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Reclaimed water helps Monterey Road community garden grow

Comments

April 13, 2011 | 7:57 am



Photo: Adam Henry waters his plot. Credit: Ann Summa

Watering at the Monterey Road Eco-Community Garden (East) in Glendale is slightly more complicated than at most gardens, requiring the use of a key kept locked away in a shed. It is the first community garden in the state to be entirely reliant upon reclaimed water and although triple-filtered, the H₂O is still not considered potable, safe for drinking. The key makes sure that nobody but the gardeners – all “water certified” by Glendale Water and Power – can open the spigot. And unlike in the rest of Glendale, there are no watering restrictions here for when to water. The garden

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monthly water bill is about \$15 a month, leaving membership fees for other needs.



Guillaume Lemoine. A companion garden a block away, Monterey Road Eco-Community Garden (West), is now under construction.

Photo: A nozzle plugs into recycled runoff water from underground street gutters. Credit: Ann Summa

Both gardens represent a collaboration between the city of Glendale and the nonprofit Coalition for Green Glendale, a group started by Alek Bartrosouf and some of his friends -- all in their early 20s and non-plot holders here. He grew up in Glendale and returned home after graduating from UC Santa Cruz, wanting to do something for the community that would promote sustainable living. He teamed up with high school friend Ana Khachatryan (then at USC) and Garen Nadir (now studying environmental law at Loyola). The city approached the group about developing an odd-shaped, 11,000-square-foot plot of land adjacent to the onramp onto the 134 Freeway west at Cordoba Street. It had been vacant for 50 years, used only for parking city vehicles.

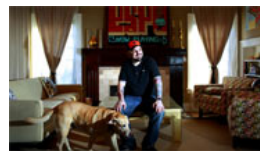
Where trucks parked there is now a bike rack, a dozen compost bins and a drought-tolerant California natives demonstration display -- a stylistic suggestion to the homeowners in the residential neighborhood where every street is tree shaded and every house has a front lawn.



Photo: Ann Summa

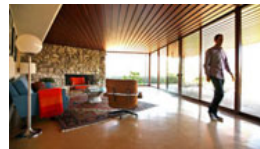
The majority of the gardeners here are condo or apartment dwellers and have no similar real estate available to them. They come from around the world: England, Peru, Trinidad, India, Armenia. And while there are dietary differences-- the Armenians grow lots of cilantro, parsley and dill, for example -- there are international commonalities. Almost everyone has lemongrass, donations from their

Weekly Home Stories



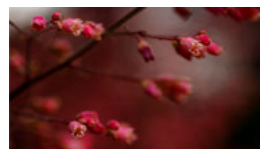
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Peruvian gardener, a multiple cancer survivor.

Adam Henry, a Nickelodeon director, is here on his lunch hour, watering his beets and carrots. "I wouldn't go out of my way to eat a beet usually. But if I pull it out of the ground, I'll eat it. Same with the carrots. And the peas? They're like candy."

He's not the only foodie. One late afternoon when she was alone in the garden, Maximova was called over to the chain link fence by a group of guys sporting tattoos and headbands. They wanted to chat out the garden. She was hesitant until they said "We're chefs."

"They came in and recognized all these plants they'd never seen in the ground. They asked about their workdays, wanting to help. We all eat food but to plant it, grow it, pick it -- most of us don't get that experience," she said.



Photo: Hannah Maximova, left, holds her son Linus and chats with Alek Bartrosouf and Garen Nadir, founders of the garden. Credit: Ann Summa

Bartrosouf, who is getting his master's degree in urban planning at UCLA, agrees: "Society is in such fast-paced mode. We get frustrated if it takes more than 10 seconds for a computer to start. Something so simple as picking weeds can be extremely therapeutic. It's manual labor and you feel good at the end."

— Jeff Spurrier



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Let's not forget the garden's designer, who donated his time and effort to both design and build the garden: Guillaume Lemoine of Picture This Land Landscape design (<http://picturethisland.com/>). Thanks Guillaume. We couldn't have done it without you!

Posted by: sara connors | 04/13/2011 at 09:56 AM

There's a great deal of useful details in this article (costs, logistics, process, etc). Thanks. Very inspiring.

Posted by: Patrick in DC | 04/13/2011 at 09:59 AM

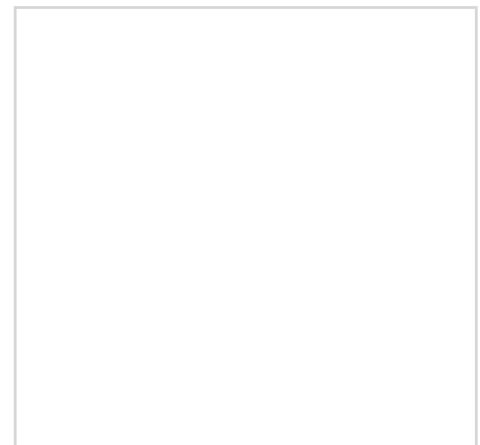
Thanks for all the support... if you have any questions don't hesitate to contact us!

Posted by: Alek Bartrosouf | 04/13/2011 at 03:26 PM

What a wonderful project and article. Thank you. Just a note that lavender is a nitrogen fixing plant so it can draw the nutrient from the air, where we don't want it, into the ground, where we do. Go lavender. This is a good reason not to use fertilizer-rich water on it, particularly in summer, when it benefits from being allowed to slip into dormancy. So maybe use that fabulously reclaimed nitrogen-rich water on annual veggies, which will love it? Anyway, congratulations to all on a fabulous garden and article.

Posted by: Emily Green | 04/14/2011 at 09:21 AM

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