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*How to Start Landscaping...
in a Russian River Friendly Way*

KAMALA BENNETT, SUSTAINABLE LIVING DESIGNS



A conventional landscape is transitioned to a Russian River-Friendly landscape.

Conventional landscape



Lawn sheet mulched in place



One year later

Russian River Watershed residents, business owners and policy makers are already thinking about the connection between their landscapes and the environment and they want to make a difference. Yet Russian River-Friendly landscaping practices require skill and expertise. Communicate your expertise to earn new clients and strengthen your existing customer loyalty, then expand to include more practices, marketing yourself as a Russian River-Friendly landscaper.

STEP 1: Start with the Russian River-Friendly practices that you already do and explain the benefits to your clients

STEP 2: Plan to offer more Russian River-Friendly landscaping practices

STEP 3: Market “Russian River-Friendly Landscaping Packages”

STEP 4: Integrate Russian River-Friendly into Green Building

STEP 5: Start your Russian River-Friendly Reference Library

STEP 1:

Start with the Russian River-Friendly practices that you already do and explain the benefits to your clients

The best strategy for offering Russian River-Friendly landscaping to your clients is to **start by identifying those practices that you already do.**

Then train yourself and your staff on the benefits. Learn how these practices can protect your client’s health or that of the environment, save landfill space, provide wildlife habitat or increase the value of their property.

Communicate your skills and the benefits of Russian River-Friendly landscaping to your customers or potential new customers. Feel free to share the information in these guidelines with them. Let them know you can help them landscape in an environmentally friendly manner with these Russian River-Friendly services. Emphasize that many of these services can save them money. Detail your skill in providing these benefits in periodic quality control reports mailed to your clients. Be sure to include the benefits

to your customer such as lower water bills and increased property value.

Include the practices and their benefits in your contracts. You may even want to request that your clients sign an agreement on the goals of their Russian River-Friendly Landscape program.



“We meet with clients to look at real life, practical solutions that are site specific.

Once interest is generated, we submit proposals with ROI’s so that clients can weigh the cost issue. We also keep them apprised of pending and future trends of the industry that are applicable locally.”

— Duane Feloni, Branch Manager, TruGreen LandCare, Windsor



Landscape professionals learn how to sheet-mulch.

PHOTO: CINDY NELSON

STEP 2:

Plan to offer more Russian River-Friendly landscaping practices

The ideal Russian River-Friendly landscape is designed, constructed and maintained with most, if not all, the practices listed in this guide. It is a holistic, integrated approach that yields the most benefits to your clients, your business, the environment and our community. It is more likely, though, that you will need to evolve towards that goal rather than instantly switch over.

Sit down with your staff and ask yourselves:

- Do we currently offer more practices from one principle than others? Why?
- What other Russian River-Friendly practices from the *Menu of Best Practices* (pages 10-11) might our clients also value?
- What additional practices would be relatively easy to learn about and implement in the near future?

Consider how to adopt more of the practices over time:

- Under the principle(s) at which your company is already strong, (such as *Conserve Water*) what would it take to offer all or most of the practices?
- What additional practices can you offer in the next fiscal year, or the next 2 years?
- What training do you need to offer more Russian River-Friendly services?
- Design professionals: ask that the landscapes you design be maintained in accordance with the *Russian River-Friendly Landscape Guidelines*.

Consider recommending firms with the following qualified professionals on staff:

- Bay-Friendly Qualified Maintenance Professionals. For a list of qualified professionals, visit www.bayfriendly.org. Click on 'Hire a Qualified Bay-Friendly Landscaper.'
- Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) program graduates. For a list of graduates, visit www.qwel.net. Click on 'Graduates.'



“The keys to sustainability are landscape designs that consider not only the DESIGN, but

also INSTALLATION and MAINTENANCE. Following “Right Plant-Right Place” as one bench mark is an example of good design, yet a sustainable system needs to include all three aspects.”

— Susie Dowd Markarian, APLD, Certified Sustainable Landscape Designer, Santa Rosa



PHOTO: VIRGINIA PORTER



“If we explain key issues in the Russian River Watershed, show the link to our landscape practices, and provide viable solutions, people will buy in.

It’s often difficult for people to feel that their small daily acts really mean something. We have to show them why their efforts make a difference.”

