. "Everything flows to the sea," says Charlie Plybon, Oregon field manager for Surfrider. "Whether it's a block, four blocks, or four miles to the ocean, the things that flow from your yard will end up there.

"We need to think about our natural resources when we're making decisions at home," he adds. "We can take small steps that don't impede our way of life, yet make a big difference." These ocean-friendly gardens, he adds, not only protect natural resources, but beautify our yards and enhance property values. They are also much easier to maintain.

The book shows how to create a site plan that includes drainage areas, infiltration areas, and exit areas. Other sections offer info on identifying microclimates, designing an efficient irrigation system, creating permeable walkways, patios and driveways, and using water-retention techniques. Another section explains how the runoff from fertilizers heavy in nitrogen and phosphorus causes algae growth, and offers suggestions for homemade organic fertilizers. You'll also learn how to keep weeds down, deter pests and fungi, and manage hillsides and slopes.

"The coastal beaches are one of the first to see the impacts of runoff pollution," Plybon says. "Small tributaries take away stormwater and runoff, and the toxins and pollutants become concentrated where they emerge at the beach."

Ocean Friendly Gardens is available on Amazon or directly through Surfrider (*www.swell.com/Surfrider-Store-Educational*).

The Oregon Rain Garden Guide: Landscaping for Clean Water and Healthy Streams, is an Oregon Sea Grant publication (published by Oregon State University). It focuses on building sunken-bed gardens that collect and filter runoff water, thus allowing you to disconnect your downspout and capture water that would otherwise go into a storm drain. You'll also collect water that would otherwise run off the hard surfaces in your yard. According to the book, the gardens work like a natural forest, meadow, or prairie, helping keep watersheds healthy by filtering out toxins before they pollute streams and lakes.

You'll learn how to assess and map your site, rout water from impervious surfaces to the garden, construct a berm, do grading and plumbing, amend the soil, choose the best plants for your area, and more. The book includes region-specific tips for the Willamette Valley, the Coast, and southwestern, central, and eastern Oregon, as well as lists of trees, shrubs, perennials, rushes, sedges, and grasses suited for each area.

You can download the book for free by visiting *www.seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs.html* or by calling *541-737-4849*. Hard copies are $4.95 plus shipping and handling. ■

Hands-on Rain Garden Workshops

Newport: Newport Public Library—Wednesday, June 9, 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Robert Emanuel and Derek Godwin, authors of the Oregon Rain Garden Guide, and Frank Burris of the OSU Extension Service and Oregon Sea Grant, will help interested residents learn the skills needed to design, build, and maintain rain gardens. Designs resulting from the workshop will also be applied to the forthcoming Newport Public Library Rain Garden demonstration project. To learn more and/or register, call Stacy Polkowske at *541-265-2631* or Megan Kleibacker at *541-737-8715*. You can also register online at *https://secure.oregonstate.edu/osuext/register/69*.

Warrenton: Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, Fort Clatsop Visitors Center, Netul Room—Friday, September 17, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Learn how to create a sunken-bed rain garden. As a result of this class, a rain garden will be installed in front of the Fort Clatsop Visitors Center. ■