— Rick Taylor, Principal, Elder Creek Landscapes, Sebastopol



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Guide your Clients through a Transition Period

Transitioning a landscape that has been managed with few chemical inputs and some additions of organic amendments to a Russian River-Friendly landscaping maintenance program can be a relatively simple and short process. Landscapes that have been intensively treated with pesticides, over-watered and over-fertilized will require greater skill and time to transition.

- Let your customers know that it may take 2 years or more to make the change, that it will require skill, frequent monitoring and increased communication, and that their expenses could be greater during that period.
- Agree upon an acceptable period and include this in your contract.
- Start by assessing the soil and testing drainage.

STEP 3:

Market “Russian River-Friendly Landscaping Packages”

Another important question to ask yourself as you expand your Russian River-Friendly services is how to market them to your clients. Here are some suggestions for Russian River-Friendly Landscaping Packages that could be developed to both respond to and encourage customer demand:

Russian River-Friendly Soil Health Care Program

Soil is the foundation of a healthy, beautiful landscape. Offer the following practices:

- Assessing the soil and testing drainage
- Removing and storing topsoil during construction
- Protecting soil from compaction and erosion
- Amending the soil with compost
- Mulching regularly
- Feeding soils naturally with compost or compost tea
- Avoiding synthetic fertilizers
- Minimizing chemicals with a goal of eliminating them altogether

Russian River-Friendly Lawn Care Program

Lawns continue to be a part of our culture. But maybe it is time to rethink what we mean by a lawn. Russian River-Friendly landscaping emphasizes that high input lawns are not included solely for their looks. Small functional lawns — those that are used for play and relaxation — can be managed to minimize environmental impacts and provide your clients with a safer lawn by including:

- Grasscycling
- Aerating, then topdressing with compost
- Phasing out the scheduled application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides
- Feeding with compost or other natural or slow release fertilizers after analysis or demonstrated need
- Integrated pest management that includes:
 - Hand pulling weeds
 - Use of natural herbicides
 - Use of beneficial nematodes
 - Use of compost tea for disease management and nutrient cycling
- State of the art irrigation management to prevent over watering

Russian River-Friendly Wildlife Gardening

Specializing in designing, constructing or maintaining wildlife gardens is another opportunity for your business to grow and flourish. Develop expertise in the following practices and offer them to new and existing clients:

- Surveying flora and fauna
- Learning about local, natural plant communities and using them as models
- Conserving or restoring natural areas
- Diversifying and including many California native plant species
- Providing water and shelter
- Eliminating the use of pesticides



“Russian River-Friendly landscapes

are economically sound

landscapes. They require less

machine use, less water, less maintenance, no toxic chemicals, and source local materials. They are comfortable and engaging, and make the people involved with them feel good.”

— Kate Frey, Instructor, Sonoma State University Sustainable Landscape Certificate Program

Amending soil with compost may be one of your easiest selling points

Compost pays for itself over the long term as you and your clients benefit from:

- Bringing life to the soil
 - Reduces the need for fertilizers
 - Improves plant resistance to disease
 - Reduces need for pesticides
 - Degrades pollutants
- Healthier plants with an improved appearance
 - Increases customer satisfaction
- Faster planting in amended soils
- Reducing plant loss
 - Fewer callbacks
 - Improves profits
- Increasing water holding capacity
 - Irrigation costs are cut by as much as 50%
 - Reduces water bills for customer
 - Decreases stormwater runoff
- Paying back the cost of amending soil in 5-7 years
- Protecting the environment and the health of their families

ADAPTED FROM: FIELD GUIDE TO COMPOST USE, US COMPOSTING COUNCIL AND SOILS FOR SALMON: A LANDSCAPERS GUIDE TO BUILDING HEALTHY SOILS AND STREAMS, 2000.

STEP 4:

Integrate Russian River-Friendly into Green Building

GreenPoint Rated is a residential rating program for single family and multifamily new construction projects in California. It is administered by Build It Green and designed to provide a credible yet accessible entry point into green building and to guide home builders to achieve increasingly higher levels of performance. GreenPoint Rated is based on the *Build It Green Building Guidelines*, originally developed in Alameda County and later adopted by local governments throughout California. For more information, visit www.builditgreen.org.

Nationally, the US Green Building Council has developed a rating system that specifies 'green' standards for commercial, multifamily and civic buildings. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) is a voluntary program for rating the environmental impacts and sustainability of both new and existing building projects. Certification is awarded at different levels, based on the number of points earned. Go to www.usgbc.org for more information.

Also under development, through a partnership between the American Society of Landscape Architects, US Green Building Council and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center is the Sustainable Sites Initiative to develop national, voluntary standards for sustainable land development and management. Visit www.sustainableites.org for updates on their progress.

Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition

The **Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition** works in partnership to reduce waste and pollution, conserve natural resources, and create vibrant landscapes and gardens. The goal of the Coalition is to expand the Bay-Friendly landscaping and gardening programs to the entire nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Bay-Friendly Landscape Professional Training Opportunities

Successful completion of these classes will allow you to market your expertise and services as a Bay-Friendly Qualified Landscape Professional.

- **For landscape maintenance & construction professionals:**

Enroll in the 7-week Bay-Friendly Landscape Maintenance Training and Qualification Program. The training is currently available for professionals with clients in multiple counties in the Bay Area.

- **For landscape design and construction professionals:**

Bay-Friendly Coalition agencies offer half day trainings that feature case studies and guest experts. Landscape design professionals with clients in Alameda County can also enroll in the 3 week Bay-Friendly Design Training and Qualification program.

Visit the Coalition web site at www.bayfriendlycoalition.org for information or to view upcoming trainings, workshops, garden tours and conferences throughout the greater Bay Area.



PHOTO: ANNE MARIE ALLEN

STEP 5:

Start your Russian River-Friendly Reference Library with these titles:

Bornstein, Carol, David Fross and Bart O'Brien, *California Native Plants for the Garden*, Cachuma Press, 2005.

Bossard, Carla, John Randall and Marc Hoshovsky, *Invasive Plants of California Wildlands*, University of California Press, 2000.

Dreistadt, Steve, *Pests of Landscape Trees & Shrubs*, University of California Press, February 2004.

East Bay Municipal Utility District, *Plants and Landscapes for Summer-Dry Climates of the San Francisco Bay Region*, www.ebmud.com. May 2004.

Flint, Mary Louise and Steve Dreistadt, *Natural Enemies Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Biological Pest Control*, University of California Press, 1998.

Francis, Mark and Andreas Reimann, *The California Landscape Garden: Ecology, Culture and Design*, University of California Press, 1999.

Gilmer, Maureen, *California Wildfire Landscaping*, Taylor Publishing Company, 1994.

Lancaster, Brad, *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond*, Vol. I, Rainsource Press, 2006.

Lowry, Judith Larner, *Gardening With a Wild Heart: Restoring California's Native Landscapes at Home*, University of California Press, 1999.

Ludwig, Art, *The New Create an Oasis with Greywater*, Oasis Design, 2006.

Schmidt, Marjorie G., *Growing California Native Plants*, University of California Press, 1980.

Smith, Nevin, *Native Treasures: Gardening With the Plants of California*, University of California Press, 2006.

Thompson, J. William and Kim Sorvig, *Sustainable Landscape Construction: A Guide to Green Building Outdoors*, Island Press, 2000.

University of California Cooperative Extension, *A Guide to Estimating Irrigation Water Needs of Landscape Plantings in California*, 2000. www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/docs/wucols00.pdf

Russian River-Friendly Landscape Professional Training Opportunities

Green industry professionals, businesses owners and residents within the Russian River watershed are becoming aware of the benefits of landscaping with Russian River-Friendly principles. Expand your professional knowledge by taking advantage of these training opportunities which are aligned with all or some of the principles which define Russian River-Friendly Landscaping.

- Become a Master Gardener and learn about plants, soils, IPM and more:
 - Visit the Mendocino County Master Gardeners at cemendocino.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener578
 - Visit the Sonoma County Master Gardeners at groups.ucanr.org/sonomamg
- Santa Rosa Junior College offers Associate Degrees and Certificate Programs in a variety of landscape disciplines through its Environmental Horticulture department: www.santarosa.edu
- Sonoma State University offers a Sustainable Landscape Certificate Program: www.sonoma.edu/sustainablelandscape
- The EPA's Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper Program www.qweltraining.com
- Other professional groups and non-profit organizations that offer conferences, trainings, workshops, or certification programs include:
 - Western Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture www.wcisa.net
 - Irrigation Association www.irrigation.org
 - Association of Professional Landscape Designers www.apldca.org
 - American Society of Landscape Architects www.asla.org
 - Ecological Landscape Association www.ecolandscaping.org
 - Pesticide Applicators Professional Association <http://papaseminars.com>
 - California Landscape Contractors Association, North Coast Chapter www.clcanorthcoastchapter.org
 - Mendocino Ecological Learning Center www.melc.us
 - Occidental Arts and Ecology Center www.oaec.org
 - Regenerative Design Institute www.regenerativedesign.org
 - Sonoma Ecology Center www.sonomaecologycenter.org

Resources

Introduction

- The EPA GreenScapes Alliance, unites government and industry into a powerful force for the reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste materials in large landscapes. Learn more about GreenScapes, or become a participant in the GreenScapes Alliance at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/green
- Low Impact Development (LID) is a more environmentally-sensitive approach to developing land and managing stormwater runoff. Many jurisdictions are incorporating LID techniques to help protect their waters and natural resources. Learn more at www.lowimpactdevelopment.org



Landscape Locally

- Soil surveys can be found at your local library or by contacting the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. For useful soil information and a free web-based soil survey, visit <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app>
- Contact soil and compost testing laboratories:
 - ABC Organics www.abccorganics.com
 - A&L Western Agricultural Labs www.al-labs-west.com
 - Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery www.harmonyfarm.com
 - Peaceful Valley Farm Supply www.groworganic.com
 - Soil Control Lab www.controllabs.com
 - Soil Foodweb www.soilfoodweb.com
 - Soil & Plant Lab www.soilandplantlaboratory.com
- Fire Prevention:
 - *Options for Managing Fire Fuel Load* can be found at the California Forest Stewardship website <http://ceres.ca.gov/foreststeward/html/fuelsoption.html>
 - University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources offers information on fire safe landscaping:
 - *Landscaping Tips to Defend Your Home from Wildfire* <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8322.pdf>
 - *Home Landscaping for Fire* <http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8228.pdf>

Landscape for Less to the Landfill



- Invasive plant species websites: www.cal-ipc.org and www.invasivespecies.org
- ANSI A300-(Part 1)-2001: *Tree Care Operations*, can be purchased from www.ansi.org
- For more information on using goats and sheep for controlling weeds and creating firebreaks, visit www.livestockforlandscapes.com
 - For sheep grazing, contact www.canvasranch.com or www.livingsystemslandmanagement.com
 - For goat grazing, contact www.barlasboergoats.com or www.goatsrus.com
- To find or offer salvaged materials visit California Integrated Waste Management Board's (CIWMB) CalMax website at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/CalMAX/ or:

- Garbage Reincarnation, Inc. www.garbage.org
- Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority www.mendorecycle.org
- Sonoma County Habitat for Humanity's ReStore www.sonomacountyhabitat.org
- Sonoma County Waste Management Agency www.recyclenow.org
- SonoMax Materials Exchange www.SonoMax.org
- To purchase salvaged materials contact or visit:
 - Daniel O. Davis, Inc. www.davisdemolition.com
 - Heritage Salvage Petaluma www.heritagesalvage.com
 - Garbage Reincarnation, Inc.'s "Recycletown" www.garbage.org
 - Salvage Shop at the Ukiah Transfer Station www.candswaste.com/california/salvage_shop

Nurture the Soil



- Guidelines on creating and implementing a *Soil Management Plan* can be downloaded from Washington Organic Recycling Council's Building Soil website at www.buildingsoil.org/tools/Soil_BMP_Manual.pdf
- The US Composting Council describes its Seal of Testing Assurance program for ensuring quality compost at www.compostingcouncil.org/programs/sta
- For listings of compost and mulch producers visit the CalRecycle website at www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics For specifications on using compost, download *Compost Use for Landscape and Environmental Enhancement*.
- Compost made from Mendocino County yard waste is available for purchase at the Ukiah Transfer Station www.candswaste.com/california/solidwaste
- Compost made from Sonoma County yard waste is available for purchase from Sonoma Compost Company, at the Sonoma County Central Disposal Facility www.sonomacompost.com
- Rolls of recycled cardboard can be purchased for sheet mulching from www.northbaypaper.com
- Information on compost tea is available from www.attra.org, www.composttea.org and www.soilfoodweb.com
- For information and equipment to brew compost tea contact Sustainable Agricultural Technologies, www.composttea.com; Growing Solutions Inc., www.growingsolutions.com; Microbial Magic, www.soilsoop.com; or Soil Foodweb, www.soilfoodweb.com

Conserve Water



- WaterSense is an EPA-sponsored partnership program that seeks to protect the future of our nation's water supply by promoting water efficiency and enhancing the market for water-efficient products, programs, and practices www.epa.gov/WaterSense
- The Alliance for Water Efficiency serves as a North American advocate for water-efficient products and programs and provides information and assistance on water conservation efforts www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org

- The California Department of Water Resources has information on water supply and demand at www.water.ca.gov
- The California Urban Water Conservation Council offers a variety of services and information, including product news and technical resources at www.cuwcc.org
- The Irrigation Training & Research Center at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo offers Irrigation Auditor and Landscape Water Budget classes: www.itrc.org
- Information on the California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) is available at www.cimis.water.ca.gov
- The Irrigation Association is a national membership organization which provides information and education on irrigation equipment and water management practices: www.irrigation.org
- The Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) Program is a WaterSense labeled Irrigation Auditor certification program: www.qwel.net
- Local water districts often offer information on water conservation, landscape audits or audit/water budget training. Contact your water supplier or check the following websites:
 - City of Cloverdale www.cloverdale.net
 - City of Cotati www.ci.cotati.ca.us
 - City of Healdsburg www.ci.healdsburg.ca.us
 - Mendocino County Water Agency www.mendocountywa.com
 - City of Rohnert Park www.rpcity.org
 - City of Santa Rosa www.srcity.org/wc
 - City of Sebastopol www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us
 - Sonoma County Water Agency (For areas in Unincorporated Sonoma County) www.scwa.ca.gov/conservation
 - City of Ukiah www.cityofukiah.com
 - Town of Windsor www.townofwindsor.com
- Sonoma County Storm Water Program www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/sw
- City of Santa Rosa Storm Water Program www.srcity.org/stormwaterandcreeks
- For local District Storm Water Contact, see contact information for local water districts in the 'Conserve Water' Resource Section.
- Learn more about safe pesticide use at www.epa.gov/pesticides/controlling
- Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC) offers the IPM Practitioner and Common Sense Pest Control Quarterly at www.birc.org
- Environmentally-friendly pest management solutions for hundreds of pests of garden and landscape plants, including an interactive guide for healthy lawns, is available from the UC Statewide IPM Program: www.ipm.ucdavis.edu
- The Seattle Public Utilities offers free Pro IPM Fact Sheets at www.ci.seattle.wa.us/util/proipm
- For information on pesticides, water quality, fact sheets (including lawn care), and less toxic alternatives, visit www.ourwaterourworld.org
- To look up impacts of active ingredients in pesticides visit www.pesticideinfo.org
- Information on the hazards of lawn chemicals is available at www.beyondpesticides.org/pesticidefreelawns
- A porous pavement fact sheet is available at www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/porouspa.pdf. Information is also available from the Concrete Promotion Council of Northern California at www.cpcnc.org
- For information on installing nest boxes visit www.hungryowl.org

Conserve Energy



- The PG&E website includes information on reducing energy consumption: www.pge.com
- The Center for Urban Forest Research of the US Forest Service offers free fact sheets on maximizing the benefits of the urban forest, as well as many reports on their costs and benefits: www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/cufr
- The International Dark Sky Association has a list of approved light fixtures that reduce light pollution: www.darksky.org

Protect Water and Air Quality



- Mendocino County Water Agency Storm Water Management Program www.mendocountywa.com/storm.htm

Create and Protect Wildlife Habitat



- California Native Plants are described at www.calflora.org
- Your local chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a good resource for information on local native plant species:
 - The Milo Baker CNPS Chapter serves Sonoma County: www.cnpsmb.org
 - The Sanhedrin CNPS Chapter serves inland Mendocino County: www.cnps-sanhedrin.org
- An updated list of native plant nurseries is available at www.cnps.org/cnps/grownative/nurseries.php
- Information on California Oaks is available from the California Oak Foundation at www.californiaoaks.org
- For information on Sudden Oak Death visit www.suddenoakdeath.org
- The California Native Grasslands Association is an excellent resource for landscaping with native grasses: www.cnga.org
- The Wildlife Habitat Council provides information on how landscapes can provide habitat: www.wildlifehc.org
- For information on fostering wildlife habitat for pest control in landscapes visit www.hungryowl.org and www.californiabats.com



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